

4.2

Global Media

For this theme you need to learn about the following, in relation to at least two areas of the media:

- A variety of media which we can consider global in terms of how they are distributed and shared
- The historical development of media **globalisation**
- The impact of global media on audience behaviour
- Debates about the pros and cons of global media.

Before we consider the media as global, we need to understand what is meant by globalisation in more general terms.

What has happened? What is happening?

In 1960, Marshall McLuhan wrote *Explorations in Communication*, and in this text he introduced the idea of the 'global village'. McLuhan was writing before cable TV, digital media, the internet, mobile phones, MP3 and pretty much everything we now call 'the media'. But McLuhan was a 'prophet' in that he predicted the process of globalisation as the product of society being increasingly 'mediated'. Globalisation could not work without people being more aware of global culture, and this happens through the media. Robertson (1994: 8) describes globalisation as 'both the **compression** of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'. This separates the two mutually dependent aspects of McLuhan's idea of the global village like this: it is only possible for us to watch films and listen

to music and buy things that are not produced locally or nationally if we know they are there for us to watch, listen to and buy.

What difference does it make?

In a globalised world there will be a single society and culture occupying the planet ... it will be a society without borders and spatial boundaries. We can define globalisation as a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.

Waters (1995: 3) describes globalisation here in geographical terms. Put simply, as we become more 'globalised', we care less about local or national culture, and identify more with attractive, persuasive ideas and ways of living, regardless of where they come from. But not everybody agrees with this. Moores (2005: 66) argues that our idea of the specific place, the local, is not 'marginalised' (made less important) by globalisation, but is instead made 'instantaneously pluralized' – in other words, we just visit (virtually) a lot more local spaces rather than one big virtual global space. Another example Moores uses is the person walking down the high street talking on a mobile phone to somebody in another country, which we might think of as being in two places at once. So we end up living in lots of spaces – local and global, at the same time.

Globalisation divides as much as it unites; it divides as it unites – the causes of division being identical with those which promote the uniformity of the globe. What appears as globalisation for some means localisation for others; signalling a new freedom to some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate.

Here, Bauman (1998: 2) is reflecting on the 'winners and losers', stressing that not everybody is included in the global village, in which – in reality – the rich and powerful share ideas, exchange trade, buy and sell, and dominate markets of various kinds. For those 'left behind', local culture becomes impoverished and desperate. We must always remember, for example, that less than 20 per cent of the human race has broadband internet access. In a place like the Gambia, culture is very local, and very poor.

How can we study it?

Although the new electronic networks have partially replaced the relatively stable and enduring traditional communities with which we are accustomed, they also facilitate countless highly specialised social and cultural connections that otherwise would

not take place. Millions of people all over the world are taking advantage. As technological and cultural landscapes evolve, the sense of belonging and community does not disappear; it changes shape.

Lull (2006: 56) here gives us the focus we need for Critical Perspectives. There are three areas for our research:

- How are specific areas of the media changing to become more 'globalised' in terms of how media are produced, distributed and exchanged?
- Who are the 'winners and losers' in this change, with Bauman's concerns in mind?
- How, as an outcome of these changes to how media 'happens', do ideas about culture, community and society change in the ways that Lull describes?

Activity

For one week, keep a media journal. This needs to cover media consumption of all kinds and any media production or distribution you are engaged in. While media consumption generally includes a whole range of experiences, ranging from planned and deliberate (e.g. going to the cinema to see a specific film) to indirect and accidental (e.g. an advert seen on a train or on the side of a bus), in this case you should focus only on the direct, deliberate side of things.

At the end of the week, identify the country of origin of each media product you consumed – this may take some time and require some internet research. When you have this information, consider the following questions:

- How much of the media you use is made in the UK?
- How much comes from overseas?
- How much is difficult to locate (e.g. made in the UK but distributed by a foreign organisation)?
- Express the amount of UK media you used as a percentage of your total media consumption for the week.
- Finally, consider how typical the week was – for example, if you watched a whole 'British cinema' season on a digital channel, this will have skewed your findings.

For this theme, you need to do two things. First, you have to show that you understand how the media has become more global in terms of how it is distributed, and you must have examples from two forms of media to back this up. Second, you must engage with the debates that arise from this increasing media globalisation – what difference does it make to people if their media is no longer controlled and organised locally or nationally?

Media studies has always been concerned with the difference made to culture and identity by the worldwide success of

Hollywood, the spread of international music, TV and news networks, and the importance of 'dispersed' media consumption like **Bollywood** cinemas in Birmingham. But there is no doubt that global media has become much more of an issue for debate since the internet arrived, or more specifically since broadband became accessible to the public. The reasons for this are obvious. The broadband internet is – with a few exceptions, like China's restricted version of Google – a global network for the distribution, consumption, critique and remixing of media products. At one end of the continuum, major corporations like Disney and the BBC use the internet to reach wider audiences than was previously possible. At the other end, school students share videos on YouTube and achieve playback from viewers all over the planet. The first example is organised, commercial, corporate and strategic. The second is an example of *we media* – organic, random, creative and much harder to analyse. Irvine (2006: 5) offers this explanation of how global digital media transform the social world.

At the extreme, modern media simply dissolve time, distance, place and local culture that once divided the globe. Perhaps the best examples are computer games and pop videos. Routinely their content blurs boundaries of history and geography in a mix that denies the specificities of actual locations and particular chronological periods. In effect, we are putting all our cultural eggs in one basket.

