

Súil Eile: An Irish Perspective on the Mass Media, Technology and Globalization¹

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I. Introduction

A controversy is brewing in Ireland that has brought the relationship between technology, global mass media corporations, and nation-states to the fore—“The Sky Sell-out.”² The debate was sparked when British Sky Broadcasting Ltd. (BSkyB), a satellite television company owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, bought the rights to Ireland’s qualifying games for the European football championship that heretofore were available free to Irish audiences on terrestrial television. In the aftermath of the World Cup euphoria, many felt cheated by the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), which chose to sell the rights to a company that only reaches 25 percent of Irish television viewers. Suddenly, everyone is talking about who owns the rights to national sports events, why our national terrestrial television station cannot afford to buy these rights, why a foreign-owned company bought them, and what national and European laws exist to prevent such a thing from occurring.

For some people, the BSKyB/FAI deal is simply a commercial transaction in line with Ireland’s (and Europe’s) free trade policies and an example of how new technologies are leading to social change, about which we can do nothing. But for many, the transmission of a national sports event is more than a mere commodity; it is a matter of national cultural sovereignty and communications democracy. What irate fans are pointing to, in the numerous newspaper and television pieces, is in line with what many media scholars believe and many European politicians have been arguing—that the mass media play an important role in society not just as economic entities, but also as creators and disseminators of symbolic content that is reflective and constitutive of distinct communities. They argue that the mass media and the goods they produce must be regulated in the public interest. This theoretical position, which has a long history, is increasingly challenged by mass media companies who employ new technologies to operate in multiple jurisdictions and outside the remit of national regulations.

During the debate, it emerged that three years ago the Irish government enacted a piece of European legislation that allows them to create a list of sporting and cultural events that are of “major importance to society.” Once this list is submitted to the European Commission, these events must be broadcast on a television service that is available to at least 95 percent of the population.³ In the ensuing three years, the government failed to create the list of sporting and cultural events. It claimed that the various sporting bodies responsible for soccer, rugby, and Gaelic sports had resisted the formation of a protected list because it would undermine their freedom to sell to the highest bidder. Needless to say, the negative public and press reaction to the

BSkyB/FAI deal has prompted the government to consider creating such a list despite this opposition.

Three important theoretical issues can be examined in the BSkyB/FAI story. First, it is apparent that while technologies do not cause social change per se, they may be used to challenge existing institutions and social systems. Contemporary developments within the production, consumption, and regulatory spheres of the mass media are a useful case through which to explore the dynamic relationship between technology and social change. Second, we are reminded of an ongoing theoretical debate about the social role of the media and attempts to balance commercial freedom and public interests. Finally, the story points to the continuing role of national governments but also the new role of transnational entities like the European Commission as arbitrators and regulators of global media corporations.

This essay examines in detail the issues that this controversy raises. Following a brief introduction to the Irish situation, the essay analyzes varying theoretical positions on the relationship between media technology and social change. The conceptualization of a soft social shaping approach is introduced. The essay goes on to critique the globalization concept and the notion that we are in an “era of globalization” before turning to an exploration of changes in the European and Irish mass media contexts. Instead of examining the consequences for Ireland of globalization in the mass media—the word “consequences” implies a causal relationship—it studies how Ireland has contributed and responded to (and suffered from) growing internationalization and technological changes in the mass media.⁴ This perspective rejects any notion of technological determinism or effects, and calls instead for an examination of the negotiations and struggles between different interest groups around new technologies. The development of the Irish mass media system provides useful lessons for other small states about to embark on liberalization, free trade, and foreign direct investment policies.

II. Why Ireland might be Interesting

Ireland is a small country that has embraced economic modernization since the 1960s but has participated in global flows of people and cultural ideas for centuries. Today, Ireland is fully integrated into the European Union but maintains strong links with the United States, both through business and a shared collective memory. For a small market, Ireland sustains a diverse number of indigenous national and regional mass media in addition to consuming British, American, and, to a small extent, European produced mass media.⁵

The population of the twenty-six counties in 2002 was 3.9 million (not much more than the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area). Of this, 41 percent of the population were under 25 in 1996. In short, we are talking about a very small country with a large youth population. The nation is also young, having only gained independence in 1922. From then to the late 1960s, Ireland was a closed country: neutral in the Second World War, largely dependent on agriculture, and struggling to re-establish its cultural identity. These features actively shaped the establishment of state-controlled radio and television services. Much was to change after 1958, when measures were introduced to encourage foreign direct investment, and with membership in the European Economic Community (EEC, now the EU) in 1973. The move away from dependence on the United Kingdom to integration into a larger European community and openness to U.S. corporations has been highly successful, although some have argued

that it has created fundamental tensions between European social democratic ideals and U.S. corporate neo-liberalism.⁶ These tensions are reflected in the Irish broadcasting system, which has shifted from a government-controlled public service monopoly to an independently directed hybrid system of public and private national, regional, and local broadcasters.

Today, Ireland is part of the Euro single currency zone and one of the most open economies in the world, with exports of goods and services amounting to over 96.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product (1999).⁷ Most of the export and employment growth in the past 20 years has been in computing and data equipment, pharmaceuticals, and electronic engineering and services. Much of this export growth has come from foreign-owned companies located in Ireland, using the country as a European base. During the late 1990s, Ireland generated up to 10 percent growth per annum but at the same time relative poverty grew, industrial unrest spread in the public sector, and people became disillusioned with European bureaucracy and its perceived lack of accountability.⁸ Not everyone experienced a benign “Celtic Tiger” and some Irish academics have recently explored what they view as the darker side of globalization.⁹ Meanwhile, numerous religious scandals, the peace process in the north of Ireland, and immigration are actively contributing to a re-evaluation of what it means to be Irish. Today, Irish identity is less tied to religion, the Irish language, the past, or the land. Among the most significant social policy changes in the last decade was the introduction of highly restrictive forms of divorce and abortion. Meanwhile, aspects of Irish culture have been successfully commodified and sold on global markets (e.g., Irish pubs, Riverdance).

