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Inhaltsverzeichnis

- 4 BETTINA KÖHLER
Medienkritik im Nord-Süd-Verhältnis
- 16 CEES J. HAMELINK
New Media, the Internet and the North/South Conflict
- 33 JANET WASKO
What is Media Imperialism?
- 57 NAOMI SAKR
Oil, Arms and Media: How US Interventionism Shapes Arab TV
- 82 GEORGETTE WANG
Reconceptualizing the Role of Culture in Media Globalization:
Reality Television in Greater China
- 99 FRANZ NUSCHELER, VERONIKA WITTMANN
*Global Digital Divide: eine neue Dimension der Zentrum-
Peripherie-Polarisierung*
- 122 ALMUT SCHILLING-VACAFLOR
Indigene Identitäten und politisch-rechtliche Forderungen im
bolivianischen Verfassungsänderungsprozess: ein Vergleich der
CONAMAQ und der CSUTCB
- 146 Rezension
- 150 SchwerpunktredakteurInnen und AutorInnen
- 154 Impressum

GEORGETTE WANG

**Reconceptualizing the Role of Culture in Media Globalization:
Reality Television in Greater China**

**1. The Myth of a Homogenizing, or Heterogenizing Global
Culture**

To this day communication researchers seem to be caught in a quandary between the critical tradition and the post-modern perspective. Although imperialism theory has suffered from a lack of substantial evidence, the implications of Hollywood's global market domination, e.g., deprivation of audience choices, threat to cultural autonomy, and alleged Americanization and homogenization of local cultures, remain a genuine concern to critical researchers. They suspect that globalization will lead to a single, integrated, assimilated, and standardized sphere where no 'de-linking' is possible.

To those who have adopted a post-modern perspective, global culture looks different. With an emphasis on "de-differentiation" and the erosion of boundaries between the popular and modern, and leaders and followers, postmodernism is, in Bell's terms, a 'rage' against order, bourgeois values and society (Swingewood 1998: 165; Bell 1979), inaugurating at the same time an active, involved public. The communicational content of globalization, therefore, is a celebration of popular democratization, difference and differentiation, in that cultures are "placed in tolerant contact with each other." (Jameson 1998: 57). This is a de-centered, de-Westernized, and heterogeneous world with the emergence of a wide range of groups, races, genders, and ethnicities.

Both schools can find evidence to support their version of global culture in what has happened since the 1990s; the diversity of social movements growing side by side with the further expansion of transnationals through international division of labor. Likewise in the media world, neither homog-

enizing nor heterogenizing analyses explain the whole picture. By now it is becoming clear that Hollywood has not achieved global market dominance in the way critical theories had foreseen. In 1977, Jeremy Tunstall (1997) published a book titled *The Media are American*. In 2008 he published another with a very similar title – all the same except for the tense of the verb: *The Media were American*. The tense difference showed how much has changed in the perception of American media domination. However, what has taken place in its stead does not necessarily serve to illuminate the post-modern view either.

Rather than celebrating the emergence of a pluralist world where distinctions between the centre and periphery, leader and follower are blurred, trading blocs of different sizes and regional centers of audio/video productions began to emerge when the stronger of local cultural industries found a market niche for their products when the cost of satellite transmission came down and regulatory barriers were removed. More countries have joined the ranks of cultural exporters, among them new leaders in the trade; thus, for example, Egypt, Brazil, Mexico, India and Korea are emerging, with smaller, poorer nations, including those in the Caribbean and Central America, south and southeast Asia, and conservative Islamic Arab nations remaining “net importers”. According to UNESCO, over one-third of the nations of the world do not produce any films (Thussu 2007; Tunstall 2008; Sinclair 2000).

