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Cultural Economic Geography: A New Paradigm for Global Communication Studies?

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ABSTRACT

This paper will consider the scope to develop an approach to global media and communication that is informed by cultural-economic geography. I refer to cultural-economic geography as that strand of research in the field of geography that has been informed on the one hand by the 'cultural turn' in both geographical and economic thought, and which focuses on the relationship between, space, knowledge and identity in the spheres of production and consumption, and on the other to work by geographers that has sought to map the scale and significance of the cultural or creative industries as new drivers of the global economy. Representative writers in this field include Allen J. Scott, Méric Gertler, Michael Storper, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift. The work of Michael Curtin on media capitals is also relevant to this emergent research paradigm, as is the work on clustering and spatial agglomeration in cultural production sectors.

I wish to propose that cultural-economic geography provides us with ways of thinking about the shifting interscalar relations of global media and communication that overcome some of the impasses of political economy, while remaining focused upon the dynamics of capital accumulation and economic structure. In particular, I would argue that the rise of new media capitals outside of the US-Europe axis necessitate a rethinking of the political economy of global media that moves beyond structuralist accounts of core-

periphery dynamics to recognize the scope for a multi-polar and multi-scalar global economic geography of media production and consumption. At the same time, they question some of the easy assumptions of globalization literature, most notably around the transformative impact of global media flows and new technologies in dissolving geographically marked places into an a-spatial networked global system.

At one level the introduction of geographical perspectives into global media and communication studies should not be problematic, as recognition of the spatiality of media production and consumption is a core feature of a materialist approach to the study of media. However, global media studies has long been reliant upon a top-down approach to understanding global media, that sees particular media environments as subject to the accumulatory logic of global media corporations. This paper will argue that recent work from a cultural-economic perspective allows for a fuller recognition of the significance of culture, policy and the relationships between global and nationally based capitals in shaping the topography of the global media environment.

Cultural Economic Geography and Global Media Studies

Global media studies has been shaped historically by the clash between modernization theories of the media, which envisage a global diffusion of hegemonic media institutions, content and structures that will benefit all societies that participate, and critical political economy, where the focus has been on the reproduction over time of relationships of domination and dependency. Over the 1990s and 2000s, many of the core propositions of critical political economy were challenged by theorists working from cultural studies perspectives, particularly in the assumptions that were made about media audiences and their relationship to content from the major exporters (Tomlinson, 1991; Ang, 1996), and the capacity of media from non-dominant nations to develop significant export markets as well as remaining hegemonic in their national media systems in spite of greater competition from global media conglomerates (Sinclair *et. al.*, 1995; Straubhaar, 1997). It would be fair to say, however, that a cultural studies paradigm for studying global media has never ultimately emerged, due in part to the historic association of cultural studies with the critical analysis of national cultures (Ang and Stratton, 1996). Like globalization theories, which emerged out of the social sciences in the 1990s, cultural studies has tended to take a “bower-bird” approach to the field, acquiring an eclectic range of insights from field such as anthropology (Appadurai, 1990) and postcolonial theories (McMillin, 2007). Much of the best known work in global media studies continues to be derived from critical political economy, as seen in the contributions of authors such as Dan Schiller, Robert McChesney and Toby Miller.

The political economy approach to global media has prided itself on being empirical and evidence-based, drawing upon a wide range of source material on trends in media ownership, global media trade, revenues earned in different media markets, changing systems of media production, and trends in media policy (see e.g. Schiller and McChesney, 2004; Miller *et. al.*, 2005). At the same time, many of the trends identified by these authors exist alongside counter-trends that provide some basis for questioning the universality of claims made about how media is developing on an international scale. There are three in particular that can be identified as pointing to the need to at least broaden the range of interpretative frameworks that are being used to comprehend the complex realities of global communications media.