Ireland’s first radio broadcast took place from the general post office in Dublin on April 25, 1916, during the Easter rebellion.¹⁰ Ireland’s national radio and television services were based on public service broadcasting ideals and the BBC model. The free state government established a public national radio service in 1926, “to educate, to teach languages and to impart the wonderfully rustic trio of ‘. . . fruit-growing, bee keeping, and poultry-raising.’”¹¹ When television services were introduced in 1961, the body responsible, Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), experienced frequent government intervention as ministers attempted to stop broadcasts of contentious news, including an interview with an Irish Republican Army (IRA) spokesperson in 1972.¹² Despite such government intervention, both foreign and domestically produced mass media played an important role in challenging deeply held taboos and Irish cultural prejudices.¹³ Today, Ireland’s hybrid broadcasting system includes the public service broadcaster, RTÉ, and a vibrant private sector, which is expanding at local, national, and international levels.¹⁴

Ireland’s mass media system has seven particularly interesting features. The first is the success of regional media. Ireland has 24 regional commercial radio stations, 13 community radio stations,¹⁵ and 57 regional newspapers, not counting free sheets. The importance of the press in Ireland was confirmed in a recent European survey when 45 percent of respondents in Ireland said they read the news in daily newspapers. The EU average is 42 percent. The second feature is the establishment, a decade ago, of a third public television station, TG4, broadcasting in the Irish language and serving the needs of the minority of Irish speakers in Ireland. Third, there is increasing competition from British and American mass media (including daily and Sunday newspapers and both terrestrial and satellite television) for readers and more recently for ownership of local media operations.¹⁶ The fourth feature is the expansion of Irish mass media corporations abroad, facilitated by changing regulatory regimes and new

technologies. The fifth point is that Irish people are the most frequent cinema goers in Europe (4.5 admissions per head per annum), although exhibition venues are mainly owned by American film corporations and their schedules are dominated by American films.¹⁷ The sixth phenomenon is that Internet penetration is 47.6 percent in Ireland, above the EU average of 37.7 percent, despite the lack of affordable broadband and flat rate access rates.¹⁸ Finally, after Japan, Ireland has the highest rate of PlayStation ownership per capita in the world, according to Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (Ireland).

III. The Relationship of Media Technology to Social Change

How are we to understand the relationship between technological change, the mass media, and globalization in the Irish context? The first step is to clarify one's theoretical position on the complex relationship between technology, media, and society. A question posed by this Roundtable asks what key technological forces are driving the age of globalization? There are two assumptions implicit in that question which we must not take for granted: that "technological forces are driving" something, and that we are in an "age of globalization." I question these assumptions and argue that we cannot hope to understand the role of technology in contemporary society without understanding its relationship to the wider social context and other factors at work in the process of social change. We also cannot hope to understand our age of globalization if we ignore the history of globalization.

My understanding of the relationship between technology and society and in particular the relationship between the mass media, technology, and society is based on the work of historians, cultural theorists, and communications scholars like Carolyn Marvin, Raymond Williams, Brian Winston, and James Carey. In addition, political economists of the media like Vincent Mosco and Nicholas Garnham¹⁹ and sociologists like Kevin Robins and Frank Webster have been useful in deciphering such complex relationships. These authors also provide a historical perspective on globalization processes that place the assumption that we are in an age of globalization in perspective and dampen the hype surrounding innovations in information and communications technologies.

Carolyn Marvin reminds us that each generation has wondered at shifts in "the dimension of the world and the human relationships it contains as a result of new forms of communication."²⁰ Her history of what she calls "modern media"—which includes the telegraph, phonograph, wireless, cinema, and electric light—deals with the fascination and fear that these new media provoked in the 19th century. She probes the scientific and technological motivations behind the developments and maps the way in which older media were "re-examined, challenged and defended"²¹ when these new media were introduced. Her work reminds us that in any examination of technology and change what we are examining is not new artifacts but rather the drama and struggle between different groups of actors to negotiate their positions and develop new patterns of communication. Thus, she explores how the telephone was socially constructed in design and use, and how dominant social codes and relationships were inscribed in the artifact. In a useful presage of contemporary issues, she notes that for all the annihilation of time and space that new media afforded at this time, there was little genuine sense of cross-cultural encounters and exchange. More often than not, exotic cultures were dismissed as inferior, and technology was seen as

a means of civilizing them. Indeed, she refers to the “cognitive imperialism” of writers in technical journals of the time.²²

In this context, it is interesting to note that Ireland, as part of the British Empire, was involved in the project to lay the first transatlantic telegraph cable (1858–1866). This magnificent feat of modern engineering saw a submarine cable laid from a small island in the south of Ireland to Newfoundland. However, this new media technology connecting Europe and North America had little social impact on Ireland. It did little to abate the flow of emigrants from Ireland to the U.S. in the years following the famine. It did little to quiet revolutionary tendencies in the country. And it did little to promote the use of the Irish language, widely spoken in that part of the country. Indeed, most Irish people would not have been able to afford to use the technology, given that it cost U.S. \$100 in gold to send just eight words.²³ Marvin notes that transatlantic telegraphy was viewed at the time as a means for avoiding contact with “contaminations,” as well as a means of establishing and maintaining contact with “compatible individuals.”²⁴ Indeed, she suggests that it was hoped that increased communication would render cultural differences meaningless by extending European/British control over the periphery.