While Irvine seems to take a negative view of global media here – there being an inference in this statement that perhaps geographical and cultural boundaries are important and their erosion is damaging – others celebrate the 'shrinking world', especially on economic grounds. It is so much easier now to disseminate cultural products across the world, to physically travel on cheap flights and to use technology to communicate with people from all nations and walks of life. So this is a debate – the world is now said to be a 'global village' and the media are playing a huge part in this trend. But there are positive and negative outcomes. And we must remember that not everyone is invited to this global gathering – it is worth stating here again that less than 20 per cent of the world, at the time of writing (2008), has broadband access, so if we are saying that high-speed and quality downloading is what makes global media possible, then we must bear witness to this considerable 'digital divide'.

As the internet is itself a fact of convergence, finding two media to compare for this theme should be easy. Indeed, some commentators say that the internet transforms media distribution so much that the boundaries around separate media forms blur beyond recognition. Nevertheless, this section will take three examples, each from a different media, in order to find answers to these questions from the OCR A2 specification.

Case study

Federico

Read this blog posting from Federico Leopone, an Italian student in Birmingham for three months. Here he describes how he uses web 2.0 to communicate with friends in Italy, and how his media consumption is divided between Italian and American media.

I think the TV I see is about 40% made in Italy. The other 60% is produced by foreign companies (most of them are American). Almost every TV series I can see on Italian TV is made in USA.

The music I listen to on the radio is mostly foreign (70% foreign music; 30% Italian music). I think the English and US music industries have a lot of success in Italy because they have a lot of money for advertising! And honestly I really can not understand how people can love songs of which they do not know the meaning!

I really love Italian movies but usually when I go to the cinema with friends, we prefer (or they prefer and I follow them!) to see American productions dubbed into Italian. I usually see Italian films on DVD at home.

The internet I use is 50% based on foreign websites (YouTube, Facebook, MySpace) and 50% based on Italian websites. I use Italian websites to search for information or university news. On the other hand I use foreign websites to have some fun.

Finally I can say my Italian media consumption is dominated by foreign media, mainly coming from USA.

Production Tip

Whichever brief you choose for your Advanced Portfolio, you will develop an idea, based on research, of the 'reach' of the products you are distributing. You need to consider the place of your media products in the global media world, which can mean one of two things. Either you will be designing your products as global commodities, to be disseminated beyond the UK, or you will see your creative work as domestic in outlook and therefore you will consider risks and threats from globally dispersed competition. Either way, you should link the outcomes to the debates about local, national and global media in this section – how are your media products to relate to lived experiences of people in this increasingly fragmented **mediasphere**?

- What kinds of media are increasingly global in terms of **production** and **distribution**?
- How have global media developed in **historical** terms, and how **inclusive** is this trend in reality?
- What kinds of **audience** behaviour and consumption are increasingly global?
- What are the arguments for and against global media, in relation to **content**, **access**, **representation** and **identity**?

The three examples we will explore in relation to these questions and debates are television, news and cinema. As your own approach must span more than one media area – this is a requirement of the Critical Perspectives exam – you might choose to combine two of these, in which case you need to make some comparisons between them. Or you can take one of the areas and conduct a second, less developed case study to bring in along the way. Either way, you will probably find that the converging nature of the contemporary media does some of the work for you. For instance, the global distribution of video games will relate to the practices of the international film industry. And global online news impacts on television and print news.

There are some broader theoretical considerations which come from cultural studies which we need to keep in mind when analysing this material. Crucially, it is important always to have specific examples at our disposal, and not to overgeneralise about 'global culture'. What we are dealing with here is essentially the interplay in people's lives (including your own) *between* the local and the global. It is far too simplistic to assume that global media are dominant and that we get all our cultural reference points from those powerful corporations which have managed to distribute their media products worldwide. There is always resistance to this trend. And we need always to remember that our own cultural perspective is not universal – there are many countries where global access is limited, either for political, economic or cultural reasons. In these societies, the nation state, controlled by government, will be far more central to **media access** than is the case in the UK. And there are societies in which religious faith competes with the 'lure' of western media. So we are engaged in investigating what McMillin (2007: 180) describes as 'the cultural and social implications of global market strategies', and 'examining globalization processes from the ground, from the level of lived experiences'.

Global television and hybrid programming

It is important to resist the idea that media used to be national and now it is global, as though this were a neat, **linear**, historical development. In fact, as Hartley (2007: 63) reminds us, 'globalisation is as old as the media themselves', and what has really happened is that we have begun to realise how cross-cultural media have always been, and we have given a name to this – globalisation. Clearly, whether or not it is a new thing, we can see that there are advantages and disadvantages to the global distribution of television, represented here as a basic list.

Pros	Cons
Cheaper hardware (televisions)	Erosion of national culture
Ability to consume TV from elsewhere	Cultural dominance of the USA
Ability to compare own nation's television with other TV	Market forces funding
More choice?	Less choice?

We will look at each of these in more detail. The pros probably need less explanation, and they are partly economic and partly cultural. The economic benefits are obvious – companies like Sony compete in the global marketplace and the price of technology reduces far more than it would if we had nationalised industries which could fix a price. And in cultural terms, global media might look more attractive if you live in a nation where the government controls the flow of information. When Free Tibet protestors disrupted the procession of the Olympic torch in London in 2008 (the year of the Beijing Games), access to images of the events was denied to the Chinese public. But the cons of global television are serious concerns – it is argued that US culture had become the norm across the world and that as a result, specific cultural ways of life are threatened. This makes it easier for the West, and particularly the USA, to justify forceful imposition of economic and political structures on other nations. So we have to see television as something more significant than just entertainment, as it may be an agent in more far-reaching operations. The issue of choice is interesting – in quantitative terms, access via broadband to a host of global TV channels clearly increases your options. But the question is whether we end up with a diet of much more of the same, whether we are overfed what we seem to like in terms of formatting, rather than having our tastes broadened – this development is known as ‘narrowcasting’.

To return to the theme of how the local and the global work together in the case of television, we must consider some examples of hybrid programming.

