

# The decentering of Cultural Imperialism: Television and Globalization in the Latin World \*

John Sinclair \*\*

---

## RESUMO

O modelo padrão no qual as indústrias de televisão se desenvolveram mundialmente nos anos 60 deu substância ao paradigma crítico durável do "Imperialismo Cultural", no qual os Estados Unidos enquanto nação foi visto como o centro a que penetrou culturas nacionais da maior parte do mundo através do sistema de televisão norte-americana e seus programas. Este artigo toma o paradigma do imperialismo cultural como ponto de referência contra o qual acessa tanto as mudanças nas influências culturais que são exercidas no mundo, como a maneira pela qual elas deveriam ser teorizadas.

*Palavras chave:* Imperialismo Cultural; Televisão; Influência; Teorias

---

---

## ABSTRACT

The pattern in which television industries developed around the world in the 1960s gave substance to the durable critical paradigm of "Cultural Imperialism", in which the US as a nation was seen as the centre from which the national cultures of most of the rest of the world had come to be penetrated by the US television system and its programs. This paper takes the cultural imperialism paradigm as a reference point against which to assess both the actual changes in how cultural influences are exerted in the world, and how they should be theorized.

*Key Words:* Cultural Imperialism; Television; Takes; Theories

---

---

## RESUMEN

El modelo según el cual las industrias televisivas se han desarrollado alrededor del mundo en los años 60 ha sustanciado el paradigma crítico que dura hasta hoy día: "Imperialismo Cultural" sobre el cual nuestra nación ha sido vista como el centro que influenció las culturas nacionales de la mayor parte de otros países del mundo todo, puesto que han sido atingidos en amplia escala por nuestros sistemas de televisión y sus programas. Este estudio toma el paradigma del imperialismo cultural como un punto de referencia para comprender dos cosas: los cambios actuales sobre como se ejercen las influencias culturales por el mundo y como podrían ser teorizados.

*Palabras clave:* Imperialismo Cultural; Television, Influencias; Teorias

---

---

\* Visiting Research Fellow, Centre for International Research on Communication and Information Technologies (CIRCIT) and Senior lecturer in Sociology and Australian Cultural Studies Victoria University of Technology (Footscray Campus), Melbourne Australia

\*\* Paper presented to the panel "Comparing Communications Systems III: Latin American TV and Video", International Association for Mass Communication Research XVIII Conference "Communication for a New World" Guarajá Brazil August 1992

**Cultural imperialism** has been a durable critical trope of the postcolonial Cera. The term was adopted by the non-aligned movement of the 1970s as a way of United States were making them feel in the realms of communication and economic and political leverage which the West had continued to exert since decolonization.

In the West, progressive academics such as Herb Schiller in the United States and Armand Mattelart in Europe propagated the notion within Left discourse with such success that it has flourished until quite recent times. However, whatever analytic or rhetorical value it once might have carried has been the prospect of more complex ways in which they must be thought. It might seem then, that there is no advantage in the critique of what now should be an obsolete paradigm. However, it is lodged in the reflexes of a generation of communication academics and policymakers throughout the world, and still has its active protagonists and some popular currency. The point of this paper is not so much to do battle against these residual pockets, as to take the cultural imperialism paradigm and its variants, including "dependency theory", as a reference point against which we can gauge both the changes in how cultural influences are exerted in the world, and how we are to conceive of them.

While "cultural imperialism" was seen to include such forms of cultural influence as tourism and education, it was the particular variant of "media imperialism" which drew the most critical attention, and led to the formulation of demands for a "New World Information and Communication Order" (NWICO) in international forums, especially UNESCO, during the 1970s.

These demands were based on a critique of Western, and particularly US, dominance of the world's communication industries, and on empirical studies of the "flows" of news and entertainment along a "one-way street" from "the West" to what was then called "the Third World". Furthermore, just as the international news agencies Reuters, APP, AP and UPI monopolized news flows and Hollywood and the US networks dominated world film and television markets, US advertising agencies were seen to be engaged in the "homogenization" of national cultures everywhere, conforming them to the market requirements of US transnational consumer goods manufacturers. In all of this, the natural, inproblematic assumptions were that US foreign policy and US-based private corporations proceeded in intimate mutual support, and that their communication industries were there to create a favourable ideological orientation amongst quiescent audiences in the subordinate nations so that US interests could be pursued without hindrance.

Perhaps there was a stage in the 1980s when it really was like that, but the wisdom of hindsight and subsequent world trends suggest that the workings of international cultural influence are more subtle, complex in mediation, and as we used to say, "dialectic" than the cultural imperialism paradigm could ever have allowed for.