In a similar vein, Raymond Williams warns us not to place too much emphasis on the development of technologies without paying due regard to the social sphere in which they arise. For him, one cannot understand the development of the mass media without at the same time examining the expanding capitalist economic systems and the increasingly mobile, but privatized, modes of living that created the conditions for new social forms of communication. In his analysis of television, Williams argues that particular social events held back the development of television systems which went on to become expressions of diverse societal values (compare the public service broadcasting ethos of the U.K. and private television systems in other countries).

What began to be changed, from the 1780s, was the whole set of relations of production, which eventually constituted a new social order. It is obvious that there has been a close relation, from the beginning, between the new forces and the new relations of production. But it is a very weak kind of thinking to abstract the technical and technological changes and to explain the widespread social, economic and cultural changes as determined by them. This error, now identified as ‘technological determinism,’ bears with particular weight on interpretation of all the later stages of industrialisation. It is especially misleading in descriptions and predictions of a post-industrial society.²⁵

Over the past two decades, Brian Winston developed a formal model of the relationship between science, technology, and society based on his research into the development of photography, cinematography, television, and the Internet.²⁶ He points to the slow pace of technological revolutions and how social formations adjust to and shape new technological innovations. Thus, the development of a scientific idea into a prototype and invention is dependent on a number of “social necessities,” what we might call *accelerators*, and generalized social constraints, or what we might call *brakes*. While some argue that television was delayed or constrained by World War II, Winston notes that the radio and film industries actively sought to control the new medium, which they saw as a threat to their existing operations.

[N]ew technologies contain considerable disruptive power. Many believe that this power is exercised in an untrammelled way and that our world is utterly transformed by these technologies. But what is transformed? Our economic system is, fundamentally, unchanged by these devices. Indeed they are creatures and products of that system. Our political structures remain largely recognisable as does our cultural life, and despite hyperbolic discourse that claims otherwise, our sense of ourselves.²⁷

It would appear, however, that we have still to learn the lessons provided by these historians. We fall into the trap of believing that this time things are different and that we are witnessing unprecedented changes in media technologies, which will result in rapid social change. This “technological determinist” perspective is prevalent not only in economic and political discourse but also in some academic texts. Marshall McLuhan is one person whose enthusiastic and daring statements about media technologies fell into this trap. He suggested that the Western world was imploding and that new media technologies were abolishing both space and time. He contended that such global connection would have a positive effect on minority groups, heightening our collective feelings of responsibility towards them.²⁸ In a similar vein, Daniel Bell suggested that new “intellectual technology” and computers would fundamentally change policy making and innovation while telecommunications networks would annihilate space and time. He noted that the “revolution” in communication and transport technologies has bound the world into one great “ecumene,” and while this has led to the “breakdown of older, parochial cultures,” it has also meant the availability of new cultural flows to all.²⁹ He elaborates:

Technology has transformed social relationships and our ways of looking at the world. . . . It has transformed how we produce goods, reduced inequality in society . . . created new networks of social relationships . . . and aesthetic perceptions, particularly of time and space have been radically altered.³⁰

One wonders what revolution, when, and for how long? One must also question his unbridled enthusiasm and belief that these technologies would lead to more democratic and equal societies in the absence of any fundamental political changes.

Years later, Manuel Castells, in his chapter on the “Culture of Real Virtuality: The Integration of Electronic Communication, the End of the Mass Audience and the Rise of Interactive Networks,” argues that the development of multimedia systems will change culture forever and that these technological transformations are of the same historic dimensions as the introduction of the alphabet to ancient Greece. He adds that this gathering of different messages in one multimedia system is:

Tantamount to ending the separation, and even the distinction, between audiovisual media and printed media, popular culture and learned culture, entertainment and information, education and persuasion. Every cultural expression comes together in this digital universe. . . . they construct a new symbolic environment. They make virtuality our reality.³¹

In the aftermath of the dot-com implosion, Castells concludes that the “dream of convergence,” pursued by futurologists, technologists, media tycoons, and himself throughout the 1990s, has failed.³² Yet for him, the Internet has become a “lever for the transition to a new form of society—the network society—and with it a new economy.”³³ He claims that the Internet has transformed the way we communicate, and our very lives. This essay is not arguing that the Internet has had no impact on people’s lives and on older forms of communication. However, it does question the revolutionary language and the extent to which the claims made by people like Castells actually equate with everyday experience around the world.

