

# Beyond nation-centrism : thinking international communication from a cosmopolitan perspective

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## BEYOND NATION-CENTRISM: THINKING INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION FROM A COSMOPOLITAN PERSPECTIVE

This article begins with a historical overview of international communication and an evaluation of the successive paradigms that have dominated the discipline: modernization theory in the 1950s and 1960s, cultural imperialism in the following two decades and, more recently, the globalization paradigm. It examines the impact of the economic and the political factors on the discipline, focusing on the overwhelming influence of the Cold War. It is argued that the conflict locked the discipline into a national perspective that began to be deconstructed only when the structure of international relations changed in the 1990s. Today, it is apparent that a nation-centric discourse cannot comprehend contemporary trends in international communication, and it is suggested that the discipline adopts Ulrich Beck's cosmopolitan methodology in order to ascertain its epistemological shift towards a postnational perspective.

In the second part, this article applies the cosmopolitan methodology to the understanding of contemporary international communication flows. It is argued that globalization and technology are remapping media spaces, shaping new media practices and products and contributing to the emergence of a transnational media order. This order is analysed through four key features that characterize it: transnationalization (the intensification of trans-border media flows), individualization (users' growing access to international communication tools), deterritorialization (the disconnection between place and culture) and cosmopolitization (the changing relationship between the local and the global). It is contended that these new media spaces and processes are not only transforming international communication, but also national media systems from within and reshaping them with transnational connectivity.

*Keywords:* cosmopolitization, globalization, international communication, Internet, new media, transnational television.

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Like many other social sciences international communication has long been fashioned by its social and political context. For the best part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the epistemology of this discipline has largely been determined by the structure of international relations. From the aftermath of the Second World War until the end of the 1980s, the Cold War has had an overbearing influence on international communication. The discipline's first two paradigms, the modernization theory in the 1950s and 1960s, and cultural imperialism in the following two decades, comprehended contemporary international communication flows from different, even opposite, political perspectives. However, both shared a national outlook that was instilled in the discipline by the rivalries between nation-states that shaped international relations during the Cold War. It is only when the conflict ended and a new paradigm emerged, globalization, that the discipline began to detach itself from the imperatives of the national interest.

This section charts the history of international communication, reviewing each paradigm that successively dominated the discipline. It argues that a nation-centric discourse cannot comprehend the current reshaping of media spaces and suggests that the discipline adopts Ulrich Beck's cosmopolitan perspective in order to ascertain the shift towards a postnational perspective.

### 1. International Communication During the Cold War

International communication emerged as an object of academic inquiry in the aftermath of the Second World War, the initial thrust being given by the establishment of the UNESCO in 1945. The fledgling U.N. organization for education, science and culture identified at the onset mass communication as an important way of promoting co-operation and mutual understanding among nations. At the UNESCO's first General Conference in Paris in December 1946, the delegates expressed the wish to establish the organisation's own worldwide radio network, and more realistically decided to conduct an international survey of the mass media "in order to examine whether all of those means of communication among men were well adapted to the world's needs" (Valderrama 1995: 31). The doctrine of the free flow of communication emerged at the second General

Conference, which took place in Mexico City a year later. Delegates from 36 Member States adopted the objective of “remov[ing] existing obstacles to the free flow of ideas by word and image” (ibid.: 41). The rationale was that a free flow of communication would create a better understanding among nations and help secure peace and security. As good as these intentions were, the state of international relations in the 1950s took the discipline in an altogether different direction. For the next four decades, the Cold War would play a determining role in international communication and help shape the discipline’s first two paradigms.

### *1.1. Modernization Theory*

The discipline’s first paradigm emerged in the 1950s and was later labelled ‘modernization theory’. Issues surrounding mass communication and national development arose as the Cold War’s two superpowers vied to impose their respective economic and political models across the world. In the early 1950s American scholars began to investigate the role media can play in fostering social and political change in developing countries. The period’s first key project was headed by Daniel Lerner and published in 1958 under the title of *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Lerner and colleagues conducted a cross-national survey in six Middle Eastern countries<sup>1</sup> with the aim of demonstrating a positive correlation between media exposure and consumption, and social mobility and modernization (Lerner 1958).