A hybrid programme is one which is sold across cultural and national boundaries, with changes made to the original format to accommodate local cultural differences, either to avoid offence or to attract more viewers. One very well-known example is *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?*, which has been broadcast in Korea as *I Love Quiz Show*, in China as *The Dictionary of Happiness* and in India as *Kaun Banega Crorepathi*. These examples, which are assessed in more detail by McMillin (2007), are easy to export and import as they require very little adaptation – or can be described as ‘culturally transparent’. An example of a format that needed more local adaptation is *Survivor*. When imported to Hong Kong, the programme moved away from a focus on hard competition between the contestants and instead foregrounded collaboration and good relations between the protagonists. This reflects the difference in cultural and moral ideology which survives the globalising trend.

Perhaps the most striking example of a hybrid programme offering a fusion of the global and the local, or of ‘instantly plural

localities', is the Beijing domestic drama *Joy Luck Street*, based on *Coronation Street*, but with a great deal of cultural adaptation.

Life on Mars might appear at first to be a programme that would resist hybrid export even more than 'Corrie'. After all, once you have replaced Northern England with Beijing, the soap opera template can translate to any context; the format is concerned with 'everyday life', and it does not really matter who is involved or where it takes place, as long as the audience is comfortable with the **verisimilitude** – the believable sense of reality and authenticity constructed by the text. But *Life on Mars* is different, because the juxtaposition of police life (in its broader social context) from the twenty-first century and that of the 1970s is particular to England in the drama. But this did not prove to be much of an obstacle for distributors in the global media sphere, who were able to export the original version to Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia and Finland, and adapted versions for the USA (set in LA) and Spain (where the context will be post-Franco society in 1978).

Examples of TV shows that the UK imports include *Takeshi's Castle*, which is imported as filmed but altered for the UK audience. In Japan, where the show is filmed, the game is interspersed with comedy sketches and Japanese commentators. In the UK, the show is reduced to half an hour, with the sketches cut out so the focus is entirely on the games, with commentary by Craig Charles. In the USA, the show is called *Most Extreme Elimination Challenge*, with dubbing and commentary in English that effectively spoofs the original show. A more mainstream show is *Dragon's Den*, which originated in Japan as *Money no Tora* (Money Tiger). The UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Netherlands all use the same title, *Dragon's Den*, but in Israel people watch *Hakrishim* (Hebrew for The Sharks), and in the USA it is called *The Shark Tank*. It seems that many of the programmes that are the most culturally transparent are those with a global capitalist emphasis (i.e. making money is good and business is extremely competitive and ruthless). It is no surprise, then, that *The Apprentice* is another highly formatted global export. The franchise originated in the USA in 2004, hosted by business tycoon Donald Trump, and the UK version, hosted by Sir Alan Sugar, has needed very little local translation. Similarly, the show has seamlessly reached mass audiences in Germany as *The Big Boss*, and in South Africa, India and Arabic nations, with similar titles and famous tycoons firing contestants in each case.

Activity

Use the internet to find three examples of hybrid TV programmes not used in this book. Your three examples must be different to each other in the following ways:

- One must be culturally transparent.
- One must be an imported format with some minor cultural changes.
- One must be an imported format with more significant cultural changes that reflect ideological differences between the nation where the product was first shown and the new host nation.

Share your examples with three other students, so that you each have four of each.

Next, in your group of four, carry out the following two creative tasks.

- Plan the export of a popular TV show for a very different cultural context. What would be easy to keep in place and what would you need to change for the new audience?
- Create a pitch for a completely global, culturally transparent TV show that could, subject to language, be distributed to any nation on earth with the format entirely in place. Can such a show be designed?

We must be careful, then, to distinguish between hybrid programmes where specific cultural adaptation is required (such as *Joy Luck Street*) and those transparent exports where the format stays in place, but names and presenters change. The former are programmes which seem to prove and disprove globalisation theory at the same time, while the latter set of examples can easily be used to defend the global village idea.

Hybrid programming is fascinating for the student of media and culture because it shows us how global and local cultural influences on people can ‘intermingle’. This connects to several of the other Critical Perspectives themes, but especially Postmodern Media, because this mixing of cultural reference points for people is one of the defining features of postmodern culture. For example, the music channel MTV is ‘remixed’ for a great many different countries, a technique described by Brown (1997) as ‘glocalised’ programming. Again, here we must return to the important fact, as established at the start of this section, that globalisation only works if the audience recognises the difference between the local and the global, or at least recognises the possibilities of a culture beyond the country they live in. This playful mixing of culture, described here by McMillin (2007: 112), is key to understanding the postmodern condition.

Hybrid programming becomes a key strategy in the latter domain, to meet the rising demand for programs that contain elements of the global, yet are charged with local relevance in terms of language, themes, actors and contexts. Hybrid programming allows lighthearted combinations of global and local programming elements. The average consumer is able to appreciate the humour in the caricature of both global and local and recognise his or her membership in a media world that transcends national borders.

Global news and journalism

In 2008, the five leading players in the global news arena were **Al Jazeera English**, which was reaching 100 million viewers globally (outside the USA); **France 24**, available in French or Arabic; **CNN**, with double the audience share of Al Jazeera, with a clearly US news agenda; **Russia Today**, generally considered to be frequently state-biased; and our own **BBC World**, which enjoys the status – legitimate or not – of being the most objective. Each of these broadcasters has a global objective and news agenda, but a culturally specific starting point, and our interest here is in the impact of that tension for the news we are provided with.