Castells presumes to talk for us and “our” lives, but for whom and about whom is he actually speaking? Such claims do not accord with what I see around me in Ireland, especially outside of academia and the high tech industries. Ireland has only 30 percent penetration of computers in the home, and less than 50 percent penetration of the Internet, both highly marked by income and occupational distinctions. For most people, the mature broadcast, print, and film media still play an important role and are much more accessible in terms of financial and knowledge resources than the Internet. If this is the case in Ireland, how much further is the concept of “the network society” from the experience in less fortunate regions and countries? What of other perspectives, the *súil eile*? These books do little to explicate the unequal power struggles between various interests who control, or seek to control, the media. They do little to speak for those with less purchasing power, or without the skills, knowledge, and resources to participate. In short, these books offer a highly optimistic perspective based on the lives of a limited class of people in a limited number of countries, and they seem to suffer from technological determinism and historical amnesia. Robins and Webster are more in line with the perspective adopted in this essay:

[T]he Information Revolution is inadequately conceived, as it is conventionally, as a question of technology and technological innovation. Rather, it is better understood as a matter of differential (and unequal) access to, and control over, information resources our approach focuses upon information and information technologies in terms of their political and cultural dimensions. In both these aspects what are raised are the complex relations between technology, information and power.³⁴

The rhetoric of the information society and the network society also convey little about the particular relationship of both old and new media to the public sphere and society. McQuail, in his classic text *Mass Communication Theory*, explores the varying norms that guide the mass media in different societies.³⁵ Clearly, newspaper, television, and radio media operations produce economic goods, but they also operate under various professional, ethical, and national codes of conduct, and in some countries under social responsibility, public service, and diversity principles. Some political economists of the media maintain that entertainment and information, while certainly commodities, also play a special role in the circulation of meaning and ideas in society. This role, underpinned by concepts of diversity and public service, requires both self-regulation and other forms of national and international regulation in order to protect consumer/citizen welfare as well as to protect media companies from undue

commercial pressures exerted by, for example, advertisers, and, indeed, in some cases their owners.³⁶ For political economists like Garnham, the “particular characteristics” of the media are now characteristic of many new information sectors,³⁷ and the regulatory issues associated with the traditional mass media may now be extended to other media sectors, including the Internet.

Political economists also seek to broaden the concept of the media beyond the mass media of print publishing, radio, and television, to include all structures and processes of social communication, such as telecommunications, education, and advertising. Indeed, new technologies of distribution challenge us to reconsider the concept of *mass* itself as it applies to the media. The mass media are characterized by McQuail as large-scale, unidirectional, asymmetrical, and impersonal, and involve standardized content.³⁸ Formerly a central source produced content and broadcast it to many people in dispersed locations at the same time. Today, new media allow for multiple sources to produce content that can be communicated both synchronously and asynchronously to individuals, small groups, or to many people.³⁹ The distinction between mass communications, institutional communications, inter/intragroup communications, or inter/intrapersonal communications no longer neatly coincides with different communications systems. This is particularly evident with the Internet.

Historians and critics like Raymond Williams and Brian Winston remind us that in order to understand the role of the media in society, we must place them within a wider context, to “de-center” them, in the words of Mosco.⁴⁰ Garnham notes that our social systems of communication are deeply embedded in wider social formations, and to study the media is firstly to study how the social formation and dominant mode of production, i.e., capitalism, influences how the media operates, and, secondly, how powerful actors operate within these social formations. In short, there are two distinct forms of power. The first is structural, “how the market system allocates resources and constrains behaviour in ways that are not under the intentional control of individual or group agency,” and the second is that “exercised by economic agents within these overall structural constraints.”⁴¹

Increasingly, as various regulatory constraints are removed and the market system is allowed to operate unbridled, we see that competition is leading to concentration, and certain media operators are able to expand both their profits and power and use both to consolidate their position. This occurs at the cost of more humanistic and societal values. Technology is central to this process in terms of increasing productivity, widening the scope of distribution, and enabling commodification.

Garnham states, “No one studying the media can avoid the question of technology.”⁴² However, he warns that we need to deconstruct what we mean by technology. Are we talking about a technology or technologies, devices or systems, technology as tool or technics (defined as the underlying institutional forms, cultural values, or skills)? For him, the successful transfer of technologies as tools between firms or countries is not *per se* a question of the technology. It may equally be a question of institutional forms and know-how. He is critical of both technologically determinist approaches and the strong social shaping approach, preferring to situate his perspective somewhere in between, and alongside Winston. Thus, he gives some role to science and technology in social change processes. This perspective argues that innovations take a considerable length of time to permeate society and that societies need to be capable of adapting to and exploiting technological developments. From this perspective, one can begin to understand how Ireland in 1866 was incapable of absorbing and exploiting telegraph communications.

IV. Globalization, Technology and the Mass Media

If what characterizes our contemporary age is a heightened sense of the interdependence of the world through increasing flows of people, goods, services, and images, as well as a changing concept of time and space, then the (mass) media are both a product of this age and a prime shaper of it. The mass media have traditionally been associated with the centralized production and distribution of symbolic content within nation-states. New technologies have unsettled this understanding, enabling more decentralized and interactive production and distribution of symbolic content, and more individualized and fragmented forms of communication and consumption. McQuail argues that both fragmentation and convergence characterize the media today.⁴³ For him, growing populations, increasing prosperity, and new technologies has led to an increase in the volume of media and channels, larger numbers of producers, and more internationalization of the media.⁴⁴ Vincent Mosco asserts that we can observe the institutional extension of corporate power in the communications industries across new spaces, and that communication processes and technology are central to this new geographic configuration.⁴⁵ New technologies (especially satellite and Internet technologies), combined with the spread of an economic and political philosophy based on free trade, the desire by media corporations to expand into new markets, and the growth in demand from new hybrid cultural markets, have meant that mass media corporations have expanded production and distribution far beyond regional and national boundaries, and new players have entered the media market from other industry sectors. This extension of players into new markets has in some cases been welcome as a modernizing and educating force. But in other cases, these players have met with resistance and regulation: from the public outcry at the BSkyB/FAI deal in Ireland, to individual resistance to imported programs,⁴⁶ to national support for audiovisual production, to long-term strategies like the European MEDIA program to support and strengthen the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry.⁴⁷ This resistance is fueled by very real differences in taste across markets and fears that private capital will reduce the diversity of content and only serve markets large enough to deliver sufficient profits.