Inspired by Lerner and working under the aegis of the UNESCO, Wilbur Schramm published an exhaustive study of international communication in 1964. The book surveyed media production and consumption worldwide and offered the first extensive analysis of international news flows. Schramm also sought to understand how to harness the power of the media in order to promote national development. He stated that communication and propaganda can modernize social and economic life by breaking resistance to change, teaching new skills, raising aspirations and creating a positive climate for development (Schramm 1964: 114–44).

<sup>1</sup> Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iran.

The modernization theory has long lost its prominence in academia but remains practiced in development circles. Many UN agencies and NGOs are involved in projects in the developing world involving information and communication technologies. This paradigm informed many of the debates that took place under the aegis of the World Summit on the Information Society, which included a conference in Geneva in 2003 and a follow-up event in Tunis two years later (Raboy & Landry 2005).

### *1.2. Cultural Imperialism Thesis*

Modernization theory was progressively challenged by the cultural imperialism thesis that emerged in Latin America towards the end of the 1960s and which dominated the discipline for the best part of the next two decades. It fitted in the dependency model which questioned the benefit of development imposed by the West in third world countries. The theory of the 'development of underdevelopment' held that developing countries (the periphery) were made dependent on industrialized nations (the core) in trade and technology (Salinas & Paldán 1974; Fejes 1981). Scholars focused on the unbalanced structure of the international flow of communication and argued that news and entertainment products travelled from 'North' to 'South' without counter-flow: whilst Anglo-American agencies dominated the global news trade and Hollywood movies were shown everywhere, 'third World' cultural products rarely reached the 'West'. It was also assumed that Western media conveyed an ideological message and the impact of this cultural hegemony became an issue. These media were accused of being the missionaries of capitalism, converting third world audiences to the virtues of the market economy and transforming them into consumers of global brands (Dorfman & Mattelart 1975; Mattelart 1979; Herman & McChesney 1997). The spread of consumerism and the profits of multinational corporations threatened the viability of local cultures (Schiller 1969).

It is from these premises that concerns about Western hegemony in the international communication system arose in the Non-Aligned Movement in the 1970s (Thussu 2006: 31–2). These concerns were structured into a diplomatic position that was subsequently articulated in the UN system. In 1978, the UNESCO issued a declaration and the

United Nations General Assembly adopted an official resolution calling for a 'New World Information and Communication Order' (NWICO). The non-aligned nations criticized Western dominance in cultural trade which, they maintained, breached their cultural sovereignty and threatened their national identity (Hamelink 1997; Roach 1997). The report of a commission set up by the UNESCO in 1977, chaired by the Irish statesman Sean MacBride, was a landmark in this debate. The report made no less than 82 recommendations addressing the disparities in international communication order (MacBride 1980).

These diatribes against capitalism and alleged American cultural imperialism were not to the taste of the Reagan administration. In 1984, the US Secretary of State James Baker informed the UNESCO that the United States was leaving the organization. The American government was followed by several other nations, including the United Kingdom. For Jeane Kirkpatrick, then US ambassador at the UN, the agenda pushed by the Non-Aligned Movement was in conflict with American values:

The Non-Aligned Movement was itself progressively captured by states linked to Moscow. By 1968, the NAM failed to condemn the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. A decade later the NAM met the invasion of Afghanistan with what one member called a 'deafening silence'. By the time that Cuba became chairman of the NAM in 1979, the movement was regularly and effectively manipulated by a group of its members that regularly threw its support behind the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. [...] the language and the positions of the NAM were simultaneously nationalist, socialist, and hostile to democratic values, alliances, and interests (Kirkpatrick 2004: 238).

