

Interrogating an Anglo-American Context in Media Studies

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Emerging landscape and the three media ages

The panel rightfully interrogates the division between the global Anglo media dominance and how issues of censorship, nationalism and regulation tend to define other places. When facts are taken into consideration, how do cultural industries rising in tandem from other places such as Universal (France), Sony (Japan), Al-Jazeera (Qatar), Rotana (Saudi-Arabia), Grupo Televisa and TV Azteca (Mexico), TV Globo (Brazil), Reliance (India) fit into this model of censorship, national culture and regulation? Thus, there are things to object about framing Anglo media versus the rest of the world. It serves a state to reheat notions of center and periphery but not how the world is indeed become culturally multi-polar through the rise of a global competitive creative class and new formations of communities of communication which beyond pleasure of reception show genuine commitment to civil liberties issues as well. A center and periphery model, therefore, takes attention away from the work of applying another perspective on the contemporary media map to rethink how emerging channels are cultivating new forms of speech rights and rationalization of the public sphere in their own rightsⁱ. What is important is not to miss how the global divisions of labor between producers and consumers countries and media reception issues are complicated by new practices of trade and mobilities which also work to de-center conventional modes of power controlled by the state.

For the purpose of my short intervention, I will restrict myself with examples from Baidu.com in China and Reliance ADA Group in India as emblematic of this new media age coming from countries which a not merely nation-state but continent and how their emergence will reshape the face of global media.

For a start, Google CEO Erich Schmidt claims that Google pulled out of China because of its values and principles. Google struggle is to collapse the bureaucracies of monopolies governments. Beyond, censorship laws, Google's goal is to transform how statecraft worksⁱⁱ. Another interpretation is that Google was simply pulling only 2% of his share of business in China. Plus much, from the Chinese's standpoint, their creative class was beating Google on the market. Thus, Google problems in China were first a failure to "localize." Indeed, there are 360 million internet users in China which represents less than 1/3 of the total Chinese internet users; Google's share is roughly 19.8 in 2009 while Baidu.com, The Chinese search engine involves 69% of the local Chinese usersⁱⁱⁱ. Since Google's pull back, Baidu's in the market of advertising has seen his share rise up to 70% while Google failed to 34%. Google is not the first company to struggle in China. EBay and Yahoo struggled as in China as well. What most important in China now is the rise of a culture of collective bargaining with workers allow to join unions.

Baidu exemplifies the rise of a Chinese creative class that can compete with Google and an economy that is undergoing significant changes. Thus, the militaristic hierarchy that has long being a staple of Chinese industry has proven to be especially difficult to accept for younger

employees born in the 1980s and 1990s, who now make up the mainstream of companies such as Foxconn which has (840, 000 employees) and assembles I pads for Apple, Computer for H-P and cell phones for Nokia. While Foxconn refuses to acknowledge a direct link between the company's business practices and the six employee suicide attempts, the close proximity of the suicides and the similar ages of the victims have resulted in greater media scrutiny of working conditions in Foxconn's factories. Foxconn has now agreed to upgrade salaries for 20% which means that money is there to do so.

Reliance ADA Group in India which is a partner with DreamWorks and financing film projects for movie stars such as Tom Hanks, Jim Carrey, Nicolas Cage and Brad Pitt and the company operates more than 500 movie theaters globally. Reliance is now talking with Universal (French) to build \$ 1.5 Billion theme park in India and it is forming a 50-50 partnership with CBS Corp to launch an English and Hindi TV channels in South- East Asia^{iv}. Reliance shows how the global map is actually being redrawn and how the nation-state seems not to play a major role at all.

I think that the question one should be asking about Baidu.com and Reliance is how their emergence plays into issues of generation, new forms of cultural transmission and cut across countries and continents. I will consider the idea of three media ages co-existing with three forms of communities of communication with different media ranges, expectations and policies. For that matter, these categories are made up of -media traditionalists who are often partisans of cultural exception- industrial/ corporate neo-liberal free-market media practitioners- and digital/social networks media consumers respectively. Traditional and corporate globalization media practitioners clearly expect a greater role for the nation-state, corporation or empowering supra-institutions such as UNESCO in writing cultural policies and even legislate for the rest of the world whereas the digital age is defined as cutting out the middlemen with new cultural practices, symbols and vulnerabilities in terms of defense of religious tolerance and civil rights, women and minorities. It is a world that is more porous and highly connected.

Thus an effective media theory or pedagogy must work around the edges of these three media ages to understand their patterns and differences and thinking through our inclination to focus solely on global competitive media outlets or picking winners for that matter.

ⁱ The rise of these cultural industries comes packaged with a growing middle class who begin to ask for better government. My study on the reception of hugely popular Mexican telenovela Marimar in Cameroon showed the role that the TV show played in putting gender relationship into the public sphere and discussions over appropriate gender behaviors and family dynamics. Marwan Kraïdy on Lebanese TV, particular the local version of American Idol, discusses how the show complicates notions of gender mixity and speech rights in the Middle-East

ⁱⁱ Interview with The Guardian editor-in-chief, Alan Rusbridger on guardian.co.uk. July 6,2010

ⁱⁱⁱ China IntelliConsulting Corporation report (2009)

^{iv} Reliance, Universal Entertain Idea of U.S.-Style Theme Park in India, by Amol Sharma, Wall Street Journal, Friday, July 30, 2010 page B1&B2