What's Stopping the (Global) Flow of TV?
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At one level, the global flow of TV has scarcely stopped. It is quite strong, even expanding. The classic sale and flow of television programs continues strongly, still dominated at the global level by the USA. The flow of TV via global satellite channels is also strong, albeit quite a bit less U.S. in character. There is also a third, new and strong layer of the global flow of formats, which are (re)produced as national or regional productions. In that area, the USA is in the top three exporters but not number one. There is also now a "flow" of TV over the Internet, as much pulled by users than pushed by broadcasters.

However, we are both noticing an even more rapid increase in flow of not quite global TV, more complexly transnational than global. In this process we are redefining much of what used to be loosely considered as global into several complex layers of transnational and translocal TV.

In at least two of the four areas of flow -- program sales, satellite channels, TV downloads across cultural or political borders, and format licensing, there is a shift from the global to the transnational. Program flows in some genres are still dominated by the USA (such as action-adventure, drama, science fiction, documentary, feature films) but others are more mixed (music, cartoons, sports) and some others skew more to transnational markets define by geographic proximity, language and cultural proximity (comedy, melodrama, variety, talk). (Based on research 1960-2000 available in *World Television: From global to local*.)

TV flows via satellite channels have also decisively regionalized in some genres. (HBO is still quite U.S.-based, Discovery is in transit as co-production grows, and MTV is surprisingly regionalized and localized.) The strong growth in new channels in the Mid-East and Asia is primarily in channels either based in strongly national producers (Asia-see work by Iwabuchi, others) or those explicitly created to be regional in scope, challenging and bypassing national TV altogether (as in the Mid-East--see work by Kraidy, others). These channels tend to focus on genres where cultural proximity matters most: comedy (which tends to be very nuanced by language and cultural knowledge), music (similar--see work in Transnational Broadcasting Studies on music video in the Arab World), melodrama (where regional cultural proximities and ties (the cross-export among China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan; the strong recent flow of Turkish melodrama to the Arabic-speaking Mid-East).

There are two distinct types of transnational TV flow at work in program and satellite channel flows. First are cultural spaces or markets usually called regional because of their shared geographic proximity, reflecting shared histories (pre- and post-colonial), such as East Asia, South Asia, Latin America and the Arab world. Those really are regions in the proper and strict sense of the world. I tend to call them geo-cultural regions because they often share culture even when they don't (like Turkey and the Arab World) strictly share a language. However, there are other spaces and markets defined more by shared colonial histories fro empires that sprawled across continents, such as the Anglophone (UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), the Francophone (France plus French-speaking Canada and much of West Africa) and Lusophone (Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, East Timor, etc.). These really aren't regional so I call them transnational cultural-linguistic spaces.

In the other two types of TV flow, format licensing and program flow over the Internet, trends seem to be more fully globalized. Formats flow outward from Europe, the USA and Australia much more than from anywhere else so far. But I suspect, personally, that this is because the phenomenon is still quite new and the traditional big producers still have what economists might call a first mover advantage. I think this flow will also become more discretely divided into transnational spaces of flow as national or other local producers come to realize that it might well be easier and more attractive to their audiences to license and adapt something that is already somewhat pre-adapted to their culture by virtue of having been produced or already adapted from somewhere else by a producer in their own cultural region or transnational cultural linguistic space. So someone in Angola might decide to get a Big Brother kit from Brazil rather than Holland because it has already been pre-adapted. They might go further and get the parallel not quite Big Brother program from a smaller producer, called "House of the Artists" because it is both pre-adapted and cheaper.

Internet TV flow, particularly outside the wealthy countries of the OECD, seems to focused right now on letting better off, cultural globalized elites and upper middle classes in developing nations get access to things like "Friends" (discretely kept off the air in China and limited to pay-TV in Brazil), which they (but perhaps not many of their fellow Chinese or Brazilian audiences) have sufficiently globalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) to understand, find funny and prefer.

So I would argue that slowly, over time TV flow is more divided by genre. And many of those genres, in whatever specific technical form of television, are increasing flowing among much more specific markets and spaces defined here as geo-cultural regions and transnational cultural linguistic spaces driven by the preferences of audiences whose identities and interests are sometimes globalized but much more frequently and fundamentally defined by transnationally shared languages and cultures.