

Foreword

In recent decades the world has undergone fundamental changes related to geo-political, economic, cultural, religious and other conditions. New divisions, no longer based on territory, have complicated or partially replaced the old East-West and North-South dimensions of the world system, generating differences and distinctions that cut through local life worlds, between cities and suburbs, between the expanding metropolis and the countryside. We have witnessed the globalization of traditional group identities and affiliations along ideological, religious, class, gender and ethnic lines, at the same time as new transnational affiliations are being formed.

Different media and media genres are related in different ways to these developments. The most common media representations, it seems, simply ignore global cleavages, by masking them or framing them in “Western” terms. This is most evident in the context of an emerging new world order. This in turn is related to a range of other divides, the digital divide being perhaps the most frequently noted, with its repercussions for transnational media structures. These divides can be characterized as simultaneously technological and social, generated by markets and socio-political orders. They are further reflected in an array of media genres and formats, as well as in the segmentation of national, regional and worldwide audiences, as seen for example in divisions between elite and popular media productions. There are at the same time cases where these distinctions are increasingly blurred, particularly in the most rapidly modernizing and expanding media systems, which often place commercial and transnational media forms in the service of political governance. Challenging this trend, we see the expansion of democracy movements around the world, placing inequality on the agendas of both mainstream and alternative media.

These transformations point to media as increasingly significant actors and as establishing new arenas on a global scale. Comparative and in-depth study of these developments, both as distinct phenomena and as intrinsically interdependent, both as factors internal to media and as they affect the media’s increasingly complex relationships to other factors, together constitute a major challenge for media and communication research as we face the second decade of the new millennium.

These words define the focus and scope of the IAMCR World Congress, *Media and Global Divides*, held in Stockholm, 20-25 July 2008. They were written by Professor Jan Ekecrantz at the Department of Journalism, Media and Mass Communication at Stockholm University only months before he died of cancer, all too young. The conference theme, *Media and Global Divides*, lay close to Jan Ekecrantz’ heart; it was an area he had explored in his research in different parts of the world for many years.

The aim of the conference – “[to examine] relationships between media and contemporary global divides, be they historical or emergent phenomena, [to] explore the pivotal, yet under-researched roles of the media with regard to today’s global inequalities” – was realized when more than 1000 scholars from 90 countries gathered in a summery Stockholm. Many of the vital and far-ranging discussions were imbued with the ideas in Jan Ekecrantz’ last article, ‘Media and Communication Studies Going Global’ (*Nordicom Review*, 2007), where he expresses his personal conviction that “globalization calls for regional, not universalistic epistemologies and for cross-disciplinary, not intra-disciplinary research offers”. At the end of the World Congress, surely a majority of the participants have taken the following combined diagnosis and prescription to heart: we need to regain our sense of context and to broaden our perspectives in a holistic direction – that will be a necessary prerequisite for a robust development of knowledge in the media and communication field.

Early in the planning of the conference the idea of collecting the various plenary address on the theme of *Media and Global Divides* was present. Fortunately, the authors of the addresses agreed that it was a good idea and were willing to take the time to edit their manuscripts for publication in the volume you have before you. Their contributions represent a variety of perspectives and cultures and offer many valuable reflections. It is my hope that the chapters presented here will stimulate further intercultural/crosscultural research dialogues and inspire new research initiatives.

I am deeply indebted to all the contributors all around the world who have made this publication possible. I also wish to express my great appreciation of the support provided by IAMCR and the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication at Stockholm University. Thanks, also, to the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO without whose financial support the publication would never have seen the light of the day.

Göteborg in May 2009

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Introduction

Annabelle Sreberny, President IAMCR

Media and Global Divides is a particularly apt focus for an organization such as IAMCR. For over 50 years we have functioned as a transnational organization with members stretched around the world. We endured the schisms of the Cold War, our activities have been interrupted by other wars and at different times gender or religion has appeared as a key line of difference to be negotiated and embraced in our work. We have to deal with our own global divides. The contributors to this volume stem from many different countries and approach the topic from a variety of theoretical vantage points.

The Stockholm conference took place in the summer of 2008, just as the global credit crunch was rolling in. It has revealed the extent to which we are all inextricably connected but has also shown how unbalanced our world is. How extraordinary it is that capital markets were more ready to lose possibly as much as \$4 trillion gambled in the market than governments were to support one per cent of development aid to the global south. Inequality, both material and inequality of opportunity, remains a glaring divide, between regions and within countries. Many of the contributions in this volume explore the complex and varied skeins of connectivity and inequality that both bind and divide us.

While we need better theorization of the processes of globalization, we are coming to understand that it is through grounded local knowledge that this is best achieved; that the detailed case study tells us a great deal while a false universalism obscures the real differences in power, wealth and influence at work in the world. Media remain the channels through which most of us receive our knowledge of the world and they articulate the lines of difference by which we inhabit that world. Assessments of the media's role in mobilising sympathy for others or aggressive impulses or consumerist illusions remains at the heart of much of our work and this volume offers some interesting new thoughts on these old issues.

In short, it is exactly the kind of book and the kind of work that IAMCR should produce. I want to thank the organising committee once again for making Stockholm such a memorable conference, I want to congratulate Ulla Carlson for her energy in pulling this volume together so quickly and I want to celebrate the diverse and agonistic space that is IAMCR.

Opening Address

Food Meets Media

Dr. Vandana Shiva

Food meets media in advertisements and public relations. However, media rarely goes to the real economy and real ecology of food. And the media has totally ignored the politics of food and the power of global corporations over the food system. The media has also totally ignored alternatives for feeding the world.

Industrialized agriculture and globalized food systems have been put forth as sources of cheap and abundant food. However, food is no longer cheap. The era of cheap food and cheap oil is over. The food crisis, mainly triggered by rising prices that emerged in 2007 and 2008 has led to food riots in many countries. From 2007 to 2008 the price of wheat increased by 130 percent. The price of rice doubled during the first three months of 2008. Biofuels, speculation, destruction of local food economies, and climate change have all contributed to the rise in food prices. Climate change is aggravated by industrialized, globalized agriculture based on fossil fuels, and the resulting climate crisis in turn impacts food security in numerous ways, including intensified floods such as those Iowa experienced in 2008 and intensified and extended droughts like the one Australia witnessed in 2007. Globalization has also led to the destruction of local food economies and increased control by corporations like Monsanto and Cargill over our food systems. Global integration of agriculture in effect means global control over the world's food supply.

While millions go hungry, corporate profits have increased. Cargill saw profits increase by 30 percent in 2007; Monsanto's profits increased by 44 percent. These profits will increase as corporate monopolies deepen. Monsanto increased the price of corn seed by \$100 per bag to \$300 per bag. For a 1000 acre farm in the U.S, this means an increased cost of \$40,000.

The rise in food prices in 2007-2008 did get media attention, but without an investigation into why the prices were rising, and how acts in the U.S were triggering food riots in Mexico, Egypt and India.

I will therefore talk of the stories that the media did not cover, stories that the media missed, stories that determine the life and death options of millions of our fellow citizens.

First, the Seed

Seed Monopolies, Genetic Engineering and Farmer Suicides

An epidemic of farmers' suicides has spread across four states of India over the last decade. According to official data, more than 160,000 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1997.

These four states are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab. The suicides are most frequent where farmers grow cotton and have been a direct result of the creation of seed monopolies. According to official data, more than 160,000 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1997.

Increasingly, the supply of cotton seeds has slipped out of the hands of the farmers and the public system, into the hands of global seed corporations like Monsanto. The entry of seed MNCs was part of the globalization process.

Corporate seed supply implies a number of shifts simultaneously. *Firstly*, giant corporations start to control local seed companies through buyouts, joint ventures and licensing arrangements, leading to a seed monopoly.

Secondly, seed is transformed from being a common good, to being the “intellectual property” of Monsanto, for which the corporation can claim limitless profits through royalty payments. For the farmer this means deeper debt.

Thirdly, seed is transformed from a renewable regenerative, multiplicative resource into a non-renewable resource and commodity. Seed scarcity and seed farmers are a consequence of seed monopolies, which are based on renewability of seed, beginning with hybrids, moving to genetically engineered seed like Bt-cotton, with the ultimate aim of the “terminator” seed which is engineered for sterility. Each of these technologies of non-renewability is guided by one factor alone – forcing farmers to buy seed every planning season. For farmers this means higher costs. For seed corporations it translates into higher profits.

Fourthly, the creation of seed monopolies is based on the simultaneous deregulation of seed corporations, including biosafety and seed deregulation, and super-regulation of farmers seeds and varieties. Globalization allowed seed companies to sell self-certified seeds, and in the case of genetically engineered seed, they are seeking self-regulation for biosafety. This is the main aim of the recently proposed National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority, which is in effect a Biosafety ‘Deregulation Authority. The proposed Seed Bill 2004, which has been blocked by a massive nationwide Gandhian Seed Satyagraha by farmers, aims at forcing every farmer to register the varieties they have evolved over millennia. This compulsory registration and licensing system robs farmers of their fundamental freedoms.

State regulation extinguishes biodiversity, and pushes all farmers into dependency on patented, corporate seed. Such compulsory licensing has been the main vehicle of destruction of biodiversity and farmers rights in U.S. and Europe.

Fifthly, corporate seeds impose monocultures on farmers. Mixed croppings of cotton with cereals, legumes, oilseeds, vegetables is replaced with a monoculture of Bt-cotton hybrids.

The creation of seed monopolies and with it the creation of unpayable debt to a new species of money lender, the agents of the seed and chemical companies, has led to hundreds of thousands of Indian farmers killing themselves since 1997.

The suicides first started in the district of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh. Peasants in Warangal used to grow millets, pulses, oilseeds. Overnight, Warangal was converted to a cotton growing district based on non-renewable hybrids which need irrigation and are prone to pest attacks. Small peasants without capital were trapped in a vicious cycle of debt. Some ended up committing suicide.

This was the period when Monsanto and its Indian partner Mahyco were also carrying out illegal field experiments with genetically engineered Bt-cotton. All imports and field trials of genetically engineered organisms in India are governed by a law under the Environment Protection Act called the “Rules for the Manufacture Use, Import, Export and Storage” of Hazardous Microorganisms, Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989.

We at the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology used these laws to stop Monsanto’s commercialization of Bt-cotton in 1999, which is why approval was not granted for commercial sales until 2002.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh filed a case in the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP), India’s Anti Trust Law, arguing that Monsanto’s seed monopolies were the primary cause of farmers’ suicides in Andhra Pradesh. Monsanto was forced to reduce its prices of Bt-cotton seeds.

The high costs of seeds and other inputs were combined with falling prices of cotton due to \$4 billion U.S. subsidy and the dumping of this subsidized cotton on India by using the W.T.O. to force India to remove Quantitative Restrictions on agricultural imports. Rising costs of production and falling prices of the product is a recipe for indebtedness, and indebtedness is the main cause of farmers’ suicides. This is why farmers’ suicides are most prevalent in the cotton belt on which seed industries own claim is rapidly becoming a Bt-cotton belt. Bt-cotton is thus heavily implicated in farmers’ suicides.

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has recently released a discussion paper ‘Bt-cotton and Farmers’ Suicides in India: Reviewing the Evidence’.

The report is manipulative of the truth about farmers suicides and Bt-cotton at every level.

Firstly, it states that “Farmers suicides is a long-term phenomena”, and the “long term” is 1997-2007.

Ten years is not a long term in a 10,000 year old farming tradition. And 1997 is precisely when the suicides take on an epidemic proportion due to seed monopolies, initially through hybrids and from 2002 through Bt. Hybrids.

Secondly, the chronology of Bt-cotton introduction is false. The story begins with Monsanto’s illegal Bt. trials, not with commercialization in 2002.

Thirdly, the report states that “In specific regions and years, where Bt-cotton may have indirectly contributed to farmer indebtedness (via crop failure) leading to suicides, its failure was mainly the result of the context or environment in which it was introduced or planted; Bt-cotton as a technology is not to blame”.

This is an interesting argument. A technology is always developed in the context of local socio-economic and ecological conditions. A technology that is a misfit in a context is a failed technology for that context. You cannot blame the context to save a failed technology.

The technology of engineering Bt-genes into cotton was aimed primarily at controlling pests. However, new pests have emerged in Bt-cotton, leading to higher use of pesticides. In Vidharbha region of Maharashtra, which has the highest suicides, the area under Bt-cotton has increased from 0.200 million ha in 2004 to 2.880 million ha in 2007. Costs of pesticides for farmers has increased from Rs. 921 million to Rs. 13,264 billion in the same period, which is a 13 fold increase. A pest control technology that fails to control pests might be good for seed corporations which are also agrichemical corporations. For farmers it translates into suicide.

The IFPRI study uses industry data to falsely claim reduction of pesticide use in Bt-cotton when the empirical data and ground reality shows pesticide use increase.

There are alternatives to Bt-cotton and toxic pesticides. Through Navdanya we have promoted 'Organic Farming and Seeds of Hope', to help farmers move away from Monsanto's "Seeds of Suicide".

Organic farmers in Vidharbha are earning Rs. 6287 per acre on average, compared to Bt-cotton farmers who are earning Rs. 714 per acre on average. Many Bt-cotton farmers have a negative income, hence the suicides.

The field data of Bt-cotton is also manipulated when cotton yields are shown as low in the pre-Bt-cotton years, it is not mentioned that cotton has traditionally not been grown as a monoculture but as a mixed crop converting biodiversity to monocultures of course leads to increase in "yield" of the monoculture, but this is accompanied by a decline in production at the biodiversity level.

The IFPRI paper has attempted to play with figures, just like the investment bankers and hedge fund managers played with figures and caused the collapse of Wall Street. Manipulation of reality with numbers does not make for truth. In the case of seeds, it is threatening farmers' lives.

Technologies are tools. When the tool fails it needs replacing. Bt-cotton technology has failed to control pests or secure farmers lives and livelihoods. It is time to replace GM technology with ecological farming. It is time to stop farmers' suicides.

Toxic Genes

The financial meltdown that started in September 2008 was a result of the investments based on "toxic" paper – worthless financial instruments traded for super profits, even while they failed to reflect any value in the real economy. "Toxic Assets" and "Toxic Paper" do not refer to the business of companies of trade in deadly toxics. It still means deadly, but deadly to financial institutions and banks because of these inherent risks.

There are similar "toxic papers" being generated in the defense of GM crops, especially Bt. Cotton. Like the toxic papers of Wall Street they have no grounding in reality. They assume false number crunching can be a substitute for truth. And they are deadly for food and agriculture security, and farmers livelihoods.

A recent paper from IFPRI "Bt. Cotton and Farmers Suicides in India" falls in this category of a doubly toxic paper because it covers up the risks of toxic genes and is

detached from reality. Yet it is aimed at shaping public opinion about GM crops by using every trick in the trade to separate the impact of GM crops on farmers from the seed monopoly and the technology of producing non-renewable, toxic seeds through genetic engineering.

Bt. Cotton is the only GM crop approved for commercial planting in India to date.

The majority of farmers suicides in India are a harvest of toxic genes of Bt. Cotton. The Bt. Gene is literally a toxic gene. It produces a high dose toxin. The Bt. in the genetically engineered crops is substantially different from the Bt. in the naturally occurring soil organism, *Bacillus Thurengensis*. A false principle of “Substantial equivalence” assumes that because natural Bt. Sprays are safe, genetically engineered Bt. Crops such as Bt. Cotton are safe. This assumption is not justified. Bt. Sprays do not cause allergic reactions, Bt. Crops do. Further the Cry proteins in Bt. Sprays break down within a fortnight upon exposure to UV light. This does not happen in Bt. Crops since the Bt. Toxin is produced internally in grains and other plant tissues. Further, the Bt. Spray is used only once or twice in a season, whereas the Bt. Toxin in GM crops is released all the time, by every part of the plant, thus increasing the risks from chronic exposure. Finally, Bt. Sprays are composed of endo toxins in an inactive crystalline form. They only become toxic in the guts of particular insects which processes the crystal into a protoxin and then an active toxin. On the other hand, Bt. Crops are genetically engineered to produce the Bt. Toxin which is active. The Bt. Toxin in GM crops is thus harmful to a wide range of species as the study on the Monarch butterfly from Cornell, and animal deaths reports from India indicate.

However the toxicity of Bt. Crops is much deeper and wider than the toxicity of the gene.

Bt. Cotton was introduced to control the American Bollworm, which is why Monsanto's trade mark for Bt. Cotton is ‘Bollgard’. The argument was that by engineering the Bt. Toxin into the plant, the plant would be pest resistant. However, the bollworm has evolved resistance to the Bt. Toxin and new pests have emerged. The non target pest infestation has led to an increase in the use of pesticides. Our field studies in Vidharbha show a thirteen fold increase of pesticide use by farmers since Bt. Cotton was introduced in 2004.

While the reality shows that Bt. Cotton fails to control pests and has in fact led to increase in pest occurrence and pesticide use, the “toxic” paper from IFPRI states that Bt. Cotton reduces the number of pesticide sprays by 32-40 percent, reduces pesticide costs by 30-52 percent, increases the total cost of production by 32-40 percent, has no clear effect on seed cotton prices, increased yields by 34-42 percent, and raises net returns by 52-71 percent.

Every claim in this statement is false. The high costs of Bt. Cotton seed is not just reflected in farmers indebtedness and suicides, it is confirmed by the case brought to the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Commission by the Government of Andhra Pradesh (AP) in which our foundation also intervened.

On June 26, 2006 the A.P. Government filed a case of contempt against Monsanto – Mahyco Biotech (India) Ltd for not obeying the commission order on reducing its royalty which Monsanto charges as “trait – value” of Rs. 1750 per pack of 450 gms of seed. Since Monsanto introduced Bt. Cotton in India before India's patent laws allowed patents on GM seeds, it cannot formally claim royalty.

The corporation buys the seed from farmers at Rs. 300/- per pack of 750 grams and then claims the right to sell it back to farmers at exorbitant prices.

The A.P. Government's contention was that the high price of the Bt. Cotton is one of the reasons for distress among farmers. When the case was filed, more than 3000 farmers had committed suicide in A.P. and most of them were cotton farmers.

The A.P. petition demanded a reduction of "trait value" from Rs. 1750 to Rs. 750 per 450 gm pack and a return of Rs. 4 billion to farmers for over charging them. Monsanto lost the case and was forced to reduce its price.

The MRTP case exposes the false claim by IFPRI that there is "no clear effect on seed cotton prices" in Bt. Cotton. It also exposes the bias in the narrow base of literature used. Research sponsored by Monsanto and the Biotech industry forms the basis of the "peer reviewed" literature. Government orders, Court Orders, independent studies are totally ignored.

The IFPRI report is also toxic in terms of contradictions and inconsistency. The report admits increase in costs of production. This translates into lower incomes for farmers. Yet in spite of farms spending more, IFPRI claims upto 71 percent higher net returns.

This claim to higher returns is also falsified by multiple field surveys. A 2008 survey by Navdanya comparing Bt. Cotton with organic cotton showed that organic producers earn nearly ten times more than Bt. Cotton farmers.

Cost Benefit Analysis of Bt. Cotton and Organic Cotton

	Bt. Cotton (Rs. / acre)	Organic Cotton (Rs. / acre)
a) Expenses – Seeds, pesticides, fertilizer, irrigation etc.	8 164	3 788
b) Output Value	8 876	10 075
Net Income (a – b)	714	6 287

Our earlier studies in A.P., M.P. and Karnataka also show that non-Bt. Cotton farmers have higher net incomes than Bt. Cotton farmers.

Input / Output Bt. / non-Bt. / Desi Cotton Per Acre

	Bt. Cotton	Non Bt. Hybrids	Desi Varieties
Expenditure Input (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation etc)	Rs. 9 700/-	Rs. 5 750/-	None
Total Yield	2 quintals	10 quintals	5 quintals
Output Value	Rs. 3 300/-	Rs. 16 500/-	Rs. 8 250/-
Loss / Profit per acre	Loss – Rs. 6 400/-	Profit – Rs. 10 750/-	Profit – Rs. 8 250/-

Cost Benefit Analysis – Madhya Pradesh

	Bt. Cotton	Non Bt. Varieties
Expenditure input (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, labour)	Rs. 6 675/-	Rs. 7 005/-
Expected total yield	4.01 quintals	7.05 quintals
Output Value	Rs. 7 218/- (Rs. 1 800/- quintal)	Rs. 12 690/- (Rs. 1 800/- quintal)
Profit per acre	Rs. 543/-	Rs. 5685/-

Cost Benefit Analysis – Karnataka

	Bt. Cotton	Non Bt. Varieties
Expenditure input (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, labour)	Rs. 8925	Rs. 10250/-
Expected total yield	3.82 quintals	7 quintals
Output Value	Rs. 7 640/- (Rs. 2 000/- quintal)	Rs. 14 000/- (Rs. 2 000/- quintal)
Loss / Profit per acre	Loss of Rs. 1 285/-	Profit of Rs. 3 750/-

A study by the Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defense of Diversity (APCIDD) showed how biased the results of the Monsanto sponsored A.C Nielson study was.

Monsanto Commissioned versus Independent Study

State	Bollworm Reduction	Pesticide Usage Reduction		Yield increase		Increase in Net Profit
Andhra Pradesh	%	Rs	%	Quintals / Acre	%	Rs / Acre
Monsanto Study	58%	1 856/-	24%	1.98	92	5 138/-
Andhra Pradesh						
APCIDD Study	14%	321/-	2%	0.09	(-)9%	(-) 750/-

Since the IFPRI study is biased in its selection of literature, its claims are also biased. Just as securitization of mortgages did not secure peoples homes but merely piled up trade in toxic paper IFPRI's manipulated paper does not secure farmers survival, it merely piles up toxic papers on toxic Bt. Cotton.

The IFPRI paper is totally contradictory in its defense of Bt. Technology. Where the cotton crop fails or pests increase or farmers commit suicide, the cause is farmers stupidity or the fault of the varieties into which Bt. is introduced. As the study states

The loss observed in some studies is largely due to the lack of adequate Bt. Varieties (particularly for rainfed conditions under draught), the lower quality of cotton of some of these varieties, the high price of seed compensating for the reduction in pesticide use, the improper use of the technology associated with the limited knowledge of the technology among cotton growers. In other words, the technology represented by the Bt. trait, should not be blamed, instead, the conditions in which it was introduced, sold and used explain some of the observed losses in specific regions of India.

When the Bt. Cotton performs well it is “the technology”. When it does badly, it is “the context”. This opportunistic separation of “technology” and “context” when convenient is at the heart of IFPRI’s false argument that Bt. Cotton and farmers suicides are not related. As it states “In specific regions and years, where Bt. Cotton may have indirectly contributed to farmer indebtedness (via crop failure) leading to suicides, its failure was mainly the result of the context or environment in which it was introduced or planted; Bt. Cotton as a technology is not to blame”. This argument is toxic. All technologies are embedded in context. There are no dis-embodied technologies, except in ideology.

Bt. Toxins in a crop are embodied in a seed, a seed is planted in the soil. Bt. Technology does not exist independent of the seed, and hence it is pure ideology to talk of Bt. Cotton as a technology independent of the seed and soil. The seed has been sold to farmers as a “magic bullet” at super profits. When Monsanto collects royalties as “trait value”, it collects from the rainfed farmer and the irrigated farmer, it collects from companies using different hybrids for introducing the Bt. Trait. It cannot own the trait to collect royalty, and disown it for the negative consequences of putting toxic genes into plants to create a toxic agriculture where farmers are pushed to commit suicide.

Just as the toxic papers brought Wall Street down, the toxic papers Monsanto sponsors to protect its interests will bring agriculture down. But unlike the bail out of banks, when the last seed is “terminated” and the last farmers is gone, there will be no bail out possible.

That is why we need to create GMO freedom now. And that also includes freedom from toxic papers that manipulate truth while farmers die.

From Seed Dictatorship

The Commodification of Food

Globalization of agriculture implies the corporate control of agriculture. The World Bank structural adjustment policies have allowed the entry of global seed corporations into India. The WTO – TRIPs Agreement is forcing countries to introduce monopolies on ownership of seed, either through patents or breeders rights. The WTO Agreement on Agriculture which forces countries to liberalized exports and imports, allows global corporations to take over control of domestic production, domestic markets and global trade.

The entire grain supply of the world is basically controlled by a handful of privately held companies: Cargill, Continental, ConAgra, Louis Dreyfus, Bunge, Carnac, Mitsui/Cook and Archer Daniels Midland. Cargill recently bought up Continental, the second biggest Grain Giant.

These Grain Giants are both the architects and beneficiaries of the globalization of agriculture. They control agriculture and food production, from seed to table, from farm to factory. They control the inputs farmers buy, and they control the markets to which farmers sell their produce. They determine the price at which farmers sell their produce. In the short run they lower prices to capture markets. In the long run such monopoly control will lead to high prices of food.

All around the world, food production has been transformed into a negative economy as farmers spend ever increasing amounts on purchasing inputs and receive decreasing prices for their produce. Low farm prices are more closely linked to monocultures

and monopolies. When all farmers grow only one commodity, there will of course be a supply of that one product. But this is a pseudo-surplus, not a real surplus. It is not the surplus left after nature's needs for ecological maintenance have been met, and also the farm's family needs for food and sustenance. The destruction of biodiversity in industrial agricultural systems means that all the functions that biodiversity could perform for the farmer at no cost has to be bought. Given the vertical integration of agriculture and food production, the same agribusiness corporations sell external inputs to the farmer and buy farmers' produce. In developed countries, only 15 per cent of the price of loaf bread goes to the farmer – the rest goes on milling, baking, packaging, transport and marketing. For agribusiness high production costs and low commodity prices translate into two way profits. For the farmer, they translate into a negative economy and spiraling debts.

Even though U.S. farm exports are booming, farmers cannot survive. More American farmers die of suicides than any other unnatural cause. As a group, farmers are likely to kill themselves at least three times as often as the general population.

The epidemic of farmers suicide has now reached India. Thousands of farmers have killed themselves because globalization of industrial agriculture has implied costly inputs and unpayable debts.

Argentinean farmers too are facing a crisis, and 200,000 small and medium farmers went on a strike in October 2000 against a negative economy of high inputs costs and low commodity prices. Fuel prices are 300 percent higher than 10 years ago and agricultural commodity prices have collapsed by upto 50 percent over the past three years.

Farmers everywhere are being paid a fraction of what they received for the same commodity a decade ago. In the USA wheat prices at the farm dropped from \$5.75 a bushel to \$2.43, soya bean prices dropped from \$8.40 to \$4.2 and corn prices dropped from \$4.43 to \$1.72. In India, from 1999 to 2000, prices for coffee dropped from Rs. 60 to Rs. 18 per kg, and prices of oilseed declined by more than 30 per cent.

The Canadian National Farmers Union put it like this to the Senate in a report called *The Farm Crisis*, 18 February 2000:

While the farmers growing cereal grains – wheat, oats, corn – earn negative returns and are pushed close to bankruptcy, the companies that make breakfast cereals reap huge profits. In 1998 cereal companies Kellogg's, Quaker Oats, and General Mills enjoyed return on equity rates of 56 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. While a bushel of corn sold for less than \$4, a bushel of corn flakes sold for \$133. In 1998, the cereal companies were 186 to 740 times more profitable than the farms. Maybe farmers are making too little because others are taking too much.

A false logic is often established according to which industrial agriculture produces more food, and increased production leads to lower prices. When viewed in terms of total food output, industrial agriculture does not produce more nutrition, and low prices are connected to monopoly control, not to productivity.

The globalization of corporate agriculture is aggravating all the problems linked with the centralized system of food production and distribution. It is increasing chemical use, through conventional methods as well as genetic engineering. It is increasing transport and food miles, and fuelling food insecurity through climate change. It is promoting the mining of water and soil fertility by putting profitability above sustainability. It is giving primacy to trade and undermining domestic production. It is putting exports

above the food entitlements of domestic consumers. Trade liberalization and globalization is threatening the food rights of the Indian people and the survival of farmers and agriculture in many ways.

The emerging trends of globalization of agriculture show concentration of the ownership of the seed industry, introduction of intellectual property rights in agriculture and genetic engineering technologies in the hands of few big corporations. The consequence of such concentration will enhance the costs of production and displace small farmers while adding social and environmental costs to the existing economic and ecological degradations of the Green Revolution.

For couple of years farmers in the green revolution region are committing suicides, which highlight the increasing social costs. Thousands of cotton farmers committed suicide in Andhra Pradesh since 1997. When farmers commit suicide liberalizers propose free exports without thinking of how exports will lead to domestic shortages and rising food prices. When food prices rise, globalizers propose free imports without concern of how cheap imports can wipe out the livelihoods and food rights of millions of farmers.

The Agreement of Agriculture (AoA) is another example of external liberalization. Agriculture has never been part of GATT, which was introduced during Uruguay Round. The AoA has three sections:

- Export competition or export liberalization
- Market access or import liberalization
- Domestic support or reduction of domestic subsidies

In addition, the Agreement on Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary Measures as well as the Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) also affect agriculture and food security.

The WTO clauses on subsidies protect the subsidies of the rich and hence allow dumping of food grains and agricultural commodities on poor countries deepening their poverty and debt by undermining livelihoods and draining scarce foreign exchange.

It has been said that WTO's Agreement on Agriculture will abolish subsidies to the North. Contrary to this, northern subsidies have been doubled since the Uruguay Round instead of falling.

The Clinton Administration planned to use \$5.5 billion in export credits in 2000. Direct payments to farmers in the US have gone up to \$9 billion to \$15.3 billion.

The subsidies that an Indian farmer gets are passed from the government to the agro-chemical, seed and tractor industry. The subsidy or loan that the farmer gets to purchase these items is passed on directly to the manufacturer. Rather than actually getting a subsidy, the farmer pays interest (however low the rate is) on the money transferred from the government to the industry. In fact, this 'negative' subsidy for the Indian farmer totals to – 23.7 billion US dollars.

In contrast the subsidies that the US farmers get, allowed by the green box, have almost doubled from 1989 to 1995. Such subsidies in the US and the EU total to 353 billion US dollars today. For example, the US government pays \$193 per ton to US Soybean farmers, which is higher than the soy price at \$155 per ton. This artificially cheap soy is then imported with low import duties to destroy India's edible oil economy

displacing millions of farmers in oilseed production and millions of people whose livelihood depends on processing of edible oil.

The US subsidies are not touched by WTO. WTO & World Bank work in synergy to dismantle the support for Indian farmers, increasing costs of production and decreasing the price farmers receive for their produce, pushing them into debt and suicides.

While farmers' subsidies are declining, corporate subsidies are increasing. Therefore, the transnational corporations gain from both northern subsidies and southern subsidies under the WTO rules. Further, northern subsidies to agribusiness have not been touched. Since the WTO was established, the United States has expanded export credit and marketing promotion programs. Even IMF loans to Third World countries have been used for export subsidies to US agribusiness.

Biofuels

Industrial biofuels are being promoted as a source of renewable energy and as a means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, there are two ecological reasons why converting crops like soy, corn and palm into liquid fuels can actually aggravate the CO₂ burden and worsen the climate crisis while also contributing to the erosion of biodiversity and the depletion of water resources.

SNO p. 80-82 David Pimental Water Supplies.

Movements for Food Democracy and Food Sovereignty

We are what we eat.

But what are we eating?

What are we growing on our farms? How are we growing it?

What impact does it have on our health and on the planet?

Food safety, food security and agriculture are intimately inter-related. How we grow our food and what we grow determines what we eat and who eats. It determines the quality and safety of our food. Yet food safety, food security and agriculture have been separated from each other. Food is being produced in ways that is robbing the majority of people of food, and those who are eating are eating bad food. One billion people on the planet are hungry. Another two billion are suffering from food related diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension. Those who are not getting access to food are victims of the malnutrition related to being poor. Those who can buy food in the global supermarket are also victims of another kind of malnutrition, the malnutrition of the rich.

Third World countries are carrying a double burden of food related disease, hunger and obesity. The WHO / FAO have predicted that by the year 2020 it is projected that 70 percent of ischaemic heart disease deaths, 75 percent of stroke deaths, and 70 percent of diabetes deaths will occur in developing countries. These diseases, called non-communicable diseases, are directly linked to diet.

The Roots of Hunger

The world is producing enough food for all. However billions are being denied their right to food. The globalized industrialized food system is creating hunger in many ways.

Firstly, industrialized agriculture is based on destruction of small farmers. Uprooted and dispossessed peasants join the ranks of the hungry.

Secondly, industrialized agriculture is capital intensive. It is based on costly external inputs such as purchased and non-renewable seeds, synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides. Peasants get into debt to buy these inputs. To pay back debt they must sell all they grow, thus depriving themselves of food. If they cannot pay their debts they lose their land. And they are increasingly losing their lives. More than 150,000 farmers in India have committed suicide as costs of inputs have increased, and the price of their produce has fallen, thus trapping them into debt.

Malnutrition and hunger is also growing because farmers are being pushed into growing cash crops for exports.

The nature of agriculture, and the nature of food is being transformed. Agriculture, the care of the land, the culture of growing good food is being transformed into corporate, industrial activity. Food is being transformed from being a source of nutrition and sustenance into being a commodity. And as a commodity, it will first flow to factory farms and now cars. The poor will get the left over.

Factory farms are a negative food system. They consume more food than they produce. Industrial beef requires 10 kg of feed to produce 1 kg of food. Industrial pork requires 4.0-5.5 kg of feed to produce 1 kg of food. Factory farmed chicken requires 2.0-3.0 times more feed than it produces as food.

Industrial biofuels are putting a new pressure on food. Food prices in Mexico have doubled since corn, the staple for Mexican tortillas, is being increasingly used to make ethanol for fuel. Corn, soya, canola are all being diverted to feed cars while people starve.

Food Safety: Freedom from Hazards or Imposition of Industrial Uniformity?

Food safety is a growing concern with the industrialization and globalization of food. Food related diseases have spread.

As Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy at City University, London reports:

incidence of food borne disease has in fact risen during the era of the production-ist Paradigm. In West Germany cases of infections *S. Enteritidis* rose from 11 per 100,000 head of population in 1963 to 193 per 100,000 in 1999, in England and Wales formal notifications of the same disease rose from 14,253 cases in 1987 to 86,528 in 2000.

Food hazards have increased with industrialization of food production and processing. As Colin Tudge observes:

the modern food supply chain is convoluted and so long that it allows endless opportunities for malpractice of all kinds – including many that beggar the imagination of those who are not criminally inclined. The supply chain is impossible to police because it is so complex, and because policing is so expensive (and nobody wants to pick up the bill – certainly not the governments who win votes by keeping the price of food down). Sometimes though, it is not at all easy to draw a line between outright villainy (like the adding of contaminants) from the standard, legitimate practices of the modern food industry.

On a global scale, new diseases are emerging and more virulent forms of old diseases are growing as globalization spreads factory farming and industrial processing and agriculture. Disease epidemics and food hazards are the outcome of food production methods based on hazardous inputs and processes.

In the U.K., more than 2 million cattle were found to be infected with Bovine Spongiform Encephelopathy (BSE) – the mad cow disease. By August 2002, 133 people had died from variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (vCJD) – the human equivalent of BSE.

New strains of E. coli 0157 have led to 75 million cases of food poisoning annually in the US, resulting in 325,000 hospitalizations and 5000 deaths.

The Swine fever in Asia led to killing of millions of pigs. A newly emerged Nipah Strain killed 100 pig farm workers, infected 150 with non-fatal encephalitis and led to the slaughter of a million pigs to control the disease.

The Avian flu has already led to human deaths and the killing of millions of ducks and chickens. The first sightings of the H5N1 virus behind the Avian influenza came in November. The epidemic has spread to 10 countries. The disease has jumped from chickens to humans and killed eight people in Vietnam and Thailand. In 1997 the H5N1 Strain killed six people in Hong Kong.

Food production technologies have undergone two generations of changes over the last few decades. The first shift in food production technologies was the introduction of chemicals in agriculture under the banner of the Green Revolution. Toxic chemicals used in warfare were deployed in agriculture in times of peace as synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Agriculture and food production became dependent on “Weapons of Mass Destruction”. The Bhopal disaster in which a leak from a pesticide plant killed thousands in 1984, and has killed nearly 30,000 since then is the most tragic reminder of how agriculture has become dependent on war technologies designed to kill.

Genetic Engineering will Introduce New Food Hazards

New traits of viral promoter, antibiotic resistance markers being introduced in GM foods need public approval and strict monitoring for safety.

Dr. Mae-Wan Ho in “Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare? (1999) has identified the following risks to human health from genetically engineered foods.

- Toxic or allergenic effects due to transgene products or interactions of transgene with host genes.
- Vector-mediated spread of antibiotic resistance marker genes to gut bacteria and to pathogens.
- Vector-mediated spread of virulence among pathogens across species by horizontal gene-transfer and recombination.
- Potential for vector-mediated horizontal gene transfer and recombination to create new pathogenic bacteria and viruses.
- Potential of vector-mediated infected cells after ingestion of transgenic foods, to regenerate disease viruses, or for the vector to insert itself into the cell's genome causing harmful or lethal effects including cancer.

While Toxic and GM foods need stricter laws, local, natural processing in small dhabas, small outlets cannot be subjected to industrial regulation, both because they are not a

source of toxic threat and because they are not centralized producers needing centralized regulation.

Whose Safety Rules? Whose Standards?

However, while food hazards grow, food safety laws are being shaped which deregulate large corporations and over-regulate the small scale self organized economy. Such industrial food safety standards promote large scale globalized production, and act against local foods. These laws are also the basis of the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary Agreement of WTO.

Food safety is no longer defined as safe for health and good for nutrition. It is being defined industrially – as the size of produce, the capital investment in processing. This is a Cartesian definition and chemical definition of safety. It is creating uniformity and it is creating food hazards through chemical additives and industrial processing. It is destroying diversity, artisinal production and the real sources of good, healthy food – local and indigenous food systems.

Beyond Monocultures of the Mind

Humanity has eaten more than 80,000 edible plants through its evolution. More than 3000 have been used consistently. However, we now rely on just eight crops to provide 75 percent of the world's food. And with genetic engineering, production has narrowed down to three crops – Corn, Soya, Canola.

Monocultures are destroying biodiversity, our health, and the quality and diversity of food.

Monocultures have been promoted as an essential component of industrial isolation and globalization of agriculture. They are assumed to produce more food. However, all they produce is more control and profits – for Monsanto, Cargill and ADM. They create pseudo surpluses and real scarcity by destroying biodiversity, local food systems and food cultures.

In 1998, India's indigenous edible oil made from Mustard, Coconut, Sesame, Linseed, Groundnut processed in artisinal cold press mills were banned using "food safety" as an excuse.

The restrictions on import of soya oil were simultaneously removed. 10 million farmers livelihoods were threatened. One million oil mills in villages were closed. More than twenty farmers were killed while protesting against the dumping of soya on the Indian market, which was leading to fall in prices of domestic oil seed crops. And millions of tons of artificially cheap GMO soya oil continue to be dumped on India.

Women from the slums of Delhi came out in a movement to dump soya and bring back mustard oil "Sarson bachao, soyabean bhagao" (save the mustard, drive away the soyabean) was the women's call from the streets of Delhi. We did succeed in bringing back mustard through our "sarson satyagraha" (non cooperation with the ban on mustard oil).

I was recently in the Amazon, where the same companies that dumped soya on India – Cargill and ADM, are destroying the Amazon to grow soya. Millions of acres of the Amazon rainforest, the lung, the liver, the heart of the global climate system are being burnt, to grow soya for exports. Cargill has built an illegal port at Santaren in Para and

is driving the expansion of soya in the Amazon Rainforest. Armed gangs take over the forest and use slaves to cultivate soya. When people like Sister Dorothy Stang oppose the destruction of the forests and the violence against people, they are assassinated.

People in Brazil and India are being threatened to promote a monoculture that benefits agribusiness. People in U.S and Europe are threatened indirectly with 80 percent soya going to cattle feed to provide cheap meat. Cheap protein to feed factory-farmed animals is destroying both the Amazon Rainforest as well as people's health in rich countries. One billion people are without food because industrial monocultures robbed them of their livelihoods in agriculture and their food entitlements. Another 1.7 billion are suffering from obesity and food related diseases. Monocultures lead to malnutrition – for those who are under fed as well as those who are over fed.

Corporations are forcing us to eat untested food such as GMO's. Even soya, which is now in 60 percent of all processed food, was not eaten by any culture 50 years ago. It has high levels of Isoflavones and phyto-oestrogens which produce hormone imbalances in humans. Traditional fermentation as in the food cultures of China and Japan reduce the levels of isoflavones. The promotion of soya in food is a huge experiment promoted with US \$ 13 billion subsidies from the U.S Government between 1998 and 2004, and US \$ 80 million a year from the American Soya Industry. Nature, Culture and people's health are all being destroyed. Local food cultures have rich and diverse alternatives to soya. For protein we have thousands of varieties of beans and grain legumes – the pigeon pea, the chick pea, mung bean, urud bean, rice bean, azuli bean, moth bean, cow pea, peas, lentils, horse gram, faba bean, winged bean. For edible oils we have sesame, mustard, linseed, niger soffola, sunflower, groundnut.

In depending on monocultures, the food system is being made increasingly dependent on fossil fuels – for the synthetic fertilizers, for running the giant machinery, for the long distance transport, which adds “food miles”. With the spread of monocultures and the destruction of local farms, we are increasingly eating oil, not food threatening the planet and our health.

Moving beyond monocultures of the mind has become an imperative for repairing the food system. Biodiverse small farms have higher productivity and they generate higher incomes for farmers. And biodiverse diets provide more nutrition and better taste.

Bringing back biodiversity to our farms goes hand in hand with bringing back small farmers on the land. Corporate control thrives on monocultures. Citizen's food freedom depends on biodiversity. Human freedom and the freedom of other species are mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

The Not so Green Revolution

The so-called green revolution was neither green, nor revolutionary. It has dispossessed small peasants, pushed our rich agro biodiversity to extinction, mined our aquifers, desertified our soils and undermined our nutrition and health. It was supposed to create peace, but sowed the seeds of terrorism, extremism and violence in Punjab (Ref. V. Shiva, *Violence of the Green Revolution*). It was supposed to create prosperity, but it left farmers steeped in debt. Both in financial and ecological terms, industrial agriculture and chemical farming is based on a negative economy – it uses more inputs than it produces. The consequence is impoverished eco-systems and impoverished and indebted farmers.

The High Ecological Costs of Industrial / Chemical Agriculture

Humanity has farmed ecologically for 10,000 years. The last half century has been a short lived experiment with non-sustainable, chemical intensive, water intensive and capital intensive industrial agriculture. The five most important ecological costs of industrial farming are:

1. Destruction of biodiversity
2. Toxic pollution
3. Pollution and depletion of water resources
4. Erosion of soil and soil fertility
5. Emission of green house gases inducing climate change.

From Biodiversity to Monocultures

Industrial agriculture based on high external inputs of chemicals and water creates a push for uniformity and monoculture. This leads to erosion of biodiversity at three levels

- a. ecosystem level
- b. crop diversity
- c. varietal diversity

Each agroclimatic zone has evolved farming systems based on species adapted to it. Industrial agriculture destroys ecosystem and farming diversity. It also pushes crops to extinction. Thus rice and wheat monocultures have replaced diverse millets, pulses and oilseeds, often grown as mixtures and in rotation. Finally, industrial farming destroys diverse varieties of crops and replaces them with uniform varieties adapted to chemicals, not to ecosystems and climate.

The Real Green Revolution: Biodiverse Organic Farming

Industrial agriculture has been promoted, financed, subsidized inspite of its high negative environmental externalities. The argument used is that these ecological costs are a necessary part of increasing productivity. However, the productivity of industrial agriculture is actually negative. More resources are used as inputs than are produced as outputs. Usually labour productivity is of labour displacing machinery and chemicals are therefore, by definition, increasing “productivity”. However, labour is not the scarce input. Land and water are. If instead of labour, energy and natural resources and external inputs are taken into account, industrial agriculture does not have higher productivity compared to ecological alternatives. The shift from internal input to high external input agriculture reduces productivity from 20 to 0.33, a sixty six fold decrease in the productivity ratio over the last fifty years.

We need to make an ecological transition to produce more food using less resources.

This productivity analysis is based on a study comparing traditional polycultures with industrial monocultures shows that a polyculture system can produce 100 units of food from 5 units of inputs whereas an industrial system requires 300 units of input to produce the same 100 units. The 295 units of wasted inputs could have provided 5900 units of food. This is a recipe for starving people, not for feeding them.

A usual argument used in promoting industrial agriculture like the Green Revolution earlier and genetic engineering in agriculture now is that only industrial agriculture and industrial breeding can keep up increased food productivity for feeding a growing population. However, increased mouths to feed imply more efficient resource use so that the same resources can feed more people. Since resources, not labour, are the limiting actor in food production, it is resource productivity, not labour productivity, which is the relevant measure. A sixty-fold decrease of food producing capacity in the context of resource use is not an efficient strategy for using limited land, water and biodiversity to feed the world.

Not only is the measure of productivity of industrial agriculture partial because all inputs, including resource and energy inputs are not taken into accounts, it is also partial because not all outputs are taken into account.

Ecological agriculture is based on mixed and rotational cropping, and the production of a diversity of crops.

Biodiversity Organic Farms Produce More

Studies have shown that the common organic agricultural combination of lower input costs and favourable price premiums can offset and make organic farms equally or often more profitable than conventional farms. Hundreds of farmers in Andhra Pradesh who grew cottonseeds supplied by multinational companies, applying chemical fertilizers and pesticides, committed suicide because they could not control the pests. At the same time Tamilnadu farmers practising organic methods were able to get cotton yield of more than 15 quintals an acre (The Hindu, 2004). The studies showed that the average yield of sugarcane is 40 tonnes an acre in chemical farms as compared to 60-70 tonnes an acre in organic farms in the Erode District of Andhra Pradesh (The Hindu, 2004). Like wise other crops also record higher yields inorganic farming as compared to chemical farming.

A number of research studies have shown that organic farming ensures better yield and fetches more income. For instance, in 1998, a paper, "The Greening of the Green Revolution" (David Tilman, Nature 396), showed that not only were the yields of organic maize as high as those of maize grown with fertilizers and pesticides, but also the soil quality in the organic fields improved dramatically.

Field trials in Hertfordshire (United Kingdom) reported consistently higher yields in the case of wheat grown with manure than wheat grown with artificial nutrients.

Prof. Jules Pretty of Essex University ('Feeding the World', *SPLICE – A Genetic Research Magazine*, Volume 4, 1998) has shown how farmers in India, Kenya, Brazil, Guatemala and Honduras have doubled or tripled yields by switching to organic or semi-organic techniques.

Cuba, forced into organic farming by the economic blockade, has now adopted it as policy, having discovered that it improves both productivity and the quality of the crops ('Castro Topples Pesticides in Cuba', Renee Kjartan, *Washington Free Press*, August 2000).

Summary of Scale and Impacts of Certified and Non-certified Organic Projects and Initiatives

Country	Project	Number of farm households	Area under organic agriculture (ha)	Changes in productivity
1. Bolivia	Prodinpo integrated from development programme	2 000	1 000	Potato yields 4 to 10-15 t/ha
2. Brazil	AS-PTA alternative agriculture	15 000	60 000	Bean yields up 50-100%
3. Brazil	Agroecology in Zona da Mata	215	50	Coffee – nd
4. Cameroon	Macecoop organic coffee	600	300	Coffee – nd
5. Chile	CET organic vegetable gardens	10	5	Vegetables, 20-30 kg per month
6. Cuba	Organic urban gardens	26 000	8 000	Total production up from 4000 to 700 000 t/yr
7. Dominican	Plan Sierra soil conservation	2 000	1 000	Maize – nd Republic
8. Egypt	SEKEM biodynamic cotton	150	2 000	Cotton from 2.25 to 3.0 t/ha
9. Ethiopia	FAO Freedom Hunger	2 300	2 150	Sweet potato yields up from 6 to 30 t/ha
10. Ethiopia	Cheha integrated rural development	12 500	5 000	Cereal yields up 60%
11. Guatemala	San Jose Poacil ADECCA	1 450	1 260	Mixed crops – nd
12. India	SPEECH, Tamil Nadu	500	409	New rice crop in dry season
13. Kenya	Manor House Agriculture Centre	70 000	7 000	Maize yields from 2.25 to 9 t/ha; new vegetable crops
14. Kenya	C-MAD programme	500	1 000	Maize from 2 t/ha to 4 t/ha
15. Kenya	Mumias Education for Empowerment project	2 069	217	Beans/groundnut yields from 300 to 600 kg/ha
16. Kenya	Push-pull pest management	300	150	Maize yields up 60%
17. Lesotho	Machobane farming systems	2 000	1 000	Whole system productivity improved
18. Malawi	Small-scale aquaculture	200	10	New fish crops
19. Mexico	ISMAM organic coffee	1 200	1 000	Coffee – nd
20. Mexico	UCIRI fair trade and organic coffee	4 800	5 000	Coffee yields from 300-600 kg/ha to 601-1200 kg/ha
21. Nepal	Community welfare and development	600	250	Maize and rice yields up citrus up from 1.2 to 1.6 t/ha
22. Nepal	Jajarkot permaculture	580	350	Maize and rice yields up Programme (nd), new vegetable crops
23. Pakistan	Sindh Rural Women's Uplift Group	5 000	2 500	Mango yields from 7.5 to 22.5 t/ha; citrus up from 12 to 30 t/ha
24. Senegal	Rodale Regenerative Agriculture Research Centre	2 000	2 000	Millet/sorghum yields from 0.34 to 0.6-1.0 t/ha
25. Senegal	ENDA organic cotton	523	233	Cotton yields – no change at 300 kg/ha
26. Tanzania	GTZ organic cotton	134	778	Cotton yields – no change at 300 kg/ha
27. Zimbabwe	Chivi Food Security Project	500	600	Sorghum/millet yields doubled; new vegetable crops
28. Zimbabwe	Silveira House	1 211	735	New vegetable crops
29. Zimbabwe	Zambezi Valley organic cotton	400	2 000	Cotton – nd
Total		154 742	106 197	

Note: nd=no confirmed data on yields.

Mr. Balbeer Singh, a Navdanya member in Utircha who was amongst the first farmer converted to organic reduced the chemical inputs in his field as given in the table below:

Year	Urea / Bigha	DAP / Bigha	Potash / Bigha	Cow Dung Manure/Bigha
1994-1995	10 kg (100%)	10 kg (100%)	2 kg (100%)	2 qt (20%)
1995-1996	8 kg (80%)	8 kg (80%)	20%	3 qt (30%)
1996-1997	4 kg (40%)	4 kg (40%)	Nil	20 qt (100%)
1997-1998	Nil	Nil	Nil	40 qt (200%)
1998-1999	Nil	Nil	Nil	20 Qt (100%)

Source: Balbeer Singh, Village Utircha and Navdanya Records.

Yield analysis of his one big ha field was done continuously during his conversion period. Following table shows that how Mr. Balbeer Singh reduced the inputs, saved money and got better yield, which is now stable. He has more diversity in the field as well as of food.

Year	Wheat Yield / Bigha	Cost of Agrochemicals	Rice Yield / Bigha
1994-1995	1.60 qt.	100	1.8
1995-1996	1.08	68	0.90
1996-1997	0.98	32	0.92
1997-1998	1.8	Nil	2.00
1998-1999	2.2	Nil	2.50
2004-2005	2.5	Nil	3.0

Source: Balbeer Singh, Village Utircha, and Navdanya Records.

The yields of our farmers and their incomes have doubled and tripled by giving up the negative economy of chemical farming and shifting to biodiverse organic agriculture. The organic project in Madhya Pradesh has also led to increased yields as reported by Dr. G.S. Kaushal, Ex-Director, Agriculture of Madhya Pradesh, who spread organic farming in 21 districts for 11 crops using 12 treatments in the period 2001-2002.

Since organic farming produces more food and higher incomes for farmers there is absolutely no justification for not adopting it as the national policy to address the agrarian crisis threatening the livelihoods of our small farmers, two thirds of our population.

Organic agriculture does not merely produce more food at lower financial and ecological costs, it produces healthier, more nutritious, better quality food.

It has been demonstrated that organically produced foods have lower levels of pesticides and medicinal and hormonal residues and in many cases lower nitrate contents. Nitrates are significant contaminants of foods, generally associated with intensive use of nitrogen fertilizers. Studies that compared nitrate contents of organic and conventional products found significantly higher nitrates in conventional products. Quality after storage has been reported to be better in organic produce relative to chemical based produce after comparative tests.

According to an International report from Journal of Applied Nutrition, 1993, the organically grown food averaged 63 percent higher in Calcium, 78 percent higher in Chromium, 73 percent higher in Iron, 118 percent higher in Magnesium, 178 percent

higher in Molybdenum, 91 percent higher in Phosphorus, 125 percent higher in Potassium and 60 percent higher in Zinc. The organically raised food averaged 29 percent lower in mercury than chemically grown food.

Here are a few examples of the mineral that were found in higher levels in organic foods in different studies.

Nutrient	Property	% Nutrient found more in organic food
Iron	Required for blood haemoglobin formation	21% more in organic food
Phosphorus	Required for bone formation	14% more in organic food
Chromium	Its deficiency is associated with the onset of diabetes and atherosclerosis (hardening of arteries)	78% more in organic food
Selenium	Antioxidant that protects us from damage by environmental chemicals. It is also protective against cancers and heart diseases.	390% more in organic food
Calcium	Needed for stronger bones.	63% more in organic food
Boron	Works along with calcium to keep bones strong.	70% more in organic food
Magnesium	Reduces mortality from heart attacks, keeps muscles from spasming	138% more in organic food
<i>Heavy Metals</i>		
Aluminium	Aluminium has been found to be associated with Alzheimer's disease	40% less than that in commercial food
Lead	Lead can adversely affect children's IQ, can cause impaired neuro-behavioral development, decreased stature and growth	29% Lower than that in commercial food
Mercury	Mercury is associated with neurological damage, autism and Alzheimer's disease.	25% lower than that in commercial food
Cadmium	Cadmium has been linked to lung, prostate and testicular cancers.	
Tartrazine(the yellow food colouring E102)	Linked to allergic reactions, headaches, asthma, growth retardation and hyperactivity in children.	
<i>Vitamins levels</i>		
Vitamin C	Antioxidant	27% more
Vitamin E & Beta carotene	Antioxidant associated with a reduced incidence of coronary heart disease and some cancers.	10% to 50% more

Source: soilassociation.org, lookwayup.com, landofvos.com

The seed / chemical package of the not-so-green revolution is justified on the basis of higher productivity and higher incomes, which in turn are supposed to reduce hunger and poverty.

However, both in terms of productivity and incomes, for the small peasant in Asia and Africa, costly non-renewable seeds and costly chemicals create a negative economy, with farmers spending more on inputs than they can earn from the produce. This is

made worse by globalized free trade and dumping of subsidised products on markets of the South, which further lower prices, and rob farmers of incomes. Indebtedness and farmers suicides are rooted in this crisis of falling incomes due to rising costs and falling prices.

The solution to hunger and poverty is to increase food output per unit acre and reduce inputs. Biodiverse organic farming increase output per unit acre while reducing costs of inputs. Across Asia and Africa small organic farms based on biodiversity are producing more food than chemical monocultures.

Organic producers of wheat using native varieties are getting 6.2 tonnes per ha in Western U.P in India. Under all agro-climatic zones, biodiversity intensification increases output while reducing input costs.

Navdanya's member Rajender Singh of Village Pulinda in Uttaranchal is earning Rs. 90,000/- per ha growing diversity of 35 crops organically on his 0.5 bigha (1/10th of an acre) farm. Yogambar Singh is earning Rs. 69500/- per ha growing 13 crops. Chemicals are intolerant to diversity. They need monocultures.

In Uttaranchal, biodiverse farms give the farmers Rs. 24,000 per acre and yields of 14 quintal / acre. While monocultures give Rs. 6720 / acre and yields of 12 quintal / acre.

In Rajasthan, monoculture farms give 10 quintals / acre and Rs. 1805 as income while biodiverse give 11.9 quintal / acre and Rs. 5835 as income.

Navdanya member has obtained 6.3 tonnes of wheat from a hectare using native seed and ecological methods.

Biodiverse organic farming, based on indigenous crops, using participatory breeding, is the solution to hunger and poverty.

We need to promote biodiversity intensive agriculture, not chemically intensive agriculture as the Green Revolution model promotes. The Real Green Revolution based on biodiverse organic farming is already happening in the fields of farmers. These small-farmer centered, ecologically sustainable initiatives need scaling up to protect the environment, protect the land and livelihoods of small farmers, and produce more food.

