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ARTICLES

PAGE 1

Hunan Satellite Channel: Capital, Market, and Ideological Transformation

Changchang Wu

China's micro-blog sites serve two masters in real names

Jianguo Deng

BLUE BOOK

PAGE 8

Overview of the Media Industry in China in 2011

NEWS

// Press PAGE 9

// Broadcasting PAGE 9

// Film industry PAGE 10

// Internet PAGE 11

// New Media and market PAGE 11

BOOKS

PAGE 13

/ **Communication Studies in China: A 30-Year Review**

/ **On Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China**

EVENTS

PAGE 16

An International Conference on Communication and Global Power Shifts, Communication University of China, Beijing 12-13 October 2012

Chinese Media Legislation and Regulation: Trends, Issues and Questions

Hunan Satellite Channel: Capital, Market and Ideological Transformation

Changchang Wu*

English translation Zhan Zhang**

This article attempts to answer the following questions based on a socio-historical analysis of the development of Hunan Satellite TV between 1997 and 2007: 1. Why did Hunan Satellite TV achieve such a huge commercial successes in China while the other provincial TV stations did not? 2. Is it Hunan Satellite TV's destiny to move towards entertainment-oriented production rather than news-related production? 3. How can the tension between the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT), CCTV, and the other provincial TV stations be interpreted bearing in mind the results of the Hunan Satellite TV case study?

From News Production to Universal Entertainment: the Paradox of Differentiated Capitalization

The growth of Hunan Satellite TV can be understood only if seen from the perspective of the generally accepted mechanism of double enclosures (on the one hand the central government, such as the Publicity Department of CPC or the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television and, on the other, the provincial TV stations based on the political capital each has gained from the relationship with central government) and subtle balance (between CCTV and the local TV stations). This growth has been divided into two phases: 1. from 1997 to 2001, when Hunan TV broadcasted throughout China via the satellite licensed by SARFT; 2. from 2002 to the present with Hunan TV now being one the most successful provincial TV stations (especially in capital) in the wake of the success of the popular TV show "Super Girls" (Chao Ji Nv Sheng).

Before 1997 Hunan Satellite TV was not nearly as famous as it is now; it was just another provincial TV channel which had been licensed to broadcast signals throughout the nation using satellite technology. Inspired by and imitating Lucky 3721 produced by ETV (Education TV Channel), in July 1997 Hunan TV began to air a variety show called "Happy Base Camp" (Kuai Le Da Ben Yingin) in which stars played games, gave musical performances and acted out comedy skits. This TV show rapidly became a real hit with the audience (especially the young one) throughout the country and is still the top weekend prime time entertainment show.

After this success in 1997, Hunan Satellite TV decided not to devote all its energies to entertainment production but, between 1999 and 2001, began to develop along the lines of the exclusive CCTV-style news production. In 2000 Hunan Satellite TV started to broadcast 5 general news programmes and 3 economic news programmes, demonstrating that its aspiration was to concentrate on news production instead of entertainment shows. But there are two questions to answer: does Hunan Satellite TV have the means to compete against CCTV as the only administratively central TV station; and, can the provincial satellite media touch the bottom line (Zhao, 1998) of news production? SARFT plays a patriarchal role in regulating and imposing state control over local media, above all in the last 5 years when it implicitly took over the control and balancing of the growing competition among provincial TV stations, with the ultimate aim of maintaining CCTV's national monopoly. Since the industrialization reform in the media market was introduced, TV stations are allowed to make their own management decisions and take full responsibility for their profit and loss. However, these state-owned local TV stations are still under the strict surveillance of the state (through SARFT, for example) which checks that no local TV productions breach the line of demarcation of central censorship. The rise of Hunan Satellite TV before 2002 was seen by SARFT as a model of commercialization of provincial TV stations which was worth popularizing throughout the nation but Hunan Satellite TV was also seen as a threat to the unitary market privilege reserved to CCTV which could jeopardize the monopolistic accumulation of political and social benefits that CCTV had enjoyed for decades.

Prof Hu Zhengrong (2006) argued that it is the particularity of media systems in mainland China that leads to the "media rental-seeking" (to use political privilege to "rent" economic profits), that the media can easily transform political capital into economic profit, and that the larger political space created by marketization and capitalization may lead to larger economic profits. But I claim that the 2001 Hunan Satellite TV crisis refutes Hu's argument and that his "media rental-seeking" model can only apply to

CCTV and not to all the other provincial/local TV stations, which cannot afford the political risk entailed in collective rent-seeking. The local media are not meant to be politically qualified to exchange their political capital with economic profit.

Looking at the development of local satellite TV stations and their reorganization and restructuring campaigns, it is clear that most of the provincial TV stations are cautious or dilatory at the beginning, none of them dares take the first step and the case of Hunan satellite TV is what I have called the case of "coincidence-success in pursuing commercialization". At the end of 2001 Hunan Satellite TV was struck by a financial crisis caused by its tempered competition with other provincial satellite TV channels. There was heated discussion about which direction the Hunan Satellite Channel should take: whether to add news or not and, at the end of this long debate it finally chose to focus on entertainment. This choice was due to Hunan Satellite TV's limited (political) capital and the limited possibility of transforming that capital into profit; Hunan Satellite TV's failure to achieve success in news production and its image with the audience as an entertainment channel jointly pushed Hunan Satellite TV towards entertainment (also allowing it to avoid political errors or deviances).

Reality Show with Misemployed Democracy

In the summer of 2005 a craze for grassroots super stars spread throughout mainland China triggered by Super Girls, a quasi-"American Idol" TV show broadcast by Hunan Satellite TV. The nation as a whole fell in love with this program and Hunan Satellite TV was symbolically set against CCTV by many Chinese netizens as society vs. government, market vs. state, civil rights vs. political dictatorship and democracy vs. party-authoritarianism.