To invoke "world trends" is to draw attention to a whole range of familiar current phenomena which could not have been predicted out of the conceptual framework of cultural imperialism or other critical orthodoxies

of recent decades: there is the decline of the US national economy relative to the Japanese, and their interpenetration; the disintegration of Cold War boundaries and the appetite for "market economies" in the nations formerly comprising the Soviet bloc; and in what was once the Third World, the industrial growth of the "tiger" nations of South East Asia and even of the major debt-laden nations of Latin America.

These changes and others have set the stage for a new era of "globalization", characterized by the disaggregation of the nation-state as the basic economic, political and sociocultural unit of world order, and the ascendancy of the private corporation, with its power base in globalized industrialization, trade and communication. While it would be rash to announce the demise of its electronic moment of information across its borders now undermines its guardian of "national cultural identity", a crucial issue in the cultural imperialism debate. This era has not just now appeared, but our critical conceptual frameworks have not been well suited to charting and analyzing its emergence.

Even from within the postcolonial world itself, indigenous theoretical initiatives for a long time misrecognized the changes taking place. The "dependency theory" of "underdevelopment" which originated in Latin America in the 1980s and subsequently became familiar in the West through the work of A.G. Frank, underestimated the capacity of countries in structural relations of dependent subordination and mass impoverishment to be able nevertheless to sustain economic growth. The coexistence of such growth with inequality, exploitation, marginalization, and indebtedness is now a commonplace in the "developing countries". This contradiction has been taken account of in Cardoso's more sophisticated and useful concept of "dependent development", postcolonial countries would always lose, has not proven adequate to explain the present-day condition of much of what once was the "Third World".

The blindspots which the concepts of "cultural imperialism", "media imperialism", "dependency" and the variant "cultural dependency" can now be understood to share in common are attributable at least in part to an implicit centre-periphery model of how power works, derived in turn from the master metaphor of "imperialism". To the extent that the historical phenomenon of imperialism was indeed one in which the centre subdued and drew tribute from the periphery, we could say that the critique reproduces the principle upon which the object of the critique once thrived. But at any time in history there have been one, two, three, many imperialisms, with greater or lesser, have to acknowledge the paradox of multiple centres, which in turn implies the possibility of overlapping, and perhaps, conflicting, spheres of influence. In Australia, for example, we are quite accustomed to recognizing that Britain, the US and Japan are centres which exert their historically and structurally overdetermined influence upon us, although there is little attempt to apprehend that in theoretical terms.

Yet just as Foucauldians have "discovered" the diffuseness with which power is distributed within societies, and just as feminists and other post-marxist thinkers have "discovered" multiple forms of domination based on

gender or race as much as class, so too should the conceptual and theoretical analysis of global influence take account of the "discovery" of plural and shifting centres of power, perhaps even dare to think that it has no centre. That is the view taken by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in a recent suggestive essay:

*The new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centre and peripheries)... The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics which we have barely begun to theorize (1990:296).*

In elaborating his own pluralized conception of global cultural processes, which will be referred to shortly, it worth noting that Appadurai is careful to acknowledge a debt to Frederic Jameson's influential article "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1984). This is an indicator of the degree to which the advent of postmodernism as a problematic has in turn allowed the notion of globalization to be thought, not least because of the theoretical liberation achieved through, not least because of the theoretical liberation achieved through postmodernism's rejection of what has sometimes been called the "dominant ideology thesis" is not to say that the concepts of "postmodernism" and "globalization" should be allowed to be conflated with each other: their analytic and heuristic potential resides in their remaining related but distinct, and formulated with appropriate rigour. As Roland Robertson warns, we should be circumspect in embracing a new paradigm in which "there is considerable danger that "globalization" will become an intellectual "play zone" - a site for the expression of residual social-theoretical interests, interpretive indulgence, or the display of world-ideological preferences" (1990: 15-16).

The inherent limitations of the centre-periphery model do not exhaust the flaws which now appear in the cultural imperialism paradigm. In particular, there is also what might be called the "homogenization thesis": that is, the entertainment or advertisements from the centre has an irresistible and identical to the interpretation which the analyst (not the audience) ascribes to the ideological meaning of the material in question. This is a variant of the "dominant ideology thesis" once common in ostensibly critical and progressive analyses, at its worst the notion that the masses are mere ideological dupes of omnipotent media, a view which now at last has been put under sustained challenge.