First, claims about the strengthening hegemony of “Global Hollywood” in international film and television markets (e.g. Miller *et. al.*, 2005) co-exist with arguments that the dynamics of many national media systems and institutions have in fact been strengthening over the last 20-30 years, and that we are in fact in the twilight phase of U.S. media dominance (Curtin, 2007; Straubhaar, 2008; Tunstall, 2007). Second, while many political economists present control over intellectual property as the basis for maintaining relations of dominance and dependency in an era of increasingly internationalized media production, through a separation of the labour of production from that of conception (Miller *et. al.*, 2005), others argue that the international media and cultural production landscape is in fact becoming more diverse and decentralised with the emergence of new media capitals outside of the U.S-Europe axis (Curtin, 2008; Scott, 2008). The economic geographer Allen Scott has argued that ‘the further intensification

of globalization processes may well be associated with a markedly more polycentric system of cultural production than in the recent past', and that 'globalization does not appear to be leading to overall cultural uniformity so much as it is to a polycentric pattern of production on the supply side and increasing variety of options on the demand side' (Scott, 2008: 317). Finally, the claims that globalization was associated with media policy convergence under the general sign of 'neo-liberal globalization' or 'neo-liberal capitalism' (Scholte, 2005; McGuigan, 2005; Freedman, 2008) and a retreat of the nation-state from the management of national media systems is open to question, particularly in fast-expanding markets in Asia and the Middle East (Thomas, 2006).

It is in light of such questions that I wish to argue that *cultural economic geography* offers significant insights and ways forward for global media and communications studies. In referring to cultural economic geography, I am following James *et. al.* (2007) in understanding cultural economic geography as arising at the intersection of three trends: (1) the 'cultural turn' in economic geography arising from critiques of the Marxist political economy tradition that dominated the field in the 1970s and 1980s; (2) the 'cultural economy' literature that sees the economic and cultural spheres as increasingly interpenetrated in spatial relations; and (3) the rise of industries that primarily trade in knowledge and symbols, and the tendencies of such industries to cluster in particular urban locations.

The focus of geography upon the spatial dimensions of social relations, and the spatially grounded dimensions of everyday life and social interaction, can provide an important

perspective from which to analyze the scope, dimensions and impacts of global media. Indeed, affinities have existed between the critical political economy tradition of media studies and radical economic geography, around the relationship between cultural domination and dependency and world systems or dependency theories of capitalism (Schiller, 1976). Economic geography as a field was strongly influenced in the 1970s and 1980s by Marxist political economy, as authors such as Manuel Castells (1978), David Harvey (1982) and Neil Smith (1990) sought to reconstruct the Marxist critique of capitalism in explicitly spatial terms. Yet there was an inherent tension in Marxist historical geography between working with analytical categories that existed prior to their constitution in space (mode of production, social classes, capital accumulation etc.), and the foundational assumption of geographers that all social relations were inherently spatial. As Doreen Massey observed at the time, ‘if we really mean that it is impossible to conceptualise social processes and structures outside their spatial form and spatial implications, then the latter must also be incorporated into our initial formulations and definitions’ (Massey, 1985: 18).

Several responses emerged to this challenge. One was to draw upon the Regulationist School of political economy that emerged in France, which sought to locate the institutional manifestations of capitalist social relations in particular historical and geographical contexts, enabling researchers to move beyond speaking of capitalism in the singular to capitalisms that were spatially grounded and ‘inflected with different social and cultural resonances in different localities, and that these resonances are directly implicated in the organization of economic life and modalities of economic calculation’

(Scott, 2004a: 488). Regulation theory provided a means of articulating differences between national capitalisms, as well as shifts occurring within capitalism, such as the turn from mass production to flexible production networks, and from the national space to globalization. It also enabled insights to be gleaned from the ‘new institutionalism’ in the social sciences, which drew attention both to the centrality of institutions to all aspects of economic life and the social embeddedness of economic relations (Martin, 2008). These shifts gave a new centrality to cultural factors in political economy, ranging from greater recognition of the need to explicitly consider the dynamics of consumption rather than approaching it as the subordinate entity to production (Slater, 2003), the question of whether there had been a shift within capitalism from “organized” or Fordist to “disorganized” or flexible capitalism and its implications for politics, class formation and the nation-state (Lash and Urry, 1987), to David Harvey’s ambitious attempt to identify postmodernism as the ‘cultural logic’ of flexible capitalism (Harvey, 1989).