Biodiverse organic small-scale farms are the solution to malnutrition and hunger. For the environment, public health and for our farmers livelihoods ecological agriculture is the real green revolution.

Media and Global Divides

An Introduction

Robin Mansell

The first keynote addresses focused on the very timely overarching theme for the Congress – *Media and Global Divides*. Professor Annabelle Sreberny (SOAS, University of London) and Professor Jan Nederveen Pieterse (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) delivered very thought-provoking speeches signalling the great importance of understanding the interpenetration of local and global forces of change. As Professor in Global Media and Communication, Annabelle Sreberny's research focus is on international communication and globalisation with a strong feminist orientation. Jan Pieterse is Professor of Sociology, specialising in research on the interactive character of global futures, drawing upon insights from economics, ecology, political science and culture studies. I was privileged to moderate this keynote session.

The extremely rich theoretical interests of these two plenary speakers, together with their diverse empirical work, ensured that their presentations on the way the media are implicated in the exacerbation of contemporary global divides insisted upon the need to speak to a wider public beyond the academy about how and why the media exclude or repress certain voices. Both speakers focused in different ways on how such exclusions are perpetuated and on the likelihood that the media could play a more effective and enabling role in encouraging and valuing diversity. The mainstream media seem unable to move beyond Western inflected portrayals of events both close to home and at a distance. Yet the very considerable expansion of alternative media, partly as a result of the spread of the Internet, has heightened the visibility of digital platforms hosting graphics and text which give spaces to the voices and images of those who challenge mainstream narratives and depictions of events. These developments offer openings for new discourses and dialogues, new contestations, and potentially, the emergence of new relations of power which may take greater account of those who formerly would have been silenced. Silenced by repressive states, cultural norms, or simply by their former inability to play a role in producing media content which is available to distant others.

IAMCR has long history of encouraging research that tackles the underlying cultural, social, political, and economic forces that give rise to the social dynamics of exclusion. IAMCR members frequently engage in debates about new possibilities for mobilising social change to reduce the gaps between rich and poor and to enable citizen participation in a more equitable social order. Both plenary speakers in this session emphasised the conceptual errors which are perpetuated by dualistic thinking about our own condition and that of 'others'. We have ample evidence that today's media are fostering

these dualistic partitions. Theoretically and empirically grounded research is essential to sustain criticism of mainstream media failures to expose the means through which power relations are replicated in ways that maintain unhelpful distinctions and emphasise differences which are disabling. Media representations that give greater attention to common projects, aspirations, and capacities to change the world for the better are sorely needed.

Annabelle Sreberny's presentation gave a very inspiring account of how the media can potentially play a positive role in contributing to human sociability, through their acknowledgement and valorization of difference and their capacity to assist people in understanding that diversity and social divisions are not only inevitable but need to be encountered in ways that are open to discovery and new insight. Jan Pieterse gave a stimulating account of the way a focus on ethnicities and on the emergence of a global multicultural helps to account for, and to foster, cultural diversity. He discussed some of the reasons for the docility of the mainstream media when it comes to challenging political actors and holding them to account for their actions. Journalists often are over-reliant on official sources, they may fail to question authority, and they all too frequently overlook arguments presented by representatives of social movements or citizens. We have seen this phenomenon again and again as globalization fractures and divides and as the results of globalization are mediated through the circuits of commercial, political and cultural relations that foster inward looking treatments of issues and conflicts.

Both speakers highlighted the many challenges of theorizing and researching the media today. The media are changing in ways that often involve collaboration between professionals and amateurs who share ideas and perspectives. Many paradoxes come to light when different viewpoints, languages, cultures, values and goals are juxtaposed in ways that alter our perceptions of distant others and this may quite radically alter how we act toward others. The Internet with its blogs and social networking sites, together with new forms of mobile media, represent a huge change. The mediated world is emerging as a complex 'space of flows' where perceptions of the risk of insecurity of mind or body are increasingly high. In the age of globalization, new forms of media and outlets for journalists and citizens may be consistent with the possibility of understanding difference, but they also embrace the potential to heighten possibilities for misunderstanding.

The new media and their mediations are bringing us into confrontation with others in ways that increasingly demand a dialogue about ethical conduct. As media researchers concerned about implications of global developments, whether they be related to financial crises, measures to tackle global warming, or efforts to find peaceful solutions to wars, we have an obligation to understand just what the potential of the media is in our contemporary world. To do so we must renew our efforts to undertake interdisciplinary research, informed by critical theory and by comparative empirical research which directly challenges prevailing preconceptions of others and brings to light the alternative narratives about how we can live in ways that remedy, or at least reduce, global divides. Annabelle Sreberny's and Jan Pieterse's presentations struck many chords in this respect, suggesting the hope that our research communities will continue to monitor and critique developments in ways that to speak directly to power.

The more media outlets enable the public or citizens to become the authors of their own news stories the more likely it is that diversity can be encouraged and respected.

When the media provide online spaces for new ways of engaging with the world and with its people, with those nearby and far away, geographically, culturally and morally, there may be a renewed basis for the hope that the mainstream media actors will become more responsible for, and responsive to, a broader spectrum of positions on the salient issues of our time. The presentations in this keynote plenary session spoke to the need to move away from America-centric or Eurocentric dialogues – to think in terms of transmodernity (Dussel 1996) or border thinking (Mignolo 2000) and to encourage a willingness to foster mediations that can support the possibility of being able to understand local histories, ambitions and desires. If this is to happen, we need research that will encourage translations that can support greater mutual understanding of global divides of all kinds. The presentations in this plenary session offered confirmation of the need to develop new theories and insights appropriate to an increasingly complex media landscape.

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Maps and Mandalas, Division and Multiplication

Media and Global Divides

Annabelle Sreberny

Abstract

In this plenary talk delivered to the IAMCR conference on “Global Divides” in Stockholm, July 2008, I explore a range of issues triggered by the very phrase “global divides”. I ask whether the world is divided and, if so, by what criteria. I explore the opposites of division through cohesion and multiplication and borrow Rosenau’s term to argue that contradictory processes of “framgregation” are evident. I present some conundrums around contemporary cultural practices, including a consumerist desire for other’s peoples authentic culture and political rhetoric that exacerbates division. I conclude by suggesting that inequality remains the most significant division, even if not simply evident along a North-South axis, and wonder if the economic downturn that was starting to show would produce a new politics, including a better understanding of endemic poverty.

I have added marginal notes in the text to take account of both the subsequent election of President Obama and the deteriorating economic environment, but the text remains a viewpoint of its moment of delivery.

Keywords: media, globalization, maps, division, space, inequality

Giving a plenary talk is always a challenge. There’s an expectation both of new content and of some performance. I experience a demand to think differently and that’s hard. Last week, while I was fighting an infestation of moths busily eating away at a Persian rug, I pondered on my lack of control over ordinary life compared with the hubris of academic conceptual and linguistic control of the entire world. How easily we invoke the ‘global’, how hard to control one’s local life.

Instead of some recycled talk on some aspects of my own research, and since it was bothering me, I’ve decided to try to unpack and think through the very terms of the conference title: *Media and Global Divides*.

Media

“Media” is a continually shifting and currently expanding object of study. Is it clear any longer what our focus, our object of study is?

There is the Internet with its range of content and uses, including the impact new on-line practices are having on older forms of mediation, citizen journalism being but one example.

There is the take up of mobile telephony not simply for point-to-point communication but for banking, SMS and content delivery. Mobile telephony is probably the fastest diffusing technology that humans have known (or since we started measuring such things). It took only 26 years from none to over 3.3 billion phones worldwide, with an estimate of 4 billion by 2010.

There is the growth of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace with their possibilities of not only narcissistic over-exposure but also of political mobilization.

There is the growth of YouTube as the place to exhibit creative new video content, accessible to anyone who cares to find it, that can launch musical and artistic careers. I very much like the wonderful US-centric website *Brave New Films* by Robert Greenwald with its “pssst, do something” motto and brilliant out-takes of Fox television. Bricolage and mash-up are the new forms.

All of this means that not only are “old”, or more precisely “analog”, media challenged by “new” “digital” media. It also means that the “new” themselves keep evolving and changing practices. It is impossible to theorise all of this together in a single framework, other than to make banal comments about complexity and multiplicity of channels. Neither extreme position in the stand-off between new media being nothing more than “silicone snake oil” or being the harbinger of freedoms we have never yet known could possibly be correct.

Furthermore, the impact of such changes on “old” media is felt differently and responded to in different ways around the world. The US press environment is clearly under desperate pressure as readers disappear and advertising revenue plummets. In Iran, much serious journalism now occurs on the web, not on paper. In Britain, the distribution of BBC-i-player, that allows for the downloading of current BBC programmes, accounts for about 5% of all broadband traffic and is blamed for slowing the entire broadband network down for everyone.

While the politics of access to such new communications technologies remains important, with geography, class and gender major determinants of access and use, the emerging political issues are more about de-accessibility. The old media were characterized by scarcity, in the technology of magnetic tape and in the limitations of ownership and control. But the new media are characterized both by massive file-sharing but also growing blockages to such sharing. That is, issues around copyright, free access, encryption, digital rights management, firewalling, DOA attacks, are emerging as the sites of political contestation in an era where image, sound and text can be so easily duplicated and reproduced.

Context Matters

In some countries, people are pushing for greater communicative and media freedoms than they have had before while, in other places, people are experiencing encroachments on the freedoms they once enjoyed. If anything, we need to be more specific, more contextualised, more analytic and probably more comparative in our research on such issues. Reading one context against another should help to understand each better. Structural pressures and changes, different models of ownership and control, questions of access and de-access still matter and produce different outcomes within national frameworks. The establishment of region-specific journals – on the Middle East, on China, on Africa – are to be welcomed. We might wish to support more working groups on different regions within IAMCR in order to support this trend.

But my easy return to and invocation of regional and national experiences pushes me toward the second term of the conference title.

Global

The “Global”. What is it? Whose is it? When is it?

At least three kinds of meanings attend the notion of the “global” and the way the term is used. Academic discourses variously talk of the global as a new space of interaction, made possibly most obviously through the internet. There is also a gesture toward something beyond and bigger than the national, sometimes seen as a totalising set of national, regional and transnational actors. And sometimes the “global” is used as a synonym for the “universal”, the singular and shared. I’d like to acknowledge the work of Jan Ekecrantz, the well-respected academic based here in Stockholm, who was attempting to bring some linguistic order to our use of terms such as globalization, transnationalization, internationalization. But we’re not agreed, we’re not there yet.

One obvious problem with thinking about the globe is that three-dimensional space is mapped on to two. Maps are highly political images. They give us specific representations and carry the vision of the world, the values and the location from which one views the globe and the question one asks of it. The world looks very different through different maps: through the Peters projection, which gives a more accurate depiction of landmass and challenges the received image of the world through the Mercators Projection. (Image 1).

Or if the South is at the top: who said north was up? (Image 2).

Or if we shift the centrality of the Atlantic – what we in the West are used to – to make the Pacific central, (Image 3).

Or if Jerusalem is at the heart, as in medieval European maps, (Image 4).

And so on.¹

In the Borges short story, *On Rigour in Science*, he imagined an empire where the science of cartography becomes so exact that only a map on the same scale as the empire itself will suffice. When the empire decayed, the map was all that remained. For Baudrillard, it is the map – the simulation of reality – that people live in while it is reality that is crumbling away from disuse. Eventually, under the map we find the “desert of the real”, the key trope in Matrix films. Perhaps the risk of all maps is that they replace what they intend to map out. We may run a similar risk in media studies where, under the “global divide” metaphor, we now find only the desert of our real, a frozen metaphor that does not reflect an always changing world.

Another problem is that we’ve upped our concerns to this new, bigger level, and hence often seem to abandon more specific kinds of analysis, that is work at the national and regional levels.

Thinking about globalization has tended to set up what John Saul (2004) calls “false binaries”: between a “geographic” focus and a “social” analysis, and between “globalization” and “imperialism” or Empire with a capital E and empire with a small e, still known as imperialism.

The first binary involves the commonsense understanding about the coexistence of a wealthy North and an impoverished South that still informs some left analysis and indeed runs through some of the discourses in IAMCR. This argument is challenged from

Image 1. Peters projection, which gives a more accurate depiction of landmass

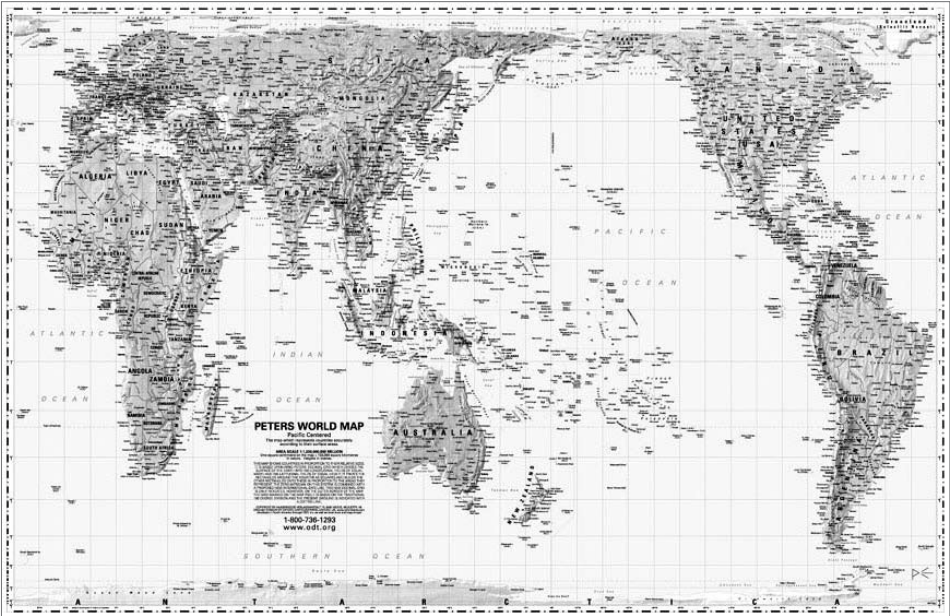


Image 2. South is at the top: who said north was up?

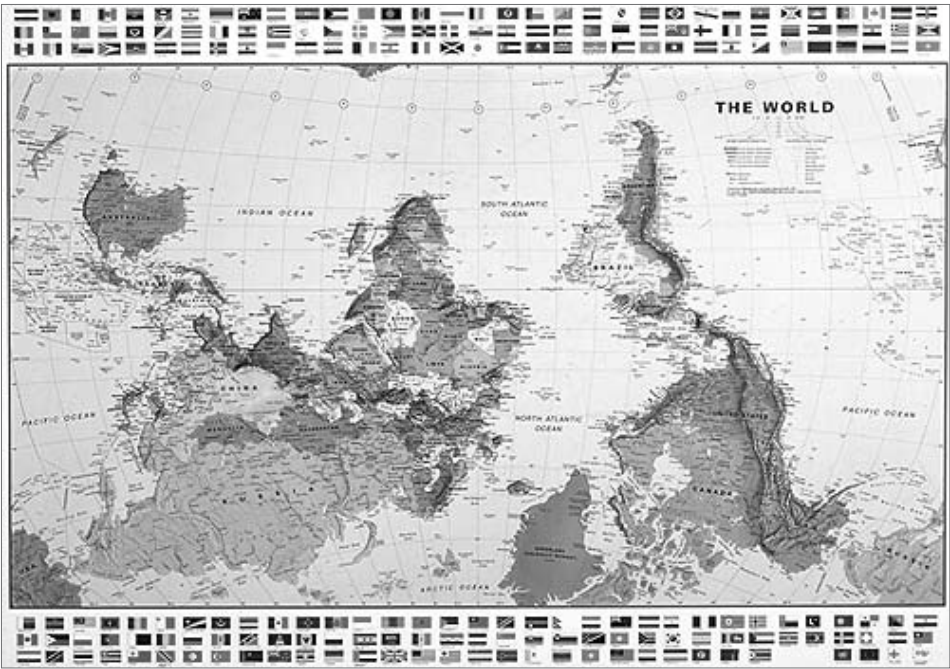
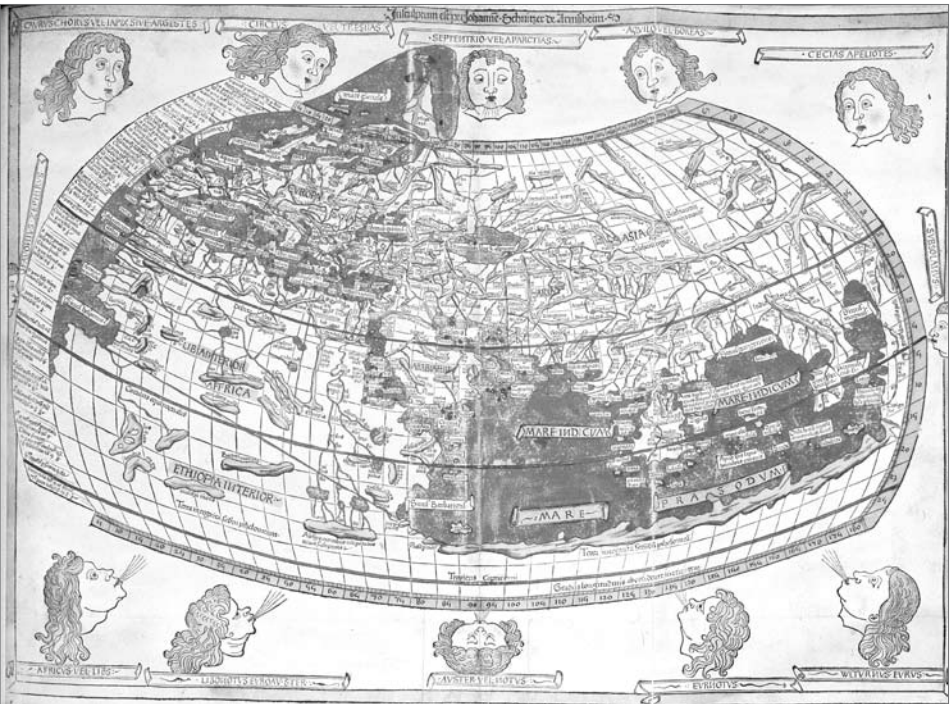


Image 3. Shifting the centrality of the Atlantic to make the Pacific central



Image 4. Jerusalem is at the heart, as in medieval European maps



two different directions. One is the evident heterogeneity of Southern economies, which includes both the emergence of the dynamic BICS four (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) as well as the world's poorest nations. The *World Wealth Report* from Merrill-Lynch/Capgemini (<http://www.us.capgemini.com/worldwealthreport08/>) published in June 2008 shows that the number of dollar millionaires around the world increased by 6% in 2007 to over 10 million people. The largest growth was in India 22.7%; China with 20.3% and Brazil at 19%, with a prediction that there will be more millionaires in China than in Britain by the end of 2008². The rapid economic development of these national economies and the production of wealth within them was *the* international story of 2008 and helped to challenge the over-easy distinction of the entire "global south" as poor. Some of the maps I've chosen show Southern improvements in economic standards using various indicators. But one of the maps shows the locations of those living on two dollars a day, where the clustering in India and Africa is self-evident. And of course, the 'global credit crunch' will make the 2009 edition of this report chastening reading, as wealth is lost everywhere, with profound implications for national development budgets and the living conditions of the world's poorest.

The other, connected, argument is the visible discrepancies of wealth and power *within* countries of both North and South. This is increasing daily as the current shudder in the rampant "casino capitalism" of sub-prime mortgage lenders and hedge-fund gamblers is piling on unemployment, repossession and debt on many in the Eur-Am zone at the same time that the consumption of ultra-luxury goods and the price of art continues unassailed³. One of the maps shows inequality within national economies around the world, with Brazil as one of the most unequal, while the recent report by UN-Habitat on the *State of the World's Cities 2008-9* says that many US cities are growing more unequal while new research shows that the UK is as unequal in 2009 as it was in the 1960s. Thus even development theorists like Hoogvelt who were once wedded to neat models of a geographically-defined core and periphery are starting to recognise a mobile and dispersed transnational capitalist class and a vast circle of less privileged people in *both* North and South.

The second binary, between Empire with a big 'E' and a small 'e', invokes the construction by Hardt and Negri (2007) of a singular global system of neo-liberal marketization that – for them – produces its own, singular, global resistance, the swarming solidarity of the global "multitude". Yet while we have witnessed the growth in importance of "global" actors like the IMF and the World Bank, we have also seen the refusal of one, or more aptly *the*, major state to abide by various "global" conventions such as Kyoto and Geneva; whether President Obama alters these stances remains to be seen⁴. We have also just witnessed Russia and China saying "nyet" to sanctions against Mugabe. Hence theorists like Petras and Panitch stress once again the significance of states as both organisers of globalization but also bulwarks against it.

If anything, the responses to the globalised financial crisis show the on-going significance of the state and its policy-making in the US, Europe and Japan, even if sometimes this feels like the little boy stopping the flood with his finger in the dyke. Again, one of the fascinating outcomes of the "global credit crunch" is the rapid return of government policy and the recognition of the negligence of and the need for state intervention and regulation. The contradiction between previous market-driven 'development-speak' and the current medicine for global financial stability could hardly be more stark. There is a strong argu-

ment for better analysis of and support for the state as an entity that can still make policy, determine priorities, resist the drive of capital. I'll say more about that in a moment.

Saul's own conclusion is that "The fact is that "Empire" (the world of capitalist globalization)" and "empire" (The world of western imperialism)" coexist: they structure, in not entirely coterminous ways, both the circumstances that produce global inequality (that is, the target of progressive activity for change) and the modalities for advancing such activity " (2008: 227) But what is important is "the avoidance of false binaries" and the need to try to link the global and the national as appropriate sites of analysis and sites of struggle. This is a significant analytic and practical challenge.

A danger seems to me is that one element is sacrificed for another. For example, in Nancy Fraser's recent work on "the transnational public sphere" (2008), she runs the risk of throwing out the Westphalian babies with the post-Westphalian bathwater, seeming to suggest that nation-states and national media systems and national public opinion/public spheres have little importance or relevance in the new "globalised" environment. Yet while significant breaches to the Westphalian system are evident – Iraq and Afghanistan being but two – we also see many current examples of where it remains intact, even against convincing moral pressures: Burma, Tibet, Sudan, Zimbabwe are all examples of the resilience of the Westphalian compact. This resilience also reinforces the argument that where intervention does occur, it has an economic basis. As proponents of intervention in Haiti once argued, no wars are fought for broccoli instead of oil. We might not always like the Westphalian compact and legitimately ask when and why it stands and when it fails, but it is clearly still there. The nation-state system still has considerable life left in it.

In regard to Fraser's argument, while it seems to be the fact that more and more communication crosses borders and that some social movements and other activities clearly communicate across borders, that does not mean that *national* media systems and national framings of issues is a thing of the past. For example, in Britain, recent OFCOM evidence about media patterns suggests a highly active minority on the net while, for most people, mainstream television continues to be the main source of information about the world. I wouldn't claim that this is the same everywhere but it does suggest that we need to slow and hold our transnationalising impulses somewhat. While media might have spread globally, we as yet have no global media. And while the internet depends on transborder extensivity, we know that access, language and degrees of freedom differ widely.

As usual, we need a "not only but also" approach to political participation and to media, exploring different spatial "levels" at the same time, recognising that people can access and act within these levels directly, not having to go through one to get to the next.

We are living through a moment, whether we like it or not, of profound restructuring as capitalism becomes increasingly global. This is, of course, in itself not a new process. I regularly read aloud a section from the *Communist Manifesto* to my students in the first week of the year and ask them to guess when it was written. Few know and almost no-one guesses that it was 1848, so contemporary does the analysis sound of the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie, the extension of markets beyond nations and the threat to traditional ways of life as "all that is solid melts into air".

David Harvey, the geographer, argues that capitalism was always about a profound reordering of space and that the term "globalization" signals the immense geographi-

cal reorganization currently at work (2007: 57). He argues that this moment of change actually gives us an opportunity to “emancipate ourselves from imprisonment within a *hidden spatiality* that has had the opaque power to dominate and sometimes confuse the logic of both our thinking and our politics”. This echoes Beck’s (2005) argument about a taken-for-granted methodological nationalism that has haunted our thinking. But the point would be not simply to now move quickly to quickly and simply to a “methodological globalization”. Rather, as Harvey puts it, there is now an historic opportunity to “see the production of space as a constitutive moment within ... the dynamics of capital accumulation and class struggle”. He proffers the term “uneven geographical development” and suggests that the dynamics of capitalism produces two contradictory dynamics: the need to speed up circulation of capital but also the desire to “annihilate space through time”.

Let’s look at those arguments briefly. The need to speed up the circulation of capital has prompted its devolution from the materiality of gold bars to digital zeroes and ones, but there is also need for long-term investment. This produces contradictions around the time-horizons in which different kinds of capital functions: finance capital versus merchant, manufacturing, service and state capitals. It also creates tensions across segments of the same economy, between currency and bond markets, for example; and between landlords, land developers and speculators.

The desire to “annihilate space through time” that Marx recognised drives technological innovations that produce reductions in cost and time of movement across space. Many media academics can recite an interesting historical narrative of camels, canals, trains and cars, the post, the telegraph, broadcasting, telecoms and the web. Some innovations have pushed cost of the transfer of information close to zero. In Britain, we increasingly have communities of telecomm connectivity who talk for free, but who pay a lot to talk *beyond* their community; although prices are falling for European links and many providers offer numerous country connectivity for free. Skype, for example, throws down a challenge to the traditional pricing structures of telephony.

But the opposite tendency, of developing space in time, is also necessary. The development of physical infrastructure to facilitate and support this weightless economic activity requires space as “landed capital”, especially evident in urban infrastructures that make “the geographic landscape of capitalism more and more sclerotic over time”. The old metropoli like New York, London, Tokyo vie with newer urban centres like Rio, Hong Kong and Shanghai. While the largest global metropoli in 2007 were Tokyo, Mexico City and New York/Newark), UN-Habitat suggests that the three largest metropoli by population in 2025 will be Tokyo, Mumbai and Delhi. Tehran has electronic advertising on its streets, Cairo is full of wifi spots, Mumbai’s media is exploding.

Hence are the contradictory tendencies of wanting to move through space faster but also of building up certain pieces of physical space in urban sprawl. Such “uneven geographical development” cuts across nations and regions and produces tensions between space and place. We might engage in more comparative work around urban communicative infrastructures, the “weight” of cities versus the “lightness” of connectivity. One evident global divide is that we just reached the moment when more than half of the world’s population lives in cities, perhaps one of the most significant divides there is.

A parallel argument about our changing spatial configuration comes from James Rosenau in *International Relations*, who also talks about the contemporary epoch as

marked by profound transformations that have fostered contradictions between the globalizing and the localizing, the centralizing and the decentralizing, the integrating and the fragmenting. His neologism is “framegration”, a term which he claims “highlights the dynamics of contraction – which sustain localizing, decentralizing and fragmenting forces on the one hand – and the dynamics of expansion through which globalizing, centralizing and integrating forces unfold on the other. It fuses in a single phrase the interactive polarities that underlie the emergent epoch” (Rosenau, 2003).

So, to summarise, my concern here is that with the invitation of this conference to think about “global division”, we mustn’t assume that other kinds of spatial conceptions are now passé, of no use. Indeed, it is perhaps more vital than ever to explore how specific societies and economies are located within the net of capitalism, what state policies can be and how local/national solutions to contemporary problems are devised, and how cities and specific places function in and contribute to the broader networks of this particular “global” moment.

Divides

Let me now turn to the third term. This is both set in the plural so invites examination of a plurality, but is also set at the “global” level, as if there *is* a singularity that is divided, even if in many ways. I’ve already tried to render somewhat problematic this putative “unity” or singularity” that is now divided. Whose or which is this “world” that is divided?

The opposite of division might be cohesion. At the end of the 20th century (ah yes, I remember it well!) the language of “a new world order” was widely trumpeted, seemingly able to overcome the truly deep and threatening division of the Cold War. But that discourse was hijacked to become a US neo-con model of order, of “the end of history”, that, instead of producing cohesion, has left chaos in its wake.

But *is* the world of the 21st century *so* deeply divided? It might be more incoherent, harder to analyse, after the polarising rhetoric of the Cold War or the simple division of “three worlds” that packaged the world so neatly. But that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s more divided. I have tried to contest a simple notion of a global economy divided simply North-South.

There are a plethora of other ways in which we might think of “global divides”: by material issues such as military spending, (Image 5); by prevalence of people with HIV/AIDS, (Image 6); by meat consumed (Image 7); by who has a Starbucks and who doesn’t, (Image 8); some of the material indices that I have chosen to represent visually in the loop of images.

Let me look at more culturally-inflected phenomena, where media and communications come back into central focus.

There are of course invitations to see the world as “culturally” more divided, perhaps one of the most invidious being Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” (1996). This is often invoked as underpinning the struggle between the “West”, whatever that is, and “Islam”, whatever that is, that has developed since the Iranian Revolution and been boosted by 9/11 and the responses to that. Yet alternative voices argue persuasively for what is shared, held in common by the Abrahamic faiths. Many of us repeat that the fact that some merchants of terror are Muslim doesn’t make the billion followers of Moham-

Image 5. Military Spending 2002 (worldmapper.org)

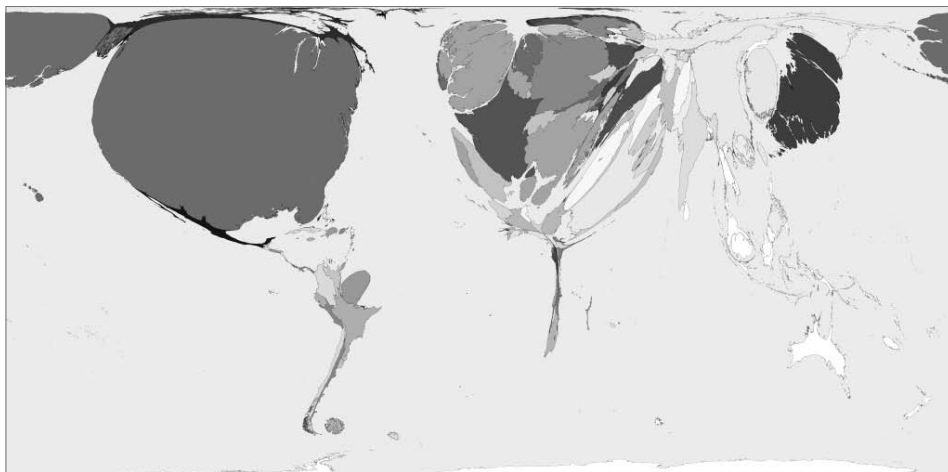
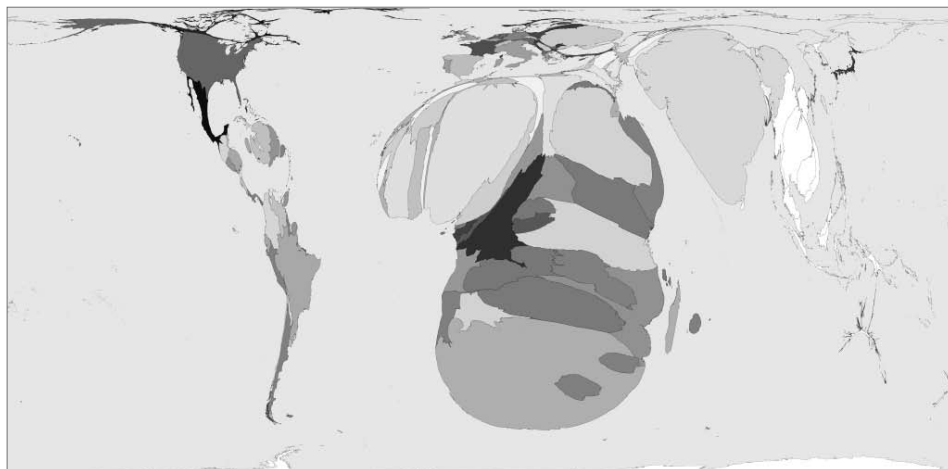


Image 6. Prevalence of People with HIV/AIDS (worldmapper.org)



mad all terrorists, despite the rhetoric of the “war on terror” and the on-going crassness of British tabloid and other European and US channels to whip up Islamophobia.⁵

It was of course Khatami, the president of Iran in the late 1990s who suggested an alternative “dialogue of civilizations”. Yet so far all overtures from Iran for direct talks with the US have been declined, and indeed at the moment the drums of war are being banged hard⁶. The power of discourse to make linguistic “facts” is readily shown by the more than two million hits on Google for “Iran’s nuclear weapons”, despite the fact that IAEA inspectors and US security officials all agree that Iran does not now have nuclear weapons. These issues are neither simply national (US-Iran), certainly not civilizational (West v Islam) and probably not global, as the rest of the world goes about its business. However, the impact of any military intervention might well become global, as the price of oil escalates and goodness knows what further military actions follow.

Image 7. Meat Consumed (worldmapper.org)

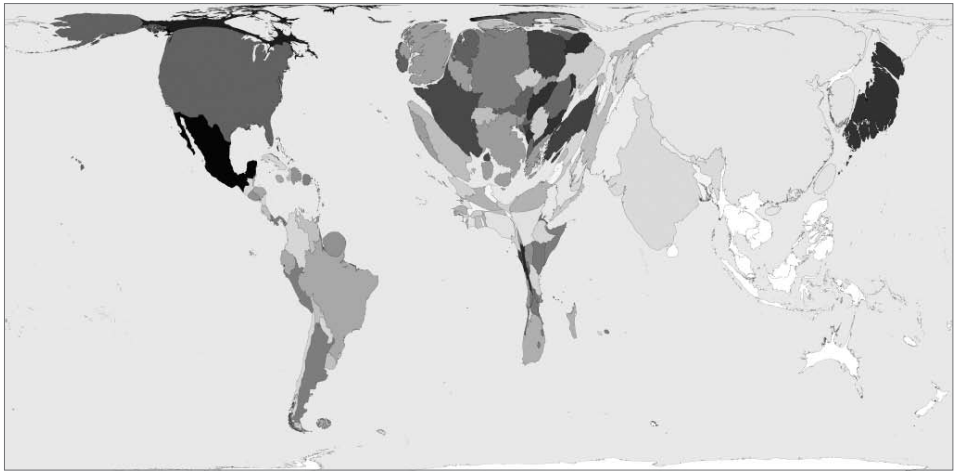
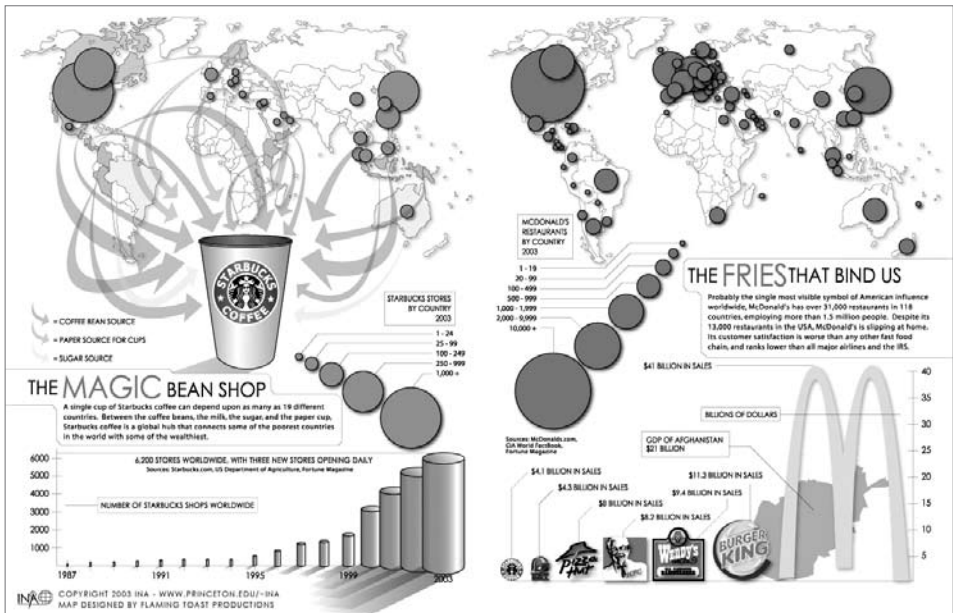


Image 8. Who Has a Starbucks and Who Doesn't



One key demand we might make of media systems is that they fully explore and articulate reasons for enmity and violence; instead of, as so many now do, acting as the mouthpieces of such values. Churchill famously quipped that “jaw-jaw was better than war-war” and a key concern of media studies must be the need for diplomacy, political communication and space for analysis of the facts.

In these kinds of arguments, division becomes elided with difference and diversity. The argument continues as to whether globalizing processes produce heterogenization or homogenization. On one hand, human history is one of cultural encounters, influences and transfers. But the scale and impact of contemporary “flows” (a poor hydraulic

metaphor for mediated cultural encounters) is unprecedented. There are many ways of arguing that this is not purely a movement toward homogeneity through market exchange. One can point to political reactions and policy regimes; for example, China allows no more than 10 Hollywood movies a year. Or one can marshal evidence about the importance of the marketing of cultural difference as a commodity (new and hybrid genre and labelling including ‘Asian radio’, ‘world music’, etc). Or one could point to autonomous demands to be different and express difference and to long-standing processes of translation and adaptation throughout history.

I recently saw the “China now” exhibition at the V and A, the Victoria and Albert Museum, itself a wonderfully resonant name. The exhibition was about the explosion of graphic design, fashion and especially architecture in China since the mid-1990s. My art historian friend was incensed by the homogenization she saw, while my photographer friend emerged saying how Chinese it all was and that in the West, we would never design in such ways. I had Appadurai’s phrase ringing in my head: “we are nostalgic for other people’s pasts”. All of this suggests to me that we need far more fine-grained analysis of aesthetic conventions, of traditions of artistic expression. It is good that members are pressing for a working group on Visual Culture in IAMCR. We might also consider the meaning of such an external desire for the “other” to always enact their otherness, whether Chinese or something else, that satisfies our need, not theirs. One might also argue that a population strong in its cultural identity is free to play with it and relax within it, rather than continually manifesting it in received forms.

Increased connectivity across boundaries doesn’t simply produce homogenization. However, expanding markets across the world means that there are hardly any places left outside and free from market influences.

Harvey uses Schumpeter’s notion of “capitalism as a gale of creative destruction” to argue that capitalism produces extreme volatility of boom and bust, or rapid growth and equally rapid shifts of production and interest to other locales. This effects the traditional heartlands of capitalism as much, if not more, than other places and brings unemployment. The collapse of old industries and thus of towns and villages – Welsh coalmining villages, the Ruhr – are obvious examples. Hence even conservative voices that have promoted globalization are acknowledging these disruptive effects: the production of helplessness and anxiety leading to the rise of a new brand of populist politicians in Europe, or the obvious contemporary dynamics of war and scarcity.

Clearly too, increased material wealth does not equate to cultural vitality. Polynesians are wealthier now than hundreds of years ago, but materialism, alcohol, western technologies and Christianity have radically altered, some would say irreparably damaged, the Polynesian sense of cultural potency. Tibet has been opened up by the Chinese and Coca-cola and tourism may prove more effective tools to erode traditional rituals and religion than decades of coercive communist intervention.

Bhutan, however, charges tourists \$200 a day to protect its identity and has no traffic lights, no physical community larger than 10,000 people. It’s poor and malnourished, but intensely Buddhist and it maintains its expressive arts. What seems important to explore in these examples is the differences between internal and external perceptions, between emic and etic outlooks: how do these changes feel to those living through them? Is it indeed “our” nostalgia for other peoples’ pasts that breeds a desire for fixity and traditional crafts as objects for external consumption? And why does so much of

our argument insist on an either-or position: can there not be ways to support emergent cultural industries that build on traditional aesthetic and musical forms and yet also appeal to contemporary tastes?

Much of the celebration of cultural diversity and extension of communicative connectivity leads to populations being better integrated into the global market. The Grameen Bank loans to Bangladeshi women allows them to buy mobile phones to rent out to others, a way of making a living through small-scale entrepreneurship. Moroccan women have developed websites that allow them to market their carpets and pottery directly to the global market, cutting out the middle-man and keeping more revenue for themselves. Diasporic groups establish media channels – radio, television, magazines – as ways both of articulating new audiences, sometimes even “communities”, but also as ways of making money and selling commodities and foodstuffs to community members. I think we need a better understanding of, even a rescuing of, the notion of petty bourgeois, renamed “petit” bourgeois, entrepreneurship. As much as Media Studies has been concerned with the power of powerful transnational media moguls, we have not thought much about small-scale media and cultural entrepreneurship, how it functions, supports creativity, who are its participants and what it means for the broader analysis of global markets.

These processes also have implications for diversity. Tyler Cowen, an American cultural economist, in a book that echoes Schumpeter called *Creative Destruction*, makes the important point that with increased cultural flows, diversity *within* a society may go up as consumers have more choice, but the diversity *across* societies goes down and they become more alike as they have more in common. Changing cityscapes reveal such a conundrum. Finding Starbucks, Pizza Hut and McDonalds in Beijing is an instance of global homogenization, but also has to be seen as one of increased choice for those within those spaces. From the advertising carried on the new Iranian satellite channels broadcasting from California into Iran, Iranians arriving in Dubai for holidays often head directly to the shops and McDonalds that are not available to them inside Iran. Further questions arise as to who consumes “diversity” and whether minorities become more and more ghettoized. Consuming diversity might be a nice urban cosmopolitan middle-class experience while poorer enclaves simply cleave more to their particular cultural worlds.

And of course diversity needs to be looked at over time, so that new encounters and new trade may over time help to produce new cultural goods. Perhaps we are so fixated on the preservation of the past because we cannot imagine the new diversities of the future? Yet the human cycle must include death, loss, even extinction: of languages, groups, ways of life. The struggle to preserve must be balanced by the struggle to create, to be born anew.

A different opposite of division is multiplication. Every difference, diversity, is a creative addition, not so much a “third space” which is still based on division, but multiplicity. The generative nature of difference lies behind all identities, so everything is always-already in-between, intermezzo. Identity is the freezing of this process, usually for some kind of political purpose.

There are some interesting contradictions in media and cultural policy, that speak to the issues of difference and fragmentation mentioned before. Many of our policy initiatives drive toward increasing the number of channels and extending the range of voices. Yet how can we support diversity without that leading to division, without being aware of the

potential dangers of the latter? Sometimes it seems as if, for example, the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and the desire to preserve “endangered languages” are less concerned to protect the endangered people who speak these languages than the cultural expression in and of itself. Yet if culture is a practice, and some people change or abandon their practice, for whom and for what purpose does the desire to ‘protect’ appear?

Similarly, support for more minority and diasporic media and a multiplicity of voices does not easily translate into a “shared culture” and can run the risk of fragmentation without integration, of difference turning into division.

Here we might rethink our attitude toward the state and its role, especially in fragile polities and economics. If strong states are seen as possible bulwarks against neo-liberal economic marketization, then we might also have to rethink attitudes toward human rights or, at least, about pressing human rights as the first and fundamental priority of weak, post-conflict states. Afghanistan now has 15 television channels, each war lord having his own outlet, but does this help Afghanistan build a sense of nationhood? The same question can be asked in Iraq, where ethnicised media outlets are growing at the expense of a voice of national unity. Rwanda, cautiously rebuilding after its trauma and concerned not to repeat the mistake of racialised discourses that helped mobilise the previous violence, responded harshly to a columnist who compared the president to Hitler. Immediately, Amnesty and HRW Watch rushed in to protest at rights violations. External agents seems to trump internal decision-making and policy concerns and to propose a different set of priorities that do not always take specific circumstances into account. I am not saying that we abandon concern about human rights or cultural rights. I am saying that the rapid organized responses of well-oiled agencies located in the West about these issues may not always be the most considered or appropriate for the conditions of the societies in question that are the recipients of the concern.

There’s a old phrase from Clyde Kluckhohn and Murray in 1948 that

Every man (*sic*) is like all other men; like some other men; like no other man

The “global” does invites us to think about “humanity”, as indeed “problems bigger than the nation” including global warming and disease invite us to think of global solutions. The three slides of blood types (Image 9, 10, 11) show what we share and how it is distributed, as does the image of the human genome and how much we share with mice.

We do live individual lives, not identical to anyone else, although some lives are more individualised and more individuated than others. It is the middle term that most confounds us: being “like some other men” which we are most usually asked to think about in terms of cultural, not material, distinctions and which are available to those who so wish to manipulate into politicised differences.

Conclusions: Media and Global Divides

To go back to where I started, it seems to me that the imputed cultural divisions in the world are often epiphenomena that are mobilised politically and cynically to create tensions that mask the real scandal of the current moment, the real material inequalities that “cultural differences” hide. Why is it a legitimate and overt political motive to “bring democracy” to other nations but not a legitimate and overt economic motive to deal with poverty? Why have international banks been more ready to lose billions

Image 9.

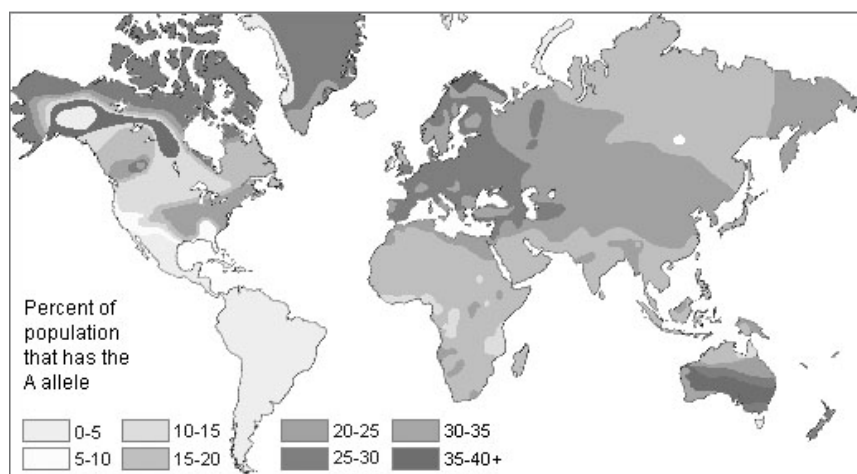


Image 10.

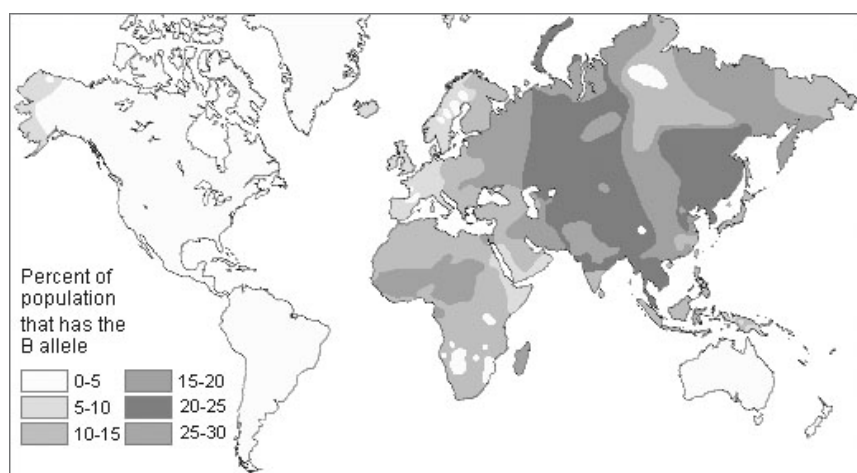
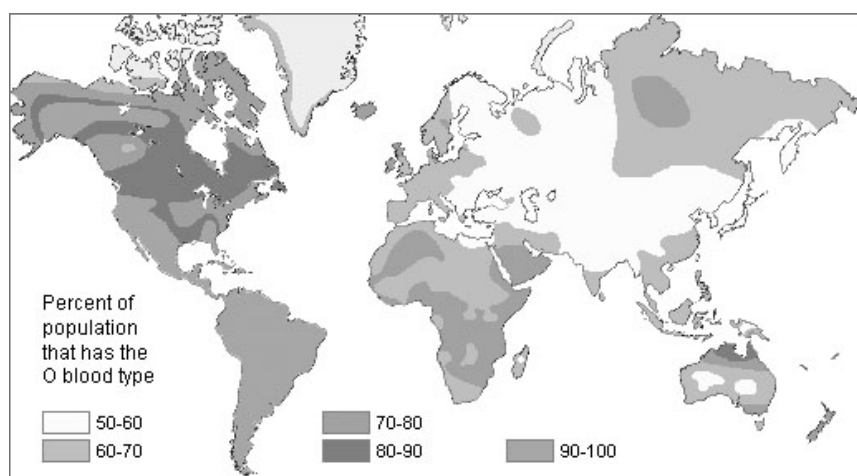


Image 11.



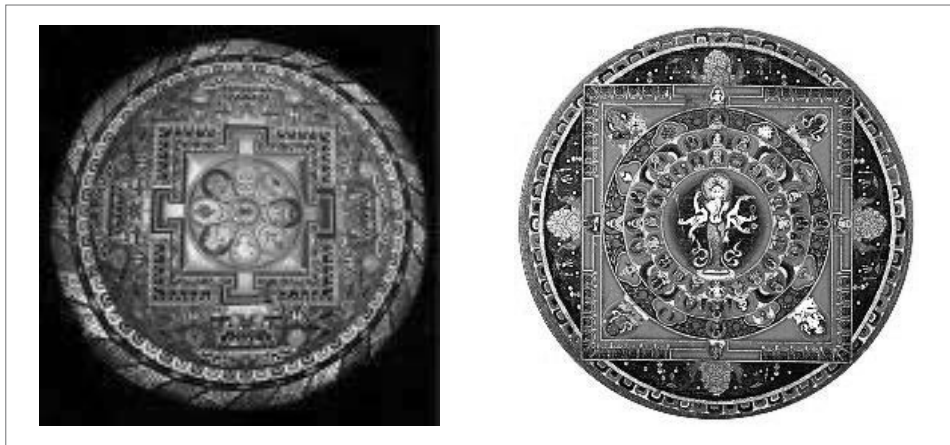
gambling in the ‘market’ than deliberate invest in development where it is necessary? This is the shame of our times.

Inequality is a far more significant concern than division/difference. As Schuurman (2001) suggests, “the very essence of development...is a normative preoccupation with the poor, marginalised and exploited people in the south. In this sense *inequality* rather than *diversity* or *difference* should be the main focus... inequality of access to power, to resources, to a human existence – in short, inequality of emancipation”. This is a concern about the on-going structural reproduction of inequality, not about the sudden explosion onto our screens of suffering in specific locales although that also requires a response. Indeed, one might say that *because* of its long-term, endemic qualities, the issue of poverty rarely make it onto television screens because it is not particularly newsworthy but merely things as they are. What is our own and our media’s responsibility, in an epoch of plenty, vis-à-vis those who do not have enough? Will it make a difference when we see suffering, not only at a “distance” but increasingly close at hand, in our neighbourhoods? Hurricane Katrina gave many Americans a profound shock. I wonder, as the economic downturn hits more people in the West, whether that triggers any sense of understanding of how much of the world ordinarily live their lives in even poorer conditions all the time?

The four Rs are common tropes in contemporary political and cultural analysis: *representation*; *rights*; *recognition*; *redistribution*. Our political and cultural trajectories lead from political citizenship to cultural citizenship; from political rights to cultural rights, but the most basic and crucial of all of them is redistribution, which also implies the return of the analysis of inequality and the reality of class. In terms of cultural difference, we want a hundred flowers to bloom. In that sense media might give us global multiplication of artistic and creative difference. It might also invoke, often out of ignorance and lack of independent analysis, the easy recourse to “friends” and “enemies”, to political division that contemporary discourse displays. In that sense, media carry the seeds of division.

But the real scandal, often far from view, is the slow reproduction of inequality – often highly gendered – that is not even deemed worthy of showing. Media are the veil of appearances; we need to remind ourselves and our students of the real divisions that stalk the world even if their geography is more complex now than before.

Image 12. Mandalas



I've included a couple of images of mandalas, (Image 12). This is a Sanskrit word, loosely translated to mean "circle". A mandala represents wholeness, and can be seen as a model for the organizational structure of life itself – a cosmic diagram that reminds us of our relation to the infinite, the world that extends both beyond and within our bodies and minds. It represents the "axis mundi" or world axis, as opposed to the "axis of evil" that supposedly threatened the West. Jung said that a mandala symbolizes "a safe refuge of inner reconciliation and wholeness... a synthesis of distinctive elements in a unified scheme representing the basic nature of existence." A mandala represents integration.

Tibetan Buddhists say that a mandala consists of five "excellencies":

- The teacher
- The message
- The audience
- The site
- The time

An audience or "viewer" is necessary to create a mandala. Where there is no you, there is no mandala (Longchenpa, 2001). Thank you for listening – and reading – and you decide whether there's been a mandala or not.

Notes

1. A loop of 36 maps played continuously through my talk. A few images are reproduced here.
2. Since writing this paper, the so-called global credit crunch – which is centrally located in North Atlantic financial systems – is rendering this forecasting more accurate.
3. Sale of Damian Hirst artworks in London in September 2008 netted a record-breaking £70.5 million.
4. Newly-elected President Obama has talked of altering the US position on climate change; we await the actions.
5. There have been some programmes talking across the grain: British television programmes on discrimination against Muslims, a two hour analysis of the Koran, a daily story about pilgrims going to Mecca on hajj; a Guardian on-line space for blogging the Koran.
6. The welcome overtures by President Obama to dialogue with Iran have by February 2009 not produced much interaction.

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For Jan Ekecrantz

Representing the Rise of the Rest as Threat

Media and Global Divides

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

Abstract

Like a giant oil tanker, the world is turning. New growth poles of the world economy have been emerging in the south and east. Globalization once belonged to the west and now the tables are turning. We have entered the era of the 'rise of the rest'. Western media and politics of representation have celebrated the rise of the west for two hundred years, how then do they represent the rise of the rest? The main trends are that the rise of the rest is ignored, or represented as a threat, or celebrated in business media as triumphs of the marketplace. Media echoing free market ideology have contributed to vast wealth polarization; representing the rise of the rest as threat contributes to global political polarization; recycling the 9/11 complex produces cultural and political polarization; and overusing celebrity narratives contributes to existential polarization. These are the global divides discussed in this paper. In the wake of the economic crisis of 2008 there have been marked changes in discourse and a new motif has taken shape: recruiting the rest to rescue the west.

Keywords: globalization, emerging societies, media representations, market ideology, recycling 9/11, celebrity narratives, before and after crisis.

Introduction

In the buildup to the Iraq war mainstream media were asleep at the wheel. Mesmerized by the 9/11 attacks and the machinations of power, mainstream media, particularly in the US and UK, allowed the Iraq war to unfold and placed no obstacles in its course. This is widely discussed; here let us consider other media contributions to creating or sustaining global divides. I focus on the following: echoing free market ideology, representing the rise of the rest as threat, recycling the 9/11 complex, and overusing celebrity as narrative.¹

The setting of this discussion is that we are in a dramatic vortex. Like a giant oil tanker, the world is slowly turning. The emerging centers of the world economy and world society are in the south and east. Globalization once seemed to belong to the west and now the tables are turning. We have entered the era of the 'rise of the rest' – in an economic sense in that industries and multinationals in the south play an increasingly important role; in a financial sense with a view to sovereign wealth funds; in a policy and political sense, in international trade policy and the G20; but less so in a cultural

sense.² Western media and representations have celebrated the rise of the west for some two hundred years, how then do they address the rise of the rest?

The main trends are that the rise of the rest is *ignored* because it doesn't fit national narratives in the west, or is represented as a *threat* because it fits or extends existing enemy images, or is celebrated in business media as triumphs of the *marketplace*. A summary headline version of this argument might run: western media complacent, display west-bias. In frequently representing twenty-first century globalization as a source of risk, western media exemplify western privilege and conservatism. Downstream, as mainstream media ignore the rise of the rest, they reinforce the relations between the rest and the rest, rather than between the rest and the west, and may thus contribute to the creeping irrelevance of the west. Table 1 gives a précis of the main arguments.

Table 1. *Media and Global Divides*

Media	Global Divides
Promoting free market ideology	Wealth polarization
Representing rise of rest as threat	Economic and political polarization
Cultivating the 9/11 complex	Political and cultural polarization
Overusing celebrity narratives	Existential polarization between celebrities and common masses

The treatment follows the sequence of these arguments. Recycling the 9/11 complex is part of a wider problematic of representing war, to which I also devote a brief section. The emphasis in this discussion is on western mainstream media; in a closing section I make brief observations on the way media in the global south represent contemporary trends in globalization. The article closes with a reflection on representations before and after the crisis of 2008.

