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• Europe: an exemplary landscape for comprehending globalization

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During the last two decades, European media in general, and broadcasting, in particular, have experienced a period of continuous change. This period has been associated with changes in communication policy as well as a series of technological developments, which have either directly, or indirectly, had an influence on policy choices towards the media sector, and especially television. In reality, there is no simple explanation for these complex processes of change; each and every country dealt with the issues and the pressures for change in different ways. What united them was the sense that these issues were common to all. These included: uncertainty over the course of future technological

innovation with respect to 'new media'; the spiraling costs of program production and administration at a time of pressure on public broadcasters' license fees; the emerging demand for the liberalization of previous monopolies particularly in the field of telecommunications; growing political and economic pressure for the re-conceptualization of broadcasting as a market-place rather than as a cultural entity; and concern over the effect of inward and outward investment on broadcasting and communications systems.

The changes which have taken place came about as a result of many interconnecting factors, and can be understood as part of larger processes that have rendered media global. Media are global in the sense of being better understood as contextualized with larger transnational processes, that is, as constituted by several factors that form the process of globalization: national politics; technology; business; diplomacy; and industrial policy. They have also been affected by 'diplomacy' because negotiations among states and between states and regional organizations (such as the recent negotiations between GATS, TRIPS and the European Union) have become part of the modern media, at least in Europe, and by 'industrial policy' because broadcasting and media matters, more generally, are often dealt with as issues of industrial policy.

Moreover, the explosions of ancient ethnic animosities and the cultural conflicts we witnessed not only in Western Europe, where language and religion seem to play a major part, are becoming the major factors of separation. At the same time a kind of international, mainly commercial and superficial, culture is emerging. Simultaneously, this internationalized culture leads to a global pattern of consumption among the citizens of various countries.

Europe continues to offer the best place for examining these global processes. Not only have the regulatory changes been most developed across the continent but the social and political transformations in Eastern Europe have extended the boundaries of the 'Europeanization of the media'. One way or another, the European Union (EU) has attempted since the mid-1980s to initiate a policy aiming to 'Europeanize' the whole communication sector of its member states, if not the European continent. Using strong industrial policy elements and considerations, this policy has attempted on the one hand, to harmonize and to protect the media sector, and on the other hand, to make it competitive in both the internal European market and the global market, and to protect the European cultural identity from the 'American challenge'.

In other words, as with other sectors of European economy and

society, the EU has, through an incremental policy process, expanded its *acquis communautaire* to most aspects of the communication landscape: from TV advertising and program quotas to production, distribution and training; from pluralism to the broadcasting of major events; from the definition of European works to cultural and linguistic diversity; from copyright protection to the protection of minors; and from telecommunications to the convergence of the media and digital television.

This 'Europeanization' of the communication field seems to be a two-fold process: one 'from above' orchestrated from Brussels, and one 'from below', where organizations and citizens of the member-states make complaints to the European Commission and especially to the European Court of Justice (Harcout, 2002). These complaints demand the implementation of European regulatory frameworks in cases where the European policy has been ignored by the local communications authorities.

The continuing power of nation-states to regulate communication systems, the absence of much real international (meaning non-US programs) television trade, the absence of global advertising practices and the continuing importance of language and cultural barriers are still considerable obstacles. But the position of the smaller European countries also complicates the relationship between the European and the local. The developments in the communications field cannot easily be followed by the smaller European states in terms of power, resources and market size (Burgelman and Pauwels, 1992; Meier and Trappel, 1992; Traquina, 1998). In fact, there has been a considerable time lag in terms of development and implementation of media policy, a lack of coherence in implemented policy and poor execution of the policy.

It is argued that smaller European countries face both external and internal problems in their effort to formulate and implement their broadcasting policies. This is because the globalization of the audiovisual economy and the integrative action of the EU eventually promote the marginalization of both production and culture in smaller countries. The limited market for the national products of these smaller countries in turn poses an obstacle for the profitability and survival of their small audiovisual industries. As a result, they have very limited possibilities to be credible and profitable in a European single market. Moreover, the smaller states face internal difficulties which are a consequence of internal structural weakness, resulting in inadequate national policies, with plenty of irrationalities and paradoxes (Burgelman and Pauwels, 1992: 181).

In effect, small states have to act and react to new developments

under different conditions from those found in the larger states (Meier and Trappel, 1992). The policies of the smaller states have to take into account the policies of larger countries, rather than the other way round. This is because their resources are limited, their market size is small for production and consumption, and their markets do not usually represent a worthwhile target for multinational corporations. Small countries and their media industries have to face not only the Anglo-American media, but often also the inescapable presence of the larger neighboring country, which speaks the same language (Tunstall and Machin, 1999).

The result is that small states, in most cases, have gained little or nothing from the changes in the European media landscape (Meier and Trappel, 1992). On the contrary, they have to follow and implement policies that they do not really need. This can result in extremely negative effects for their industries such as heavy cross-ownership by local dominant groups or a sharp decline of their public broadcasters.

In an environment in which the deregulation of the media sector has been associated with the 'marketization' of the public communication sector (Murdock and Golding, 1999), consumer demand has been taken for granted. In the last two decades the 'consumer-choice' argument has played a dominant role in all new media developments. In the 1980s cable TV was considered the ideal technology to end centralized television systems as well as a technology that would encourage interpersonal communication and democracy. In the last decade the same arguments have come back replacing the terms 'cable TV' and 'wired society' with 'digital TV' and 'information society'. But this digital rhetoric has paid little attention to citizen-viewers, although they argue on their behalf (Papathanassopoulos, 2002).

It would, however, be premature to assess the consequences of these global processes. What is evident is that there is a dialectic relationship among the national and the international, the global and the local, the European and the regional, old media and new media, deregulation and re-regulation or even self-regulation. These are not only related to the globalization of the media but to politics and economy, which shape the new world and media order.

The key question is not whether media globalization leads to a new model of analysis. Media globalization demands a critical, trans-disciplinary approach. Following Neil Postman's thoughts (1999) we might ask the following questions:

- What is the problem to which the globalization of media is a solution?

- Whose problem is it?
- What new problems might be created because we live in a 'media rich' society?
- Which people and what institutions might be most seriously harmed by new media developments?
- What changes in society and culture are being enforced by the globalization of the media and their practices?
- What sort of people and institutions acquire special economic and political power from new communication technologies?

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• Exploring the African view of the global

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> We demand zero tolerance of violence against journalists and press freedom. But today more subtle threats to freedom of expression come from within media as a result of media concentration, globalization and a culture of greed within the industry.
>
> (International Federation of Journalists, May 2001)

This brief intervention advances the view that the emerging 'global media condition' undermines rather than promotes the freedom of the media in Africa and other developing regions. For Africa, the current world communication system is 'an outgrowth of prior colonial patterns reflecting commercial and market imperatives' (McPhail, 2002: 9). The