A more radical conception of the economy/culture relationship argues that the categories are increasingly merging into one another, to the point where it is increasingly necessary to speak of a *cultural economy*. It has long been observed that there has been a commodification or an industrialization of culture in 20th century capitalism, and a governance of cultural industries on the basis of commercial logics, with the mass media being the most common point of reference for such developments. What is proposed in the ‘cultural turn’ in economic geography is that ‘economic categories are themselves discursively as well as materially constructed, practiced and performed at different spatial scales’ (James *et. al.*, 2007). The influence of poststructuralist thinking is apparent here,

and Michel Foucault in particular has been central to new approaches to economic geography, particularly his observations that ‘Space is fundamental in any form of communal life [and] space is fundamental in any exercise of power’ (Foucault, 1984: 252), and that ‘the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space’ (Foucault, 1986: 22). The growing imbrication of culture and economy is connected to the rise of service industries and the emphasis placed upon the relational dimensions of economic transactions in these sectors, but is also seen in the turn in business management towards “corporate culture” as a means of restructuring the ways employees think and behave creatively in the pursuit of improved organizational performance’ (James *et. al.*, 2007).

The cultural economy literature is wide-ranging and hotly debated (see e.g. du Gay and Pryke, 2003; Amin and Thrift, 2007; for a critique, see Scott, 2004a). It is perhaps most widely acknowledged to have transformed the study of consumption, which had long been a fundamental point of distinction between economists, who saw consumer preferences as being formed prior to and independently of the appearance of goods and services in the market, and a variety of cultural studies, social science and anthropological traditions that have emphasized the relationship between the consumption of commodities and questions of status, meaning and identity. It is now widely acknowledged that ‘consumption has come to represent the site on which culture and economy most dramatically converge’ (Slater, 2003: 149).

The centrality of culture to systems of economic production is perhaps more hotly debated among economic geographers, but Meric Gertler (2003) has pointed to three ‘big

ideas' that have given increasing significance to a cultural economic geography of production. First, the reorganization of corporate production models away from vertical integration and towards 'flexible specialisation' and global production networks has drawn attention to both the economic advantage of geographical proximity between producers, suppliers, distributors, specialist workers and intermediaries such as specialist legal and financial service providers. Second, shifts in innovation models away from linear 'ideas-push' approaches (ideas are developed in research and development labs, and then applied in the market by firms), towards models that derive their strength from interaction between suppliers, producers and users (Dodgson *et. al.* 2002), have focused attention on the importance of geographical clustering to innovation. As a result, there has been a growing interest in why particular regions become innovative, and how a propensity for innovation becomes embedded in particular regional cultures, through what Storper (1997) refers to as *untraded interdependencies*. Finally, the concept of path dependency in technology development and design (David 1985; Arthur 1999), combined with the significance of increasing returns to scale in economic theory (Krugman 2000), have drawn attention to the cumulative advantages that can accrue to regions from achieving early leadership in particular industries. Gertler notes that 'once a region establishes itself as an early success in a particular set of production activities, its chances of continued growth are very good indeed' (Gertler 2003: 135). In order to achieve cumulative growth over time, there are typically a supportive set of accompanying social, institutional and cultural factors at play within a particular region; at the same time, these socio-cultural and institutional factors may also present difficulties in reversing regional decline.