Free Market Paradox

I made a mistake in presuming that the self-interest of organizations, specifically banks and others, was such that they were best capable of protecting their own shareholders. (Alan Greenspan, US Congress, October 2008)

In his last published article Jan Ekecrantz (2007) urges media studies to pay more attention to economic inequality and the role of media in sustaining and representing inequality. An immediately pressing question is, after decades of echoing and worshipping 'market forces', now that the 'free market' goes kaput, now what? For years western media passed on the admonitions of the free market gospel, the Nobel Prize winning economists of the Chicago school, the stipulations of the IMF and World Bank and the tropes of the Washington consensus – don't intervene in the market, rollback government, liberalize, privatize, lift capital controls, the free market and democracy go together. When crisis hit developing countries IMF conditions invariably stipulated cutting government spending.

Since 2008 everything is topsy-turvy. Crises are supposed to take place in developing countries and to serve as instruments to discipline and punish the periphery and its unruly elites. Now financial crisis hits the United States and Europe – it is regarded as

the most serious crisis since the Depression – and by mid 2008 the same economists who counseled liberalization and market shock therapy for developing and post-communist countries – such as Larry Summers and Jeffrey Sachs – plead for American government spending and large public works programs to stimulate the economy.

For decades people were told that the free market is superior, is the only viable economic model, there is no alternative – but now that the ‘free market’ is in trouble, sovereign wealth funds rescue Wall Street power houses. State capitalism – declared old fashioned and ineffective by the western establishment’s power/knowledge grid – comes to the rescue as the free market goes down the toilet. According to Martin Wolf, the day the US government bailed out Bear Stearns with \$30 billion, was ‘the day the dream of global free market-capitalism died’.

Remember Friday March 14 2008: it was the day the dream of global free market-capitalism died. For three decades we have moved towards market-driven financial systems. By its decision to rescue Bear Stearns, the Federal Reserve, the institution responsible for monetary policy in the US, chief protagonist of free-market capitalism, declared this era over. It showed in deeds its agreement with the remark by Joseph Ackermann, chief executive of Deutsche Bank, that “I no longer believe in the market’s self-healing power”. Deregulation has reached its limits. ... The US is showing the limits of deregulation... we must start in the right place, by recognising that even the recent past is a foreign country. (Wolf, 2008)

Since then there have been many days like that. In the course of 2008, with bailouts climbing to \$700 billion and on to trillions, those seem days of innocence. There go the banks, the hedge funds, the rating agencies, the boards and for that matter, the business pages – each led by the smartest people in the room, now queuing up at the exit. One may cherish the irony of this historical twist, but it is do-it-yourself irony because media rarely concede the u-turn and appear oblivious to the gaping contradiction between 25 years of propagating the ‘free market’ and the u-turn of 2008. If you like world history, 2008 and 2009 are good years.

By echoing free market rhetoric unhindered, media have contributed to massive, unprecedented transfers of wealth within countries and on a global scale, a vast wealth polarization in which, according to UNDP figures, some 350 billionaires own as much as half the world population (UNDP 1994; Nederveen Pieterse 2004). Through 25 years of free market propaganda media have been dozing at the wheel and under the heading of trickle down have enabled or permitted the rapid and steep growth of inequality within and between societies. However, should we not concede that social inequality is nowadays mostly caused by technological change, which brings about skills differentials, and by the effects of globalization? Not per se. It *is* possible to combine innovation and economic dynamism and equity. Contrast Scandinavia, Nordic Europe and East Asia with the US, UK and the developing countries that underwent structural adjustment. Technological change does not cause inequality; political change does.

One might argue, too, that when banks, boards, rating agencies, hedge funds and analysts all lost marbles because they miscalculated risk, how could media have done better? The point is, however, that by falling in line with propaganda and joining the free market bandwagon and by failing to inculcate civic vigilance, media contributed to a climate of lax regulation and permissive capitalism which, in turn, fostered creative accounting

and corporations making the quarterly numbers by cooking the books. In time this set of processes produced the Enron and Anderson series of corporate scandals (2001), the subprime mortgage crisis (2007) and the financial and economic crisis of 2008.

To the extent that business media are an exception in representing the rise of the rest in a positive light, they tend to display a different bias: 'what is good for market forces is good for society'. When the west was winning, when it drove and 'owned' globalization, free market stories sounded acceptable and attractive. The world is flat and outsourcing is beneficial in the end. Now it appears it has all been bubbles all along – the high tech bubble, dotcom bubble, easy money bubble, real estate bubble, consumer credit bubble, merger and acquisitions bubble, the petrol and commodities bubbles, and now the bailout and economic stimulus bubbles. Media followed and fed each of these bubbles.

This includes the role of media *as* market forces. Media play a major role in market development. Hugo Slim, the world's wealthiest man, made his fortune in Mexico's telcoms. Thaksin Shinawatra made his fortune by selling computers to Thailand's police force and then became a telecom magnate. Berlusconi is Italy's media tycoon and Bill Gates' wealth is well known. Dan Schiller has discussed the role of media and telecoms in the era of digital capitalism (1999) as did Susan Strange (1996). The deregulation of American telecoms in the nineties was a major contributor to the financialization of the US economy (Phillips 2006) and to the Wall Street frenzy that, in time, produced the Enron and WorldCom scandals. All along media, of course, are major political forces as well. Conrad Black maintained links with rightwing think tanks. Rupert Murdoch's media have contributed to pro-market propaganda. American media are deeply wired into the military-industrial-media complex.³

The paradox of liberalization is that under the banner of the 'free market', market forces have been cast as panacea. Business media and accounts such as Thomas Friedman's (2005) have attributed the rise of Asia, China and India to liberalization; to Deng's modernization in China in 1981 and India's financial liberalization in 1991. Likewise the World Bank attributed the 'East Asian miracle' to export orientation and economic liberalization. Let me make some brief points in relation to this account.

This narrative overlooks the role of the public sector. In each of these cases the developmental state played a fundamental role in establishing the conditions that made market growth possible, from education, infrastructure and land reform in East Asia to Mao's reforms in China and Nehru's reforms in India. This is typically being ignored in Anglo-American free enterprise accounts of economic success. Washington orthodoxy is about paradigm maintenance, as Robert Wade shows (1996, 2002).

'Freedom' has historically been a language of power and a doctrine of hegemony (Wallerstein 1984) so the free market is a doctrine of winners. Now winners are becoming losers and the discourse and policies shift to protectionism. This leads to strange headlines such as 'Obama vows to help restore US faith in globalization' (*Financial Times*, June 27, 2008). The article deals, of course, with trade policy and the then senator's criticisms of Nafta; yet since he is also 'a free trader', he seeks to 'improve Nafta.'

As the new industrialization in the global south produces a commodities boom, including high petrol prices, high commodity prices have a relatively equalizing impact in the world economy, as during the postwar economic boom. Western representations zero in on the downside of these trends. Thus, according to Thomas Friedman, the 'first

law of petro politics' is 'that the price of oil and the pace of freedom always move in opposite directions'. Cases that prove his point are Iran, Venezuela, Nigeria and Russia (Friedman 2006). Aside from criticisms of Hugo Chávez, the message between the lines is that Friedman treasures the American way and bemoans the growth of state capitalism. But the selection of cases is biased. If oil states support American policies, such as Saudi Arabia, petro politics poses no problem (see Vitalis 2006); the problem, rather, is unruly petro politics. Besides, with the hindsight of 2008, freedom and the American way take on different meanings.

Goldilocks Globalization Changed Place

According to opinion surveys in the nineties, people in the west generally felt that the pace of globalization was just right – not too fast, not too slow. However, according to a Pew survey in 2007, 57 percent in G7 countries feel that the pace of globalization is 'too fast', whereas the majority in the global south deems its pace just right.⁴ Thus, Goldilocks globalization has changed places.

In the nineties the global south felt threatened and overwhelmed by globalization. The risks of liberalization and financial crisis were real enough and culminated in the 1997 Asian crisis. Into the twenty-first century, advanced countries feel threatened by job loss and, in the US, by mounting trade and external deficits. According to populist views, competition from the south threatens job loss and undermines prosperity in the west. What mainstream media do *not* discuss, however, is the comparison *between* western countries: why are Scandinavia, Germany and other parts of Europe able to combine innovation, economic dynamism and a welfare state, whereas the US and UK are not. Decades of private sector underinvestment in American plants, technologies and innovation is the other side of the story that is lost (discussed in Nederveen Pieterse 2008a).

In American media, the problem has long been, rather, China and its undervalued renminbi, its cheap exports, its excessive savings, its thirst for commodities and energy. Complaints about China's currency run from media to congress and the treasury and make a policy point: forcing upon China a similar devaluation of its currency as Japan accepted in the 1985 Plaza Accord, which made Japan's exports to the US much less competitive. China's has learned Japan's lesson. By end 2008 US pressure on China to devalue its currency has still come to naught. China bashing signals a shift: in the nineties China's vast growing consumer market was a dream come true for western multinationals; in the 2000s it is treated as a threat. China is criticized for its human rights record and for increasing its military spending. After the crisis, in the course of 2008, the discourse in some respects shifts again (discussed below). The underlying script change is that the drivers and winners of globalization, particularly during the closing decades of the twentieth century, are becoming losers in the twenty-first century. At issue, of course, are not merely representations but also policies. Not just attitudes and media, but also policies are changing – advanced countries that used to push free trade now opt for protectionism, not just in agriculture but also in manufactured goods.

A further twist is the idea that the rise of the rest threatens the global environment. The rise of middle class consumption standards for growing numbers in China, India, Brazil and other developing countries competes with resource use and consumption standards in the west. Indulge for a few hundred years in uncontrolled modernization

and then cast the rise of the rest as a threat to planetary survival. Four percent of the world population in the United States has been absorbing 40 percent of the world's resources – and now the consumption of rising middle classes in developing countries is viewed as a threat to the global environment.

The 9/11 Complex

In academia and social science Eurocentrism has been taken to the cleaners by Edward Said, Samir Amin and in postcolonial studies;⁵ but it has made a comeback in media and politics, particularly in relation to Islam. In history and art the contributions of Islam to science and civilization as a broad and early cosmopolitanism have been increasingly widely recognized; but in western political discourse the 'clash of civilizations' prevails.

The 9/11 complex has turned into a western cul de sac. Go to Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, in fact to most of the world and the American and west European obsession with the Middle East and Islam just doesn't exist. This is the west's special front seat in the gallery of paranoia. Everything to do with Islam and the Middle East is tainted with threat. In 2008 the number of terrorism suspects on American security lists exceeds a million.

War-on-terror tunnel vision homogenizes Islam and treats Islam as threat. This is a boon for security experts, for terrorism is the successor to the cold war; for rightwing parties – who also have to make do without a communist enemy; and for western media – for media love a ready-made narrative. As Abrahamian (2003) points out, American media have without fail interpreted 9/11 through the lens of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations perspective.

Media such as Copenhagen's *Jyllands-Posten* and *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris have volunteered to serve as frontiers in this clash of civilizations. Mainstream media follow or allow rightwing populist trends in the west, notably in Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Austria and the US. These trends merge anti-immigrant sentiment, denigration of Islam and ignorant or hostile images of the global south. The Pim Fortuyn ('the Netherlands is full') and Ayaan Hirsi Ali strands recycle Orientalism.⁶ Italian media in 2008 have scapegoated and targeted Roma people. At times manufacturing or cultivating these cultural tensions serves to distract attention from political and economic transformations or geopolitical objectives. Anti-immigrant sentiment in the US and Europe is another expression of globalization worries. For some time, immigration has been a flashpoint of global inequality, an intersection of western labor demand, border controls and global inequality.

The clash of civilizations is an imagined clash, or a political scenario masquerading as cultural friction. Apply double standards to the Middle East for decades (the official terminology is the 'roadmap to peace') and eventually it boomerangs, especially since the region is also the recipient of major petrol revenues. The clash of civilizations is a self fulfilling prophecy. View the world through lenses of perverse Orientalism and the Middle East hits back. Some argue that attacks on Islam such as the Danish cartoons may serve to deflect attention from Israel-Palestine tensions (Petras 2006).

With the 9/11 complex also comes a trans-Atlantic dispute, the Christopher Hitchens dispute, in which the English assure the Americans: You can keep him. And in increas-

ing numbers Americans respond, It's fine; you can have him back. In fact, please take him back!

Representing War

Media reflect – stage manage, produce – the different sides to war. Over time media representations of war, at any rate on the part of war parties, have become more, not less biased because war is increasingly conducted via airspace with media as major arenas of psychological warfare and black information on the frontlines of public opinion.

Media representations in the US particularly of conflicts in the Middle East and adjacent regions and of Israel's policies often diverge from those in the region, clearly so during the neoconservative project of 'transforming the Middle East', as a glance at CNN and, in contrast, *Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya* and other Mideast media shows. US secretary of state Madeline Albright declaring in 1996 of the death of half a million Iraqi children under five because of US sanctions, 'we think the price is worth it', exemplifies the divide. Secretary of state Condoleezza Rice's statement, as Israel's devastation of Lebanon was underway in August 2006, that 'a new Middle East is being born', was tone deaf to sentiments in the region.

For years Afghan President Hamid Karzai protests at regular intervals that American air raids killing Afghan civilians are unacceptable and intolerable, without noticeable effect on operations. American air raids have spread to Pakistan's border areas and since November 2008 to non-tribal areas such as Bajaur. In late 2008 Pakistan's prime minister has begun to voice similar criticisms. Meanwhile public perceptions in both countries are that the air operations are part of an arrangement with the Americans and political leaders go through the motions of protesting for legitimacy's sake.

Reporting of the clash between Georgia and Russia in summer 2008 has been one-sided; for critical treatments one must search far off the beaten track. Also according to otherwise reasonably independent sources, Russia's intervention in Georgia signals the re-emergence of a totalitarian regime. Philip Stephens (2008a) in the *Financial Times* compares Russia's actions to those of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. *New York Times* op-ed columns feature language such as this: 'W. [short for George W. Bush] and Condi are suddenly waking up to how vicious Vladimir is.' Citing Georgia's president Saakashvili's view of Putin ('today we are looking evil directly in the eye'), Maureen Dowd casually uses the language of 'evil' (2008). It is a small step from rehearsing unexamined assumptions to war mongering. Months later, in autumn 2008, reports emerged, among others via the BBC, that Georgia's forces had used indiscriminate violence against civilians and homes in South Ossetia, which Russia responded to with proportional restraint – the opposite of the account that had been circulating for months. By the time these reports emerged the story was long off the front pages and the rites of indignation had come and gone. It takes little for mainstream media to slip into established narratives but it takes a lot to self correct and to break narratives, a lot more than is usually available.

Reporting on Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan is extensive but biased. Regarding Darfur the public knows about the 'Janjaweed' and images of parched stretches of land, but has little information about problems of water that underlie ethnic strife and conflicts with Chad. The International Criminal Court indicts Sudan's head of state for

genocides of three tribes that the general public has never heard of. The hiatus between these charges and public knowledge shows the gap in reporting.

Overusing Celebrity Narratives

By following Bob Geldof and Bono, Angelina Jolie and Madonna as tour guides to world problems, media offer comic book versions of world problems and relief and adopt tabloid views of globalization. This to the dismay of social movements and NGOs who for decades have sought to present images of Africa emancipated and empowered and not as an object of charity.

That media use and create celebrity is ordinary; stardust and glamour serve as emotional glue and media offer emoticons with celebrities as props. Locales, regions and nations are extended families of sorts and media provide their narratives. Through incessant repetition national narratives attain 'thruthiness' in the sense of generating a common sense. That celebrities and movie actors take up global engagement and articulate social responsibility is welcome and at times their ideas are smarter and more grounded than their media representations (cf. Richey and Ponte 2008 on the Product RED campaign). What is problematic, however, is media overusing celebrity to the point of distorting global relations. Thus, western discussions have been dominated by Gleneagles promises of debt relief for Africa, which a few years later turn out to be largely unmet. Discussions of international development have long been dominated by the Millennium Development Goals. A pattern is that the declaration of new targets and goals diverts attention from the circumstance that past targets have not been met. In response to Geldof and Bono escapades, entrepreneurs and investors note that by making Africa look like an object of charity they reduce the actual interest in investing in Africa.

This is not where the energy is and this is not why the ship has been turning. Asian investment in Africa has been rising significantly. The main driver, of course, has been rising demand for commodities, but an additional factor is that, unlike the west, China and India have not been burdened by the mortgage of denigrating representations. Growth in several African countries has risen to 6 percent – after 'lost decades' of marginal or negative growth – largely due to demand and investments from the NICs in the south. The World Bank reports that 'for the first time in three decades African economies are growing with the rest of the world', which fuels 'hopes of new business era in Africa' (World Bank 2007; Russell 2007). Africa 'is at the heart of the latest surge of enthusiasm to hit emerging markets. Factors: commodities boom, debt relief, improvements in economic policy. Private capital flows have tripled since 2003 (45 billion in 2006)' (Chung 2007).⁷

If we compare media north and south, the general tenor in media in the global south is more positive about the growing role of the south, more concerned with south-south cooperation, more impatient with the postwar power structure and more critical of western bias, as glancing at *Al Jazeera* or *Al Arabiya* programs or leafing through *Frontline*, *Dawn*, *Al Ahram*, *Daily Star*, *Uno Mas Uno* or *La Jornada* shows. The common experience of western colonialism and neocolonialism obviously plays a role. Media in the south are also more aware of the ironies of western bias. Thus, the *Times of India* reports the story of a US Senator outsourcing a speech on the globalization of Oregon to a firm in Bangalore, India.⁸ Another trend in media in the global south is a growing

assertiveness. According to Chandran Nair, ‘Speak up, Asia, or the west will drown you out’: ‘What is needed is the emergence of a confident body of Asian intellectual leaders’ (2007). A Reuters story in the *Hindustan Times* is headlined ‘Stop lecturing us, India tells rich nations’.

The time has come for the developed world to attend to its own problems, and stop lecturing emerging economies about what is right and what is wrong, Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said on Monday. As growth looks sure to slow in much of the rich world, partly due to the fallout from reckless lending in the United States, new economic powerhouses like India say they are tired of being told what to do. “For too long the advanced economies have told the developing economies that this is right and this is wrong”, Chidambaram told Reuters on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. But his biggest criticism was of financial authorities in developed countries for not keeping up with the new and complex financial market instruments that lay behind recent credit market turmoil. “Their regulators have fallen behind. They are beginning to rethink their regulatory structure”, he said. “I am told in the UK there is urgent consideration of the fact that response is divided between three separate institutions – the Financial Services Authority, the Bank of England and the government. They want to know where the buck stops”, he said. “In the name of innovation, regulators or governments in the advanced economies have fallen behind the curve”, he said. “The lesson is that the model we have adopted, cautious calibrated opening of the economy, is perhaps the right model.” “Regulation must stay one step ahead of innovation”, he added.⁹

Another instance of the south talking back is China’s human rights report on the United States. Drawing on Human Rights Watch, FBI reports, etc., the report criticizes American violent crime, its large prison population, police brutality, restrictions on workers’ rights to unionize and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁰

Meanwhile, in one area at least mainstream media north and south tend to agree. ‘Blessed are the poor’ according to one of the prophets, but not according to the world’s media, north and south. In the north, economic migrants or jobseekers from the south are easy targets for discrimination and accusations of crime. In the south, crime and disease are associated with poverty (e.g. Davis 2006). Middle class sensibilities and glitzy marketing aesthetics prevail in most of the world’s media (see Berger 2008).

BC/AC

Discussed above are major global divides that media uphold in the early twenty-first century. Whether media merely reflect and follow or create divides is a question that cannot be addressed here. Mainstream media underestimate and under-represent the rise of the rest. In this respect they differ from business media – which are keen to identify ‘new champions’ (e.g. Sirkin et al. 2008) and in whose interest it is to do so, whether from the point of view of investment or competition. They differ also from intelligence agencies – CIA and American defense intelligence reports have long identified the major economic and power realignments to come,¹¹ but they don’t make popular reading. Mainstream media in representing the rise of the rest as a threat send the message if

globalization isn't ours, then it isn't. As long as this is the common sense in the west, it suggests the diagnosis 'does not play well with others'.

Their representation of new emerging globalization meets the needs of conservative, complacent societies, a bourgeois response that enables bourgeois repose. It keeps horizons near and flat. How would conventional wisdom come to terms with the ironies of history? How would media represent self criticism and reflexivity? For all their influence, media are often windows of clichés, corridors of conventional wisdom, knowledge without depth, with occasional smart or probing editorial comments. Perspectives such as the American bubble and the European bubble vent regional narratives of power. To the extent that media are bubble media – display windows of collective narcissism in which world events figure as sidebars to national narratives – they institutionalize regional comfort zones.

The crisis of 2008, however, has been a major game breaker and wakeup call for the 'masters of the universe'. There are marked differences in public discourses before and after the crisis, BC and AC. The discussion above portrays BC views.¹²

Twenty-first century shifts manifest to a large extent as economic shifts with finance as a salient dimension and sovereign wealth funds as key players. The sovereign wealth funds mainly come from two sources, surplus accumulated through exports of manufactures, as in Japan, China and Korea, and energy exports, with the Arab Emirates and Norway in the lead, followed by other oil exporters. Before the crisis, perspectives on sovereign wealth funds followed the general American pattern of distrust of state institutions. In 2005 the US congress vetoed China's CNOOC's bid to acquire the oil company Unocal. In 2006 congress overruled the Dubai Ports World holding company taking over the management of six US ports. Larry Summers voices the philosophy underlying this distrust. According to Larry Summers, sovereign wealth funds 'shake the logic of capitalism': 'governments as shareholders ... may want to see their national companies compete effectively, or to extract technology or to achieve influence' (2008). What is wrong, actually, with governments seeking to build the national economy? In Europe industrial policy has been the norm; in East Asia the developmental state has been the path to success. But in the US the default ideology is 'free enterprise' and government 'picking winners' is taboo in the American business ethos. Thus, Summers implicitly upholds a singular, American notion of capitalism and condemns forms of mixed economy. Obviously this American position is no longer tenable with banks, insurance companies such as AIG and Detroit automakers turning to government for support. The criticism that SWFs follow political rather than economic objectives doesn't hold when politics and economics are no longer clearly distinguishable. Philip Stephens notes, 'Broken banks put the state back in the driving seat' and 'government is no longer a term of abuse' (Stephens 2008b).

After the crisis, the story lines begin to change. Their changing course also reflects five years or so of petrol prices close to \$100 a barrel (2003-2008), so oil exporters are flush. The story is essentially simple: 'Sovereign funds put cash in the banks' (*Financial Times*, November 28, 2007). Funds from China to the Arab Emirates buy stakes in Wall Street banks. As the China Investment Corporation buys a 10 percent stake in Morgan Stanley for \$5 billion and a 10 percent share of Blackstone, 'the fund sees a unique opportunity in the credit crisis of developed markets' (Anderlini 2007). It is not just Abu Dhabi buying Manhattan's Chrysler building or sovereign wealth funds from China

and Singapore buying into Wall Street power houses; it is that the accumulation patterns have changed. The portée of the intervention of sovereign wealth funds is that the 2008 crisis ushers in the comeback of state regulated capitalism. At one stage sovereign wealth funds are shunned, next they are reluctantly allowed in, then they are embraced, next they are actively sought after, expected to take part in and drawn into institutions, or reprimanded for not taking part – much of this in the course of a year. Daniel Gross sums up the unfolding plot:

With U.S. banks and financial institutions retrenching in the wake of the subprime debacle, cash-seeking American hedge funds, private-equity firms and corporations will be booking passage for Beijing and Bahrain. “They [SWFs] have almost replaced U.S. pension funds as the principal source of capital for alternative investments”, says Michael Klein, chairman of Citigroup’s investment-banking unit.

The rising pace of SWF investment in blue-chip American companies will provoke plenty of angst. SWFs operate with a Cheneyesque opacity. Americans tend to imagine free trade and globalization as McDonald’s in Riyadh and shoe factories in Vietnam producing cheap goods. But governments of nondemocratic countries in the Persian Gulf and Asia owning big chunks of America’s financial infrastructure? Not so much. (Gross 2007-2008)

Consider the shifting nuances in the headlines and story lines in the western business press from 2007 through 2008, at times with contradictory signals even on the same page or in the same article.

- ‘Big spenders: how sovereign funds are stirring up protectionism’ (J. Willman) and ‘Markets eye the new rich kids on the block’ (J. Chung, *Financial Times*, July 30, 2007).
- ‘A passage to the west for sovereign wealth funds’ (J.F. Vail, *Financial Times*, October 31, 2007).
- ‘Officialdom finds a new, unprincipled bogeyman’ (J. Dizard, *Financial Times*, November 27, 2007).
- ‘Sovereign funds should lend support to equities’ (*Financial Times*, December 13, 2007).
- ‘Why SWFs will not fix the western financial mess’ (T. Jackson, *Financial Times*, December 17, 2007).
- ‘Credit crunch led to rapid rise of sovereign wealth fund investment in US and European banks’: since January 2007 Singapore’s Temasek spent \$41.7 billion (in stakes in Merrill Lynch and Barclays), the UAE \$10.7 billion and China \$8 billion (*Financial Times*, March 24, 2008).
- ‘IMF clears way for development of sovereign wealth funds code’ (*Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 2008).
- ‘The wealth of nations is reflected in the stellar rise of sovereign wealth funds’ (*Financial Times*, March 31, 2008).

- ‘The new global wealth machine’ (*New York Times*, April 2, 2008).
- ‘Do not panic over foreign wealth’ (G. Rachman, *Financial Times*, April 29, 2008).
- ‘Reject sovereign wealth funds at your peril’ (*Financial Times*, June 6, 2008).
- ‘SWFs attract controversy but are part of the global solution’ (Arnab Das, *Financial Times*, July 23, 2008).
- ‘Managers eye Asian SWF billions’ (*Financial Times*, August 4, 2008).
- ‘Fifth of SWFs “unaccountable”’ (*Financial Times*, September 15, 2008).
- ‘Global Investment: Exec Desperately Seeks SWF. Must be rich. No green card or English required. Send photos and balance sheets to Wall Street’ (Gross 2007-2008).

There is a parallel to these changes in representations in the growing charm with Islamic finance instruments, with London, Amsterdam and other financial centers queuing up to provide the new instruments (Sullivan 2008). This echoes the pattern of Eurodollars in the 1970s with a twist: western institutions seeking to retrieve and corner the money that has gone into paying for the west’s energy habits.

Initially the emerging economies appeared to be safe from the impact of crisis,¹³ but gradually slackening demand not only in the US but also in Europe has begun to impact on emerging economies’ exports. Nandan Nilekani who heads India’s Infosys, adds a further twist: ‘we were riding on a global liquidity boom’. ‘Remove the “steroid”, as is happening now, and 2-3 percent of growth will go’. So the crisis also comes as a corrective in emerging economies: ‘After a few years of 8 percent plus growth, we felt that we were already a superpower. We took credit for global factors, and took the foot off reforms’ (Nilekani 2008).

The crisis has accelerated the transition from the G8 to the G20. Initiated by French president Sarkozy, the G20 summit in November 2008 edges towards a new global balancing act including a greater role for major emerging societies. A Dutch newspaper headline during the summit reads, soberly, matter-of-factly, ‘G20 waits for new leader, preferably one with money’.¹⁴ The awareness that the American hegemon is bankrupt is spreading.

The declining value of American assets through 2008 – such as Citigroup, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, Washington Mutual – cost the sovereign wealth funds that went in early dearly. A November headline reads, ‘sovereign funds go cold on rescue finance’.¹⁵ Given continued uncertainty, sovereign wealth funds have become much more cautious. In turn, this has increased the political pressure for their involvement.

The ambivalent rise of sovereign wealth funds in western media – tinged with anxiety and greed – is paralleled in changing representations of the ‘rise of Asia’. After the crisis the rise of the rest is gradually being represented in a slightly more positive light and we can probably anticipate more such changes. After all, one day the ‘new champions’ might be called to the rescue. A cover headline in *The Economist* asks ‘Can China save the world?’ (November 15-21, 2008). The question mark prevails, of course, but what is new is the question. It signals that the entire landscape has changed radically. If the IMF is to resume its role of stabilizing international finance it can only do so with new inflows of funds, in particular from Saudi Arabia and China. Hence a headline reads

'UK confident Saudis will help IMF' (*Financial Times*, November 3, 2008). As 2008 draws to a close, Chinese sovereign wealth funds have announced their withdrawal from investing in western financial houses and Chinese officials lecture the American treasury on the importance of economic stability.¹⁶

Notes

1. 'Media and global divides' was the theme of the International Association for Media and Communication Research annual conference in Stockholm July 2008. This article is an updated version of my keynote address. I have given versions of this talk at the Institute of Communication Studies at Punjab University and the South Asian Free Media Association in Lahore, November 2008. I am indebted to comments of Oscar Hemer (2008), Durre Ahmed and participants.
2. Extensive discussion of twenty-first century globalization is in Nederveen Pieterse 2008b. Alice Amsden (2001) discussed the 'rise of the rest'. Zakaria's (2008) book *The post-American world* also takes up the 'rise of the rest'. These discussions go beyond American decline and open a different chapter.
3. A case in point is the retired four-star Army general and military analyst of NBC News, Barry McCaffrey, who made thousands of appearances on MSNBC and other networks and had direct access to top US commanders, all the while being under lucrative contract with major military equipment suppliers. A detailed expose is D. Barstow, 'One man's military-industrial media complex', *New York Times*, November 30, 2008: 1, 26-27.
4. 'Poll reveals backlash in wealthy countries against globalisation', *Financial Times*, July 23, 2007: 1.
5. In media studies see Curran and Park 2000.
6. Extensive discussion is in Nederveen Pieterse 2007.
7. On these relations see Kaplinsky and Messner 2008; Nederveen Pieterse and Rehbein 2009.
8. 'US Senator outsources speech to India', *Times of India*, November 13, 2006.
9. *Hindustan Times*, October 23, 2007.
10. AP, 'China calls U.S. record on rights "shocking"', *International Herald Tribune*, March 14, 2008: 3.
11. According to the US National Intelligence Council's report *Global Trends 2005*, released in 2008, 'India and China could rise to join the US on top of a multipolar world in 2025', reports *The Times of India* (November 22, 2008: 1). India will become the world's fourth largest economy.
12. In this script the global south is often blamed for the failure of international negotiations. Thus, according to a headline of *Il Messaggero* on the failure of the Doha round talks in Geneva in summer 2008, 'Guerra Asia-USA, fallisce il WTO' (July 30, 2008: 1).
13. E.g. T. Fuller, 'This time, Southeast Asia watches crisis from afar', *New York Times*, November 22, 2008: 5.
14. *De Volkskrant*, November 15, 2008: 15.
15. H. Sender, *Financial Times*, November 10, 2008: 15.
16. 'China sovereign wealth group to stop investing in western banks', December 4, 2008: 1. G. Dyer, 'Chinese officials lecture Paulson', December 5, 2008: 2.

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Global Divides in Transnational Media

*Managing the Visibility of Suffering**

Lilie Chouliaraki

Abstract

By empirically exploring variations in satellite news on human suffering, including the 2004 tsunami footage and the 2007 Burma demonstrations, this chapter argues that the symbolic power of trans-national broadcasting consists primarily in its capacity to manage the visibility of suffering so as to reproduce the moral deficiencies of global inequality. At the same time, however, it shows that there are certain conditions of possibility, technological as well as symbolic, whereby satellite news stories may be able to produce a sense of moral agency that transcends the West, thereby constituting cosmopolitan communities of emotion and action.

Keywords: symbolic power, satellite broadcasting, human suffering, mediation

Introduction

This chapter explores systematic patterns in the visibility of suffering in satellite news, from the 2001 September 11th footage to citizen-generated content in the 2007 Burma demonstrations, so as to illustrate the role of trans-national media as agents of symbolic power¹. Symbolic power refers to the capacity of the media to selectively combine resources of language and image, in order to present distant suffering as a cause of emotion, reflection and action for Western media audiences.

The ways in which the media portray and narrate the suffering of far away others has always been controversial. In the past, it has raised critical questions about the power relations between the West and the 'rest', about stereotypes of the 'poor South' and about compassion fatigue among Western audiences (Moeller 1999). In the global media age, the symbolic power of the media to represent suffering reformulates these issues into a crucial ethical and political challenge: the extent to which satellite media enable the expansion of moral imagination beyond existing communities of belonging, national or regional.

By studying examples of ordinary (news bulletins) and extraordinary (rolling footage) satellite reporting, in national and in international contexts, this article argues that the management of the visibility of distant suffering most often amounts to the reproduction of a communitarian imagination. At the same time, it tentatively points to the potential of citizen-generated content to provide a different management of the visibility of suffering, thus potentially challenging, though not necessarily transcending, the Western imagination of community.

The Global Visibility of Suffering

The Moral Claim of Trans-national Television

There are two responses to the question as to whether satellite broadcasting may be expanding our scope of responsibility beyond the West: whereas the optimistic response claims that the global visibility of suffering inevitably brings with it the potential to care for distant others, the sceptical one challenges the idea that visual immediacy may lead to anything more than care for those who are like 'us' (Curran 2005: 5-6).

The optimistic argument takes its point of departure on the global scope and instantaneous reach of satellite broadcasting as key dimensions of symbolic power that may give rise to new communities of belonging: the 'global village' or 'global civil society' (Thompson 1995; Tomlinson 1999; Beck & Sznaider 2006). Three distinct but interconnected arguments point to this direction. First, a consequence of the CNN effect, there is an increase in the broadcasting of distant disasters and in audience awareness about suffering others (Livingston & Bennett 2003; Livingston & van Belle 2005); second, there is a heightened visibility of war atrocities and new rituals of death and torture, such as the Iraq war, internet beheadings and Abu Ghraib pictures, placing the spectacle of suffering at the centre of a contemporary media ethics agenda (Mirzoeff 2006; Silverstone 2006); finally, there is an increase in citizen-generated footage, such as the Burma monk demonstrations in 2007, which bypasses traditional gate-keeping mechanisms and enables the world to watch spectacles of violence otherwise inaccessible to the media (Gillmor 2005; Beckett 2008). Thanks to satellite networks, the argument has it, we are now closer to distant suffering than ever before, thereby bearing the moral responsibility of witnessing and, with it, the burden of complicity: in the age of mediated abundance, *we cannot, any longer, say we did not know* (Ellis 2000:1). The optimistic argument on the ethical force of satellite reporting is essentially an argument about the symbolic power of trans-national media to generate a new moral imaginary, that of cosmopolitan citizenship – a disposition to act on distant others without the obligation of reciprocity or the certainty for the outcome of our action (Keenan 1993: 135; Peters 1999: 51-62; Barnett 2003: 9-21). This civic disposition draws on two historical modes of engagement, which mediate our relationship to the spectacle of suffering and shape our moral agency towards vulnerable others: indignant denunciation against the injustice inflicted upon the sufferers by their persecutors or tender-hearted empathy with the misfortune and pain of the sufferers (Boltanski 1999).

In contrast to the optimistic position, the sceptical argument challenges the function of trans-national media as agents of global connectivity and insists that satellite broadcasting, far from facilitating the globalisation of civic dispositions, clusters trans-national populations around their already existing communities of belonging. Satellite television, in other words, *brings together multi-country markets linked by geography, language and culture* (Straubhaar 1997: 285). There are two overlapping perspectives to the sceptical argument: fragmentation and marketization.

Satellite media, the fragmentation perspective has it, may be global in technological scope but designed to be regional in cultural reach, serving the interests and desires of specific media publics, such as the Arab community in the case of Al Jazeera (Sakr 2005) or the Anglo-American world in the case of CNN or BBC World (Curran & Park 2000). As such, they are less about globalising moral sensibilities and more about reproducing

‘satellite realms’, that is insulated publics that transcend the national but never quite become global (Sakr 2001).

The marketization perspective addresses the impact of financial oligopolies on satellite content. Insofar as news on suffering and violence sells, it remains a priority in international reporting but only on the condition that it is subject to the demands of infotainment (Thussu 2008). There are three aspects to the infotainment perspective on distant suffering: sensationalism, whereby suffering is presented in terms of its dramatic details in order to grasp audiences’ attention (Seaton 2005: 49-80): sanitisation, where suffering is ‘cleansed off’ its graphic dimensions in order to protect the audiences’ emotions (Campbell 2004) and, finally, de-contextualisation, where suffering is rarely explained as a complex event so as not to appear demanding on the cognitive capacities of media audiences (Moisy 1997).

Satellite broadcasting, in summary, maximises the presence of distant suffering on television screens, yet it does so in an ambivalent manner. Whereas optimists claim that it enables greater proximity with vulnerable others, internationalising the moral consciousness of the West, sceptics argue that news on suffering is not represented in accordance to its political or humanitarian magnitude but on the basis of its relevance to and infotainment capacity for Western publics.

Whereas both sides of the argument draw upon theoretical discourse and empirical evidence to support their claims, neither of the two engages in a systematic examination of the symbolic properties of satellite broadcasting. As a consequence, it is difficult to identify the cultural resources, in the form of aesthetic registers and ethical discourses, through which satellite news stories contribute to the formation of collective dispositions (Corner 1995: 43). Importantly, these arguments tend to oversee the capacity for change inherent in the making of news stories themselves. Indeed, although journalistic change is largely about ownership patterns and institutional structure, it would be misleading to ignore the fact that the potential for change also lies in the relative malleability of the representational practices of news embedded, as they are, in broader trajectories of technology and power².

Following a case-based methodology, I focus on the study of the symbolic properties of selected news stories on distant suffering in satellite broadcasting. My aim is dual: i) to trace down the representational practices through which each case manages the visibility of distant suffering, and, in so doing, ii) to show how each case simultaneously evokes a normative claim as to who it is important to care for. The study of the symbolic power of satellite broadcasting to act as an ethical force emerges out of this dual analytical attention in the particular properties of each news story and simultaneously in the universal claim each story makes about which sufferings are worthy of emotion and action for Western media publics.

I next explore the symbolic process of the imagination of community in satellite broadcasting by focusing on six case studies of news on suffering. Whereas the first four cases cluster around a Eurocentric imagination of community, constituting what we may call communitarian publics, the final two cases suggest that alternative ways of managing the visibility of suffering may lead to an expansion of the Eurocentric imagination – a possibility, however, inevitably grounded on the premises and practices of Western publics.

Trans-national Publics: Communitarian and Cosmopolitan Imaginations

I focus on two categories of satellite news, 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' news, and I examine each one of these in two different contexts of broadcasting, the *national* and the *international*³. The category of 'ordinary' news is reflected in the genre of the news bulletin, which I examine in the *national context* of the Greek National Television (Floods in Bangladesh, 2004), and in the *international context* of BBC World (Boat accident in India, 2002). The category of 'extraordinary' news is reflected in the genre of rolling footage, which I examine in the *national context* of the Danish National Television (September 11th, 2001) and in the *international context* of BBC World (Iraq war footage, 2003)⁴. My emphasis in the study of these four cases falls primarily on the *aesthetic quality* of each piece of news, that is on the visual and verbal properties of their spectacle of suffering, and on *the moral agency* of the news, that is the options for action on suffering each piece proposes to us as relevant and effective.

Communitarian Publics

I first discuss the category of 'ordinary' news in the two contexts of broadcasting, trans-national and national, before turning to the category of 'extraordinary' news.

The Management of Visibility in 'Ordinary' Satellite News

The first piece of news is about a *boat accident in India* (BBC World, 2002). This is a brief story with a descriptive narrative: a river-boat capsized in river Baytarani, in the Indian province of Orissa, as it was making its way towards Jaipur town – forty people feared drowned most of them office workers and school children. Despite the fact that this is a major trans-national news service with an extensive network of technological and human resources as well as a long tradition of reporting in the region, the management of visibility in this case is minimal. It does not involve on location reports, but rather the use of maps: one of the Indian province of Orissa situated among its neighbouring provinces and another one of India situated in the northern hemisphere. The aesthetic register here is cartography, a decontextualised representation of geographical space that abstracts the event of suffering from its experiential circumstances. This management of visibility involves no people, no action, no emotion. Such absences



correspond to choices over where, when, and with whom the suffering is shown to occur, which, in turn give rise to a particular type of moral agency: do nothing, care not. The geographical distance between Western Europe and the river Baytarani is coupled onto another kind of distance, an emotional and moral distance between us and the Indian sufferers.

The *second* example is a piece of news on *floods in Bangladesh*, (National Greek Television, 2004). It combines the visualization of the scene of suffering, as it reached national television via satellite, with a brief voiceover added for the Greek public⁵. Two symbolic features constitute the aesthetics of this piece of news: the panoramic point of view and the lack of action. The panoramic point of view provides us with an overview



of the flooded landscape from afar and above; at the same time, it universalizes the scene of suffering: this could have been elsewhere, at any other time, involving another population. In so doing, the panoramic landscape creates an aesthetic distance from lived reality: the scene is all about water, trees and

human figures in a static composition. This is not the footage of a catastrophe, which covered 60% of the nation but a ‘tableau vivant’, inviting distantiated contemplation of the flooded land rather than engagement with the urgency of suffering. In terms of agency, there is no purposeful action, no voice: these people lack appellative power, the power to communicate the condition of their misfortune. In Boltanski’s words, these Bangladeshi sufferers are portrayed as *radically without will* and their de-humanization, echoed in the voiceover’s dramatic but brief text about the ‘biblical catastrophe’, further participates in the aestheticisation of this news story, effectively producing a spectacle of difference between cultures that lie beyond the possibility of contact.

Despite their diverse contexts, the national and the international, these two examples of ‘ordinary’ news share three key features: the minimal narration of suffering, the refusal to humanize the sufferers and the interruption of emotion, denunciation or empathy, vis-à-vis the events of suffering. Such symbolic features constitute the majority of our regular diet of daily news reports, on the grounds of the pragmatic argument of selectivity: the media do not always have access to sites of distant suffering nor can they report on every event in the same order of importance⁶. Yet, what these pieces of news throw into relief is that the interruption of emotion involved in this professional logistics is not only a necessity but simultaneously a moral claim in its own right. They remind us of the fact that emotion is a scarce resource and that part of the capacity of news to present the world is its capacity to reserve the potential for emotion for some sufferers; to locate others outside our own community of belonging and to place their suffering beyond the remit of our action.

The Management of Visibility in ‘Extraordinary’ Satellite News

There are, however, news stories with a different management of visibility, though these are admittedly not the majority. These exceptional stories include aesthetically complex representations that invite our exclusive and sustained engagement with suffering. The key feature of extraordinary news is the shift from the news bulletin to the rolling footage, which involves the suspension of an ordinary sense of temporality and

the introduction of, what Badiou (in Barker 2002: 75) calls, *truly historic time: moments when a minute lasts a lifetime, or when a week seems to fly by in next to no time* – the shock and disbelief at the moment of the second plane crash on the World Trade Centre. Let me briefly discuss the September 11th footage in the national context of the Danish National Television, before I move to the global media spectacle of the Iraq war, in the trans-national context of the BBC World.

I concentrate on three distinct *sequences from the September 11th footage on Danish television*: the eye-witness account, the update of events and the panorama of the Manhattan cityscape. The *eye-witness account* is a right here-right now exposition of events. We are together with the expert panel at the Copenhagen studio and, at the same time, connected via telephone link with the Danish Consul in New York. Satellite images show ambulances and people walking away from the scene of catastrophe, whereas the Consul gives a first-person account of chaos and mayhem in Manhattan. The aesthetics of this sequence is that of raw documentary. Camera and human voice combine in a complex act of witnessing that invites Danish spectators to experience the events as-if they were there on location and to share the intensity of emotion as-if they were themselves present in the scene of disaster. As a consequence of this intense proximity, moral agency is cast in the topic of empathy, inviting us to engage in real-time with the tragic fate of American people and to feel for their unexpected vulnerability.



The update of the ‘morning of September 11th’ events was inserted into the flow of the footage at regular intervals during the rolling footage. The management of visibility takes us everywhere where action took place: New York with the WTC attacks; Washington DC with Pentagon burning; Georgia with Bush’ first appeal to the American people. The manner in which these sequences are linked, particularly using Bush’s speech to



conclude the update, already situates the attacks, terrorism and the promise of retaliation in one meaningful narrative. In terms of aesthetic quality, this sequence differs from the previous one in that it is not about events as-breaking-news but rather about already authoring September 11th-as-history. The moral agency emerging from this management of visibility is cast in the trope of denunciation: it focuses on the tragic loss of human lives, separates perpetrators and victims and evokes the collective demand for justice as the only possible response to this instance of suffering (*we're going to hunt down those folks who committed that act*).

The Manhattan panorama is an extended sequence, which provides us with a long shot of the cityscape in grey smoke, turning the scene of suffering into a phantasmagoric spectacle. The confrontation with the awe-provoking dimension of the imagery of suffering removes the urgency of the here-and-now and opens up a space of analytical temporality, where the events can be debated and reflected on (Boltanski 1999: 121). Indeed, the moral agency of this sublime aesthetic is devoid of empathy or indignation and turns to tentative deliberations on the attacks: the voiceover consists of the expert panel explaining the causes and discussing the political implications of the event.



In sum, the September 11th satellite footage, characterised by a hectic alternation of aesthetic registers, complicates the moral agency of a specific national public, inviting the Danes to engage with this spectacle of suffering in multiple ways: to empathize, to denounce and to reflect on it as a human tragedy and as a political act. Importantly, the sufferers of September 11th are presented as thoroughly humanized and historical beings; as people who feel, reflect and act on their fate. They are, in short, people like 'us' who happen to live far away. We are united with them in denouncing the evil-doers (recall *Le Monde's* headlines, *We are all Americans*, 12.09.01) or in supporting them in alleviating their misfortune (the political legitimacy of the 'war on terror' was also, partly, due to extraordinary quality of world reporting on the September 11th attacks; Reynolds & Barnett 2003: 85-101).

The bombardements of Bagdad (BBCWorld, March-April 2003), one of the most visually arresting spectacles of warfare, were broadcast live on BBC World at approximately 19.00 CET and they were, subsequently, inserted as regular ‘updates’ in the channel’s 24-7 live footage flow – the examples described here focusing on the updates’ common patterns throughout their three-week broadcasting span (Chouliaraki 2006b).

The point of view is from afar and above with a steady camera capturing Baghdad in its visual plenitude. Filmed at night, the sequences turn the screen into a dark surface animated by yellow explosions and green flashes at the sound of bombing fire. The visual effect is that of a digital game, endowing the spectacle of war with a fictional rather than a realist quality- a similar quality to the Gulf War visuals that made Baudrillard (1994)



famously conclude that the war never happened. The voiceover functions indexically to the visual, following action closely, and uses the first person perspective of the eye witness to draw attention to its detail. The extracts contain no visualisation of human beings on the ground: no sufferers in their homes, in the streets or in hospitals. At the same time, the linguistic choices that verbalise the sufferer

and the bomber deprive both these figures of any sense of humanness: the sufferer is mostly a collective entity (‘city’) or a non-living being (‘compound’) and the bomber is either diffused in the activity of airwar (‘planes’, ‘missiles’) or erased from the narrative. By cancelling the presence of the bomber and the sufferer, the footage presents the bombardment of Bagdad as a site of intense military action without agency.

This particular management of the visibility of suffering evokes a sublime aesthetic, which, as we saw, constitutes distant suffering less through emotions towards the sufferer and primarily through a distantiated appreciation derived from the awe of the spectacle of warfare itself. Together with the embedded journalists’ reports, the sublime register of the bombardments of Bagdad re-worked and perfected visual testimony as the dominant genre of war footage. The moral agency emerging from this first-person genre engages with the war in the mode of impartial contemplation, as a spectacle to watch rather than as a political act to take sides on. Despite the claim to objectivity that this process of sublimation conveniently issues, the BBC footage of the bombardments remained Western in its perspective, insofar as it consistently de-humanised the Iraqi population under attack in Bagdad and, in so doing, potentially blocked the moral agency of empathy towards the victims or of denunciation against the bombing of civilians or, indeed, against the whole project of the war in Iraq.

The Imagination of Communitarian Publics

I have discussed a number of satellite news cases, ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ in a national and an international context. These differ substantially from one another. ‘Ordinary’ news is about stories that we hardly ever remember; ‘extraordinary’ news is about stories that are hard to forget. Despite radical differences in their management of the visibility of suffering, however, these stories share a key feature: they address their audiences, both national and international, as an already constituted community. This is a community that is united in blocking out emotions for ‘irrelevant’ sufferings or united in fully empathizing with sufferers who are like ‘us’. As a consequence, neither type of news can invite their audiences to engage in public action towards suffering that occurs beyond the West. Those who celebrate the creation of global communities through television viewing, find justification in the empirical reality of ‘extraordinary’ news in a national context, such as September 11th footage where the far away appears too close to us to ignore. Those concerned with indifference and compassion fatigue find partial justification in the empirical reality of ‘ordinary’ news, such as the Indian accident or the Bangladesh floods, where suffering never becomes humane enough to move us to a response. Neither of these classes of news provides us with a quality of connectivity that brings with it a responsibility towards suffering outside Western communities of belonging.

These positions represent a key aspect of the Eurocentric bias at the intersection between trans-national and national satellite flows – a bias that comes to confirm the fragmentation claim I discussed earlier. Far from a ‘globalisation of content’, those patterns of visibility suggest that what occurs in satellite broadcasting is a ‘regionalisation’ of global content, whereby trans-national media may be broadcasting globally but still ‘remain within their own particular worlds’ (Hafez 2006: 71). They demonstrate, in particular, that, despite the increased visibility of spectacles of terror, all content is inevitably subject to a process of hierarchical particularization that defines whose suffering matters most for Western spectators’: sufferers in North America are closer to us than those in Eastern Asia.

The bias further confirms the marketization thesis that links satellite news content to trans-national commercial interests. An illustrative example of this is the case of Iraq war reporting, which combined previous formats with new visual genres, evoking Western testimony and sensational spectacle as the primary definers of satellite war footage. Such features point to a mutation of war reporting from ‘hard’ to ‘soft news’ (Baum 2005) – a mutation that serves both commercial interest and political agendas. Aestheticised warfare, as we saw, erase the humanity of Iraqi civilians whilst upholding journalistic objectivity, whereas embedded journalists appear to produce authentic reports from the battlefield but ultimately operate under the tight control of their military hosts.

Satellite news then produces communitarian publics. It does so through national satellite broadcasting, where it follows a localised trans-national agenda that places distant suffering in a hierarchy of domestic relevance, but also through trans-national broadcasting, where news follows a regionalised trans-national agenda that may report on distant suffering but remains unable to cultivate a culture of solidarity beyond the West.

Cosmopolitan Publics

There are cases of satellite news, however, that can push civic sensibilities beyond the community of the West. The main feature of these cases of news is that they raise the demand for action on distant suffering here and now – hence their ‘emergency’ quality⁸. By incorporating the element of urgent action in its representation of suffering, emergency news re-configures, though not necessarily transcends, national and trans-national contexts of satellite broadcasting. At the same time, in accommodating different degrees of urgency on suffering, emergency news keeps the ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ news distinction in place. Let me discuss two examples of emergency news: news broadcasts on the Burma demonstrations 2007, as a case of ‘ordinary’ news and the rolling live footage of the tsunami emergency 2004-2005, as a case of ‘extraordinary’ news.

The Management of Visibility in ‘Ordinary’ Emergency News



The Burma monk demonstrations, September 2007, which involved the violent crackdown of peaceful marches of people, mostly monks, against the tyrannical regime of Myanmar, became an emergency story both in trans-national and national television contexts. Two symbolic elements contributed to the construction of this story as an emergency: i) the citizen-generated imagery of the peaceful demonstrators vis a vis the brutal violence of state army, which invoked both empathy for the suffering yet defiant monks and denunciation against the perpetrators of their suffering and ii) the intertextual chains of this imagery across types of media, from mobile phones to broadcasting and to internet blogs and websites, which not only expanded the public visibility of the

events but further contextualized them in powerful discourses of resistance against the Burmese junta.

Drawing on the aesthetics of raw documentary, the footage gained significant news value in recording the long lines of saffron-robe dressed monks marching quietly through army-populated city streets and in capturing on camera the killing of a Japanese journalist by riot police on September 27th, in a demonstration where nine more people were also shot dead. Illegal in its country of origin, this amateur and erratic footage acted as a trans-national counter-narrative of power against official accounts of events – for example, when Danish National Television juxtaposed Burmese satellite footage from MRTV3 to scenes from the streets of Rangoon, throwing into global visibility what would have otherwise remained a local and obscure crisis.

The documentary aesthetics of ‘clandestine testimony’ that characterizes this piece, the *grainy* and *shaky* images or *crackly* telephone calls with their *chilling soundtrack*, is part of the strong appeal to authenticity that citizen-generated footage makes (Cooper 2007:6). Submitted to media networks by participant-observers in risky circumstances (Beckett 2008), such footage renews the journalistic authority of first-person testimony- an authority, let us recall, highly disputed in Iraq war footage. It does so, by displacing the journalist, potentially corrupt by state or private interest, with the citizen as the source of authentic information. Insofar as the latter owns the basic technology to record, reporting on human suffering at the peril of oneself is no more the heroic privilege of the professional but ordinary practice for everyone who happens to be in the scene of action⁹.

The aesthetics of clandestine testimony simultaneously enacts and invites a particular type of moral agency that we have not encountered so far: the dual agency of ‘seeing and saying’ (Peters 2001: 717-23). This form of agency recognizes, in the passive act of witnessing, the active obligation to speak out in the name of those whose capacity to respond to injustice is limited and ineffective – to speak, in other words, in the mode of denunciation. *Now with the internet and the whole world watching, it is a very different story*, says a Burmese activist in his comparison of the 1988 with the 2007 revolts, emphasizing the radically different conditions of visibility and moral agency that frame two similar events (BBC24, September 26, 2007). The act of seeing is indeed able to shift to the act of saying only because of the intense media activism of civil society organizations, which appropriated and re-contextualised the images of monk demonstrations in a discourse of human rights and international solidarity – in Boltanski’s words, they managed to *address the spectator’s ability to consider himself as a speaker* (1999: 40). By capitalizing on the United Nation’s democratization initiative in Burma, these civil society organizations managed to mobilize civic sensibilities across the world and to place Burma at the heart of a global and intense, even if short-lived, wave of activism.

The Management of Visibility in ‘Extraordinary’ Emergency News

The tsunami catastrophe, 2004, invokes a different quality of urgency, one that resembles the ‘truly historical’ temporality of the September 11th news. Given the magnitude and multi-dimensionality of the disaster, the rolling footage of this event involved a continuous alternation of locations, types of information and genres of reporting, making the tsunami one of the most complex journalistic ventures ever (Downman 2005). The result was an unprecedented amount of aid donations for the tsunami survivors – what Koffi Annan, then Secretary General of the United Nations, celebrated as a *unique manifestation of global unity* (BBCWorld, Jan. 9th 2005).

Another unique dimension of the footage, however, was the number of tourist video recordings that reached the websites of major news networks, making the tsunami a crucial turning point in the use of citizen-generated content by news networks (Gillmor 2004). The first-person perspective of such visual material lent to the event an intense right-here-right-now quality and offered a powerful resource of identification for Western spectators. Whereas the Burma demonstrations footage capitalised on a ‘clandestine’ quality of witnessing unfamiliar to the Western world, the tsunami material capitalised on the ‘all too familiar’ quality of witness accounts by people like ‘us’. The close-to-



home aura of most such videos, suddenly snapping, as recordings culminate in fear at the powerful wave blow, throws into relief the immense identification capacity of citizen footage on distant suffering. This aesthetic combination of the banal with the sublime created, in a way different to September 11th, another sense of collective identification for Western spectators.

Whereas satellite television played a major role in disseminating citizen footage, networks like the BBC integrated such visual material into their websites, providing multimedia and Web-video and -log facilities. Such a rich multi-media environment not only managed to contribute to public action that made a difference in the lives of distant sufferers, through donations, but also to participate in the therapeutic process of 'working through' the trauma of witnessing, through personal accounts and tributes to victims (Ellis 2000).

The Imagination of Cosmopolitan Publics

It is not that the cases of emergency news do not evoke the West as the imagined community where we belong to. They certainly do. It is rather that emergency news presents us with some demand for engagement that does not exclusively follow from the pre-commitment to implicit obligations; from the communitarian bond. We are neither the apathetic spectators of 'ordinary' news of distant suffering nor the over-engaged spectators of 'extraordinary' news on the suffering of the West. We are simply confronted with the question of suffering as a problem to be solved. We are invited to consider our commitment to it as a matter of our own judgment. Are the Burma demonstrations a cause worthy of our action? What can we do to help the orphans of Banda Aceh? In posing these questions for our own reflection, emergency news also opens up a space that pushes us, even momentarily, beyond the concerns of our communities of belonging; beyond the obligations of the communitarian bond (Chouliaraki 2006a: 188-89). But there is a difference between the two.

