

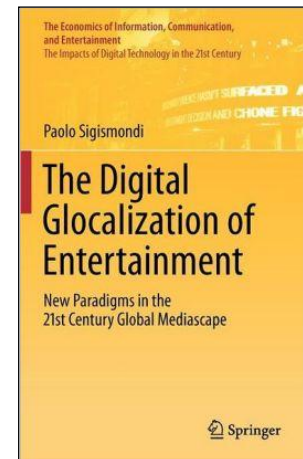
Paolo Sigismondi, **The Digital Glocalization of Entertainment: New Paradigms in the 21st Century Global Mediascape**, New York, NY: Springer, 2012, 135 pp., \$ 119.00 (hardcover).

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More than 10 years have passed since the new millennium started. However, we still witness many political, economic, and cultural issues lingering from the previous millennium. Globalization must be among the most-discussed topics; however, we do not have a clear definition for it. Since the appearance of the modern version of the term, it has been conceptualized and reconceptualized in numerous ways by theorists, thinkers, politicians, activists, and such. Although the idea of globalization is still ambiguous and elusive, a clear tendency indicates that it is moving from a unilateral and linear influence or movement to one of mutually reinforcing and multilayered flows among nation-states and cultures. The view of globalization as a one-way force from “the West to the Rest” predominated for most of the 20th century, but as the 21st century approached and non-Western nation states and blocs appeared on the global stage, such discourse began to change (Featherstone, 1993).



Discussing this transition in the field of media and communications in the 21st century, Paolo Sigismondi visits two issues: the rise of *glocalization* and the rapid development of digital technology, particularly in the entertainment sector. In his book, **The Digital Glocalization of Entertainment: New Paradigms in the 21st Century Global Mediascape**, Sigismondi conjunctionally defines these two trends as the “digital glocalization of entertainment: Successful media texts crossing national and cultural borders incorporate global, glocal, and local elements, enriched by customized elements made possible by the digital media environment” (p. 3). What is remarkable is his connection of the digital glocalization to the (potential) withering of the existing Hollywood influence and authority. In doing so, he pays attention to the popularization of nonscripted programs and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution.

The book, which is based on Sigismondi’s doctoral dissertation, is clearly structured and written. In the introduction, Sigismondi lays out the background, research issues, and theoretical approach. To frame his research and concept, Sigismondi draws on the works of Griffin (1984), Bielby and Harrington (2008), and Straubhaar (2007), which supposedly help him discover the complexities of the entertainment industry and conceptualize glocalization. In order to analyze the industry, he adopts notions from business fields, such as the five competitive forces and the national diamond framework from the work of Michael E. Porter, a leading scholar in competitive strategy. These attempts to include the economics and business perspective seem to be in line with Sigismondi’s MBA background, which he uses to his advantage throughout his industry analysis. Indeed, such an approach promotes readers’ understanding of what is really happening in the entertainment industry and where Hollywood is heading in the age of digital

glocalization. However, Sigismondi does not offer a full account of his theoretical framework and analysis tools—readers who are less familiar with them might need more explanation as to what exactly they are, why they are useful, and how they are applied.

In Part I of his book, Sigismondi investigates the ways in which Hollywood has managed several challenges taking place domestically and globally. In doing so, Hollywood's position has shifted from content creator to distributor in the U.S. entertainment business value chain (p. 25). Then, using the national diamond framework, Sigismondi gives a clear articulation of the reasons Hollywood is prevailing economically in the entertainment industry. In Part II, he lists noneconomic factors that support Hollywood's global primacy and examines different aspects of the issue, such as "the sheer availability of American entertainment products in global entertainment marketplaces," "narrative transparency," "different potential meanings of a media text from its decoders," "cultural proximity," "national pride," and "participatory and convergence culture" (p. 35). This is where the author becomes interdisciplinary; readers, however, may remain uncertain about how these factors have precisely influenced the dominance of Hollywood separately or in conjunction, and which one(s) the author finds more potent. Still with some lack of clarity, the author turns his attention to two challenges that are threatening Hollywood's firm grip on the industry: the diffusion of nonscripted entertainment and the ICT revolution.