It may be true that at the beginning the producers of Super Girls did not intend to compete against CCTV; what they did was simply imitate a successful US and UK reality show, adapting it to the Chinese reality in order to pursue a media commercialization success. However, Super Girls, a purely commercial reality TV show, turned into a mixed container into which CCTV, other provincial TV stations, and SARFT all threw themselves wholeheartedly. This was the first time a local TV Channel had gained national influence, previously only held by CCTV, and many Chinese intellectuals and netizens took part in a lively discussion about democracy and this show since the spontaneous voting system adopted by Super Girls involved the participation of people from all over the country. Thus, with the success and growing popularity of Super Girls, the interventions of SARFT and CCTV were gradually seen as "monopoly" or "hegemony" by the audience. Covert manipulation became publicly visible in an unexpected way and this demonstrated the power of the media to win social capital and public support.

However, it should be noted that political capital still maintains its power in the media industries and since 1992 so-called "commercialization" has generally been considered an "action" of state government to overcome a political crisis through marketization (Barme, 1999; Zhao, 2000; 2006). It reflects a strange but balanced logic of the commercialization of China's TV industry: the TV station must be linked to the party-state which is disguised in what Vaclav described "the power of the powerless" (1985). Local TV stations have to be politically castrated by SARFT to gain authorization to commercialize: they must be appreciated not only by the audience, which can only be used to measure their commercial success, but also by the Party and the State, the prerequisite for their commercial success.

This essay does not aim to comment on whether there was an atmosphere of democracy in Super Girls, or to review in-depth the complex debates on democracy and the market. What it intends to do is illustrate the misemployed democracy and its negative effects produced by Super Girls. The market has ironically been used to promote "democracy" in Super Girls, as if the market were the only ideology that could rescue the state from an authoritarian Maoist regime after "a second cultural revolution" (Dirlik, 2001). Since many social upheavals and problems, of which the Chinese government is vitally aware, did not transform into public "events", it seemed that in 2005 Super Girls, a reality TV show, became a public "event" and an alternative soapbox for Chinese intellectuals not only to advocate neo-liberal, universal democracy and civil society, but also as a means of expressing their desire for some political rights within the context of the weakening socialist ideology and revolutionary legacy. Super Girls was represented as demonstrating democracy through market success which added many political aspects to the programme

itself. The great irony here is that both the political imagination ignited by the Chinese intellectuals and the long-term existing antagonism towards the monopoly of these intellectuals negatively affected the commercial value and they both imperceptibly augmented the influence of Super Girls around the world.

Meanwhile, the collective activism of young fans (especially girls) convinced officials of the gap between state ideology (socialism and collectivism) and society, as well as the power of consumerism as a vital part of the new state ideology and its consequences for society. When hordes of fans, all dressed in the same way, obediently remain still and well-disciplined (totally different to their behavior at school), exclaim with delight, joy and excitement and worship the Super Girls stars (like Li Yuchun, the Super Girls winner in 2005); when fans create a nationwide network of fan clubs, paying membership fees and taking united action like NGOs or other volunteer social organizations, the party-state understood the urgency of letting Hunan Satellite TV offer prominent political and ideological education in Super Girls. Soon after, it was not permitted to show any overacting fans bursting into tears or shouting; the unexpected ban by SARFT on Meteor Garden - a popular Taiwan Idol TV series adapted from a best-selling Japanese cartoon - can also be mentioned here, as the TV series were admired and idolized by teenage girls (the main fan group of Super Girls) in mainland China.

On the Road with Achilles' Heel: Cultural Politics

Many studies have dealt with the marketization and industrialization of China's TV industry and how this has transformed the Chinese TV system into a more effective and democratic one: all TV stations are equal in the face of market forces. But how the administrative hierarchy of the TV system hinders the development of provincial/local TV stations through political and unbalanced economic submission (according to hierarchy) has never been analyzed. There is also a scarcity of research on how the different economic development results (i.e. GDP) of each province located the (economic) development of the provincial TV stations, and also partly determined the trends and genres of the programmes they produced.

As mentioned above, Hunan Satellite TV is not in an advantageous position and I call this Hunan Satellite TV's Achilles' heel. However, Hunan Satellite TV offers an important case study to observe the path of the tortuous development of local TV stations in China. Undoubtedly, Hunan Satellite TV still plays a leading role among all the provincial TV stations, and the reason why it holds this prominent position may be due either to the personality of the Hunanese (daring, fearless and challenging) or the institutional innovation of Hunan TV's strategy. As I explained above, Hunan Satellite TV's success is only a coincidence, without drawing on any previous experience. It freed itself from the cage and beat CCTV - the only influential national TV - both economically and culturally, leading to more lively and aggressive competition between local TV stations and CCTV since 2006, the year Hunan TV launched the reality show and then other music and dating shows. Subsequently Zhejiang Satellite TV developed as China Blue (famous for "I Love Remembering Lyrics") in 2009 and Jiangsu Satellite TV branded itself Happiness China in 2010 (famous for "If You Are The One")

Ironically, after Hunan Satellite TV gained such a huge audience with Super Girls the Hunan Satellite TV fans on one hand saw Hunan Satellite TV battling CCTV as local vs. central authority, but on another hand it also unconsciously created another monopoly - with the same dominating structure as CCTV. Thus, the rise of Jiangsu Satellite TV can largely be attributed to a balance of power with the explicit or implicit support from SARFT to counter the dominance of Hunan satellite TV as a provincial TV station.

To sum up, if the commercialization and convergence of CCTV continues successfully due mainly to its ability to transform its monopolistic political capital into huge economic profits, which makes it invisibly challenged, Hunan Satellite TV gained its success only through marketization based on programming instead of political capital-economic profit transformation.

It firstly achieved a cultural hegemony with an entertainment programme (Super Girl) resulting in it not only being challenged, imitated and followed, but also being strictly limited, supervised and controlled by SARFT, leading it into a re-politicization process. In other words, the de-politicization of the market is subtly utilized by Hunan Satellite TV to resist the monopoly of authoritarian politics in the name of popular culture, while its national expansion along with this "popular culture" represents a challenge for

the political hierarchy and the unevenly distributed capital in the media market of mainland China - this is the heart of the commercialization process of Hunan Satellite TV.

