



Discussion on International Communication and IS in run up to WSIS

Masters Degree in Journalism and Media Studies

Media Policies and Institutions

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Guest Lecture

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Overview

- International discussion on information flows (news, more general content)
 - Free flow of information (1950-60)
 - NWICO and Balanced flow (1970-80)
 - IS and revival of free flow (jaren 90-)
- Points of attention
 - News agency
 - Role of journalist

News and news agencies

- 19th century development of news agencies
 - important evolution for newspaper sector
 - only possible because of spread of telegraph
 - main emphasis by commercial news
- Until 1930 European players dominant
 - France: Havas (later AFP) 1835
 - Germany: Wolf 1849
 - Great-Brittain: Reuters 1851
 - from the beginning all international players
 - connected to their colonial empire
 - make cartel to split up world into territories
 - exclusive territories and shared territories

□ After WO I

- role of Wolf diminishes
- Associated Press (1848) starts with news on Latin-America (until then Havas and Reuters)
- after 1930 AP and United Press slowly gain strength

□ After WO II

- breakthrough of US news agencies
- over time diversification of products and services
 - photo's, video and AV-news, financial info and databases

Three main agencies

	Associated Press (USA)	Reuters (UK)	Agence France Presse (France)
Bureaus	237	183	140
Countires	112	157	165
Languages	6	23	6
Journalists	3.421	2.072	1.200
Words a day	20 million	3 million	2 million

□ Associated Press

- AP services 15.000 organisations with news
- AP Engles, Spanish, Swedish, German and French
- 1 Billion people hear or see something spread by AP a day

□ Three main agencies provide 80% of public news worldwide (Unesco)

□ Associated Press Television News & Reuters Television (former Visnews)

- control marked for AV-news

Free Flow of Information

- After WO II Bipolar world
- For West (especially VS)
 - function of international communication = promote democracy, freedom of expression, etc.
 - Free flow of information
 - part of liberal free market discourse
 - media companies should have the right to:
 - produce what they want
 - sell where they want it
 - against censorship, import taxes and state regulation