Finally, there is the extent to which industries and firms that are directly engaged with the production and consumption of culture – whether as knowledge-intensive or entertainment-based symbolic forms – have moved to the centre of contemporary global capitalism. This needs to be broken down into two parts. The first concerns the rise of the cultural or creative industries themselves, which are now estimated to constitute 7-9 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States, and 3-5 per cent of GDP of other OECD economies. The second is the extent to which characteristics of these industries merge into the rest of the economy, as capitalism becomes more knowledge-intensive, design-intensive and oriented towards niche consumer markets (Lash and Urry, 1994). One of the reasons why the size, scope and nature of the creative industries can be difficult to define, in ways that are more marked than was the case for the arts industries or the media industries, is because the line between ‘symbolic’ and ‘material’ goods is itself increasingly shifting. Allen Scott has observed that ‘One of the peculiarities of modern capitalism is that the cultural economy continues to expand ... as an expression of the incursions of sign-value into ever-widening spheres of productive activity as firms seek to intensify the design content and styling of their outputs in the endless search for competitive advantage’ (Scott, 2004b, pp. 462-463). This parallels the tendency among consumers experiencing rising levels of affluence to increasingly seek ‘goods and services that provide entertainment and distraction, forms of personal ornamentation, modes of self display, sources of information and self-awareness, and ... whose symbolic value to the consumer is high relative to their purely practical purposes’ (Scott, 2008: 308).

The work of Allen Scott has played a vital role in understanding the cultural-economic dynamics of contemporary creative industries. Scott's work on the *cultural economy of cities* (Scott, 2000) identified five major features of the creative industries – or what he terms the cultural-products industries – that promote both network organization and clustering and agglomeration in particular cities and regions:

1. The importance of specific forms of labour input, that possess specialist tacit knowledge and whose skills can be acquired on a flexible, just-in-time basis;
2. The organization of production in dense networks of small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that are strongly dependent upon each other for the provision of specialized inputs and services;
3. Employment relations that are frequently characterized by intermittent, project-based work, which promotes co-location of industries and workers in particular areas, in order to reduce transaction costs and search costs;
4. Indirect, synergistic benefits that result from the co-existence of many people and enterprises engaged in inter-related activities, such as the enhanced capacity to match individual creativity to market opportunity;
5. The development of associated services and institutional infrastructure such as specialist intermediaries (e.g. entertainment lawyers) and a supportive public policy environment.

Scott identifies Hollywood – or, more accurately, the region of southern California centred around Los Angeles – as the exemplar of locational clustering and agglomeration in the global media and entertainment industries. The break-up of the Hollywood studio system after World War II saw the externalization of a range of in-house activities, leading to a more diffuse organizational system of production, characterized by project-based work and the intensification of clustering of firms in industries and activities related to film and television production in greater Los Angeles, as ‘the relations between firms cannot be planned over extended periods of time so that inter-firm contacts need to be constantly programmed and reprogrammed’ (Scott, 2005: 7). At the same time, the instability of these networks – perhaps paradoxically – reinforces the durability of the localized production system, with the result that Hollywood remains a magnet for creative people from around the world, and as a result, ‘new aptitudes flow continuously ... from outside, thus helping to enlarge production capacities and to refresh pools of talent’ (Scott, 2005: 7). Hollywood is thus not only an attractor to those seeking to apply their skills in film and television (actors, director, scriptwriters etc.), but also to a related set of adjunct and associated industries, ranging from fashion to marketing, and digital visual effects to restaurants and catering. Moreover, successful creative industries clusters such as Hollywood ‘accumulate place-specific cultural associations as the symbologies embedded in goods and services produced in the same area are absorbed into the local urban landscape’ (Scott 2005: 7). Whether it is the touristy perceptions of Hollywood as the ‘home of the stars’, or the more dystopian landscapes of films such as *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner*, the association of Hollywood with cinema impacts upon the shape of

the city, its global cultural connotations, its self-image, and its attractiveness as a destination for creative workers of various kinds.