As with so much of the content of Critical Perspectives, there is a huge overlap here with We Media and Democracy, since we are considering not only whether our news is increasingly international in nature, but also the emergence of ‘citizen journalism’, whereby ordinary people produce news via the internet, which is of course a global network. News is interesting as a case study for global media because we tend to be more sensitive about where our news comes from than we are about what we perceive to be entertainment. Here is an example: if most of the films we watch come from the USA, then some of us will worry about cultural representation, but it will not be treated as a really big issue for our democracy; but if our news comes from the USA, that would be a different matter for most people. Alongside this, the rise of user-generated video on YouTube is considered by most of us to be an interesting new form of media that sits quite happily alongside commercial film and television. But citizen journalism – ordinary people producing news via blogs and eyewitness video – provokes debates about truth and the law. According to John Hartley (2008: 53), we cannot think of the internet revolution in news journalism purely in terms of space (news that is distributed beyond national boundaries); we also have to consider how the internet revolutionises ‘news time’.

Traditional journalism and broadcasting have pitched their tent, as it were, in the temporal rhythm of the day and the week. But this is the frequency that seems the most under attrition in the present

developments. There may be a challenge to traditional daily/weekly journalism and broadcasting in this scenario. People are responding to different speeds of public communication, but this doesn't necessarily mean the end of democracy. It's not dumbing down but speeding up.

But what about news and space, which is more our focus here? The distribution of news has in this decade been increasingly global in some aspects, due to the emergence and success of a small number of global news services, a trend that has been labelled 'CNN-isation'. The American news network, along with Sky, Fox and the BBC, produces and circulates news via digital technologies and, crucially, satellite, to geographically diverse and in some cases remote parts of the Earth. If we view news as a locally or nationally produced service, which we have tended to, then we will be used to the news being selected and constructed in relation to a particular narrative (running order of stories) and

Synoptic Link

News Corporation

At AS, you may have studied News Corporation in the context of institutions and audiences. Here, we might usefully return to some amended **data** from the AS book on News Corporation as a case study for our assessment of global media.

The Australian 'tycoon' Rupert Murdoch started owning media institutions in the early 1950s and since then he has come to acquire for his News Corporation a vast array of newspapers, TV channels, radio stations, film companies and websites. In the UK he owns BSkyB, 18 per cent of ITV (and he is after Channel 5), *The Sun*, *News of the World* and *The Times*, and globally he dominates the press, owns the Fox Broadcasting Company and Twentieth Century Fox, and most recently he purchased MySpace. News Corporation has a gross annual income of approximately \$20 billion and employs around 40,000 people worldwide. The music industry is the only sector of the mass media that Murdoch's company does not have a major stake in, although the acquisition of MySpace may be a move towards this. Murdoch's huge 'media empire' is the subject of much concern, with people thinking that the deregulation of media ownership in the UK, started by Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister and continued by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown under New Labour, has allowed him to become so powerful that he now has influence over the way political events in particular are reported. For three different accounts of

Murdoch's power, see the film *Outfoxed*, the extracts of Alastair Campbell's recent diary *The Blair Years* which chronicles Murdoch's relationship with the Prime Minister, and Anthony Sampson's *Who Owns this Place*, a book about power in contemporary Britain, who has it and how it is exercised.

The documentary film *Outfoxed*, directed by Robert Greenwald, is highly recommended for this theme. You should view the whole film, but one particular sequence stands out as a challenge to the idea of news/current affairs broadcasting as a neutral 'window on the world'. It features the appearance on the Fox network's *Bill O'Reilly Show* of the son of a New York Port Authority worker killed on 9/11 who refused to sanction the 'war on terror'. The guest is told to 'shut up' by O'Reilly and is escorted from the studio; he later becomes the victim of a sustained campaign to discredit his views about the Bush administration's response to the attacks on 9/11. The key issue is about audience and distribution. If we agree (as the makers of *Outfoxed* certainly want us to) that Fox News is anything but impartial, then the fact that Fox is a global network – thanks to satellite and digital access – has international implications. The concern is that the American perspective on news events comes to determine what is seen as newsworthy, what gets reported, how it gets reported and how the aftermath of news events is discussed. Crucially, the American treatment of events and the American ideology come to be seen as the norm across the globe.

specific news values that correspond to editors' ideas about what a specific audience, in a specific time and place, is interested in. But if the news is produced elsewhere, then all of that is up for grabs, and there are some democratic issues raised about who determines which events are newsworthy, who edits the news, who the news



Figure 4.2.1 *Outfoxed* points the finger at the Fox global news service

Case study

BBC Online

Despite being a **public service** broadcaster, which is often wrongly associated with traditional, non-commercial operations, the BBC is the most successful internet news provider. BBC News tops the average monthly UK audience chart for news articles, entertainment and sport (Gibson 2008: 260). Whereas *The Sun* dominates the circulation figures for hard-copy newspaper readership, the BBC attracts 7.2 million visitors per month online, compared to 1.9 million users of the online version of *The Sun*. The BBC has an increasingly global reach for its news output, as the online press statements from the Corporation reproduced here demonstrate, with the important statistics in bold type for your consideration (BBC Press Office, press release, 21 May 2007, at www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2007/05_may/21/global.shtml – accessed August 2008).

The BBC's combined international news services attracted a record global weekly audience of more than 233 million during 2006/7, according to independent surveys. The global audience figure for the combined services of BBC World Service radio, BBC World television and the BBC's international online news service bbcnews.com is up 23 million from 210 million last year.

BBC World – the commercially funded international English language news and information television channel – now has estimated record audiences of 76 million viewers a week, up from 65 million in 2005/6.

The BBC's international-facing online news sites attracted a record 763 million page impressions in March 2007, up from 546 million in March 2006. There were a record 38.5 million unique online users across the globe during March 2007, up from 32.8 million a year ago.

BBC Global News Director Richard Sambrook said: 'This is a strong and welcome indication that the BBC's news services are strengthening their impact with audiences around the globe in the highly competitive multimedia age. People around the world are increasingly turning to the BBC when they need quality news and information that is independent and trusted.'