The extent of the Soviet Bloc's influence on the NWICO debate is well documented. According to a contemporary account, the Soviet Union negotiated the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on the basis of their own draft, which "stipulated the 'use' of the mass news media for certain purposes [i.e. propaganda], and made independent journalists subject to control by governments" (Sussman 1981: 1). As several Western observers commented, the MacBride report had, at best, an ambiguous attitude towards freedom of expression. International associations of journalists, broadcasters and newspapers were alarmed by the degree of state control

on the news media that the Commission recommended to implement.<sup>2</sup> It appears indeed that several recommendations expressed in the MacBride report reflect authoritarian values and some governments' frustration not to be able to control the flow of international communication the way they controlled their domestic news media. Recommendation 48 called for an "international right of reply and correction" enforceable by the UN in order "to offset the negative effects of inaccurate or malicious reporting of international news" in the Western media (MacBride 1980: 263). Should a newspaper criticize a dictatorial regime its government would have been able to publish its own version of events. Recommendation 58 was equally forthright and recommended "Effective legal measures [...] to be designed to [...] circumscribe the action of transnationals by requiring them to comply with specific criteria and conditions defined by national legislation and development policies" (ibid.: 266).

## 2. Beyond the Nation-State: Thinking International Communication after the Cold War

Both modernization theorists and the proponents of the cultural imperialism thesis comprehended international communication from a national perspective: while the former sought to harness media for national development the latter were preoccupied with the defence of cultural sovereignty. During the Cold War international relations was structured by the antagonism between nation-states and the prevalence of the national dimension influenced the epistemology of international communication. The discipline was suffused with methodological nationalism and all its operating concepts (e.g. national development, cultural sovereignty) were shaped by the politics of the nation-state. The institutions that commissioned international communication studies, such as the UNESCO, were themselves the theatre of conflicting national interests. Governments and their rivalries shaped the debate it was impossible to think international communication beyond the horizon nation-state.

<sup>2</sup> These positions were expressed in a pamphlet published by the World Press Freedom Committee in 1981.

The reconfiguration of international relations at the end of the Cold War heralded a new era for the discipline. When scholars realised that the ideological bias of cultural imperialism prevented them from understanding the complexity of modern communication, the old views were progressively deconstructed and a new paradigm could emerge. The theories of globalization announced a progressive shift away from a nation-centric perspective. The myths of cultural imperialism had to be dispelled one by one before nationalism lost its grip on the discipline. The first problem rested with claims about the one-way flow of communication. Jeremy Tunstall was among the first to raise doubts about this flight of the imagination, accusing its advocates of taking the marketing claims of US companies at face value and making fanciful assertions about the worldwide spread of 'false consciousness' via satellite (Tunstall 1977: 38–63; see also Lee 1980). Early question marks arose unexpectedly from an international study coordinated by Varis and Nordenstreng. This research, which received a large echo at the time, confirmed the dominance of a few exporting countries – the United States in particular – but identified a trend towards greater regional exchanges (Varis 1984). Robert Stevenson, head of the American team, picked up on the evidence of regionalism in TV production and consumption to argue that “many of the charges against the Western media and news services lack evidence to support them” (Stevenson 1984: 137; Tracey 1985).

It fell on Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham to suggest an alternative model to the patterns of international television trade. They argued that the cultural imperialism thesis was unable to provide an explanation for the complexity of world television and the consolidation of regional media markets in particular. They proposed a regional perspective and fashioned the concept of 'geolinguistic region' to give an account of the emergence of regional media players, the rise of regional production centres in 'peripheral' countries such as Mexico in Latin America and Egypt in the Middle East, and the growing popularity of regional contents with local audiences (Sinclair et al. 1996).

Claims about the alleged impact of Western media on indigenous cultures were dismissed on several grounds. Critics showed that they did not stand up to scrutiny because of lack of research and thin evidence (e.g. Tunstall 1977; Fejes 1981). It was also argued that the myth of



strong effects was based on an archaic audience reception model which assumed that ideology drips into people's veins in the manner of a hypodermic needle (Tracey 1985: 41). Research conducted in the Netherlands (Ang 1985) and Israel (Liebes & Katz 1993) demonstrated that viewers' responses to media imports were diverse – being dependent on the context of reception – complex and reflective. Ien Ang maintained that worldwide audiences enjoyed *Dallas* for its melodramatic quality and were able to see through the obvious ideological connotations of the series (1985: 4).