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China's micro-blog sites serve two masters in real names

Jianguo Deng*

As the so-called Web2.0 continues to gain popularity the social media have won over many Internet users, taking up most of their online time. This is true also in China, the world's most populous Internet using country. In China, what has been all the rage in the past two years is none other than micro-blogging, the fastest growing Twitter-like services, with 300 million users at the end of 2011, out of a total of 485 million Internet users as reported by the China Internet Network Information Center's (2011) latest data. The CNNIC survey shows that, while China's Internet population growth is slowing down, micro-bloggers have increased drastically from 63.11 million at year end 2010, to 195 million in June 2011, and 300 million at year end 2011.

In the face of the fast-evolving development of new media like Weibo, the Chinese government has taken rapid measures in the hope of putting it to its own use and of bringing it under control. Two recent measures of this kind include kicking off a national movement to use micro-blogs for government communication and imposing a mandatory real-name registration policy on all micro-bloggers in China.

This short essay examines the real name registration regulation, focusing on the rationale behind the service providers' compliance, the possible impact on Weibo's growth, and the people's concern with the theft and misuse of private information that may be exacerbated after Weibo providers have obtained it.

The "real name" policy

On December 16, 2011, in the name of promoting a "healthy Internet culture" and "socialist core values", the Beijing Municipal Government promulgated with immediate effect a micro-blog real-name registration regulation, the first Chinese city to do so. The regulation requires all users to register with their real names in order to use micro-blogging services, and those who fail to do so within three months will be unable to make posts. By March 16, 2012, all users of the four micro-blogging service providers in China - Sina, Tencent, Souhu and Netease - will have been mandatorily authenticated. The "Regulation" has the aim of managing the "scientific development, positive use, enhanced management (or control) and ensured security" of the new medium.

Playing down the chill effect the regulation may have on micro-blogging, the Beijing government tried hair-splittingly to differentiate the requirement of an authentic screen name, and that of authentic background information registered with the service provider's website. An anonymous official said the government was just mandating the latter. Beyond that, the official said, the government has started working so as to soon demand users who use different screen names for different services (e.g. micro-blogging and discussion boards) on a website should all register with their real ID. These measures were meant "to enhance the government's service level and communication ability, making the Internet a smooth communication channel between the municipal government and residents", said the official, under the usual anonymity when releasing news that may cause public uproar.

Despite the wide controversy such measures have caused, other cities have followed Beijing's suit. On December 17, 2011, Shanghai adopted the same policy as did Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

Sina compliance: drinking poisonous wine to quench thirst?

Sina and other micro-blogging service providers were quick to declare that they welcomed the real-name policy and that they would immediately start to make sure that the requirement was met. Sina vice-president and its Weibo business department General Manager, Peng Shaobin, said Sina would follow all the government's regulations proactively and would "overcome the difficulties" involved in order to execute it to the full. Meanwhile, he said, Sina would further enhance its product features to "guide" users to register with their real names (Xinhua news agency, 2011).

And, Liu Xinzhi, director of marketing of Sohu's micro-blogging department was reported as saying: "the real-name registration regulation will effectively reduce the amount of irresponsible and harmful information in the micro-blogsphere. It will enhance communication among users and benefit micro-blogs' long term development."(Xinhua new agency, 2011)

User authenticity, however, was not something that was badly needed in the Chinese micro-blogsphere, as a large number of micro-blog users in China had already been using their real names long before the real-name registration regulation, to a large degree because of Sina's penchant for using celebrities to market its Weibo service. In the early months of Weibo, Sina executives were said to have doggedly courted celebrities with free iPhones and iPads preinstalled with Weibo applications, successfully converting Luddite scholars into instant Weibo power users. Celebrities usually chose to go by their real names in micro-blogs. (China.com.cn, 2010)

If Sina Weibo has been successful so far in China, however, it does not have much to do with its celebrity marketing gimmicks, but for other two reasons. Firstly, it has provided Internet users a place for news and information that the Party-controlled news media had failed to provide for so long. Secondly, as a new medium, microblogging has provided users with a constant, albeit fragmented, flow of fresh and diverse information in a way unlike any other existing media. These two reasons are more related to the current news ecology in China and the technical features of micro-blogs - flat, diverse, decentralized and disruptive and full of "weak ties" - than how it is marketed by Sina.

On top of that, Sina's celebrity strategy, though effective so far in spreading Weibo, has not been without criticism. Some commentators pointed out that Sina, by restoring flat micro-blog communication to a power hierarchy, has alienated most other average Internet users. That's why, even before the real name registration policy was promulgated, Sina Weibo registered a slower growth and Sina shares were falling. "Our focus now turns to adding more social networking features to Weibo to increase user retention," CEO Charles Chao said in a statement (RTT News, 2011). But the real name registration regulation may only exacerbate the loss of users by scaring them away. Sina and other service providers seemed aware of the possibility of losing users. What made them announce their compliance with the regulation might have been a hope of "killing two birds with one stone". Acting as they did, they were showing obedience to the authorities as well as strong business shrewdness, or so it appears. In contrast to old-style websites hampered by rampant user anonymity, user authenticity has long been hyped as (to a certain degree it truly is) the major attraction of social media websites such as Facebook and its Chinese versions like Renren.com. Authentic users can facilitate communication, and, for a more important but usually less explicitly-announced reason, requiring users to register under their real name can greatly increase the service provider's accuracy in targeted advertising. The more accurately an advertiser knows its target audience, the more advertising dollars it is willing to pay. With the real name registration policy in place, service providers can tell a better story to their advertisers and appease the government at the same time.

However, while increasing its advertising targeting accuracy, forcefully requiring real name registration of its users will very likely kill the beauty of the micro-blog and turn off users. The real name policy might help business in the short run (which itself needs to be seen), but in the long run, a more rigidly controlled micro-blogsphere may dampen users' interest and speed up their exodus, diminishing the service providers' long-term business prospects. For Sina, fully complying with and enforcing the real name policy will be like, as a Chinese idiom goes, "drinking slow poisonous wine to quench an immediate thirst" (饮鸩止渴 *yinjiu zhike*) In the latest development of the story, as evidence of Sina and other microblog sites' concern with users' exodus, they have chosen to play tricks on the government to get out of the dilemma they were in.