While the last section reviewed the range of factors that influence social change (of which technology is only one) and views about the role that the mass media plays in society, this section will explore some key debates surrounding globalization.

One might be forgiven for thinking that transnational corporations invented globalization and that the term simply refers to the relatively recent trend whereby companies have taken advantage of new telecommunications and computing technologies to expand their production and consumption networks beyond national boundaries. Yet this is a very econometric, technocentric, and ahistorical conceptualization. Within cultural and communication studies, globalization has a long history and is regarded as much broader than an economic process.⁴⁸ For Robertson and Tomlinson, globalization is bound up with modernity, emerging in the early 15th century and accelerating rapidly from the 1880s to the 1920s.⁴⁹ For them, globalization is a *process* whereby societies have become more interconnected and interdependent at a number of levels through the flow of products, people, and finance, and the establishment of international agencies, global competition, and international law. Giddens goes somewhat further, arguing that the world has become one social system and should be understood as the uneven reordering of time and

distance in social life.⁵⁰ The existence of a global sensibility is for him partly generated by the international scope of media communications.

The term *globalization* may not, of course, be the most appropriate to describe contemporary changes in society and the economy. Ferguson argues that globalization is nothing more than a “myth,” used to justify the activities of those institutions and corporations most likely to gain financially from open access to global markets.⁵¹ For David Harvey and Frederic Jameson what we are observing is not a radical break in society but rather a new level in the development of capitalism, multinational capital, with its associated modes of social and political regulation and new cultural forms.⁵² Harvey notes that new systems of flexible capitalist production and the need for new systems of exchange and distribution have led to a reconfiguration of space and the growing strength of the local, as regions and nations strive to make themselves more attractive to mobile international capital and tourists.⁵³ Systems of communication, and in particular systems that stimulate fashion and taste, play an important part in the expansion of this capitalist system. Mosco adopts the term *spatialisation* to denote “the process of overcoming the constraints of space and time in social life.” For him, spatialisation as the extension of corporate power across space and time is especially clear in the communications industries and he is careful to retain a sense of the differential power available to various actors within these industries. Globalization, as one dimension of the wider process of spatialisation, is tied up with the spatial expansion of capital and the state, and the transformation of space.⁵⁴ What is clear is that whether one comes from sociology, political science, economics, or cultural studies, the term points to important changes in the organization of space and time, and the mass media have been important players in this process from the late 19th century onward.

The emergence of transnational corporations in all fields, beginning in the early 1970s, was prescribed by the increasing reach of the dominant Hollywood studios (also called the Hollywood ‘majors’) following World War II and the spread of news agencies from the U.S., the U.K., and other European countries. For many developing nations as well as critical commentators, the centralization of media production in First World countries signalled an important loss of control over communications and entertainment systems, often expressed as a fear of cultural homogenization. These fears were given some legitimation by the UNESCO-appointed MacBride Commission, which explored communication flows, rights, and access, and articulated a movement for a New World Information and Communication Order in the 1970s.⁵⁵ While this movement resulted in U.S. and U.K. withdrawal from UNESCO, some of the issues raised are still with us today. As we examine globalization and the mass media today, the terms, players, and power axes may have changed but the same hierarchies of power remain. Just as the telegraph and cinema became dominated by a limited number of First World players, so too the Internet has been commercialized by global corporations from a limited number of countries. It is clear that while these technologies have the potential to liberate, they are more often than not used by the most powerful actors to expand into less developed and less powerful markets.

Of course, audience research has shown that ownership and centralized production of information and communications do not necessarily mean that communities do not critically interpret the content provided to them or do not/cannot “indigenize” and localize foreign-produced content. Appadurai is one such commentator who feels we need to look beyond push/pull Americanization/Westernization models to a more dialectical and non-ethnocentric approach. For example, he notes that for some

countries in Southeast Asia, “Japanization” is seen as a greater threat than Americanization. For him, the global cultural economy is a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order involving the following five dimensions: flows of people, the media, technology, finance, and ideologies. As one of these flows, mediascapes are “repertoires of images and information, the flows which are produced and distributed by newspapers, magazines, television and film,” and produce fluid, irregular landscapes that are interpreted according to one’s perspective.⁵⁶ For Appadurai, the globalization of culture is not the same as the homogenization of culture, for globalization employs a number of instruments of homogenization (e.g., advertising, fashions), which are absorbed into local economies and repatriated in various ways, depending on the role of the state as an “arbiter of this repatriation of difference.”⁵⁷

John Tomlinson also focuses on the cultural dimension of globalization and warns against conflating culture with the communication and information technologies through which symbolic images are transmitted. He stresses that the media form only one small part of the process by which cultural meanings are constructed, arguing that cultural texts must be considered in relation to the mundane and ordinary activities of everyday life.⁵⁸ In order to understand the relationship between the media and culture, we must place mediated culture in the context of real lived culture:

.local direct experience—as the ‘immediate environment’ within which the self develops—can be argued to have a certain existential priority in people’s lives. Mediated experience by contrast, because of its distanced and ‘refractory’ nature, is ‘likely to bear a rather tenuous, intermittent and selective relation to the self’ . . . thus though people do incorporate televisual experience into their routine daily local ‘experience mix’ . . . it remains, for the majority, stubbornly separate from the experience that come from ‘closer to home.’⁵⁹