Two lines of work are relevant here: the recent "ethnographic" trend in audience studies, and a emergent view of culture as a form of resistance through mediation. The audience research is a naturalistic empirical investigation of the theoretical argument that media messages will be investigation of the theoretical argument that media messages will be interpreted by actual

audiences in different ways, depending on such social differences as gender, race and class. The little of this work that has been done on a cross-cultural comparative basis reveals interesting variations in audiences' interpretations or "de-codings" of the US soap epic *Dallas*, that "perfect hate symbol" of the cultural imperialism theorists (Mattelart et al., 1984:90). Philip Schlesinger is concerned that audience research of this kind implies a relativized subjectivism, a "new revisionism" in which "an obsession with popular consumption for pleasure has tended to eclipse a concern with forms of dominance and control" (1991:306). However, such an assessment conflates the new audience research with other, unrelated tendencies which have arisen in media and communication studies over the last decade as the "dominant ideology paradigm" has lost its purchase on the field (Collins, 1990:3-6). Indeed, one of the strengths of the new audience research is its orientation towards the disaggregation of audiences in the era of globalization, or in the formulation of one of its principal protagonists, "Our analysis of the cultural impact of any form of domination must always be differentiated, concerned to establish which groups, in which places, are receptive (or not) to it" (Morley and Robins, 1989:27). When confronted by such assertions of the need for studies to articulate the differential consumption of media products on one hand with the international structures of their production and distribution on the other, even Schlesinger concedes that "such belated acknowledgement of the obvious should be welcomed" (1991:306).

The other current approach which queries the homogenization thesis concerns the hitherto underestimated resilience, or at least, mediation with which cultures meet and transform foreign influence. From a "globalization" perspective, the notion of international "flows" of cultural influence becomes expanded beyond the flows of news and entertainment with which the cultural imperialism theorists and the NWICO debate were concerned. To refer back to Appadurai, he discerns international flows of people, technologies and finance as well as the flows of media and ideologies familiar from the cultural imperialism paradigm, but observes that these flows are subject to "indigenization":

*at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or other way: this is true of music and housing styles as much as it is true of science and terrorism, spectacles and constitutions (1990:295).*

This process generates "heterogenization", a dialectic counterpoint to homogenization. The influential Latin American theorist Jesus Martín-Barbero identifies a similar dialectic when he observes:

*not everything to do with transnationalization is the pure negation of difference: there is also a refunctionalization of difference in order to deal with the cultural entropy that the homogenization of markets helps bring about. (Martín-Barbero, 1988:460).*

Martín-Barbero has in mind not just the cynical hegemonic interests who salvage difference by packaging indigenous rituals and crafts for tourists, but also cites examples where "the popular classes" have utilized radio or taperecorders to protect and communicate the subcultural language and music of their regions. Indeed, these allusions to grassroots forms of communication are indicative of a broader trend in Latin American communication studies towards an interest in popular resistance (McAnany, 1989), not the notion of subversive pleasure found in some of the more familiar work in English (Fiske, 1987), but "a new perception of the popular that emphasizes the thick texture of hegemony/subalternity, the interlacing of resistance and submission, and opposition and complicity" (Martín-Barbero, 1988:462).

However, to take one last view of the dialectic mediation of cultural influence: Stephen Castles and colleagues, evidently unimpressed by the postmodernist repudiation of the notion of authenticity and of the distinction between surfaces and depths, emphasize the alienation and loss they see in heterogenization:

*The British eat spaghetti, the Africans white bread, the Asians wiener schnitzel; but it all derives from the plants of world agri-business. The point is that homogenization actually makes differentiation both possible and meaningless: we can get everything everywhere, but it has ceased to have any real cultural significance. Whatever we do is a celebration of the cultural dominance of the great international industrial structure, but we can kid ourselves on the basis of appearances that our culture or sub-culture is different. As difference loses its meaning, our need for it as a focus of identity becomes ever greater, as do our acts of self-deception. The attempt to preserve static, pre-industrial forms of ethnic culture is an obvious example of this. The increasing integration of the world results in a simultaneous homogenizing and gramenting of culture (Castles et al., 1990:140-141).*

A more empirical approach to the question of local cultural response to global influence is put forward by Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus who have sought to demonstrate how a "cultural discount" applies in the international television program trade (1988). That is, national television markets tend to exhibit a preference first for indigenous material and then for material from culturally similar sources. The more alien the material on offer, the higher the "cultural discount" and the weaker the preference: for example, Australia might be receptive to Japanese capital and consumer goods, but not television programs. Similarly in the international advertising industry, certain national markets have proven resistant to incursions by US advertising agencies, notably Japan and France, both of which have instead provided a strong domestic base from which certain indigenous agencies have themselves become internationalized (Sinclair, 1987).