According to a report by Wen Wei Po (2012) in Hong Kong, on March 17, the day after full compliance with the real name registration policy was expected (March 16), reporters found Sina, Tencent, Sohu and Netease had all tinkered with and distorted the governmental "no real name, no freedom of expression" requirement to blunt its repulsiveness to users. They split the users into existing users, who they automatically linked to their mobile phone numbers (which they had obtained earlier and supposedly had all been registered in their real name), and newly registered users, who were required to do so with their IDs at sign-in. yet, according to the Wen Wei Po report, some existing users said they could still make posts on March 17 even without mobile phone number linking or ID registration. Other users said they saw that the so-called Internet Water Army (Internet ghostwriters paid to post online comments with specific content) was still in operation under fake names. How long Sina and other service providers can

use these tricks remains to be seen. There is no sure answer to this question, as it could have been an approach acquiesced by the government, fearing that the real name policy was too harsh.

Public concern: theft and misuse of private data

As a matter of the fact, in an era of the massive exploitation of private data, what worries the public most is apparently not the “real name” polity itself, but the possible leak of the information once they have registered. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for the Chinese to receive spam text messages or phone calls on mobile or fixed line phones each day and be addressed with their real name. All institutions Chinese microblog users have dealt with, commercial or governmental, would deny firmly they were at fault, or that the Gig-bit database of private information is being hawked online. Super-rich state-owned telecommunications companies constantly deny that they are accomplices in this, saying that it is technically impossible for them to distinguish normal text messages and phone calls from those which are not. But, as many anecdotes show, at any specific moment, when the People’s Congress is in session in Beijing, spam texts and phone calls suddenly diminish. When the congress is over, spam resumes. In China there is an extremely low level of trust in any institutions that can lay their hands on Chinese citizens’ private data, and any policies that lead to more disclosure of such data would only increase their worries. These worries have been reinforced by a recent massive leak of personal data of more than 50 million users of websites including China Software Development Network (CSDN), and social network sites Renren.com and Kaixin001.com. Unconfirmed media reports have also been circulating about the leakage of personal banking information. Hearing that, panicked users rushed to ATMs to reset their account passwords.(Websense.com, 2011)

After the full enforcement of the real name policy, will Weibo be as sticky to users as it used to be? Maybe we need to ask a question raised by a reader commenting on a story about the real-name registration on China Media Project, a project of the journalism and new media studies center of Hong Kong University on December 18, 2011: “It should be noted that social media anywhere is prone to rumors and false information. Why is it that most countries don’t feel the need to administer such harsh controls, and China does?” (Bandurski, 2011). Micro-blogging service providers in China seem to have two masters to serve in their pursuit of political correctness and commercial viability - a jittery government that worries about losing its influence and relevance in a social media era, and the Internet users who have become more aware of and vocal about supervision and their right to free speech. Whether and how they can serve the two masters well will be a very tricky and treacherous job. But, as copiers of the West, this could an be an area where Chinese social media sites can at least show some innovative spirit.

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Overview of the Media Industry in China in 2011

Mobile Media industry / Advertising industry

Mobile media: in 2010 the Chinese optical fiber network extended for a length of 9.95 million km, 1.66 million km more than in 2009. Between 2009 and 2010 China acquired 64.33 million new mobile devices, reaching a total of 1.50 billion devices. The base of the internet bandwidth in the telecommunication industry reached 187 million citizens, a rise of 49.24 million people; in the whole country the international bandwidth is 1098957 Mbps, registering a 26.8% growth between 2009 and 2010.

The business sector was worth 3095.5 billion yuan (367.81 billion Euro), up 20.5%, while the income of the telecommunication management sector reached 898,8 billion yuan (106.8 billion Euro), up 6.4%. These data show that even although the main internet communication structure grew, some important numbers in the development of the telecommunication sector continue to shrink while the supply of broadcasting products, information and added value services are gaining more market importance. It is therefore possible to argue that the telecommunications sector is under a "mediatization" process.

In 2010 the Chinese market had 1.15 billion telephone subscribers, including 850 million mobile subscribers; at the end of 2010, 74.5% of the population was a mobile telephone subscriber, more than three times that of the fixed telephone subscribers. It is worth noting that among the mobile subscribers group there were 47.05 million 3G subscribers.

At the same time, after the first decade of the XXI century the number of people who have access to the Internet, Internet penetration and the popularization rate saw a real jump ahead. According to the Blue Book statistics, at the end of 2010 China gained 73.30 million new users to reach a total of 457 million users and confirmed an Internet penetration index of 34.3%, a value that should be compared with the world Internet penetration index (23.2%) and the Asian Internet penetration index (55.4%).

Advertising: According to the statistics released by the State Administration for Industry & Commerce of the People's Republic of China, in 2010 the value of advertisements was 2340.51 billion yuan (278.18 billion Euro), registering a growth of 299.25 billion yuan (35.59 billion Euro) (14.67%) compared to 2009; a significant growth which is even higher than the GDP of 10.3%. The value of the advertising sector accounts for 0.59% of the entire Chinese GDP. The sector continues to progress as is confirmed by 243,445 advertising danwei (unit of labour). It is important to note that there were 1,480,525 Chinese professional advertisers at the end of 2010, up 10.91% over the previous year.

In the last five years the growth of the sector was 11% in 2006, 10.68% in 2007, 9.11% in 2008, 7.45% in 2009, and 14.67% in 2010. Since 2005 the growth of the Chinese advertising sector has steadied out, especially after the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008. Even although the Chinese advertising sector was not seriously affected, foreign investments recorded a slowdown.

Source:

Bluebook on China's Media- Report on the Development of China's Media Industry (2011)

Led by the Tsinghua University School of Journalism and Communication, and Center of Media Economy and Management Studies.