The questions that arise here for our analysis of global media are to do with origin and circulation. We must include the BBC alongside Sky, Fox and CNN in our list of big global players in the digital news arena, and ask the same questions of the BBC's service that we ask of these commercial rivals which do not work in the same public-funding context. Who decides on what the news is and what the audience is entitled to in a global context? What are global news values?

represents and who it excludes, and, ultimately, who the 'we' is that the news is speaking to – there are links here with another theme, Media and Collective Identity.

If news is considered a global commodity, this means that it does not just happen, but it is produced, purchased and sold on like any other commodity. To understand how this works, we need to know about news agencies. These are organisations such as the Associated Press, Reuters or World Television News. These bodies supply international news supposedly from the point of view of 'pure information' (if such a thing is possible); then, when the news is purchased by the big news providers we have heard of, the news agenda is 'applied' to the information. To go back to the Tesco analogy, this is like a supermarket buying meat from a farmer and then packaging it with their own brand identity.

Case study

Al Jazeera English (AJE)

Al Jazeera cannot be ignored in any study of global news. For background on the context for this case study, go to <http://english.aljazeera.net> (accessed August 2008) or go to YouTube and search for Al Jazeera.

The news agenda of the network is clear – to use the same global strategies employed by western corporations to challenge the perspectives they offer. In other words, Al Jazeera's relatively new English language network (AJE) seeks to offer a balance to the 'global news supremacy' so far enjoyed by Fox, CNN and the BBC. This statement from Dave Marash (in Goldkorn 2006: 1), the Washington news anchor for Al Jazeera, is interesting, as Marash is situated at the centre of the strategy – working from the heart of the USA for a news service based in Qatar.

'All of our competitors, CNN International, BBC World and the American networks, concentrate about 80 percent of their news gathering resources in Western Europe and North America,' he said, sitting in his small office at the network's Washington hub. 'Al Jazeera English is going to concentrate about 80 percent of our news gathering outside of North America and Western Europe.'

It must be stated clearly here that Al Jazeera is as critical in its reporting of Arab governments and military action as it is of American interventions. The station is not a mere propaganda outlet for Arabic states. Indeed, the popularity of the service arises from its offering of an alternative to both western and official Arabic news offerings. However, if the globalisation of news is the

inevitable outcome of capitalism – just as the Tesco chain became dominant in the food retail market in the UK by controlling a market and swallowing up competitors, so the global news networks reduce their opposition by the same logic – then the Al Jazeera response is to use the same tactics from a different starting point. The result is that the idea of news as objective and neutral is dispensed with for broadcasting, just as it has been for newspapers. Consumers can choose which news agenda to consume. However, critics would argue that news hegemony operates so powerfully that only the most media-literate citizen is actually able to make such an informed choice. The majority of people consume a news service which they assume to be reliable, honest and transparent. Consider this comment from Badreya Al-Jenaibi (2007: 2).

The thoughtful audience member would hopefully watch Al Jazeera and other broadcasts like CNN and BBC. The way to counteract bias from one program is to not rely on just one source of news. In the past, the Arab and non-Arab audience had little choice, however, but to listen to either Western-dominated news with its particular bias, or to receive news of the Arab world from Arab regimes. Al Jazeera has offered a revolutionary alternative that has helped to create a new Arab discourse and alter the Arab media experience. It is obviously biased, but it does present an Arab perspective in a world where Arab voices were not particularly distinct. Al Jazeera changed that, and for that reason, it is a worthy source of news and opinion, even though the news and opinions are often quite biased.

But news analysts and academics argue that although the news agencies do not explicitly share the news agendas of the western networks, because they know that Fox, CNN, Sky and the BBC are their main 'customers', they will seek news which they perceive to be 'client-friendly'. In this way, news production becomes circular, and the concern is that non-western events are marginalised even at the first stage in the cycle. News is business.

Boyd-Barrett and Rantenen (1999) suggest that a series of events have shaped the development of global news, and as there is not sufficient space here to cover these in factual detail, you are strongly advised to research each one yourself. These are, in chronological order, the protests in Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989; the collapse of the Berlin Wall in the same year; the Gulf War in 1991; and 9/11. Each of these instantly became a 'global news event' because of the way the images were circulated. According to Boyd-Barrett and Rantenen, the global news coverage of each can be seen very easily as American rather than neutral – the first two events were celebrated, as a rival political/economic system to US capitalism was challenged in each case, and the latter two were

Synoptic Link

Local newspapers

This amended set of institutional data from the AS book about the ownership of local papers will also be useful for this discussion about the survival of local print media in the age of global online news.

Ten regional publishing institutions control 90 per cent of the total market for the local press. This is a clear example of 'concentrated ownership' which has in recent years come to define the 'behind the scenes' institutional structure of the mass media, often without much public awareness. Ask yourself these questions – do you read a (paid-for) local paper? If so, who owns it? You might not think it matters, but it may well have implications for the extent to which the publication reflects the community to whom it is sold. Trinity Mirror have roughly 20 per cent of the market, owning 234 titles. Newsquest Media Group weigh in with 219 (15 per cent share). Johnston Press have 282 and 14 per cent share, Northcliffe Newspapers are close behind with 111 (12 per cent) and Associated Newspapers have 10 per cent of the market with just 11 papers (clearly these are bigger selling titles in bigger regions). So close to 70 percent of the regional newspaper audience is catered for by five companies. The source for these figures is the Newspaper Society (July 2006). While the 'freesheet' threat is not a new one for local papers, the way in which *Metro* is circulated is proving to have an impact an average of 10,000 sales of paid-for papers are reportedly lost to free papers in the major cities. Unlike national newspapers, some of which are maintaining sales as a result of a host of strategies and innovations, the average net circulation of every paid-for regional paper is in decline. However the regional press is still a very lucrative media sector, just slightly less so than in the linear news era.

portrayed via a simple binary opposition of good/evil, hero/villain. So if we combine this range of contingencies, we can arrive at a history of global news, arising from developments in technology affording global news first and 24/7 news second; the emergence of global news networks such as CNN as a response; and a series of news events that were 'Americanised' in their media circulation.