The appearance of lingual/cultural markets seemed to have lent support to the postmodernist view of a less centralized and Westernized media world. However, if the past view of Westernization was not necessarily a realistic reflection of Western influence in the first place and if Hollywood products did not dominate the viewing agenda of the global audiences, as many had believed, no one can claim with certainty that films and television programmes now popular on lingual/cultural markets are replacing Hollywood products rather than local products, or merely adding more choices and making television viewing a more attractive pastime activity. In other words, the emergence of cultural trading blocs would be evidence of greater cultural heterogeneity if audiences around the world were all watching Hollywood programmes; if not, it in fact may have hidden greater homogeneity within each cultural/lingual media bloc.

The theoretical plight brought by the above development in media globalization is challenging to communication researchers. In the past decades the global media landscape was characterized by rapid, interlinking development at both the micro and macro level. These developments include the shifting political economy of transnational media, technological and regulatory changes that have brought opportunities for market expansion, new business models, including strategic alliances and co-productions, and the emergence of hybrid, glocal texts, not to mention myriad infrastructural changes. Most of the development has been extensively researched, yet as the emerging media landscape does not answer to our understanding of the meaning of globalization – the world as a single system, either homogeneous or closely interrelated – the need for a review of our approach to studying media and globalization becomes urgent.

There are two areas which call for closer attention: the much overlooked inter-relations among the many changes brought by media globalization, as mentioned above, and the way key concepts, including culture, economic forces, global media, and audience are conceptualized. Here we encounter the fragmentation and disconnectedness that McQuail (2003) saw as problematic in communication research. As a thorough investigation of the above development calls for a variety of resources – research at both the macro and micro level, theories based on starkly different and incompatible philosophical traditions, and bodies of literature that seldom relate themselves to the other areas of study in communication – the description and analyses of linkages and relations become difficult to manage. In addition, there has been a tendency to contextualize linkages and relations as part of a dualistic model – although dualism has long been denounced in philosophy. At least two pairs of dualistic dichotomies can be delineated in the debate on the homogenization and heterogenization of global culture, namely those of culture vs. economic force, and global media vs. local audiences. Will the power of existing theories increase significantly if the way to conceptualize key concepts remains the same? Are we looking at change in a way that can allow us to properly grasp its fluidity and complexity?

To respond to the above questions this paper examines the role of culture as it is reflected in the way cross-cultural viewing preferences feed back into the transformation of imported media genre – one of the crucial linkages among various dimensions of media globalization, using the case

of television formats and the transformation of reality television in Greater China as examples. To capture the complex patterns of exchanges and interactions, this paper argues for the need to go beyond the 'either-or' conceptual framework that has characterized our discussion on issues surrounding media and globalization. It is proposed that concepts such as cultural and economic as well as media and audience need to be seen as moving forces rather than dualistic dichotomies with a linear, predetermined relation.

2. Defining Culture

Culture – its role and conceptualization – is central to our concern, not only because of the homogenization vs. heterogenization debate, but also because both globalization theories and a large body of research findings pointed to blurring cultural boundaries in a global era, yet the emergence of new markets largely followed existing lingual/cultural lines.

Culture is generally understood as the way people conduct their lives, a definition which includes visible and observable artifacts, ritual and place, and non-visible memory, value, and meaning structures. In academic research, however, defining culture has proven to be a much more challenging task. In anthropological studies where culture is the centre of attention, 164 definitions were found when Kroeber/Kluckhohn (1952) surveyed the literature, with the broadest as “anything that is not natural”. Outside of anthropology the meaning of culture seems to be equally, if not more, difficult to unravel, as it has been influenced by a wide range of theoretical frameworks (Swingewood 1998: x) including sociology and economics, as well as linguistics, discourse analysis, and postmodern theories. Of the many different ways of conceptualizing culture, critical theorists' view of the commodification of culture is perhaps the most relevant for the study of transnational flow and reception of cultural products; it puts culture in the context of cultural production and consumption, and underscores the way and extent to which culture is materialized in a capitalist system, yet it also tends to overlook the workings of culture that do not fall neatly within their theoretical framework. Clifford Geertz (1973: 14), for example, saw cultural processes as “the construction of meanings,” “a context in which [events] can be intelligibly described”. Tomlinson (1999: 24) suggested that it is on

the basis of this “culturally meaningful context of local mundane lifeworlds” that individual actions became globally consequential. Reflexivity, connectivity, and dynamism characterize the way culture matters for globalization, as well as the fluidity involved in its conceptualization.