The 'extraordinary' emergency of the tsunami involves an intense management of visibility in trans-national, multi-media environments, which became possible largely because of Western tourists' use of technology and their subsequent involvement in the dissemination of images and narratives; in Kofi Annan's words, it has to do with the fact that the *whole world witnessed the tragedy*. Importantly, however, the extraordinary quality of this suffering is also due to the fact that, among the hundred thousands who lost their lives, nine thousand were citizens of Western Europe on Christmas holidays:

the tsunami emergency is proximal suffering at a distant location (Olsson & Riegert 2005). There is a Eurocentric bias in this construction of moral agency, which ultimately throws into relief the very conditions of possibility for 'global unity': the care for the suffering of distant others expands beyond the West only insofar as the West is part of this suffering, both experiencing and witnessing it. The Reuters' agency observation *that the tsunami attracted more media attention in the first six weeks after it struck than the world's top 10 "forgotten" emergencies did over a whole year* (quoted in *The Guardian Media*, March 11, 2005), only comes to confirm the fact that the sensibilities it mobilized constitute a global 'risk community' (Beck 2006) rather than a cosmopolitan public of empathy and solidarity.

The 'ordinary' emergency of the Burma demonstrations comes closer than any other example to what we might call cosmopolitan agency – a proposal to public action on distant suffering without reciprocity or guarantees. This is partly the consequence of a particular management of visibility, clandestine testimony, which used new media technologies to shed public light on a military regime suppressing popular protest. Crucially, however, cosmopolitan agency is also the consequence of the voices of trans-national governance and civil rights groups that strategically employed these new media to campaign and co-ordinate protests across the world¹⁰.

Civil rights organisations, in this sense, enact the moral imperative of cosmopolitan citizenship in a dual sense: as a moral sentiment and as a political project (Kaldor 2000). It is precisely the capacity of this news, embedded as it was in a complex ecology of mediated communication, to appeal to a civil ethics of witnessing, in the scenes of violence and death, and to make the claim to justice, in the calls for action to 'free Burma', that brought forth the moral agency of international solidarity. The management of visibility in this particular piece seems to suggest that the cosmopolitan alternative may be a rare exception (Hafez 2006: 111-117), but it is certainly a possibility in the trans-national milieu of satellite and interactive media.

The Symbolic Power of Trans-national Visibility

There is ample evidence in the study of the symbolic power of satellite broadcasting to confirm the sceptical argument, which challenges the capacity of trans-national media to expand the moral imagination of Western publics. On the one hand, we saw that the national and international reporting of 'ordinary' news tends towards regional fragmentation, by way of suppressing emotional engagement and minimising moral agency towards distant suffering. At the same time, 'extraordinary' news provides resources for identification and action that selectively reproduce cross-border publics with exclusively Western affiliations; they do so, either by fully humanising the distant sufferers of the West, as if they were 'us', or by de-humanising non-Westerners, as if their pain or death were not relevant to our moral consciousness.

On the other hand, we saw that both 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' satellite news across contexts tend towards particular generic formats, the first-person documentary and the sublime spectacle, in order to render distant suffering a dramatic but emotionally acceptable media story¹¹. Both formats are important for the management of the visibility of suffering, because their aesthetic properties work to accommodate the spectators' emotions in the face of the spectacle of suffering: a spectacle that confronts us

with the immediacy of human pain without offering options for action. These formats, however, become integral aspects of the marketization of satellite news, insofar as they ultimately come to participate in the narrative economy of infotainment: the first-person documentary, as we saw, tends to sensationalise the stories of suffering at the expense of complexity and explanation (eye witness accounts in the tsunami videos or the embeds reports), whereas the sublime introduces a contemplative distance that sanitises the spectacle of suffering, maximising its drama but keeping the spectators' emotional engagement with it at a minimum (Baghdad bombardment, Bangladesh floods).

If these features of satellite news throw into relief a description of the transnational media milieu as a 'sphere of global infotainment' (Thussu 2008: 7-8), then the question is whether distant suffering on satellite television can be more than just a fleeting spectacle; whether, in line with the optimistic argument, it may also act as a substantial message about the frailty of the human condition – the only feature of the human condition that can make a claim to universality (Arendt 1958). It is the category of emergency news that seems to bear the potential to expand existing imaginations of community in Western media. Whereas it is both 'extraordinary' and 'ordinary' emergencies that articulate the necessity for action, it is in particular the category of 'ordinary' emergency news that puts forward the normative claim of cosmopolitanism, namely caring for the vulnerable other without expectations for reciprocity or gratification.

Specifically, the symbolic features of 'ordinary' emergency news point to two key dimensions of the construction of a cosmopolitan disposition: i) the renewal of the claim to mediated authenticity, grounded on an ethics of the citizen witness and ii) the embeddedness of this claim in discourses of international solidarity.

Even though the aesthetics of first-hand documentary is as present here as it were in previous examples, its symbolic environment and, therefore, its normative discourse is different. The immediacy and sensationalism of violence is now framed by a claim to clandestine testimony, by an awareness of the conditions of terror under which the recordings reached a global audience – here, *the whole world is watching* quote is not simply a statement of technological capacity but a moral claim inherent in the aesthetics of citizen journalism itself. At the same time, the call for action does not reside in the satellite spectacle on suffering, and its inherent impasse of inaction, but comes through mediated voices of civil society in their blogs and websites, which provide concrete options for local action: signing a petition, participating in a protest. Without resorting to an uncritical celebration of the role of such media in enabling action (see endnotes xi and xii), it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the multiply-mediated dimension of practices of solidarity, online and offline, that ultimately manages the shift from watching to acting, from spectatorship to protest.

The civic disposition in 'ordinary' emergency news, then, should be seen as emerging in a broader multi-media environment of satellite and interactive technologies. Such environment shifts the spectacle of suffering away from sensationalism and sublimation and uses it to articulate an urgent and authenticated claim to justice and a form of moral agency that transcends the West as its exclusive terrain of responsibility and action – enabling what Gilroy calls a *wordly, cosmopolitan activism* (2006: 90). The value of this piece of news, even if it is only a fleeting occasion, lies precisely in its capacity to provide the symbolic resources for an imagination of the world that goes beyond the spectacles of global infotainment and presents the West with spectacles of human

vulnerability, of the world *as a small, fragile and finite place* (Gilroy 2004: 90) – and thereby issue forth a form of moral agency that can make a difference in the lives of those who need it.

Conclusion

This chapter empirically explores variations in satellite content on human suffering, taking its point of departure in the assumption that satellite broadcasting is not only a matter of territorial power, entitlements over access of space and technology, but also of symbolic power, entitlements over claims and representations that mobilise the imagination of community in the global media age. It concludes that the symbolic power of trans-national broadcasting consists primarily in its capacity to manage the visibility of suffering so as to reproduce the moral deficiencies of global inequality. However, under certain conditions of possibility, technological as well as symbolic, satellite news stories may be able to produce a sense of moral agency that transcends the West, thereby constituting cosmopolitan communities of emotion and action.

Notes

1. Conceptually, the focus on visibility is motivated by an Arendtian definition of the public sphere as a 'space of appearance' (1958), where image and aesthetic performance (rather than language and deliberation) are also seen as constitutive of civic dispositions; for similar conceptions, see Peters distinction of mediated public space as a space of 'world disclosure' rather than 'information exchange' (1999: 33-62); Butler for the formation of regimes of emotion and action in the mediated space of visibility (2004); Silverstone for the ethical dispositions towards distant others shaped in the *mediapolis* (2006); for historical accounts see Boltanski (1999: 1-19); Chartier (1999: 20-37). Methodologically, the focus on visibility offers a coherent field of empirical study comprising of the global flows of news images as they appear in trans-national and national media networks (Curran 2005: 9; Machin 2004: 316-66).
2. The embeddedness of media texts in the power relations of technology and society is a common assumption in a number of critical hermeneutic approaches, which ask the question of how media texts participate in the formation of media publics (Alexander & Jakobs 1998: 28-32; Corner 1999: 6-8; Dayan 2001: 743-65; Seaton 2005: 102-32; Silverstone 2006: 43-55).
3. The case studies were selected on the basis of the 'maximum variation' principle (Flyvbjerg 2001: 79-81) from an extended body of empirical material consisting of news stories collected between 2001 to 2007 from three different European countries, UK, Greece and Denmark. Each case illustrates a particular position in the spectrum of variations in satellite broadcasting: from the absence of visibility at one BBC World news story (a case chosen deliberately to illustrate the ethical implications of this option), to 'ordinary' imageries of the scene of suffering in the news to, finally, the global media spectacles of September 11th, the Iraq war and the tsunami catastrophe.
4. For different versions of analysis on 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' satellite news, see Chouliaraki (2006a, 2006b).
5. Due to the low image quality of the original television footage, this picture comes from Google Image on the 2004 Bangladesh floods; the iconography is identical to the National Greek Television footage.
6. For news selection principles see Tuchman (1972: 660-79); Merrill (1984: 104-30); Cohen (2001: 173-177).
7. For a similar argument see Braman and Sreberny (1996); Sreberny et al (1997); Chalaby (2005); Hafez (2006).
8. For the term emergency, see Calhoun (2003: 531-53).
9. For sceptical arguments regarding the unreliability of citizen-journalist see Beckett (2008); Cooper (2007); for the problematic relationship between professional and citizen journalism see Gillmor (2005), Gow-

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- ing (2007); for the elitism inherent in the use of technology as a means of activism see Hafez (2006); for more general sceptical arguments towards a new media determinism, which tends to celebrate new technology as a catalyst for social change see Curran (2005) and Mansell (2002).
10. For discussion on the use of new media and the development of civil society activism see Tambini (1999: 305-29); Dahlgren P. (2001: 64-88); Fenton (2008: 37-57).
 11. Hafez (2006: 71) for the globalisation of format vs localisation of content argument; Moran (1998) for the negotiations of cultural identity produced through the globalisation of generic formats.

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Communication, the Nexus of Class and Nation, and Global Divides

Reflections on China's Post-Revolutionary Experiences

Yuezhi Zhao

Abstract

This paper locates the problematic of communication and global divide in the nexus of class and nation in the context of post-revolutionary China's twisted developmental path and its world historical economic ascent in the era of neoliberal globalization. After a brief overview of the politics of class mobilization for nation-building during the Maoist period, the paper moves on to examine the role of communication in contributing to reform-era China's spectacular rise in the global hierarchy of economic power on the one hand and a drastic process of domestic social stratification and class polarization on the other. As China's lower social classes are making redistributive and social justice claims on the Chinese state and propelling it to fulfill its socialist promises from within, China's increasingly denationalized middle class are protecting this state from the outside by championing Chinese nationalism in the global symbolic arena. These historically specific re-articulations of class and nation not only continue to bolster China's post-revolutionary state in the capitalist global order, but also make it impossible to completely shed its socialist color.

Keywords: class, nation, media, information technologies, China, socialism

Introduction

The official slogan of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, "One World, One Dream", expresses a grand universal appeal for a common humanity. Yet the huge communicative divide between China and the West over and beyond the Olympics – dramatized by Western and Chinese media confrontations over China's human rights record and Tibet – underscores a profound global divide between China and the West. This global divide, which is closely linked to China's deepening domestic political economic and socio-cultural divides, compels us to reflect upon China's twisted post-revolutionary history, including the terms of its reintegration with the West, and the role of communication in it.

This chapter explores communication and global divides in the nexus of class and nation in the case of post-revolutionary China. As Desai (2008) has argued, class and nation both have material base in the capitalist logic of uneven development in the modern world, and the historical processes of class formation and nation-building are closely intertwined. For the Chinese as well as many other peoples outside the core of Western capitalism, the historical struggle for nationhood and the formation of the nation-state was closely entangled with the struggle against the tidal waves of uneven

development unleashed by capitalism and imperialism. As late as the mid-1980s, the most powerful argument that the post-Mao media mobilized for capitalistic development was still one that invokes the danger of Chinese nation “being expelled from global citizenship” (Wu 2008).

After nearly three decades of capitalistic development, China appears “wealthy and powerful”, so much so that it is now the largest creditor of the US state, and it managed to stage the most spectacular Olympics ever to celebrate its reintegration with the global capitalist order under the slogan of “One World, One Dream”. That this slogan has become such a farce has further underscored the point that the thesis of globalization as decline of nation-states and nationalisms is a mistaken one (Desai 2008: 397). At a time when neoliberalism has widened the class divide everywhere in the world and when the class divide intersects with so many other social and cultural divides, it seems more urgent than ever to bring back class into the analysis of global divides.

By locating the problematic of communication and global divides within the nexus of class and nation, I also hope to address what Desai (2008: 298) identified as an unproductive scholarly division of labor between a study of nations and nationalisms focuses primarily on culture and a political economy of national and international capitalist development that foregrounds class. Because media and communication encompass both political economy and culture in this age of informational economies and creative industries, media and communication scholars are uniquely positioned to address both the political economy and cultural politics of class and nation.

I first offer an overview of the different articulations of class and nation in China’s developmental path in the Maoist era (1949-1977) and the reform era (1978-2002), focusing on the respective roles of communication and cultural politics in these two periods. Then, against the drawbacks of sustained Western critiques of China’s human rights record and the rising tide of Chinese nationalism in response to these critiques, I will discuss the highly fluid dynamics of class and nationalistic politics in the political economy and cultural politics of China’s ongoing transformation since 2003. At the center of my analysis is the importance of challenging the depoliticized politics of neoliberalism and the necessity of bringing politics back to the discourse of development, as well as the continuing relevance of the anti-imperialist legacies of Chinese nationalism and its pursuit for an alternative socialist modernity to capitalism.

Communication and Class Mobilization for Nation-building in the Mao Era (1949-1977)

In the aftermath of the unprecedented Western media celebration of Chang and Holiday’s 2005 book, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, in which Mao and along with him, the Chinese Communist revolution and Maoism as a form of socialism, was so thoroughly demonized that it seems futile to even speak of the liberating aspect of the Chinese Communist Revolution and the Chinese pursuit for socialism these days. The daily pounding of Western news headlines about China’s human rights abuses and press freedom violations have reinforced this anti-communist ideology in a supposed post Cold War world.

Despite all its horrors, it is nevertheless important not to view the Chinese Communist Revolution as an unfortunate and misguided adventure. This revolution was an

outcome of a prolonged and sustained effort by a vast multitude of the Chinese people to overthrow imperialism, feudalism, and comprador capitalism, the well-known “three mountains”, and to lay the foundations for building a socialist modernity as an alternative to capitalism. It is an important landmark on the long and worldwide emancipatory project known as the international communist movement launched in Europe 160 years ago (Sharma 2007: 4).

In the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR that gave birth to new nations, an argument has been made that the USSR, rather than being communist in any meaningful sense, might more accurately be regarded as a powerful form of developmentalism. Thus, “20th century communism was as much, if not more, about the logic of uneven development of world capitalism as it was about the logic of class and capitalist exploitation” (Desai 2008: 418). In China, socialism and nationalism were closely intertwined historically, and the Chinese communists were also more nationalists than communists. Because of the Chinese nation’s “class” position in an imperialist international system, “the Chinese revolution... was first national and then social, and could not be otherwise” and Chinese communists “held a firm conviction that if social interest conflicted with national interest, the social must yield to the national” (Lin 2006: 40). Nevertheless, to the extent that the Chinese nation was declared by Mao to have finally stood up after the victory of the Communist Party’s peasant-based social revolution, and to the extent that the PRC was and is still defined constitutionally as a state led by the working class and centered on the class alliance of workers and peasants, Maoist Chinese nationalism has an indisputable anti-imperialist and socialist legacy.

After having overthrowing the “three mountains”, the political economy of nation-building in the PRC, first faced economic embargo from the capitalist West and then a split-up with the USSR within the international communist movement, ended up having to rely on the ruthless extraction of the domestic agricultural surplus (the domestic equivalent of uneven trade in international markets), or more bluntly, a state-imposed rural-urban apartheid through the household registration system, for the country’s initial industrialization. After the disaster of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, Chinese peasants, after having served as a powerhouse for the Chinese revolution, became the primary victims of a massive famine.

However, Maoist nation-building policy did not abandon Chinese peasants and rural society altogether. It continued to invest in agriculture, and made use of top-down methods to give back to agriculture, the peasants and rural society. The existence of “Three Great Divides” that is, the divides between rural and urban China, between workers and peasants, and between manual labor and mental labor, was of great concern (Lu 2008). Because social developments took priority over economic development, Chinese achievements in the areas of adult literacy, basic education and health care were the envy of the developing world during the Maoist era (Wen 2008). In cultural politics, the mass media’s socialist rhetoric glorified the workers and peasants as the protagonists of Chinese history. Urban educated youth and intellectuals were encouraged, and even compelled to go to the countryside to bridge “Three Great Divides”, to learn from the peasants, and to transform their own petty-bourgeoisie class consciousness.

Although the Maoist era is often reduced to the Cultural Revolution, which is denounced for the excess of its class struggle discourse and its torture of intellectuals and officials, it is important to understand the class politics of the Cultural Revolution, a revolution in

the area of culture and ideology aiming to sustain the socialist gains of the Communist revolution, and to prevent “capitalist restoration”. As Wang Hui (2006: 36) argues, Mao promoted the concept of class to stimulate debates and struggle within the party’s political culture, in order to avoid depoliticization under the conditions of the party’s administration of power. Mao’s concept of class denoted the attitudes of social or political forces toward revolutionary politics, rather than the structural situation of social class.

The Cultural Revolution aimed to cultivate the new subjectivities of the popular classes, and the realization of the central task of the Chinese communist revolution, that is, “the dismantling of class relations formed through a history of violence and unequal property relations” (Wang 2006: 37). However, Mao’s highly subjectivist concept of “class” contained internal contradictions and dangers. The supposedly progressive politics of “class struggle” quickly degenerated into an essentialized discourse of class identity, becoming “the most oppressive kind of power logic, the basis for the merciless character of subsequent faction fights” during the Cultural Revolution (Wang 2006: 37). Spontaneous political and discursive debates aiming at transforming repressive social relations and fighting against the rise of techno-bureaucratic power were turned into depoliticized symbolic violence of the most brutal type.

The Maoist period, while cutting itself off from Western media and capitalist consumer culture, developed many indigenous forms of popular media and communication, including big character posters, Red Guard tabloids, revolutionary songs and operas, and in the countryside, wired radio, local arts and cultural troupes, commune propaganda units, and mobile film projection teams. Although the communicative and cultural empowerment of the popular classes during this period was a mixed bag, suffice it to say that manipulation above by Mao and faction power struggles did not explain everything (Zhao 2008: 199). Indeed, perhaps as a dialectic of the Cultural Revolution, the legacies of that popular communication empowerment have found their expressions in the languages, tactics, and organizational skills of workers, peasants, urban citizens, and even Falun Gong members in variegated struggles against the bureaucratic capitalist state and its domestic and transnational capitalist collaborators during the reform era. And to this I turn.

ICTs, Media, and the Neo-liberal Re-articulation of Class and Nation under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin (1978-2002)

The reform period starting in 1978 marked a dramatic re-articulation of class and nation in the political economy of Chinese development, and along with it, a radical re-orientation of the class nature of Chinese nationalism and the development of a depoliticized neoliberal cultural politics of class and nation. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the media have played instrumental roles in these processes.

The Role of ICTs in Constituting Uneven Development

Instead of trying to narrow the “Three Great Divides”, the political economy of post-Mao “reform and openness” pursued uneven development by design under Deng’s slogan of “letting some people get rich first”, and ICTs have been the primary agents of this process. Moreover, precisely because Western theories of information society

posit a society detached from the politicized domain of culture as a terrain of struggle within and against capitalism and an economism beyond social division and political conflicts (Schiller 2007), or an “end of politics (Mosco 2004), it had a particular ideological appeal to a post-Mao Chinese ruling elite who just came out of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and suffered from the violence of its essentialized “class struggle” discourse. If Mao had led a popular social revolution in the first half of the 20th century by mobilizing China’s lower social classes and championing the cause of anti-imperialism, the party-state under Deng Xiaoping and his successor Jiang Zemin installed China’s “digital revolution” from above by relying on the country’s technocratic elites and rearticulating China’s political economy with transnational capitalism. The anti-politics of neoliberal politics and technocratic rationality dominated China’s “digital revolution” (Zhao 2007a).

As the state prioritized the ICT sector for massive investment and concerted policy development since the mid-1980s, and as China and the IT sector became the two poles of growth for transnational capitalism (Schiller 2007), the Chinese state, which had started the reform process by decollectivizing agriculture and temporary boosting agricultural production and increasing rural income, had by the mid-1980s ignored agriculture, the peasants, and rural society. An unsustainable rural economy created the largest wave of migration in human history, with more than 120 million rural migrant workers on the move. Despite all its heavy-investments and its exponential growth, a World Bank report claimed that the 4 million workers in “China’s IT industry in 2003 accounted for less than 1 percent of the country’s total labor force” (Qiang, 2007: 6).

Moreover, just as railways were built in the peripheries of global capitalism during the colonial era in order to serve the interests of metropolitan capital, reform-era developments in Chinese ICTs have been prioritized to coordinate two-intertwined developments in transnational capitalism: the shift to post-fordist flexible production by connecting transnational capital with the vast labor pool congregated in China’s special economic zones and coastal regions, and the rise of information industries as the primary sectors of capital accumulation on their own right (Hong 2008; Schiller & Zhao 2001; Schiller 2007). Despite their rapid diffusion, the distribution of telephone and Internet services has been highly uneven between the coastal, central and Western regions, and between urban and rural China. The rural-urban divide, of course, are closely intertwined with regional and ethnic divides within China’s economic and cultural geography.

With ICTs as both the key enabling infrastructure and as a leading economic sector, the Chinese economy was quickly turned into a foreign-investment driven, export-oriented, and increasingly dependent economy, with dependency on Western, especially the US, consumer market on the one hand, and increasingly, on raw material from non-Western countries on the other. Within this international division of labor, China’s input is primarily cheap labor, made possible by a repressive state and its regressive agricultural policy, and of course, at the expenses of the environment, rural society, and social development in general. As China’s leading export industry, the ICT sector itself is also highly dependent on core foreign technologies, and sweatshop conditions are common in China’s IT assembly lines (Hong 2008). The world’s information revolution is partly built on the backs of Chinese women migrant workers on these assembly lines.

As China became the workshop of the world, the lion’s share of the profits goes to cosmopolitan capitalists in the West, while Chinese workers receive a pittance. Within

this global political and symbolic economy, the Chinese state, because it does the “dirty job” of controlling Chinese workers on behalf of transnational and domestic capital, accumulated a huge foreign currency (mostly US dollar) reserve, while simultaneously harvesting the Western media’s condemnation of human rights abuse in the country. As China became the poster-child of the World Bank promoted ICT4D strategy, Chinese society became fragmented, polarized, and deeply fractured along class, region, gender, ethnicity, and other social and cultural divides. By 1997, the World Bank had reported that China’s Gini coefficient index, which measures inequality on a scale of 0.001 to 1 (where 1 reflects absolute equality), had increased from a score of .28 in 1981 to 0.458 (Anagnost 2008: 498), making China, which still claims to be a socialist country, more inequitable than the United States (.408) and one of the most inequitable societies in the world – ranking 90th among 131 countries in a UN assessment in 2005 (Manthorpe 2006). Chinese state investment in education was among the lowest in Asian countries throughout the 1990s, leading to a 30 million increase in adult illiteracy between 2000 and 2005, while the radical marketization of medical care system and the collapse of cooperative medical care in the rural area turned China’s health care system from an envy of the developing world during the Mao era into one of the most unfair in the whole world, ranking 188 out of 191 countries in a 2005 World Health Organization (WHO) assessment. Rather than speaking of “China”, it has become more meaningful to think about China in terms of “one country, four worlds”: the ultra-modern and high-income Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen constitute the first world, and ethnic minority and border areas and extremely low income rural areas the fourth world (Hu, Zhou and Li 2001: 167).

Media’s Role in Rearticulating the Politics of Class and Nation

ICT’s role in constituting China’s uneven development was matched by the state-controlled but highly commercialized media’s role in rearticulating the neoliberal cultural politics of class and nation.

First, a repressive media control regime effectively depoliticized development and prohibited open debates about the class orientation of China’s “reform and openness” process. This created the key enabling political condition for cheap labor as China’s “comparative advantage” by disabling the circulation of labor struggles and suppressing the formation of radical working class consciousness (Zhao and Duffy 2007). That this affects a process that witnesses the displacement of tens of millions of former state enterprise workers and the emergence of 120 million migrant workers as wage earners must be seen as an event of truly world-historical significance (Schiller 2008). The most striking fact is this: instead of being able to complete the process of forming themselves as an urban working class, members of this massive migrant workforce are not able to reproduce themselves materially and culturally in the cities (Ngai 2005; Hong 2008). Moreover, with an estimated of more than 200 million rural labor force in need of non-agricultural work, the process is just beginning (Wen 2008).

Second and as the other side of the coin of class (dis)-formation, as many party members got rich first by becoming capitalists themselves and as the party incorporated the newly constituted capitalists and comprador elites into its ranks and turned itself into a nationalist party, or a party of all people, it continued to frustrate autonomous capitalist class formation by restricting liberal and neoliberal intellectuals from enjoying their full

press freedom in the mass media, and by prohibiting private capital from entering the core areas of the media system (Zhao 2008).

Third, while still opportunistically mobilizing the anti-imperialist dimension of Chinese nationalism in its ongoing bargaining with the US for a better deal within the global capitalist order, the party leadership and the mainstream media foreground a pragmatic and cultural form of Chinese nationalism, using it as an instrument for rallying popular support for the party-state-led project of “the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (Zhao S. 2004; see also Wu 2008). As China repositions itself “from a Third-World anti-imperialist nation into one of imperialism’s ‘strategic partners’”, essentialized Chinese cultural values and symbols, even vernacular beliefs and practices such as the fetish with the “lucky” number of 8, receive the highest level state sanction. The 8.08 pm grand opening of the August 8, 2008 Beijing Olympics with the Zhang Yimou directed high-tech cultural spectacle is the ultimate embodiment of this version of Chinese cultural nationalism in the digitalized neoliberal era.

Fourth, as the media abandoned the Maoist discourse of class and class struggle, it embraced the discourse of “social strata” and dedicated themselves to the formation of “the middle class”, making the growth of this class “a national project that signifies China’s membership in the developed world” (Anagnost 2008: 499). Within this discourse, the middle class – whose size and exact constitution remains fizzy, ranging between 5 to 15 percent of the population – becomes a prized political and cultural trope, a force for social stability and perhaps even the agents of (bourgeoisie) Chinese democracy. Under this neoliberal mode of citizenship, “[c]itizen-subjects were no longer defined as equal members of a collective political body but by the degree of their individual progress towards middle class status” (Anagnost 2008: 499). Thus, one witnessed one of the greatest ironies in the cultural politics of post-revolutionary China: the discourse of “class struggle” was taken to its essentialized extreme when Chinese society was relatively egalitarian during the Cultural Revolution, and it was totally suppressed during a period of rapid class polarization during the reform era.

Fifth and as the other side of the media’s role in its contribution to, and anticipation of, “middle class” formation, workers and peasants, the prized class tropes of the Maoist era, re-emerged as the “vulnerable social groups” in the official discourse. Rather than a structural factor and a class-charged political issue, inequality is depoliticized and articulated as “cultural difference in a hierarchy of national belonging” (Anagnost 2008: 497). Rather than the revolutionary and productive backbone of the nation, peasants have become the burden of the nation’s march toward its ascendancy in the neoliberal global order. At best, they are the ones who need to improve their own individual “qualities”, and if they try hard, they can perhaps even become a member of the middle class; at worst, they are doomed to be sacrificed as the “price” for the building of a market society utopia and for the realization of China’s “great national destiny” (Zhao 2008: 318).

Communication and a New Politics of Class and Nation in Hu’s China (2003-)?

The post-colonial state, as Partha Chatterjee wrote, aimed to “find for ‘the nation’ a place in the global order of capital, while striving to keep the contradictions between capital and the people in perpetual suspension” (1986: 68). This seems to be exactly what the

post-revolutionary Chinese state has done. To the extent that China has made the largest contribution to global poverty reduction since the 1980s, this is no small achievement. But there are two major problems.

First, this is a damned place in the global order of capital. Apart from and perhaps precisely because of the mounting global political economic crises that we found ourselves in after 30 years of global neoliberal revolution, China has become the target of critique in a global public opinion arena dominated by Western-based transnational corporate media. The liberal human rights discourse has become not only the ideology by which the West condemns China, but also has been mobilized by domestic Chinese liberal intellectuals in their critique of the party-state. This is neither to defend the Chinese state nor to dismiss the Western liberal democratic discourse altogether. China's problems are real. Social and cultural conflicts in every corner of China have intensified, including in Tibet. However, China's problems are deeply embedded in the global political economy and are thus global in nature.

And this is my second point. The problem for both China's bureaucratic capitalist rulers and those in the West who wish for a peaceful evolution of post-revolutionary China into a capitalist liberal democratic polity is whether the new national politics of Chinese middle class formation can happen fast enough before China's low social classes are ready for yet another social revolution in an uneven global order that continues to provoke Chinese nationalism. On the one hand, the specific Chinese manifestations of the contradictions between capital and people are erupting on a daily basis across the nation; on the other hand, different strands of nationalisms are on the rising within and beyond Chinese borders.

If the 1980s ended with the single event of the state's crackdown in 1989, the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st Century have been characterized by intensified and dispersed social conflicts among different social forces on a daily basis. As the processes of social stratification, class polarization, and cultural displacement accelerate, the frequency and velocity, as well as the breadth and scope of conflicts and resistance have also intensified. Despite the state's relentless repression and its pervasive and ever-expanding information control regime, various social forces inside China are communicating their social struggles.

Since 2003, it has become apparent that censorship can no longer keep a lid on the voices of domestic opposition against the ruling elite's agenda of further market-oriented developments at the cost of social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability. Along with the rising tide of popular protests, a protracted debate on the future of China's reform, known as "the third debate on the reform", engulfed the Chinese media and cyberspace between 2004 and 2007. Old revolutionaries, left-leaning intellectuals, and grassroots, online critics of market-oriented reforms mounted successive waves of criticism against the further privatization of China's state-owned sector, the entrenchment of private property rights in the Chinese legal system, and the dominance of Western-style market economics in China. Deng's "no-debate" curse, that is, there should be no debate about the capitalist or socialist nature of the reform, was broken; the neoliberal reform agenda was challenged (Zhao 2008: 287-338).

As the Hu Jintao leadership consolidated its power in the aftermath of the SARS crisis in 2003, China has entered a post-reform era. Although the depoliticized logics of neoliberal politics has not been fundamentally challenged, the division over China's

developmental path is once again discussed as a political issue. Throughout the reform period, the specter of the Cultural Revolution has been effectively invoked to undermine any real political criticism of neoliberal oriented development. “So, do you want to return to the days of the Cultural Revolution?” was the most powerful counter to any critique of the reform process (Wang 2006: 2). Today, in light of mounting domestic social conflicts and in the aftermath of a devastating global financial crisis that has not only discredited neoliberalism, but also rendered China’s exported-oriented developmental strategy utterly unsustainable, accusation of any critique of the current developmental path as an attempt to return to the Cultural Revolution has become less effective.

At the center of Chinese national politics, the Hu Jintao leadership has tried to address the excesses of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s through a combination of ideological and social policy initiatives. Since 2003, a new discourse on development has been promoted to correct the single-minded pursuit of economic growth at the cost of social development and environmental sustainability. The official ideology has put more emphasis on social justice and equity, or social harmony. In late 2005 and early 2006, in response to economic depression and social disintegration in the rural areas, the party leadership recycled a key slogan of socialist idealism of the 1950s; that is, to “construct a socialist new countryside”. Concurrently, the leadership has launched a whole set of redistributive and social welfare oriented policies, including abolishing the agricultural taxes and tuition fees for compulsory education to relieve the burden for farmers, increasing transfer payments to poor provinces to close the staggering regional gap, and establishing social security and health care benefits for the rural population. The 2008-2009 global financial crisis and the collapse of Western consumer demands for Chinese goods has further compelled the Chinese state to develop China’s internal market, boost domestic consumption and improve social welfare for the lower classes.

In the media, telecommunication, and cultural areas, state authorities have launched various projects aiming at improving access in poor rural areas. Instead of relying on the neoliberal “universal service fund” mechanism, China’s telecommunication authorities, in the context of a heightened political discourse of “constructing a socialist new countryside”, resorted to Maoist campaign methods to solve the problem of connecting China’s most remote villages. By the end of 2006, 99.5% of all Chinese administrative villages had telephone connections (Zhao 2007b). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture and its local counterparts are in the process of implementing its cultural provision projects in the rural areas.

To be sure, these top-down statist projects of communication and cultural enfranchisement have limitations. As Lu Xinyu (2008) pointed out acutely, one of the main challenges of the party’s “socialist new countryside” initiative is to reconstitute Chinese peasants as social subjects, rather than turn them into passive objects receiving state compensation. Nevertheless, if the mythic universal service fund of the global neoliberal telecom policy regime has yet to deliver universal service to the world’s poor, neither are NGOs equipped to do the job of wiring all the world’s remote villages. Popular struggles for communication and cultural citizenship must be concretized in national politics and state policies. In China, recent state-led projects of communication and cultural access are the political and policy results of the struggles of millions of Chinese peasants and the claims they have made on the nominal socialist state.

Grassroots-oriented projects of media and cultural empowerment have also been

initiated. Sun Heng, a migrant singer, for example, has played an important role in working class cultural empowerment through his Beijing Young Migrant Workers' Art Troupe – an amateur music band of, for and by migrant workers since 2002 (Zhao and Duffy 2007: 241). For their part, some urban intellectuals, in perhaps yet another twist of the Maoist revolution, have even willingly returned to the countryside to pursue rural reconstruction initiatives. Professor Wen Tiejun, for example, is leading a project of rural reconstruction by mobilizing university students to work with peasants. Drawing on revolutionary symbolisms and cultural repertoire, red arm bands identify these students for their revolutionary color, while the popular Cultural Revolution song “Solidarity Is Power” not only provides the immediate medium of bonding between the students and the peasants, but also inspires peasants to recognize the power of being organized (Wen 2008).

Meanwhile, middle class nationalism is on the rising. Commercialized media outlets, the Internet, and mobile phones – the fruits of China's market reforms and the very means of China's re-integration into the global order of capital, have also become the channels by which the most globalized segment of the Chinese population, namely, overseas Chinese and the educated urban youths inside China, expresses the multi-faceted discourses of a transnationalized Chinese nationalism. The outburst of Chinese nationalistic sentiments in the aftermath of the global media coverage of the unrest in Tibet in March and April 2008 is a powerful manifestation of China's rising bourgeoisie nationalism within and beyond Chinese borders. In this movement, overseas Chinese and China's Internet savvy urban youth of the reform era have taken the lead in defending the Chinese state's sovereignty over Tibet in the realm of global public opinion, in struggling for the legitimacy of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation-state, in exposing the Western media for their apparent biases in their coverage of the protests in Tibet. In earlier debates on cultural imperialism, the “active audience” thesis has been deployed to discredit the cultural imperialism thesis. However, in this case, an active transnational Chinese audience mobilized themselves to fight against what they perceived to be the bluntest manifestations of cultural imperialism and racism in the Western media.

For example, one of the widely circulated You Tube videos, “Tibet Was, Is and Always will Be Part of China”, was produced by a second-year Chinese university student studying in Canada. The famous website anti-cnn.com was launched by the 23-year old Rao Jing, a recent Tsinghua University graduate in Engineering Physics and an Internet entrepreneur. The Western media continue to fail to acknowledge the independence existence of Chinese popular nationalism by trying to argue that these videos are ordered by the Chinese government or that these youth are manipulated by the government. However, as Gries (2004: 20) has argued, such a view risks “dangerously trivializing the roles that the Chinese people and their emotions play in Chinese nationalism”. Still, when Rao and his anti-CNN website, after having first been brought into the global media spotlight by the Western media, were reported favourably by leading CCTV programs, there is no question about a convergence between popular and official nationalistic discourses. The grassroots were leading the Chinese state in this instance. The Western media have given the Chinese state and Chinese media a perfect opportunity to re-establish their hegemony over Chinese society.

To be sure, nationalism as a political ideology is always Janus-faced everywhere in the world. Chinese nationalism is also complicated, fluid, and multifaceted. Some

strands of Chinese nationalism express chauvinistic tendencies and reflect what Leslie Sklair (2001: 29) described as “an arrogant overconfidence in the overprivileged” in response to China’s economic ascendancy. Chinese critiques of the US, for example, have often been advanced from the perspective of an aspiring nation aiming to achieve more parity in global power relations, that is, within a realist paradigm defined by the concepts of “comprehensive national power”, “national interests”, and “the rule of the game” within the order of global capitalism (Zhou 2006). Thus, although some aspects of today’s Chinese bourgeoisie nationalism resonate with Maoist anti-imperialism with its critique of Western hypocrisy, it does not have an anti-capitalist class politics.

However, some aspects of the online grassroots nationalistic discourses are more radical than official nationalistic discourses in the media. For example, the Chinese state has been reluctant to condemn the US invasion of Iraq and is collaborating with the US on the war against terrorism. In contrast, there are strong critiques on the Internet about the US’s war in Iraq, and some Chinese popular nationalist discourses have moved beyond a reactive and inward-looking stand on Tibet to take on global issues. One of the most popular You Tube videos on the Tibet issue, for example, presented a devastating montage of pictures depicting the sufferings of Iraqi children under the US’s war in Iraq and asked the US to stop this war first before trying to free Tibet.

Because the party has not explicitly denounced its anti-imperialist legacy and because it continues to be wary of Western attempts at disintegrating China, nationalism as an official discourse of domestic political legitimation and the dominant foreign policy position of accommodating American global hegemony have always co-existed in tension with a more radical discourse of nationalism as an oppositional force against imperialism and an unjust global order. In fact, official nationalism and the party’s foreign policies have been consistently contested in popular nationalistic discourses. Popular left nationalists accuse the Chinese state for compromising the principle of international justice in the single-minded pursuit of economic development on behalf of the ruling elite and the interests of transnational capital, and they have routinely charged the dominant foreign policy elite with being naïve, soft, and selling the interests of China’s low social classes in dealing with the U.S. and Japan throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Zhao, S. 2004; Zhou 2006; Shirk 2007; Zhao 2008). These are discourses of popular nationalism which the party-state could neither associate with nor claim to speak for (Hu 2006). Lin Chun’s (2006: 238) following observation is particularly insightful:

As long as the global liberal ideology with an open or unspoken anticommunist (and racist) influence continued to be (perceived as) destabilizing, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the background, official fear and public caution readily joined forces in China. If historically the weak and vaguely proposed liberal solution fell through in revolutionary China because of the liberal-colonial alliance, the constant economic and political “China bashing” at the present had a similar impact. The cold war survived in hot globalization to keep the concept of imperialism alive.

Thus, if China must revisit its developmental path and make it ecological and socially unsustainable, the West must overcome the legacies of Orientalism, imperialism, and cold-War inspired anti-communism in its understanding and treatment of China.

Conclusion

Saskia Sassen (2006) has analyzed in some detail the emergence of “global classes”, the movement toward postnational and denationalized citizenship, and their implications for politics. The objective and subjective microstructures of power and authority in globalized and globalizing China, however, go far beyond what Sassen has described. For example, many members of China’s ruling communist elite are said to “rule naked” in China. Not that they do not dress up; as a matter of fact, they often dress up in the grandest of global super-brands. Rather, this refers figuratively to the widespread phenomenon of Chinese officials striped themselves of their families by sending their spouses and children, and along with them, illegally accumulated wealth, to the West. Thus, for the Chinese ruling elites under “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” (Harvey 2005), not only there is no society, let alone a socialist one, individuals and their families have strategically (re)located themselves to different nations to secure the maximum personal advantage in a global capitalist order. Meanwhile, some women Christian believers belonging to underground rural churches in China’s hinterlands claimed that they are not afraid of suppression by the Chinese state, not because they can count on the protection of God, but because then US president George Bush is also a Christian (Author’s Interview with Yu, Jianrong, July 2008).

And yet, paradoxically, Chinese nationalism not only remains a force to be reckoned with, but also has acquired a strong and powerful transnational dimension. That is, as China is further integrated into the global order of capital, members of China’s increasingly denationalized middle class are articulating their transnationalized nationalism and waging struggles for China’s territory integrity and national dignity in the global symbolic arena. In doing so, they are bolstering the legitimacy of the Chinese state. Thus, as China’s workers and peasants are making redistributive and social justice claims on this state and propelling it to fulfill its socialist promises from within, China’s increasingly denationalized middle class are protecting this very state from the outside. This historically specific re-articulation of nation and class at the current juncture not only continues to bolster China’s post-revolutionary state in the order of global capital, but also makes it impossible to completely shed its socialist color. Even more interestingly, in an attempt to counter the West’s liberal democratic discourse and to fight against a transnationalized Tibetan ethno-nationalist movement, the Chinese state, while championing Chinese nationalism on the one hand, has been compelled to reclaim class-based solidarity with the Tibetan nation on the other. In a highly symbolic move in January 2009, the Tibetan Autonomous Region National People’s Congress established March 28 as Tibet’s annual “Serf Liberation Day”. In the official media discourse, this is to commemorate the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s quelling of a March 10, 1959 armed rebellion led by “the Dalai Lama and his supporters in the upper ruling class ... with assistance from some western powers”, and the subsequent completion of a “democratic reform” that led to “the emancipation of millions of Tibetan serfs and slaves” from the Dalai Lama’s “feudal serfdom” and “theocracy” (Xinhua News Agency, 2009).

To be sure, Chinese liberals and neoliberal intellectuals – who have ready access to the Western media and whose suppression by the state always makes global news headlines, call for Western-style democracy and the end of one-party rule. However, among China’s low social classes, socialist values and Maoist slogans remain the language of resistance against the state’s capitalistic oriented development policies. Instead of call-

ing for regime change, workers and farmers are trying to make the state live up to its revolutionary mandate against foreign capitalists, private interests, and local authorities (Harvey 2005; Perry 2007). “New left” intellectuals, for their part, have insisted on “the continued importance of the state’s political authority in domestic struggles for social justice and equality” (Anagnost 2008: 500). As Lu Xinyu put it, one of the tasks of China’s “new left” is to “use social movements to temper the left hand of the state” (Author’s Interview, June 27, 2008).

During the Maoist era, the official slogan proclaimed that “only socialism can save China”. During the reform era, when China has played such a pivotal role in bolstering the global capitalist order, it was said that “only China can save capitalism”. Now, with mounting global financial, social, cultural and ecological crises, it is not clear whether even China can save capitalism. Nor will the demonization of China for its human rights records – let alone resorting to the ugly face of racism – do the job. On the one hand, China’s popular classes are crying out against being sacrificed for China’s rising in the global capitalist order, while critics who have argued for socialist renewal are threatening to gain strength in China’s symbolic universe, especially on the Internet, despite the party-state’s draconian regime of control. On the other hand, the anti-imperialist legacies of Chinese nationalism continue to animate Chinese politics at the global stage.

Hegel and Marx have both been credited for saying that all great world-historical facts and personages strike twice, first as tragedy and then as farce. But maybe this is not the end of the story for the Chinese quest for domestic and global justice, equality, and dignity in the name of socialism. If the post-Mao Chinese state has unleashed the forces of the market under the name of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” from above, China’s leftist intellectual forces and subordinate social agents have rediscovered China’s revolutionary legacies and the socialist discourse in their attempts to subject both the power of the post-Mao state and the power of the market to societal needs. It is precisely in this sense that I have argued, “perhaps not only the Party’s official socialist slogans per se, but also their reappropriation by various Chinese social forces and the unfolding societal processes of subordinating both state and market to the social needs of the working people, are what the struggle for socialism in China is about” (Zhao 2008: 343). Chinese popular energies are infusing Chinese politics, economy and culture with more democratic and egalitarian impulse, and this time, perhaps more enduringly.

If the Maoist socialist experiment was a tragedy; the Dengist reform program a farce, is it possible that socialism may strike China for a third time, neither a tragedy, nor a farce, but a “reasoned utopia”, in the way that Pierre Bourdieu (1998) elaborated? As Lin (2006: 287) put it, “[t]hat capitalism does not have an answer to China’s and world’s fundamental problems, is what sustains the quest for alternatives.” Whatever forms such alternatives may take, they may indeed resonate with the 2008 Beijing Olympics slogan “One World, One Dream” in one sense: the dream for the full development of human potentials across all the global divides.

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Bridging the Divide between the Press and Civic Society

Civic Media Advocacy as “Media Movement” in Latin America

Silvio Waisbord

Abstract

The gap between the press and civic society has been a paramount concern for media research on Latin America. Press systems in the region have been historically dominated by states and markets. During the past decades, two “media movements” have emerged to strengthen the linkages between the press and civic society: one set of efforts have promoted reforms in media policies, and the other one developed alternative media independently from governments and markets. This chapter examines the rise of “civic media advocacy” as a third “media movement” in the region. Civic media advocacy aims to change news coverage of civic and social problems in the mainstream press. The analysis examines its strategies and political underpinnings and discusses its achievements and limitations. The experience of civic media advocacy in contemporary Latin America offers insights into whether and how civic society can effectively transform journalism.

Keywords: civic society, media advocacy, journalism, Latin America, press, democracy

Introduction

The press maintains linkages with three external fields: states, markets and civic society. “Strong” and “weak” linkages are shaped by structural relations as well as newsmaking practices. Structural factors such as ownership, financing, and legislation determine the connections between news organizations with states, business, and civic actors. The processes of news production and consumption involving newsrooms, sources, and audiences also affect the intensity of the relations between the press and external fields.

A central concern of critical studies in media and journalism is that democracy suffers when the linkages between the press and civic society are weak (Curran 2002; Dahlgren 2008). For the press effectively functions as platform for the expression of citizens’ interests, it needs to cultivate and maintain strong ties to civic society. This is a fundamental condition for the press to nurture citizenship, cover multiple perspectives, report issues that affect a wide diversity of publics, and facilitate civic dialogue and citizens’ participation. In contemporary democracies, however, those goals are compromised as states and markets exert stronger influence than civic society on the press.

Strong structural and institutional linkages with states and markets negatively influence the press. Those relations vary across countries and political regimes. At a structural level, states influence the press through ownership, arbitrary policies that reward loyal coverage, punitive laws, and discretionary allocation of public resources. Markets wield influence through the power of media owners, corporate expectations about profitability of the press, the weight of private advertising in press economies, and the socio-economic biases of news audiences. Also, *quid pro quo* relations between states and market forces further consolidate the power of official and business over the press. At an institutional level, states and large business typically overshadow civic actors in the production and distribution of information. Official news management ensures that government newsmakers and sources are dominant. The public relations machinery of large corporations exerts significant power in newsmaking. Routine practices and the professional norms of journalism reinforce the power of official sources and newsmakers.

Thus, the encroachment of states and markets poses major obstacles for the existence of plural and diversified press. Strengthening the presence of civic issues and voices in the news is a crucial challenge for democracy.

The Divide between the Press and Civic Society in Latin America

The gap between the press and civic society has been a paramount concern for media research on Latin America. Press systems in the region have been historically under constant and uncontrolled influence from states and markets (Waisbord 2000). For the print press, the state has historically been a major economic and political actor. State advertising has remained a major financial source for the press at large. This situation remains unchanged until today as governments retain substantial power over press economies and control key decisions affecting media business. Collusion between governments and the media has been a dominant characteristic of press systems in the region (Hughes and Lawson 2005). Likewise, the market has wielded substantial influence on the news media. While commercial success, measured in advertising revenues and audience ratings, has been an overriding concern for broadcasting systems, public broadcasting has been historically weak. Likewise, market goals have been the main driver of the mainstream print media.

Given structural relations with states and markets, the press in the region has been ill-equipped to give adequate and balanced attention to a wide range of issues and perspectives. It is predisposed to report on issues that are important to official sources and other individuals and institutions with fluid media access. It is biased to cover issues that are primarily interesting for well-off, urban audiences and give minimal, sporadic attention to issues that primarily affect resource-poor populations. Matters related to social development such as poverty, hunger, malnutrition, health, and education receive little attention (Alfaro 2008). The press focuses on issues that are relevant to powerful newsmakers, conventional news sources, and urban and wealthier audiences. It has been extremely cautious to report on issues that may antagonize officials and major advertisers (Pedraglio 2005; Gonzaga Matta 2008).

This situation has historically prompted two set of responses from civic society that were crystallized in “media movements”. Like any social movement (Diani and Bison 2004), media movements are networks of citizens and associations waging political

conflict to achieve social transformations, particularly in relation to the press and the media in general. They aim to promote changes in the media through a variety of collective actions, including advocacy, education, mobilization, protest, campaigns and other actions.

One “media movement” has tried to bridge the press-civic society gap through promoting policy reforms in media systems. The goal has been to strengthen the presence of civic voices and curb the influence of governments and large business. “Policy reform” movements have undergone a stop-and-go evolution, largely determined by the region’s long history of authoritarianism (Fox and Waisbord 2002). The consolidation of democracy since the 1980s has opened up new possibilities for policy and legal reforms. There have been various efforts at the national level to make the press, and media systems in general, more responsive to civic voices. Just to mention a few examples from the past decade: Initiatives to pass laws promoting access to public information and derogate draconian legislation in Argentina, Peru and Mexico (Gill and Hughes 2005), and civic-led debates on media reform during congressional debates of media policies in Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay (Alfaro 2005) are evidence of ongoing efforts to strengthen civic interests. Such impulses are particularly commendable considering the political sensitivities around media reform. Driven by the fear of alienating large media owners, civilian administrations have typically tiptoed around the issue of media reform or endorsed proposals that benefitted large media owners. After more than two decades of uninterrupted democracy across the region, media democratization is still pending.

A second “media movement” has aimed to develop citizens’ media as an alternative to channels influenced by governments and business. Latin America has a long and rich tradition of “alternative” media that repudiated the influence of both states and markets. Rather than pushing for policy changes, “alternative media” movements have focused on developing and sustaining citizens’ means of expression. Alternative media have often been integral to civic mobilization around a wide range of issues (e.g. miners’ rights, environmental issues, women’s rights) that used technological innovations (from early radio to hand-held video to the Internet) and exploited legal loopholes to set up community-based forms of expression (Huesca and Dervin 2006; Rodriguez 2001).

In this chapter my interest is to discuss civic media advocacy (CMA) as a third “media movement” to strengthen the connections between the press and civic society in Latin America. CMA refers to actions of civic groups to influence news coverage of social issues in the mainstream press. Since the consolidation of liberal democracy in the region in the past decades, numerous civic associations have been engaged in issue advocacy by promoting increased quality of the coverage of civic issues throughout the region. Examples include associations that promote reporting of children’s issues (e.g. Brazil-based *Agência Notícias de Direitos da Infância*), women’s issues (e.g. Argentina’s PAR network, Mexico’s *Comunicación e Información de la Mujer*), HIV/AIDS (e.g. Brazil’s *Agência AIDS*), environment (e.g. *Red de Comunicación Ambiental de América Latina y el Caribe*) and social issues in general (Argentina’s *Red de Periodismo Social*, Ecuador’s *Agencia Latinoamericana de Información*). A new form of civic mobilization in the history of media politics in the region, the work of these organizations has important implications for media democracy.

The emergence of CMA in Latin America offers an opportunity to examine key questions in media and journalism studies: Can civic society change the press? What are the

merits of CMA to make journalism more responsive to civic interests and demands? In this article, I review the strategies and political underpinnings of CMA based on interviews with reporters and members of advocacy groups, and discuss its achievements and limitations. The first section focuses on the reasons for the invisibility and misrepresentation of social issues in the mainstream press. The second section examines the strategies of civic groups to improve news coverage of social problems. The last section considers the implications of civic media advocacy for media democratization. My argument is that CMA has made significant progress to expand the range of issues and perspectives. Its contributions, however, are limited not only by press systems that remain firmly oriented towards states and markets. They are also constrained by journalistic cultures and newsmaking dynamics that continue to tilt the press in favor of official sources and “hard” stories.

The Problems of News Coverage of Civic Issues

The rise of CMA needs to be situated in the context of the mobilization of civic society in post-authoritarian contexts in Latin America. Since the fall of authoritarian regimes during the 1980s, the activation of civic society has been a distinctive feature of contemporary democracies in the region. The mobilization of a wide range of human rights, indigenous, women’s, youth, and environmental groups, and the emergence of novel forms of citizens’ participation in municipal administration suggest the vitality of civic society (Brysk 2000; Eckstein 1989; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Yashar 2005). The press, however, has largely lagged behind the actions of civic groups in terms of identifying problems and actions. It has not adequately reflected the richness of participative experiences and demands.

CMA aims to address this gap by bringing civic issues and voices into the mainstream press. It is premised on the realization that the mainstream media play a central role in the “politics of recognition” (Fraser 1997) and the construction of public problems (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) in an age of “mediated” politics. Just as political parties and politicians have realized the centrality of mediated politics in the past decades in Latin America (Skidmore 1993), civic groups have also realized the need to be strategic about news coverage. News coverage affects the prospects for social and political change. Invisibility and misrepresentation in the media undermine overall efforts to promote public awareness and policies.

Studies have documented that the press rarely covers civic issues and offers narrow perspectives, particularly on matters affecting socially excluded populations. First, social problems that affect the poor are typically absent in the news. The press is negatively biased to cover health issues that mainly affect poor groups, including indigenous groups and rural populations (Alcalay and Mendoza 2000; da Rocha 1995). Environmental issues that affect urban populations are more likely to get substantially more attention than issues affecting poverty-stricken rural and peri-urban areas (Jukosfky 2000). Crime affecting poor people is less likely to get attention than crime affects wealthier groups (Bonilla Velez and Gomez 2006). The lives of poor children and youth, including violence and exploitation, are rarely news (ANDI 2003).

Second, the press typically fails to bring out different perspectives, particularly the views of populations that are directly affected by social problems, to promote dialogue

about problems and solutions. News coverage of crime affecting poor citizens often portrays them as hapless victims or perpetrators (Larrain and Valenzuela 2004). In Colombia, coverage of the prolonged internal armed conflict, which has severely affected poor rural populations, has been dominated by official sources, namely politicians and military officers. Voices proposing peaceful solutions receive substantially less attention. Poor and rural citizens, who disproportionately make the swelling numbers of people displaced by the conflict, are rarely given opportunities to present their views (Arenas et al 2003; Coba et al 2007). Although Brazilian journalism has increasingly offered more coverage on environmental issues, it tends to focus on official opinions and concerns over civic voices and local actions to address problems (de Oliveira 1996; Guedes 2000; Luft 2005).

The deficient quality of news coverage of social problems puts in evidence key failures of the press in supporting democratic goals. First, the press doesn't expand the boundaries of public debate about social problems. By turning away from covering a wide variety of problems, the press excludes citizens and issues from the process of critical reflexivity. In doing so, the press perpetuates a process of social exclusion by relegating the concerns of the majority. Second, the absence of coverage of social inequalities reflects the disinterest of the press to foster empathy and solidarity in democratic life. Press critics have underscored the need for the press to nurture social linkages across citizens from diverse backgrounds. Bringing out issues that affect others is necessary to promote sensitivity to others whose life conditions and perspectives are different.

The starting point of CMA is that problems essentially lay at the institutional level, namely, newsroom practices and conditions. Working conditions in newsrooms discourage the production of in-depth reporting of civic problems. It is not unusual for reporters to hold more than one job, and be expected to file several stories daily. Additionally, and particularly in provincial media, reporters moonlight as ad jobbers. Also, news companies rarely free up reporters, or assign sufficient human and financial resources, to cover stories. These conditions push journalists to cover issues that demand a minimal amount of time and expenses. The consequence is reactive coverage focused on events (devoid of context in long-term processes) and dependent on official information and wire news.

