# Reviews

Internationalizing Internet Studies: Beyond Anglophone Paradigms, by Gerard Goggin, and Mark McLelland (eds), New York: Routledge, 2009. Paperback, pp. 344, £24.95, ISBN: 0-415-87842-5. Language: English.

Internationalizing Media Studies, by Daya Kishan Thussu (ed.), London; New York: Routledge, 2009. Paperback, pp. 322, £22.99, ISBN: 0-415-45530-5. Language: English.

Each of the two volumes under review is concerned with the internationalisation of their disciplines and research fields. In both volumes this internationalisation implies the inclusion of perspectives and approaches from outside Western Europe and North America into the academic discussion. At the same time they represent quite different research traditions. While Media Studies is an established discipline (the history of which is described by Kaarle Nordenstreng in Thussu's volume) and traces back at least 40 years, Internet Studies is an emerging field of study. To a certain extent media studies can be seen as a mother discipline for internet studies. Therefore it makes sense to read the two volumes in conjunction. In this review I shall focus on some of the most noteworthy contributions to the two publications.
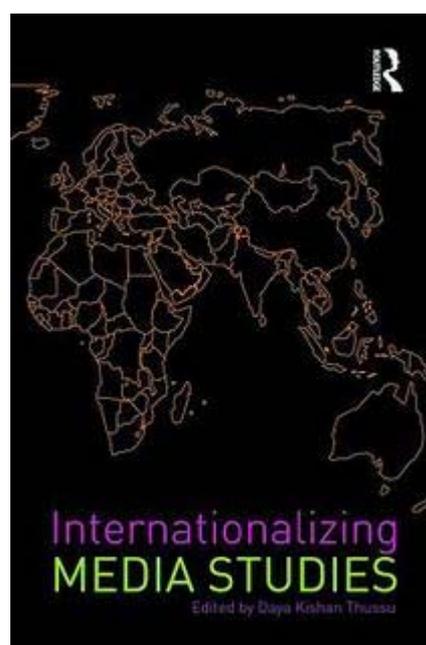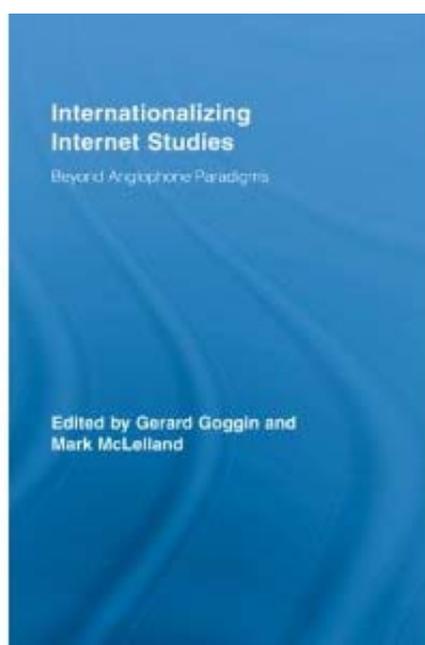
Internationalizing Media Studies

Daya Kishan Thussu's introduction to *Internationalizing Media Studies* looks at the development of media studies and conceptualises internationalisation as the third 'intervention' into media studies after feminism and race/ethnicity studies. The background for this intervention is the internationalisation of the research milieu itself and of higher education.

The volume is divided into four parts, consisting of four-five chapters each. The first part is called 'Internationalizing Media Research' and serves as an excellent theoretical background for understanding the need for an internationalisation of media studies. Thussu's initial introduction is followed up by his own chapter – the first in the volume – where he shows how media studies have been rooted in Anglo-American and Eurocentric perspectives, and why this is problematic in a world where other continents, especially Asia, are becoming equally influential. He also addresses the problem of separate research cultures (cultures separated according to language) working independently of each other and unable to draw on each others' findings. In addition, he sees the need for an internationalisation that goes beyond the 'West against the Rest', or 'de-Westernising' approaches.

Another significant contribution in this part is Andreas Hepp and Nick Couldry's chapter, where they argue for a 'transcultural approach' that suggests that our research should not be restricted by state borders and instead approach media in an international perspective, as cultural thickenings, bearing in mind that 'all cultures are more or less hybrid' (p. 37).

The second part, 'Broadening the Field of Media Studies', deals with the inclusion of new perspectives into media studies. Most interestingly, Sandra Braman's chapter discusses globalising, as opposed to internationalising, of media law and policy. Her contribution enters a larger discussion in internet studies, where the international perspective is contrasted to the national perspective[1].