Cultural-economy geography raises important questions about the durability and transferability of creative industries models from one place to another. On the one hand, it provides correctives to the automatic association of economic globalization with a 'race to the bottom', as globally mobile multinational capital plays off one place against another in order to drive down wages, working conditions and environmental standards. Storper (1997) notes that while the 'off-shoring' of work to low-wage economies, runaway production and a more polarized new international division of labour is one possible scenario arising from economic globalization, it exists alongside what he refers to as *territorialized economic development*, or 'economic activity that is dependent on territorially specific resources' (Storper, 1997: 170). Territorialized production is that where product and services are not standardized, quality is prioritized by consumers and not only price, and production processes rely upon both specialist labour inputs and untraded interdependencies, or 'conventions, informal rules, and habits that coordinate economic actors under conditions of uncertainty ... [and] constitute region-specific assets' (Storper, 1997: 4-5). At the same time, concept from critical economic geography such as *uneven development* serve as reminders of the limits of replication of models derived from success stories elsewhere, to be 'the new Hollywood' or the 'next Silicon Valley', in an environment of 'heightened inter-place competition' (Harvey 1989: 295), and where already successful cities and regions possess considerable advantages in global competition based upon place competitiveness.

Michael Curtin's *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*

Michael Curtin's *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Curtin, 2007) marks out an ambitious attempt to “think spatially” about how capital, culture, creative production and media policy intersect in the contemporary audiovisual space, and to develop an angle on it that is not framed primarily by the dynamics of English-language, North American media. The book seeks to identify the much-noted cultural dynamism of the audiovisual industries of what can loosely be termed “Greater China” (the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan) and how its cultural products are simultaneously being shaped by the desire “to refashion Chinese narratives for a Westernized global audience”, but also to reach “Chinese audiences around the global [that] are growing daily in numbers, wealth, and sophistication” (Curtin, 2007: 1).

While Curtin’s account draws upon the various critiques of media imperialism and cultural imperialism theories arising from cultural studies, globalization theories and postcolonial studies (Curtin, 2009), *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience* differs from those accounts of global media that question media imperialism by uncovering evidence of “contra-flow” or the capacity of non-Western media products to reach Western media audiences, in that its focus is upon the Chinese-speaking regions of East Asia as developing as a discrete regional media space with its own dynamics of capital

accumulation, creative migration and socio-cultural variation, which challenges the hegemony of Global Hollywood not directly through box office figures in North American and European markets (although the box office success of films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Hero* draws attention to this), but rather as constituting new sites of media capital whose dynamism exceeds that of Hollywood. Connecting film and TV to other industries where U.S. dominance was once unquestioned, Curtin speculates on whether:

Hollywood today is nevertheless very much like Detroit forty years ago, a factory town that produces big bloated vehicles with plenty of chrome. As production budgets mushroom, quality declines in large part as a result of institutional inertia and a lack of competition. Like Detroit, Hollywood has dominated for so long that many of its executives have difficulty envisioning the transformations now on the horizon. Because of this myopia, the global future is commonly imagined as a world brought together by homogeneous cultural products produced and circulated by American media (Curtin, 2007: 4).

It is important to be clear that the media space that Curtin is referring to is one that is discrete, but not autonomous. As Curtin notes, ‘the Chinese film industry ... has operated transnationally for much of its history’ (Curtin, 2007: 269). Moreover, very significant elements of the Chinese media system developed without creative input from nor access to audiences in mainland China, most notably the Hong Kong studio system as it developed in its “golden age” from the 1960s to the early 1990s. This parallels Yeung’s

(2004) observation that a distinctive “Chinese capitalism” has evolved despite the People’s Republic of China being largely closed to outside commercial influences from 1949 to the Deng Xiaoping era of *gaige kaifeng* (“reform and opening up”) in the late 1970s. To this day, Chinese film and TV continues to be shaped by two competing dynamics: the clear aspirations of the major global media conglomerates such as News Corporation, Time-Warner, Disney and Viacom to expand their presence in Asian markets that are seen as the fastest growing in the world; and the myriad complexities of dealing with the Chinese state in developing investment and co-production arrangements or seeking to release films or broadcast TV content to mainland Chinese audiences (Curtin, 2007: 192-210 on STAR TV and Phoenix TV in China; cf. Wang, 2008 on CCTV).