But now we need to return to the question: is our news increasingly global, as opposed to local or national? To do this, we have to turn our attention to the most old-fashioned of media products – the local paper.

In 2008, almost every local newspaper in the UK reported declining sales, and this is generally perceived by industry commentators to be a linear trend – the local paper looks doomed in the face of global, online, 24-hour news media. However, there are many examples of local newspapers turning the threat of the

Activity

Your local rag

Rather than provide a case study on a local newspaper to consider in contrast to the global media examples above, it is far more effective for you to carry out your own case study using this template. Work in a group (or even the whole class) to collect this information and to evaluate the findings. If possible, invite (via your teacher) a journalist working on the paper into school/college to share her/his experiences of the 'community service' the paper provides.

For the journalist's visit, good preparation is essential. You will need to get their thoughts on the following areas:

- Who owns the paper
- How the paper seeks to reinforce or even create community values
- How it makes money
- What the relationship is between ownership and the editorial agenda (who selects the news and decides how it is presented?)
- What the paper considers the greatest threat to its existence.

Split into five groups and take one theme each. Each student within each group should produce five questions, and then each group chooses two questions from the 25 on the table. This is an important process, as it will create a clear agenda for the interview and the desired outcomes.

The next step is to agree on who will ask the questions, in what order and with what recording mechanism, and then to rehearse so as to avoid badly phrased questions or answers going unrecorded on the day.

Although this may seem to put pressure on you, we tend to find that many local journalists are happy to help, as you will be demonstrating an interest in the work they do, and you are, after all, part of their audience.

If it is not possible to arrange a local journalist visit, or to visit the paper yourselves, then you can get the 'cold information' from the internet or by contacting the paper, and you may be able to ask the questions via email.

internet to their advantage, by enhancing their community focus with online elements, allowing readers to connect with one another as well as with the paper. In guerrilla warfare, the trick is to make your weakness your strength – small armies can hide. This is a very different example, but the idea of identifying a weakness and making it your niche is the same here – the internet can offer global reach or local activity. The strategy now is called ultralocal provision, where readers of the ‘local rag’ can follow the minute detail of very specific issues that affect them directly, and can use the online version of the paper to blog, respond, refresh and update this information, which would be of little interest to anyone more than five miles away. Wainwright (2008:1) explores this concept.

Given the threat of the web and the growth of freesheets, people might well ask – why should anyone buy one of those local papers anyway? But look past the across-the-board sales declines and there are pockets of success, where the age-old values of a town or country source of information are alive and well. Moreover, they are harnessing the power of the web to succeed.

Global cinema

There are three strands to this theme within the broader study of Global Media. First, we must assess the idea that films are increasingly made for a global audience, and this will lead us, once again, to discuss cultural imperialism. Alongside this analysis, we need to pay attention to diaspora – a term which describes people dispersing across the world and, to some extent, taking their ‘home culture’ with them. This provides a challenge to the cultural imperialism ‘version’ of global media theory, so we will be into a debate at this point. And third, but perhaps most importantly, we need to be aware of the range of films made around the world that may or may not attract the attention of audiences in other countries. This approach is sometimes described as the study of ‘world cinema’, but the problem with this, as Stafford (2007) points out, is that we can end up creating a simplistic binary opposition between Hollywood films and everything else, so ‘world cinema’ is only understood in terms of its perceived difference to the Hollywood films that dominate the box office in most countries. Instead, we should see ‘global cinema’ simply as a very varied collection of film industries, so we will look at a range of examples here in their own right.

To address the idea of the global audience, let us consider some statistics provided by Stafford (2007: 20) that may or may not surprise you. The Indian cinema audience is the largest in the world, more than twice the size of the US audience (source:

European Audiovisual Observatory, 2004). But Hollywood is hugely successful at reaching audiences outside the USA, generating revenue for the major studios of \$15 billion annually. The exceptions to the 'Hollywood hegemony' are China, Japan, South Korea and India, where in each case under half of all box office returns are currently for US films. Britain, as you will know, has, for a variety of reasons (which are explored in detail in the section on British cinema in relation to Media and Collective Identity), allowed Hollywood to become hugely dominant at the box office, but it is important to recognise that this is not universal, as Stafford (2007: 20) points out.

When we think of the typical cinema audience, we usually think now of a multiplex showing a Hollywood film and that does indeed happen around the world. But we should perhaps also consider the millions watching films in a variety of Indian languages (not just Hindi) in many different types of cinema auditoria. Hollywood has the richest film industry because it has the most affluent 'domestic' audiences. However in the last ten years it has become apparent that the market outside North America is much bigger and potentially more lucrative.

So our first way of thinking about global film looks like this. Hollywood films are, compared to other film industries, more successful at reaching international audiences. Whether this is just inevitable capitalist economics at work (the USA is a rich nation and lots of people worldwide speak English, so it is not rocket science that we prefer to watch expensively made, lavishly promoted films in English, because we can), or whether there is a more sinister outcome (cultural homogenisation leading to a US ideology dominating world culture and 'othering' huge groups of the population into the bargain), is a matter for debate. Let us consider an example in order to unpack some of this.

Our second approach concerns diaspora. Later in this section, we will consider research by Durham (2004), which produced interesting findings about how people connect the global to the local in relation to their own highly specific life contexts. Diaspora is described by Ruddock (2007: 72).