Chief Editor: Cui Baoguo

Publisher: Social Sciences Academic Press (China) April 2011

Press

Transformation of non-political newspapers across China

The General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China (GAPP) announced on February 27 that it would accelerate the transformation of press media groups in China. According to 2011 data, more than 1600 non-political newspapers transformed into companies, and after the announcement of GAPP in February, various provinces replied with different targets for 2012; e.g. Guangdong Province has undertaken the transformation 76 non-political newspapers, Shanxi province will complete the transformation of 95 non-political newspapers before April and Hubei province added another 77 newspapers to transform into companies in the first half of 2012, etc.

Source: General Administration of Press and Publication of the Republic of China 27nd February 2012
<http://www.gapp.gov.cn/cms/html/21/515/201202/733931.html>

GAPP: Domestic Publishers to Launch Abroad

GAPP (General Administration of Press and Publication) chief Liu Binjie announced that China will help domestic publishers to set up agencies, branches and offices abroad, and that China is in favor of these publishers launching journals, magazines and newspapers overseas. GAPP's "No.1 Document", entitled "Advice on Accelerating China's Press & Publication Industry to Go Overseas", issued on January 9 2012, set a clear direction and a roadmap for the country's publishing industry for the coming years.

According to the document, China will support and offer "relevant resources" to domestic media groups, in an effort to launch foreign-language journals and magazines which target the overseas market. Preferential conditions and promotional measures will be granted to non-state-owned enterprises and/or sino-foreign JVs that specialize in producing foreign language journals and magazines.

Source: China News January 2012 <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2012/01-09/3591473.shtml>

Broadcasting

The 3-network convergence construction is to be accelerated

On February 14, 2012, SARFT organized the 2012 national Radio, TV, Film Broadcasting Technology Conference in Beijing. Vice director Zhang Haitao made an important speech about the 3-network convergence, emphasizing that the construction of the national cable TV-network platform will be the core issue of 2012. Besides SARFT, the administrative department of the telecom industry will also join this platform, which will change the monopoly-management of SARFT, and overcome the long time deadlock between the broadcasting administration and telecom administration on 3-network convergence (fight for the control of the 3-network convergence related industry, with experts' estimates of a CNY market of about 668 billion).

Source: The 3-network convergence construction is to be accelerated. IT Time Magazine, 2012.06 issue
<http://www.ittime.com.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=13&id=1930>

Chinese TV Series production of 2011

In 2011, SARFT announced that a total of 1040 TV series (33,877 episodes) had been produced, but only 469 TV series (14,942 episodes) obtained broadcasting permission. In fact, TV stations in mainland China can only broadcast 6000-8000 episodes of series each year meaning that more than half of the TV series produced cannot be broadcast. SARFT communicated that it expects that more than 20000 episodes of TV series will receive permission to broadcast this year. However, the limited broadcasting chances didn't limit the trade of TV series in 2011. "Hou Gong Zhen Huan Zhuan" ranked No.1 with a copyright sales price of 4 million Yuan (478,295 Euro) per episode (including TV stations and internet broadcasting), and other TV series such as "Fu Chen" and "Fu Qi Na Xie Shi", which are currently popular on TV screens across China, also sold at the price of 3 million Yuan (358.721 Euro) per episode. Experts expect that the copyright price of TV series may increase to 5 million Yuan (597,868 Euro) per episode in 2012.

Source: Increased TV series copyright price, each episode may reach 5 million Shenzhen Commercial Daily 1st January 2012 <http://www.chinanews.com/yl/2012/01-06/3586995.shtml>, **2012 Beijing News, also on entgroup new 28th march 2012**
<http://news.entgroup.cn/tv/2813260.shtml>

Film industry

China to Expand Film Import Quotas

China is to expand the number of films it allows to be imported into the country each year. The announcement was made on February 18 following a meeting in Los Angeles between US vice president Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, currently China's vice president. The moves were made as part of the settlement of a trade dispute between the two countries that in 2010 resulted in a ruling from the World Trade Organisation requiring China to improve market access. China was given a deadline of March last year to comply. With immediate effect, China is to allow the annual import of 14 films that are deemed as "enhanced," a category spanning IMAX and 3-D titles. These are in addition to the current quota of 20 revenue sharing films per year. The terms on which revenues are shared with overseas rights holders will also change. Rentals are now set at 25% of box office revenues instead of the current sliding scale of 13%-17%. The effectiveness of the new policy will be reviewed after 5 years, allowing the US potentially to return to the WTO to seek further relief if China's implementation is deemed insufficient.

Source: [Chinesefilm.cn](http://www.chinesefilms.cn/1/2012/02/20/122s7426.htm) – 2nd January 2012 <http://www.chinesefilms.cn/1/2012/02/20/122s7426.htm>

Weifilm--the New Genre of Film Production in China

The "First Weifilm Forum - Open up the new world for Chinese online short films in the internet age" took place during the Hong Kong International Film & TV Market (FILMART) on March 21 2012, which for the first time introduced the concept of "Weifilm", indicating micro films in the background of the heating-up production of online short films. In the meantime, Qinghai TV station also announced that from April 22 it would broadcast the first Weifilm programme on TV screens nationwide to support the development of this new genre of film production in mainland China following the success of several Weifilms in 2011, i.e. "Old Boy" (Youku production), "Kan Qiu Ji" (directed by famous film director Jiang Wen) and "No.66 Road" (produced by Cadillac).

Source [Xinmin Evening News](http://ent.xinmin.cn/2012/03/27/14187175.html) 27th March 2012 <http://ent.xinmin.cn/2012/03/27/14187175.html>

China's animation industry on the rise?

Echoing the reform of China's cultural development, at this year's NPC and CPPCC sessions a new exhibition showcasing China's achievements in comics and animation over the last 5 years is being held at the National Museum. Mu Fangzhou now takes you there for a retrospective on Chinese animation. This is not your typical comic convention or anime festival. It's an event full of texts, numbers and figures, and the data is positive. Having rapidly increased its political and economic might globally, China is now eager to boost its cultural appeal. Since the 17th CPC National Congress in 2007, a string of policies supporting the domestic animation industry have come into effect, and here at the National Museum you can learn how the business has been doing since then.