Curtin’s work identifies four key variables that shape the spatial dimensions of media and the emergence of media capitals. First, there is *the logic of accumulation*. The classic capitalist logic of accumulation, identified by classical political economists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx, as well as geographers such as David Harvey (2005), is to seek concentration of production resources and to maximize the extension of markets, in order to realize the greatest possible returns on investment in the shortest period of time. These centripetal tendencies in the sphere of production and centrifugal tendencies in distribution promote the rise of clusters of production on the one hand, and relentless pressures for geographical expansion by companies on the other. Such dynamics are central to the rise of Hollywood as the quintessential media and creative cluster whose cultural products have global reach (Scott, 2005), but can be identified with second-tier

media capitals such as Mumbai, Cairo and Hong Kong, which have developed distributional reach through privileged access for their products through territorially and linguistically related regions.

Second, there are *trajectories of creative migration*. The clustering of media production into media capitals means that these urban locations act as “talent magnets” for particular types of creative workers. While this has been well documented by authors such as Allen Scott (2000), Richard Florida (2005) and others writing about creative cities (eg. Tay, 2005), Curtin identifies a weakness of this literature as being a lack of consideration of the significance of political stability or expressive freedom for creative workers as a driver of such migration. This may not be such an issue where the competition is for creative workforce within nation-states (Chicago or Los Angeles? London or Manchester?), but it has certainly been a factor in the rise of Hong Kong as a destination for Mandarin-speaking creative workers. It is also a very pertinent consideration in the aspirations of other East Asian urban centres to become leading creative cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei and Singapore.

The third set of factors Curtin identifies are *forces of sociocultural variation*. Both the film and television industries have been strongly shaped by legal, institutional and policy frameworks that have for the most part been nationally based, although strongly influenced by international developments. In the area of film, the phenomenal global success of Hollywood cinema from the 1920s onwards meant that governments in many parts of the world prioritized the development of a national film industry as a

countervailing force to Hollywood as well as an outlet for the creative expression of national culture. Governments were even further implicated in the development of television, as they were required to provide basic infrastructure for broadcasting and to adjudicate on who could hold a licence to broadcast. In many parts of the world, this involved the development of a public service monopoly, or a strong public service broadcaster that was to be a conduit for national culture, values and information. This is complicated greatly by the ways in which communications technologies, global media economics and popular audience preferences promote access to imported television material – particularly from the United States – meaning that many national television systems develop in a relationship of what Joseph Straubhaar (2008) terms *assymetrical interdependence*. They are neither fully independent nor fully subject to cultural domination: rather, the relationship between local and imported media content shifts over time, with the imported content acting as a force that helps to shape local media production.

Finally, there is the role played by *national media policies*. From the 1980s in particular, with the development of cable and satellite television and the popularization of the Internet, media has been seen as being increasingly subject to dynamic forces associated with globalization (Schiller and McChesney, 2003). Contrary to perceptions that this equals the end of the nation-state and the slide of national cultures into cultural homogenization, it remains the case, as Govil (2009) argues, that ‘the national remains a powerful mode for engaging the spatial and temporal practices that organize the contemporary media industries across varied economies of scale’ (Govil, 2009: 149). The

national space remains central to defining the legal and institutional conditions of production and reception (ownership laws, content regulations, intellectual property, communications infrastructures), it provides a repertoire of vernacular forms that mark out media content as belonging to particular places and cultures, and it anchors particular media industries to media capitals and to governments who can provide supporting ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure for the further development of media production.