□ Political and economic interests

○ US most important producer of content

□ free flow in its own interest

○ Free flow helps in spreading Western views and lifestyle

□ via news agencies western view on reality

□ via entertainment promotion Western lifestyle

○ helps in campaign against Communist bloc

□ Free flow questioned from the 70 onwards

○ Scientifically: flow theory

○ Political: discussion around NWICO

Flow Theorie and News

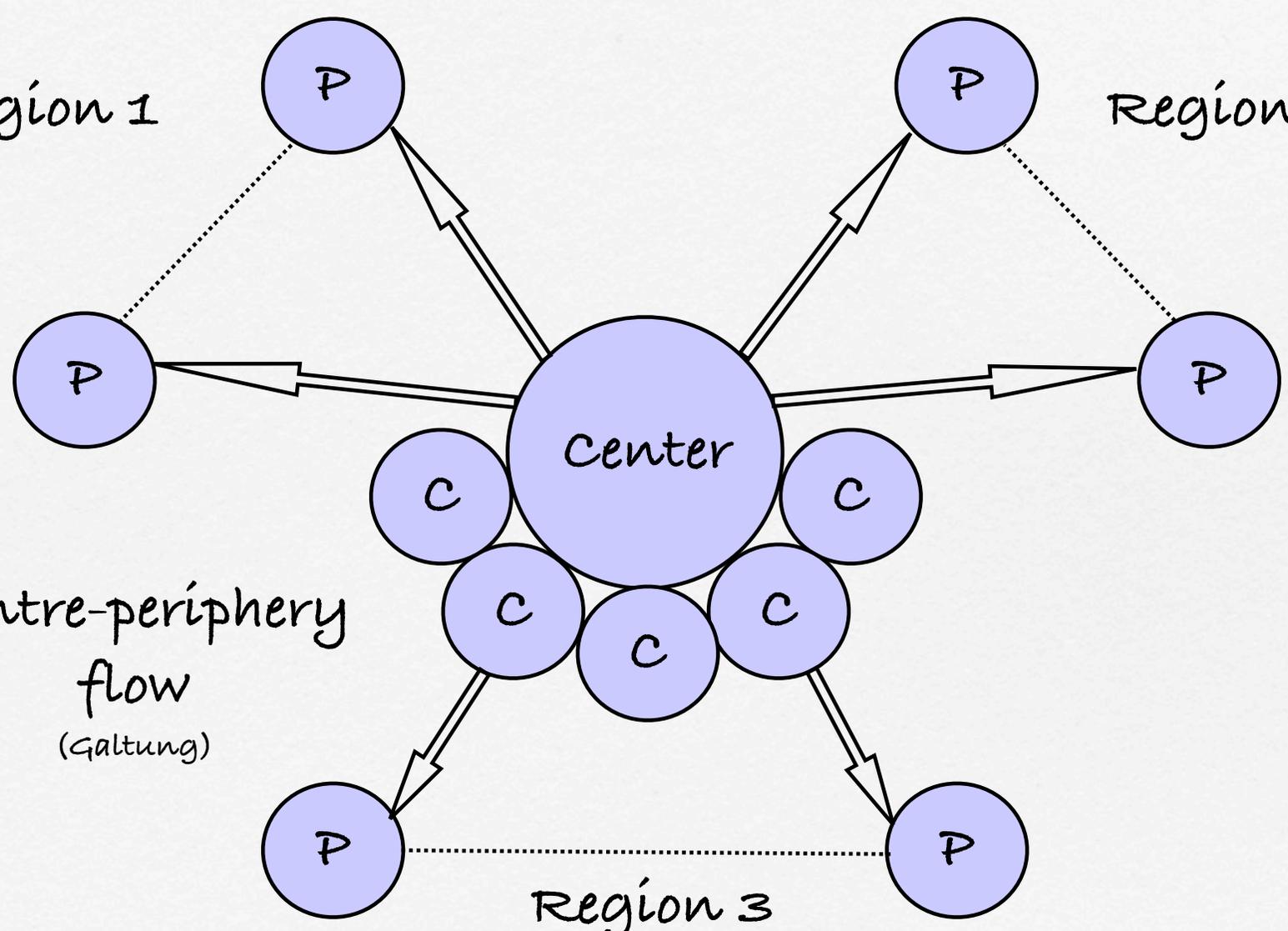
- Based on content analysis of mass media
 - data for coverage of foreign news in media
 - data for coverage of national news in foreign media
 - data about several countries in working of flows
 - Remark: methodological problems, but provide an insight
- Two important group of studies:
 - studies on flows and content of news
 - studies which look for factors determining news selection

Region 1

Region 2

Centre-periphery
flow
(Galtung)

Region 3



- news from the centre most dominant in coverage
 - flows between countries in the centre strong
 - flows from centre to periphery strong
 - in periphery after own news, news from the centre strong
- news from periphery mostly weakly represented
 - flows from periphery to centre weak
 - little attention for problems of the South in the West
 - based on a selection by Western agencies
 - attention for disasters, political problems, etc.
 - flows between countries in periphery weak
 - less in South America, case for Africa
 - flows between regions in periphery almost inexistent
 - 'round flow': news on periphery in periphery selected and processed by Western agencies

New World Information and Communication Order

- New World Information and Communication Order
 - launched by Non-Aligned Movement in 1970s
 - translation of economic discussion on NIEO
 - Most important arguments:
 - international information-system reinforces inequality
 - South too dependent on the North in terms of soft & hardware
 - West responsible for a wrong portrayal of the South o.a. as a result of dominance news agencies
 - information seen as an economic product, not as a cultural good

- Discussion on NWICO takes place within Unesco
- 1977 establishment of the MacBride Commission
 - based on research input and political negotiation
 - recognizes that certain undemocratic systems hinder free communication ⇒ emphasize participation of population in policy and in communication
 - freedom of the press linked to freedom of expression and 'right to communicate'
 - critique on concentration in the media especially at the level of news agencies
 - recognition that some countries try to destabilize internal stability of other countries o.a. by use of international media

□ NWICO and UNESCO

- 1980 Resolution in UNESCO to come to a NWICO
 - elimination of the imbalance and inequalities which characterise the present situation,
 - elimination of the negative effects of certain monopolists, public or private, and excessive concentration,
 - plurality of sources and channels of information,
 - freedom of the press and information,
 - the freedom of journalists and all professionals in the communication media, a freedom inseparable from responsibility, ...
- supported by almost all developing countries
- very critical document in terms of current standards
 - WSIS less critical

□ Critiqued by the West

- seen as attempt to put media under state control
- in conflict with Western liberal values
- way of legitimizing state censorship
- 1985 and 1986 US and GB withdraw from UNESCO

□ Initiatives to realize 'balanced flow'