Above all, and in spite of the doubts which can be raised about the actual content of the "national cultures" said to have been under threat from

cultural imperialism (Schlesinger, 1987: 220-231), it is clear that language occupies a special position with regard to the maintenance of cultural difference. In the particular context of international television program flows, Richard Collins has argued that language is a "semi-permeable membrane" which has contributed to the quite uneven acceptance of British satellite television in continental Europe, with the consequent absence of transnational advertisers on that medium (Collins, 1989). David Morley and Kevin Robins sum up the effects of language-based cultural discounts in the current European television market in these terms:

*Attempts to attract a European audience with English-language programming, no unlike the attempt to create European advertising markets, do seem to have largely foundered in the face of the linguistic and cultural divisions in play between the different sectors of the audience... There is a growing realisation that the success of american-style commercial programming in Europe is context-dependent in a very specific sense. US imports only do well when domestic television is not producing comparable entertainment programming - and whenever viewers have the alternative of comparable entertainment programming in their own language, the American programmes tend to come off second best (Morley and Robins, 1989:28).*

Some of the elements which have been identified so far - indigenization, language difference, and domestic market strength - are at the heart of another phenomenon which can now be found in cultural imperialism's blindspot, and that is the rise of other, non-anglophone "centres" of international media production and trade based on what might be called "geolinguistic regions": Bombay for the Hindi film industry, Hong Kong for Chinese genre movies, Cairo for Arabic film and television, and Mexico City for film and television production in Spanish, particularly in the "indigenized" telenovela genre, as well as for dubbing US programs into Spanish for re-export. These centres are not at all "new", having already been in evidence when Jeremy Tunstall wrote The media are American in 1977 and predicted that their "hybrid" genres, and soap opera, would grow to form their own stratum in international exchange.

Armand Mattelart and his collaborators give attention to the geolinguistic factor in their investigation of the difficulties faced by the cultural industries of certain European and "Third World" countries in the development of a "Latin audiovisual space" within contemporary "international image markets" (Mattelart et al., 1984). As Schlesinger reminds us, the "audiovisual" is both a symbolic arena and an economic one" (1987:228). The work is tendentious in its origins, given that it was commissioned by the French Minister of Culture after a meeting in 1982 with his counterparts from Mexico and Brazil as well as Spain, Portugal and Italy, which agreed to promote "co-operation between countries with a language of Latin origin" (Cited in Mattelart et al., 1984: ix). Et tu Brute? It should be said that the

Mattelart group distance themselves from the inherent traps of this patronage and pursue their own diverse interests (1984:17-18). They strive to move imperialism standpoint with which much of their own former work is identified, and towards an "internationalist" or globalized perspective which reaffirms the more dialectic qualities of thought to be found in the Western Marxist tradition, and combines a sceptical empirical understanding of the media industries. They also are able to avoid the reflexive sloganized dogmatism of what Garnham has called "Third Worldism" and "cultural anti-americanism" (1984:1-6).

As Anthony Smith observes, the spread of a lingua franca throughout such a "culture area" provides the potential rather than the necessary conditions of the emergence of transterritorial communications (19980:186). In this case, the potential lies in the linguistic and other cultural similarities which might countries which have latin-based languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian; that is, the geolinguistic region of Latin America and southwest Europe, itself a fusion of the cultural legacies of former empires.

The cultural imperialism approach and the Marxist: theoretical tradition in general have had no more than a negative interest in the classical economists concept of "comparative advantage", and even Ricardo would never have thought to apply the notion to language. However, in the context of the flow patterns of international trade in audiovisual products, and particularly when taken in emerges if not as a determinant, then at least as a factor of potential advantage in the international market. Richard Collins has drawn attention to English as "the language of advantage" in the "tradeable information sector" of the global economy, though also emphasizing its potential rather than necessary status:

*The size and wealth of the anglophone market provides producers of English language information with a considerable comparative advantage vis-a-vis producers in other languages. But it is important to recognize that this is a potential advantage which may or may not be realizable. Not all anglophone producers will succeed, and producers in other languages are not necessarily doomed to fail (1990:211).*

Indeed, an examination of the geolinguistic dimension of global media flows, made with due regard to certain "multinationals of the Third World" which have transformed themselves into "international multimedia groups" (Mattelart et al. 1984: 51-657), demonstrates that a kind of Latin audiovisual space is in comparative advantage of language is a key factor. These private corporations are Televisa, which all but monopolizes the audiovisual industries of Mexico, and TV Globo, the dominant television network in Brazil.