Certainly, resource-poor newsrooms negatively affect the quality of news in general. Sections that cover "hot news" (e.g. political, economic, police, foreign news), however, have more reporters and consistently draw from source-generated information. The massive dependence of Latin American newsrooms on official "gacetillas" for political news (Hallin 2000) and police reports for crime/public safety stories is well documented (Ramos and Paiva 2007). Instead, few news organizations have specific beats covering civic issues. The lack of sections discourages news organizations from constantly seeking fresh news. Typically, civic issues fall in "society" sections which serve as umbrella terms to cover a myriad of issues. In recent years, the creation of sections such as "health", "education", "community", and "women's issues" (which offer neo-feminist perspectives instead of the traditional fashion/lifestyle issues) in newspapers, newsweeklies and newscasts has opened new opportunities for advocacy groups. Reporters covering those beats may be more receptive as they regularly need to file stories on those subjects.

Approach and Strategies

CMA embraces an “institutionalist” interpretation of the mainstream press. Here “institutionalism” refers to the view according to which organizational routines and practices and professional norms determine news content. News-gathering routines and journalistic conventions determine preference for official, dramatic, conflict-driven, sensationalist, event-centered, and celebrity news. Such norms do not only constrain journalists, but they also limit the opportunities for civic interests to get news coverage.

CMA is a keen observant of established norms and practices to determine news. It believes that those norms and practices can be used to advance social agendas. It adheres to standard reporting practices rather than trying to revolutionize journalism. It doesn’t propose a breakthrough in news-making, but rather, it offers a creative approach to news management that capitalizes on the biases of contemporary journalism to further social justice. It assumes that journalistic rules do not necessarily reflect dominant interests, but rather, they can be twisted in favor of social causes. It is cognizant of typical newsrooms’ working conditions and needs to find opportunities. It views newsrooms as dynamic environments and subject to contradictory demands. It assumes that newsrooms are typically dependent on content generated by external actors rather than reported-initiated stories.

CMA is premised on the idea that opportunities for shaping news content are unpredictable. A variety of circumstances may open or shut off possibilities. Conflicts between individual news organizations and governments may bring out opportunities to criticize social policies. Official commitment to specific social policies may be advantageous for civic groups to get media attention. Individual reporters may be particularly interested in specific issues.

From this perspective, CMA aims to achieve three goals: To increase the amount and quality of coverage of specific issues; strengthen the presence of civic voices in the mainstream press; and approach the press as a tactical ally to help advance political and social causes. To achieve these goals, civic organizations use three strategies: sourcing, training, and press criticism.

“Sourcing” strategies aim to facilitate reporters’ access to information and to strengthen the position of civic organizations as credible and regular news sources. These strategies include a wide range of tactics. Some organizations, such as Brazil’s ANDI and Mexico’s CIMAC, act as unconventional news agencies that produce and distribute content, and frequently discuss story ideas with reporters. Some organizations have agreements with major news organizations to publish specific content. For example, Argentina’s Red de Periodismo Social has an agreement with influential newspapers in the country to publish a series of stories on social issues. Stories have put the spotlight on issues such as the conditions in public hospitals and the systems of garbage collection and disposal. Similarly, Argentina’s CIPPEC has agreements with *La Nación* and *Clarín*, the country’s leading dailies, to publish articles on a host of social issues such as education, and justice, several times per year. CIPPEC is fully responsible for content production which is given “in exclusivity” to the newspapers. Newspapers are guaranteed a “scoop” in exchange for space for content.

“Sourcing” strategies also include developing and strengthening relations with individual reporters. Relations provide a sense of newsrooms’ needs in order to find opportunities for news coverage. “Slow news days” may offer opportunities for getting

wide coverage or front-page attention. Interest in reporting the “human side” of certain stories (e.g. scientific breakthroughs, judicial decisions) may open the possibility of identifying citizens as both subjects and sources.

Civic organizations also take advantage of conventional news events to gain coverage. They piggyback on news attention on high-profile speeches, newsmakers’ public events, Congressional debates, and “international” and “national” days commemorating specific issues (e.g. International Women’s Day, World’s AIDS Day, Earth Day) to get coverage. Tactics range from conventional news management (e.g. issuing press releases, staging press conferences) to news-grabbing actions (e.g. publicity stunts, rallies, protest) typically associated with grassroots groups. Likewise, advocacy groups are sensitive to the specific needs and biases of different media to get coverage. Print organizations may be more interested in scoops. Television news is driven by images and entertainment, and afternoon talk-shows in issues that relevant to their female audiences. Radio programs are typically interested in interviews with experts and newsmakers.

A second strategy is to increase the level of professionalism of news coverage. The challenge is twofold. First, rarely do reporters have in-depth knowledge of specific issues (e.g. laws against domestic violence, children’s rights, basic information on disease transmission and prevention). Although increasing numbers of reporters in the region graduate from journalism and communication schools, few had opportunities to specialize in certain areas. Second, civic associations are largely unaware about journalistic practices and lack strategic approaches to work with press organizations.

To overcome these problems, advocacy organizations work with both reporters and civic organizations. On the one hand, they offer journalism training to familiarize reporters with essential technical aspects and bring them in contact with experts/sources. Many organizations also give awards to recognize quality reporting on specific subjects (e.g. children’s issues, women’s rights). They also have elaborated set of principles to guide reporting. On the other hand, media training of civic organizations intends to strengthen their ability to become regular and credible news sources. Generally, organizations are either unaware of conventional journalistic practices or distrust the news media. Relations between reporters and civic associations are often non-existent or filled with misunderstandings and animosities. Expectations are remarkably different: While reporters seek newsworthy stories that fit editors’ expectations and resonate with audiences, organizations are interested in disseminating information that doesn’t always have intrinsic journalistic value. Training, then, is also viewed as opportunities to facilitate communication between reporters and organizations to discuss issues and possibilities for collaboration.

A third strategy is press criticism of news coverage of civic and social issues. Many organizations regularly monitor and analyze the volume and quality of news, produce data and documents, and share results with reporters and editors to show gaps and achievements. The purpose is to provide constructive criticism to news organizations and use the data to identify problems and actions for improvement.

The Ideological Underpinning of Civic Media Advocacy

The analysis of the strategies of CMA reflects the adoption of a pragmatic approach that views the mainstream press as a potential strategic ally in representational struggles over the visibility of social issues.

Such approach suggests three important differences between CMA and other media movements.

First, CMA is not premised on a radical critique of the dominant media. Although it is critical of conventional coverage of social and civic issues, it does not demonize the media. It is not agonistic, but rather, it seeks to collaborate with news media and individual reporters who are receptive to social issues. It is not imbued by a philosophical pessimism that negates the possibility that the mainstream press media may circumstantially give adequate attention to social causes. Instead, it espouses a moderately optimistic perspective about the prospects of transforming press coverage. It doesn't view the mainstream press as inevitably biased against social/civic interests, but it seeks to find opportunities within news organizations. It recognizes that not all subjects may receive adequate coverage due to editorial interests and the professional biases of journalists. It pragmatically assumes that because the large (as well as other) media will always pursue special interests, it is strategically necessary to find opportunities to shape content. It approaches the media as a commercial and political institution that, depending on a variety of circumstances, may put the spotlight on social issues. It sees the news media as a set of open arenas for disputing content and frames, and newsrooms as subject to temporary and contradictory demands that create or close down opportunities for introducing social issues. Although CMA increases the gravitational pull of civic society on the press, it does not substantially reconfigure the structural linkages between the press, states and markets. This is not a causal omission, but rather, a conscious decision of strategies aimed to change news content rather than the basic practices of the mainstream media.

Second, CMA chooses to integrate a variety of media actions to promote their causes rather than focusing on building and maintaining separate platforms from the dominant media system. Such approach is based on the recognition that the mainstream press have unmatched reach and influence. So, advocacy groups work with large-scale media while preserving alternative, autonomous platforms for producing and disseminating information. CMA, then, doesn't aim to overturn prevalent structures. In fact, media policy issues are relative absent or are minor concerns for advocacy groups. CMA expresses disaggregated efforts for changing media content without introducing major transformations in political and economic structures.

Third, CMA is premised on the notion of technical, issue-specific rather than partisan advocacy. CMA represents a post-partisan sentiment that abstains from party politics. Advocacy groups aim to politicize specific issues, that is, to turn them into matters of public debate and policy. Yet they carefully push for issues that are not closely identified with partisan agendas. In fact, they frequently work with various political parties to gain visibility and interest from policymakers, and stay above the fray. Interviewees often refer to civic advocacy in terms of "non-militant" or "non-combative" journalism.

The prospects for nonpartisan advocacy vary according to the kind of issues. Not all issues lend themselves to become political news. Specific local and national politics as well as editorial positions of news organizations offer different opportunities. Advocacy for attention and policies to address domestic violence or the murder of poor children living in streets typically confronts a different set of political challenges than promoting abortion rights or free access to healthcare for people living with HIV/AIDS. Each issue differently affects a myriad of political interests. Putting the spotlight on trigger-happy

police may be troublesome for news organizations interested in maintaining friendly relations with police departments. Covering abortion may not be equally important for conservative and left-wing newspapers. News organizations may be more receptive to stories about the negative consequences of smoking when the Minister of Health vocally condemns the tobacco industry.

Achievements and Limitations

The experience of CMA suggests that the press is not inevitably biased against civic interests. As a result of CMA, many news organizations have contributed to raising the profile and frequency of civic stories, particularly on issues dealing with poor and socially excluded populations and human rights (ANDI 2006). Also, some advocacy organizations have successfully carved out space for civic news through building alliances with news organizations and became regular sources.

If we conceive the press as a heterogeneous field permeable to the influence of external fields, the experience of CMA suggests that civic actors can influence newsmaking. Media-conscious and journalistic-savvy civic groups have been building paths to reconnect civic society and the press. The achievements of CMA are significant. News coverage of domestic violence in Argentina and children's issues in Brazil and Colombia, hardly insignificant problems in each country, are different from what they were years ago (Alfaro 2008). CMA shows that organized publics are able to dispute media representations and exert influence in newsrooms.

How should we interpret the success of CMA? Does it represent the strengthening of the connective tissue between the press and civic society? If so, does it entail a major power reallocation away from states and markets?

By conforming to the rules and practices of professional journalism, CMA confirms the prevalence of the "media logic." The news media have the upper hand in shaping the relationship with civic groups. Civic issues are covered as long as they meet journalistic criteria of newsworthiness and storytelling formats. Journalists decide whether any form of information is news, when it is published or aired, what sections fit the content, and so on. "Media logic" also determines when and where civic demands get covered.

It would be incorrect, however, to conclude that pure journalistic concerns determine what issues and groups get coverage. Considerations about state and market interests play a significant role in shaping newsroom decisions. Even when journalists share common professional values, they are sensitive to how relations between news organizations and a range of external actors may affect news content. Political considerations such as editorial positions vis-à-vis administration and specific officials, as well as personal relations between editors and politicians affect news decisions. Likewise, economic issues are also considered in the selection of stories. Economic arrangements between news organizations with governments and advertisers, financial interests of editorial board members, and/or the characteristics of specific audiences also affect news decisions.

In cases when news organizations have different relations with both political and economic actors, "media logic" is neither fixed nor identical across newsrooms. When some news organizations openly oppose governments or maintain different ties with business, there is no unified "media logic" that uniformly determines news content.

Content can change depending on fluctuations in the relations between news organizations and external actors.

Media logic affects the choice of issues. Not all civic issues and groups have similar chances of making news. It is hard to generalize what issues may encounter acceptance or rejection from newsrooms. As a rule of thumb, civic issues that directly confront powerful political and economic interests are more likely to be ignored or sidelined. Given the power of the Catholic Church in the region, journalists are typically more cautious about covering reproductive rights than other women's health issues such as maternal mortality or cancer prevention. Likewise, reporters are more likely to cover the fate of orphaned children displaced by civil war in Colombia or the use of children in drug trafficking in Brazil than the employment of child labor by powerful business. Covering violence against women by their partners as a general problem may meet less resistance than denunciations of domestic violence against specific powerful officials.

Likewise, considerations about audiences also influence news. Social issues that directly affect audiences are more likely to get regular attention. Because media audiences, particularly for print media, are generally skewed towards well-off, white populations, news about the many dimensions of racism, class inequalities, or the exclusion of indigenous groups may occasionally get attention, but they are not matters of regular coverage. Diseases and health conditions that disproportionately affect poor people (e.g. malnutrition, tuberculosis) are less likely to get as much as attention as cardiovascular diseases and obesity that affect broad segments of the population.

Also, media logic determines news frames. Solidarity frames that present issues in terms of empathy with socially excluded populations are more common than frames that present issues as a question of empowerment and human rights. Here the difference is whether civic issues are presented as political or non-political issues. Many news organizations feature sections devoted to issues affecting poor and working-class citizens in terms of charity and social responsibility. Such sections regularly feature a variety of issues, such as programs for disable people and food banks, from a non-political perspective. Non-political frame means constructing story in terms of struggles of citizens to wrestle power away from powerful political and economic interests. Conversely, the prospects for framing social issues as political, because they are presented as antagonizing public officials or clashing against powerful business, are different. They are not necessarily absent, but they are rare as they require a political commitment from reporters and news organizations. Argentina's *Pagina/12*, for example, regularly covers reproductive health and domestic violence in its "women's section" through frames that prioritize empowerment and rights.

Conclusions

The experience of CMA raises the question whether we can discuss the strengthening of the relations between "civic society" and "the press" in general terms. Neither civic society nor the press are unified, homogeneous fields. Civic society comprises dissimilar groups and interests that fit differently the "media logic" of news organizations. Because the interests of the mainstream press in specific stories vary, the effectiveness of civic groups to affect coverage depends on their demands. Opportunities for engaging the press in quality and responsible coverage of civic issues are not identical for all publics and issues.

CMA also brings up new questions about the prospects and strategies for bridging the gaps between civic society and the press. On this issue, academic debates are rooted in environments of media scarcity that are substantially different from today's media abundance. This situation is the premise of "zero-sum" views about the relations between the press vis-à-vis states, markets and civic society. If markets gain terrain is at the expense of states and civic society; if states become more influential is by drawing power away from civic society and markets. Such perspective may be limited to capture the relations between the press and other actors in an expanding news landscape. The launching of new sections and segments in print and audiovisual media coupled with the proliferation of Internet websites, radio stations and cable channels has led to the explosion of news outlets. A multi-leveled, diversified media environment, with a constant demand for content, expands opportunities for making news. In principle, this brings out opportunities for content diversification, including the coverage of a range of civic voices and issues. At a time of media abundance, contemporary media systems make room for the entrance of civic groups in ways that it was more difficult in the past.

The gains of civic groups, however, may not automatically result in states and markets become less relevant. CMA suggests that civic voices may gain presence without prompting a major reshuffling of power relations. The impact of CMA cannot be assessed mainly or only in terms of quantity of stories. Somewhere in an emerging vast media landscape, a wide range of civic interests are likely to be expressed. The question, instead, is what issues are properly and extensively covered by the mainstream media that command attention from key decision-makers and large audiences. It not simply about whether there are opportunities for civic expression, but rather, the presence of civic voices in mainstream news.

The challenge remains to determine how issues that disproportionately affect populations who are not central to the market logic of media organizations gain press coverage. As long as mainstream organizations prioritize ties to political elites and large market interests, media advocacy for issues that directly threaten those interests are difficult. Thus, the achievements of CMA in reconnecting civic interests and the press vary given that not all publics and interests are similarly positioned vis-à-vis the mainstream press to be equally successful. CMA provides valuable lessons to understand how mobilized publics can effectively connect with the mainstream media, gain visibility, and transform news coverage within the limits of press systems still under strong influence from states and markets.

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Telescopic Philanthropy, Emancipation and Development Communication Theory

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Abstract

Development communication theory can be framed as the rescue mission of the global north to save the global south from itself. It is in view of this that this paper asks: what does it mean to found the emancipation of the postcolonial nation on the philanthropic whim? Using Derrida's theory of gift as a framework, this paper opens up discussions around the cost of international development assistance on the instrumentality of the postcolonial state as an agent of national development. It uses illustrative examples from Ghana and Uganda to demonstrate how development aid has transformed the postcolonial state into an instrument of tutelary governance, and invites development communication scholars to question the discursive and performative functions of international development assistance.

Keywords: development communication, gift, telescopic philanthropy, postcolonial state, Ghana, Uganda

Introduction

One obvious way by which countries of the Global South get to become headline news in the mainstream developed countries is when there is a bad news like the outbreak of war, famine or disease. Africa is notorious for this particular symbolic construction. This character of news about the Global South is a well-known feature. What is not well commented on, however, is the second dynamic to this paradigm of doom and gloom, which is the heroic Western act of saving Africa from itself. This act of philanthropy has become the dominant prism through which Africa gets to make it into the headline news of the developed world. Examples abound in the mass media. When Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears who, after suffering from bad press due to their personal mischief, wanted to salvage themselves and their economic fortunes as entertainment celebrities, they announced plans to travel to Africa to campaign against poverty and AIDS, even though they probably would not do so in fact. Madonna is now associated with a non-profit organization, "Raising Malawi", after adopting a child from an orphanage in Malawi. The metaphor of the perpetual African child cannot be lost in this. Oprah's school project in South Africa, like Madonna's adoption story, is difficult to criticize, because doing good, altruism, and charity are acts that are almost impossible to challenge. Increasingly, Mr. Paul Hewson (alias Bono) is better known for his campaign to save Africa than for his music with the band U2. We know that celebrity valuation is based on the economy of image circulation. And thus the philanthropic attraction to the poor lies in its difference.

Lucy Irigary would have said both the celebrities and their object of seduction, the poor, are located in a specular economy (Irigaray 1985). It is this economy that I think critical scholarship in Development Communication should attend to. For we need to answer the question: What comes after giving? The role of the media in the construction of this second dynamic of telescopic philanthropy has not received much scholarly attention as what I have called the paradigm of doom and gloom. Thus this chapter is an attempt to draw attention to this aspect of how Africa is repeatedly represented as an object of charity and how this has wider ramifications on the emancipatory potential of the continent. In a sense, then, this chapter is about a global divide of benefactors and beneficiaries, alms givers and beggars, saviors and their helpless objects of heroism.

What does it mean to found the emancipation of a continent on the philanthropic whim? It is in the rescuing of the poor, or helping the “undeveloped” to attain what Schramm (1964) called the attainment of the “Great Society”, that development communication theory finds its reason d’être as an academic and programmatic area of inquiry. Thus we need to problematize the relationship between philanthropy and the epistemic foundations of development communication. I will develop an argument around the characteristic feature of the Global North as the source of charity and the Global South as the object of emancipation, and how this dynamic impacts on the state and transforms it into an instrument of tutelary governance. Such a view can be used as a framework for rethinking development communication scholarship and the question of emancipation. Indeed the project of development communication theory can be framed as the rescue mission of the North to save the Global South from itself. Drawing from theories of charity, and philanthropy, this paper attempts to open up discussions around the limits of altruism and the poverty of development communication theory as an emancipatory practice.

From Charles Dickens to Present

“Telescopic philanthropy”, as a phrase, was first used by Charles Dickens in his novel *Bleak House* some 150 years ago to poke fun at and critique what was then an English fascination and obsession with designing development projects to save Africa and Africans from poverty, and to usher them into a modern economy of production. In the Dickensian narrative, the story is told of a Mrs. Jellyby, a friend of John Jarndyce, who neglects her house and children and is obsessed with projects designed to save African in the Congo from poverty by teaching them how to grow coffee to enable them to earn an income. In retrospect, it is clear that what Dickens was describing was the genesis of what is now a global industry of state, non-governmental charities and celebrity acts of philanthropy to save Africa from itself. Dickens was noted for his journalism and the use of the novel as a means of social critique. His discussion of telescopic philanthropy is instructive because it allows us to understand the practice of international development as pre-dating the post-World War II Truman era. It also allows us to understand how international development framed as charitable interventions that northern developed countries do to global southern countries as acts that are tied to the domestic power politics of the so-called benefactor countries.

It is against this backdrop that I am motivated to argue that the problem with Africa is as much a problem of development as it is the troubling impact of international aid

on the continent's self-initiative. Evidently what I am aiming to argue is not about a global divide of technological haves and technological have-nots. The global divide that interests me is the global divide of benefactors and beneficiaries, that between donors and beggars, between philanthropist and objects of charity. The institution that is partly responsible for this global divide is the global media. As we have seen from Dickens, the attempt to save Africa is not new. Indeed, Susan Thorne's (1999) provocative interpretation of 19th Century middle class formation in Victorian and Edwardian Britain makes the case that saving the heathens in Africa was always preferred to saving the heathens at home, and that this particular fascination with the distant other had a definite imperial logic. It is a logic that is still with us today. I will be coming back to this particular angle of the past to relate it to the present.

I have been conducting interviews with retired international development workers who were active in the 1960s. And recently I had a chat with SD¹ who was instrumental in lobbying for the creation of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). He told me his earliest achievement in the late 1950s was helping to bring the first batch of African students to Canada to study. When the first batch arrived, he welcomed them and asked what they wanted to do for their first weekend. The African students told him they wanted to visit a First Nations Community. He was shocked. Shocked because, not only did he not know where they lived, he was not even sure whether as a Canadian he was allowed to visit a First Nations Community. Later he found out that a First Nations Community was located about five kilometres away from his home. He did not know of them until then, but he knew of how to save faraway Africa. His neighbours, the First Nations people, probably needed development assistance more than the distant Africans did. But saving the distant other has always been the preferred practice. Today the theme of telescopic philanthropy as the means of emancipation from poverty has taken centre stage in global discourses on Africa. What is interesting, and disturbing about this development of the discourse of aid is that there has been a shift from state actors to a predominance of private individual and corporate actors. Saving Africa has now become the new celebrity public statement.

It has been some 60 years since international "soft power" was re-articulated in the garb of compassion as international development with the proclamation of the Truman doctrine (Truman 1964). Sixty years into the present, we know that this model of assistance is a failure. For instance, in 2007, the Senate in Ottawa, an arm of the Canadian Government, released an extensive report showing that 40 years of Canada's development assistance through the state agency CIDA has been a dismal failure (Senate of Canada 2007). Among others, the Senate Committee recommended, as an option, that CIDA be shut down. While this is unlikely to be implemented, it points to the fact that institutionalized international development initiated from the developed countries to support the development of developing countries is not working.

Action Aid International has been at the forefront of documenting the amount of phantom aid in international development assistance. It reports, for instance, that: "Eighty-six cents in every dollar of American aid is phantom aid, largely because it is so heavily tied to the purchase of US goods and services, and because it is so badly targeted at poor countries" (Action Aid 2005 p. 19. See also Action Aid 2006 for a follow-up report). The Canadian Senate report stated that since CIDA was created in 1968, it has spent 12.4 billion dollars in bilateral assistance to sub-Sahara Africa with

no demonstrable results. Why should it be surprising? Imagine that 81% of CIDA's 1500 employees are based in Ottawa with field staff having no executive authority (Senate of Canada 2007).

If we remind ourselves that the original idea of international development assistance that the US invented was not about development of the Global South, but about developing a global instrument of soft power and containment (Samarajiwa 1987, Escobar 1995), then the epistemic commitment of development communication theory ought to question the language of help that characterizes international development. Much of the development communication literature of the past 60 years has been on how to become an effective handmaiden of this dubious re-invention of international diplomacy called international development (See Waisbord 2000 for a comprehensive statement of various theoretical, methodological and strategic commitments in the field). Arturo Escobar's (1995) Foucauldian take on development and other post-development theorists are also instructive here.

Development communication theory as an area of inquiry needs to take into account the price the so-called poor pay when they get a clinic built, pipe-borne water provided or a school built through the altruism of the philanthropist, the gift giver, or the new missionary worker of international development. I want to use a recent EU decision to illustrate this point. In July 2008, the BBC reported that the European Commission had agreed to use one billion euros of unspent European farm subsidies to aid African farmers (BBC 2008). The BBC report, which showed a picture of an African farmer labouring a rice field, went on to quote European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso as saying "The impact of high food prices is particularly severe for the world's poorest populations" and adds that without the EU's assistance, the UN's goal to reduce global poverty will fail. This European act of altruism, upon a second look, is not only a phantom one, but a Trojan Horse that is meant to purchase a highly needed strategic advantage for the EU in a growing global tide against EU and North American agricultural subsidies and how they negatively impact on farmers in the Global South. The price Africa will pay for getting the "spare change" of one billion euro dropped in its begging bowl is that it will lose a strong standing in making a case against the EU for subsidizing its farmers so that they can unfairly compete with Africans in a global food market. What the EU's charitable gesture does against the discourse of fair trade and the fundamental illogicality of preaching free trade in Africa while maintaining farm subsidies in Europe is far more significant than any apparent altruism it might suppose. Here then is the point about giving being an act of self-interest.

Impossibility of Gift

International development assistance, either through the agency of the state or the private individual or corporation, has come to acquire the look of a gift to be given to the Global South by the Global North. Despite the attempts at pushing Freirean conceptions of participatory development and post-development advocacy of grassroots development to make this gift-giving paradigm effective (as in the discourse of aid effectiveness), it is still a challenge yet to be overcome. Part of this difficulty lies in the discourse of gift that founds the discourse of international development. From the Global North, the media focus is on the assistance being sent down. From the Global South, led by the

postcolonial state and the army of NGOs, the discourse is about how to attract development assistance and make aid effective.

One is tempted to think that the push to “fix” aid to bring about development, as evident in the September 2008 Accra conference on Aid Effectiveness, is founded on a visceral need to assuage guilt feelings of historical wrongs to Africa rather than any critically examined conviction of the relationship between aid and development. And even then this reparative altruism is not an innocent one. Anyone who knows the story of European slavery and colonization of Africa cannot help but develop the compassion to help undo the wrongs of the past. And in such a position, a compassionate heart founded on the values of charity, philanthropy and assistance becomes inevitable. The task, I think, is to remind ourselves that it is not always the case that our do-good intentions translate into good outcomes. And the problem does not lie in how doing good is carried out. It lies precisely in the philosophical assumption that Africa must be helped. There is no co-relation between international development assistance flows and economic take-off. One Ugandan journalist, Mwenda (2007), has already pointed out that the example of the Marshall Plan in post-War Europe used to justify the transfer of aid to Africa is an overstated case. American aid to Europe under the Marshall Plan accounted for about 3% of the GDP of the receiving European countries. The average African country today receives about 15% of GDP as aid. And yet the success story of reconstruction in Europe is not replicated in Africa in its quest for modernization. William Easterly (2006) presents us with enough evidence to dispel our religious belief that aid is good for Africa’s economic growth and human development. He shows with hard statistical evidence that there is an inverse correlation between aid and development.

Since Marcel Mauss (1969), the literature on the sociology of gift has expressly demonstrated that the gifting relation is not an altruistic act. It is heavily loaded with debt. Indeed, despite its neoliberal undertones, an argument can always be made that the market is a superior form of exchange relations because market transactions result in a permanent liquidation of debt (Godbout 2000) between the parties. Gift-giving only results in the unresolved question of reciprocity, and for that matter, debt, or better still, poison.

What then is the debt that African countries owe for being recipients of development assistance in this global divide of donors and beggars? The trouble with the gift as a means of exchange, according to Derrida, is its impossibility (Derrida 1992). The possibility of the gift is contingent on its relation of foreignness to the economy. As a result, the possibility of the gift requires the absence of reciprocity, exchange, counter-gift, or debt. If the gift is reciprocated, it cancels out the gift as gift. The gift is thereby annulled if any restitution for the gift is ever given. The gift must not only remain unpaid, but cannot even be recognized as a gift by either the donor or recipient. Acknowledgment of the gift gives rise to gratuity, self-recognition, and other symbolic forms of reciprocity. Therefore, if the gift is recognized as such, the gift is annulled, and if there is no gift, then there is no gift. The possibility of the gift is its impossibility.

Derrida points out that the relationship among time, the economy, and the gift is an important one that we should attend to. In time, all gifts are reciprocated and, therefore, part of the economy. Not only does the impossibility of the gift highlight that the gift is, in fact, always a part of the economy (through the logic of exchange), but that the gift finds its legitimation in its defiance to the economy; a defiance that, according

to Derrida, does not in fact exist. According to Derrida, there is no “logic of the gift” because the discourse of the gift is always speaking of something other than the gift itself. Unlike Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu (1996; and 1990) argues for the possibility of gift through time. The time lapse between the inaugural gift and the counter-gift allows for a collective delusion of the possibility of the gift. But more significantly, Boudieu points out the role of the gift in the perpetuation of what he calls “symbolic violence”. And this symbolic violence is more severe when the counter-gift is practically impossible as is the case in charity, which ultimately leads to a lasting relation of dependency and enslavement of debt.

Here then is the power of Truman’s re-articulation of international soft power as international development assistance. It also illustrates the burden of debt resulting from gifting that the African farmer and his continent owe the EU for the one billion euro of aid. The cost of this aid as a Trojan horse is never discussed in the mass media. The gift will always facilitate the speaking of something other than itself. And it is in that something that we may find the true cost of international aid. Not in the feel-good stories of building a clinic for the village through donations – stories my graduate students love to bring to my class. It is precisely these forms of symbolic violence inherent in the gift that post-development scholars see as the driving force behind the post-WWII development project.

From the Gift of Spiritual Salvation to the Gift of Economic Emancipation

Looking back at the 19th century European missionary work abroad helps us understand its contemporary parallels with the international development aid industry in its quest for the economic emancipation of Africa through assistance. Both the missionary work of the 19th century and the institutional practice of 21st century international development assistance today have some very eerie similarities. Imagine a Canadian NGO that sources funding from CIDA to promote human rights education among African journalists. To qualify as an expert and be sent to Nigeria, one must be under 30 years of age and a Canadian citizen. One of my graduate students was sent on this project for one year after completing a bachelor’s degree in the social sciences. She was sent to Nigeria to conduct workshops on sensitizing Nigerian journalists to human rights issues. She arrived in Nigeria only to discover that a good number of those attending had been working as journalists before she was born. Some had risked their lives under military governments to demand freedom of speech. A good number also had graduate degrees. Yet, this young missionary of human rights was given the task of teaching Africans the gospel of human rights. What facilitates this absurdity is the reality of the global divide of donors and beggars.

When she told me her experience as an NGO staff facilitator of human rights education in Nigeria, she reminded me of the qualifications required to be allowed to work as a missionary in Africa two centuries earlier. In 1876, the Ladies Committee of the London Missionary Society rejected the application of a woman “with native blood in her” from modern day Mumbai (formally Bombay), who thought she had all the skills to work in Africa. She was told it was official policy to recruit “only English ladies with thorough English education” (Thorne 1999: 108). While race was used as the measure of qualification, citizenship is used today as the measure of qualification to work in the

secular missionary work of international development. If race was used in 19th century missionary work as the structural mechanism for ensuring that international development assistance functioned properly as a means to ameliorate domestic conditions in Europe, citizenship is the new structural mechanism to ensure that international development assistance functions properly as a means of creating “jobs for the boys” – perhaps an even more sanitized version of good old pork-barrel politics. In both processes, the compassionate language of philanthropy and charity has been mobilized to mask them.

I have a second example. In the business of international development assistance, we do know that the World Bank was instrumental in articulating private sector participation in international development. Today it is a very expanding industry. Indeed the feel-good stories of helping the Global South grow out of its dehumanizing poverty trap have achieved new levels of appreciation with the coinage of a new lexical monstrosity – “philanthropreneurs” – to designate the reinvention of the relationship between capitalism and development (Strom 2006). Bill Gates quits his daytime job to become a full-time charity worker; Pierre Omidyar, founder of eBay, wants to use investment capital and donations to expand micro credit programs. The list can continue. Alan Abramson, head of the non-profit and philanthropy program at the Aspen Institute, puts it quotably:

These guys have firsthand knowledge of the market’s power, and they’re asking themselves why they can’t make money and tackle some of the problems once addressed primarily by government at the same time (quoted in Strom 2006).

This is a repeat of history with a twist. If the state and multilateral institutions are instrumental in inviting the private sector into the lucrative business of development in the 21st century, in the 19th century it was the missionaries who invited Empire into the edifying business of the civilizing mission.

As Susan Thorne shows in her re-reading of colonial historiography, it was when the distant focus of missionary activities increasingly came under attack at home that the London Missionary Society strategically introduced the discourse of social imperialism and the need for Empire to actually come on board to facilitate the civilizing mission abroad (Thorne 1999). We know that one of the reasons for the World Bank’s appeal to the private sector to come on board international development assistance is the supposed dwindling of resources for the non-profit sector. And here again, if we compare the strategies for raising funds both then (in the 19th century) and now (for instance World Vision’s infomercial on TV and “telethons”), the imperial and colonial logic becomes even more poignant (Jefferess 2002). For instance, in an attempt to widen the social base of its collections, the LMS introduced a penny-a-week guild in 1903. By 1916, there were penny-a-week clubs among the working classes (Thorne 1999: 114). We know the consequences of the missionary work in Africa and how it facilitated colonialism. Given the similarity of missionary work in Africa then and now, what are the consequences of international development assistance today?

The Cost of International Development Assistance

There has been a wealth of NGO literature in recent years that shows how international development assistance is a phantom one (Action Aid 2005 and 2006; Christian Aid 2005). The empty promises from G8 summits are not new. What is not often articulated

is the real cost of aid. My argument is that if missionary work in the past facilitated the actual colonization of land, the missionary work of today (international development work) is facilitating the actual colonization of the postcolonial state. One only needs to look at the “Letters of Intent” submitted by African governments to the IMF every six months to see how the external aid industry underwrites new modes of state accountability, which I can only describe as tutelary governance. Letters of Intent are periodic reports that governments under structural adjustment submit to the IMF to explain how they are governing their country and how they are disbursing development assistance. They must also explain why they have not fulfilled IMF and World Bank expectations, should there be any failings. These letters are often signed by the African country’s Minister of Finance, and depending on how trusted the government is, counter-signed by the governor of the Central Bank. If you have a state that depends on external sources to balance its budget, why will it be accountable to the citizens at home that it governs? What aid does is to prevent African governments from engaging in production relations with their citizens and local businesses.

Andrew Mwenda (2007) presents some startling statistics on Uganda to alarm us. In the 2006/07 national budget of Uganda, the Government’s projections were:

Expected Revenue:	2.5 trillion Shillings
Expected Foreign Aid	1.9 trillion Shillings
Recurrent Expenditure	2.6 trillion Shillings
Development Expenditure	1.8 trillion Shillings

Recurrent Expenditure is the cost of administration of the country, which includes some 70 ministers, 114 presidential advisors and 333 members of parliament, among others. At the Ministry of Health headquarters, the government provided 3000 FWDs, yet none of the 961 counties has an ambulance at their clinics.

Ghana is another illustrative example. Shortly after celebrating debt relief under the World Bank’s Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC), Ghana turned around and spent 60 million US dollars to celebrate its 50th anniversary as an independent nation (*Daily Graphic* 2009). The Ghanaian Government then commissioned a 176 million US dollar presidential mansion to be built and subsequently signed a 37 million US dollar cheque to order a presidential jet (*National Enquirer* 2009). All these expenditure were heavily criticized by members of civil society, yet the state refused to budge. According to the *National Enquirer* (2009) newspaper, the president “attracted a lot of criticism from minority parties and sections of the Ghanaian public, when commissioning the project, for not seeing to the priority needs of the people, such as addressing the acute water shortage and lack of capacity to deal with sanitation in the cities, and described the choice as amounting to a misplaced priority.” The Ghanaian state refused to budge because it expects volunteers and donors from rich countries to come and build the schools and clinics that are badly needed in many parts of the country. This is a country where a donation of furniture or books at a cost of USD 5,000 to a community school makes headline news.

The vulgarity of the postcolonial state, which founds its legitimacy in the articulation of national development, yet does otherwise, can be seen in the table below. At the end of 2008, when Ghanaians elected a new government, parliament approved a package

of ex-gratia award for the retiring president. When the details of the law were made public in January 2009, Ghanaians described it as unacceptably extravagant. While it remains to be seen if the new government will repeal that law and revise the package, I have compared the benefits of Ghana's retiring President, John Kufuor, with that of his American counterpart, George Bush Jr., as both left office in the same month and year after eight years of service.

Table 1. Comparing Retirement Packages for Ghanaian and American Presidents²

Retirement Benefits	Ghana (per capita income USD 1,400)	United States of America (per capital income USD 46,000)
Pension	400,000.00 non-taxable lump sum	USD 191,000.00 taxable
No. Of cars	6 fully maintained, comprehensively insured fleet to be renewed every 4 years	No car
Official residence	Two fully furnished houses	No house
End of service gratuity	1.2 million USD	No End of service gratuity
Support for Widow	Retains ownership of houses. No pension	Lifetime pension of USD20,000.00
Medical and dental	Free family coverage	Free family coverage
Entertainment	Unspecified but to be provided for by Office of State Protocol	Not provided for
Foreign Travel	Paid for by the state with 3 supporting staff. Can travel for up to 60 days in a year	Paid for by the state with 2 supporting staff
Foundation/Presidential Library	State provides One Million USD seed money to help start a private foundation	Private funds (tax exempt) for presidential Library

What makes the Ghanaian postcolonial state act so lavishly for itself and not for development projects? How is it possible that Ghana can contemplate such a package for its ex-president – one that surpasses that the package provided by the United States? This is possible because much of the Ghanaian national budget is underwritten by external donor support in the form of development assistance, while the state has no incentive to be accountable to the needs of civil society. In such a disjuncture, the postcolonial state becomes a good instrument for external control as part of its payment for the debt of the gift of development assistance.

This postcolonial state's loyalty and fealty to external agencies is well illustrated by the story of Ghanaian farmers and their battle against unfair competition. Imported chicken and rice are cheaper in Ghana than are locally produced products. So poultry producers were able to convince the Ministry of Finance to impose special levies on imported chicken products to give local produce an edge in the competition. When this was incorporated into the national budget for 2003 and passed in parliament, the government revenue collection agency at the nation's ports refused to enforce it. The consequence

of this rare situation of government refusing to collect legitimate tariffs was that it was losing revenue, deliberately, while local farmers continued to be disadvantaged in an unfair competition with imported and subsidized products from Europe. Next, the local poultry producers took the government to court to legally compel it to implement the tariffs on imported chicken and rice. When it won judgment in 2005, the President sent his Finance Minister to parliament to read a bill under “a rarely-used emergency measures” (Christian Aid 2005: 31) to overturn the 2003 act that compelled government to collect tariffs on imported chicken and rice, and ultimately, to make the court decision irrelevant. What the local poultry farmers did not know was that Ghana had committed in a previous “Letter of Intent” to the IMF and World Bank promising that it would not impose tariffs on goods like imported chicken and rice. In addition, in a previous 2000 agreement with the IMF, Ghana had committed not to impose tariffs on agricultural inputs and in return get a 35.1 million USD loan from the Fund to support its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (IMF 2000). According to a Christian Aid report, both the IMF and the World Bank used their top most officials, including the then president of the Bank, James Wolfensohn, to personally put pressure on the Ghanaian president and his senior ministers to repeal the law requiring the state to collect import duties on imported agricultural goods (Christian Aid 2005).

Torn between civil society and the donor institutions led by the IMF and the World Bank, the government demonstrated accountability to the latter institutions by acting unilaterally against the very economic interest of Ghanaian businesses. Under WTO rules, Ghana can levy tariffs on imported agricultural products. But the Ghanaian state will have none of that. Even if local businesses organized to defend their interest against international competitors using legitimate means, like lobbying to have the national budget statement reflect their needs and going to court to get a judgment, the state, in an afterthought, demonstrated its loyalty to external donors. This is the true cost of international development assistance. Local entrepreneurs and labour in Ghana do not stand any chance of competing against imported chicken from Europe, because European farmers enjoy state subsidies on grains use as feeds. The IMF and World Bank were instrumental in pressurizing Ghana to remove subsidies to farmers under its structural adjustment program. Now they have to unfairly compete with European farmers in their own domestic market. And the Ghanaian democratically elected government is supervising this unfair treatment of its farmers by actively working to perpetuate it.

Andrew Mwenda (2007) Ugandan Journalist, puts it aptly:

If the government’s fiscal survival depends on it having to raise money from its own people, such a government is driven by self interest to govern in a more enlightened fashion. It will sit with those who create wealth, talk to them about the kind of policies and institutions that are necessary for them to expand the scale and scope of business so that it can collect more tax revenue from them. The problem with the African continent and the problem with the aid industry is that it has distorted the structure of incentives facing governments in Africa.

The state has literally become an institution-for-itself and in that dispensation, it becomes available to external interest rather than local demands as part of the payment for the debt of the gift of aid. External agencies have leveraged the power of giving into appropriating the instrumentality of the state. This is an effect of the gift, which Der-

rida says does everything, except what it promises. Donor support has resulted in the transformation of the postcolonial state into an instrument of tutelary governance. It is from this perspective that I think development communication theorists can inquire into the discursive functions of donor support in international development.

Conclusion

I want to conclude with a reference to African writer Aminata Sow Fall's novel the *Beggars' Strike*. I read that novel as an allegory of the African condition of aid dependence. As an allegory, it tells us how we can end this global divide of benefactors and beneficiaries, or philanthropists and recipients of aid. The *Beggars' Strike* is a remarkable story of street panhandlers, despised as the jetsam and flotsam of Senegalese society, who could not take the abuse and physical assault from city officials who wanted to clear them from the street corners. The difficult circumstance of one of them being killed in an act of terror against the beggars produced its hero in the person of Nguirane, who philosophized, and rightly so, that alms giving and alms collecting are relations of exchange that mutually benefit both parties. So the city officials are mistaken in assuming that only beggars benefit from alms-giving. I wish to quote the character Nguirane here:

Our Hunger doesn't worry them. They need to give in order to survive, and if we didn't exist, who would they give to? How could they ensure their own peace of mind? They don't give for our sake; they give for their own sake! They need us so they can live in peace (Fall 1981: 38)

So when the beggars decided to move out of the city to live at a distant fringe, alms givers started travelling the long distance just to give alms. In the end, the city officials wanted them back at the street corners, but the beggars declined. This discovery of the power relations between alms givers and beggars reminds us of the specular economy that masquerades as philanthropy. And this is what development communication theory needs to open up.

Notes

1. Real name omitted for confidentiality.
2. Table constructed from three sources: Danso (2009); Reuters Report (2009) and Smith (2008).

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Unpacking Cultural Divides

Yudhishtir Raj Isar

Abstract

This text is based on an introductory Keynote delivered by the author for a Plenary panel of Nordic researchers that took place during the 2008 'Media and Global Divides' conference. Designed to provide an international stage-setting context for a range of Nordic perspectives, the text first deconstructs the notions of 'global' and 'divide'. It then takes up 'global divides' that are cultural in nature, referring principally to 'divide'-related notions analyzed by various contributors to the two published volumes of the *Cultures and Globalization Series*, of which the author is co-editor. Finally, it seeks to displace the 'divide' metaphor, by attending to the complex relations of competition and collaboration that link different centres of cultural production, e.g., the spatial dynamics of film and television production as explored by Michael Curtin in the recently published second volume of the *Series* entitled *The Cultural Economy*.

Keywords: cultural conflict; identity politics; cultural and media imperialism; film and television; media capital.

Introduction

As a preliminary to this introductory exploration of the notion of 'cultural' divides, I propose to briefly unpack the terms of debate. At this conference – 'Media and Global Divides' – the master term is 'global divides'. How might we parse this double-headed expression? What is the '*global*'? Does the term refer simply to phenomena encountered everywhere in the world? Or to phenomena that dominate the planet specifically because of the time-space compression that we call globalization? Or is the 'global' a higher level of overarching organization and process, a new whole at the planetary level that is more than the sum of its parts, endowed with an entelechy of its own?

And what do we mean by 'divides'? Are these, as in the original etymological meaning of the word, mere dividing points or lines? Or watersheds? Or disjunctures? Is a 'divide' something more than that: a disagreement, a conflict of interests, a schism? Or does the term connote a gross imbalance of power, a major asymmetry of access, a marked pattern of injustice, a glaring inequality of means? Should we perhaps, as Cees Hamelink read it in his James Halloran Memorial lecture, see the notion in a totally different frame of reference, as a deeply rooted dichotomy of mind-sets: between, as he put it, the spirit of absolutism and that of self-reflexivity?

We tend to deploy all of these senses, and more, depending on the context and the situation. Perhaps we do this simply because both 'global' and 'divide' have joined the ranks of those floating signifiers that are now rife in the discourses of the social sciences

and the humanities. But in fact there is also a polysemy of meanings that is inherent in the issues involved; different disciplines and problematics may well have their own preferred meanings.

Unfortunately, this state of affairs advances neither analytical rigour nor trans-disciplinary communication... Be that as it may, for the purposes of the *Cultures and Globalization Series* we read the notion of a 'divide' in the following two ways:

1. As a predicament common to all societies, whether it obtains within nation-states or between groups of societies thought to belong to particular geocultural regions or thought to display patterns of commonality or sameness.
2. As oppositions or asymmetries at the level of the global ecumene, e.g. North-South, East-West, Islam-the West...

In both cases, our work for the *Series* strongly suggests that we ought to conceptualize the 'divides' in more complex and nuanced ways than has tended to be the case so far.

That said by way of introduction, I shall now briefly describe the project and review some divide-relevant issues that emerged from the 2007 volume on *Conflicts and Tensions* and the 2008 volume on *The Cultural Economy* (Anheier and Isar 2007; 2008).

The 'Cultures and Globalization' Series

Our point of departure of the project was that culture, its forms of creation, presentation and preservation, are broadly and deeply affected by globalization and in turn impact upon it — but in ways that are inadequately understood. Mapping the interactions between culture and globalization is the principal object of the *Series*.¹ Our purpose in so doing is threefold: i) to *analyze* cultural transformations and their economic, social and political implications (and vice-versa); ii) to provide a *platform* for new perspectives in accessible, policy-relevant ways and iii) to substantiate these new perspectives empirically and *quantitative data* thereon in innovative ways. The project is academy-based, but also welcomes journalists, artists, and public intellectuals as contributors; its scope is truly international and multi-disciplinary; it calls on established as well as younger scholars; and it is entirely foundation-supported, notably by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, the Compagnia di San Paolo, the J. Paul Getty Trust, the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

Each volume consists of *overview essays* resulting from fresh research on key issues and trends, followed by *analytical chapters* and *case studies* on particular regions, topics, or fields. A distinct and major segment of each volume is the data section of *indicator suites* on cultural phenomena, trends, events, etc. all presented through very sophisticated and user-friendly information graphic methods. Each volume is also prepared in the light of a conceptual framework, a set of lines of inquiry that are proposed to contributors in advance; the latter are also brought together at an 'authors' meeting' organized midway through the writing process with a view to achieving a degree of coherence and cross-fertilisation rare in most collective volumes.

Conflicts and Tensions

The conflicts and tensions that underly the 'divide' notion in the cultural realm were

the focus of the inaugural volume of the *Series* published in 2007. Strong anxieties lurk behind much of the present-day concern for culture understood in its multiple senses, but particularly in the ways of life or 'culture as identity' meaning (Eagleton 2000) in relation to globalization. The specter of conflict is ever-present: the cultural dimensions of conflict on the one hand, and the conflictual dimensions of culture on the other or, to put it differently, how any kind of group conflict can be 'culturalized' and how culture itself can become a party to the confrontation between particularisms. This connection between the two is a corollary of Appadurai's 'culturalism': "the conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics" (1996, p. 15) – by different agents and agencies, by ideologues of many different types and persuasion. This applies in particular to the question of cultural identities, both individual and collective, and to their forms of expression, maintenance, representation, recognition, and renewal.

In this sense, then, the volume is about the interplay between globalization and 'identity politics' in both local and global arenas. Understandably, several contributors address the issues against the now unavoidable backdrop of the 'clash of civilizations' thesis, which sees cultural difference as the principal ground for divergences that will lead inevitably, if not addressed, to violent conflict. 'Globalization' was the second term of our binomial.² We therefore asked contributors to foreground the interactions between the forces of globalization and conflicts or tensions that they could understand as being 'cultural' in one way or another, or at least linked to cultural factors, whether these conflicts or tensions are global or trans-national in their scope, cutting across geo-cultural regions, or whether they arise within nations – while bearing in mind our preference for the global or transnational articulation of these phenomena. We also invited our authors to examine two particular facets of culture-related conflict: i) how conflicts generated by globalization in other areas come to occupy a 'cultural' terrain and ii) how and why the cultural dimension itself may have its own inbuilt conflict and tension dynamics that might be either amplified or suppressed by globalization processes. Having set out the above conceptual framework and lines of inquiry, the more specific questions we asked contributors to address included the following. When is conflict 'cultural'? Is culture agent or pawn in a range of conflictual situations? When and how do economic and/or political conflicts occupy a 'cultural' terrain? When does the cultural dimension itself have its own inbuilt conflict dynamics? How are conflicts and tensions either amplified or mitigated by globalization processes?

Now obviously the 40 different authors approached these issues in hugely different ways; the point here is not to capture this variegation but to share a selection of findings that speak to the notion of cultural conflicts as 'divides'. In that spirit, one could cite the way in which the processes of liberalization ('state shrinking') accompanying globalization are weakening the capacity of public institutions to head off and/or manage culture-related conflicts in multi-ethnic societies. There are winners and losers, as different ethnic groups suffer or gain disproportionately; those with grievances (real or imagined) are easily instrumentalized here by 'cultural entrepreneurs' (Crawford 2007), in other words individuals or agencies that politicize cultural identity for political or economic gain.

I could also cite a range of 'fault lines' explored. For example, the asymmetric relationships between 'North' and 'South' that implicitly favor the universalization of

western paradigms, stifle local production of culture, language, and memory, and thereby create considerable conflict potential. Or the divide between the 'West' and the 'Arab World', based upon still largely unaddressed historical traumas that become increasingly vulnerable to memory wars, reinforced by double standards on both sides. Or the fault lines with Islam, generated by conflict-saturated discourse about the meaning and practice of the religion itself that has in turn led to acute tensions both within the Islamic *umma* and with the belief structures of other religions...

Are cultural conflicts really 'cultural', we asked as well? Culture has its own dynamic, yet is embedded in economic, social and power relations; the 'cultural' is deployed in varying combinations with other societal dynamics, and what matters is the nature of these combinations, how they are nurtured or misused... Needless to say, the 'clash of civilization' thesis is also tackled in the volume, as the paradigmatic instance of a divide constructed at the global level. Our critique confirms the judgment already made by others such as Said that the thesis reifies and essentializes an abstract concept: 'civilization'. In point of fact, most culture-related conflicts occur *within* rather than *between* civilizations. Yet the 'clash' paradigm has enjoyed far greater currency than it deserves; after 9/11 it has been resuscitated and politicized.

The Cultural Economy

In the 2008 volume, some 46 authors from 21 different countries explore the 'cultural economy', understood as the manifold forms of economic activity that produce outputs with significant aesthetic or semiotic content, or symbolic outputs. And they tackle framing questions such as the following. How does globalization affect the production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services? How does commodification impact upon notions of cultural value? How are the relationships between cultural creators, producers and consumers being modified? How vibrant is the cultural economy in different countries and regions of the world? What are the policy challenges that societies face in this arena? While answering such questions, several contributors have explored 'divides' of ownership, agency and voice – divides that are at once 'global' because they occur between world regions such as North and South, or East and West, and 'local', by which I mean within regions or nations. While globalization has vastly extended the market reach and power of cultural producers in many cases, it has reduced them in many others.

Hence the vigorous international debate on trade in cultural goods and services. Hence also the advocacy of such protocols as Open Knowledge, Open Archives, Open Access, Open Source. But given the power and reach of private interests in global capitalism, however, this advocacy is unlikely to be translated into practice. Instead, what may be expected is a continuing proliferation of small and micro-enterprises with the capacity to contest diverse markets through the enabling powers of new production and distribution technologies (Scott 2008). This is unlikely to challenge the power of large multinational corporations in the cultural economy, but these entities will find themselves to an ever increasing degree embedded in a long-tailed distribution made up of myriad small-scale niche producers.

We have a predilection for the analytical insights of cultural and economic and cultural geography; for this reason, patterns of *spatial concentration and dispersion* in

cultural production, as explored by Michael Curtin, Andy Pratt and Allen Scott (2008) are foregrounded in the volume. These authors have studied the ways in which a growing number of cultural-products agglomerations is accompanied by a growing differentiation of outputs, as individual centers struggle to mobilize their place-specific competitive advantages and as they build up reputations for particular kinds of product designs and forms of semiotic expression. And in this context there are two key factors – the geographic diversification of productive efforts and the socio-spatial fragmentation of demand – that both seem to resist the processes through which certain producers and/or agglomerations establish monopoly powers in certain global market segments. Hence, for Allen Scott,

globalization appears less and less to be resulting in a pattern of mass cultural uniformity. To the contrary, we seem to be entering an era where cultural production is becoming increasingly polycentric and polysemic. The most evident expression of this state of affairs is the steady emergence of a world-wide mosaic of cultural production centers tied together in complex relations of competition and collaboration. (2008: 321)

Film and Television: The Persisting Spatial Dynamics

These ‘complex relations of competition and collaboration’ are a force field in which the ‘divide’ metaphor necessarily has less purchase. They oblige us also to look afresh at the old ‘media imperialism’ critique, whose explanatory value has already been challenged on several counts. Because it failed to account for the diverse ways in which audiences make use of foreign media. Because it overlooked the growing influence of domestic media producers and failed to acknowledge the increasing prominence of transnational media production centers in cities such as Mumbai, Hong Kong, São Paulo or Lagos. Because it focused on national cinemas and national broadcasting systems, paying little attention to the increasingly complex and trans-border circulations of popular media. Because it privileged the United States as a central and organizing actor in the international media economy.

Instead of dominant power emanating from a single source, we see complex and contingent forces and flows at work in a multi-centric cultural economy, as the number of media producers, distributors, and consumers has grown dramatically, first in Europe and then in Asia, with China and India together adding almost two billion new viewers. These trends have been particularly well analyzed by Michael Curtin in his chapter entitled ‘Spatial Dynamics of Film and Television’ (2008: 215-226), and therefore I should like now to dip extensively into his analysis.

Although powerful global media conglomerates were active contributors to these forces and flows, Curtin observes, local, national, and regional media firms expanded rapidly as well. In India, Rupert Murdoch’s Star TV presumed to displace the government’s television monopoly but found itself beleaguered in turn by dozens of new indigenous competitors, many of them telecasting in one of the many sub-continental languages, all of them commercially driven. As a result, Star TV was forced to localize its programming and institutional practices, so as to adapt to competitive forces on the ground. In many other instances, global media corporations have had to adapt to local

conditions at the very same time that local film and television enterprises have become more globalized in their perspectives and practices. Rather than exhibiting patterns of domination and subordination, media institutions now appear to be responding to the push-pull dynamic of globalization, as increasing connectivity inspires significant changes in textual and institutional practices.

Hence the turn away from the idea of Western hegemony and towards the ways in which a larger set of processes operate trans-locally and interactively. In other words, rather than being an arena of centralized power, the world's increasingly interconnected media environment is more and more the outcome of messy and complicated interactions. These processes, observes Curtin, have led to the use of such adjectives as fractal, disjunctive, or rhizomatic to characterize a complex terrain of textual circulation, reception, and appropriation. Yet even though these adjectives connote ruptures, screen industries have nevertheless followed fairly consistent patterns of operation for almost a century. The amount of production may have increased dramatically and the patterns of circulation may have grown much more complex, but the *spatial dynamics of media capital* have remained fairly consistent. Michael Curtin has catalogued three features of these dynamics: 1) the logic of accumulation; 2) trajectories of creative migration and 3) forces of socio-cultural variation. It is to these that I now turn.

The Logic of Accumulation

The logic of accumulation presents at one and the same time the *centripetal* tendencies in the sphere of production and the *centrifugal* tendencies in distribution that Marx had in mind when he predicted that capital must 'annihilate space with time' if it is to overcome barriers to accumulation. Even though a film or TV company may be founded with the aim of serving particular national cultures or local markets, it must at some point re-deploy its creative resources and reshape its terrain of operations if it is to survive competition and enhance profitability. The well-known history of the American cinema provides an instructive example of these tendencies. Similar patterns emerged in India, where big studios emerged in the Bombay area in the 1930s. In Chinese cinema as well, transnational cinema circuits were firmly in place by the thirties, but the mode of production was initially more dispersed. During the post-World War II era, as prosperity returned to the industry, both Cathay and Shaw Brothers established integrated production operations in Hong Kong that rivaled the scope and productivity of their American counterparts. This capital-intensive factory model prevailed across the world, but unlike the auto or steel industries, filmmaking was in the business of distinctive *prototypes* rather than producing batches of products with interchangeable parts. Each commodity was relatively unique, even if production routines grew increasingly standardized and even if the films were intended for mass audiences.