Source [CNTV](http://english.cntv.cn/program/cultureexpress/20120320/108844.shtml) 20th March <http://english.cntv.cn/program/cultureexpress/20120320/108844.shtml>

Internet

Micro-blog real name policy: four portals began to implement the new rules on March 16

A new regulation was implemented on March 16: from that day every microblog user of the most popular Chinese internet portals (Sina, Tencent, Sohu, Netease) has to register with his/her real name. Despite much online outcry before March 16, the new measure appears to be having a limited effect. In fact, on many of the most popular Chinese micro-blog websites users can still post messages online without registering with their real names and government identification numbers. Officials said that the real name policy aims to limit the spread of rumors online and protect users. According to the latest data provided by China Internet Information Center (CNNIC), China has 349 million micro-blog users. Micro-blog platforms are a major source of commentary in China on a wide range of topics. Online posting has played a key role in breaking news and providing space to comment on the government policies. Although it was the government that began the push to tighten controls on the media, service providers have been working with authorities to implement the new policy, but some users have expressed their aversion to the new policies.

Source: [Guangzhou daily](http://www.cnr.cn/gundong/201202/t20120208_509136512.shtml) 20th march http://www.cnr.cn/gundong/201202/t20120208_509136512.shtml

MIIT Issues Development Guidelines for Chinese E-Commerce

On 27 March the Ministry of Industry and Technology of the People's Republic of China issued a new set of guidelines meant to shape the development of Chinese e-commerce. The [full report](#) is quite long, but of course, what you're really interested in are the policy initiatives, of which there are ten:

1. **Strengthen organizational guarantees:** Local governments should take further steps to organize e-commerce, increase supervision in this area, and incorporate e-commerce companies in existing supervision and cooperation channels.
2. **Create a robust environment for the development of trust in e-commerce:** Everyone — government, consumers, and the companies themselves — should push to make e-commerce sites accountable if they do not maintain their promises.
3. **Increase public service and market supervision in e-commerce:** Again, local governments should get more involved in supervising e-commerce sites, especially to ensure that they respect the law.
4. **Increase the strength of attacks against illegal behavior in e-commerce:** More recommendations of strong government supervision, including the possible founding of a long-term branch of government dedicated to supervision and law enforcement in this area.
5. **Perfect mechanisms protecting the rights and benefits [of consumers]:** Extend existing and create new systems to ensure the rights of consumers are protected in the e-commerce sphere.
6. **Strengthen e-commerce legislation and create industry standards and norms:** Pretty self-explanatory.
7. **Perfect the diversification of e-commerce financing mechanisms:** Increase transparency in financing and also increase government investment in this area.
8. **Strengthen statistical monitoring of e-commerce:** Increase cooperation and supervision of the relevant government departments to ensure accurate statistical tracking of the market.
9. **Speed up the development of skilled professionals:** Increase training initiatives, etc.
10. **Increase international cooperation:** Work with more international companies and promote the development of Chinese companies through cooperation.

Source: Sina Tech also on Technasia 27th march 2012 <http://www.technasia.com/miit-issues-development-guidelines-chinese-ecommerce/>

New media and market

MIIT Announces February 2012 Telecom Statistics

China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) has released its February 2012 telecom industry statistics. The figures for the month were as follows:

Telecom operating revenues amounted to Yuan 90.26 billion (Euro 10.78 billion), bringing the cumulative year-to-date total to Yuan 182.78 billion (Euro 21.83 bln), up 16.4% over the same 2-month period of 2011. Core services accounted for Yuan 160.55 billion (Euro 19.17 billion) of the cumulative total, up 11.3% year over year.

Total telephone subscribers increased by 9.91 million in February to reach 1.291 billion. The number of mobile subscribers grew by 10.33 million to 1,007 billion, and fixed-line subscribers dropped by 419,000 to 284.29 million. Broken down by traditional fixed-line and PHS, the PHS subscriber base decreased by 595,000 subscribers to 16.340.000, while traditional (i.e. non-PHS) fixed-line subscribers increased by 176,000 to 267.95 million. 7.32 million new 3G subscribers were added in February to reach a total of 143.92 million. A total of 71.03 billion SMS messages were sent during the month of February, bringing the total for the first 2 months of 2012 to 156.59 billion, a 7.6% increase over the same period of 2011.

Broadband added 2.45 mln new registered users in February to reach a total of 154.96 mln. Dial-up increased by 12,000 users, raising the total dial-up user base to 5.51 mln.

MIIT also on Marbrige Daily 30th March 2012 http://www.marbridgeconsulting.com/marbridgedaily/2012-03-30/article/54864/miit_announces_february_2012_telecom_statistics

E-commerce to make even bigger gains

China aims to double the value of its e-commerce sales to 18 trillion Yuan (Euro 2.86 trillion) by the end of 2015, which would make it the leading market for global e-commerce. That's according to an E-commerce 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-15) issued on March 27 by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the nation's top industry regulator.

China, with 513 million Internet users, is home to more online residents than the United States, according to a China Internet Network Information Center report in January.

"During the 11th Five-Year Plan (2005-10), the growth rate for China's e-commerce sales increased by an average of 250 percent, reaching 4.5 trillion Yuan (Euro 536.50 billion) by the end of 2010," the ministry said.

In 2010, around 161 million Internet users purchased 513.1 billion yuan (Euro 61.32 million) of goods online, accounting for 3.3 percent of the value of all retail sales in China.

"E-commerce has expanded into various industries such as agriculture, trading, transport, finance and travel industries and is merging with China's substantial economy," the plan said.

As online shopping becomes more popular, so do methods of making payments through third-parties online. From 2005 to 2010, the amount of payments made through third-party services increased 60-fold to reach 1.01 trillion yuan (Euro 0.20 billion).

Source: China's Daily 28th March 2012 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2012-03/28/content_14928764.htm

Communication Studies in China: A 30-Year Review

Chief Editor: Wang Yihong, Hu Yiqing

Vice Chief Editor: Zhang Dan, Yang Ruiming

Publisher: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House (book in Chinese)
2010.July

In 2007 the Institute of Journalism and Communication of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences awarded this book the status of major research initiative.