Tomlinson is clearly critical of dependency/cultural homogenization theories, questioning their reduction of culture to the media and their implicit acceptance of media effects, while ignoring almost two decades of active audience research. Like Appadurai, he questions the conflation of globalization with Westernization and the assumption that the political-economic power of transnational corporations is accompanied by an ideological power to define cultural reality. While he concedes that transnational corporations are not “innocent in the shaping of global culture,”⁶⁰ he warns against the assumption that cultural and ideological impacts flow from the global distribution of uniform cultural goods. His understanding of global culture and the role of the media point more to the opening up of alternative “lifeworlds,” the deterritorialization of culture (i.e., the erosion of any direct relationship between culture and both geographical and social places), and the hybridization (i.e., intermingling) of cultures. He stops short of celebrating contemporary cultural life as merely postmodern diversity by admitting that “hybridization” must be used with an awareness of power and the inequalities that characterize its distribution. But while agreeing that hybridity is never power-neutral, Tomlinson also argues (drawing particularly on Latin American sources) that the process is not unilinear, and that many formerly dominant cultures are now experiencing cultural hybridity from within (e.g., Ireland and the U.K). For him, deterritorialization and hybridity are both dialectical processes and must be viewed in relation to a culture’s ability to reassert and re-embed itself.

For those academics solely concerned with the media, new technologies are leading to a new communications geography characterized by “an international space of information flows, an increasing crisis of the national sphere and by new forms of regional and local activity. Our senses of space and place are all being significantly reconfigured.”⁶¹ The new spaces of information flows are marked by symbolic boundaries of language and culture rather than political and geographic boundaries. These spaces are paradoxically leading to both the development of global deterritorialized media production and distribution, and more local production and distribution.

Interestingly, within Ireland some academics have criticized the more cultural approach to globalization of Tomlinson and Robertson and the more economic world systems approach of Wallerstein in favor of a complex and situated view that is far from positive. For Allen, globalization means the presence in Ireland of transnational capital, new relations between the state and capital, growing inequalities in income, the commodification of culture, and historical amnesia.⁶²

Globalisation may have shifted the balance of power in favour of capital, but it does not follow that it has become a de-territorialised spirit that is all-powerful. Actual existing capitalism, rather than its idealized version promoted by neo-liberal apologists, needs a symbiotic relationship with a local state. It follows that states can have some leverage over capital if they are subject to pressure from their own population.⁶³

For Preston, new communication systems have contributed to the annihilation of time and space but he observes that the process cannot be reduced to these systems and must be dialectically related to the particular contexts in which they are embedded. He notes that the forms and extent of globalization may vary between industrial sectors and while it is relatively easy to export software applications globally, it is more difficult to market cultural goods on a pan-global scale.⁶⁴ Corcoran describes globalization as an ideological discourse which tends to obfuscate the fact that nothing is predetermined or inevitable about the development of new media technologies. He also discusses the diminished appeal that certain audiovisual and cultural goods have once they cross cultural boundaries, a particular problem in terms of exporting European cultural goods to other markets.⁶⁵

It is apparent from a brief review of the literature on globalization that the term means different things to different people, depending on their disciplinary perspective or individual interests. Some imbue the term with optimistic overtones related to increasing global consciousness while others fear the effects of homogenization and commodification. Some critics use the term to describe historical trends while others use it in a more prescriptive and normative fashion. Clearly, it is difficult to talk about an age of globalization without recourse to these historical discourses and they, in turn, lead us to question the usefulness of talking about an age or era of globalization. This essay would agree with those who propose that we should view globalization as an ongoing process rather than an era. Further, it would highlight that while new technologies have facilitated the development of new deterritorialized media systems, these have rarely been developed without local resistance and deployment of alternative systems.

V. Globalization and Mass Media in Europe

Our historically informed theoretical perspective on the relationship between technology and society and the various perspectives on globalization may be used as lenses through which to examine developments in Europe and Ireland.

Mosco notes that media growth has taken three forms in the past number of decades: horizontal media concentration, vertical media integration, and transnationalization leading to the creation of “behemoths” like Time Warner, AOL, Disney, and Sony.⁶⁶ Globalization, or transnationalization, of a media company can proceed through subsidiaries, partnerships/joint ventures, or mergers and acquisitions. In Europe throughout the 1990s, the trend toward mergers and acquisitions in all industries has been strong, with the European Commission considering 335 cases in 2001.⁶⁷ In the media industries, mergers were assisted by market liberalization and the development of new channels of distribution that allowed foreign-owned companies to enter other markets.

The work of Sanchez-Taberero and Carvajal is useful in terms of mapping concentration and changing patterns of ownership in European media industries. Interestingly, but unsurprisingly, they found great differences between traditional mass media and new media, and between old and new distribution systems. For example, in most of the larger countries in Europe, the print industry is still controlled by national companies that are forced, through anti-monopoly laws, to invest internationally if they wish to expand. The exception to this is the U.K., where new laws have allowed Australian/American News International, Rupert Murdoch’s company, to own both broadsheets and tabloid newspapers. In radio and television markets in European countries, they found that public companies still hold the major market share. Only in new sectors like pay TV and satellite did the authors fail to find public actors in a market leadership position and, more often than not, these new segments of the market are dominated by two large global media companies, Vivendi Universal and BSkyB:

Vivendi, though Channel +, controls the Belgian, Spanish, French, Finnish, Dutch, Norwegian and Italian markets. BSkyB is leader in Germany and Austria through Premiere World—associated with the German Company Kirch Group—and directly in the United Kingdom and Ireland. News Corporation controls most of BSkyB’s capital and Universal has found the perfect partner in Vivendi for distributing its fiction contents through its different platforms.⁶⁸