Curtin’s aim in developing this framework is to expand upon the concept of media capital in a way ‘that at once acknowledges the *spatial* logics of capital, creativity, culture, and policy without privileging one among them’ (Curtin, 2009: 117). This is in contrast to accounts of the political economy of globalization that can approach the world as an undifferentiated market for corporate expansion without grounding a theory of media markets in cultural and historical geographies. It is also a valuable corrective to those approaches to creative cities and media capitals that treat industry clustering as simply a matter of mixing together a suitable set of ingredients (some tolerance and diversity here, some networking infrastructure there ...) without recognizing the powerful economic, technological and historical forces that underpin the rise of media industry clusters in some places and not in others. In developing a critique of *Playing to the World’s Biggest Audience*, my aim is to identify some aspects of Curtin’s approach that can be refined further to move critical analysis forward, while recognizing the vital contribution this work has made to the development of cultural-economic geographies of global media.

While *Playing to the World’s Biggest Audience* refers to the globalization of Chinese film and TV, it does not in fact demonstrate that this has occurred. While films such as

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon had a significant impact in the cinema multiplexes around the world – and moved Chinese cinema out of circuits that can variously be described as cult, niche or art-house – it was still some way from achieving the box-office returns of Hollywood icons of the global-popular such as *Star Wars*, *Titanic* or the *Terminator* movies. Moreover, there has not really been a successor to *Crouching Tiger* as an Asian film achieving global box-office success, despite the heavy investments made in films such as *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*. Importantly, there is no evidence of a television program or television format coming from China, Hong Kong or Taiwan that has made a significant international impact, in contrast to Japanese formats such as *anime* and the *Iron Chef* series. This is not to say that the rise of the media industries and media markets of greater China are not a significant historical *leitmotif* of our times, or that they present significant regional challenges to the hegemony of global Hollywood; it is to say that they are some way off being directly competitive with the major global media conglomerates and the U.S.-based film and TV production studios.

It may be the case that talking in terms of regionalization rather than globalization is more appropriate, as there is a significant line of argument among economists and economic geographers that much of the globalization literature is hubristic. Rugman (2000) and Krugman (1997) argued that the ‘pop internationalism’ literature of the 1990s overstated the capacity of corporations and investors to ‘go global’, while understating the cultural and policy barriers that exist to becoming genuinely global corporate entities, as distinct from those operating in geographically and culturally proximate nations and regions. Yet the regional focus throws into question the suitability of the framing of

cultural markets around a notion of shared Chineseness in terms of culture and ethnicity. Putting aside the myriad of political issues in the region (most notably between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan), it is difficult for Curtin to locate Singapore within a geo-cultural conception of "greater China" since 'Chinese cultural influences are relatively attenuated' in Singapore, whereas Singapore sits more obviously in a South East Asian regional hub that includes Malaysia and Indonesia. It is also difficult to ignore the significance of Japanese and Korean media and cultural products in this regional market, which suggests that an alternative framing device is needed alongside China or Chineseness, such as Asian approaches to modernity (Straubhaar, 2008) or an East Asian popular culture consumed among young urban elites of the region (Chua, 2003). Curtin acknowledges this problem in pointing out how 'fantasies of a sprawling but organically coherent Chinese culture – a "greater China" – have faded as businesses have confronted the very difficult challenges of creating and promoting transnational products' (Curtin, 2007: 23).

The final issue relates to the lack of policy coherence among the nation-states of the East Asian region. The differences between the media policies of the People's Republic of China and the other countries in the region are substantial, and they create substantial difficulties for any pan-Asian regional media strategy that involves the incorporation of the Chinese market into expansion plans. The countries of the Asian region lack a more general set of unifying influences akin to the relationship between public service broadcasting and the political-economic space of the European Union, or the somewhat more tenuous links between the nations of South America based upon intersections

between culture, politics and historical geography. Thomas (2006) identifies eleven variables that are differentiating factors in the media and cultural policies of Asian nations, and there is no pan-regional driver akin to the European Union that acts to promote policy and regulatory harmonisation.

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