In the case of Televisa, the domination it has long held over its home market in the world's largest spanish-speaking nation has become a raft for its various international ventures. Spanish is the second most widely-spoken European language in the world after English, but like the other languages the peripheral vision of the cultural imperialism perspective. TV Globo is



export markets, but it too first based its international push into Europe and Africa on its comparative advantage as the world's largest Portuguese-speaking language (Hoffman, 1989:224-225). Once again, the critique reproduces its object, to the extent that born English-speaking critics of cultural imperialism, or indeed theorists of globalization (Featherstone, 1990:11-12), take for granted the pre-eminence of English as a global language, and hence their own position as beneficiaries of centuries of anglophone colonialism. It languages of an older era of colonialism, have become the biggest television networks in the world outside of the US. Even if their markets are not as lucrative as the English-speaking ones, and there is a heavy cultural discount applied to foreign language programs in the anglophone world, a different set of relativities applies when the world is viewed from Mexico City or Rio. To take a notable example, the "Hispanic" population of the US, although less than 10% of the total population and relatively deprived as a group, is none the less the sixth largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, and also the most affluent: on the face of it, a natural constituency for Televisa (Strategy Research Corporation, 1987:38).

Since comparative advantage is potential rather than actual, there are other factors to be taken into account in the expansion of these networks, but even these factors have not been within the range of vision of the cultural imperialism perspective. Because that view emphasized the technological and political strengths of the West, and especially the US, it was inclined to see the adoption of new forms of the mass media as a process in which the US imposed its new media technologies, television in particular, on weaker, "less developed" nations. This was seen to achieve a new market for US transmission and reception technologies, that is, both producer and consumers goods, as well as for US programs, not to mention access to audiences for US-based advertisers and general control of the medium's ideological ethos. Because of this assumption of western commercio-technological domination, and its theoretical commitment to objective structural forces as the prime movers of historical change, what the cultural imperialism perspective did not take account of was the degree to which individual entrepreneurs in the subordinate countries might have sought to attract and give active encouragement to this process, and so secure for themselves a place in the consequent structure of "dependent development".

This was particularly true of Mexico, where the progenitor of Televisa, Emilio Ascárraga (Senior) not only inveigled the president of the time Miguel Alemán (Senior) into adopting the US commercial model as the basis for Mexico's television system when it began in 1950, but had long sought to organize the other media entrepreneurs throughout the region to do the same. He was assisted in this by Goar Mestre, who was active in developing the commercial television industry which flourished in Cuba prior to the revolution of 1959, and which gave birth to the *telenovela*, the Latin American soap opera which has since become the staple production and export genre. It should be acknowledged that Azcárraga had attracted investment from both NBC and CBS in his radio entrepreneur days of the 1940s, and subsequently

built up his television program export activities with assistance from ABC in the 1960s (Sinclair, 1990a: 58-59). As for Mestre: after being custed from Cuba with the revolution, he emerged in Argentina and Venezuela, backed by capital from CBS and Time-Life. It was also Time-Life which provided the investment and technical advice to launch TV Globo in Brazil in the 1960s, but it is not often noted by cultural imperialism theorists that these and most other investments in the region were withdrawn by the early 1970s (Fox, 1988:16-17, 31; Straubhaar, 1982:142-145). More important than the investments was the fact that this unofficial version of the "alliance for progress" between Latin American entrepreneurs and US networks established the commercial model of television broadcasting as the norm throughout the continent. The rout of public interest by private interest exemplified here has continued to be a hallmark of these television systems (McAnany, 1984:194-195).

The cultural imperialism perspective also underestimated the degree to which the media entrepreneurs in the subject countries would use and adapt new technologies for their own innovation. In the Mexican case again, the advent of videotape was seized upon to build up program export activities, while at a later stage, satellite technology was used to interconnect the various Spanish-language television stations which Televisa for many years controlled throughout the US itself (as mentioned, the sixth largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world, and richest), thus establishing a national network for Mexican-originated programs and creating a national audience of "Hispanics". The international expansion of Televisa and its corporate ancestors has always been production driven, based on an economics similar to the export of domestic product upon which the US cultural industries have built themselves. As early as 1954, Azcárraga (Senior) had attempted to sell his programs to US networks, and when they were rejected as only fit for "ghetto time", began establishing his own stations throughout the US, and a network to distribute programs and sell advertising for them. In these enterprises, his prestanombre, of "front-man", was René Anselmo, a US citizen. By 1986, a national network of broadcast stations, low power repeater stations and arrangements with cable stations, all interconnected by satellite, was reaching a claimed 82% of Hispanic households, or fifteen million viewers (bigger than NBC, it was said), supplying them with programs largely beamed up from Mexico City (Sinclair, 1990a).