Public companies dominate in terms of market share in the newspaper and terrestrial television industries due to the existence of media diversity principles at the national and European level, entrenched historical legacies, and special relationships with their nation-states. The popularity of home produced programming screened by these public companies must also be taken into account. Their market share, however, is decreasing as deregulation and new technologies enable new commercial players to enter the market. In media sectors where there is less regulation—satellite television, pay TV, music, cinema, Internet, and advertising—these industries are dominated by American and Japanese companies. These companies entered European markets for a number of reasons, including profitable market size (e.g., the U.K., Germany, and France), linguistic similarity (e.g., American, Canadian, and British companies in

Ireland), or to take advantage of underdeveloped systems of communication (e.g., Greece, Portugal). As Sanchez-Taberner and Carvajal point out, countries in the last two categories are most vulnerable to take-overs by transnational media corporations.

Is this something to be feared? Certainly there is evidence to support the view that levels of regulation are necessary to protect the public interest and maintain diversity of content. For example, when Greece deregulated its broadcasting system, it had insufficient regulatory structures in place to enforce public service requirements. As a result, a few business magnates now use the media to pressure the government to serve their business interests.⁶⁹ In Ireland, the small size of the market means that it is not commercially viable for new commercial players to provide locally relevant content. In essence, this means Ireland is provided with the same content as the U.K./U.S. market, with Irish advertising.⁷⁰ Indeed, the multiplication of television channels is leading to a shortage of programming in Europe, which is filled by cheap, imported U.S. fiction and re-runs of old programs.⁷¹ The most recent European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) figures revealed that 66 percent of the films shown in Europe were from the U.S. while only 5 percent of American films originated in Europe. This is despite the fact that the two regions produced about the same number of films. The market share of films from outside these regions was even more miserable, at about 3 percent or less. The “trade deficit,” as it is called, is even worse in television. The EAO has identified increasing penetration of non-community owned media corporations in Europe: a total of 264 non-community owned audiovisual companies in 1999, 239 of which were controlled by United States’ investors, representing 13.3 billion Euro of assets or 87.2 percent of foreign assets. Market fragmentation, the lack of a European film distribution system, and the scale of American companies were some of the reasons cited for this trend.

To illustrate the increasing commercialization of the European mass media landscape and the implications for diversity of content, one has only to examine one of the major behemoths a little more closely. Given the recent controversies over BSkyB’s satellite interests in Ireland, it seems only proper to examine the “mother company,” News Corporation. The company’s website and various media reports (in non-News Corporation owned media) state that the company employs about 50,000 people worldwide and has assets of \$42 billion and revenues of \$15 billion. News Corporation has grown in all three of the ways mentioned above: horizontal integration across different media, vertical integration between production and distribution, and transnationalization. Starting in the newspaper business in the 1950s, Rupert Murdoch, then an Australian citizen, has subsequently become a British citizen and now an American citizen in his quest to build a global media empire. In particular, he has been successful in the establishment of an international newspaper chain and a regional satellite TV network covering the American, European, Asian, Chinese, and Australia/ New Zealand markets. In the U.K. and Ireland, he is best known for launching the “topless page 3” in *The Sun* newspaper in 1970, facing down the print workers’ unions at Wapping in 1986, and the attempt to buy the Irish national football team’s qualifying games for the next European Championship in 2002.

Murdoch has successfully expanded his business into different media sectors and across national boundaries, and he has not been averse to using his media operations as a tool to support his business expansion. Indeed, his blatant influence over the content produced by his companies undermines any notion that we might have about media objectivity or public service. Murdoch, although now an American citizen, is

quoted as saying that he will urge his U.K. newspapers to follow an anti-Euro position in order to protect British sovereignty and protect the country from French bureaucrats:

My feeling about the euro is there is a lot of nonsense spoken about it. The five tests, etc., but it is a political decision. . . . The central issue is one of sovereignty. If you give up control of your currency, you are going to give up control of your tax system just as night follows day. . . . Europe is made up of so many diverse cultures and histories that to slam it altogether with a government of French bureaucrats answerable to nobody . . . I cannot see anything but benefit by waiting.⁷²

One suspects that his anti-Europe stance has more to do with his views on European media policy than protecting British sovereignty. Indeed, one of his U.K. representatives called other U.K. media executives “xenophobic” for their negative reaction to a bill allowing American firms to own ITV and Channel 5 in the U.K. for the first time.⁷³ Under European law, the audiovisual industries are recognized as strategic, not only for their economic value but also for their cultural value. Therefore, the Commission tries to promote the trade of audiovisual goods across Europe but also to protect and promote local and national production, particularly among smaller cultures. These are two goals that sometimes conflict, as seen in the “Television without Frontiers” directive (1989), which encourages the broadcast of European produced audiovisual content “where practical.” But the directive uses stronger language in limiting the percentage of advertising that can be shown per hour, where it can be inserted in a program, and in setting decency standards. An amendment to this directive in 1997 ensures that events of major importance, including sports, must be broadcast unencrypted—even if exclusive rights have been bought by pay-TV stations. This conflicts directly with Murdoch’s strategy to promote his satellite television channels by extracting monopoly rents from sports events and movies. His determined pursuit of the Asian/Chinese market, meanwhile, is another object lesson in how commercial and political interests outweigh public interests in these companies. According to various newspaper reports, Murdoch acceded to complaints from the Chinese government to end the BBC’s access to his STAR network in 1994 for their coverage of the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations, and refused to allow Harper Collins to publish the memoirs of Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong, because the memoir was critical of the Chinese government.