Also at issue here is the way culture is positioned vis a vis the sphere of economic forces. One of the most notable differences between the critical and the postmodern views of globalization is the way economic and cultural forces have formed a conceptual part in theorizing the changes that are taking place. For those influenced by Marx, capitalism was the “major transformative force shaping the modern world”; “a single overriding dynamic in interpreting the nature of modernity,” as Giddens (1990: 11) pointed out. From this perspective, cultural products are not much different from other types of commodities; their production, distribution and promotion are governed by the same capitalist principles of the marketplace. The similarity between cultural products and others, however, ends here. To critical scholars, the commercialization of cultural production, while achieving social control, is described as also having the effect of negating rationality, eroding freedom, autonomy, and a sense of history (Swingewood 1998). The rise of transnational media, therefore, carries serious cultural implications to those at the receiving end.

In contrast to the paramount importance of the economic factor – namely capitalism – in conceptualizing globalization by critical researchers, postmodernists tended to focus on the diversity and heterogeneity of languages, aesthetics, and images. There was no denial of the role of the economic the factor, yet it was mostly seen in the light of a gradual “de-differentiation,” where the economic becomes cultural, and the cultural becomes economic. Cultural autonomy existed in the early stages of capitalism, Jameson (1998: 70) argued, but with the expansion of global capital, culture began to rapidly grow through all social realms to the extent that “everything in our social life is cultural,” where “[n]o enclaves are left in which the commodity form does not reign supreme.” It is at this stage of late capitalism that culture becomes the major productive force, no longer separable from economic forces. One of the most telling pieces of evidence was, according to Jameson, the fact that today entertainment is treated in a fashion that is no different from any other commodities such as food or textiles in major trade negotiations such as GATT and NAFTA.

There was therefore no denial of the importance of economic forces in globalization from either school; what sets the two apart was the role of culture in bringing the changes that have so far taken place. Ironically, what was observed of media globalization suggests that cultural forces are an integral part of market operations, yet in the process they have also retained a certain level of autonomy. Such contradictions are reflected in the production, but most of all in the consumption of cultural products; the box office and audience ratings of imported films and television programs are cases in point.

Ratings and box office records are powerful instruments in discovering viewer preferences and minimizing risks while ensuring profit for investors. They determine the life and death of cultural products, and offer valuable information that helps formulate business strategies. If entertainment and cultural products are 'no different from any other commodities' such as food or textile, then consumers – audiences in this case – deserve greater attention. Unfortunately, with their full attention focused on the way power – whether political or economic – dictates cultural production, critical researchers saw audience preferences as determined, shaped, or inconsequential, as viewers can never choose beyond what is supplied to them. Attempts to pursue the links between audience preference and cultural production are deemed of little value, or useful only for commercial purposes.

It is, however, not possible to ignore viewing rates, box office or audiences, especially in this age of abundant supply, if the patterns of cross-cultural flow and reception of cultural products is to be fully understood. On a global market that is governed by capitalist logic, viewing rates and box office receipts are crucial to profit making and production decisions.

Past studies on media globalization tended to reinforce the critical position by focusing on a few glaring success stories of transnational cultural flow, e.g., the triumphs of *Dallas*, *Titanic*, and, more recently, television formats such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and *Big Brother*. However, they tend to be exceptions, considering the total supply of international cultural products on the global market each year. The theory of cultural proximity and cultural capital (Straubhaar 2003, 1991; Hoskins/Mirus 1988) explained to a large extent the audience's lack of interest in imported products, but to understand how the cultural factor works through their preferences, we need to look more closely, not only at the 'why', but also the

'how' and 'so what' questions in cases where certain products fail to cross cultural boundaries; in other words, how has cultural influence manifested itself in the discursive landscape of texts, and also in the development of the media landscape?