For a number of reasons, both legal and commercial, Televisa has since been decisively edged out of free-to-air broadcasting in the US, its former companies now owned by Hallmark (as in greeting cards). There is also a competing network, owned by Wall Street and targeted towards US Hispanics of Puerto Rican and Cuban origin. However, Televisa has since built up another resource, its national cable network in the US, Galavision, which has now become integrated with its transmission from México, and the basis of Galavision Europe, a 24-hour satellite service to Spain. This service is transmitted via the world's first private international satellite operation, PanAmSat, which covers the American continents and Europe. Although no

longer owned by Televisa, it was Televisa which initiated PanAmSat as a crucial part of its international expansion, and which exploited its connections to secure the required permission from the US, where it is based (Sinclair, 1990b).

This is to raise the issue of the relationship which Televisa as a transnational enterprise bears to the Mexican state. Mexico is still basically a corporate state ruled since the 1930s by one party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or Institutionalized Revolutionary Party, which every six years ensures that its presidential nominee is elected. Televisa is in declared public support of the PRI, ideologically allied to its more conservative faction, and prepared to risk its credibility at home and abroad by avowing the PRI in its management of news and current affairs. However, while being close to the party, Televisa is in longstanding struggle with the state, a struggle in which it seems able to maintain the upper hand. From time to time, presidential administrations have sought to assert control over the private oligarchy which owns and runs commercial television in Mexico, only to be defeated, compromised or out-manoeuvred by them. It was noted earlier that the Alemán presidential administration in 1950 was persuaded to allow television broadcasting to be established on a laissez-faire basis. However, belated attempts by subsequent administrations to regulate the content and operation of private television, and when rebuffed, to develop a state television system, have only had the effect of consolidating and legitimizing the alliance of private interests which have become Televisa (Sinclair, 1986).

Televisa in Mexico is more than the television broadcasting monopoly whose demographically and regionally segmented channels capture 70% of all advertising expenditure, and more than the conglomerate which reaches into most other branches of the media communications industries, hardware and software alike. It has also institutionalized itself over the last decade as "the fifth estate" in Mexican society, competing with the state for hegemony over the "hearts and minds" of the Mexican people, including the intelligentsia, with the opening of a non-commercial cultural channel and the cultivation of various links with formal education and the arts, even with communication research (Trejo Delarbre, 1987). At the same time, Televisa has become more internationalized in its activities and interests, so that, as Garnham observes:

*To focus too centrally on the State is also to fail to grasp the ways in which the development of the international economy is itself undercutting the role of the nation state. This, in fact, can give rise to a situation in which multinational producers of culture can actually engage in a battle with the State for the allegiance of its citizens (1984:5).*

In the case of Televisa, however, the multinational culture producer is rooted in the national soil, but should not be thought of as "Mexican" any more than we can think of news Corporation as Australian or Saatchi & Saatchi as British. The story of PanAmSat shows how the sovereignty of the

natio-state can be more threatened by a domestically-based than by a foreign transnational corporation. In 1982 the Mexican government sought to head off initiatives which Televisa had made in domestic satellite development. The constitution was exclusive prerogative of the state. However, through René Anselmo and the Televisa companies in the US, Televisa's retaliation was to raise the stakes beyond the jurisdiction of the Mexican government. A new US subsidiary was created, PanAmSat, which applied for authorization to launch a private satellite that could cover not just the US and Mexico, but all of the Western regulated by INTELSAT, it required special presidential assent: Ronald Reagan would have to sign a determination that the proposal was "in the national interest" of the US. This Reagan did, no doubt assisted by the intercession of his associate John Gavin, former US ambassador to Mexico, who was soon after to become head of Televisa's international satellite division. In this way, Azcárraga (Junior) had been able to mobilize contacts up to the highest level in the most powerful nation of the region in order to steal a march once more on the Mexican state (Sinclair, 1990a, 1990b).

The unforeseen development of such intercontinental media markets based on the comparative advantage of geolinguistic region, domestic market size and technological adaptation does not repudiate the rationals of the cultural imperialism critique as it developed in the 1980s, insofar as it sought to comprehend the cultural dimension of unequal relations between nations. Of course basic structural inequalities still remain. The suggestion sometimes made that Televisa's incursion into the US market or TV Globo's exports to Portugal and Italy are forms of "reverse cultural imperialism" is a canard, based on cynicism at worst or ignorance at best. Indeed, the energetic pursuit of overseas markets by Televisa and TV Globo can be explained also in terms of the constrictions which inflation, economic crisis and the imposition of debt discipline have placed upon their growth in their respective domestic markets, still in a condition of "dependent development".