- International: development of alternative news agencies
 - vb. Pana
- National: Development Media Theory & Practice
 - In certain countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, India

□ UNESCO left in shatters

- little political legitimacy in West
- financially loses two of its biggest contributors

Free flow & IS

- Free flow since 1990 predominant ideology
 - depends on neo-classical revival in West
 - results in liberalization of markets at international level
 - introduction of competition and privatization in national markets
 - media: corporatization of SABC is example in SA
 - telecommunication: Telkom and many other operators
 - processes introduced in many developing countries
- Free flow underlying ideology of the IS
 - open networks in telecommunications
 - Internet inherently open and global network of free flows

Run up to WSIS

- Theme of liberalization and free markets themes in all international conferences on IS former to WSIS
- WSIS should not be seen in isolation
- *G7 Ministerial Conference on the IS (Brussels 1995)*
 - first international meeting on cooperation around IS
 - reflect largely western interests of open markets and lib.
 - push for open networks, common standards, etc.
 - Important is challenge of Deputy President Mbeki to organize a follow up on the challenges for DC

□ Information Society and Development Conference (Midrand 1996)

- G7, EU and selection of developing countries
- Important differences between West and NGO-groups in the South, later emphasize (in alternative text):
 - equal and inexpensive access (question liberali-privatization)
 - applications adapted to cultural and linguistic needs
 - public policy important task in stimulating IS development
- Supported by South-Africa, Egypt and Mexico
- Reaction of West (esp. US) furious, wants to walk away
 - Text added as annex
 - Central declaration repeats dominant discourse

□ G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit (Japan 2000)

- first time the G8 recognizes problem of Digital Divide
 - produce a Charter on Global Information Society
 - at first appears move away from G7 Ministerial Conference because of recognition of problem
 - in effect policy standpoint does not change
 - private sector in liberalized markets seen as driving force for development of IS
 - reform of legal structures blocking exchange of information—intellectual property rights and the free circulation of information
- establishment of Digital Opportunity Task.force
 - established to help DC introduce IS
 - recognition of a more social agenda (but not in discourse)

World Summit on the Information Society

□ UN Resolution 56/183 (2001)

'... contributions from all UN bodies, (...) non-governmental organisations, civil society and the private sector to actively participate in the governmental preparatory process of the Summit and the Summit itself'

□ Main goals

- develop a common vision on the IS
- develop strategies to close the digital divide

- Some people high hopes WSIS would result in more nuanced view
 - civil society would take part as equal partner
 - should also revive the summit events (some fatigue)
 - UN Summit process seem to lead to consensus
 - Some former summits had achieved nuanced views
- Others more skeptical
 - organization by ITU
 - organization with more technically oriented mandate
 - no representation of NGOs or civil society in its working
 - unesco involved but careful because of legacy NWICO
 - US and UK were thinking of rejoining unesco

□ Prepcoms important as these had to define the role of civil society

○ in UN system

□ countries are members and have vote

□ NGOs status of observers (no voting rights)

○ discussions do not lead to new role civil society

□ status of observer

□ all important decisions taken behind closed doors

□ Declaration and Action plan don't reflect concerns of civil

○ reasons

□ mainly authoritarian development countries against

○ China and Pakistan, fear critique of NGOs

□ Brazil fear that identical status for private sector would make these interests too strong

Heated debates ?

- What are the debates about
 - everything-summits have tendency to lead to broad statements
- *Infrastructure, access and digital divide*
 - access recognized to be important by everyone
 - private sector and West: end of story
 - civil society:
 - emphasis on fact that IS can not be reduced to technology
 - about knowledge, creativity and education
 - South: asks attention for digital divide

□ Communication rights versus security

○ civil society, European Council and unesco

- freedom of expression, rights to privacy
- fear that emphasis on security will infringe on these rights
- civil society also right to communicate (active right)

○ US and Russia:

- safeguard networks against criminality and terrorism

□ Participation, e-government and education

○ West

- more efficient communication with citizens (services)
- e-education seen in a very utilitarian way

○ Civil Society

- citizens participation in policy making and governance
- right to education from humanistic point of view

WSIS, So What ?

- Status of UN Summit Meetings
 - strong policy statements
 - putting themes on the political agenda
 - force countries to think about issues
 - force NGOs to think about issue !!!!!!!!
 - strong coverage in media
 - tend to be rather general statements with little concrete Action Plans
 - not legally binding on governments
 - most summits face problems when it comes to implementation