The supporters of the cultural imperialism thesis were criticized for seeing the world media in black and white and lacking the flexibility to deal with the complexities of our times. According to John Tomlinson, not only does it take for granted the dominance of the West but also fails to recognize the shifting “patterns of distribution of power” induced by the decentering process of globalization (Tomlinson 1997: 185). The old views are too simplistic to give account of the new “global cultural economy”, which is a “complex, overlapping [and] disjunctive order”, added Arjun Appadurai (1990). Néstor García Canclini concurred that the “one-directional schema of imperialist domination” is unable to provide an explanation for contemporary cultural processes provoked by phenomena such as migration (García Canclini 1995: 230).

When scholars left behind the cultural imperialism's neo-marxist agenda a new paradigm developed that enabled them to shift their attention to emerging trends. Whilst the old thesis assumed national cultures that are coherent and unified wholes, the new perspective focuses on cultural diversity and the contemporary fragmentation and juxtaposition of cultures (Tomlinson 1991: 73). It was recognized that fears about cultural homogenization were ill-founded because cultural products mutate and adapt when they move between cultures (Tomlinson 1997: 181–2). Attention began to be given to regional and transnational flows of communication, notably from the Global South to the West, the formation of hybrid cultures that draw from different locales, and the phenomena of transnationalization and deterritorialization (see below). The change of perspective has been considerable over the past few years to the point that there is not much left in common between the old and new paradigm. Indrajit Banerjee can legitimately contrast the new research agenda that “underlines cultural change, interconnection and

diversity” with the old “that emphasizes domination and hegemony” (Banerjee 2002: 519).

Despite considerable progress the new research agenda has yet to be grounded on a firm theoretical basis. In particular, the globalization paradigm is still in need of a set of methodological and theoretical principles that would help ascertain the paradigmatic shift away from the prison-house of the national perspective. International communication scholars, I suggest, should hear Ulrich Beck’s calls to replace ‘methodological nationalism’ with ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’. The German sociologist defines the cosmopolitan outlook as the attempt to “build a frame of reference to analyse the new social conflicts, dynamics, and structures of Second Modernity” (Beck 2002: 18). Methodological nationalism fails to grasp the ramifications of the process of globalization, which “not only alters the interconnectedness of nation-states and national societies but the internal quality of the social” (Beck 2000: 87). Sociology needs to break with the territorial bias of the nation-centric discourse because the “principles of territoriality, collectivity and frontier are becoming questioned” and “the assumed congruence of state and society is broken down” (ibid.). “Political, economic and cultural action and their (intended and unintended) consequences know no border” and thus the “challenge is to devise a new syntax, the syntax of cosmopolitan reality” (Beck 2006: 18).

The cosmopolitan outlook can provide the theoretical underpinning of the globalization paradigm. It is apparent that globalization and technology are remapping media spaces and markets and that a transnational media order is emerging media. While media systems were predominantly national in scope, they have evolved today on four levels: the local, the national, the regional and the global. The national layer has not disappeared but it is part of an intricate set of relationships involving all four dimensions. In all events, national media cannot be taken as the benchmark against which all types of media should be measured. The cosmopolitan outlook can help us think beyond a territorial and national mindset and comprehend the emerging media structures and experiences created by the transnational media. As Robins and Aksoy write, the new transnational media order will not materialize automatically but “we will have to think it into existence’ against the ‘gravity field of the national imaginary” (Robins & Aksoy 2005: 21).

### 3. Analysing the New Media Spaces

What is to be seen from the new vantage point? In the past, the media were often tied up with the national project and central to the modernist intent of engineering a national identity (e.g. Scannel 1996; Van den Bulck 2001; Price 2002) However, the close relationship between media and nation has been unravelling over the past two decades. Causes for this disjuncture are complex and include phenomena related to globalization such as the increasing flow of capital, goods and people crossing borders. Change is also brought by the current information technology revolution that has further deepened the integration between computing, telecommunications and electronic media (Forester 1985; Castells 1996). New technology involves the process of convergence between hitherto separate media platforms, the digitization of broadcasting and satellite systems – making global communication networks more powerful and flexible – and the emergence of new digital media.

The end result is a remapping of media spaces that involves new media practices and experiences. The following pages outline the characteristics of the emerging media order from an international communication perspective. It is contended that globalization and technology are not only changing the patterns of international communication flows but also national media systems from within, reshaping them with transnational connectivity, and creating contemporary cultures pregnant with new meanings and experiences.

