

Beyond “Center” and “Periphery”: (De-)Westernization in International and Intercultural Communication

**Conference of the International and Intercultural Communication section
of the German Communication Association**

Erfurt, Germany, October 27-29, 2011

**Hosted by: Department of Media and Communication
at the University of Erfurt**

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Conference theme

Research on international and intercultural communication is largely dominated by American and Eurocentric perspectives. This is reflected in the existing theoretical models and methods as well as in the strong focus on Western nations and societies as research areas.

The resulting Western-centric systems of analysis have long been regarded as ideal models for research around the world. However, recent years have witnessed a movement for the emancipation of non-Western research. Particularly in Latin-America and Asia, American and Eurocentric perspectives have been perceived as part and parcel of Western cultural imperialism and therefore questioned from as early as the 1970s.

As part of the globalization discourse, emerging research areas such as India, China, Africa or Latin America, once deemed peripheral, have increasingly come into focus. However, the available methods and analytical models turned out to be insufficient for explaining media use or media effects in those regions.

But does a genuinely non-Western type of media and communication research truly exist? Ironically, even the critical examination of Western models and the call for the "de-Westernization" of media studies has largely been voiced by Western researchers. And on the other hand, is the dominance of Western theories and methodological approaches primarily rooted in cultural imperialism, or have these research paradigms evolved and proven fruitful in many cases of international and intercultural communication studies? After all, the paradigms emerging from the Euro-American space have been subjected to critical analysis and improvement rather than outright rejection.

Moreover, the field of Euro-American media studies cannot be regarded as a single, uniform block. Instead, this field consists of different lines and traditions of research, and there has been a continuous and reciprocal process of theory and methods formation. What, therefore, can Western models and methods offer for international and intercultural communication research today?

Call for Papers

Conference organization

Through its different panels, the conference will scrutinize Western media studies from previously peripheral, non-Western perspectives and research areas. And it will consider the (potential) reciprocal impacts of these non-Western perspectives on Western research.

The central aim is to initiate an insightful exchange on the interrelationship of non-Western and Western perspectives in order to inspire research practice. The following panels are intended to explore the theme of the conference:

Panel 1: Research landscapes: Proposals for professional reflection

This meta-discursive panel will allow a professional self-positioning or self-reflection vis-à-vis the status quo of current international and intercultural communication studies from different (geographical) positions.

Panel 2: Media & globalization: A critical analysis of a research construct

This multidisciplinary panel will analyze the integration of Western and non-Western perspectives, the discussion of proximity and distance between media products and systems, and thus reassess the explanatory power of globalization theories and their terminology in research on international and intercultural communication.

Panel 3: Journalism: Demarcating, transcending and subverting borders

This panel will explore the classical fields of journalism research, such as foreign correspondence, media ethics or the impact of technological innovations on journalistic work, and consider the reciprocal influences between “center” and “periphery” in them.

Panel 4: Media & development: Western claims and local needs

Media assistance is becoming increasingly important in international development efforts. This panel will feature a critical discussion of the theoretical foundations of the concept of media assistance, its relation to methodology and the empirical evaluation of its successes and failures.

Panel 5: Diaspora & media: The periphery as a dynamic center

This panel wishes to develop different approaches to assessing the role of media for diasporic communities and use them as resources for the expansion of Western and non-Western perspectives.

Submission and selection of papers

Please send your proposal for a 20-minute presentation to the organizers (iic2011@uni-erfurt.de) no later than **May 15, 2011** (using a pdf or a doc file). The abstract should not be longer than 8000 characters (including blank spaces) and should be assigned to one of the panels. Submissions for the conference should be made in English. Please add a title page to the abstract containing the name(s) and address(es) of the presenter(s) and the title of the presentation. All submissions will be subjected to anonymous review and submitters will be informed by June 15, 2011 about the outcome of the selection process.