3. Workings of the Cultural Factor Through Viewing Rates

Cultural boundaries were seen to be becoming blurred from both the social, and media content perspectives. Different reasons can be attributed to each globally successful film or television programme, yet there is one underlying similarity that cuts across most, if not all, of them – an “aculturalness” (Wang/Yeh 2005) or “cultural odorlessness” (Iwabuchi 2000, 2002) that typically deemphasizes values, beliefs, habits, names, places, and historical events specifically relating to any particular culture, nation, ethnic or social group in order to minimize the risks of presenting something that may be difficult for a transnational audience to comprehend or relate to. Included in this family of “acultural” cultural products are most of the genres popular on the global marketplace: Japanese cartoons, Hollywood blockbusters, and, more recently, television formats of reality game shows. Hybridization, “aculturalization” and glocalization characterized the strategic thinking of media producers in responding to the emergence of transnational markets, and also the type of media content that audiences find occupying their program schedules.

The disappearance of cultural features in cultural products is taking place in parallel with what globalization theories suggest are taking place in the life of the audience. According to Giddens (1990), the idea of time and space being closely linked has become irrelevant and obsolete as locales are increasingly penetrated by distant social influences. In the past decades the nature and structure of relationships, and also the way life is conducted have undergone significant changes as modernity calls for disassociation of the individual from the familiar and the close-by. To reach greater efficiency and effectiveness roles that have been played by familiar faces are taken up by professionals and experts, and operations institutionalized and formalized – a process producing what Giddens described as a disembedded mechanism.

It is within this context of detaching from, and emptying out of, local culture at both the individual/audience level and the product content level that the case of television formats in Greater China is especially illuminating in analyzing what is taking place in the cultural/lingual markets.

Format licensing, the international sale of television programme formats, began to mature into a major business in the 1990s (Moran 1998). As it allows room for local adaptation while introducing new programme ideas, some quickly achieved global popularity. *The Weakest Link*, a game show format jointly developed by the BBC and NBC, was one of the successful examples; it was sold to 75 territories in 50 countries up to January 2002 and achieved dazzling success in Europe, North America, the Arab world and parts of Asia.

In contrast to the high ratings and lasting popularity that the show has enjoyed in US and European nations, in several of the Asian nations where a local version was shown, *The Weakest Link* has not only failed in the ratings, but has attracted bitter complaints from the audiences, educators and media critics. In Thailand, it was criticized by the Thai government for promoting traits that are “unbecoming and contradictory to the Thai culture and morality” (Day 2002: n.pag.). In Hong Kong, the producer had to change the presentation style of the hostess, and hence the tone of the programme – both unique features – in order to survive in the ratings competition. In Taiwan, the local version came to an end after it was on air for four months.

Findings from focus group sessions organized by the author in 2007 indicated that Taiwanese audiences’ expectations of a local programme differed distinctly from those of an imported programme; if a programme was perceived to be local, it was to conform closely with all things local. Unfortunately, despite a local hostess, local contestants and questions on local issues, *The Weakest Link* featured British humour that was alien and appeared rude to the audience, and rules that included a large cash award for a sole winner, as well as an elimination-by-voting design. The combination of these elements created an image that ‘The Law of Jungle rules when it comes to money-grabbing’. There was a consensus among focus group participants and media critics that watching the show brought pressure and uneasiness, as the audiences witnessed people back-stabbing against one another in a real, televised show. Glocalization backfired and the audiences

found the show ‘fake’, as neither the hostess nor the contestants acted like ‘one of them’.

4. The Transformation of Reality Television in China

Reality television (RT) that, like *The Weakest Link*, also featured games with a handsome cash prize for a sole winner, and a “strategy-elimination-viewer involvement” catalyst (Keane 2003) was met with a similar response from audiences on the Greater China market; in China RT was not accepted by the audience until after a gradual process of transformation.