Part three bears the self-explanatory title 'Regional Perspectives on Internationalization'. It opens with what may well be the most important contribution of the volume in general, Indrajit Banerjee's thorough analysis of the development of Asian media studies. Banerjee shows how Asian institutions and scholars have struggled to gain legitimacy in the international media research community. This has been due, among other things, to the slow development of media in the region in general, to the weaknesses of regional educational institutions and academic publications. With the recent economic liberalisation and development in the region, the situation has started to change, and we have seen the appearance of several important research institutions and journals; however the research conducted is still based on Western models. 'Imagine', writes Banerjee 'how much richer media studies would be if scholars from Latin America, Africa, and Asia brought new ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives into the world of media studies' (p. 172-3). This awareness, of course, is equally important for other areas of research, and Banerjee's analysis of the devel-

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[1] One example of this discussion can be found in Gerrard Goggin's contribution to the other volume under review here, *Internationalizing Internet Studies* (chapter four). There is, Braman argues, a significant difference between international and global organisations: 'the first involves geopolitically recognized states, while the second also includes civil society entities such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporations in decision-making' (p. 93). This insight is important for our understanding of truly global organisations such as ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), but can also serve as a corrective to the overarching internationalising project of the entire volume.

opment of media studies in Asia should be taken very seriously by anyone concerned about the international development of internet studies.

Part three also includes the only contribution in the volume from Eastern Europe, Elena Vartanova's 'De-Sovietizing Russian Media Studies'. Even if her discussion is based on the situation in Russia, the focus on the transition from Soviet to post-Soviet academia is relevant for all countries of the former Eastern Bloc. 'The process of de-Sovietizing Russian media studies', Vartanova argues, 'was a complicated and uneasy one, requiring the reconceptualization and modernization of key definitions and new theories in order to incorporate global and national, innovative and inherited approaches' (p. 219). This process has been characterised, as Vartanova demonstrates in her chapter, both by a heavy institutional influence of Soviet traditions and by a broad, and not always critical, transfer of Western theoretical perspectives to Russia.

Part four looks at the relationship to the educational setting and includes the only contribution on (sub-Saharan) Africa.[2] Winston Mano's chapter on media studies in Africa shows how African media studies are dependent upon Western (especially American) media studies. In order to break away from that dependency, he argues, African scholars need to not only include traditionally African modes of communication, but also to engage with the Western models of thought that form the basis of media studies and thus contribute to the deconstruction of 'West-centric media studies' (p. 290).

Internationalizing Internet Studies

Goggin and McLelland's introduction reads as a manifesto for the internationalisation of internet studies, where the two Australian editors attack what they see as an Anglophone bias in the field, and instead propose a new, international, paradigm for internet studies. They have 'set out to bring together understandings of culture, politics, community, use, and the social shaping of technology in order to suggest the profound implications of internationalization on how we approach the Internet' (p. 5). This is an important undertaking and their point is well argued. The internet, the editors argue, has developed differently in different parts of the world. On the one hand, this is due to local cultures. The editors point out that in cultures where you use non-Latin scripts, there is, initially, the extra disadvantage of being unable to write digitally in your own language. Later on, however, this challenge can turn into an advantage, as in the Chinese case, where the semantic density of the Chinese script allows for more information on a single mobile screen than is possible with Latin letters. On the other hand, the authors show that the variance in internet usage is also due to topography and population density as it is easier, for example, to put up a widely accessible broadband infrastructure in Korea than in Australia. Therefore, the goal of the volume is to bring together research on the internet in different cultures globally, and thus to be able to 'reformulate general assumptions and concepts of the Internet' (p. 11).

The volume consists of twenty chapters, separated into four parts. The first, theoretical part is called 'Rethinking Internet Studies?', and offers some thought-provoking chapters on how we conceptualise the internet as such. Susanna Paasonen's discussion of the concept of

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[2] The other volume under review unfortunately does not present any research on Africa.

'cyberspace' as a metaphor is an excellent example of why we need an internationally differentiated approach to internet research. She points out while the term is widely used in Anglophone research, it feels outdated in the Finnish context that she works in. In Finland, the internet has been domesticated by its users, and is seen more as a part of everyday life, than as a separate space. Editor Goggin's chapter on 'the international turn in Internet governance' is an important description of the historical development of internet governance from a situation where the internet was mainly controlled by the USA government, to a situation where international governing bodies have been set up to regulate the internet. However, with the appearance of Deibert et al's two volumes *Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering* (2008) and *Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace* (2010), where the focus is on national governments' attempts to control the internet within their own borders, one could as well talk of a *national* turn in internet governance. In addition, Braman's chapter in *Internationalizing Media Studies* demonstrates why ICANN is perhaps better viewed in a global, not international, perspective.