Trajectories of Creative Migration

The second feature of these spatial dynamics, argues Curtin, is made up of trajectories of *creative migration*: audiovisual industries are especially reliant on creativity as a core resource. Recurring demand for new prototypes requires pools of labor that are self-consciously motivated by aesthetic innovation as well as market considerations. Attracting and managing talent is one of the most difficult challenges that screen pro-

ducers confront and they must also maintain access to reservoirs of specialized labor that replenish themselves on a regular basis. While media companies tend to cluster in particular cities, it is not just market forces, but also patterns of *creative migration* that come into at play – as centripetal tendencies that accentuate the centripetal logic of production.

Why do Hollywood, Mumbai, and Hong Kong continue to act as magnets for cultural labor, asks Curtin? He finds the answer in the way the Post-Fordist mode of production encourages and sustains the agglomeration of creative labor because constant changes in product output require frequent transactions between contractors, subcontractors, and creative talent. This encourages studios to employ *local* subcontractors and talent because proximity allows directors and managers to oversee outsourced creative labor and to make changes more easily and more frequently. As for the workers, for obvious reasons they cluster where studios and subcontracting firms are based. What seems to be distinctive today is the ways in which the centripetal logic of capitalist production has been married to the equally centripetal trajectories of creative migration, engendering the rise of several competing media capitals that are centers of creative migration in their own right.

Forces of Socio-Cultural Variation

Because cities such as Hollywood, Mumbai, and Hong Kong lie across significant cultural divides from each other, producers have been able to sustain distinctive product lines and survive the onslaught of distant competitors thanks to *forces of socio-cultural variation*. National and local institutions have been and remain significant actors despite the spatial tendencies of production and distribution. The early years of cinema were an exception because the logic of media capital unfolded relatively unimpeded by national regulation, but as the popularity of Hollywood narratives increased, many countries established policies to counter the growing influence of this new commodity form. By the 1920s, opinion leaders and politicians across the world began to grow wary of Hollywood and cultural critics began to clamor for regulation. Many countries imposed import quotas and content regulations on Hollywood films and some set up national film boards to subsidize cinema productions with national themes and talent. And at the same time, state-subsidized radio broadcasting began to provide various forms of insulation – the BBC has been the model and template here – accentuating national contours of difference in opposition to media capital's need to operate on a smooth plane of market relations worldwide. Despite a very varied and uneven record across the world, regulation of the airwaves has provided an effective way for governments to refigure the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of a capitalist regime of accumulation.

But self-conscious state policies are not the only forces that exploit socio-cultural variation. As Curtin observes, the media industries in Mumbai, Cairo, São Paulo, Bogotá or Hong Kong have also taken full advantage of social and cultural differences in their production and distribution practices. Operating across deep divides in terms of cultural inspiration and content from Hollywood et al., they have employed creative talent and cultural forms that resonate distinctively with their specific audiences. They have also made use of social networks and insider information to secure market advantages. Cultural and national pride have always been invoked in their promotional campaigns.

Conclusion

So rather than a landscape of stark divides, the spatial distribution of film and television production, together with the other developments including those I have briefly explored as well, present a multi-polar picture of success and failure, of inclusion and exclusion. And yet, while this state of affairs would tend to invalidate the simplicities of the cultural homogenization thesis, it would be wrong to conclude that globalization is bound to operate in ways that remove or reduce inequities and asymmetries. Many real divides remain. As Andy Pratt observes, *for example*, “they take on an unsurprising pattern dominated by corporate control in the North, and in cities, and a clustering around market places where consumers have high and growing disposable income” (2008: 47). These gate keeping functions include controls over (or surrender of) intellectual property rights, and distribution rights and, despite certain exceptions, seriously limit the possibility of using the developing world’s strength of ownership and innovation of creative ideas. Clearly, purely market driven system of cultural supply cannot transcend these predicaments. Instead, as Scott puts it, “an energetic but still in important respects prospective cultural politics (in the sense of self-conscious contestation of the symbolic content of economic outputs) is one of the necessary conditions of enhanced democratic order in the modern world” (2008: 321).

Notes

1. Annabelle Sreberny noted perceptively in Stockholm that I chose not to unpack the term ‘culture’, the quintessential floating signifier. No doubt I shied away from doing so because the concept is even more entangled terminologically than the notion of ‘divide’ is. ‘Culture’ is replete with myriad differences, overlaps and nuances in meaning, as various disciplines appropriate it as their ‘terrain’ and in the process effectively turning into ‘silos’ that discourage cross-disciplinary dialogue. So let me repair that omission here. The operating definition we are using for the *Series* sees ‘culture’ as:
the social construction, articulation and reception of meaning. Culture is the lived and creative experience for individuals and a body of artifacts, symbols, texts and objects. Culture involves enactment and representation. It embraces art and art discourse, the symbolic world of meanings, the commodified output of the cultural industries as well as the spontaneous or enacted, organized or unorganized cultural expressions of everyday life, including social relations. It is constitutive of both collective and individual identity (Anheier and Isar, 2008: 3).
2. The notion of *globalization* itself, almost as frustratingly as ‘culture’ is the object of multiple theories and definitions. In the *Series*, we use the term to refer to the worldwide interconnections and interdependencies that all have deep origins in world history but today are being increasingly and ever more rapidly brought about through the movement of objects (goods, services, finance and other resources, etc.), meanings (language, symbols, knowledge) and people across regions and intercontinental space. This notion of globalization as ‘time and space compression’ is not a normative concept: it is neither a business buzzword, nor a tool for miracle growth, nor the result of an evil plot (Chanda 2007), but simply the global connectivity that characterizes the way we live ever more closely ‘bound together’ in the world.

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Dead Ground

Fallacies of Understanding Global Divides, Policy-Making and Communication

Inka Salovaara-Moring

Abstract

This chapter addresses cultural production and global divides from a media geographer's point of view by introducing 'dead ground' as its central concept. This concept is borrowed from strategic thinking, originally a military term, and refers to ground that cannot be observed or experienced empirically – but (in this case) is often subjected to inference based on conventional thinking, 'common knowledge' based on experiences from other systems, or other epistemological environments that do not necessarily bear the required truth value. 'Dead ground' is explored as an ontological and epistemological concept, related to fallacies that are present in the globalisation discussion. It will particularly analyse three different fallacies: the single trajectory fallacy, the single rationality fallacy, and the single moral fallacy.

The chapter raises the question as to whether these fallacies have been inherent in Western media studies, and if they have, if they might have facilitated cognitive colonisation of the analysis of changing cultures.

Keywords: dead ground, space, globalisation, Eastern Europe, policymaking

Unknown Unknowns

There are known knowns. There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we do not know we don't know. (Donald Rumsfeldt, US Secretary of Defence, 2002)

The starting statement is taken from Donald Rumsfeldt's 12th February 2002 press briefing,¹ held at the Pentagon, and relates to US operations against al Qaeda. In hindsight the sadly ironic twist of this statement is striking. At the time, however, it earned the Secretary of Defence the 'Foot in the Mouth' award for his usage of English language. Although intended in part to be tongue in cheek, Donald Rumsfeld gave quite an accurate definition for what is '*dead ground*' and its significance in global, military thinking. Rumsfeldt's 'unknown unknown' is the highest form of ignorance, something you cannot seek because you don't know that it exists. It is a 'dead ground'.

The concept of 'dead ground' is borrowed from strategic thinking and is originally a military term. It refers to ground that cannot be observed or experienced empirically – but is often subjected to inference based on 'common knowledge', that is conventional

thinking based on experiences from other systems or cultures. Dead ground is hidden from an observer because of man-made obstacles, natural hindrance or because of the differing epistemological and ontological frame. (Salovaara-Moring 2009a)

My point of departure is *how our sense-making of global divides is always* shadowed by dead ground because sense-making is implicitly *territorial and temporal*. As such it is always prone to several fallacies. Thus this chapter introduces the concept of dead ground as an aid to understanding fallacies that concern global divides, policy-making, and communication in certain historical and geopolitical contexts. Moreover, it takes a critical look at cultural production and communication at a macro-level, in an empirical context, building on examples from my own research into transitional Eastern European countries as well as conflict-ridden areas of Caucasus.

Dead Ground, Change, and Complexities of Cultural Space

Martin Heidegger described the event which we now call globalization as “planetary imperialism of technologically organized man”, which as an “organized uniformity” becomes the surest instrument of total rule over the Earth (Heidegger 1977: 152). In many cases this ‘technologically organized man’ can be located in Western hemisphere industrialized societies with an extensive history of colonialism.

Hence, it is not only Western epistemology that is based on knowledge-production that strives for control, prediction, and minimising uncertainty. Technology has also been engaged in the same mission: control, access, governance, and rule of territories. Moreover, Western politics and policy-thinking is often based on belief in linear systems: that is a belief that the arrangement of nature, social life, cultural productions, and its complications is one where outputs are proportional to inputs. Furthermore, one where the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, and where cause and effect are observable and quantifiable. It is an environment where careful planning facilitates prediction; where success is pursued by detailed monitoring and control; and where a premium is placed upon reductionism: rewarding those who excel in reductionist processes. Reductionist analysis and policy-making consists of taking large, complex problems and reducing them to manageable chunks.

However, many changing societies are nonlinear systems, which means the arrangement of nature, life and its complications – such as new technologies, or media systems in developing democratic order – are systems where inputs and outputs are not proportional, where the whole is not quantitatively equal to its parts, or even, qualitatively recognizable in its constituent components, and here cause and effect are not evident. This is an environment where phenomena are unpredictable but, within bounds, self-organizing. One, where unpredictability frustrates conventional planning, where solution as self-organization defeats control, and where the ‘bounds’ are the actionable variable; requiring new ways of thinking and acting.

The collapse of communism and its consequential chains of events in the Soviet borderlands offer a good example of nonlinear systems and unforeseeable trajectories. When in the early 1990s communism collapsed, it brought a sudden end to the Cold War and led to the independence of fourteen Central and Eastern European countries, in addition to eight more in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The collapse of state-run socialism also brought about a fundamental reorientation in scientific thought. Due to its

close proximity to 'Europe proper', Central Eastern Europe formed a social and political laboratory, a 'terra incognita' of post-utopian time.

The region itself became *dead ground* in social sciences: old concepts and theories did not apply in this new context because social structures were in flux. Most importantly, it was *tabula rasa* for capitalism: something to be used and exploited. Given the situation, it is ironic that it was Marx (1867/1968) who once said: "people don't make their own history as they please but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." In many cases frozen territorial conflicts (Kosovo), old ethnic boundaries mixed with religious conflicts (the Balkans), and even tribal cleavages (Caucasus region) resurfaced on the political landscape.

Eastern European countries can be considered as laboratories of democracy containing 'media laboratories' that were forced to adjust to the development of changing societies as well *economic globalisation*. Those systems that seem to have worked in the West were initially accepted because there was no time for extensive experimentation. Media system crafting was based on imitation rather than invention. The route leading towards the more stable and mature European democracies and a free, accountable media did not prove to be the predictable one-way path towards higher democratic standards that observers tended to believe. In many cases democracy, media systems, and economy were crafted simultaneously (see for example Jakubowicz 2007; Splichal 2001, 1994; Sparks with Reading 1998; O'Neill et al. 1998; O'Neill 1997). However, following its introduction, it was capitalism that became the force that modified the other two systems.

In my studies on post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, I encountered several fallacies that come out of cultural misunderstandings of *dead ground*. Often they are based on a Eurocentric or Anglo-Saxon normative understanding of how things should go, not how they actually evolve. Moreover, they are related to imported Western policy-making practices that are implemented in a hybrid surrounding consisting of inherited Communist practices and newly adopted rules of liberal capitalism. In the following pages, I will focus on three fallacies caused by these misunderstandings. These are the single trajectory fallacy, the single rationality fallacy, and the single moral fallacy.

Single Trajectory Fallacy: Spatial and Temporal Dead Ground

The first fallacy, the single trajectory fallacy, arrives from the presumption that all countries in transition are standing in queue, waiting to catch up with the West and arrive at some teleological end-state of an idealized model of capitalism, democracy, and communication. Developing countries are '*panoptized*' by the Western gaze by measuring their performance against benchmarks that are other than their own. These countries often face the obligation of following that path, whether through the development of administrative, media, or other policies, in order to be considered a good student of the West. It is obvious that the aforementioned teleological end-state does not exist. Moreover, there is no transit from one politico-economic stage to another. This fallacy is often a result of encountering spatial and temporal *dead ground*.

The *spatial* aspect refers to misunderstanding the borders, territories, and dynamics of the space of a given society. Western understanding of space is explicitly attached to

the concept of political borders and, through that, to the territory's governance and their people. Through this perspective, states are the only legal actors on the international political stage. However, in many countries, borders set by post war treaties and international agreements are seen as contrary to the real borders (such as Hungary in 1918, and the problematic delineation of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia). This means that habitat, for example, instead of a political border can be regarded as the true boundary.

Every cultural and regional entity has its internal borders and frontiers, the most important being between ethnic majority/minorities, historical/or religious and urban and rural. They are not official but can function as *hard borders* that have their own set of norms and values. The more prevalent or potent the internal border and frontier, the greater the level of instability can be expected. A typical example could be the hostile attitude towards ethnic groups that moved to a region during a time of oppression or as a part of the colonising political power. These ethnic groups include for example Russians in Latvia and Estonia but one could also mention many others around the world such as the French pied-noir in their former colonies in Africa, the British white settlers in Zimbabwe, or Asians in Fiji.

In many parts of the world, the identity of peoples and their collective rights tend to be bound to a notion of territoriality associated with responsibilities in relation to a given area, which are defined as *collective spaces*. These collective spaces may include human groups (both living and ancestral), forests, animals, watercourses, and so on. This difference in worldviews becomes apparent when exploitation of natural resources is driven by multinationals that base their exploitation on the right to property whilst the alternative voices of *collective space* are seldom heard. (de Sousa Santos, Nunes and Meneses 2007: 9). In addition, historical colonisation of natural resources of now independent states, continue to create conflicts and re-modify the power geography of access and governance of oil, gas, and the spaces through which they can be transported (for example, the Baltic Sea and Caucasus region).

The *temporal* aspect of *dead ground* refers to the fact that all cultural phenomena are located in spaces that are defined by their own temporality: framed by a specific *scopic regime of time-space*. Understanding temporal dead ground means that one has to become aware of a historicity that defines not only the conditions of the present but also possible futures. Histories of competing ideologies, oppressed nationhood, instability or conflict create not one but multiple complex and controversial histories. As the young Kosovan journalist, Ilirjana Bajo Law (2008) put it: "Nations are like human beings. If they live in a constant state of denial, never making peace with the past, they can make no progress and will have no future." Controversial histories require an understanding of the *polyvocality of lived temporalities* – but also ruptures in temporalities.

As many of those journalists I have interviewed² have pointed out, both the people and the whole region are very rooted in the past. Faced with developments that are considered to be forced upon them and not embedded, people feel betrayed and this experience has not been properly acknowledged. At the same time, journalists were emphasising 'adaptability' – people who can adapt to situations easily, make adjustments easily to situations, and be flexible. That notion was reflexive of a new mentality brought by the *new capitalization* of cultural economy. (Salovaara-Moring 2009b; 2009c)

This mode of capitalization is inherited from the early 90s, when Eastern European media systems financially started from scratch. Media systems were crafted against

the historical experience of oppression and had little sympathy for regulation. In many places this created the most deregulated media system there is, both in terms of legislation and cultural production. In some cases policy-making was based on an imitation of European and Western best practice.

This development included some paradoxical features. The deregulation of media may well stand for freedom of expression, but it has also led to surreptitious journalism: journalism that can be bought off by money or vested political and/or business interests. In many countries that developed new policies, there were great worries about what foreign investments in the media sector would lead to. Often these worries were well founded – the investors operated in ‘dead ground’. However, this was not the case always. Sometimes, foreign ownership may have given greater freedom in a politically instable domestic situation by providing a stable financial basis (for example West-Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung Group in Bulgaria and Diena-Bonnier in Latvia).

At the same time, ideas of ‘watchdog’ news journalism were merely idealised self-images held by Western observers. In the new trans-national constellation it was evident that such a final destination did not exist to any broader extent, neither in the East nor the West. In this context it must also be said that the relationship between democracy and media is hampered by market logics even in more mature democracies. In these societies of change, however, the media economy experienced severe difficulties due to undeveloped advertisement sector and withdrawal of state subsidies. This, in many cases, created intimate connections between business and media sector.

Capitalism, like any human system of exchange, is always a historical and temporal construct. As sociologists, such as Gil Eyal, Iván Szelenyi and Eleanor Townsley (1998), have pointed out: in Eastern Europe, capitalism was built without capitalists because the bourgeois class had been removed by state-socialism in the nationalisation of private property in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution. Thus the concept of class or traditionally stratified democracy was more or less inapplicable in analysing alternative capitalisms. This does not mean that there would not be social stratification in these societies but it certainly did not follow the Western type of class society. This also meant that within cultural economies there were agents from different spheres. In many cases Eastern Europe leapfrogged intermediate stages and landed in neo-liberal corporate capitalism of a kind that media industries were just developing in the West. Paradoxically, for example, the Financial Times often applauded this development by taking ‘New Europe’ as a model with its flat taxes and deregulation by scolding ‘Old Europe’ with its stubborn inflexibility. (Salovaara-Moring 2009d). The East was progressive compared to the West, at least in global capitalism. The *single trajectory fallacy* was thus revealed to be a myth, and was actually turned back upon its proponents.

Single Rationality Fallacy: Epistemological Dead Ground

The second fallacy is called the *single rationality fallacy*. It is based on misunderstandings of epistemological dead ground. Single rationality fallacy refers to a misunderstanding according to which human societies live by ‘Reason’ that is a way of thinking characterized by logic, analysis, and synthesis. Reason attempts to discover what is true and what is best for everyone and thus, for every place. In this type of thinking,

logics, analysis, and synthesis are not culturally embedded. Moreover, this rationalistic view often contrasts itself with a pejorative conceptualisation of *emotionalism*, which is presented as thinking driven by desire, passion, or prejudice. That is a thinking mode reserved for ‘traditional societies’.

However, reason is not only historically constructed but also territorially bounded. In Western thinking, the concept of ‘reason’ is attached to the notion of a ‘functioning public sphere’ where ‘public sphere’ is universally floating and culturally detached normative category of political critique. In recent media studies trust in reason has facilitated sociological analysis with simplified forms of the Habermasian theoretisation of a ‘public sphere’ especially when adapted to changing societies. The fallacy appears in universally accepted premises of deliberation that ignore and reject alternative logics of the everyday that were hampered by capitalist logics and thus seldom actualised in any societies.

In the early 1990s, the most significant requirements of evolving civil societies in Eastern Europe had to do with the social sphere including a functioning ‘public sphere’, with new practices of journalism that would support the consolidation of nationhood and democracy. That was a difficult task, given the mistrust that people felt towards politicians and also, partly, towards media. Newly appointed governments – while hailing freedom of regulation and even anti-regulative sentiments – in unofficial ways often exerted direct political pressure on public or state media, and interfered with commercial media and the press. However, at the time of transition, a new generation of journalists also appeared on the scene.

Journalism as a profession had deteriorated in status. Both in the West and the East, young journalists to a lesser extent see it as a ‘holy vocation’. They either see it as an (often poorly) paid job when compared with many other professions, or then the motivation of young journalists is more on the side of self-expression than that of serving the public or acting as the ‘watchdogs’ of the political system. One version of the ‘single reason fallacy’ is actually not to focus on agents, and how their behaviour rationality may change over time and in space – the fallacy appears in the supposition that ‘Western Reason’ is both a universal and an unchanging entity embracing all territories equally.

Single Moral Fallacy: Ontological Dead Ground

Ontological dead ground refers to imposing one’s own cultural categories upon studied phenomena and societies. Every culture has its own specific ontological structure, an *epistemic regime* through which things and relations are seen as normal and acceptable to its subscribers. Ontological order includes cultural principles, how categories of time and space are understood, moral orders, meta-concepts like *good* versus *bad*, *divine* versus *evil*, and so forth. This is the operating system of a culture, part of the hardware that triggers resistance when it is violated.

Single moral fallacy refers to a fallacy that appears as a result of ontological dead ground. In its most typical form it appears as the *Mother knows best* syndrome. It is common to all dominant ideologies. The *Single Moral Fallacy* supposes that the ‘Other’ is incapable of governing himself according to alleged principles of “public good”. Therefore this ‘Other’ must be confined to certain, often Western, economic rules and

policy practices – although these practices are made by men who are incapable of acting upon them themselves.

Typical confusion is created when forms of governance are exported from the outside to a region with different traditions. Liberal democracy, for example, is a loose group of Western cultural norms, traditions, and manners. Exporting political inventions (such as US-style institutions to Iraq or Eastern Europe) creates a Nietzschean dilemma where good intentions can create catastrophic consequences. The free market may represent freedom but if brought into a region where other systems are in flux it may pose a new type of threat with its hard economic liberalism. Ontological realisation of good in the new context is often exceeded by less wanted side effects.

The Western credo i.e. discussions on ‘global citizenship or global media policy are often less than self-reflexive about their own ideological starting points. That is to say that the ‘global’ in these discussions is revealed to be more or less the same as ‘Western’. Instead of being just broader ‘imagined communities’ they may often assume that Eurocentric or Anglocentric legal or political models (such as the neoliberal economic order, representative democracy, individualism, control over and often exploitation of natural resources) formed a single and accepted normative framework in all spatial and historical settings.

Public service broadcasting (PSB) gives us a clear example of where Western ideals/reason and economic and ideological realities of the region clashed during the first decade. The ‘media boom’ created markets that subordinated the public values of journalism, turning it into a commodity, and turning the ‘public’ into ‘consumers’. Thus, the idea of serving the ‘public’ found the soil of the region particularly barren. Normative ideals of PSB were mostly imported from wealthy European countries with BBC-type of journalism, whereas these financially weak states could not provide a strong enough fiscal base for their state-financed media. Although Western European countries suffered from the deteriorating financial base of their public service broadcasters, the ideology of serving the ‘public’ was, however, deeply engrained.

As expressed by a Latvian professor Inta Brikse: “Television is making paid programmes because of the lack of public money. What that really means is that the producer is collecting money from those who want to be in a programme and then the channel is making this programme. Of course these kinds of programmes are damaging the image of Latvian TV. We are paying for the channel and we don’t know when these attitudes are starting to affect the newscasts. The problem follows that the public opinion is that journalism is bought in Latvia.” (in personal interview)

The interests of nation-building and the free market were often contradictory. In many cases, PSB companies were forced to finance their activities by selling advertising space or collecting fees for those who wanted to express their opinion in the public channel because the level of subsidies granted by the states were insufficient. Commercial broadcasters raised the same questions as in Western Europe: “What do we need state-financed media for when private companies can do it cheaper?” In theory PSB was good but in reality the enterprise was hard to actualise. The consequence of the single moral fallacy was that unrealistic models were maintained that may well have created more problems than they solved.

Conclusions

So, to summarise, the main claim of this chapter is that the discussion on globalisation and global divides is often conducted at an abstract macro level. However, all human practices, whether cultural production, media policymaking or reception, are always *located activities*. As such they are located very concretely in time and space and carry their own culturally-embedded ontological and epistemological sense-making. Policy discourses, just like other normative discourses, however, often claim to have a universal and normative status. Moreover, surprisingly often they are outcomes of Western ways of thinking. When good ideas result in bad outcomes, this may be because of false universalism and not of allegedly disobedient people, cultures, and societies that do not conform to Western ideas.

Modern international politics and related policy practices can be easily captured as *technologies of political subjects, their desires, territories, and resources (both human and natural)*. Distinctive institutional and symbolic media forms may emerge in response to a set of imperatives constructed in changing markets in order to govern the habits, fears, and passions of dispersed populations that differ from another territorial setting. In general, Western media policy practices can be seen as part of post-capitalist governmentality that leans towards an image of flexible political reason that aims for adaptation. The new situation apparently calls for different thinking, theories, and openings in order to understand the ‘capitalization’ of cultural systems like journalism and how multiple spatio-temporal, country-specific constraints modifies systems in globalising contexts.

We have to understand that the *dead ground* formed by different cultural and economic topographies rejects the Western political and epistemological dominance over the world. Devices of ‘normal’ science informing conscious media policy still cherish the idea of holding the high ground and the ability to base knowledge on inter-visibility between the observer and reality, narrative or ideology. This notion, however, requires revision. The best way to initiate this revision is to turn the gaze inwards, and open up the Western ‘capitalised’ morality based on hubris and vested interest in a one-sided trade-off. We should remember *Anaïs Nin’s* notion: ‘*We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.*’ Our reality of the world is not the final reality but just one competing cultural and economic form.

Notes

1. U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) News Transcript <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2636> (accessed 5 June 2008).
2. This chapter is based on the research project ‘Beyond East and West: Media Geographies of New Europe’ (funded by the Academy of Finland 2007-2009).

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Global Divides and Transnational Media Literacy

Elisabeth Eide

Abstract

The present article explores the challenges of global divides for media researchers through the example of a foreign reporter's blog from an area of intense conflict in Pakistan, where he was threatened by religious students. The event triggering the threats was an MMS containing a Norwegian-made cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed.

The reporter's initial entry to the blog after this event received a large number of responses from a mainly national audience, although the event itself was of a transnational character

The chain of events underlines the need to further explore how, with the help of modern technology, national media events may transcend continents and be reinterpreted in very different circumstances, while the debate mainly remains constrained by national boundaries. Furthermore it demonstrates how such a transnational event may be seen as an inspiration for academics concerned with global journalism and discusses the concept "transnational media literacy" as a tool of interpretation.

Keywords: globalization, transnational, Mohammed cartoons, blog journalism

Embedded with the Taliban

This journey towards an exploration of the concept *transnational media literacy* starts with a special story from the journalistic field.

In early June 2008, a reporter from TV2 – the largest privately owned channel in Norway – went to Afghanistan and Pakistan to do research for a book about the attack at The Serena Hotel in Kabul in January. There he had witnessed how his colleague, Carsten Thomassen, was shot and killed in an attack staged by the Taliban. On 11 June, he wrote a piece from Peshawar in his blog, and received more attention than usual, altogether 200 entries, many critical of his views.

In the following, I will analyse the event in its context suggesting some useful theoretical approaches and also try to summarize the challenges such a media event may pose to journalism researchers and international academic co-operation.

A few days before the reporter, Fredrik Græsvik (one of the most seasoned journalists at TV2), wrote the initial entry in his blog, a caricature of the Prophet Mohammad had been published in a regional newspaper in Norway as a critical response to the suicide attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. The drawing showed a man whose lower body was naked, carrying a suicide belt around his waist and an

inscription across his chest saying: “I am Mohammad, and nobody dares to print me”. The cartoonist afterwards repeatedly said he did not intend to insult any Muslims and underlined that he had been critical of the original 12 caricatures published by *Jyllands-Posten*, in Denmark in September 2005. All the same, the caricature was interpreted as provocative by many Muslims – and some non-Muslims. Nothing much happened in the aftermath of the publication in Norway, probably due to the dialogic tradition and the calm attitude on the part of Muslim leaders.

The reporter visited a *madrasa* – a place of religious learning – where a student is called a *taleb*, Taliban being the plural form. This noun gained new meaning when a group of Taliban appeared as a political-military force in Afghanistan starting in 1994¹. The *madrasas* in Pakistan, and particularly those near the Afghan border have been associated, especially in the new millennium, with institutions for training of religious extremists, some of whom have fought with the Afghan Taliban in the battlefield – and a few of whom have resorted to suicide attacks inside Afghanistan.

The reporter had a long conversation with the students and was invited by the mullahs to stay the night. The madrasa is placed in what is called the Tribal Area close to the Afghan border, where the different Pashtun clans, through their leaders, have mostly ruled themselves for centuries. Recently, the people there had witnessed attacks both by American warplanes and drones and from the East by Pakistani troops, all in their seemingly endless search for Osama bin Laden and his associates.

The discussions were rather heated. According to the reporter, Græsvik, the students (aged 18-25) agreed among themselves that the reporter was a legitimate target for assassination, since he belonged to the electorate of a democracy that in turn was responsible for a government sending soldiers to occupy Afghanistan. Græsvik says he felt the assassination option remained very hypothetical, however².

Did He Deserve a Beating?

From the reporter’s blog, we can read that the situation got more heated the next morning, when one of the students happened to receive a picture of the Norwegian-made caricature on his cell phone via MMS. This happened after he had sent a message to a contact somewhere (location unknown) about a Norwegian reporter staying in their madrasa. The reporter in his blog writes the following, under the headline: “Are Norwegian editors trying to get me killed?”

Yesterday they quarrelled over sleeping next to the Norwegian journalist, this morning they quarrelled over who would get close enough to give me a solid beating. A little more than two years ago a Palestinian group at the Gaza strip tried to assassinate me due to the Mohammad caricatures printed by V.S. in his Christian magazine [January 2006]. I had a narrow escape from that attempt. This time I escaped with some pushing, since I swore at them and since the Mullah came to my rescue after a while. (Græsvik 11.6.2008)³

He told his readers how he felt that editors and cartoonists sitting safely back home while putting others’ lives, including his own, in danger ought to venture out into the Islamic world and face the anger. He questioned the wisdom of printing such caricatures in an increasingly globalized media world, and the entry concluded with a question:

Do YOU think the editors are cowards who put others' lives in danger? Or do you think it is right to print cartoons to provoke – regardless of the costs? Please write a comment. (And – yes, I know that there are many among you who may think I deserved a solid beating, that might be right, but you do not need to write this.) (ibid.)

A short version of this event – focussing on the threats against the reporter and his reactions – was broadcast on TV2's news-around-the-clock channel. The blog harvested comments for approximately two weeks, but only very intensively during the first 24 hours.

A Polarized Blog

The event demonstrates how a newspaper with a mostly regional readership (not unlike the situation for the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* before it turned national) can generate, with a visual image, unforeseen feelings and actions in another corner of the world. In this case it happened in what is considered a remote and dangerous area for journalists, an area that might easily be considered as one end of the Huntingtonian “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington 1993, 1996, Lewis 1990). It also demonstrates how media output can be circulated by a combination of modern technology and private initiatives – for reinterpretation far outside a medium's regular audience, if we may still apply such terms. How this MMS travelled is one obvious research question. The reporter says he does not know, but one route may have been from Norwegian-Pakistanis, living either in Norway or (visiting) in Pakistan, to this student contact at the Madrasa. The route may also have been much more complicated.

Among the app. 200 entries to the blog⁴, I found a few participants who contributed more than once, one of them 24 times. But otherwise there was a great variety. With all reservations taken for the many uncertainties of interpreting such material⁵, a quantitative overview indicates that close to two thirds of the responses were critical – some even hateful – of the reporter for allegedly betraying the principles of freedom of expression. Some accused him of being a closet Muslim lover (not an uncommon derogatory concept in the blogworld of Norway), and others accused him of being much too self-centred. More men than women participated, and among the women a majority more or less supported the reporter's views.

Judging from the entries (and the nicknames), only a handful of participants with a Muslim background took part in the discussion. One of the participants appeared to be Danish. The fact that the Norwegian language is primarily only understood by a Scandinavian audience prevented a larger transnational discussion; but we do not know how many of the participants actually live in Norway. Still we may conclude that the blog was mainly localized to one country, while the debate contained transnational elements and arguments.

Table 1. Views Expressed in the Blog (11.06–12.07⁶)

	Sympathetic with the reporter's views	Critical of the reporter's views	Ambiguous attitude towards the reporter's views	Total
Male entries	35	81	9	125
Female entries	17	14	1	32
Gender unknown	12	23	2	37
Total	64	118	12	194 ⁷

Among the most frequent discourses in the debate were the following ones critical of his views (several participants expressed more than one discourse in their entries, therefore it does not make sense to quantify these results):

- *The reporter disregards/betrays the value of freedom of expression.* (“There is no doubt that the Islamists will win this struggle. When even experienced journalists in fear of their own life turn against freedom of expression, which has been the foundation of the equal rights and religious freedom we have in Norway today, yes then the Islamists are going to win”; Marius 11.6.2008)
- *The reporter is a closet Muslim lover* (“I no longer consider Græsvik to be a good journalist. A good journalist defends freedom of expression as something absolute; and he evidently does not do so. When he also reveals clear sympathies for the Taliban and is extremely one-sided in his defence of Islam’s people and critical of the U.S., Israel and the West ...”; Anti-socialist 11.6.2008)
- *The self-centred reporter* (“The only thing that provokes me here is F. Græsvik’s ability to put one man, himself, in focus over Adresseavisen’s publication. I don’t think the cartoonist had you in mind ...”; Lars Erik, 11.6.2008)

In addition, some people explicitly accused the reporter of bad judgement or uttered more general and moral disgust.

The ones who were largely sympathetic to Græsvik’s reasoning may be grouped under the following discourses:

- *Respecting the culture of the Other* (... “I wonder about these people who just throw out their words on print just to exercise their right to freedom of expression. All countries are not like Norway and these people demonstrate precisely that they do not understand the totality of this problem.”; Bjarte 11.6.2008)
- *Provocation is negative and counterproductive* (“There are so many just out there to provoke and harass. Their sensibility is as low as that of the terrorists. They act without thinking of the consequences”; Adrian 11.6.2008)
- *Wrong to mock religion* (“One should not defend freedom of expression by ridiculing others’ religions or beliefs”; Tork 11.6.2008)

Some of these entries also mentioned how freedom of expression was never totally unlimited, and that some of the ‘original’ cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed were examples of how this right could be misused.

The reporter responded to parts of the critique and tried to clarify his position as a defender of the freedom to print both cartoons and of other forms of expression, but felt free to criticize some of the ways in which this right is being exercised in contemporary Norway.

Connections between Locals

He did this by referring to cartoons turning into global media events, when telling how he encountered the rage both in Gaza and in Pakistan, a point not considered by many of his critics who seemed to “domesticate” the debate.

Anthropologist Jonathan Friedman sees the global as a set of processes that connect localities (2008). This seems to fit well with the event described above, as we here find a case in which a cartoon from a Norwegian newspaper is suddenly represented among madrasa students in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province, bordering on an Afghanistan at war. But the connection is limited, and the discourses following the event in Norway do not come across to the *madrasa* and its community of interpretation.

In the course of globalization, writes Martin Löffelholz, transnational cultures are developing that increasingly shape the production of media content (2008: 23). We may debate to what degree this is true, as many media seem to still retain a very national focus. But it remains true that we are living at a time in which one does not yet know the full impact on journalism of media mergers and the (no longer so) new technology; and in which journalism is undergoing a very rapid development. Löffelholz therefore does not endorse a very fixed theoretical approach to global journalism research, but writes that “a *multi-perspective approach* – not always with a clear focus, may be a necessary answer to the many challenges of a social scientific description of journalism” (op. cit.: 26).

Modernities?

Judging from the complexity of the situation inspiring the present article, Löffelholz’s view seems relevant. One approach might be to discuss modernity. Yudishtir Raj Isar mentions how asymmetric relationships that implicitly favour the universalization of Western paradigms stifle local production of culture, language, and memory, and thereby create considerable conflict potential⁸. The conflict potential was obviously realized during the caricature crisis in 2006 (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007, Eide, Kunelius & Phillips 2008). But does “stifle” mean freezing local cultural production and interpretation in pre-modernity, or thinking of this production of meaning as static?

Modernity is often defined as having to do with individualism, division between the public and the private, enlightenment philosophy and critical rationality, capitalism, global economy, development and evolutionism (Friedman 2008), i.e., values that a Western *we* is supposed to embrace. It may be worth discussing, however, whether this *we* cannot also see other expressions of modernity, or whether one might do as Friedman has and speak of *modernities* in the plural (ibid.). The communication between the individual *Taleb* and his contacts (somewhere in the world) may then be seen as part of modernity and of the global processes connecting localities. And the response of the angry group of students, traditionally interpreted as an echo of medieval thought and

fanaticism, might be looked upon as a result of modern religious revivalism, and as an expression of believers feeling humiliated, plus a heated political reaction against Western military intervention and double standards.

Ethical Responsibility

Raj Isar also asks when a conflict is cultural, and whether encounters with the West are increasingly interpreted in religious terms. This relates to the trend towards culturalization of the way in which conflicts are explained – a move away from previous racially inspired discourses. On the other hand this trend seems to ignore more social or political explanations of present-day phenomena in multicultural societies. The question arises, then, of whether an increasingly religious interpretation (by the media) may be a way of de-politicizing current conflicts. In the case described above, such an approach offers a rather narrow interpretation of the event.

Another route of exploration of the event may be through editorial ethics and responsibility. The reporter revealed that the TV2 blogs are edited. Entries expressing outright racism or hate speech are deleted. In the case of TV2, such moderation has been outsourced to a company in Sweden, a fact that does not seem to be entirely in accordance with a media institution's editorial responsibility. This may indicate the low status of blogs compared to TV programmes, and the need for researchers to think in terms of the political economy of outsourcing. One might imagine more such outsourcing and multiple borders being crossed if it were not for the particularities of the Scandinavian languages⁹.

Seeing the World with Different Lenses

My background in journalism studies and journalistic practice has given me experience of how certain media events may be received in communities of interpretation that differ substantially from each other. Awareness of this fact has to do with what Edward Said labels "contrapuntal reading" (Said 1994). I have also witnessed how internal differences in a nation may at times be more decisive for media output and interpretation than are regional or global divides. Being based at a university in Pakistan during the full duration of the caricature crisis the spring semester of 2006 was a learning experience. Most people there probably did not see the actual cartoons, but had strong opinions about them as blasphemous and provocative. Political leaders used them for their own purposes. Voices were raised suggesting that they were a result of a deliberately planned action to prove Huntington right in his "Clash of Civilizations" prophesy. But there were also other voices, even a few who defended the initial publication of the cartoons, and Western voices of various political shades were given space in Pakistani newspapers. The anger expressed was often an amalgamation of frustration with the government's closeness to the U.S., the soaring food prices – and outrage against the Mohammed cartoons (Eide 2007).

The images conveyed to the so-called Western world about Pakistan (and other countries where Islam is a dominant religion) during this conflict seem mostly to have been the angry side of the picture (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007), demonstrating the collective conventions or doxa of journalism at work: focusing on extremes and conflict (Bourdieu

1999, Benson & Neveu 2005). In this case, it implied the flag- and effigy-burning fanatics in the streets; the unruly rampages, representing a tiny minority of the 170 million people living in the country. Similar pictures would be found in the Pakistani press, which may indicate some universality when it comes to news values (Eide 2007). But while the pictures of violence at home (in Pakistan) seem after a while to have been shown as a warning to the citizens (“see how destructive this turns out”), in Europe the connotations may have been simpler and more outright: Here is the violent Other; this is the way “they” are. This indicates how images travel – but unaccompanied by the discourses in the societies in which they originally occur, as also happened in Græsvik’s case (see also Hahn 2008).

Transnational Media Commons?

In search of some common ground for global journalism research, the concept of “transnational commons” might be useful. Ulf Hannerz defines it as resources that are somehow shared by humanity, and not directly under the control of any government. His examples range from collective resources such as the (polluted) sea and water to the shared potential of biodiversity¹⁰ and common threatening realities in the shape of global warming. He also writes about the public spaces of larger cities as “transnational *cultural commons*”. The latter do not risk being depleted, as meanings are floating without getting lost (Hannerz 1996).

Despite the risk that Hannerz may be projecting an idealized world, it is clear that, combined with other aspects of globalization (such as diasporic connections), the Internet (though access to it is limited by government censorship and gross social inequality) may today, twelve years after Hannerz wrote his piece, be seen as an important element in a contemporary *transnational media commons*. In addition, today’s electronic connections transcend the borders of the large cities, as seen in the MMS transmittance of a Norwegian caricature. Thinking along the same lines, due to the development of the Internet, Stephen Reese recently found it meaningful to speak of a “global news arena” and a “new social geography”, despite the fact that most traditional media are local or national:

When I refer to global journalism I do not mean to suggest that it has replaced the local and national. In a broad sense, no media practice has escaped the transformations of globalization. Even the smallest Third World news agency with access to the Internet has changed the way it works [...] So we can see aspects of the global embedded in many settings, which makes theorizing more challenging. (Reese 2008: 241)

Reese emphasizes global media ownership as one important factor and suggests three related propositions in this social geography: [1] an evolving media system that he calls the “global news arena”; [2] a journalism adapting to this arena, in need of navigating “between its traditional ‘vertical’ orientation within whatever nation-state it is carried out and a ‘horizontal’ perspective that transcends national frameworks”; and [3] cultural as well as professional identification among those involved in this global dimension, not least within journalism, which “increasingly shares common norms and values adapted to the needs of a more globalized system” (ibid.).

The cartoon controversy, in its many incarnations, has demonstrated the existence of a “global news arena” with its horizontal perspective, but it also emphasizes how streams of journalism do not necessarily and easily adapt to this. The TV2 reporter’s experience and the blog response that followed emphasize the need to combine local and global perspectives in journalism.

Author, journalist and professor at Vassar College, Amitava Kumar wrote in his powerful book on India-Pakistan relations that “The most challenging space of scrutiny that one can occupy is the place where one is both oneself and the enemy” (Kumar 2004). Reporters like Fredrik Græsvik may have felt that challenge, and in his particular case may have thought that the traditional news conventions were too narrow to allow him to express his experiences, explaining his desire to enter his views on the blog, and to invite response.

The Reporter as a Human Being

Another line of exploration of the case of Græsvik’s blog from Pakistan may be the particular ways in which reporters and participants express themselves in this medium. There are examples of entries that could have been published in traditional print media, but this probably does not apply to most of them. Some are very personal letters to the reporter, while others are rather hateful without arguments underlining the aggression. Some are far from the point, as when a famous Norwegian blogger gives her view on Græsvik’s initial entry, and another person comments on her good looks.

Susan Robinson explores what she calls the “j-blog”, where journalists from conventional media have an extra outlet (Robinson 2006). In her study, she argues that the blog is a place where reporters may “display short-form reporting, short-form analysis and short-form writing”; and it is also a way for mainstream publications to “recapture journalism authority. Thus, blogs represent reconstituted journalism [...]” (ibid. 65).

With Græsvik, being a TV reporter, the case may be slightly different, because traditional TV reports are very short and do not offer space for in-depth reasoning. But the reporter’s blog as a means of attracting (bonding) the audience to a particular medium in competition with more independent blogs may be highly relevant. Another dimension has to do with the blog atmosphere being more informal and personal. Robinson points out that blogs are popular because they “allow the reader to see the journalist as a human being, connecting with them without the stiff, imperial voice that turns so many young people off” (Robinson, 2006:68, quoting Pohlig, 2003: 25). She also questions whether journalists, when engaging in this new (post-modern) journalism, “are crafting something completely alternative to ‘normal’ journalism” (ibid. 69), but concludes that the j-blogs “by mainstream publications remain very much framed in tradition” (ibid. 81).

Comment and Confessional Diary

Furthermore, Robinson suggests a general categorization of her sample of blogs in seven forms¹¹. Græsvik’s initial entry may pass as a cross between a “confessional diary written about the reporter about his or her beat” and a “straight column of opinion for the Web”, as it is indeed a personal account, but simultaneously comments on an actual event: the publication of another Mohammed cartoon in his home country. It lets the

readers see the reporter with his frustrations as a (temporarily misplaced) human being, spontaneously writing after having experienced a stressful and threatening situation. His entry carries several of the characteristics traditionally more associated with blogs than with mainstream (news) journalism: usage of first person, questions without answers, etc. Based on these observations, the entry may be more inviting to ordinary (young) citizens than are the rather hierarchic news items transmitted on the TV screen – thus generating a more active response¹².

Melissa Wall shows how independent blogs have emerged during times of war as a “new genre of journalism – offering news that features a narrative style characterized by personalization and an emphasis on non-institutional status; audience participation in content creation; and story forms that are fragmented and interdependent with other websites” (Wall 2005: 154). Græsvik’s blog, being linked to a major medium, shares only a few of these characteristics: personalization and audience participation in creating a debate. As such, it does not constitute an entirely new and post-modern journalism (an expression used by several blog researchers), but may be said to be a textual re-expression in between the institutionalized and the informal.

It is beyond the scope of the present article to elaborate on the particularities of the blog, but judging precisely from the *responses* to Græsvik’s blog, one may safely suggest that a larger degree of informality, intimization and aggression (and subsequently polarization) characterizes many, but far from all of the audience entries. On the other hand, this is clearly an outlet for voices that would (otherwise) not have been registered in the mainstream media.

Conclusions: Transnational Media Literacy

A caricature aimed at a Norwegian regional audience becomes a transnational media event via cell phone connections – and generates a blog with a largely national response, but still a debate with international ingredients. The future is likely to bring similar challenges in a world where people are increasingly interdependent, not least due to the climate crisis. If one as a researcher in the field of journalism feels the need to understand a variety of perspectives in a globalized world, it makes more sense than ever to build academic networks across countries and continents. In this case, a valuable connection would be researchers at Peshawar University – colleagues who, provided with a translation of the blog, might be co-workers in a project including the Pakistani side of the story. Thus, they would be able to suggest their questions to the Norwegian reporter and other actors – and I mine to the Pakistani actors. How did the cartoon travel to the *madrasa*? What did the students do afterwards? What Internet connections do they use to inform themselves? Do they also contribute to blogs or other debates about the Mohammed cartoon conflict? What would the answers tell about their niche of modernity and their media literacy, even if limited?

Some researchers’ networks of this nature (i.e., across the imagined clashes or divides) do exist. In spite of immigration restrictions and deep economic divides, more media and journalism researchers need to broaden such connections to achieve a deeper understanding of the role of media globalization. The interpretation of such media events as the caricature issue may require a degree of what Gayatri Spivak calls “transnational literacy”, which she explains in this way:

[...] the ability to read the world in its differences even when required categories such as 'literature' or 'decolonization' impose a uniformity [...] It allows us to sense that the other is not just a 'voice' but that others produce articulate texts, even as they, like us, are written in and by a text not of our own making. It is through transnational literacy that we can invent grounds for an interruptive praxis from within our disavowed hope in justice under capitalism. (Spivak/Sanders 2006:2)

Spivak – primarily a literature scholar – is concerned with the interpretation of fiction, but her words have inspired me to suggest *transnational media literacy* as an increasingly important perspective in journalism research. Among the properties of such literacy, these points are suggested:

- An awareness of the ways in which initially local and national media events may obtain a more global character, not least helped by modern technology, and thus generate a plurality of readings and interpretations (and non-intended actions) in communities of interpretation across the world.
- An ability to see events with the eyes of the distant other too, helped by an exchange of lenses – between academics across continents, and between media and journalism educators and practitioners in particular.
- A recognition that transnational media literacy also operates and is required within a nation's borders, as was demonstrated in many nations when the caricature crisis was at its peak in 2006 – and as is constantly demonstrated in all societies in which diaspora plays an increasingly important role.
- A growing and shared in-depth knowledge of the various media systems of the world and of how the struggle for media freedom and human dignity takes various forms owing to the variety of national and local circumstances.

More cooperation is needed between media researchers and educators, a cooperation that transcends continental barriers and strict visa policies. Many networks do exist; one of them was formed while working with the newspaper coverage of the caricature crisis, where researchers from many corners of the world contributed. In November 2007, the group actually sat together and commented upon each of the twelve original drawings of the Prophet Mohammed from *Jyllands-Posten* (Alhassan 2008). Such experiences and future related endeavours may contribute to making Said's contrapuntal reading (1994) a more accepted and fruitful practice in transnational media research.

Notes

1. In 1996 they took Kabul, and when the US and its allies invaded Afghanistan 7.10.2001, they controlled approx. 90 percent of the country.
2. In a telephone interview with this researcher, 12.07.2008.
3. <http://fredrik.tv2blogg.no/article17092.ece>. All translations from the blog are made by this researcher.
4. The reporter himself has five entries in addition to his initial one.
5. I have interpreted male nicknames and pseudonyms as representing male participants, and vice versa. A small group of people non-identifiable as gendered does exist (12)
6. Only 19 entries were made after the first date (11.6), which demonstrates the intensity of such a medium.
7. This number excludes the reporter's own entries, which were either supportive or ambiguous.

8. This refers to his presentation in the same plenary in Stockholm, also published in this volume.
9. Occasionally, misunderstandings between people in the Nordic countries occur, which may also happen in the course of the mentioned outsourcing.
10. As Dr. Vandana Shiva mentioned in her keynote on the opening night of the IAMCR conference in Stockholm.
11. The seven forms suggested are: "a reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals; a straight column of opinion for the Web; a question-and-answer format by editors; a readership forum; a confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat; a round-up of news summaries that promote the print publication; and a rumor-mill blog that the reporter uses as an off-the-record account" (ibid. 70).
12. The massive response may also have to do with the fact that the Mohammed cartoons conflict was a hot political topic in Norway – and indeed elsewhere.

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Global Divides in Cosmographic Genres

Charity, Solidarity and Different Explanations of Difference

Anna Roosvall

Abstract

This chapter sets out to explore charity and solidarity approaches in three cosmographic genres: aid galas, foreign news, and documentaries about foreign nations. I argue that their nation-based ratio together with the panoptic character that allows the home nation a privileged invisibility as the rest of the world is being written, constitute predominantly charity approaches. Solidarity approaches towards global, inter- and intra-national divides do however appear when dialogic modes of writing (verbally and visually) are used. They also concur with political rather than culturalistic understandings of these divides, therefore oppose naturalization of differences and open up for possibilities of change. In the end I discuss possible ways of analyzing solidarity in relation to power in media studies, as well as ways of constituting solidaritarian media texts. A key feature in this project is the break-up of the opposition of genres that discuss the domestic respectively the foreign.

Keywords: solidarity, charity, cosmographic genres, foreign news, documentary films, aid galas

Introduction

Cosmologies of today are largely created and reproduced in the media, and there are certain genres where the cosmographic aspects are especially clear, genres where the journalists and other producers can be characterized as cosmographers (see Jonsson 2001). Three such genres will be addressed in this article in order to discuss not only global, but also international and intra-national divides. The genres are: TV broadcast aid galas, foreign news, and magazine programmes where documentary films about foreign nations are being broadcast. The attitudes towards global and other divides will be conceptualized mainly as charity versus solidarity, and different approaches to solidarity will be discussed and operationalized in relation to media production as well as to media studies. Attitudes of charity and solidarity will furthermore be related to the different explanations of difference that can be found in those genres. Two significant explanations of difference are politics and culture, and I will argue that the promotion of culturalism (Appadurai 1996), in the cosmographic genres, mitigates political dimensions of global and other divides. I will address media and global divides mainly through attitudes towards and representations of global divides within the production of North-Western media. Starting out with the quite obvious expressions of charity approaches

in aid galas, I proceed by exploring the genre of foreign news, where solidarity is often a cherished ideal of its practitioners, and end up in the documentary film genre where not only truth, but also empathy – an intrinsic feature in both charity and solidarity (Chouliaraki 2006:201, Kössler & Melber 2007: 36) – are key words. In contrast to the presumed solidarity approaches of foreign news and documentary films about foreign nations I will argue that charity modes in fact permeate all of the cosmographic genres, and in the end subsequently propose ways to relate to this within the media as well as within media studies.

Aid Galas, Charity and Solidarity

The spring of 2008 there was a TV broadcast aid gala on a major Swedish TV channel, channel 4, called “The Humour Gala”.¹ There are similar formats in national media of other nations. The gala displayed paradoxical and sudden jumps between slapstick sketches and location reports from famous Swedish people travelling to different places in the South and reporting of sometimes extreme suffering among children, offering a viewing experience that is interesting and perplexing in its own right. The main focus here is however on how the problems that are being reported are explained, or not explained, throughout the show. One way to analyze this is to disclose how the reported problems are supposed to be solved, according to the content of the show. The sub-heading of the Humour gala was “For every kid”, a phrase that was repeated over and over in the show. In connection to this theme, Swedish celebrities read parts of the UN child convention and then asked the audience for help, like this: “Now you have a choice. Either you do nothing, or you do something. Together we shall fight for every kid”. The word “you” was used in the singular Swedish form (there are different words in Swedish for “you” meaning a single person and “you” meaning many others that you address). The solution to the problems that are being reported hence lies in the hands of each individual of the Swedish audience, on the individual level, which it of course to a certain extent does, in an interconnected world. Politics or policies were however not forefronted in the show, neither present, nor historic or future ones. Political action, or change in policies, are thus not suggested solutions. What we are supposed to do is instead to pay 20 dollars a month to UNICEF. Then we can call ourselves “world parents”. This is of course not a bad thing in itself. Countless lives will be saved and improved because of such contributions. What is problematic, however, is that no additional solutions that would address or include structures, policies or politics are suggested. Major divides are thereby preserved rather than eschewed.

During the gala, the prominent guests are eating, all dressed up, and watching for instance a report from a camp/hospital in DR Congo that specializes in caring for girls who have been severely injured through war-related rapes. A significant amount of time is spent on a nine-year-old girl who says that no-one wants to play with her because she smells. This is explained to be because of all the injuries from these rapes and the reporter/celebrity describes how all of a sudden the constant washing of clothes and sheets in the camp makes sense to her. All these girls and women have been more or less cut up and can’t control their bodily functions any more. This reportage is important, both emotional and factual, but it lacks something, as does the whole show; it lacks structural, political explanations of difference in conditions; of difference related to

global and other divides. The structure of this cosmographic genre is panoptic (Foucault 1991) and nation dependent in essence. One part of the world, predominantly a nation, can remain invisible while surveilling and controlling potentially all other parts. This structure implies, together with the lack of political explanations, geographical cultural explanations of differences, that appear as constant states and subsequently are naturalized. The reportage more specifically is also lacking a postcolonial perspective that could certainly have been added to conflicts in DR Congo, and it lacks solidarity from the formerly colonizing parts of the world. This is plain charity. Pay some money and go on living like before.

A definition of solidarity – as well as charity – is needed at this point. In a series of interviews of people formerly active in the anti-apartheid movements in Sweden, Håkan Thörn (2008) discovered that almost all of them when asked to define solidarity explained it by distinguishing it from charity. Most of them associated charity with an unequal relation and furthermore with Christianity.² The activists associated solidarity on the other hand with a political worldview, in other words a political cosmology. What was also stressed in the definitions of solidarity was a reciprocal aspect. Where charity goes one-way, solidarity included for many people expectations that the “others” would actually be able to contribute something that would be interesting for the “self”. Solidarity thus needs to be directed towards something, from both ends. Traditionally it has been between citizens of nations as a constituent of the nation as an idea and as a primary idea (Renan 1882/1990, Durkheim in Thörn 2008), or inter-/cross-nationally between classes or between women in the women’s and feminist movements.

More specifically, solidarity can be constituted through:

1. ‘identity’, meaning common interests such as those represented in the classical example of the international worker or labour movement
2. ‘substitution’, meaning the commitment and action on behalf of those unable to protect themselves or resist (this kind of advocacy includes forms of benevolence and development co-operation)
3. ‘complementarity’, meaning the exchange of experiences and assistance of various and diverse forms
4. ‘reciprocity’, meaning the exchange of equal or similar forms of experiences and assistance
5. ‘affinity’, meaning common values, emotions, ideas, and concerns, for example among pacifists, socialists, environmental activists, representatives of indigenous minorities and so on
6. ‘restitution’, meaning the recognition of historical injustice as a basis of action

(Kössler & Melber 2007: 32, following Waterman 2001)

Kössler and Melber (2007: 36) go on to add “empathy” to the list and stress also how solidarity today, in an interconnected world, is a political requirement. It is a political requirement because reciprocity is a prerequisite in interconnectedness if it is not to appear as cultural or media imperialism (see Sparks 2007: 94). Empathy is needed to constitute reciprocity. Empathy is the “conscious effort to ‘understand’ the ‘other’ and in this way to actually constitute potential addressees of, or partners in, solidarity” (Kössler & Melber, *ibid*). All members of a society need to, as in the original meaning of the word

solidarity, stand up for the debts and duties incurred by, or imposed upon, the collective or individual members (Kössler & Melber, *ibid*). And today, the society which is most applicable is not the national society to which Durkheim and Renan once applied the term, but a world society (see also Volkmer 2002: 243). The notion of solidarity with strangers that emanates from solidarity between citizens of a nation is stressed by the class and women movements' examples. Solidarity can be transnational. It should then indeed be possible to relate it to a world society, to the world as an imagined community (Anderson 1991) with partners in solidarity being situated on different sides of global divides. The world society is indeed a society that is cut up by severe divides, across as well as inside nations. The nation dependent and panoptic ratio of the cosmographic genres might therefore stand in the way of solidarity directed towards anything else than the traditional imagined communities of nations. This interface of media and the life world is where the media as a moral force, in Roger Silverstone's words (2007: 10) "becomes most relevant, where the world in its otherness is at its most visible". And it is here, as Silverstone (2007: 10-11) continues "in this role and with this responsibility, where the world's media become, indeed must become, ethically constitutional".