Diasporic audience research emerges from the fact that the media's role in cultural mediation is influenced by the movement of people as well as goods. The vast audience for Indian and Chinese media, in its various dialects, exists on an international as well as national level.

This poses a challenge to the 'cultural imperialism' idea, as the logic of that theory would suggest that this would not happen – that the lure of American media would reduce any desire to cling to any notion of cultural heritage through media consumption.

Case study

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

Here are the box office statistics for the third film in the *Pirates* franchise. The total US box office gross figure comes to \$309,404,152, with international box office returns of \$643,000,000, so in this significant case, the international revenue doubles that acquired from the domestic market. In the 2007 box office chart, *Pirates* was top in a top 50 list where the first 45 films were American, so this gives us some perspective on the global reach of Hollywood. (Source: www.the-numbers.com/movies – accessed August 2008, and Pulver in Gibson 2008: 216)

What are the implications of *At World's End* being seen in cinemas alone (so disregarding DVD viewings) by enough people to generate almost \$100 million from just this one film?

Purely on the level of distribution, it means that in all the countries in the world where the film was shown on a large number of screens at the same time, domestic films were in competition with *Pirates*. In other words, people were not watching films that might relate more to their own cultural experiences. On the other hand, as this film is a fantasy with global themes, that argument might be limited – after all, you do not have to be American to be interested in pirate myths.

But if we look at the film as a representing text, there

is an argument that the film does portray some key themes in very pro-western ways. The film was made in St Vincent, by agreement with the government of Dominica, but the representation of Caribs caused offence in Trinidad and other Caribbean communities, due to the reinforcement of a long-standing binary opposition created in western fiction between civilisation and savagery. This is more serious than it might appear at first from our UK vantage point, as there is a highly specific, local battle in the Caribbean over the need to educate children about their ancestry in order to challenge these stereotypes. So for the Carib communities, the global media reach of Disney offers a direct threat to the struggle to revise offensive and disempowering versions of their history.

So we can see in this example how what seems like a piece of 'mere entertainment' can be viewed as an example of both capitalist domination (the domestic exclusion of domestic cinema, seen here as no different to Tesco putting the local grocer out of business in the name of 'business development' and 'consumer choice') and also cultural imperialism (the imposition of biased and oppressive representations of people as 'truth'). How seriously we take these claims is a matter for debate, of course. They are presented here as a challenge to the notion that *At World's End* is 'only a film'.

Synoptic Link

Bollywood in the UK

The best example of diaspora in the UK context is Bollywood, which we looked at in some detail in the AS book, within the study of audience. Here we return to that detail, as it connects well with our focus here on diaspora in relation to global media.

Consider this description of current access to Bollywood films and music in Birmingham, from Somak Raychoudry (from an email exchange, 31 August 2007).

There are lots of channels you can access now. Many of them are free. On Sky I get Zee and B4U music, which are essentially film music channels, and several regular channels that do Indian TV programmes – soaps etc. And if I were to pay I could get B4U, Zee and Sony's three premium movie channels. Then there are channels for other languages – not strictly Bollywood – Punjabi, Gujarati and Bengali.

The scale is amazing. I watch them often. Sometimes the premium channels are free on weekends. The advertising on these channels is phenomenal, which shows the extent of the audience. Like Sunrise FM radio, for instance. I haven't seen Chak de India yet but it's on at Star City I hear and is highly recommended. In Birmingham it seems every major cinema has a Bollywood movie showing.

Case study

The Edukators

The Edukators is a German film in which a group of politically motivated young people, who are angered by the capitalist system which keeps the poor in poverty to feed the rich, develop a form of protest whereby they break into the homes of rich people. But rather than steal their goods, which would do little to threaten the system, they rearrange the furniture and leave a message – ‘Your days of plenty are numbered’ – seeking to disturb and frighten those who live in affluence. When one such break-in goes wrong, the group is forced to kidnap a victim and a thriller plot develops with some twists, not only in terms of plot, but also in terms of how we feel about the characters.

This is an interesting film in the context of our study of Global Media because it is much more than just an alternative to Hollywood. In fact, there is no point trying to understand it within a general understanding of ‘independent’ or ‘world’ cinema. While it may be the case that there is a more developed youth politics in Germany than in the UK at present, the film’s themes are

more global than culturally specific, given that capitalism is defined by its global force. When watching the film, consider the oppositions it sets up between rich and poor, empowered and disempowered, radical and ‘distracted’. As a media student, you should be especially interested, fairly early on in the film, in the Marxist discussion of television – seen as a brainwashing facility for the people in power, leaving the dispossessed with no time for revolutionary thoughts. Consider how the oppositions become less clear as the film progresses, and discuss the variety of possible responses you might have to this film, and how this might depend on your age and your sociocultural situation. Assess the degree to which you think these themes are global, and whether you agree with this comment from one film critic (Dudek 2005: 1).

The characters and their ideas are considered dangerous by the state, but their symbolic actions are a threat to no one but themselves. Although *The Edukators* is a German-language film, it is set in a global village where all politics are local.

Finally, our third method for considering global cinema is more to do with awareness – becoming familiar with films that are made in different countries, not just as ‘different to Hollywood’, but as interesting media products on their own terms. To do this, we turn our attention to the German film *The Edukators* (directed by Hans Weingartner, 2005) – see the case study above.

Local, national, global

How can we pull together these case studies and perspectives to make an informed judgement on the idea that the media are becoming increasingly global? It is surely a question of balance, and also a question of vantage point. In other words, how you see the globalisation debate will depend on where you are and what you prioritise.