China had its version of the reality television as early as 1996, when a programme produced by a provincial network sent its crew to cover the story of some college students who managed to travel long distance with only a few dollars in their pockets (Xieh/Chen 2006). This special episode of the programme, entitled *Big Challenge to Survival*, received such extensive coverage in the media that the producer launched a full-fledged programme carrying the same title in June 2000. A year later its second series was launched, introducing competition among players. The new format, inspired by the success of the *Survivor* series in the U.S., was quickly adopted by a number of programmes all over China. In most cases the transplantation was exercised with care; greater emphasis was placed on comradeship and bonding among team-mates, rather than defeating them in the competition. While elimination remained an important element of the show, it was handled through a scoring system, to save contestants from targeting one another and cushion the impact on those who were expelled. Nevertheless, the modification was not satisfactory to the audiences; localized imitations quickly died down for reasons similar to those leading to the demise of *The Weakest Link*. *Perfect Vacation*, the localized Hunan version of *Big Brother*, was described as a “disgusting live farce”. Survey results showed that 63% of the viewers “extremely liked” the program, 37% “extremely disliked” it, with no one in the middle (see New Capital Press 2005). Eventually it was taken off the air by the local government.

In 2005 RT had a comeback in China; of the new genres the success of *Super Voice Girls* was especially noteworthy. A televised singing competition produced by the Hunan Province Satellite Television Station, *Super Voice*

Girls (SVG) bears resemblance to Hollywood's *American Idol*, yet it allows the audiences to participate in the decision-making process by casting their votes via SMS. This voting mechanism triggered an avalanche of input from fans and supporters keen on supporting their favourite contestants in the game. In 2005, SVG became the top-rated programme in China; at one time over 3.5 million votes flooded in during the night of the championship race, jamming Hunan's telecommunications system.

In September of 2007, China's Broadcast Bureau put a ban on the uses of all forms of audience voting in television programmes, and issued a list of restrictions on similar programs. The official statement accused a proliferation of televised talent shows of distracting youngsters from their studies while promoting vulgar language and poor taste. Critics, on the other hand, suspected that the action was taken to curb the fever of 'participation' from developing into a democratic decision-making style which might take root beyond the sphere of entertainment.

Whatever caused the government to take action, because of it the phenomenon is not likely to reappear in China. However, from *Survivor* to *Super Voice Girls* it is difficult not to notice that almost none of the major ingredients in the Western version of RT survived in China. Although both *Survivor* and SVG featured voting, in the former it was used for contestants to vote out one of their own; in the latter it was instrumental in rallying audience support for the singer of their choice. In fact, this new generation of Chinese RT has very little in common with its Western cousin – except that they were still 'real people playing themselves'. In many ways it was much closer to the original model developed *before* imitated versions were introduced. In Taiwan similar trends of development were observed when *The Starlight Boulevard* also a televised singing competition – topped the ratings chart. The "voyeurism" that characterized RT viewer psychology (Andrejevic 2004; Nabi et al. 2003) was replaced by "fandom", and the audience was no longer a third party watching real life drama unfolding, but passionate supporters of emerging idols and ardent participants in a public event.

Several factors could be attributed to the failures of television formats in Greater China, yet the most frequently and consistently mentioned in reviews was cultural incompatibility. It was believed that Chinese audiences, as those in many of the Asian nations under Confucian influences, are char-

acterized by distaste for competition and rivalry. The transformation of RT in China shows that competition alone does not alienate the audience, as it is the backbone of SVG and all talent shows; however, the way competition takes place does make a difference. Competition that encourages contestants to strive for excellence was not just accepted but encouraged and seen in a positive light, yet competition that pushes them to target one another in order to win was disturbing. Confucian teaching, as pointed out by the cultural critic Hsueh Bao-hai¹, stresses harmony, compassion and humanity. These and other characteristics of East Asian cultures (Miike 2007; Kim 2002; Yum 1988) – reciprocity, interrelatedness, and other-centeredness – form the cultural context in which fun and entertainment are defined.

