

## Call for Participation: An International Conference on Communication and Global Power Shifts

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### Call for Participation

#### An International Conference on Communication and Global Power Shifts

Communication University of China, Beijing, October 12-13, 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 lay 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 later 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

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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 magnitude of the topic also warrants broad and extended scholarly attention. Consequently, a series of cross-pacific academic events over the period of two years have been planned to pursue these issues:

- A two-day international conference at the Communication University of China (CUC), Beijing, October 12-13, 2012. Up to 20 leading scholars from different regions of the world will be invited 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. Please submit paper proposals to [2012cuc@gmail.com](mailto:2012cuc@gmail.com) by **April 15, 2012**. Full conference papers are due on **September 30, 2012**. Please note that English is the preferred language of the conference.

•A three-day international conference on the same theme hosted by the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University in June 2013. This conference will culminate SFU's School of Communication's 40th anniversary celebrations. Interested participants to the SFU conference please refer to a separate call to be issued by the SFU host.

•A two-week International Summer School, jointly hosted by the Communication University of China, Simon Fraser University, University of Westminster, Chinese University of Hong Kong, along with other co-organizers, at the Communication University of China in Beijing, July 1-12, 2013. Some of the leading scholars participated in the October 2012 Beijing and June 2013 Vancouver conferences, along with faculty members from the hosting universities, will lecture at the Summer School. Those interested in attending the Summer School should apply to [bjss2009@gmail.com](mailto:bjss2009@gmail.com). Further information will be published on <http://bjss.cuc.edu.cn/> in the end of 2012.

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