We will return to the different understandings of solidarity and what they may contribute to media studies, when operationalized, at the end of this article. Our journey there will initially go through the perhaps most prominent cosmographic genre: foreign news, also known as world news or international news.

Foreign News, the Epitome of Cosmography

In the foreign news genre the world is still understood as a world that is naturally divided almost exclusively into nations (Roosvall 2005, see also Berglez 2007, Volkmer 2002). This ratio of the genre connects to an understanding of global divides as divides predominantly *between* nations, *between* different parts of the world, as in Yudhishtir Raj Isar's proposed second basic understanding of the notion of "divides" (see Isar's chapter in this book), rather than divides that are common to all societies. Foreign news is a quite conservative and conserving genre compared to some of the trans-national and globalizing media trends that for instance Anheier and Isar (2008, 2007) identifies, even though this genre actually has many features that *could* promote trans-nationalization. Swedish foreign news is about anywhere in the world except about Sweden. This distinction is important in itself since it suggests that events and processes in other nations need to be treated differently than events and processes that occur in the home nation. Thereby it suggests a different attitude towards so called foreign events or processes than attitudes that would be taken towards domestic events and processes. In the end Swedish foreign news is however not really about anywhere. There are clear patterns where certain regions, like Western Europe and the US, are overrepresented and others, like South America and Western Africa, are almost blind spots (Roosvall 2005). To a certain degree this depends on the placement of Swedish foreign correspondents (see also Hannerz 2004), but since most news articles in the Swedish press are from international news agencies (Roosvall 2005: 99), this should have limited bearing. Rather, some areas are more interesting than others; some – like the US and Western Europe – because they are seen as important, both politically and culturally. Others – like the (post-)communist world and the Middle East – because they are seen as dangerous, both politically and

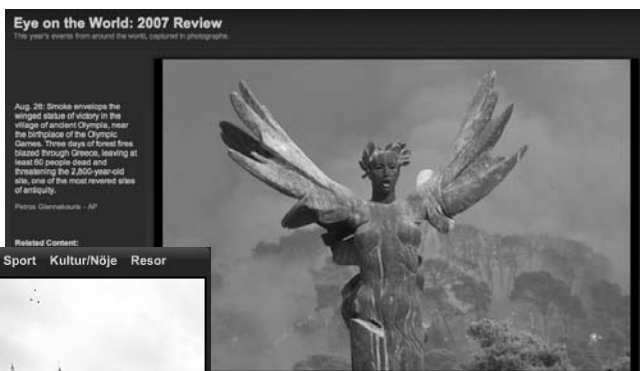
culturally (Roosvall 2005: 315). This division is fairly constant over time, appearing in similar ways both before and after the end of the cold war, and both before and after September 11, 2001 (Roosvall 2005: 183). If cultural globalization is understood, as I suggest, as the questioning of alleged (stereotypical) relationships between geography and identity (Thörn 2004: 45), the relative stability in these representational divides is remarkable. Not only in relation to world order changes, but also in relation to the overwhelming technological globalization that has taken place since the end of the cold war, one could have expected cultural globalization, as the questioning of old-fashioned assumptions about how a certain geography implies a certain identity, to have taken place. In foreign news it has not.

Let's zoom in now on a certain sub-genre of world news, as it appears in Swedish-, US- and UK-based newspapers on the web. It is a genre that is called things like "24 hours in the world" and that displays slide-shows of picture paragraphs. This is an expanding sub-genre. It seems to grow with the excessive increase in access to, circulation of, and interest for pictures from around the world (see also Frosh 2003). A lot of pictures appear simultaneously in both the Swedish and the British and the US newspapers web-editions (see Roosvall 2008a, 2009a forthcoming). What is common for these pictures, and for the foreign news genre as a whole, is how difference is focused, by display of supposedly typical, in fact stereotypical, features from different parts of the world: cars in the US, an ancient statue in Greece, lederhosen in Austria, dryspells in Australia, a turban and a temple in India, etc., and over all colourful and aestheticized displays of nature, buildings, people and their clothes (see Roosvall 2008a, 2009a forthcoming).

While difference is clearly alluded to in the slideshow compilations of the pictures, it is not explicitly discussed or explained. Rather, the pictures accumulate a cultural meaning from each other (see also Hall 1997); a national-cultural meaning, where the nation part is signalled by the structure of the genre. Structural perspectives on the world are however absent. Even in May Day reports, where workers all over the world appear in demonstrations at the same time, structural-political aspects are hard to find, while culture appears as an implicit explanation (see also Roosvall 2008a). A constant focus on national symbols and traditional national-cultural clothing is accompanied by short captions that give almost no clues to the actual conditions that the people who are demonstrating are demonstrating against. The national-cultural notion in the slide-shows hides not only structural-political divides between different parts and nations of the world, but also intra-national divides, and the cross-national character that these divides often have. At the same time it is implied by the ratio of the genre that the global divides are *international*, rather than connected to the cross- or transnational structures that we know exist. There are privileged people in every nation. The nation as a main frame of reference stands in this sense in the way of both global- and intra- and cross-national understandings of significant economic, informational etc. divides, and the national cultures that are being displayed clash severely with the aforementioned notion of cultural globalization. The world here is a de-politicized cultural spectacle.³ Even though solidarity might be an aim for many of the foreign news producers, the overall outcome of culturalistic⁴ (Appadurai 1996) explanations, underlined by the nation dependent ratio of the genre, where one nation looks at and analyzes potentially all others, but not itself, this one-directional, panoptic approach denounces solidarity and ends up in a charity mode.



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Amritsar, India: A Sikh worshipper takes a bath in the tank of the Golden Temple



Picture paragraphs from world news slide-shows. Top: Sikh and temple in India (*The Guardian*, 24 Hours in Pictures, May 2, pic. 15). Second from the top: Cars in the US (*The Washington Post*, Eye on the World, 2007 review, pic. 24). Third from the top: ancient statue in Greece (*The Washington Post*, Eye on the World, 2007 review, pic. 14). Bottom: people in (neo-)traditionalist garb demonstrate on May Day in Austria (*Svenska Dagbladet*, Around the World in Pictures, May Day special, pic. 6).

Documentaries about Foreign Nations. Monologic and Dialogic Modes

Panopticism is also an intrinsic part in a long-running Swedish foreign magazine programme *Documents from Abroad* [Dokument utifrån]⁵, where documentary films about foreign nations, but not the home nation of the medium, are being broadcast.⁶ A picture from the vignette may illustrate the cosmographic claims of the genre.



Caption: *Documents from Abroad* [Dokument utifrån]. From the vignette of 2006. Permission from Dept. of Audiovisual Media, National Library of Sweden (former Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images/SLBA).

In a comparison between films broadcast in the year of 2000 and the year of 2006 there is a distinct difference in the areas focused upon and how they are treated within the films. In 2000 there is a significant introspection going on, with a lot of films focusing on Europe and European nations, where they have also been produced (see Roosvall 2008b, 2009b forthcoming). The films constitute a trend of critical introspection and can be understood as parts of the deconstruction, the re-negotiated understanding, of the world that started after the end of the cold war (see Ekecrantz 2002).⁷ A focus on single nations, similar to the ratio of foreign news, however, dominates both in the material from 2000 and from 2006 (see Roosvall 2008b, 2009b forthcoming), although there were a few interesting exceptions. In the year 2000 two documentary films about both African countries and Sweden were broadcast. One of them focuses on connections between difficult conditions in Sudan and the presence of a Swedish oil company there and thus illustrates both the interconnectedness of the world and significant power relations.⁸ The other film depicts poverty in both Kenya and in Sweden, and through this approach it actually displays not only global, but also international and intra-national divides.⁹ It connects to an understanding of global divides as divides that are common to all societies, and that exist for instance *within* nation states. This understanding corresponds with Isar's first basic understanding of the notion of "divides"; divides as a predicament common to all societies (see Isar's chapter in this book). The film furthermore connects to solidarity rather than charity in that the equal representation of Kenya and Sweden is connected to a dialogic rather than a monologic mode. The story, the problems, the solutions are not one-directional, but dialogic, reciprocal, mutual, going back and forth between places and people. The North-Western introspection and the dialogue of the documentary films of 2000, has however disappeared in the films of 2006.¹⁰ There is one documentary film

from 2006 that has a transnational character, though. It is a story about the journey of a t-shirt from Germany, where it has been donated, to Tanzania, where a little boy gets it. Again interconnectedness is on the agenda. But the story is one-directional, and in this way connects to charity rather than solidarity and is monologic rather than dialogic in its mode. This is post September 11, post questioning of alleged relationships of geography and identity, it seems; in other words post cultural globalization. North-West appears now to be back to charity, back to talking about or perhaps listening to rather than talking to the subalterns, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) words.

As in the aid galas and the foreign news genre, the televised documentaries about foreign nations generally demonstrate cultural rather than political explanations of differences, but (national-)cultural explanations dominate more in relation to so called third world nations (Roosvall 2009b, forthcoming). Significant global and international divides can thereby be connected to the use of different media narratives and different media modes in relation to different parts of the world.

Solidarity in/and Media Studies

The three cosmographic genres that have been discussed here can be concluded to be rather similar when it comes to their cosmologies, and all of them tend to apply mainly a charity approach towards the rest of the world, even though solidarity approaches can also be detected within the foreign news and documentary film genres. The shared charity attitude can be connected both to the culturalistic, rather than political, explanations that dominate within the genres, and to the panoptic ratio of the genres as such.

Let's turn back now to Kössler and Melber's (2007: 32, following Waterman 2001) list of different understandings of solidarity and see how they can be related to the ratios and modes that have been found in the cosmographic genres, and to the field of media studies over all.

Identity (1) – common interests such as those represented in the classical example of the international worker or labour movement – could be detected in parts in the May Day reporting examples from the web slide-shows of foreign news. Future media studies should among other things investigate what kind of identities that are included in solidarity approaches within the media today and if they correspond to experienced identities among people, thus subsequently problematizing the identity politics concept (see for ex Fraser 2000) in the constitution of a distinction between identity politics generally and the *represented* identity politics that is being played out in and by the media. A similar approach could be taken towards issues of *substitution* (2) – the commitment and action on behalf of those unable to protect themselves or resist – in media representations. Who needs to be substituted today and who actually gets substitutional solidarity in and through the media?¹¹ Here it becomes especially important to monitor the absences in media discourse (Fairclough 1995, see also Spivak 1988). Approaches of *complementarity* (3) – the exchange of experiences and assistance of various and diverse forms – and *reciprocity* (4) – the exchange of equal or similar forms of experiences and assistance – on the other hand will in the media presumably generally be used for other groups than the substitution approach, and for other geopolitical areas of the world. Both complementarity and reciprocity are connected to a

dialogic media mode, but we can distinguish here between a complementarity dialogic mode which could be seen as less equal, but in certain emergency situations perhaps necessary and more realistic, and a reciprocity dialogic mode, where similarity rather than difference is expected but not demanded. Similarity is in this respect related not to the superficial levels of clothing and religious buildings that the world news slide-shows tend to focus on, but to similarities in basic human needs and human features, as in the documentary about poverty in both Kenya and Sweden. The Kenya-Sweden documentary thus displays a reciprocity dialogic mode, whereas the Sudan-Sweden documentary displays a complementarity dialogic mode. The reciprocity dialogic mode moreover connects to *affinity* (5) – common values, emotions, ideas, and concerns, for example among pacifists, socialists, environmental activists, representatives of indigenous minorities – where investigations of when and how affinity is constituted in the cosmographic genres would give excellent clues to the character of and the ratio behind both dominating and competing cosmologies and the anthropologies that are inscribed in them. *Restitution* (6) – the recognition of historical injustice as a basis of action – is perhaps most apparently lacking in the media, and most needed because of the media's cosmographic claims. Earlier cosmologies need to be questioned and rewritten and alternative ones need to be written today. One way of doing this – a crucial one – is to apply a postcolonial perspective (McClintock 1995, Loomba 1998). How does the history – and presence – of colonialism still affect our world and how we see it? Furthermore, Kössler and Melber added empathy to the list. Empathy in itself can result in plain charity, but merged with the six points above, and with political rather than cultural explanations of difference, it provides a solidarity mode that will be necessary for evoking the audience as citizens and not as consumers and thus subsequently address the audience as dispositioned for political action.

The six general approaches to solidarity could in the end be divided into two to three categories that call for different approaches in media studies. Concerning *identity* (1), *substitution* (2), and *affinity* (5), monitoring of the presence/absence of these approaches in relation to groups in media output (and the relating of this to studies of these groups and their perceptions) are suggested. In a second category, *complementarity* (3) and *reciprocity* (4) provides excellent grounds for discussing aspects of solidarity in different media modes, which could be studied – and demanded – even though profit driven media institutions can not be considered solidaritarian per se. There is a need of studies of different media modes of representation in relation to different (imagined) groups, especially monologic and dialogic modes. As seen in the exceptional examples from the documentary film genre dialogic – both complementary and reciprocal – modes are possible. *Restitution* (6), can be connected to this second category in that it does not only refer to different quantities or qualities of representations of certain groups, but also to the constitution of more equal power relations. *Restitution* also in itself constitutes a third category, appearing as the epitome of the policy aspect of all six approaches in that it explicitly calls for change in policies in connection to significant power relations; to significant global, inter- and intra-national divides.

Adding empathy as well as the notion of solidarity as a political requirement to the conceptualization of solidarity, as Kössler and Melber suggests, underlines the need for both symbolic and material action. It furthermore demands a reversal of the relation between culture and politics as explanations in the cosmographic genres; it demands a

focus on structures and politics and the possibility of change, that challenges the naturalization of differences in conditions, as well as the naturalization of related divides between and within different parts of the world, that are implied by the culturalistic explanations (see also Roosvall 2008a).

To conclude there is a need to continue, or resume an introspection where we look at cosmologies of dominating cosmographers and ask: what do these cosmologies say about these cosmographers, about their presupposed audiences, and how they relate to the rest of the world? We – and by we I mean specifically the North-West, where much of the media production (and ownership) is situated, but the same goes actually for everyone – we need to combine outlooks with introspection and subsequently try to bridge the divides between these two approaches. One crucial way to do this is a break-up of genres (see also Volkmer 2002: 242). If the cosmographic genres are also panoptic genres, as they have been disclosed to be, neither divides between outlook and introspection nor significant and unequal divides between different parts of the world are likely to disappear. The break-up of foreign and domestic news genres does however not necessarily mean universalism, which often ultimately has proved to be used in a Euro-centric way. It means universalism only in the sense that term can be modified along the lines of Spivak's (1993) and Ernesto Laclau's (1996) theories (see Thörn 2008). Universalism in this sense can be relativized, its historic and social context-dependence recognized, and thus we can see universalism as not borderlessness, but as transcending of borders, as a possibility of action, of movement, which in a specific situation transgresses a specific interest and particular groups or identities (Thörn 2008). Such an approach would meet both the empathic and political requirements of a solidarity that is essential within the media as well as within media studies today.

Notes

1. Broadcast May 1 2008.
2. Even the Christian activists made this connection, but specified it as a connection between charity and the more conservative parts of church.
3. Structural explanations are generally, in the foreign news genre, reserved for communist or post-communist parts of the world, but also these stories are to a significant degree de-politicized and spectacularized (see Roosvall 2005).
4. Appadurai (1996) suggests the term cultural, and different forms of it, rather than the reifying noun culture, and identifies culturalism as the main way of relating to difference in our globalized world (p 16). Culturalism appears as identity politics on the national level (p 15).
5. A literal translation of the title would be "Documents from the outside".
6. The panoptic notion of this programme is stressed further by the existence of a similar programme reserved for documentaries and reportages about domestic Swedish events. This other programme is called *Documents from the inside* [Dokument inifrån].
7. The introspective aspect can be related to Bill Nichols' (1991) description of the development of the documentary film genre over time, where introspection (and personalization) is seen as a late, and more advanced, stage.
8. *Tron, hoppet och oljan* [Faith, Hope and Oil], broadcast on SVT May 3 2000.
9. *Att vara fattig är ett helvete* [Being Poor is Hell], broadcast on SVT October 18 2000.
10. This tendency contradicts Nichols (1991) one-directional history of the character of documentary films, and supports Stella Bruzzi's (2000) analysis of the genre where she claims that different characteristics are mixed within films, and can not be expected to be part of a one-directional evolution of the genre.

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11. It can of course be discussed whether substitution as such really qualifies as solidarity, since it can be viewed as non-reciprocal, but it still includes essential elements of action, that differs decisively from charity approaches, and does not exclude a reciprocal aspect in a second stage.

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Media and the Global Divide

A Bottom-up and Citizen Perspective

Thomas Tufte

Abstract

When addressing media and global divides, the focus of the problem is often on the overall global trends in media and cultural production – identifying current developments in different regions of the worlds, and illustrating the complexity of these developments within the media and communications panorama in general and cultural production in particular. However, with the present paper, I wish to complement such meta perspectives by offering a bottom-up and more grounded perspective upon globalization and the role of media in articulating, or not articulating, divides.

Consequently, as my commentary to the overall theme for the 2008 IAMCR conference, here I reflect upon media and global divides from the perspective of how these divides are experienced in everyday life, by ordinary citizens. Particular emphasis is put upon people who are marginalized in the societies where they live. My brief examples are from rural Malawi, low-income urban Brazil and amongst ethnic minorities in Denmark. The lived divides are approached from three perspectives, that of the material divides, the socio-cultural divides and the symbolic divides. Following an account of these different lived divides, I assess the ‘citizen tactics’, that is, the different attempts to overcome the identified divides, suggesting that by understanding the character of such citizen tactics, we can also understand the (re-)configuration of political identities in times of global divides.

Keywords: global divides, citizenship, globalization, communication for development, social change, media ethnography, citizen media

Introduction

...while globalization is identified as an important part of modernity, it is frequently obvious, although left implicit, that where theorists are really at home is still the West: western Europe, North America. Possibly Japan has by now been added, but on the whole theorists are still Occidentals. It ought perhaps to be made an obligation on the part of those who discuss modernity in general – or such related abstract notions as ‘knowledge society’ or ‘information society’ (or ‘global divide’, I would add, ed) – to try to give some real attention to the implications of what they are saying to people at the margins of the global ecumene: not just to see whether their claims hold, but also to ponder the consequences of emerging uneven distributions (Hannerz 1996: 55)

What do current media development trends, processes of cultural globalization and, consequently, the possible global divide look like as a lived experience *amongst peasants*

in rural Malawi, amongst low-income urban women in the *favelas of Brazilian cities* or amongst *2nd generation immigrant youth in an old workers neighbourhood-turned-immigrant community in Copenhagen*? My main objective is to narrate experienced 'divides' and how the citizens themselves try to overcome them.

What *does* the concept of 'the global divide' actually mean and entail, seen from a citizen perspective? When you ground this question in the lived experience of cultural globalization, the global divide becomes lived experience of inclusion or exclusion, representation and participation: global *divides*. Beyond material conditions expressed as a technology-focused digital divide, the global divides, in relation to media, are cultural, social and symbolic divides: lived experiences of lack of recognition or lack of identification, misrepresentation or lack of representation, and also lack of participation in processes of media and cultural production.

Analysing global divides in relation to media in everyday life becomes an analysis of experienced mediatized divides related to processes of social inclusion, identity formation and citizenship. It may concern experienced divides in relation to people and nations elsewhere on the globe, but just as likely experienced divides in one's own country or community.

In this context, the media are the mediators of lived experience, access-givers to symbolic worlds of entertainment and global news reporting. They also become facilitators of and providers of spaces for public debate and for participation in society. By analysing media and global divides from an everyday perspective, the object of study does not become the technologies *per se*, but how they facilitate social networking, enhance processes of identity formation, enable access to and participation in public debates and ultimately enhance possibilities for citizens to express themselves and engage in society.

Consequently, the first point I wish to make, and illustrate with some brief examples, is the variety and diversity within the interconnectedness inherent in 'global divide'. The Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, reflecting upon modernity, states: 'One of the great advantages of a conception of modernity as an expansive civilization is that it draws attention to global asymmetries, to center-periphery relations. Modernity was not originally everywhere, and if it has spread everywhere, or is at least making itself felt everywhere, it is present under quite variable conditions' (ibid.).

The global divide can be seen as a perspective upon modernity as such, an expansive civilization where global asymmetries and 'variable conditions' exist. An attempt to understand this dimension of modernity and of contemporary world development speaks to the need to deconstruct the lived experiences of the same. Consequently, the first question to raise when attempting to understand the global divide, and in particular the media's role in the global divide, concerns identifying some of the different aspects of the lived experience of media and the global divide: What divides are people experiencing in everyday life?

The lived divides can be approached from many perspectives, of which I will focus on three:

- Firstly, the perspective of *material divides* where the emphasis is on understanding the degree and forms of access to media and communication technologies.
- Secondly, the perspective of *social-cultural divides* where the divide is beyond a question of material access to the media, but about the socio-economic divisions in society, power relations and media ownership. The media perspective on these divides

concerns the role the media potentially can play in bridging these divides, articulating social change processes and offering quality public service to their audiences.

- Thirdly, the focus will be on *symbolic divides*, where the divide concerns the lack of representation and the misrepresentation of particular social groups in the media, resulting in a lack of voice.

Following an exploration into the different ways media and global divides are experienced by ordinary citizens, the question that emerges concerns overcoming some of these divides. The question becomes one of agency and change: How can marginalized citizens, affected by the above-mentioned material, socio-economic and symbolic divides, engage and participate in processes whereby they can overcome these divides? This question speaks to the possible articulation of the ways and means by which some of the examples of experienced divides can be overcome.

Experienced Divides

What divides are people experiencing in everyday life? To address this question, brief examples are provided from three places where I have conducted media ethnographic research over the past years: rural Malawi, low-income urban Brazil and low-income urban and immigrant Denmark. These accounts are merely indications of the different experiences of media and global divides that are found across the globe.

Malawi: Material Divide and Radical Exclusion

Living as a peasant in rural Malawi in Southern Africa is probably as marginal as you can get as a member of the ‘global ecumene’ of well-connected media consumers (Hannerz 1996). Typically, you live in a small village with either no electricity or occasional electricity, no TV sets in the village and at most one landline telephone in the vicinity, probably at the closest health care facility. Most of you and your neighbours have radios, small portable ones you – if you are a man – can carry around. However, often the radio is silent, because you cannot afford the batteries. This scenario is a common one for rural Malawi.

Malawi is one of the world’s 5 poorest countries, ranking 167 on the UNDP Human Development Index. Consequently, media are far from as widespread as in many other countries. Television *per se* is a novelty, only introduced into Malawi in 1999. Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation, the public service entity providing radio and TV, is stripped of resources, providing irregular and rather poor quality programming to primarily a select urban audience. National production is very limited. In the rural areas, television is practically inaccessible.

Radio, however, is widespread, but still not with full coverage. A survey by Malawi Broadcasting Company (MBC, 2006) indicated that although 92% had access to radio at home, 22% of those with radio access had radios that were not working. Of these 22%, almost half (43%) explained that they had no batteries and 39% indicated technical faults. In other words, they couldn’t afford even batteries or repairing their radios. The same survey indicated strong dissatisfaction with poor signals and poor reception in many parts of Malawi.

As for media content, a small inquiry I conducted of the radio entertainment supply in 2005 illustrated that 9 entertainment-education radio dramas were on air at that par-

ticular time, funded primarily by international donors via either UN agencies, bilateral donors or through NGOs and CBOs. Most of these programmes dealt with conveying development-related messages and raising development-related debates using radio drama formats (Tufté 2007). This speaks to a very precarious situation with regards to production of radio programming, with close to no funds available, if they are not provided by external funding agencies. Ironically, these international donors do their best to put their international insights and experience to the service of the Malawian people, but the question is rather: Do these institutionalized, often donor-driven initiatives provide the media content the Malawians prefer, can understand and can access?

Contrary to some of these initiatives, what is rather widely available and accessed, in particular amongst younger men, are 'video parlours', which are informal cinemas organized as video/DVD screenings, often in private homes, where the owner charges a minimal fee for each screening. Action films and pornographic films are amongst the most popular screenings, representing a very particular dimension of possible symbolic worlds these young men access. Very limited knowledge exists as to the sense-making processes resulting from these particular media consumption patterns.

With regards to telephony, landline phones are very few in the rural areas. This is however changing these days, and mobile phones are experiencing a *de facto* boom in many African countries, including Malawi. This is articulating new social relations and dynamics. For instance, bank transfers by mobile phone have become possible. This, at the level of anecdote and from the Masais in Kenya rather than rural Malawi, is leading to changing patterns of social interaction, where urban Masai dwellers are remaining in the cities and often simply transferring funds occasionally to their rural communities of origin rather than visiting them (Talle, 2009). Internet remains practically inaccessible in rural areas, with only occasional telecentres providing access, or occasional Internet cafés at larger trading centres or in towns.

In this context, the degree of mediatized everyday life experienced by the common Malawian peasant is practically non-existent – it is only gradually growing and remains very much a still-to-be-explored experience. Here, the significant material divide is reinforcing the lived experience of radical socio-economic exclusion and marginalization. The non-access to national and international news, the limited possibilities of involvement in any mediated public debate, the lack of representation and no participation in any mediated cultural production place the rural Malawian at the very margins of the culture economy.

Brazil: Cultural Proximities but Social Divides

Living in a low-income urban area in Brazil, for example in one of the shanty towns, *favelas*, in the outskirts of Sao Paulo, where I have conducted fieldwork, is a very different experience than that of rural Malawi. The typical favela-dweller lives in a very compact household environment. There are many household members, and they live very close to their neighbours in a cramped neighbourhood, often on occupied territory or land that they do not own. They have high media access, are heavy media consumers and generally orient themselves towards the enormous supply of national media production, especially the serial TV fiction, the telenovelas.

Most households have a TV set, most often an old one, and many even have a video or a DVD player. Radio access is close to 100%, and in the better-off areas of low-income urban peripheries computers with Internet access are found. The large majority cannot afford either cable TV or satellite TV, but they primarily have access to the large national TV stations, especially Rede Globo's channels. Rede Globo is the largest TV network in Latin America and in the 1990s was the world's largest producer of TV fiction, primarily in the form of telenovelas. Thus, the *favela* dweller lives in a strong media environment characterized furthermore by the massive presence of national production of all programme formats including ordinary TV news, dramatized TV news formats, reality and TV talk shows, and not least the telenovelas and mini-series (Tufte 2000). Since the early 1970s, telenovelas have dominated the Brazilian prime-time television and as such have also been an important instrument in promoting national cultural integration in this enormous country.

The above-described media situation in Brazil is contradictory. While all 180 million Brazilians have massive access to media and one might say they are highly integrated in terms of national cultural identification, the social divide in society prevails and is immense. Brazil was for years identified by UNDP as the most socially unequal society in the world. In other words, the high degree of access to at least traditional radio and TV is by no means an indicator of any sort of socio-economic progress.

The culture economy in Brazil is extremely well developed, and audiences of all socio-economic strata have high degree of access, including most *favela* dwellers. Also, the telenovelas in particular provide some visibility of socio-cultural issues of concern also to the *favela* dweller, and in many ways the media serve as a public forum and articulator of public debate. However, despite the fine-tuned 'cultural connection' between media and audience, the extreme socio-economic conditions prevail. Conclusively, Brazil – despite massive media access and strong national cultural integration – remains a country with a dramatic social divide.

Denmark: Full Media Access but Symbolic and Cultural Divides

In Nørrebro, a former workers neighbourhood in central Copenhagen, you find 60+ languages spoken amongst the immigrant communities that have settled there over the past two to three decades. Living in Nørrebro, as a family of say Kurdish-Turkish origin, or of Pakistani origin, you most likely have complete access to both radio, TV, including satellite or cable TV, Internet access and mobile phones. At home, it is likely that the children in the family have a TV in their (shared) bedroom, and that there is a larger TV screen in the living room. (Grand-)Parent viewing habits most likely dominate the media consumption patterns in the living room. This consumption often has a strong orientation towards the country of origin. Contrary to this, the children's bedroom media consumption is far more mixed and with a high level of consumption of American TV sitcoms, series and shows, much like that of most youth in Denmark. Mobile phones are widespread, often times extending and reinforcing existing social networks, but also instruments of social control, for example allowing parents to 'let go' of their young daughters, as long as they remain in SMS contact (Tufte 2003).

Approximately 25% of the population in Nørrebro are immigrants, former refugees or children of immigrants or refugees. At the national level, these populations constitute

roughly about 8-9% of the population. While Danish radio and television continues to be dominated by state-owned public service media, the media consumption amongst especially 1st but also to some degree 2nd and even 3rd generation immigrants is not concentrated on the Danish public service media, or on Danish media in general. We find a significant presence of ‘homeland media’ in their media consumption patterns (Tufté 2002). Or stated differently: Immigrant communities in Denmark often navigate between diasporic media practices and consumption of both American mainstream and Danish media content.

What I found in my research amongst ethnic minority youth in Nørrebro was a strong feeling of non-representation or misrepresentation in the media (Tufté 2002). A series of events in the neighbourhood was covered in unfair ways in the media. Combined with a generally stereotyped negative representation of young ethnic minorities, it sparked, amongst these young ethnic minorities, disappointment, anger, apathy, and more generally, a sense of social – and political – exclusion from Danish society. The ‘war against terrorism’ in recent years has accentuated a strong focus on terrorism that is associated not only with fundamentalist Muslims, but that very quickly spilled over into associations with Muslims in general and to non-ethnic Danes in general, particularly those of distant cultural origin, i.e. the large Pakistani, Marokkan, Palestinian, Somali, Iranian and Iraqi communities in Denmark. The most recent and dramatic shooting episodes in the neighbourhood of Nørrebro in the spring of 2009 have reinforced a stereotypical media representation of 2nd generation ethnic minority youth as criminal gangs.

Citizen Tactics

Overcoming the global divides and the role of the media in these divides is a question of tactics. ‘Tactics’ is the concept developed by the late French sociologist Michel de Certeau in his book ‘The Practice of Everyday Life’ (de Certeau, 1984). Tactics, according to de Certeau, are the efforts made by ordinary people to create spaces for themselves, whereby they can overcome the ‘strategies’, or the structures of power, to which they are subject due to institutions’ actions and impositions. We can argue that the role of the media – the mainstream and large scale media – constitutes one such set of institutions exercising strategies. The response to this for ordinary citizens is to seek to develop *citizen tactics* – ways and means to carve out their own appropriation and meaning and thus produce a resistance to the structures of power to which they are exposed in everyday life.

Now, what do such tactics consist of? Citizen tactics speak to questions of agency, ownership and identity formation, and they relate a need to identify the ways in which citizens exert agency, articulate ownership and form their identity in accordance with their own norms and values, trajectories and projections for the future. In the three settings we are examining – rural Malawi, favela Brazil and immigrant urban Copenhagen, Denmark – such tactics are taking on very different characteristics.

Malawi – Exercising Citizenship through Media and Communication

As a peasant in rural Malawi, overcoming material, socio-economic and symbolic divides is a complicated matter. Very slow technological developments in the rural areas of Malawi, combined with the extreme poverty situation even with frequent famines in recent years, severely limit the ability to overcome material divides, not to mention the socio-economic

and symbolic divides. A weak media infrastructure, and very incipient civil society and very young traditions for democracy and civic engagement, produces a difficult point of departure. However, despite the gloomy scenario, the possibilities of overcoming divides are well illustrated by a current civil society initiative developed by ADRA Malawi, the Adventist Development and Relief Association, a faith-based NGO.

ADRA Malawi has developed an innovative 'communication for social change' strategy for HIV/AIDS prevention. This social-change-oriented communication strategy involves exercising citizenship through media and communication and through this approach, improving HIV/AIDS prevention. Basically, ADRA has developed an integrated approach to development and awareness raising, where food security (community gardens), awareness raising via mass media (radio drama, TV drama and radio talk shows) and community dialogue sessions (in 20 rural communities) are addressed in a holistic and synergetic manner.

The food security programme has a community development aspect to it as well, in enhancing some limited degree of local economic development and trade. Awareness raising on HIV/AIDS is pursued by producing media programmes based on formative research and drawing on local traditions of theatre, storytelling and embracing local cultural traditions, in regards to humour, myths and artistic expression. The community dialogue sessions focus on debating HIV/AIDS, often times connected to what is in the radio programming. Finally, the radio talk show has a key element of advocacy, inviting opinion leaders and responsible leaders into the studio to debate, but also to be held accountable for initiatives they are involved in.

In these manners, available technologies, primarily the radio, are used for advocacy, public debate and awareness raising, and connected to community dialogue sessions with the explicit aim to articulate public debate, enhancing some degree of voice and public participation, even from the rural areas. Thereby, the initiative, set forth in some of the most distant and marginalized communities not only of southern Malawi but of the world, constitutes a modest attempt to connect the local peasant and rural community with contemporary processes of mediatized local, national and global development. A well-developed monitoring and evaluation scheme is documenting the changes.

Brazil – Active Sense-Making, Social Movements and Community Radio

In Brazil, the experienced divides are of a socio-cultural nature, where the mainstream media, Rede Globo in particular, for many favela dwellers plays a decisive role in processes of sense-making and identity formation, but also in the articulation of civic engagement and participation in the public debate. Parallel to this heavily mediatized society we also find social movements and a strong civil society articulating other voices in the media, expressed most significantly in the current community media movement (Peruzzo 2008). Due to a new media law in 1998, community radio stations in particular have mushroomed in the past decade to more than 10,000, thereby becoming a significant alternative mediated public sphere. Thus, these two key elements, Rede Globo and its telenovelas on one hand, and the community media movement on the other, are *both* perspectives that can be highlighted as relevant pathways in reinforcing cultural identity, overcoming the social divides, and engaging favela dwellers in public debate and social change in Brazil.

Firstly, in response to the massive presence of commercially produced national telenovelas in everyday life, it is important not just to discard this heavily mediatized everyday life as a situation that articulates apathy and passivity. Many opposite processes can be identified. The telenovelas have been seen to articulate strong public debates on social, cultural and political issues and as such serve as a useful tool in the development of open discussion cultures, and consequently in the articulation of civic engagement in public debate. At the level of identity formation, the telenovelas, consumed for up to 3-4 hours daily by many *favela* dwellers, also serve to articulate a particular ‘tactical space’ in everyday life – what I previously have called ‘hybrid spheres of signification’ (Tuftes 2000). These spaces are intermediary zones in everyday life, spaces of media reception and of sense-making, constituted both physically in the in-betweens of the public and private spaces, and symbolically, negotiating both gender roles, the rural past of many families and the urban present. It is a space in everyday life that becomes central to the formation of self and of identity, a symbolic construct from which the processes of cultural hybridization and interaction with the mass media make their way out into the innumerable practices of everyday life (Tuftes 2000).

Secondly, community media have in recent years come to occupy a central space in the Brazilian media debate and in providing many local communities a voice, a discursive space, and thus an entry point into the public debate in Brazil. The alternative media or ‘citizen media’ (Rodriguez 2001) have existed for a long time in Brazil – in the 1960s and 1970s in the form of theatre and radio, in the 1980s with the alternative video movements, in the 1990s with some local TV experiences, and experiments with smaller cable TV stations. Today, the Internet, combined with the traditional media, has opened up a broad range of citizen media initiatives (Wildermuth 2009).

Denmark – Public Service Broadcasting and Public Debate

The lived experience with media and the global divides amongst ethnic minority youth in Denmark refer primarily to a divide in relation to the national Danish frame of reference. Stereotyped representations and lack of representation in the national Danish media, in addition to a strong sense of non-belonging and apathy, have been prevalent amongst many youth ethnic minorities. These mediated experiences of a symbolic divide are somewhat contradictory to the fact that Denmark has a strong public service broadcasting infrastructure with both major national public service media and a legal framework and state budget in support of local TV and radio production. Thus, supported by this framework is a broad variety of ethnic minority media, spanning from Turkish music radio stations and local Arab television in Danish (ATV) and to a diasporic TV channel for the European Kurdish population.

While the public service broadcasting is well developed, some of the experiences of non-inclusion, discrimination and misrepresentation seem connected to broader questions of transnational migration, but also to the deeper processes of cultural transformation in the Danish society, and to some of the inertia against such processes amongst ethnic majority Danes. To counter some of these processes, and the experiences of cultural and discursive polarization in the media, we do find noteworthy public service programmes. One example is X-factor, a musical talent show, a globalized concept-based programme format, where a large number of the approximately 10 finalists in the Danish version

of the programme where ethnic minorities. Suddenly, the common terminology of ‘2nd generation immigrants’ and ‘ethnic minority youth’ vanished, and the finalists were referred to by their first names, Mohammad, Danushan, Patricia and Marcel. Ironically, ethnic minority youth are becoming increasingly visible on the musical scene in Denmark, thus in the culture economy, not with their negative stereotypes but as talented *Danish* cultural performers, thereby contradicting some of the persistent symbolic and socio-cultural divides experienced in everyday life.

Bridging the Divides?

The role of the media and of communication structures at all levels (community, sub-regional, national, regional and international) is inextricably bound up with how citizens understand and engage in democratic life. The rights and capacities of people, particularly those living in poverty, to voice their own perspective and have them heard in public debate, particularly through the media, are increasingly recognized as critical to effective governance (James Deane 2008: 161)

In the above quote, Head of Policy Development at BBC World Service Trust, James Deane, speaks to one of the fundamental questions at stake when discussing media and global divides: the question of how citizens understand and engage in democratic life. It is a question of citizens’ rights and capacities to voice their own perspectives. Without such possibilities, effective governance and democratic life are difficult.

If we assess the three cases I have mentioned in relation to these democratic principles, then we see very different scenarios. Each in their way, the lived experiences and *citizen tactics* in rural Malawi, in low-income urban Brazil, and amongst ethnic minorities in Denmark have illustrated global divides regarding the role of the media. The examples are not exclusively *either* material divides *or* socio-cultural divides *or* symbolic divides. However, all three examples narrate ways and means whereby citizens, via the de Certeau’ean ‘tactics’, seek to articulate not only resistance to the divides, but to pro-actively overcome them.

While the overall trends within the culture economy point towards reinforced divides, the civil-society-driven struggle to overcome these global divides is a steadily growing process taking place on multiple levels, in a variety of spaces. This current global process is an open process, rooted in a multitude of bottom-up and citizen-driven initiatives of which three have briefly been discussed here. However, really understanding the potential of these processes will require in-depth empirical studies of the outlined divides, contextualized in globalization studies. Enhancing citizenship in this context is, as the Mexican cultural analyst Rossana Reguillo states, about understanding the re-configuration of political identities:

...conceiving globalisation from the perspective of communication and its articulation with the social is, possibly, to understand where what we might call the re-configuration of the political identities is occurring. (It’s the) pursuit of a citizenship as a process open for definition (Reguillo 2005: 70).

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From an Echo of the West to a Voice of Its Own?

Sub-Saharan African Research under the Loophole

Ullamaija Kivikuru

One paradox of our time is the fact that, parallel to debates on globalization paradigms, discussions about the de-westernization of communication research have emerged (e.g., Alfaro Moreno 2006; Murphy & Rodriguez 2006; Couldry *et al.* 2007; Martín-Barbero 2006; Thussu 2006; Tomaselli & Teer-Tomaselli 2007; Tunstall *et al.* 2007; Wang 2008; Wasserman & de Beer 2009; Xiaoge 2009). Reterritorialization seems to be a by-product of the talk on globalization and the cultural homogenization that is said to come with it. It is noticeable that the recent flow of de-westernization studies is largely lacking in straight-forward claims of media domination, media imperialism or core/periphery contradiction. The most central concept is mediatization. The absence of one single centre is acknowledged; the US is considered as “only one node in a complex system” (Sparks 2007: 141). Zigzag routes of media flows seem to have been accepted as a starting point.

Self-analysis has also reached African media and communication research, thus far perhaps the least known of the territorial research spheres. Quite frequently, African media research has been assessed as semi-Western, reflecting the tones originally set by especially Anglo-American research. This short introduction attempts to catch glimpses of African media and communication research today. Quantitatively speaking, it is not very extensive, especially on international platforms, but it is in fact more diversified than may be assumed.

The elaborations of difference and of “new” areas of emphasis in communication research have most often been presented within regional frameworks – authors seem to think that research in Latin America, Asia or Africa can be defined, at least to a certain extent, from a territorial perspective. This viewpoint is problematic, at least in the case of Africa. How could anyone dream of grouping together, in a single basket, Sub-Saharan African researchers, who are divided by a huge territorial area and some 40 media systems, by three *lingua franca* each with their own strong colonial legacies, by hundreds of African languages also with their own impact on today’s situation, and finally by individual educational histories, from home as well as from the West? There is in fact no justification for talking about African media research within one framework. In order to have any relevance, an examination should be made using far more sophisticated spectacles.

One counter-argumentation to avoidance of territorialization could be the fact that all research is frequently and sweepingly territorialized – we talk about “Northern”, “Anglo-American”, “Central European” or “Nordic” media research. But there is still a difference. African media and communication research is rich in disjunctions based on time and place, and researchers in different parts of the region are often more familiar with research from the so-called West than with research from their own region.

Further, there are huge differences in publishing potential in different parts of the region.

South Africa has a strong research component, but it has long been isolated from the rest of the continent. Only recently have South African researchers begun to acquaint themselves with their neighbours. South Africa is a realm of its own, still quite strongly inwardly oriented – but with its windows open to the West and Australia. This complex society has strong educational institutions in media and communication, and it has researchers who have been forced to develop publishing arenas of their own during the period of isolation. Nigeria also plays a strong role: It has a multitude of educational institutions carrying on research, too. Ghana has had a long tradition of researchers with a voice of their own. Both also have large diasporic communities of researchers in the West. Nairobi, Kenya, has long been a centre for publishing, although its significance has been decreasing. On the other hand, especially media research carried out in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa is unknown even in neighbouring countries.

In Africa, comparisons between media systems in various countries are problematic. As we know, African borders were mainly drawn on the desks of European colonial masters. It is better to talk about “media cultures” in the same sense as Nick Couldry (2007: 249) or Rosa Maria Alfaro Moreno (2006) do. Couldry takes a cultural line of consideration and encourages researchers to focus on creative agencies outside the dominant centres. This is a valid point, although Herman Wasserman and Arnold de Beer (2009: 432) justifiably warn that, in such a line of thought, structural inequalities are easily pushed aside, and that were unethical in the African situation. Resources available for education and research also vary markedly across the continent.

Alfaro Moreno talks about Latin American circumstances, but her thoughts are well suited to Africa as well. She focuses on publics, counter-publics, strong and weak publics and the dynamism embedded in communication, and she stresses the fact that the construction of public opinion does not belong only to the space of the media, but also to articulations of ethnicity and folklore (Alfaro Moreno 2006: 303-308). This type of argumentation is of relevance also in Africa.

Why in Stockholm?

The paradox of reterritorialization can be challenged with ease. Media movements do take other forms of institutionality as well. However, territory is the framework of the following texts. A panel session at the IAMCR Stockholm Conference was devoted to African media research, and some of the panel members’ papers are collected in this volume. The panel comprised a group of eastern and southern African researchers, all of whom have English as their working language. This means that a large number of research traditions and researchers from Africa were left out. Above all, research from West Africa, both in English and in French, was under-represented.

However, this was the first time African media research had been given the opportunity to have a special panel at an IAMCR conference. At its previous conferences, the IAMCR has regularly presented media or communication research in a particular region, most recently with a focus on Asia and the Arab world, when IAMCR conferences have been held in these regions.

Then, why a session on African research at a conference held in Stockholm, in Scandinavia? The main reason is that Nordic media researchers and journalism educators have a long history of collaboration with Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly as a side-path to development assistance activities. However, the oldest layer of joint history dates back to Finnish missionaries in Namibia in the 19th century. The most recent and no doubt best-known layers of joint history are part of the various media and democracy projects started in the 1990s when multi-party democracy began in most countries of Africa and changed the media landscapes there. Sweden, Norway and Denmark have supported such projects.

This does not mean that the Nordic countries can claim any credit for media research in Africa. Nordic assistance agencies have been interested, occasionally but not systematically, in media matters, mainly in journalism education, in campaign organization and, most recently, in promotion of democracy in the region. Networks have been developed, and some Nordic researchers have been involved in research cooperation as well. That is all, but it is enough for us to organize a special panel presenting African media research at the IAMCR Conference.

Unfortunately, not all who were invited could come, and not all of the panel participants who presented their papers in Stockholm were able to develop their presentations into articles for this volume. African academicians are burdened with a great deal of teaching and administration. They are pressured by the same demands to “publish or perish” as their colleagues in the West are, but their possibility to allocate time for research is extremely limited.

It is thus understandable, but regrettable, that Ruth Teer-Tomaselli from South Africa, who talked about the challenges posed by new technology in South Africa, Edwin Nyuitho from Kenya, who talked about media monitoring of the coverage of the Kenyan presidential elections in 2007, and Amin Alhassan, a diasporic Ghanaian researcher based in Canada, who expressed his concerns about the recolonization of African media research¹, were not able to develop their presentations into articles to be published in this volume. All three scholars represent a relevant and interesting dimension of African media research today. Of course, it is even more respected that Guy Berger from South Africa and George Lugalambi from Uganda took the time and effort to develop their presentations into texts published in this volume.

As such, the group of panellists was quite representative in terms of the range of subject matter. The speakers dealt with media policy research, media monitoring on current issues, research on media and politics, as well as more theoretical dimensions. What was missing was perhaps the gender perspective. During the past 10-15 years, several monitoring or case studies (e.g. Lowe Morna 2004; Mlama 1994; Solomon 2007) have been carried out in different parts of the continent on the status of women in the media, but taking into consideration the lively woman journalists’ associations in Africa, the interest devoted to gender studies could still be considered low. In the same way, research on the political economy of media has not been popular on the continent.

In the following, some aspects of recent African media and communication research will be shortly described.

From Development to Democracy

The aspect most frequently linked with African media and communication research is no doubt the development aspect – and quite justifiably so. Development is embedded in Sub-Saharan African research, but within it, a considerable move has taken place from campaign and nation-building research to the analysis of participation and community orientation. An interesting feature is also the fact that, during the past 10-15 years, development has partly been replaced by democracy as a “basic value” for any communication research. The originality of such development could naturally be questioned, because the form and dimensions given to democracy sound quite European. A far more indigenous natural trend involves discussions on identity matters (Wasserman 2003; Shepperson & Tomaselli 2002).

In the 1970s, Africa became famous for its nation-wide literacy and health campaigns. Research on these campaigns and, for example, the “literacy papers” attached to such campaigns articulated the development optimism that was predominant at the time. Research has never analysed properly the downfall of nationwide campaigns. Were the reasons entirely political, economic or did unsuccessful communication perhaps also play a role in the exercise? Since the 1990s, this branch of development communication research has been redirected to health communication, especially HIV/AIDS communication in various African countries. Such studies – mainly quantitative, though qualitative designs have become more popular in the recent years – are far more sophisticated than those carried out by media practitioners and researchers some two decades earlier.

Development communication has mainly been related to practical activity promoting health, agriculture, or education. It has not been intended to be academically challenging. The ghosts of modernization are easily detected in the theoretical considerations in, say, the introduction parts of project plans. Such texts are often designed according to northern donors’ or international organizations’ wishes. It would hardly be justified to expect original theoretical thinking under such circumstances.

In the development-oriented texts, communication is usually a tool only, subordinated to special knowledge in the particular subject field. Some recent texts (e.g., Tarawalie 2008) have combined new technology, rural development and indigenous culture, but they are exceptions.² A somewhat similar subordinate role has been reserved for communication in the democracy-related monitoring processes of elections, women’s role in public life, or the urban/rural contradiction. Notions of communication are frequent, but in fact they still only play a minor role.

The service orientation has long been a strong component in African communication research. Quite frequently, research reports also conclude with a list of recommendations – the goal is to work for social change. This kind of implicit development quest is found also in research that does not have direct development objectives. It can perhaps be said that development is still an implicit value for African communication research. To date, purely academic research has appeared as a phenomenon that Africa cannot afford. Those who have had the privilege to complete a higher education and take trips abroad have the responsibility to pay back and assist in the process of developing their society.

These kinds of links can easily be found, for example, in the development of one African particularity, the community media. The 1990s has been the decade of democracy and community media in Africa. The idea of giving a “voice to the voiceless” has also encouraged northern donors to support community media projects in various parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Hundreds of community radio stations, on-air as well as off-air, have provided media researchers with rich empirical material.

However, the link to democracy has turned out to be more complicated than expected. Community media in Africa have taken a fairly strong educational course, avoiding political questions, and especially the relationship between the community radio and the community it is obliged to serve has emerged as problematic. There seems to be plenty of room for reconsidering the implementation strategies investing on radio promoting community participation (Manyozo 2007). These studies have theoretical connections to the discussion about alternative media in the West (Moyo 2007). Analyses of community media are no longer solely stories with a happy ending, but a media policy orientation is still quite often missing, because project-based radio stations come and go.

The problematic relationship between national policies and local participation has been known since the nationwide campaigns (e.g., Ng’awanakilala 1981), but this problem has been rediscovered with the renaissance of community media. Recent studies on the difficulties encountered in the relations between community media and local governance (e.g., Teer-Tomaselli & Mjwacu 2003) indicate how complex the relationships between communities and community media can become.

On the other hand, complexities surrounding the concept of participation, also discussed by northern researchers (e.g., Sparks 2007), appear in many recent African texts (e.g., Manyozo 2007). The group interested in community media could perhaps be called somewhat eclectic in their focus (e.g., Alumuku 2006; Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997), but their texts definitely provide food for thought for those concerned about community media in the so-called North as well. Many African views on participation operate through a more down-to-earth approach than, for example, Colin Sparks in his recent considerations, but both streams are relevant in the discussion on participatory communication. African texts provide important ideas about the problems that prevent true participation, and they do base their argumentation not only on experience, but also on media policy and political economy.

Community media have been the favourite baby of northern donors. However, day-to-day reality provides evidence of the fact that both journalists and journalism educators know almost nothing about this sphere in Africa. Community media have, according to media policies in many countries, a space of their own in society, operating alongside public and private nationwide media. In practice, however, community media remain an isolated sphere, and participation is still more a popular slogan than an integral part of the mediascape.

Thus, development-oriented African research provides relevant and interesting issues for communication research outside the region as well. One aspect, however, has remained unchanged. African research, whether using the development or democracy frameworks, is still very serious, and avoids entertainment themes. Case studies on developmental soap operas, above all the South African cult youth series *YizoYizo* and a few studies on cartoons (e.g., Eko 2007) are exceptions, but still it is justified to claim that, for example, the African urban youth culture has not yet received the attention it is due.

South-South Networks are Weak

Besides the far-too-obvious notion of development, there is a multiplicity of characteristics typical to African – or, more precisely in this text, Sub-Saharan African – media and communication research. There is a strong emphasis on journalism research, which has its origin in the journalism education that has been an important part of African nation-building since the early 1960s. Journalism research started as a strongly skills-oriented field, but it has diversified considerably, now discussing news criteria, ethics, as well as media and identity issues.

There is also a long tradition of diasporic research. African scholars have worked in the West but done research on African media. Simultaneously, non-African researchers based in Africa have focused their interests accordingly. Typical of the latter has frequently been a very broad focus, leading to overview types of texts. As Wasserman and de Beer note, the strong influence of authors from the North writing on African journalism studies seems to be changing, because African authors have recently been able to get their texts published in international arenas. One unfortunate characteristic is the fact that South-South coordination still does not work well in Africa. African researchers know neither other African researchers nor researchers from Asia or Latin America. Accordingly, influences have come mainly from the Anglo-American sphere, where many have studied.

With some exaggeration, one could claim that African communication research has largely viewed Africa through northern eyes. It can be said that African media theory has long been quite narrow, borrowing, for example, European concepts of democracy for research on media and democracy. African media theory has often been linked with notions of freedom of expression, again borrowed from European discourses. However, the most recent texts on media and democracy have clearly been framed more in African societies (e.g., Berger & Barratt 2007, Nyamnjoh 2005, Rønning & Kupe 2000; Tomaselli & Dunn 2002).

Given the dependency on northern thinking, it is understandable that counter-reactions have occasionally been overdone, romanticizing “true Africanness” and “genuine” African forms of communication. Critical voices (e.g., Fourie 2008) have pointed out, for example, that a “true” African community ideology such as the South African *ubuntu* no longer exists in any other field of social activity – why then think that it could be the basis for normative principles in media activity? On the other hand, knowledge about tradition and oral communication has proved valid especially in research on community-based forms of communication (e.g., Mlama 1994; Mda 1993).

Against this background and knowing the variety of languages spoken in Africa, it is interesting that research on language and communication is limited. Practically no media research is published in African languages today, although especially in countries such as Tanzania, the media field has a strong local language – in this particular case, Swahili – emphasis. Languages used by the media have an explicit link to democracy. The situation is extremely interesting, for example, in Tanzania, where the multi-party system has meant a clear preference for Swahili-language media.

Language choices have been politically sensitive issues, linked not only to culture, but also to colonialism, nation-building and democracy. In most Sub-Saharan societies, the media operate with a diversity of languages – far more than Western societies have to cope with. Even the most interesting studies (e.g., Alexander 1992; Kamwangamalu

1999) do not devote much space to the languages used by the media. A challenge totally unknown to Western media systems, requiring regular media operation in 6-9 languages, does not seem to create a situation worth researching in southern Africa. Only extremely rarely has it been thought valuable enough to deserve the attention of scholars.

During the past 15-20 years, two other features of the research have grown in significance: media policy research with a leaning towards media monitoring, and research on media ethics. Media monitoring could perhaps be considered a foreign product, initiated and largely financed by northern donors. It has focused mainly on elections and gender issues. Quite interestingly, the gender issue does not come up in other related situations, but in the sphere of monitoring, it does. The ethics feature (e.g., Kasoma 1994; Rønning & Kasoma 2002) has obviously strengthened owing to the fact that with increased diversity in the media landscape, a wave of sensationalism has emerged in most Sub-Saharan societies. It has created a quest for ethics, and quite interestingly, ethics has been discussed within the framework of African identities.

Growth of Platforms

African researchers living in diaspora have not usually had special difficulties in finding publication channels for their texts, but the situation has been markedly different in the case of African researchers working inside Africa. A remarkable change has taken place during the past 10-15 years, partly thanks to new technology, and partly due to the fact that African research has grown and received attention owing to the quality of the work. The number of platforms has increased, and northern publishing houses have opened their doors to African authors more frequently than before. Further, texts by African researchers appear regularly in northern, refereed journals.

Since the 1970s, *Africa Media Review* has been able to cross the language barrier between English- and French-speaking authors, and the journal was long the only one distributed outside the region as well. The quality of texts varied, but the journal showed that African media educators did have an interest in more academic issues as well. Unfortunately, the journal seems to be dead today, mainly because its publisher, the African Council for Communication Education, based in Nairobi, Kenya, is apparently defunct. Instead, a new peer-reviewed journal, Tanzania-based *African Communication Research* started in 2008. Thus far, its focus has been on grassroots communication and media ethics.

South Africa has a long tradition of journals, which during the apartheid years were totally unknown to the rest of the continent, but which today are fairly well distributed also in eastern and western Africa. *Ecquid Novi. African Journalism Studies* has already published its 30th volume, and with increased resources to Stellenbosch University thanks to a new co-publisher (University of Wisconsin Press). Especially in its Forum sections, the journal has frequently published intense debates on burning current media policy themes. Another established – in fact, even older – South African academic journal is *Communicatio: South African Journal of Communication Theory and Research*, which has published its 35th volume. Somewhat younger is *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural and Media Studies*. As the title indicates, the journal has a strong cultural studies orientation, while the other two have a wider focus, from journalism studies and media ethics to communication theory. All also publish articles relevant to Africa but written by non-African scholars. All are referee based.

The most recent layer of African oriented journals is formed by online journals such as the London-based *Journal of African Media Studies*, which started publishing in 2008, but also the African version of *Global Communication* has opened a platform for African media research. Also *Global Media Journal* (started in 2007), in its African edition – sponsored by Stellenbosch University, South Africa, has provided a platform for African research. Further, the *Nordic Journal of African Studies* frequently publishes texts on communication research.