Glocalization, as a strategy to appeal to transnational audiences, therefore, can work, but only under the assumption that the format does not contain elements that seriously contradict local cultural values and practices. The same reason explains the rise of the cultural/lingual television markets; as programmes are imported from countries with a similar lingual/cultural background, the risks of cultural incompatibility and contradictions are minimized.

The above findings support earlier research that showed prior information, including knowledge, beliefs, cultural values and attitudes explained (Elasmar 2003: 168) how selective attention and selective retention processes were triggered in cross-cultural viewing. In the epic study of *Dallas* (Katz/Liebes 1984; Fiske 1987: 71, 79; Liebes/Katz 1990), it was found that, cultural values not only facilitated the understanding, but also supported the misunderstanding and oppositional reading of media texts. Conversely, there was little evidence for the influence of foreign media on local audiences (Elasmar/Hunter 1997).

5. Going Beyond the Dualistic Mode of Conceptualization

The failure of television formats such as reality game shows in Greater China is more than a manifestation of how the choice and preference of audiences relate back to production and content supply, one of the critical linkages that were largely overlooked in the literature. It demonstrated how cultural influence, independent of economic motives, continues to mani-

fest itself through audience preferences and cultural production decisions in a global era. Furthermore, it also underscored the need to conceptualize the audience as both passive and autonomous, consumers who go after the new and the trendy, and as cultural beings that enjoy the stable and the familiar. As consumers, they are part of an economic, capitalist mechanism for profit making; yet, within the constructed media environment they are active viewers anchored in their local world.

The “local worlds”, as noted by Rosenau (2003: 88), are characterized by the “local ties” and “local habit of mind” that people have. They tend to be deep-seated, and not easily undone—unlike their global counterparts. This “place” forms the local contours in which individuals choose to carry out their daily lives in the way and with those they know or are acquainted with. There is a familiarity with the surroundings and the people, a sense of its past, present, and to a large extent, its future that an individual can easily follow and relate to. Competition for excellence in China, for example, finds its root in the national examination system that had, for over two thousand years, helped to select civil servants from among the best of the country’s gentry class. As Harvey (1989: 302) pointed out, in a shifting world we are in greater need for moorings; “if no one knows their *place* in this shifting collage world, then how can a secure social order be fashioned or sustained?”

From this perspective, culture is not determined by economic forces, nor has it become economic. Rather, the two are forces that clash, modify, enhance, and bring out one another. Nevertheless, a pluralist view of relations as such is difficult to conceptualize and accept if culture and economic forces, and media and audiences are seen as opposing, deterministic dichotomies.

Swingewood (1998: 2ff) noted that Marx never resolved the problem of the “partial autonomy” of culture (and art), but neither was it Marx’s intention to see cultural and economic structures as dualistic dichotomies. Swingewood attributed much of the determinism and hence the conceptualization of culture to later generations of Marxists as “a reflection of a determining, underlying economic structure, an epiphenomenon, or ‘effect’ of external, material processes” in Marx’s theories: “If the production of ideas depended on economic forces and class interests then culture itself could exercise no active role in social change. Given this canonized, functionalist

interpretation of Marxism it is hardly surprising that Marxist theory failed to grasp the complexity of culture itself.” (Swingewood 1998: 2ff).

Dualistic models are attractive as they underscore differences and outline the parameters within which analyses can be structured and unfolded clearly, logically and effectively. As Tomlinson (1996: 86) indicated, most of Giddens’ discussion on globalization, modernity, and cultural production have followed a dialectic and dualistic model: “[T]hroughout his work on modernity Giddens insists on a dialectical push and pull between opposing tendencies: the local and the global, disembedding and reembedding”. Although to him the problem with Giddens’ approach lies in the imbalance of disembedding global modernity and the reembedding of global belonging, an over-reliance on the dualistic model in which social forces are treated as opposing, uncompromising elements may be the very reason for this oversight on the issue of imbalance.