It is no accident that this expansion is emanating from debt-ridden nations in crisis: austerity measures. Inflation and devaluation have depressed advertising expenditures in the domestic markets, and given incentive to intensify international activities. These activities have diversified beyond broadcasting and program sales: in Televisa's case, there are subsidiaries in Spain which sell advertising space and duplicate home videos, while a US-based subsidiary manufactures video hardware, but through a plant in the maquiladora zone of Mexico. In that regard, Televisa is joining the many US, European and Japanese-based transnational manufacturers who also have been attracted to this zone by its trade concessions and access to cheap labour. Televisa also makes telecommunications components in this zone (Sinclair, 1990b). Other US subsidiaries are in record promotion and telemarketing, while the most extreme assault on the US market has been an English-language venture, a national sports daily newspaper, The National, which however closed after an unsuccessful eighteen months of publication.

As for TV Globo, it has been taking advantage of the proliferation of television services in Europe, where unlike the US, audiences are accustomed to seeing subtitled material. Italy has been particularly receptive to Brazilian programs, predominantly *telenovelas* as elsewhere. Indeed, so strong a following did these programs have in Italy that Roberto Marinho, head of the family which owns the TV Globo network, or Azcárraga's Brazilian counterpart, decided to invest directly in a television network, Telemontecarlo. Italian television is dominated by the state-run RAI and Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest networks, which leaves Telemontecarlo with only 4% of the audience. However, Globo has strong backing from Italian capital and has plans to develop the network on a pan-European basis (McCarter, 1990). At the same time, using tactics similar to those with which the US audiovisual industries in the past opened up new markets, Globo has been selling dubbed *telenovelas* to France at a loss, hopeful of gaining access to the French-speaking world as a whole (Marques de Melo, 1989).

Yet while these communications conglomerates of the former Third World must be taken account of in following the flows of cultural influence in a globalized world, we can not arrive at the conclusion that they will come to assume the same position as the expanding US networks had when the cultural imperialism debate was first initiated in the late 1960s. The US audiovisual industries are not yet a spent force, and are assuming new forms with which the emergent global networks must compete. The latest chapter in the PanAmSat story is instructive.

In 1987, in the aftermath of a US federal Communications Commission action against the Mexican ownership of broadcasting interests in the US, Azcárraga (Junior) was obliged to sell off certain of his US interests, and given that PanAmSat had outlived its political usefulness for leverage on Mexico and seemed at that time to have little economic potential, Azcárraga sold it all to René Anselmo, whose business interests by then had been separated from Azcárraga's by fiat of the FOC. Anselmo went on to make the necessary coordination arrangements with clients in the major Latin American and European countries, and launch the system. As was mentioned, PanAmSat also distributes Televisa's international Galavision service from Mexico to the US and Spain. But amongst others to see the possibilities of this intercontinental service were the major US cable channels which were already packaging programs in Spanish for the US Hispanic market: Ted Turner's CNN, which produces a news program in Spanish for the US *telemundo* network, now sends a 24-hour news service in Spanish to Latin America via PanAmSat, plus another Latin American service called TNT, while the US cable sports channel ESPN sends out 15 hours a day of sport in Spanish (Sinclair, 1990b:357). Latest to join this trend has been Time-Warner, who have commenced a Spanish and a Portuguese-tracked version of Home Box Office via PanAmSat, called HBO Olé (HBO Plans, 1991).

Whether or not HBO Olé represents a move back to the future remains to be seen. What can be said is that the cultural imperialism perspective, which underpinned the less theoretically subtle formulations of dependency

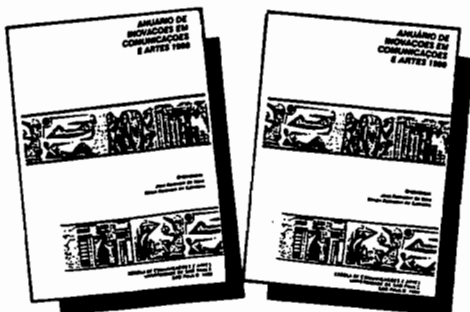
theory, between nations; its assumption of credulous, homogenized consumers of cultural products and of a supine comprador bourgeoisie in the subordinate countries; and its disregard for the specificities and complexities to be found amongst the various nations of the erstwhile Third World. Critical analysis of the processes of national disaggregation and interpenetration between new international entities in the era of globalization calls for less abstract and dogmatic, more particular and empirical ways in which to apprehend the world.