African media researchers have thus been able to locate publication channels, although the old imbalances remain: South African research channels are quite predominant. Further, there is another danger embedded in the new development. Because of the “publish-or-perish” syndrome, many more African university departments have planned or even started journals of their own, often totally unaware of each other’s plans. Establishing a credible academic platform is a challenge not only because of the demanding work of finding and evaluating suitable texts or of the technical part of printing. The creation of a reliable, well-functioning distribution system is a huge problem on a continent still suffering from a very weak South-South link.

Naturally, however, the main point is that African communication research does have a voice, and that voice no longer tells the same story as that told in the northern mainstream.

Notes

1. Alhassan has presented similar considerations in his article “The Canonic Economy of Communication and Culture: The Centrality of the Postcolonial Margins” (*Canadian Journal of Communication* 32(1), 103-18)
2. The launching issue of Tanzania-based *African Communication Research* (2008, Vol. 1, No 1) was devoted to grassroots and participatory communication.

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The Poverty of Journalism and the Politics of Reporting Poverty Statistics in South Africa¹

Guy Berger

Abstract

A debate raged in several South African newspapers in November 2007 around whether poverty levels had increased over 13 years of democracy and a black government. The controversy arose after the release of research findings by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) that the number of poor people had more than doubled between 1996 and 2005. The politicisation of the debate largely reflected the sensitivity of the government at the time, and this permeated the construction of various arguments. In the end, however, the controversy was inconclusive and it was subsequently “eclipsed” by developments outside the media. The experience points to the relations between press and society in transitional society, and especially to poor performance of the press in regard to coverage of a matter that is both complex and of critical social importance.

Keywords: South Africa, journalistic failure, poverty, political transition, reporting statistics, primary definers

Introduction

South African post-apartheid politics have seen much political contestation on the terrain of which political force best addresses poverty. President Thabo Mbeki who resigned in September 2008 had staked much of his reputation on this score, while his chief opponent and former comrade in the ruling African National Congress (ANC), Jacob Zuma, has portrayed himself as a victim of Mbeki’s political machinations because of his compassion for the poor (see, for instance, *The Star*, January 2008). The historical and electoral rhetoric of the ANC is pro-poor, and is a reaction to the continuing underdevelopment of the majority population that owes its roots to the apartheid political economy. But both the political left and the right have tried to paint the Mbeki government as falling short on the ‘delivery’ of ‘development’, and their critique evoked vehement denials by the authorities who instead pointed to major progress across a range of poverty fronts. This defensive response by those in power was not surprising because the criticism implies that either they act in the interests of ‘fat cats’ and don’t really ‘give a damn’ about the poor, or that they are inept in trying to uplift the downtrodden. Both views resonate with racist stereotypes of black rulers, thereby giving the issue a super-charge – especially when the criticism of government emanates from sources as

sociated with white advantage. While racial stereotypes have been researched in terms of representations of the poor (see Bullock et al 2001), here the focus was on the race of those presented as responsible for addressing the plight of the poor (and on the race of their accusers as well – see below). In this general context, the Mbeki government proved especially prickly about the SAIRR research which appeared a month before the watershed annual conference of the ANC in December 2007. The incumbents foresaw (correctly) that they would be vulnerable to challenge by left-leaning groups rallying under a populist banner seeking to replace Mbeki with Zuma as party president.

It was in its annual survey released in November 2007 that the SAIRR claimed there had been increased poverty under Mbeki's watch, highlighting this particular focus in a press release at the time. The Institute is susceptible to being characterised as reflecting white interests because of its own demographic make-up and also because – despite its liberal history – it supported the rightwing Inkatha Freedom Party (then a bellicose force with many murderous members) against the ANC, during the 1980s and early 1990s. The poverty claim from the baggage-laden Institute appeared in the political context outlined above, and it unsurprisingly triggered a controversy of note. Multiple discourses can surround a social issue like poverty (Summers 2006: 13), and this proved to be the case here.

In a nutshell, the Institute's claim was that whereas in 1996, there were 1.9 million South Africans living on less than the equivalent of a dollar-a-day, by 2005 this number had escalated to 4.2 million. The controversy that erupted around this finding might have been predicted. Government had, years earlier, reacted strongly to a 'battering' in the media, when figures released by the UNDP (2003) highlighted poor performance on poverty alleviation. And during 2007 itself, an article in the *Sunday Independent* (18 February) signalled the contentiousness of issue. Under the headline "Poverty is difficult to quantify, let alone end", journalist Patrick Laurence reported that the SAIRR was researching the issue and that its dollar-a-day yardstick meant there were 4.3 million people defined as poor in 2004. He also noted the higher benchmark of "relative poverty" which pointed to 23.5 million poor people in the same year. His article did not, however, compare this data to previous years, which was the key provocative dimension of the November SAIRR release. Also prior to the debate proper, but helping to set the stage, letters in June to *Business Day* deliberated on whether the SAIRR was a racist organisation, following an initial missive penned by a pro-government writer that was published under the headline: "Institute stands for doom, gloom". In short, the research did not come into a vacuum, and nor did it hail from a source with an unassailable image of a neutral research agency.

The poverty row ran throughout November 2007, and newspapers were a key platform for contestation (see Table 1).

The voices heard in the debate were largely those of the SAIRR, government and researchers. Overall, there was a predominance of SAIRR representatives in the jousting, often with the last word. No trade unions or NGOs dealing with welfare issues were presented. Further, that no-one in the press appears to have seen fit to canvass poor people and publish how they perceived the issue, indicates that this was a dispute within the elite about the poor. This omission of poor people is not surprising in the light of research elsewhere (eg. Devereux 1998), and also because the media in this particular case do tend to be fairly elitist – such as *Business Day*, where much of the debate took

place. But the effect was that poor people were rendered voiceless and without agency, and also as lacking in responsibility for their condition. Other research has observed that such voices of the poor are largely absent within South Africa media reportage on general policy issues (see Banda 2007a, Berger 2007, 2008). Echoing findings of one study (Banda 2007b), the coverage in the SAIRR case presented a sanitised, reified picture that was often far removed from actual experiences of poverty.

Significantly, another absent constituency in the whole debate was the business sector, suggesting implicitly that, while the controversy was signalled as relevant to business readers, business itself had no views on, or implication in, poverty trends. A symptomatically myopic paradigm thus seems to have informed both the media and the business community in regard to this debate.

However, journalists were also conspicuously absent from the substantive discussion – entering only in news reports, a few editorial comments, and very rare opinion pieces. Instead, the most ‘meaty’ arguments were presented unmediated in the form of opinion pieces by outsiders to the press. Additional points were evident in published letters to the editor. Not many newspapers seem to have foreseen that this story would become a rolling issue nor one that deserved more thoughtful journalistic engagement. Thus no articles were found that would count as a round-up of the debate or a meta-analysis of the positions, although such should be legitimately expected to be a contribution to the coverage by journalists themselves. There was therefore no clear or credible resolution for readers who followed the coverage (probably in piecemeal fashion).

Journalists stood accused of subtracting value during the debate. Although the debate became one of government performance on poverty, it also indirectly revealed a lot about press performance in covering the major issue at hand. The basic role of the press being a neutral simple information conduit was evident in, and limited to, early news articles about the SAIRR report and government reaction to it. Even here, the inadequacies of journalism were hammered. As pointed out by analyst Steven Friedman on a newspaper website, the media simply regurgitated the SAIRR’s claims without scrutiny or balance. He criticised reporters for not asking “basic questions” of the SAIRR about how the findings were reached, and for not asking other experts for their views. Ken Owen, a former editor, expressed his hope in a letter that “in future the newspapers will be more circumspect in publishing material from the institute without checking it”. An official at the quasi-governmental Human Sciences Research Council, Miriam Altman, used her opinion piece to lay into “poorly researched journalism”. As often happens in political debates, the media serves as a scapegoat and is partly blamed for the controversy. In this case, however, the critiques of media performance were not unwarranted. There was no acting as a watchdog in terms of independent scrutiny of the claims being made on any side of the debate. Even less did the press act as an educator in its own right, explaining the issues. Instead, the lack of journalistic intervention meant a discourse of incomparable statistics, substantial jargon and more confusion than illumination. The debate remained at the level of “he said, she said” representation.

Thus, most coverage appears to have been in the form of reactions to, and by, elites external to the press who were keen to join the debate, rather than journalists pro-actively soliciting (diverse) participation. To this extent, the press did act as a forum and site of contestation, although in so doing it also did not go beyond reflecting the agenda, viz. that there was a dispute over government’s poverty performance. However, inasmuch

Table 1. Contributions to the Debate

	Author	Year	Title	SAIRR authors	Govt authors	Pro govt	Pro SAIRR	Crit SAIRR	Mixed/ Neutral	News	Editorial	Opinion	Letter	Blog	Date	Medium
1	Cilliers, S	2007	Al meer mense leef onder broodlyn				1			1					13-Nov	Beeld
2	Editorial	2007	Armoede				1				1				14-Nov	Burger
3	Friedman, S	2007	Numbers, numbers everywhere and not a truth in sight?					1						1	15-Nov	Thoughtleader
4	Sapa	2007	Mbeki attacks Institute of Race Relations			1			1	1					17-Nov	Weekender
5	City Press Reporter	2007	President in war with race body over poverty						1	1					18-Nov	City Press
6	Duodu, C	2007	Economic train should not leave the poor behind				1					1			18-Nov	City Press
7	Editorial	2007	Don't forget the poor				1				1				20-Nov	Witness
8	Kenny, A	2007	Is poverty increasing in SA?				1					1			20-Nov	Citizen
9	Cronje, F	2007a	Ignoring poverty	1			1						1		20-Nov	Business Day
10	Kane-Berman, J	2007a	Analysing the poverty of the president's attack	1			1					1			22-Nov	Business Day
11	Editorial	2007	The President has a point in the debate about poverty					1				1			24-Nov	Weekender
12	Kane-Berman, J	2007b	State should do more for unskilled	1			1						1		01-Dec	Weekender?
13	Seepe, S	2007	Our poverty survey stands the test, Mr President	1			1					1			25-Nov	Sunday Times

Table 1. Contributions to the Debate (cont.)

Author	Year	Title	SAIRR authors	Govt authors	Pro govt	Pro SAIRR	Crit SAIRR	Mixed/ Neutral	News	Editorial	Opinion	Letter	Blog	Date	Medium
14	Netshitenzhe, J	2007a	Telling neglect in race institute's poverty study	1	1	1	1				1			27-Nov	Business Day
15	Altman, M	2007	Poverty shock! (Never mind the facts)				1				1			29-Nov	Mail & Guardian
16	Owen, K	2007a	Phony findings			1						1		27-Nov	Business Day
17	Turok, B	2007	Stop nitpicking					1				1		29-Nov	Business Day
18	Owen, K	2007b	Shoddy research				1					1		29-Nov	Business Day
19	Bester, T	2007	The pitfalls of poverty measures					1				1		29-Nov	Business Day
20	Cronje, F	2007b	Jobless in SA and the poverty 'consensus'	1		1					1			28-Nov	Business Day
21	Netshitenzhe, J	2007b	Poverty of statistics	1	1						1			30-Nov	Financial Mail
22	Makgetla, N	2007	Finding perspective in debate on poverty trends					1			1			05-Dec	Business Day
23	Simkins, C	2007	Getting the measure of what it means to be poor					1			1			05-Dec	Business Day
24	MacFarlane, M	2007	So who was 'sloppy'?	1		1						1		06-Dec	Mail & Guardian
25	Kane-Berman, J	2007c	Status depends on money	1		1						1		14-Dec	Financial Mail
TOTALS			7	2	3	13	5	6	3	2	11	8	1		

as SAIRR voices were predominant, it can also be postulated that the press also played a role as a fairly passive vehicle for institutional public relations.

Many participants were long-standing and predictable institutional commentators, and private individuals' voices only appeared (although did not predominate) in the letters. It has been suggested in a different context that in poverty reportage the opinions of expert sources are considered both authoritative and morally legitimate (Bessant 1997; Kelly 1996, cited by Kitchener and Vandermensbrugghe, 2008). Interestingly in this SAIRR controversy, the "experts" could not all be presented in this way – given their differences, racial colouring and political loading of the controversy. However, overall there was an uncritical legitimisation of elite institutional voices as the primary stakeholders in the debate – something that clashed visibly with extra-media developments (see below).

In short, as will be seen below, within the elite 'bubble' of debate, rather than journalists being "primary definers" of the issues (Hall et al 1978: 58-9), that role fell to participants with specific axes to grind.

Research Findings

The data for this article consist of 25 items published in the mainstream media. A total of 13 appeared in *Business Day* and its Saturday edition – *The Weekender*. Three articles were editorial comments by publications, and only three items were actually news stories. Eight were letters and eleven were opinion pieces. Three of the opinion pieces were by government representatives, and three from the SAIRR, but a total of seven of the 25 items were direct from the SAIRR (four being letters). Of the remaining five opinion pieces, two took the SAIRR figures for granted, two challenged them, and one tried to rise above the debate.

The coverage began with news items and a few editorial comments, followed by opinion pieces, a flurry of letters, more opinion pieces and then more letters. Battle was enjoined early on when Mbeki strongly criticised the SAIRR in his (then) weekly online newsletter as (then) head of the ANC. His arguments were political, conceptual (the measurement of poverty) and about research method (statistical sourcing and data interpretation). Various contributors, through opinion pieces and letters, then came out in support of him or criticised the SAIRR. The Institute itself was quick to retaliate in kind. Three contributions relatively late in the debate (a letter and two opinion pieces) tried to switch the agenda by arguing that the controversy was irrelevant. The status and significant demographics of the contributors, relevant to their standing and social credibility in South Africa, is as follows: white men 21, white women 1, black men 3.

That the SAIRR findings constituted a political 'hot potato' was noted by *The Weekender* (24 November) which observed that "the argument is highly politically charged" and not the kind of information the government would want to hear on the eve of a tightly-fought leadership contest. The paper also charged that the SAIRR was ideologically against the government's policy of social welfare grants (a claim that was later rebutted by the SAIRR). However, the coverage itself also helped to heighten the politicisation of the debate through headlines which framed it as a conflict story, and indeed one that was also a personalised one. Examples are: "Mbeki attacks Institute of Race Relations" (*Weekender*, 17 November) and "President in war with race body over poverty" (*City Press*, 18 November).

Political rhetoric flowed amongst the participants, and without any balancing by less impassioned journalistic discourse. Mbeki said the Institute had positioned itself “as the liberal alternative to our movement”, and that its claims were a “canard” needing to be “chained”. He referred to “the pernicious tendency... to advance the particular agendas of forces that are opposed to our movement and the national democratic revolution”. The SAIRR, he continued, had chosen “to discover statistics that serve the political purpose of discrediting our movement and government...”. The Institute’s president Siphso Seepe wrote that Mbeki’s “tirade” was “fatally flawed”. He argued that the SAIRR “was in the business of doing research” rather than playing politics, and he accused Mbeki of reading only fragments of the Institute’s study. SAIRR official Frans Cronje also hit back at Mbeki’s criticism that the Institute was undermining the “national democratic revolution” by saying that the “revolution” could possibly even topple the Mbeki leadership before the year’s end. In a published letter, Cronje wrote: “If SA’s recent history was one of simple ‘success’, Mbeki might not be staring an ANC branch-level revolt in the face next month.”

If the debate was a wrestling match sans referee, what was particularly left adjudicated was a dispute about the central matter of how to define poverty. This enabled the SAIRR’s Cronje to conclude: “If anything, the debate that followed the release of our figures suggests that South Africans cannot even agree on what poverty is, let alone whether it is going up or down.” The issue at stake was the Institute’s one dollar-a-day income definition which constituted the basis for its claims. The SAIRR said this was “the globally accepted measure of poverty”, and its president Siphso Seepe wrote that the dollar-a-day definition was “widely used by the United Nations and the World Bank”, and was also used for the UN’s Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).

By implication, Mbeki and others who questioned this measure were out of line with global orthodoxy. This accusation resonated with other representations of Mbeki as a denialist in international terms about HIV-Aids and the crisis in Zimbabwe. In addition, the Institute said that government could not eschew the dollar-a-day measure when it, itself, utilised the formula in its commitments on the MDGs.

On the other hand, resort to ‘majoritarianism’ as an argument was also present on the government side in its own bid to discredit the SAIRR. Three contributors – government’s Netshitenzhe, semi-official Altman and ex-editor Owen – said that the Institute’s findings were at odds with other poverty research results in South Africa. Responding directly to this was SAIRR official Cronje in an article headlined “Joblessness in SA and the poverty ‘consensus’”. In this, he volunteered the view that the difference between the Institute’s data and that published by others was “part of the reason that we published it”. He added: “On the charge that we are outside the consensus position, the institute is innately suspicious of such positions and, in any case, doubts that such consensus exists when it comes to poverty in SA.” In all these claims, there was no verification of the points of either the ‘majoritarians’ or Cronje.

The SAIRR’s dollar-a-day benchmark was also contested for other reasons. On the government side, it was presented as being a false and simplistic “money-metric” concept. Mbeki pushed instead for consideration of the “social wage” such as education, electricity, water supply, health, and housing services. In addition to this unresolved narrow vs multidimensional view of poverty, another controversial matter was what monies were taken into account even with the narrow definition. There was no resound-

ing authoritative clarification of whether or not the SAIRR's conclusions looked only at earned income under one dollar-a-day, and thereby left out other income (social grants and pensions) in regard to measuring "poverty". This is a significant issue because, as stated by *The Weekender*, 12 million South Africans receive grants. Even the SAIRR's Seepe noted that 25% of South African households "now get their greatest single source of income from the state" (*Sunday Times*, 25 November). But instead of the press producing any independent or convincing assessment of how these welfare monies compared to other income, and thence to the SAIRR figures, there was only a letter (late in the day) from the Institute's Marco MacFarlane saying that this source of income was indeed included in the research.

While the participants were weak on defining poverty, many did not hesitate to expand their comments to remarks on the sustainability of social welfare in general as a poverty-reduction strategy. This was not pursued in any depth however, and it was also never untangled as to the role of extra-governmental cash income within the mix of resources (cash and kind) available to poor people.

There was 'journalistic failure' not only on this issue, but also in regard to a part of the debate concerning what level of cash income defined people as poor. Government's own figures cited by Mbeki and others defined poverty as people living on less than R3000 a year. Nowhere in the coverage was this recalculated at a daily rate so that it would be directly comparable to the \$1 (R6.80) standard (it works out at R8.22 a day). On this measure, a very large number (some 19.5m) of South Africans count as poor. Another set of statistics marshalled in the contestation by government's Joel Netshitenzhe, was sourced to the UNDP, with the measure of R354 a month. Again, there was no evening out of the apples and oranges. (The figure translates to R11.64 a day). By this measure, Netshitenzhe gave a figure of even more (circa 21 million) poor people over the period 1995-2002.

Not directly addressed in the debate was the question of why government contested the SAIRR's 'mere' 4.2 million figures, when its own alternative systems yielded five times more people as being poor. A close reading, however, shows that government preferred to rely on these higher figures of poverty because with this particular data it could also claim a reduction in poverty trends. The implicit position here was that even if the poorest section of the poor had increased (as per SAIRR claims), the statistics also showed that the general poor were nevertheless diminishing as a proportion of the population. On the government's figures, this was a fall from 50.1% to 43.2% of population, and the UNDP ones the decline was from 51.1% to 48.5%. Again, apples and oranges persisted in the commentary, with no newspaper stepping forward with a common standard that would show the comparable percentage of population in the SAIRR figures.

What further remained unresolved in this were the differences between proportions of the population, and absolute numbers. The SAIRR argued that even if, in government's own terms, the percentage of the poor had dropped, the actual numbers of people in the below R3000 bracket had increased from 18.9 million to 20.5 million. It argued that this increase corresponded to a similar rise in unemployment figures during the period of their research. Missing in this aspect of the debate was any elaboration around the comparative significance of concentrating on percentages of population versus absolute numbers. Again, absent was any journalistic intervention that could have been helpful in progressing the debate.

In terms of the status of the statistics at the heart of the furore, it was unclear as to what could be relied upon. Para-governmental researcher Altman's article implied that accurate data existed through its headline: "Poverty shock! (Never mind the facts)". *The Citizen's* Andrew Kenny, one of the rare journalists engaging in the debate, assumed the same in saying: "The SAIRR has an impeccable record of presenting accurate, unbiased information."

On the other hand, *The Weekender* (24 November) – another once-off journalistic participant – proposed that the figures did not prove either side right, but rather illustrated the poverty of the data. The paper supposed nonetheless that "it would be extremely surprising if the financial state of SA's poorest 20% had increased, never mind doubled, over the past decade". Further credibility was taken out of the whole scrap by five participants late in the debate (Altman, Netshitenzhe, Owen, and Neva Makgetla on the government side; Charles Simkins on the SAIRR side) who argued that none of the statistics and/or year comparisons could be sustained. A complete lack of confidence in the figures was also manifested in headlines such as: "Numbers, numbers everywhere and not a truth in sight?"; "Phony findings"; "Shoddy research"; "The pitfalls of poverty measures"; "Poverty of statistics". Altman acknowledged that "South Africa's poverty statistics are hotly debated partly because no single official source provides reliable and regular trend data."

With all these assertions, ranging from *The Weekender's* simple speculation through to some commentators' sheer scepticism, it was possible for additional politicisation of the debate to stand unchallenged. Thus, government's Joel Netshitenzhe wrote: "That the findings of a single statistical report could tell a sharply contrasting story to those of many similar studies is a precise indication of how contestable statistics can be. Simply put, this means that, while often presented as science, statistics can be manipulated for multifarious purposes." The overall picture is one of many commentators using some statistics to make their own case but simultaneously discrediting opponents on other statistical grounds. The message this sends is highly confusing.

Where journalists did get involved in the debate, it was not to deal with the key concerns or to set aside smoke and mirrors. Instead, the quality of their interventions was notably weak. *The Weekender* thumb-sucked: "Even if it were true that the poorest 10% or 20% of the population had got poorer, it can't be ignored that the overall picture is very positive. ... The gloriously rising tide ... will ultimately improve the position of the poor, even if it has not already". *The Witness* wandered off target to condemn low wages paid to construction workers building stadia for the 2010 world cup ("Don't forget the poor"). *The Citizen's* Kenny used the report to crudely argue that "(t)o get rid of poverty we must get rid of labour laws". Columnist Cameron Duodu took the SAIRR claims as correct and proposed that more Keynesian policies were needed.

Three non-media participants attempted to switch the terms of the debate altogether, rather than confront the challenges of resolving the SAIRR's claims. In a populist mode, ANC MP Ben Turok expressed this in a letter published under the headline of "Stop nitpicking". In his view, the debate was about marginal changes in poverty, when either way levels remained massive and still needed addressing, along with the issue of inequality. Absent from his intervention was the salient issue as to whether the poverty trends were going up or down. On her part, Makgetla argued: "We may never agree on whether the glass is half full or half empty. Maybe it would be more fruitful to replace

debates about the past with discussion on how to deal with poverty and social alienation more effectively, by finding ways to give poor communities a voice and generating mass economic opportunities.” Simkins raised the issue of inequality as distinct from poverty, and called for a “less ideologically fraught and more empirical poverty programme”. Avoidance of the debate’s key issues, and journalistic silence on them, meant that any clear settlement was not reached. Instead, the contestation ended indecisively.

Another noteworthy feature of the debate was the participants’ shared assumption that it was correct to lay responsibility for poverty at the door of government. Only one intervention (an editorial in *Die Burger*) made the point that government alone could not solve poverty – other sectors had to take it on board. Although *The Citizen*’s Kenny simplistically blamed “our wicked labour laws”, he also said that these were drawn up by the “Fat Three” of government, big business and trade union bosses. Government’s Netshitenzhe said that it was population growth that accounted for an increase in absolute figures “instead of governance failures as the SAIRR would have us believe”. The extent to which poor people themselves, and other social sectors including the business sector, shared serious responsibility or acknowledgement for steps to alleviate poverty, was conspicuous by omission.

Analysis, Conclusion and Recommendations

Although the debate as a whole was in most respects unresolved, from a purely textual and rhetorical point, the SAIRR can perhaps be said to have ultimately emerged victorious over its critics. For example, it mobilised more firepower than did government, and its response to critics were seldom rebutted. But this victory is not necessarily the case when pitted against what can be labelled as a masterframe of “ethno-nationalist” discourse (cf. Greenfeld, 1999: 39; Diani 1996: 1057; Entman, 1993: 53) espoused by Mbeki in particular. Thus, it is not at all clear in social readership terms if the SAIRR would have automatically prevailed over the characterisation of its members as (mainly white) political reactionaries with an ulterior motive. While poverty was at the centre of the debate, in some senses it played as a political football in a wider and even rowdier game. In this respect, the media was far from constituting a public sphere for reasoned debate that generating rational truth. It is thus unlikely that many readers would have ended up any the wiser in the face of such a complex statistical debate and its politicisation. On the other hand, independent and intelligible value-add by journalists could have produced a different outcome. Yet press coverage of this critical issue fell far short of what could have been delivered.

A controversy amongst sources ought to be a prime occasion for journalists to act as “primary definers” of the issues, but here they barely even played a part as “secondary definers”. This notion of “definitional power”, as originally articulated by Hall et al (1978) and even as nuanced by Schlesinger (1990) and Schlesinger and Tumber (1994), has been used elsewhere to assess how the media, by virtue of a structured relationship to power, reproduce elite perspectives. While this character was evident in this case, it was not the case here that the result of such perspectives was the representation of a supposedly consensual position. Instead, contrasting alternatives were readily present, reflecting a transitional democracy in which general hegemonic views had not had time to crystallise. Only the perception of poverty as being a salient issue (and in terms of

which government should be judged) was shared amongst the participants. This recognition is often the case in media coverage in several other countries (see Summers, 2006). However, even in this regard, and as discussed further below, there were voices proposing that inequality was more important than poverty. In brief, consensual discourse was not part of this debate.

It is relevant to note that despite the governmental attempts at spirited defence during the row, soon after there followed the unceremonious ousting of Mbeki and most of his cabinet from senior positions in the ANC (and nine months later, from government as well). This throw of the dice was in part a function of disgruntled ANC members left out of the government's policy of "Black Economic Empowerment", and to that extent, a function of poor(er) people having their political say. This development took place outside the discourse of the SAIRR debate, and indeed most of its actors were probably unaware that the controversy had even taken place. It was an outcome that did not necessarily vindicate the Institute's findings, as much as send a signal that the arguments about poverty that had been generated in the elite press took place in a somewhat elevated atmosphere.

Extra-media developments, however, in a society where class issues are arguably becoming more important than race in terms of social cleavage, suggest that participants, and especially journalists, should be aware that much as Mbeki's 'race-card' view may have 'trumped' the SAIRR's statistical claims, class in turn may 'trump' race. An additional point is that it was not just a case of the press being less than a rational public sphere, but also that it was of a public sphere that seems to have little impact on public opinion.

In the light of all this, it can be proposed that this coverage does not ultimately tell us much directly about power in South Africa, except by way of negative significance that political power resides outside of the press debate on poverty levels. Future studies may therefore want to assess poverty in relation to other issues – and in other media as well. Primary here might be a focus on representations (explicit and implicit) of class inequality and thence relative poverty, and not only absolute poverty, as a 'political-driving element'. Of course, various elites (including many journalists) may have less interest in organically coming up with media consideration of inequality. In addition, however, one might profitably look at that media which more expressly claims to reflect the voices of the poor, and which eschews coverage of abstract, policy-related concepts like "poverty" in favour of empirical tales of actual people at the 'bottom of the pile'. In particular, this would point to the burgeoning tabloid newspapers in South Africa.

This is all the more important given yet another development that occurred subsequent to the debate – namely, xenophobic attacks where poor people (mainly young and male) turned on other poor people (although also on people with property – like shopkeepers) on the basis of nationality. The media coverage of the SAIRR debate missed many things – and in particular it was blind to the nationality dimensions of poverty. Reality subsequently intruded onto this perspective, but future coverage could do well to pay attention to it in advance – and likewise to be sensitive to age, gender and HIV-status aspects of poverty.

Further research would be appropriate to investigate in more depth the "grammars of poverty" (Kress 1994) in terms of ascriptions of responsibility in the media, and in news as well as other editorial genres (see also Iyengar 1991). Going further, research

could also be done into the sense of responsibility amongst journalists themselves about representing poverty, and researching why there was such evident failure in this particular case. At present, the SAIRR debate in the press leaves a clear conclusion: it is hard to see how the media can play a role in regard to poverty if journalism remains as poor as it was during this incident. Summers (2006:37) writes of coverage as “a site of ways of knowing poverty”. In this instance, confusion rather than knowledge was an inevitable consequence of journalism’s inadequacy.

Note

1. This article has its roots in the 2008 theme of the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies, viz: media, poverty and social justice. It is a revised version of a paper presented on Friday July 25, 2008, panel on “Challenges for African media and communication research”, 26th conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research, “Media and Global Divides”, at Stockholm University. The original paper includes a theoretical section attempting to fuse concepts from Framing Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, which has been dropped for reasons of length and focus in this article.

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Building an Agenda for Media and Communication Research in Africa

George W. Lugalambi

Abstract

This article lays down a number of points that need to be reflected upon in building a research agenda for media and communication research in Africa. It resurveys some old questions about the identity of the field. It is argued that scholars contemplating the agenda for researching the media in Africa need to re-examine some of the global and historical currents that gave the field its present shape. Drawing attention to the ideas of scholars who have proposed substantive lines of research for the agenda envisaged, this discussion adds another dimension to those ideas by spotlighting the nature, shapers and motivations of the research agenda as well as the pertinent issues.

Keywords: Africa, media, communication, journalism, research

Introduction

For an area of scholarship that seems to be perpetually in flux, with technology constantly reshaping media and the way we use them to communicate, it is imperative that we regularly revisit the research agenda of the field. This discussion offers and briefly elaborates some points to ponder. An old debate about the identity of the field among disciplines is resuscitated if only to keep the historical and global contexts in view.

The dual field of media and communication has certainly found its footing in Africa, and a significant measure of its growth has happened over the last three decades. As the number of African communication scholars has grown so has the scope of African scholarship in the field. These scholars have been groomed under varying academic traditions and have injected diverse perspectives into the field. Evidently, though these developments need to be studied systematically, the body of work on journalism, media and communication in Africa and about the continent appears to be expanding. Much of it is produced by African scholars.

Similarly, enrolments in journalism, media and communication programmes in tertiary education institutions have also grown markedly. In some institutions admission into these programmes is remarkably competitive. It is important to note too that there are enormous variations in the level of facilitation or distribution of resources among these institutions in Africa. The pattern generally follows the relative wealth of countries, which in turn influences research productivity in media and communication as in all areas of academe.

In policy and advocacy or activist circles too, the media and communication have gained wide recognition as pillars of public life on the continent. No explanation of de-

mocratisation is complete without accounting for the role of the media in this process. Open media and communication may not be sufficient conditions for the sustenance of democracy, but as institutions they are necessary for that purpose due to their wide-ranging contributions in the political, technological, economic and cultural domains (Ogundimu 2002). As the media development concept and movement gain ground, there is going to be greater pressure to use rigorous research to demonstrate and justify to policy makers and the political class the intrinsic value of the media.

Meantime, the very notion of an agenda assumes the existence, or at least the possibility, of consensus on the substance, type and parameters of media and communication research to be pursued by scholars working in and on Africa. One would expect such an agenda to be coherent, extensive and exemplary of the continent's communicative diversity as well as the multiple strands of the field. Whether an agenda of this kind is even a practical thing to conceive remains an open matter.

Media and Communication as Scholarship

We cannot engage the issue of a research agenda for media and communication research in Africa without, for starters, reflecting more universally on the character of our field among disciplines. The question of the identity of communication as a discipline has been at the heart of the historical and global development of this field. To put Africa's own research agenda in perspective, it helps to bring back into focus the earlier seminal debate about the identity of communication as a field for research and scholarship.

There is therefore a lot of value in reprising the original debate that raged in the 1980s concerning what exactly communication scholarship was all about. At that time, the lifting of the lid on the "ferment in the field" of communication occurred amidst lingering questions over the legitimacy of communication as a scholarly activity. What makes those historical concerns pertinent to our context is that the fledgling discipline of communication in some African countries was at that nascent stage heavily influenced by the socio-behavioural tradition that dominated American communication research, for example. The legacies of that influence are still clear and present in much of the media and communication research and scholarship going on in Africa to date (Banda 2008).

Among the critics of the so-called dominant paradigm then, Tunstall's (1983) reservations about American communication research exemplified the key concerns about this process of ferment. The essence of his critique can give African communication scholars good grounds for reflection. I will return to his critique shortly.

For the moment, I wish to suggest that Africa's research agenda for the field of media and communication would have to be situated in a clear notion of the institution of scholarship. As I understand it, scholarship is conducted through relatively organized systems of knowledge. Conventionally, every system of knowledge has been characterized in terms of specific features that qualify it as either a 'discipline' or a 'field' of study. The approach that Biglan (1973: 202) used to distinguish the features of systems of knowledge is worth considering. He characterized systems of knowledge basing on their subject matter as defined by "the degree to which a paradigm exists," "the degree of concern with application", and "concern with life systems". These particular definitions may undoubtedly be contested and may be culture-specific, but they should prompt media and communication scholars in Africa to think seriously about the grounds on

which the academic legitimacy of their scholarship and research rest and is to be judged and defended.

Criticism of the Field

Let me return to Tunstall (1983). From the several issues he raised, I will single out a few for closer attention because of their potential to resonate with contemporary African media and communication scholars. *First*, he advanced a philosophy of communication as an interdisciplinary system of knowledge. Epistemologically, he saw communication back then as a stunted or struggling area of academic research and scholarship. As a sociologist in the classical mould, he expected communication to be a stable, coherent, and predictable system of knowledge. The basis of his frustration with U.S. communication research, in particular, was the absence of a minimum set of terms of reference from which all those engaged in the area could draw guidance for their work.

Second, Tunstall (1983) argued that U.S. communication research suffered from fragmentation because it was based on an integration of journalism and social psychology, two areas of practice and theory that he deemed academically incompatible. He found 'media' and 'communication' especially unwieldy as areas of scholarship because, conceptually, the definitions of these terms led into many divergent directions. As far he was concerned, this marked communication out as a system of knowledge without focus.

Third, Tunstall (1983) was worried about the low quality of research in communication and media studies at the time. He suggested that this was the reason many good researchers, presumably from the social sciences, made only stop-gap appearances in communication before moving on to more established areas of research.

Lastly, for Tunstall (1983) the question of quality was allied with that of methodology. He took American communication researchers to task over their fondness for the survey. He believed that their attraction to this method was based on a misunderstanding of Paul Lazarsfeld's basic motivations for the survey. In his opinion, Lazarsfeld was not interested in communication or the mass media. He was driven by other reasons including the fact that communication and media phenomena were considered uniquely amenable to the survey.

Response to the Criticism

Contemporary African media and communication scholars would have responded to Tunstall (1983) then in more or less the same terms as they would have done today. If we accept, as he did, that communication is an interdisciplinary system of knowledge, then it would be contradictory to dismiss, the way he did, its organizing principle of theoretical pluralism (Miller 1983) and critical eclecticism (Halloran 1983). By the very nature of communication, we expect scholars to bring a variety of perspectives to bear on the interpretation of its phenomena.

The issue of quality in communication research is a valid issue, but so is it in all fields and disciplines. Scholars from disparate academic backgrounds from time to time do cross into media and communication research and have encountered valuable insights that they have found worth following up. Tracing the history of communication, Schramm (1983: 8-9) noted that many such scholars came with "their own disciplinary

maps.” Whereas such scholars originally tended to come in to examine their own disciplines using communication as a “central variable”, nowadays scholars investigating communication in its own right tower over this area.

What makes communication a vibrant system of knowledge is the dynamism generated by those constant “agonies of definition, theory, method, relevance, finance, and integrity” that Turnstall (1983: 92) deplored. All disciplines and fields have their share of these agonies. So it was immaterial to argue, as Tunstall (1983) did, that communication simply had too many of them. The whole purpose of scholarship is precisely to untangle those very agonies.

The apparent lack of focus has been acknowledged by various analysts including Schramm (1983: 14) who first asked of communication: “But has it produced a central, interrelated body of theory on which the practitioners of a discipline can build and unify their thinking?” His own reply at the time was unflattering: “I am afraid that it has not”.

To be sure, contemporary research has proceeded along fairly common themes and frameworks of analysis that have aided in understanding various aspects of how communication and the media work. What appears to be bothering some observers is the multiplicity of themes and frameworks. Going by the intensity of lively debate taking place, the variety we are confronted with is after all a good problem to have.

Yet various attempts have been made over the years to impose some kind of structure on our ways of knowing how communication and media function at different levels as well as in different contexts. Paradigms, theories and concepts are proposed and challenged as rapidly as they are floated. In Africa we ought to respond to universal concerns without necessarily seeking and forcing universal or paradigmatic explanations on communication and media phenomena.

Contemporary African scholars are studying communication and the media motivated by an interest in basic questions revolving around culture, structure and process at micro and macro levels. In fact, even the focus on policy that Tunstall (1983) recommended for American communication research would not be constructive without examining underlying issues of the cultures, structures and processes of communication and media.

Systems of knowledge evolve with time. Knowledge cannot be bound in time and space. Its value resides in its cumulative impact and malleability. This leads us back to the debate about the position that communication, as a system of knowledge, occupies in the institution of scholarship. As posited earlier, systems of knowledge have conventionally been defined in terms of their subject matter, with the ultimate goal of positioning them as either restrictive disciplines or open fields of inquiry.

Status of Communication as a Discipline

When we look at the commonly applied descriptions of scholarly disciplines, we see certain recurrent concepts. According to Donald’s (1995: 7) extrapolation, disciplines are understood as having: “defining modes of inquiry and conceptual structures”; “a specialized body of knowledge or theory with a reasonably logical taxonomy so that gaps in accepted knowledge can be recognized”; and “techniques for theory testing and revision and a sense of sequence, which enables scholars to predict where they should look next”. Disciplines, Donald (1995: 7) further points out, “are defined epistemologically by their distinctive sets of concepts, the logical structure of propositions, the truth

criteria by which propositions are assessed, and the methodology employed to produce the propositions”.

When we plot these criteria on a continuum, we can locate every system of knowledge at a particular point. On the other hand, whereas formalistic disciplines can no doubt aid in structuring access to the content and methods of a particular system of knowledge, they can also cause a regimental effect on knowledge. In the African context, this implies that our approach to the study of communication and media could become exclusive rather than inclusive of the diverse communication and media forms we have on the continent, top-down rather than lateral and prescriptive rather than creative. Cohen, Barton, and Fast (2000) are aware of the positive and negative sides of casting systems of knowledge as disciplines. They also recognize the uneasiness arising from what some view as communication’s lack of a clear and firm identity as a system of knowledge.

An African View of Communication

I suggest that African media and communication scholars need to take up or re-engage and contextualize the debate about the identity of this field as prior reflection on the research agenda they envision. Drawing on John Dewey, Carey (1989) identified the “transmission” view and the “ritual” view as alternative conceptions of communication in Western thought. But what is the African perspective on communication? Do the Western alternatives capture what Africans believe communication to be? Do African scholars need to adjust the terms of the debate for it to be meaningful?

Okigbo and Pratt (1997: 12), employing the idea of an “Afrocentric” model, tackled this issue with the curricula and pedagogy of media education in mind. Berger (2002) also did just that in his insightful critique of the application of key Western concepts such as media, democracy, civil society and public sphere in Africa. He went on to offer alternative interpretations that he believed were more relevant under African realities. More work of this kind is essential as a basis for mapping and progressive elaboration of the agenda for media and communication research on the continent.

Likewise, Kupe (2004) identified five areas that scholars need to focus on in researching African media and communication contexts. These were: the institutional roles of journalism, the media and communication; the relationships among the media, development and democracy; media organizations, production, occupations and practices; media content and audiences; and the role of media and communication policies and regulations.

I take the cue from the ideas of the foregoing scholars but with a slightly different goal of adding another layer to the discussion. I look at the research agenda in four dimensions presented in the form of points for reflection.

Nature of the Agenda

To some the field of communication is notoriously eclectic but to others its strength and vitality lie therein. Clearly, the complex relationships among the media, development and democracy cannot be fully deconstructed through an instinctive devotion to particular methodologies such as the survey. This is one tendency that Tunstall (1983) criticized earlier U.S. researchers for.

Media and communication phenomena are by definition multi-faceted, impacted by a host of influences originating in the political, technological, economic and cultural spheres. The media and communication do have material effects of their own on these domains as well. An African agenda would have to reflect the universal eclectic character of the field in terms of methods employed and subjects addressed. That said, I would specifically recommend that researchers do more to harness the power of ethnographic methods given the mosaic that Africa's cultural milieu is. This condition relates to the core of the region's communicative complexity.

By and large the media and communication are seriously under-researched compared to other social issues and aspects of public life in Africa. While there are variations among countries, there are severe shortages of systematic basic research about media institutions in a way that would afford a deep understanding of media organizations, production, occupations, and practices on a country by country basis. Too much research is exploratory and too broad in focus.

On initial inspection, it might sound inconsistent to push for country-specific research and to make a simultaneous case for comparative work. But the more we know about individual countries the more productive comparisons among them would be. This also points to the necessity for researchers in and on Africa to regularly and frequently confer among themselves on research issues. This would lead to a more programmatic approach to research, which would in turn yield many other positives: better understanding of commonalities; clearer appreciation of differences that really make a difference; wider diffusion of essential research skills; deeper infiltration of researched knowledge into curricula and day-to-day coursework; and certain growth in the body of knowledge about African media and communication institutions.

Shapers of the Agenda

Scholars tend to frown upon let alone resist research agendas determined by forces outside the academy. However, with public subsidies for higher education and research as a whole either shrinking, constant, or not increasing at the appropriate rate, scholars have little choice but to look to non-profit foreign donor agencies, international bodies, non-governmental organizations, industry or the private sector, and statutory public bodies for money to fund their research projects.

The conditions and sometimes outright excess baggage that come with this money are well-known. More often than not, the influences occasioned by these external research sponsors manifest in subtle ways. But there are also numerous examples of external research support based on mutual collaboration and on interests determined entirely or to the larger extent by the recipients.

Motivations Behind the Agenda

Obviously the matter of who shapes, or who should set, the agenda for media and communication research in Africa deserves to be pondered earnestly. But so are the motivations that drive the agenda. Too often the needs and interests of research users do not get factored into the equation. Potential research users especially in the industry invariably complain that research conducted in the academy is irrelevant. Similar grievances can

also be heard from policy makers. This problem does not apply exclusively to media and communication researchers. It extends across researchers in all disciplines.

One of the recurrent themes in these debates is that researchers should be sensitive to the needs of individuals and industries that might use their research. Politicians in particular are increasingly demanding that researchers be responsive to prescribed public goals. This is not merely a matter of value for money. Politicians and policy makers are demanding that publicly funded research should answer to national objectives such as the millennium development goals and poverty reduction strategies. To the extent that media and communication researchers can demonstrate ways their work can effectively improve the performance of these institutions, however that performance is conceptualized and measured, the field will gain more respect among those we expect to apply its accumulated knowledge.

While it is necessary to maintain a respectable distance from the industry and the policy bureaucracy to ensure scholarly autonomy, some scholars have gone overboard by distrusting these institutions on impulse and suspecting their motives with ideological zeal. Critical engagement would be preferable as it would provide a sound foundation for reciprocal appreciation of each other's roles.

Issues on the Agenda

The programmatic approach to research brought up earlier demands a high degree of selectivity. This implies that those who elect to follow this approach must think systematically through their choices. They would have to do a comprehensive assessment of national development and policy goals, issues of public interest, and critical issues concerning the media and communication. On these premises they would determine which elements are in dire need of research to improve the knowledge base for practitioners, educators, students and policy makers.

There are those who contend that the question of the disciplinary identity of the dual field of media and communication is beside the point. The jury is surely still out on this issue and it will continue to inspire animated discourse.

Conclusion

This discussion was intended to bring back into focus some of the key issues pertinent to the building of an agenda for media and communication research in Africa. These issues were addressed as points for reflection. The evolution of this field of study and research in Africa cannot be divorced from the global and historical debates about the position of the field as an area of intellectual inquiry. For that reason it was vital to hack back to those discussions of more than two decades ago about the academic legitimacy of communication research. As it turns out, many of those issues still ring familiar today. The question of the character of scholarship in media and communication is as relevant to Africa today as it was to researchers in the West decades ago. This discussion is an addition to what ought to be an ongoing conversation.

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James Halloran Memorial Lecture

Conversations with my Robot

Cees J. Hamelink

Recent advances in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) make the prospect of living with a new humanoid species more realistic than ever before. Moreover, the AI technology is in the process of converging with other technologies such as nanotechnology, information and communication technology, robotics and biotechnology. This “convergence” technology raises new and perplexing questions for the future of human communication.

Humans have an almost unlimited desire to communicate, even with angels, trees and dolphins. The converging technologies promise to open up further opportunities to expand this communicative compulsion. Enormous benefits could be in store such as the removal of all the obstacles that during most of human history limited the effectiveness of message transfer. Such obstacles were the restrictions of distance, speed, volume, and reliability. An other essential impediment to human communication across borders has always been the existence of different languages. The advent of communications steered by machine intelligence will almost certainly offer the solution of this problem through advanced speech recognition and instant translation. Although one may easily be carried away with such prospects, it needs to be realized that it is unlikely that the availability, accessibility and affordability of these emerging technologies would be globally and equitably shared. Given the reality of unequal socio-economic positions in the world, one can foresee that such divides as the development divide, the information divide and the digital divide, will be succeeded by a convergence-divide. And, as with the other gaps, this divide will be exploited to consolidate positions of power and privilege.

What different modalities of impact on human communication could we possibly expect in the not too distant future? I will briefly discuss human-machine communication, machine to machine communication, communication between living and deceased people, brain-brain communication, and cross-species communication.

Human – Machine Communication

People will increasingly communicate with the assistance of machine intelligence and the machines will have ever more human features.

Developments in the converging technologies will produce machines with an intelligence that far exceeds human intellectual capabilities. In order to co-exist with these machines humans will have to learn to communicate with a being gifted with superior

intelligence. The deepest impact of this development will be the necessity to re-think the whole concept of what it means to be 'human'. As Bill Joy (2000) wonders, "Given the incredible power of these technologies, shouldn't we be asking how we can best coexist with them? And if our extinction is a likely, or even possible, outcome of our technological development, shouldn't we proceed with great caution?"

A crucial question is whether humans are ready for a peaceful co-existence with such beings.

Machine to Machine Communication

Among the new forms of communication that humans will be exposed to is the communication among intelligent nanobots in our biological systems. The introduction of machine intelligence in our biological systems implies the prospect of longevity and even immortality. "Billions of nanobots will travel through the bloodstream of our bodies and brains. In our bodies, they will destroy pathogens, correct DNA errors, eliminate toxins, and perform many tasks to enhance physical well-being. As a result, we will be able to live indefinitely without aging" (Kurzweil 43).

The convergent technologies may well create a future – as Bill Joy argues – that does not need humans anymore. Humans in the world of convergence may still communicate with each other but it may not matter anymore. How to deal with a new Copernican change that positions humans no longer at the center of the universe?

Cyberimmortality

The development of the converging technologies might open up the possibility of communicating across the barrier of human mortality. Artificial intelligence technology is likely to make it possible that people continue their lives after death as archived personalities. "The Convergenists' agenda is aimed at improving human performance without limit, and many of the anticipated technological spin-offs would be useful for recording, preserving, and reanimating human personalities – ultimately creating cyberimmortality" (Brainbridge 2006: 28). With this development a realistic expectation would be that living people can communicate with persons that have died but are electronically 'archived'. This represents a challenging prospect for religious reflection. It is interesting to note that converging technologies have not yet caused a similar concern as human cloning has. It remains to be seen how religious leaders and theological experts will respond to humanoid, intelligent robots with the personality characteristics of people who have died.

Indicative for the nature of this development may be the observation of the strong emotional bonds that elderly lonesome people have with such intelligent artifacts as the Sony dog Aibo. Although Aibo is clearly a metallic toy, experiments demonstrate that people quickly grow attached to their electronic pet with which they share problems and very private concerns. Imagine how they would relate to the deceased partner with whom communication remains possible and who would not only listen like the digital dog, but who would respond with advice and understanding as he or she did when still alive.

Telepathic Communication

Converging technologies will make communication between human brains possible. As Kurzweil proposes “the age of telepathic communication is upon us” (Kurzweil 2006: 43).

Communication between human brains and machine intelligence and between human brains may significantly alter the way human brains operate through the exponential expansion of our memory and cognitive capacities. An intriguing question is whether effective human communication is not largely influenced by our failing memories. Try to imagine that in human encounters we would have full recollection and cognition of all the interlocutors in the conversations we conduct.

Cross-species Communication

Humans have demonstrated throughout history a tendency to treat non-human animals in very destructive ways. This has always been rationalized and legitimized by referring to the fundamental divides between the different species. This position has been reinforced by the impossibility of trans-human communication. We know that whales communicate with each other over great distances (over hundreds of miles) and with voluminous contents (anywhere between one and ten million ‘bits’ per 30 minutes). Humans cannot communicate with them which makes killing them and industrially processing them easier. It is interesting to observe that when people can communicate (even in the sense of giving orders that are understood) with their pets, they are less inclined to murder and consume them. This would lead to the conclusion that human treatment of other sentient beings (animals and even plants) would change once communication –or at least hearing the “others” – is possible.

Research in photo-acoustics demonstrates that plants are not as silent as is commonly assumed. Most plants make sounds. If one registers – through advances audio-technology – the sounds of a rose that wakes up, there is a regular succession of chords that reminds the listener of Bach’s toccatas. (Berendt 1987: 62). Biological research has also demonstrated that different sounds have a different impact upon the growth and well-being of plants.

It has also been empirically demonstrated that different types of music cause different crystal patterns in frozen water.

It seems a realistic expectation that the further development of converging technologies will allow humans to hear sounds where they assumed only silence existed (like in the deep seas) and to produce sounds that are beneficial to other living beings. Admittedly, a very rudimentary basis for inter-species communication, but a beginning nevertheless!

The Human Dimension

We are already well on our way to lose the human dimension in many of our communication processes. Even the plain old telephone is increasingly going virtual and it is an ever rarer experience to talk to a life human being instead of communicating with a machine. Virtual voices welcome our telephone calls, direct us through a maze of numbers and options, tell us that all human operators are too busy and when we are on the

verge of strangling the virtual respondent, kindly thank us for our business. Is this still human communication? If it can be called communication at all, it certainly falls in the narrow category of the “transfer of messages” model and does not fit in a conception of communication as “interaction”;

Can we still communicate in sense of Martin Buber’s relational communication. What happens to human communication when all “I-Thou” relations are all technically mediated? We will certainly expand and upgrade our communicative transmission practices, but can we ever listen to the ‘otherness’ of the other in communication processes mediated by the converging technologies?

Solutions?

If we think this is an undesirable development: should we try to limit technological development? Can we limit “our pursuit of certain kinds of knowledge”? (Joy, 2000). In a modern world that is largely inspired by the Enlightenment ideals of human improvement through science and technology, this is difficult to imagine. The holy mantra of our era seems to be that knowledge in itself is good and that acquiring more knowledge is even better. And, indeed, the search for knowledge satisfies a fundamental human desire to “fly away from ignorance” as William Shakespeare elegantly put it. However, as we acquire more knowledge we should also become aware of the dark sides to an uncritical reverence for scientific and technological development. In the past decades science and technology brought humankind close to the destruction of the planet and the emerging converging technologies make the extinction of humanity a very real possibility.

One may object that humans as individuals have a strong desire to survive. This may be true, but it does not guarantee that the collective of humans as a species will not be guided by an equally strong negligence towards its future. The nuclear arms race of recent history does not provide a very reassuring picture. Humankind has collectively a great capacity for irresponsible and destructive action. Technology has rarely ever been invented, developed and applied under the guidance of normative, moral principles. Engineerability was and remains in combination with military and commercial interest the essential driving force. The question is whether we still afford this in the 21st century?

Should not the development of the converging technologies be tested against the human rights standards of human dignity, security and autonomy? If the human dimension would be chosen as normative yardstick, we would have to seriously consider the observation that the tools people make are rapidly outpacing their mental capacities. For their survival human beings may not be very well equipped, but they are streetwise in designing constructs (such as languages, technologies) that compensate innate inadequacies. Amidst the impressive array of human cultural constructs the question comes up whether these may wander too far away from human nature. Could it be that the distance between construct and nature grows so big that what seemed a solution turns out to be a danger? The development of advanced, sophisticated armaments is a good illustration. Modern arms (such as computer-steered fighter planes) no longer match the human capacity to understand what we are doing and what the consequences may be. The fighter pilot is morally so distant from his victims, that he may as well be playing a computer game rather than destroying human lives. But even if he would try to understand and reason morally about his acts, he could not possibly begin to imagine

what the effects of his actions are. Whereas our minds still travel in the age of horse-drawn carriages and spears, our bodies travel in super-fast cars and Concorde and have the devastating power of nuclear arms at our disposal. Can minds catch up with bodies? The mind boggling developments in science and technology inspired the belief that the rational, conscious and free human mind that the Enlightenment projected was capable of dealing with these developments in a humanitarian way. This illusion was fundamentally challenged by the 20th century horrors of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. To regain the human dimension we have to contemplate how we could bring the different paces of mind and body in harmony. Maybe the aborigines in Australia can help us by what they do during long journeys: before they reach the destination of their walks they take time for their souls to catch up with their bodies.

Whatever position one may have in relation to convergence technology, there can be little doubt that humankind is in the process of developing new tools that have far-reaching implications for its future. Finding a humane perspective for this future demands that critical choices are made. These choices should result from a society-wide and transparent discursive process that involves all those who will be affected. It is disconcerting that the very beginnings of such a process are not even in sight today!

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Programme

Sunday July 20

- 15:00-19:00 Arrivals and registration
19:00-20:15 Opening of the Congress
Welcome: Tytti Soila, Head of Department, JMK, Stockholm University
Main speaker: Dr. Vandana Shiva
Music: The Royal Swedish Opera School
20:15-22:00 Buff t

Monday July 21

- 8:30-9:30 Registration
9:30-10:10 Opening Ceremony
K re Bremer, Vice Chancellor Stockholm University
Robin Mansell, President IAMCR
Ester Pollack, Chair Scientific Research Council and Organizing Committee
10:40-12:30 Keynotes: Media and Global Divides
Annabelle Sreberny & Jan Nederveen Pieterse
Moderator: Robin Mansell
12:30-14:00 Lunch
14:00-16:30 Sections and working groups
18:00-20:00 Reception
Hosted by the City of Stockholm and the City Council.

Tuesday July 22

- 9:00-12:30 Sections and working groups
12:30-14:00 Lunch
14:00-19:00 Sections and working groups
14:00-15.30 Open seminar: Media, Politics and the Olympic's in Beijing
Panel: Zhengrong Hu, Yuezhi Zhao, Niklas Ekdal, G ran Lejonhufvud
Moderator: Sigurd Allern
19:30-22.30 Archipelago tour

Wednesday July 23

- 9:00-12:30 Plenary: International Panel on Global Divides
Speakers: Yuezhi Zhao, Francis Nyamnjoh, Lilie Chouliaraki, Silvio Waisbord,
Amin Alhassan Moderator: Indrajit Banerjee
12:30-14:00 Lunch
14:00-15:30 Sections and working groups
16:00-19:30 General Assembly
19:30-22.30 Art tour

Thursday July 24

- 9:00-12:30 Plenary: Nordic panel on Global Divides
Introduction speaker: Yudhishtir Raj Isar
Commentators and speakers: Inka Moring, Thomas Tufte, Anna Roosvall,
Elisabeth Eide
Moderator: Terhi Rantanen
12:30-14:00 Lunch
14:00-19:00 Sections and working groups

- 14:00-15:30 Jan Ekecrantz Memorial
Round table discussion: Risto Kunelius, Rousiley Maia, Tom Olsson, Kristina Riegert, Daya Thussu and Ivan Zassourski
Moderator: Janet Wasko
- 16:00-17:30 Open seminar: Journalism and Crises Communication
Panel: Barbie Zelizer, Kristina Riegert, Jackie Sutton, Staffan Sonning
Moderator: Lars Nord
- 19:00-20:00 James Halloran Memorial Lecture
Cees Hamelink
- 20:00-23:00 Campus event

Friday July 25

- 9:00-12:00 Sections and working groups
International Council Meeting
Open Seminar: African Media Research
Panel: Guy Berger, George Lugalambi, Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, Edwin Nyutho, Amin Alhassan
- 12:00-13:00 Closing ceremony