

Daya Kishan Thussu (Ed.), **Internationalizing Media Studies**, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, 320 pp., \$35.95 (paperback).

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It has been almost a decade since the groundbreaking outcry for “de-Westernization” of media studies was made by Curran and Park (2000). The financial crisis of 2008, triggered by neoliberal modes of globalization, serves as a wake-up call for sober reflections on the nature (or some scholars may say, “logic”) of globalization and its implications for political economy and cultures (Kavoori, 2009). Globalization of higher education, on the other hand, catalyzed the flow of talented students from the “periphery” to the “core,” dramatically increasing cultural contacts, and thus spurring alternative conceptualization of mediated landscape. It is to these theoretical calls for “de-Westernization” and increasingly practical demands for comparative approaches and cross-national perspectives that this edited volume, *Internationalizing Media Studies*, is responding. As stated in its introduction, the collection aims to continue the debate on “the imperative to broaden the discourse on the globalization of media and communication” (p. 1).

The volume, built upon the 2006 international conference with the same theme at the University of Westminster, London, is edited by Daya Kishan Thussu, who has authored several books, including *News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment* (2008) and *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow* (2007). Two dozen scholars from five continents address some of the key questions and challenges facing media studies in the age of globalization. Their articles are organized into four sections: internationalizing media research, broadening the field of media studies, regional perspectives on internationalization, and pedagogic parameters: internationalizing media syllabi.

In Part I’s “Internationalizing media research,” five scholars set the tone for the entire book. They point out inherent limitations in epistemologies and methodologies. These limitations, such as presumed “national-territorial” correlation with media culture, are diehard because they are derived from the legacy of colonialism, racialization, imperialism, and national essentialism. At the same time, they also propose alternative approaches. As seen in Chapter 2, “What should comparative media research be comparing? Towards a transcultural approach to ‘Media cultures,’” Hepp and Couldry propose to look at media through various cultural lenses as “translocal phenomena” (pp. 37–38). Chitty, on the other hand, in Chapter 4, “Frames for internationalizing media research,” suggests exploring the Web as a “matrix” which includes individualization and transduction among different mediated venues (p. 67). Despite different approaches and focuses, authors in part I all pay more attention to structural relationships between media and society, attempting to (re)couple media studies as a discipline or field of research with a big picture, namely political economy and pervasive capitalism. Mattelart, for example, in Chapter 3, “Globalization theories and media internationalization: A critical appraisal,” highlights this concern after critically reading the cultural-diversity turn in theories of globalization. After the cultural-diversity turn, globalization

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theorists claim that globalization operates by generating cultural pluralism, rather than homogenizing global cultures and wiping out local cultures. Mattelart, however, asserts that the irony of media studies is how "theories of cultural globalization think the effects of media internationalization without thinking the process of media internationalization" (p. 59).

As the section's title indicates, the purpose of Part II is to expand the field to include new areas and subjects, and to invoke theoretical presumptions. To readers' satisfactions, it succeeds. For example, Braman, in Chapter 6, "Globalization media law and policy," skillfully shows how studies on media laws and policies can be strengthened if scholars take into consideration the roles of government, governance, and governmentality. Somehow, media studies are always foregrounding either users and consumers or content. In turn, this audience- and content-centrism renders producers (or workers, to be more specific) in the media industry invisible. Mosco and Lavin's chapter, "The labouring of international communication" is remarkable, simply because they draw our attention to this long-neglected spot.

Echoing the contextual call to "reinsert media into the cultural and the social" (p. 82), Part III's "Regional perspective on internationalization" reflects how research grounded in regional and local history, culture, language, religion, and economic practices can contribute to challenging the default mind-settings (read Euro-American-centric), and thereby, to expanding the field. Well aware of the regional specificities, the authors in this part provide the readers with an exemplarily grounded overview of pressing issues for media studies scholars by seeking legitimacy and visibility on the basis of regional perspective. As Sabry points out, in Chapter 12, "Media and cultural studies in the Arab world: Making bridges to local discourses of modernity," de-Westernization of media studies in Arab-Islamic context means double-critique, against both predominant Western approaches and the struggle for "authenticity."

In Part IV, "Pedagogic parameters: Internationalizing media syllabi," the authors focus on the classroom-setting strategies to keep up with more and more diverse student bodies whose media-related experience and first tongues are equally diverse. While Downing investigates program designs and textbook usage in Chapter 17, "International media studies in the US academy: A sampling of programmes and textbooks," Nordenstreng and Mano provide counterpart overviews in Scandinavia and Africa, respectively. In his chapter, "Internationalizing media ethics studies," Hamelink suggests "a discursive reflexive approach" toward such specific areas as media ethics studies. He also encourages discussing "moral issues in settings where students from different cultural backgrounds participate" (p. 253).

These seemingly separate parts, as a matter of fact, generate a coherent and constructive conversation on how to bring in alternative perspectives, especially from non-Western institutions and scholars, without reducing them to "afterthought tokens" (p. 26) or *case* studies on variations from the norm. Moreover, with media embedded in society and political economy, media studies, and higher education in general, all in an environment of uneven globalization of knowledge production, authors in this book throw into relief theoretical unconsciousness of nation-based, Western-centric approaches in media studies. For example, in Chapter 7, "Changing paradigms of media research and practice in contexts of globalization and terror," Boyd-Barrett makes it explicit that, in excess-driven democratic countries, the conspiracy between media, governmental intelligence agencies and propaganda

apparatuses, and the insatiable thirst for profit are all in evidence, although major principles for media would claim the objectivity of news and governments' neutral if not benign, stance. The conspiracy is "not something incidental, but is intrinsic, to the operation of media in corporatized democracies" (p. 125).

With tremendous efforts to project media studies against the broad political and economic landscape, cultural variations originated from class cleavages (both transnational and domestic) are surprisingly under-addressed in this volume (the exception here would be Zhao's Chapter 11, "Rethinking Chinese media studies: History, political economy and culture," in which she advocates the inclusion of social disparities as one of her five steps for rethinking Chinese media studies). There is little surprise that the process of globalization caught lots of social science subfields off guard. Media studies is no exception, because even the simplest concept is subject to revision, such as the definition of media or the term "mass communication" (see Napoli, 2010). Nothing is more relevant "to broaden the discourse on the globalization of media and communication" (p. 1) than the definition of media per se and the penetration of (new) media into our daily life. Pervasive usage of mobile devices and rapidly changing practices and behavior related to digital media leave no theories and methodologies tenable which refuse to forego the pre-given definition of media. Moreover, how to integrate new media, and digital technologies and Internet in particular into class should also be on top of the pedagogical agenda. Overall, this volume reflects continuous efforts to bring in alternative perspectives to cope with our intensively interconnected world. More importantly, given long-term emphasis on media effect, usage, and audience, this volume also provides media studies students with theoretical tool kits from globalization theories. For those who are interested in media industry in the late-capitalist era, or in how the process of globalization affects media studies analytically, this volume serves as a great start.

References

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