Part two, 'Language Communities Online', has a linguistic focus and opens with Nanette Gottlieb's textbook example of a culturally informed and technologically aware study of computer-mediated communication. Her presentation of 'deliberately undertaken manipulation of the orthography, often combined with the features of informal spoken Japanese, in order to achieve conciseness, style, and wit'(p. 74) should be of great interest to anyone working on non-Latin scripts or language play on the internet, such as Greeklish or the Russian *padonki*-language. To the general reader of the volume Eugene Gorny's rendering of the development of a Russian website on jokes, anekdot.ru, should be particularly interesting for its description of the transition from web 1.0 to web 2.0. Gorny gives an insightful portrayal of how the success of the website was a result of the involvement of its readers. The two final chapters in this section, by Urmila Goel and Ljiljana Gavrilović respectively, stand in stark contrast to each other. While Goel's chapter on an Indian minority web portal in Germany is based on critical theory and is successful in demonstrating how the 'Indernet' is used by people of Indian origin as a platform to deal with experiences of Othering in Germany, Gavrilović's chapter on identity construction by Serbian Minorities on the internet lacks a critical distance to the paradigm of Westernization of Serbian diasporic society. Gavrilović describes three different types of diaspora websites, according to their attitude towards Serbian cultural heritage. While one of the types is described by Gavrilović as the 'true, beautiful face of the Serbs' (p. 150), another is accused of showing a 'denial of reality' (p. 157). Such evaluative terminology undermines the academic credibility of Gavrilović's contribution.

Part three, 'Islam, Modernity, and the Internet' looks at Islam on the internet. Nasya Bahfen writes convincingly about the dilemma the Malaysian government is facing between promoting a vibrant and modern economy based on widespread use of the internet and keeping their information monopoly. This chapter links up well with Gholam Khiabany and Annabelle Sreberny's chapter on the internet in Iran, which is an excellent example of research. The chapter demonstrates the fundamentally different conditions under which the internet develops in Iran, as compared to both neighbouring and Western countries, and it gives a nuanced picture of the tensions that the new technology reveals between different political and social groups in the country.

The fourth and largest part, 'Asian Cybercultures' is devoted to the development in East Asia, with several interesting case studies that go together well. Taken as a whole they serve as convincing evidence that this is (one of) the most vibrant region(s) of the world when it comes to digital technology and internet development.

To sum up, the introduction to *Internationalizing Media Studies* is polemical and sometimes the editors get slightly carried away, especially when embarking on a critique of the Anglophone bias in research in general. While this critique is legitimate, I would claim that with Anglophone universities and journals at the centre of academic life, this partiality is a challenge for research in general. In addition, the volume has its own bias, towards East Asian internet studies: half of the volume is devoted to East Asia while there is nothing on the internet in Africa or Latin America.

There is also a problem with the timing of the volume; even if it was released as late as 2009, parts of it already feel outdated. It feels strange to read chapters on social networks and the internet that do not even mention Facebook (p. 237). Furthermore, after the publication of Deibert et al's abovementioned research on how national governments control internet access, I am surprised by claims, without qualification, that the internet is a technology that 'defies central management and control' (p. 192). In addition, it is a mystery how several authors can write about ICANN without referring to the association's intentions to open up for internationalised domain names (p. 57, 149).

The biggest problem of the volume, however, is the selection of chapters. While many chapters present high quality research and serve as good illustrations of the necessity to internationalise internet studies, at least one of the chapters should not have been included at all. Meryna Lim's chapter is characterised by exactly the kind of Anglophone, American bias that the editors warn against in their introduction. The blogosphere in Iran and Indonesia is constantly compared with the blogosphere in the USA and the case studies are based on blogs in English rather than the local languages. In addition Lim does not take the academic literature on blogs into consideration for her theoretical background discussion. Thus, by including the chapter in their book, Goggin and McLelland undermine both their own internationalising project and the overall impression of the volume.

The quality of the different chapters in the two volumes varies, but in general they offer several important perspectives that should be of interest for anyone working on media or internet studies. They should prove especially relevant for researchers in the two adjacent fields, Media Studies and Internet Studies. While *Internationalizing Internet Studies* is interesting for its various cases studies, *Internationalizing Media Studies* is stronger on theoretical discussions. The omissions and obvious lacks in these volumes open up a discussion for new media studies in general. For even if Thussu included one chapter on the situation in Africa as well as one on Latin-America, the picture remains very clear: in the two volumes under review 'internationalising' appears as another term for the 'East Asianisation' of internet and media studies. The reason for this is obvious, it is the economic, political and technological development we have witnessed in countries such as China, Japan and South Korea that makes this the most exciting region to follow. However, by focusing so exclusively on one region, we risk ending up ignoring developments elsewhere. As an example, figures from 2010 showed that Twitter experienced its fastest growth in Latin America. In addition, there is no reason why we should focus only on cases where the development has gone farthest.

From a researcher's perspective it should be equally interesting to study the specificities of internet and media culture in countries where the development has not gone as far as in East Asia, or indeed, the West.

For that matter the sum total of three contributions to these two volumes on East and Central European leave the impression that the region is slightly underrepresented. This should serve as an encouragement for scholars of new media in the region to make more of their research available in English and to strive for the high standards set by the best contributions reviewed here. To paraphrase Indrajit Banerjee – this would make new media studies so much richer.

MARTIN PAULSEN is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Foreign Languages working on the project 'The Future of Russian: Language Culture in the Era of New Technology' at the University of Bergen, Norway. His research focuses on internet development in Belarus, Russian and Ukraine, computer-mediated communication, language ideology. [e-mail: martin.paulsen@if.uib.no]