## References

- Appadurai, Arjun (1990) "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", in Featherstone (1990), pp. 295-310.
- Castles, Stephen, Cope, Bill, Kalantzis, Mary and Morrissey, Michael (1990) Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia, Sydney, Pluto Press, Second Edition.
- Collins, Richard (1989) "The Language of advantage: Satellite Television in Western Europe", Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity, London, Sage (Special issue of Theory, Culture and Society, vol. 7, no. 2-3), pp. 1-14.
- Fiske, John (1987) Television Culture, London, Methuen.
- Fox, Elizabeth (1988) "Media Policies in Latin America: An Overview", in Fox, E. (ed.) Media and Politics in Latin America, London, Sage.
- Garnham, Nicholas (1984) "Introduction" to Mattelart et al. (1984), pp. 1-6.
- "HBO Plans Pay TV Launch in Latin America", (1991) Broadcasting Abroad, March, p.4.
- Hoffman, M. (ed.) (1989) World Almanac, New York, Pharos Books.
- Hoskins, Colin and Mirus, Rolf (1988) "Reasons for the US Dominance of the International Trade in Television Programs", media, Culture and Society, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 499-515.
- Jameson, Frederic (1984) "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", New Left Review, 146, July-August, pp. 53-92.
- Marques de Melo, Jose (1989) "Las Telenovelas en el Brasil", Apuntes, 16, pp. 46-59.
- Martín-Barbero, Jesus (1988) "Communication from Culture: The Crisis of the National and the Emergence of the Popular", Media, Culture and Society, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 447-465.
- Mattelart, Armand, Delcourt, Xavier and Mattelart, Michèle (1984) International Image Markets: In Search of an Alternative Perspective, London, comedia.
- McAnany, Emile (1984) "The Logic of the Cultural Industries in Latin America: The Television Industry in Brazil" in Mosco, V. and Wasko, J. (eds) The Critical Communications Review Volume 11: Changing Patterns of Communications Control, Norwood NJ, Ablex, pp. 185-208.

- McAnany, Emile (1989) "Television and Cultural Discourses: Latin American and United States Comparisons", Studies in Latin American Popular culture, vol. 8, pp. 1-21.
- McCarter, Michelle (1990) "TV Net Grows in Italy", Advertising Age, December 17, p. 22.
- Morley, David, and Robins, Kevin (1989) "Spaces of Identity: Communications Technologies and the Reconfiguration of Europe", Screen, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 10-34.
- Robertson, Roland (1990) "Mapping the Global condition", in Featherstone (1990), pp. 15-30.
- Schlesinger, Phillip (1987) "On National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticised", Social Science Information, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 219-264.
- Schlesinger, Philip (1991) "Media, the Political Order and National Identity", Media, Culture and society, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 297-308.
- Sinclair, John (1986) "Dependent Development and broadcasting: 'The Mexican Formula'", Media, Culture and Society, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 81-101.
- Sinclair, John (1987) Images Incorporated: Advertising as Industry and Ideology, London and New York, Croom Helm.
- Sinclair, John (1990a) "Spanish-language Television in the United States: Televisa Surrenders its Domain", Studies in Latin American Popular Culture, vol. 9, pp. 39-63.
- Sinclair, John (1990b) "Neither west nor Third World: The Mexican Television Industry within the NWICO Debate", Media, Culture and Society, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 343-360.
- Smith, Anthony (1990) "Towards a Global culture?", in Featherstone (1990), pp. 171-191.
- Strategy Research Corporation (1987) 1987 US Hispanic Market Study, Miami, Strategy Research Corporation.
- Straubhaar, Joseph (1982) "The Development of the Telenovela as the Pre-Eminent Form of Popular Culture in Brazil", Studies in Latin American Popular Culture, vol. 1, pp. 138-150.
- Trejo Delarbre, Raul (ed.) (1987) Televisa: El Quinto Poder, Mexico, Claves Latinoamericanas, second edition.
- Tunstall, Jeremy (1977) The Media Are American, London, Constable.

## ***ANUÁRIO DE INOVAÇÕES EM COMUNICAÇÕES E ARTES***



Uma publicação anual que apresenta as sínteses de estudos e pesquisas sobre os processos comunicacionais, os fenômenos artísticos e as práticas de informação - objetos concretos do universo acadêmico.

É um flagrante da produção científica dos pesquisadores: textos submetidos aos concursos de professor titular, versões de teses de livre-docência e, ainda, ensaios baseados em teses de doutorado e dissertações de mestrado.

O Anuário tem por objetivo estreitar os laços entre a universidade e a sociedade agilizando a circulação de conhecimento novo produzido pelos pesquisadores da ECA visando a sua aplicação nos setores produtivos ou sua reprodução crítica na área educacional-cultural.

**Professores, Pesquisadores, Centros de Documentação, Escolas e Entidades da área que desejam adquirir o Anuário de Inovações em Comunicações e Artes escrever para:**

**UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO  
ESCOLA DE COMUNICAÇÕES E ARTES  
Av. Prof. Lúcio Martins Rodrigues, 443  
A/C Setor de Vendas de Publicações  
Prédio principal - térreo - Cidade Universitária  
CEP: 05508 - São Paulo - SP - Brasil  
Telefone: (011) 813-3222 - ramal 2061**