#### *3.1. Transnationalization*

An increasing number of media companies and products cross borders. It is recognized that the world's largest entertainment conglomerates have acquired a global scope: Bertelsmann, Disney, News Corporation, Time Warner and Viacom operate in most of the world's significant markets. However, international reach is no longer the preserve of large corporations as smaller media companies have acquired the capability of conducting international operations. For instance, Switzerland's two main media groups, Edipresse and Ringier, have spread their activities to

18 and 12 countries respectively despite being companies of a relatively modest size.

Communication enterprises from the Global South are increasingly active internationally. When their products reach Europe and the United States, these firms add to the counter-flow of communication that is emerging from the developing world to the West (Thussu 2007). The South African pay-TV platform MultiChoice is present in numerous African countries as is the African Broadcast Network that connects public service broadcasters across the continent (Mytton, Teer-Tomaselli & Tudesq 2005). Zee Network's channels are available worldwide to Indian migrants who are now able to watch these stations alongside innumerable other Asian channels almost wherever they find themselves. Hong-Kong-based Phoenix TV has achieved near worldwide distribution, as have a handful of Arabic channels. The launch of Al Jazeera English in November 2006 is a further illustration of a Global South company reaching out to Western audiences. Many Latin American companies have extensive international activities, notably Mexico's media giant Grupo Televisa and Venezuela's Cisneros. Cisneros group of Companies, headed by chairman Gustavo Cisneros, operates in an excess of 80 countries, including the United States. Brazil's media powerhouse Organizações Globo has also developed a global footprint. Not content in selling telenovelas worldwide (see Rêgo & La Pastina 2007), the company is building up the distribution of its two international channels, TV Globo Internacional and the newly-launched PFC Internacional, which retransmits live or 'as live' Brazilian football games.

The late 1990s have also witnessed the transformation of the format market for game shows and reality television. In the past, TV formats took a long time to cross boundaries and when they did they were aired in a relatively small number of territories. 'Super TV formats' have emerged over the recent years that reach many more territories in a time span shorter than ever before. Broadcasters strive to snatch shows that look promising ahead of their competitors and make purchasing decisions very early in a programme development. Thus formats that prove popular in a few territories spread rapidly across the world. The new breed of super TV formats include Celador's *Who Want to Be a Millionaire?*, Endemol's *Big*

*Brother and Deal or No Deal*, BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* and FremantleMedia's *The X Factor* and *The Apprentice*.

The rise of cross-border TV channels lies at the heart of the current regional and global reshaping of media industries and cultures. Following two decades of expansion, thousands of TV channels broadcast across borders today, which include some of the most innovative and influential stations of recent times. Many have played a determining role in the transformation of media cultures in several world regions. In the Middle East, satellite ventures have introduced innovative TV formats and driven wide changes in Arab television. Channels like Al Arabiya have raised the standards of broadcasting journalism and the independent voice of Al Jazeera has unsettled governments (Sakr 2001, 2005; El-Nawawy & Iskandar 2002; Miles 2005; Zayani 2005). In South Asia, Zee TV and Star TV have accompanied sweeping cultural change and radical transformations in the television industry (Page & Crawley 2001, 2005).

In Europe, pan-regional TV channels struggled in the 1980s when they were in the grip of a range of problems that included poor satellite transmission, governments reluctant to grant access to their markets and a reception universe that was too small to attract advertisers. They were also searching for a workable model of international broadcasting and a suitable way to address a multinational audience. Facing such difficulties many of the early cross-border channels were ventures of a short duration.

The stars of pan-European television (PETV) came into alignment in the late 1990s when a transnational shift began to occur in European broadcasting. Broadcasters progressively understood how to deal with a multinational audience and began to adapt their video feeds to European cultural diversity. The growth of cable and satellite connections in the region, which reached 170 million homes in 2006, expanded the reception universe of cross-border TV channels, enabling them to increase coverage and leverage costs over many more markets (Eutelsat 2007). The growth of direct-to-home broadcasting facilitated reception and digitization lowered transmission costs. European integration and the implementation of a fairly liberal audiovisual legislative framework further facilitated the expansion of trans-frontier television. The positive impact of Television Without Frontiers was reinforced by the establishment of a viable European copyright

regime through the 1993 EC copyright directive. The restructuring of the advertising industry, the growing number of companies with cross-border activities and multi-territory brands were other favourable developments for cross-border TV networks (Chalaby 2002, 2005, 2007).