Seeing global culture either as a homogenizing or heterogenizing global culture presents another example of the “either-or” quandary. As Robertson (1995: 27) pointed out, “[I]t is not a question of *either* homogenization *or* [italics original] heterogenization, [...] but rather of the ways in which both [...] have become features of life across much of the late-twentieth-century world”.

The question, therefore, is no longer the adequacy of reasoning or evidence, either to validate, or invalidate assumptions, claims, or theories, but the way of conceptualizing, observing, and analyzing concepts and issues. Nearly two decades ago, Curran (1990) noted a “revisionist movement” in mass communication research, when significant modifications of theoretical standpoints were introduced to both the critical and the pluralist camps. Within the Marxist tradition, the support for the theory of the deterministic impact of capitalism on culture and the close connection between economic interests and ideological representation began to erode when Foucault (Curran 1990: 139) presented a sophisticated view of power relations rooted in social networks. Inspired by Althusser’s emphasis on the autonomy of social practices, a revisionist movement eventually ‘dethroned’ the primacy of the economic forces upon the arrival of the post-modern era. In postmodernist research there had also been signs of shift, with greater attention paid to the workings of power structures in eroding the autonomy of cultural workers. These efforts, however, would not likely lead to a full

convergence of the two theoretical standpoints, as indicated by Curran (1990: 144), as long as the way researchers conceptualize economic and political powers remains the same.

The concern here, however, does not rest on the convergence of theoretical viewpoints, but on the way forces and powers were conceptualized in such a way that has made revisionism in communication research necessary. Swingewood (1998: 180) warned against the danger of “false dualisms” of agency and structure, micro and macro, etc.; culture, he emphasized, is “the result of a highly fluid, socio-historical field of forces”. Likewise, economic and cultural forces, media and audiences, globalization and localization are not dualistic and unidimensional paired, dichotomous concepts that coexist in tension. They are, rather, moving forces that may clash, undercut, but also stimulate and enhance one another, and are at times mutually constitutive, bringing forth new development and relations, as in the Yin and Yan forces in the Chinese Taoist philosophy.

Cultures are far more resilient than proclaimed, Banerjee (2002) said. One should add that such resilience can only be captured if its fluidity and complexity are fully recognized.

¹⁾ Personal interview with TWL's Taiwan producer, Mr. Hsueh Bao-hai, 14.5.2002.

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Abstracts

The purported decline of American media on the global market, the appearance of lingual/cultural markets and the rise of new media centres have put the debate of cultural homogenization vs. heterogenization in a new light. This paper examines the role of culture as it is reflected in the way viewing preferences feed back into production decisions that lead to the transformation of imported media genre, using the transformation of reality television in Greater China as an example. It is argued that there is a need to go beyond the 'either-or' conceptual framework and thus to see cultural and economic, and media and audience power as moving forces rather than as dualistic dichotomies with a linear, predetermined relation.

Der behauptete Niedergang amerikanischer Medien am Weltmarkt, die Entstehung von sprachlich-kulturellen Märkten und die Entstehung neuer Zentren lassen die Diskussion über kulturelle Homogenisierung versus Heterogenisierung in einem neuen Licht erscheinen. Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die Rolle von Kultur in Bezug darauf, wie die Präferenzen der ZuseherInnen die Produktionsentscheidungen beeinflussen und damit das Genre von importierten Medien transformieren. Als Beispiel wird die Transformation von Reality-Shows in China herangezogen. Es wird argumentiert, dass die Notwendigkeit besteht, über den konzeptionellen „Entweder-oder“-Rahmen hinauszugehen und kulturelle, ökonomische und mediale Macht sowie die Macht der ZuseherInnen eher als bewegende Kräfte anstatt als dualistische Dichotomie mit einer linearen, vorgegebenen Beziehung zu sehen.

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