Communication Studies, as a new academic discipline, was first introduced to mainland China 30 years ago mainly through the effort of some Chinese scholars who focused on journalism studies at that time. After many phases of development (including introducing, digesting, transforming, applying and criticizing) along with the dramatic transition process of the media industry and the Chinese society since 1980s, Communication Studies gradually established its own academic status and became an important branch not only in higher education, but also in social science research in China.

Based on the careful collection and filtering of the huge amount of literature on Communication Studies published in the last 30 years, the authors of the book, or more specifically the editors, explain and comment a variety of subjects, i.e. the internal and external environment of communication research, the key events and contributors, the text and concepts, the resource of theories, research directions, and academic criticisms. The book thus became the main academic reference on the development of Communication Studies in China.

This book comprises by 4 chapters: Chapter 1 chronicles Communication Studies in China, describing how Communication Studies gained its foothold and developed in mainland China, and documents the zigzag path of this development in a logical way; Chapter 2 is a collection of reports and articles on specific topics, which represents a revised understanding and analysis (mostly supplemented with a critical perspective) of representative research fields in Communication Studies in the past 30 years; Chapter 3 is a collection of distinguished scholars' articles on Communication Studies, which records the historical interaction of the scholars' own relationship with the growth of the discipline in China, in addition to their unique contributions, academic status and research interests/statements in Communication Studies; Chapter 4 is the reference resource which provides related data for readers to facilitate their own research in Communication Studies.

Wang Yihong is a senior researcher in Media and Journalism department of China Academy of Social Science. She is also a part-time professor of Graduate University of Chinese Academy of Sciences.



On Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China

Author: Shujen Wang

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

2003 September

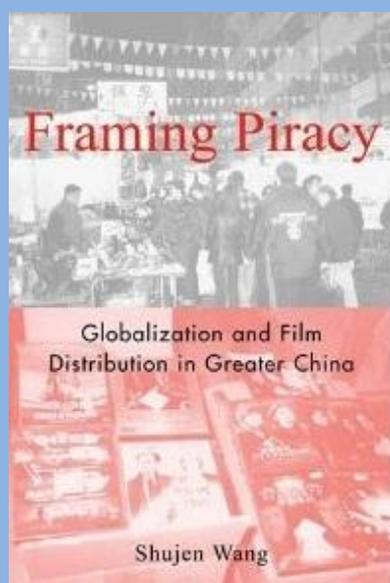
I wrote *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (2003) in an effort to move beyond the dichotomy of the global and the local, which was a tendency in the film and media globalization literature with foci mostly on global production or local reception. The epigraph to my book touched on that matter: "The two extremes, local and global, are much less interesting than the intermediary arrangements that we are calling networks" (Bruno Latour, 1993:122).

With the spatial and theoretical turn to the middle, my book focuses on distribution, both licit and illicit, in Greater China (the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan). Using the Actor Network Theory and with the results of an extensive field research in the three territories, the book maps global film distribution and piracy and Hollywood's struggle to maintain control of property and the market in the context of transnational copyright governance, the role of the state and its relations with transnational trade and legal regimes, and the impacts of digital technologies on the spatial and temporal logic of the market (chapters 1 through 4).

In the informational economy, intellectual property has become the real property, since what are traded are increasingly intellectual property *rights*. Piracy not only challenges such conventional centers of power as legitimate transnational media rights holders (e.g., Hollywood major studios) and international copyright regimes, it also tests a state's internal regulatory and enforcement capacity and its external negotiation and trade leverage in a post-WTO trade environment. Enabled by digital technologies, the current forms of entertainment piracy have disrupted the balance of power in copyright industries given its capacity to erase space and reward speed.

It is clear from the three case studies (chapters 5 through 10) that film distribution and piracy patterns in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are different, reflecting the unique politico-cultural-economic-historic-technological realities in each territory. Restricted media access in China is one of the major reasons for the strong demand for piracy products in that territory. Additionally, distribution and piracy in China are linked directly to the size of the market, the state run monopolized distribution system, and the overall market supply and demand imbalance problems. China's geographical, economic, and technological environments have also made it both a desirable market for pirated goods and an appealing production and export base for such goods. While China's efforts in gaining WTO accession (2001) did bring forth significant changes in its film import and distribution policies, its IPR regulations and enforcement practices, further market liberalization, and piracy remain an issue.

Politically isolated but economically and technologically successful and sophisticated, Taiwan is viewed as a key node and a transshipment center for the piracy networks. Its threat to copyright industries lies not in the size of the market, but in the various technological, geographical, and commercial advantages that it possesses. Hong Kong, on the other hand, has been an ideal location for distribution given its status as a free port between the Mainland and the West. It is a crucial node in multiple intersecting networks through which flows of products and capital, both legal and illegal, overlap and interchange.



Given its location as the jumping off point to the Mainland, parallel importing (the gray market) has also been a unique problem, challenging the geographical divisions of the market order.

Just as the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan each serves an important function in the Greater China economic circle in legitimate business, they also serve different yet complementary roles in the underground shadow economy.

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Shujen Wang is associate professor of visual and media arts at Emerson College and a research associate in the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University.

An International Conference on Communication and Global Power Shifts, Communication University of China, Beijing 12-13 October 2012

Organizers:

National Center for Radio and Television Studies, Communication University of China
School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Since the beginning of the 21st century, a range of celebratory, inspirational, and alarmist claims by politicians, pundits, and academics around the world have converged to herald a global power shift away from the West, and towards 'the Rest.' The U.S. originated global financial crisis of 2008 and Euro-zone debt crisis of 2011 lend credence to this discourse. Given the centrality of communications to the formation and transformation of the current global order, communication structures, processes and practices lie at the heart of shifting global power relations. From U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's assertions that the U.S. is losing the "information war" to Al Jazeera, to the Chinese state's concerted efforts to strengthen its global communication capabilities, profound changes in the geopolitics of global information are apparently underway. The rise of Nollywood and Bollywood and the persistent circulation of 'pirated' materials serve to challenge discourses of cultural homogenization and cultural imperialism. The increasingly pivotal role of communication and culture in emergent patterns of innovation, production, distribution and marketing raise questions about the locus and mechanics of power in a globalized economy.