Today cross-border networks count among European television's most prestigious brands and have become dominant in several genres, including international news, business news, factual entertainment and children's television (Table 1). They do not reach the ratings of terrestrial stations

*Table 1: Cross-border TV Channels in Europe According to Genre*

<i>Genre</i>	Channel
<i>News</i>	Al Jazeera English; BBC World; CNN; Deutsche Welle; EuroNews; France 24; Fox News International; Russia Today; Sky News
<i>Business news</i>	Bloomberg Television; CNBC Europe
<i>Generalist</i>	Arte, TV5
<i>Factual entertainment</i>	The Biography Channel; Discovery suite of channels; E! Entertainment; Fashion TV; The History Channel; National Geographic; Travel Channel; Zone Reality
<i>Sports</i>	Eurosport; ESPN Classic; Extreme Sports Channel; Motors TV; North American Sport Network
<i>Entertainment</i>	BBC Prime; FX; Hallmark; Paramount Comedy; Zone Club; Zone Romantica
<i>Movies</i>	13 <sup>th</sup> Street; Cinemax; HBO; Sci-Fi; Studio Universal; Turner Classic Movies; Zone Europa; Zone Fantasy; Zone Horror
<i>Music Television</i>	Mezzo; MTV; TMF; Trace TV; VH1; Viva
<i>Children</i>	Boomerang; Cartoon Network; Disney Channel; Jetix; Nickelodeon; Playhouse Disney; Toonami; Toon Disney
<i>Adult entertainment</i>	The Adult Channel; Playboy TV; Spice
<i>Shopping</i>	QVC
<i>Religion</i>	Daystar; The God Channel; Islam Channel; Revelation TV; TBN Europe
<i>Ethnic</i>	All channels that target a specific ethnic and/or linguistic community in Europe

but they compensate with strong brand equity and an ability to deliver specific and attractive demographics across frontiers for advertisers. And while terrestrial stations struggle in a changing industry, transnational TV networks contribute to transforming it. Many practices that have become standard in television first emerged in the pan-European TV industry, from horizontal programming in the early 1980s to multi-stream revenue strategies and the development of multi-platform content and marketing partnerships more recently.

Companies, formats, content and TV channels increasingly cross borders. When they do, they often take on a transnational structure. Many media conglomerates are adopting a new organizational configuration and mutating into *transnational* companies (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1998). Headquarters give affiliates a certain amount of autonomy, specialize them according to their strengths and resources, and then link them up into an interdependent corporate network. This new organizational structure enables these companies to combine global efficiency with responsiveness to local and regional markets. Similarly, many international TV channels are transforming into transnational networks of local channels. These channels share a concept, brand, part of the programming and library titles, resources and infrastructures, but employ local staff and develop according to their respective environment, setting up their own schedule mixing shared network content with their own material.

### *3.2. Individualization*

It is only recently that individuals have had direct access to international communication. For the best part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, international communication was prohibitively expensive. The telegraph was in large part the preserve of governments, news agencies and newspapers. In the first three decades of satellite TV transmissions (from the 1960s to the 1980s), the costs were such that broadcasters only had the capability of receiving a satellite TV signal.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The dish installed at the Goonhilly Earth Station in Cornwall (UK) in 1962 to pick up transcontinental satellite signals measured 26 meters in diameter and weighed 1,118 tonnes.

When it was thought that the purpose of broadcasting was to foster national identity and protect national culture, governments sought to restrict their citizens' ability to communicate across frontiers. This policy was forcibly implemented by the regimes of the Soviet bloc but was pursued to a less extent by democratic governments. Private reception of a satellite signal was forbidden across Western Europe until the early 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Over the past twenty years, change brought by technology has been dramatic. Today, an increasing number of people have the tools that give them free and open access to international communication. Technology has dramatically lowered the cost of international transmission and forced governments to liberalise their communications policies. Anyone with a 60-centimeter dish can watch countless international TV stations that broadcast from Europe's main satellite orbital positions.