Nonscripted entertainment, the term the author deliberately prefers "as it is deemed more extensive and therefore more able to capture the evolving nature of the phenomenon" (p. 48), started in Europe and diffused globally because of its cost-effective aspect. In the process of spreading over various locales, a format of nonscripted entertainment founded on the European model was modified and contextualized according to regional needs. Sigismondi posits, "the superior local adaptability of non-scripted entertainment makes them more appealing in foreign TV markets than regular Hollywood productions which cannot practice 'glocalization' of entertainment as effectively" (pp. 75-76). He then presents two industry examples that were able to "diversify their assets and expand their global reach" and "generate multiple revenue streams" by utilizing new media platforms (pp. 69-71).

When the nonscripted format began its global rise, Hollywood was inattentive. However, as the format became popular, Hollywood began establishing new divisions and acquiring existing corporations that produce nonscripted entertainment. Although Sigismondi still argues that the emergence of the format remains a strong threat to Hollywood, his argument is somewhat contestable considering the current pervasiveness of Hollywood reality TV programs. Even though Hollywood was not one of the early leaders in the genre, it has recently become an undeniably strong actor by employing the European strategies and evolving the format based on their know-how in the global entertainment industry. A myriad of nonscripted Hollywood shows are being produced, exported to other countries, and contextualized locally. It seems that the cost-benefit merit of the genre was well received by Hollywood; therefore, the format is not a threat to Hollywood, but an opportunity.

The technological revolution is another threat that Sigismondi (and probably many other scholars) insists Hollywood has been confronting. In Part II, he unpacks the relationship between Hollywood and technology. Tracing all the new technologies that have been resisted by Hollywood in the past, he concludes that "in general, the past technological advances applicable to communication and

entertainment in particular have ultimately proven beneficial for Hollywood” (p. 86). However, it is assumed that the new forms of digital technology are posing an elevated level of threat to the industry, as demonstrated by the spread of distribution channels such as piracy, YouTube, and alternative media platforms.

Indeed, not only the circulation but also the production of digital content appeared as a game-changer in the mediascape. Digital technologies transform the relationship between producer and consumer, as well as the processes of production, distribution, and consumption. It is unfortunate that the author does not go further in examining this phenomenon. He repeatedly highlights that new devices have the potential to impact the existing revenue streams, but is ambiguous about the specifics. In arguing convergence culture or alternative shows, both based on digital technology, he gives only an overarching explanation of the situation and a weak interdisciplinary critical analysis as to actually how the new types of digital media content are consumed and circulated, whether or not they are entrenched enough to disrupt the Hollywood structure, how much cultural and social influence as well as economic and technological power they have, and, lastly, how Hollywood is responding to them.

In the last chapter of Part II, Sigismondi offers NBC’s 2008 Olympic coverage as an example that successfully combined the strategy of glocalization and the use of digital media. It is definitely a high-profile case that captured what the audience needed from digital media, but in Part II it is not very clear what glocalization is. It seems that there is a discrepancy in the definition. In Part I, glocalization is presented as a complex, interactive process among global and local producers to meet local cultural tastes, while in Part II, it is a simple rescheduling of the programs according to consumer interests.

This book gives readers an incredibly clear elaboration of the historical, professional, and economic context in which Hollywood and, by extension, the entertainment industry, are placed in this age of digital glocalization. Notwithstanding, the book’s biggest strength, it is more or less difficult to perceive the trends—the glocalization and ICT revolution in the entertainment business—Sigismondi attempts to present and gain an understanding of the “complex, contradictory process” (p. 115), as he focuses more on what is happening on the surface rather than what is behind the scenes or how complex factors are negotiated. Sigismondi should have clarified his own critical voice and derived more interdisciplinary explanations out of the economic approach in order to explicate more of the complexities of digital glocalization.

References

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