Despite these shifts, the global communications order continues to be marked by profound inequalities and injustices. The ongoing restructuring of the global political economy may accentuate, rather than challenge, existing forms of domination. In order to understand these changes we need to look beyond dominant 'power shift' discourses, which focus primarily on the changing 'balance of power' among states. This perspective overlooks the sharply escalating power shift from the global workforce to transnational capital, as well as the growing communicative power of micro-bloggers and the prominent role of social media in recent social mobilizations. The latter have manifested a power shift from established institutions and entrenched power structures to networked individuals and the 'multitudes,' leading to the potential revitalization of popular democratic imaginations and practices.

These competing claims of global power shifts are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, they intersect in complex ways to define the new dynamics of power in and through communications in the current era, as networked social forces fight out their visions and stakes in a crises-laden world both within and beyond the nation-state boundaries. The volatile and chaotic nature of the current global system and the crucial role of communications in the mutual constitution of the post-crisis global order have given rise to new urgency for concerted efforts in the critical analysis of both enduring issues and new players, processes, and dynamics in global communications. Relevant topics include but are not limited to:

- *Historical studies and theoretical explorations of communication and global power shifts*
- *Continuities and changes in the dynamics and patterns of global communications, with specific attention on South to South and/or intra-regional communication and cultural flows, and their theoretical and practical implications*
- *Role of BRICS countries, other regional blocs, as well as individual states – large and small – in readdressing global power imbalances in and through communications*
- *The mutually constitutive role of media, information and cultural industries both in the ongoing global economic crisis and in the multi-dimensional struggles for social transformation*
- *Foreclosures and opportunities for a more just global media and communication order in the Internet age, including lessons learned from the NWICO and WSIS processes*
- *New parameters and conceptual frameworks for transnational, national and subnational communication and cultural policies*
- *The continuing relevance of Dallas Smythe's concept of "audience commodity", current debates on "digital labor power", and labor struggles in and through communication, social movements and the possibilities and limits of small media—"traditional" and "new" in communicative and*

cultural empowerment at the global, regional, national and local levels, including analysis of the communicative dynamics of the ongoing "occupy movement"

- *Critical assessment of neoliberal-era theories and practices of ICT4D and current conceptual and practical innovations in approaches to "development"*
- *Analysis of the constraints, challenges and opportunities in communication for ecological and social sustainability*

The multifaceted nature of the topics entails interdisciplinary and multidimensional analysis, from the perspectives of political economy and policy, critical cultural analysis, and contextualized studies of communication technology and society. The most promising lines of inquiry will involve projects that address the complicated intersections of political economy and cultural politics along critical categories such as empire, class, nation, race, and gender.

The two-day international conference at the Communication University of China (CUC), Beijing, October 12-13, 2012 will invite up to 20 leading scholars from different regions of the world to submit a 5,000-6,000 words position paper assessing the current state of affairs in global communications and charting new frameworks and directions for research and action, and contribute to the discussions at the conference. These position papers, along with selected paper submissions to the conference, will be made available through the China Media Academic website (<http://academic.mediachina.net>). Selected papers from the conference will also be published in a conference volume or a special issue of an academic journal. Contact: 2012cuc@gmail.com

Chinese Media Legislation and Regulation: Trends, Issues and Questions

The Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP) at the University of Oxford is organizing a conference on Chinese media legislation and regulation, **in Oxford, on 15 June 2012**, on the following issues:

China's media landscape has undergone tremendous change over the last few years. Technological innovation and the explosion of Internet use have changed the landscape for the dissemination of entertainment and information. Provincial television channels have boomed. Privatization and foreign investment and influence have become important questions for consideration. The cultural industries have become a priority area for further economic development. At the international level, media trade is one of the most prominent issues between China and the United States. Electronic media have also become a channel for bottom-up political activity: increasingly microblogs are used to bring specific incidents into the public sphere, or for satirical expressions.

These evolutions have been studied in-depth from the angles of political science, communication studies and cultural studies. The legal and regulatory aspects, in contrast, have received less attention in academic literature. Understanding the internal dynamics of the regulatory system for the media is crucial to better explain its impact on political issues, how media law and regulation reflect broader evolutions in China's legal system, and to provide a deeper insight in the shifting priorities and objectives of the current leadership. To identify salient issues and bring emerging talent in the field together, the Programme for Comparative Media Law and Policy at the University of Oxford will organize a conference which will revolve around the following issues:

- *Understanding the context of Chinese media law, regulation and policy. What dynamics exist in the restructuring of institutional interests behind media law and policymaking? How do policy making institutions in China interact with international counterparts? What shifts are taking place in the bureaucracy of decision-making and why, including those between the Party and State, and along horizontal and vertical lines. Is the conception of an underlying value system changing and if yes, how are relevant interests mobilized?*
- *Emerging media doctrines and enforcement. Is there consistency between the various administrative regulations? Can one examine case studies in regulation—the recent changes on*

regulation of entertainment formats, for example—as a way of presenting new understandings of media law and policy making in China? Is the role of the courts changing in terms of functioning in the media policy realm? Are various zones of litigation, tort law, defamation or privacy law, financial or business law, having an impact on media policy? Which sorts of cases are brought to courts, or how does administrative enforcement function?

- *Alternative forms of regulation. How are co-regulation and self-regulation taking shape in China? In which sectors are these applied? What are the actors, structures and processes?*
- *International cooperation and trade. How is China opening up for foreign investors? Does this result in shifting patterns of business activities, investment and participation? What is the influence of the WTO and other international regimes on Chinese media law and regulation?*
- *How does discourse about media law and regulation include reference to international norms and competing models of regulation? What is the state of research on effects of change in norms and enforcement on social relations?*

It is expected that the conference papers will form a publication, the exact format of which is still to be determined.

For further information about PCMLP, please see: <http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk>

China Media Observatory is oriented to develop a strong academic network among Professors, researchers, PhD from Europe, China and other countries, who are focusing on China Media studies, with interdisciplinary approaches. Any academic contributions and suggestions from your side are always welcomed.

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