The new media facilitate even further trans-border communication. Websites from anywhere can be reached at a click of a mouse and the delivery of television over the Internet let people – migrants in particular – watch an even wider choice of TV channels. New media also facilitate *interpersonal* communication across borders. Emails and Internet telephony applications such as Skype have dramatically lowered the cost of international telephony. YouTube, a website acquired by Google for no less than US\$1.6 billion at the end of 2006, enables users to post and watch videos regardless of where they live.

The practice of blogging, which consists in regularly updating a website with entries of a various nature (text, photographs, video, links, etc.) on a particular topic (including oneself) has implications for cross-frontier communication. Blogs have come to the world's attention during the Iraq War, when journalists, self-made correspondents, military personnel and

<sup>4</sup> When Pierre Meyrat, then managing director of Teleclub, called a press conference to launch Switzerland's first cable channel in the early 1980s, he received a phone call from the Swiss PTT letting him know that it was forbidden to downlink a satellite signal. Meyrat replied that he knew nothing about it and suggested that they send a delegate to the press conference to inform journalists. Towards the end of the event, Meyrat declared that the PTT wished to make an announcement. When the PTT representative let the audience know that private citizens and companies were not allowed to downlink a satellite signal, everybody laughed. Two weeks later the necessary authorisations were delivered to Teleclub (Pierre Meyrat, interview with author, 7 December 2005).



Iraqi residents have penned their thoughts online (Wall 2005). A report published by the Geneva Security Policy Centre shows how blogs can create communities of interest that cross boundaries in the direst circumstances:

Another important feature of warbloggers, and bloggers in general, is their close collaboration with their counterparts from all over the world. Iraqi bloggers, for example, benefit from the insights of their Western readers, and can transmit their message well beyond Iraqi borders. They no longer need the traditional media to accomplish this task and are less constrained by the lack of infrastructure (a feature of most conflict zones) than the traditional media sources. A number of Western bloggers also keep in close contact with their counterparts in combat zones and not only share their comments on what they read, but propose storylines, ideas, and means of accomplishing them (Al-Rodhan 2007: 131).

These tools are more individual-centred and are less government-controlled than old pathways to international communication. Digitization and the new media have led to an unprecedented democratization of international communication and the empowerment of the growing number of people who have access to them.

### *3.3. Deterritorialization*

Néstor García Canclini was among the first to analyse the phenomenon of deterritorialization, which he explains as “the loss of the ‘natural’ relation of culture to geographical and social territories” (García Canclini 1995: 229). Culture becomes disembedded from territory and loses its connection to place. John Tomlinson has described this disjuncture as “the weakening or dissolution of the connection between everyday lived culture and territorial location” (Tomlinson 1999: 128).

Deterritorialization is often evoked in the context of migratory groups, where the disconnection between place and culture is most apparent. Displaced populations use several media to (re)create a culture that draws from several locales (e.g. Aksoy & Robins 2000; Karim 2003). However, modern communication is increasingly deterritorialized in character, a phenomenon which again can be illustrated with transnational television.

Many features of cross-border TV stations including coverage, schedule and patterns of production tear apart the relation between place and television. These channels have different types of distribution (multi-territory, pan-regional or global) that challenge the traditional connections between national territory and broadcasting (Chalaby 2003). Their schedules are also less time-specific than those of terrestrial television. The programming of national stations is based on the viewing time of a specific territory, broadcasting appropriate genres for clearly defined moments such as daytime and prime time. Cross-border TV channels might adapt their schedules to local times but their programming is primarily 24-hour oriented, broadcasting continuous feeds of news, documentaries or music videos. The process is particularly manifest in global news TV networks which have developed facilities enabling them to break news on a worldwide basis and give round-the-clock real-time coverage of international affairs.

Many transnational TV channels are produced in more than one place. CNN has several interconnected newsrooms across the world (Atlanta, London, Mexico City and Hong Kong), as has Al Jazeera English (Doha, London, Washington DC and Kuala Lumpur). Within a period of 24 hours, CNBC Europe links up to satellite feeds in Asia and North America, depending on where the financial markets are open. Many entertainment channels mix American, regional and local material. Thus cross-border channels do not merely broadcast to a multinational audience but follow internationalized patterns of production.