Academics developing research in the area of media globalisation are usually in agreement on the importance of ethnographic research methods. These methods involve spending time in the social context of the audience group you are researching in order to ‘go native’ and get to grips with the specific local context as far as possible. There is no way that you have time for this on your A2 course, but it is nevertheless very important that you understand the interplay between the local and the global, rather

than assuming that everyone is experiencing the media in the same way in some idealised global village, as this is simply not the case. One illuminating example is Durham's (2004) research into teenage girls of Hindu cultural heritage living in Florida, who were using the media partly to construct a hybrid identity. Durham discovered, through the ethnographic endeavour (spending time, observing from the location) that the girls were using *Friends* alongside Hindi film songs to switch and combine the two poles of their identities, as paraphrased here by Ruddock (2007: 71).

Both of these experiences were meaningless on an explicitly textual level; *Friends* was just 'stupid', where Hindu musicals probably mean something, but the girls did not know what. But on a cultural level, both resources helped the girls mediate the different worlds they inhabited; *Friends* accessed a high school (language) where musicals contained a sense of Indianness shared with parents. The girls found themselves being Indian in Florida due to forces beyond their control. They had to figure out what this means, partly by using media products made by multinational systems of production and delivery. But it was up to them to make these power dynamics real by embodying them in specific ways.

This specific embodying of cultural meaning is crucial. We cannot understand globalisation merely by imagining that everyone

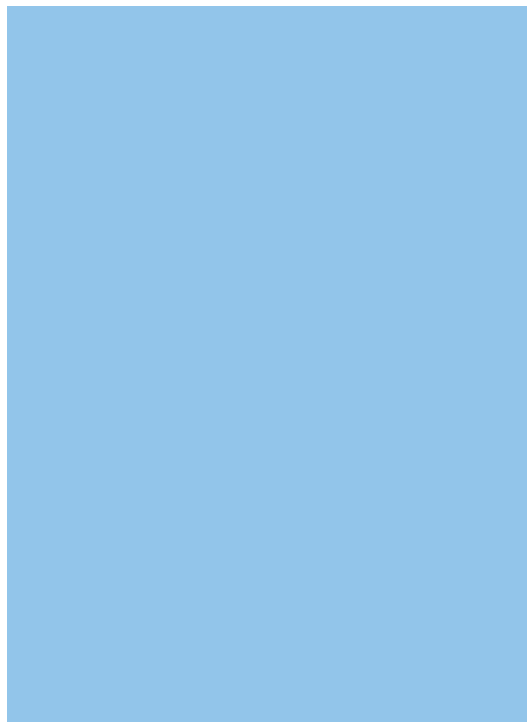


Figure 4.2.2 Birmingham – a 'glocal' city?

ends up attaching the same kinds of meanings to the same cultural products. Global media is always-already used by people in highly specific local contexts, and we are better served by understanding it as an infinite number of 'small stories' rather than a simple 'grand narrative' of cultural imperialism. Consider Birmingham City Council's new slogan for the city – 'global city, local heart'.

On the other hand, we cannot deny the development of global media and the potentially serious implications of an increasingly US media agenda being 'naturalised' and made to seem neutral. This is power at its most dangerous – when it looks like truth. Al Jazeera's attempts to redress this balance might look like an important political intervention, but equally we might worry that 'two wrongs don't make a right', if it is true that its news agenda lays no more serious claim to objectivity than that of Fox and CNN. On the other hand, why does the local paper survive? The longevity of this old-fashioned media format might seem like proof positive that there will always be a need for media that support a community, where the editorial agenda resonates with the values of the location. In each case, the more important questions are about access and ownership. Even local papers are usually owned by bigger companies which do not operate in the locality – so the concentration of ownership that pervades global media is mirrored at the level of the local rag also. You will need to come to your own informed, academic position on this, as once again there is no right answer. What we must remember is that there are two versions of media globalisation. One is hard to contest – the fact that there is more and more availability of media, which is distributed across national and cultural boundaries, following the logic of capitalism and arising from concentrated ownership. In this context, it is fair to say that it is harder to cling to local cultural identities – which is not to say that people do not do so. The second version extends this assessment to conclude that this increase in global media leads inevitably to a 'cultural homogeneity' (McMillin 2007), whereby people in an ever increasing number of countries consume the same cultural material, which tends to be produced by major power-holding corporations within a western capitalist ideological framework. The 'third way', which we have explored with regard to global cinema, diaspora and hybridity, bears witness to the complex ways in which people 'mix and match' the local, national and global. These different versions of the globalisation theory are described here by McMillin (2007: 11).

In the political economy view, 'global' is often considered synonymous for a 'site of cultural erosion and destruction' and the 'local' as a site of pristine cultural 'authenticity' (Ang 1996: 153). The second view, held by cultural theorists, is a little more nuanced, and regards globalisation as including processes of cultural appropriation where people take what is relevant to their own contexts and orient or adapt it to their local needs.

Exam-Style Question

Is media these days more global than local? Or can it be both?

Your task, having used the material and case studies here as a starting point, is to assess the value of each of these approaches. Is globalisation really happening and having a real impact on your life, through the media? And if it is, then what difference, if any, is this making to your identity and the way you see yourself as belonging to a community? And are you able to pick and mix appropriate global media to adapt them to your own local situation?

Examiner's Tip

There is one very easy thing that A level media studies students rarely do in exams, but compared to other skills, it is quite straightforward. It will certainly impress the examiner. In higher education, this is expected, so as well as getting you more marks in Critical Perspectives, it will be useful preparation for the next part of your educational career. It is called referencing. All you have to do is remember the year of publication of each book, article or online publication that you want to quote or paraphrase. Then, when you write about someone's idea, you put the year in brackets – for example, McDougall (2009), if it were this book. The idea is that the reader of your contribution can use your essay as a starting point for more research, so they are easily able to locate the source you are referring to by looking up the various publications of the writer by year.