Transnational TV channels are not entirely free from geographical impediment because most markets are local by definition and they must abide by national and regional regulations. To a certain extent, the practices of localization reterritorialize international feeds by adapting them to local audiences. But these channels are no longer defined by a specific place as national television used to be. Place ceases to be a 'container' to become a 'content' of corporate strategies: it can be re-defined and accommodated to resources and commercial objectives.

Deterritorialization is changing the status of the local: in the current media order, the local is disembedded from place and can travel anywhere. With the Internet and communications satellites, local media can be consumed across space and people are now able to read their local

paper, watch their local TV channel or listen to their local radio station wherever they migrate or travel. For instance, SRG SSR, the Swiss public broadcaster, has placed all its seven TV channels and 16 radio stations on broadcast satellite Hotbird 3. The 4,000 Swiss households who have bought the digital receiver and the smart card are able to watch any of the Swiss stations across Europe. Many ethnic direct-to-home satellite platforms, such as Arabesque, which distributes a selection of Arab channels, are also available internationally.

Deterritorialization has transnationalized the local and made it as significant as the global. At corporate level, the ability to leverage both dimensions has become key to a successful strategy. There is no opposition between the two terms and cultures that accept both are enriched and diversified. Both dimensions are now entwined as the local can become global and the global can be localized.

### *3.4. Cosmopolitization*

Ulrich Beck defines cosmopolitization as 'inner globalization', or the alteration of societies under the impact of the transnational and/or global dimension of phenomena that include communication, mobility, migration, risk, ecological crises, or production and labour (Beck 2002: 17). It is the result of the interpenetration and juxtaposition of cultures, the interconnectedness of societies, the interdependence of nation-states and the blurring of boundaries:

The cosmopolitization of reality [...] is not the result of a cunning conspiracy on the part of 'global capitalists' or an 'American play for world domination', but an unforeseen social effect of actions directed to other ends performed by human beings operating within a network of global interdependence risks. This often coerced, and generally unseen and unwanted, cosmopolitanism of side effect cancels the equation of the nation-state with national society and gives rise to transnational forms of life and communication, allocations of responsibility, and internal and external representations of individual and collective identities. The nation-state is increasingly besieged and permeated by a planetary network of interdependencies, by ecological, economic and terrorist risks, which connect the separate worlds of developed and underdeveloped countries (Beck 2006: 48).

Transnational media participate in the process of cosmopolitization. When Western governments used the telegraph to protect and expand their colonial empires, international communication reinforced the power of (a few) nation-states (e.g. Ferguson 2004: 164–76). Today, international communication might still interconnect them but it is transforming their very fabric. New technologies are restructuring media flows at four levels, the local, the national, the regional and the global, involving complex networks of companies, products and audiences. The national dimension of media systems does not vanish but it ceases to be overtly dominant, as when governments tried to restrict these systems to national boundaries. This remapping of communication flows makes media systems more balanced, flexible, open and diverse than they ever been. The new media spaces are more centred on the individuals' rights and needs than previous government-controlled communication systems. Transnational media challenge boundaries, question the principle of territoriality and open up from within the national media.

#### 4. Conclusion: International Communication from a Postnational Perspective

For most of its history the discipline of international communication was dominated by the national outlook. Modernization theorists focused on the issue of national development and the proponents of the cultural imperialism thesis, raising to the defense of cultural sovereignty, sought to protect developing nations from an unbalanced communication order.

The end of the Cold War helped shift the agenda of the discipline away from a nation-centric perspective. New concepts were forged that enabled scholars to analyse the impact of globalization on modern media systems. I have argued that the cosmopolitan outlook should constitute the theoretical foundations of the globalization paradigm and help ascertain the shift towards a postnational perspective.

It is no longer possible to understand international communication with tools and concepts that were built under the influence of methodological nationalism. The trends highlighted in this essay show the magnitude and pace of recent changes in contemporary media. The media order that is emerging is not only transnational in scope but

is changing the relationship between place and culture, and between the local and the global. Globalization and technology are remapping media spaces and shaping new media practices and products. They create contemporary cultures pregnant with new meanings and experiences, which can only be deciphered with the adequate methodological and theoretical tools.

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