Table 1 details some of the company’s global assets.

Table 1. A Selection of News Corporation Ltd. Assets

Film	TV/Network	TV/Cable	Newspapers	Magazines	Books	Other
20 th century Fox	Fox TV Stations Fox News FX	Fox Sports	The Times Sunday Times The Sun – UK	Gemstar TV Guides International (38.5 %)	Harper Collins	NSD – digital TV Tech
Fox Films		Speedvision (85 percent)	TSL Education		Fourth Estate – UK	Broadsystem Database systems
	BSkyB –UK (36.3 percent)	FX	Sydney - The Australian, Daily Telegraph, Herald and Weekly Times, Herald Sun		Zondervan	National Rugby League Australia (50 percent)
	Star – Asia	National Geographic	Queensland – Courier Mail, Sunday Mail			News Corporation Music including Festival Mushroom Records, Aus/NZ
	Star Plus – Hindi	Fox Family	The Advertiser			News Interactive
	Phoenix + Channel 5 – China	Fox Kids	New Zealand – (46 percent) of Independent Newspapers			News Outdoor
	Foxtel		New York Post			
	Balkan News Corp					
	Telepieu + Stream – Italy					
		LA Dodgers				

If postmodernism and late capitalism are characterized by the extension of the power of the market over a whole range of cultural processes, then News Corporation provides a revealing example of how this is proceeding. News Corporation plainly uses its traditional and new media channels to promote its own business interests (i.e., less media regulation, more advertising and pay per view). At the same time, there are distinct barriers to its unbridled march from European legislation, national legislation and from audiences.

The case of News Corporation raises salient political-economic issues about who “has access to what communicative resources and what they can do with them.”⁷⁴ This examination of media producers/distributors is neither to return to cultural imperialist debates that equate the media with culture nor to ignore the agency of users. Rather, it is a call to examine the relative distribution of power between producers and between producers and consumers, and to explore the implications of this distribution for diversity of content. Concern about media content that is blind to the plurality of race, ethnicity, gender, and class, even allowing for the fact that the media are only one form of cultural contact, is not a call for national or cultural protectionism. Rather, it is a call to examine the role of the media in society and take seriously its cultural/public service as well as its economic role. It is also a summons to interrogate the concept of the active audience. Surely the active audience should go beyond an ability to reject, or negotiate, meaning in given products to include the right to have real choice, the right to produce alternative products, and the right to access alternative products. Murdoch’s declared interests only lie with those who are willing to pay, and his definition of service is far from public:

I have never heard a convincing definition of what public-service television really is. . . . My own view is that anybody who, within the law of the land, provides a service which the public wants at a price it can afford is providing a public service.⁷⁵

VI. Globalization and the Mass Media in Ireland

Ireland’s experience of global flows resonates with, yet differs from the globalization theories examined above.⁷⁶ For Robertson and Tomlinson, globalization is bound up with modernity, emerging in the early 15th century and accelerating rapidly from the 1880s to the 1920s. For them, it is a process whereby societies become more interconnected and interdependent at a number of levels through the flow of products, people, and finance, and the establishment of international agencies and international law. However, between 1880 and 1920, the Industrial Revolution effectively bypassed Ireland as the country experienced colonization, revolutions, cultural persecution, and famine. During this time, Ireland was more dependent on other nations and the flow of people from Ireland was one way—outward.

Long before the presumptive beginning of globalization, Ireland experienced flows of people both in (from the Celts to the Vikings, the Normans to the English) and out (from the missionaries to the more recent economic migrants since the famine in 1848). These arrivals into Ireland brought goods (e.g., potatoes!) and new ideas that had a significant influence on Irish society and were adopted by Irish people as their own. Many of the instigators of the literary and cultural revival and home rule movement in Ireland in the late 19th century were of English and American stock,

including Douglas Hyde and Eamon De Valera. This flow of people both in and out helped to establish Ireland's reputation globally as a center of creativity, and produced a vibrant mixing of cultures, or a hybridity, from early on. James Joyce had no qualms about uncovering the myriad different cultural influences and motifs in the Irish landscape and offered a broader concept of Irishness than most revolutionary republicans allowed.

In order to revitalize the nation, the language, and other cultural pastimes, the new state apparatus born out of this revolutionary republican movement in 1921 established a strong paternalistic and censorial role in relation to the mass media. They also defined Irishness in very narrow, religious, and ethnic terms. John Horgan describes early radio as "tame, tightly controlled and didactic."⁷⁷ Strong cultural revivalists were appointed to the board overseeing the national radio broadcaster, and the schedule was dominated by Gaelic sports, religious ceremonies, traditional music, and political addresses to the nation. Books, films, and later television shows were censored as unfit for Irish citizens. This approach found overt expression in legislation (1971–1994) that prevented spokespersons for the IRA and Sinn Fein from being heard on television or radio. Kelly and Rolston argue that these censorship laws meant broadcasters both north and south of the border exercised strong self-censorship in relation to coverage of the troubles in the North and in so doing denied certain sections of the population their right to speak.⁷⁸ One outcome of the promotion of a dominant state "party line" on British and Irish television vis-à-vis the Northern conflict has been a deep distrust by audiences of all persuasions of official spokespersons. Instead, there is active reliance on social networks and alternative sources of information. It may also be partially responsible for the strong growth of a regional press, both north and south of the border. As an example, the small city of (London) Derry in Northern Ireland sustains both a unionist and a nationalist newspaper. At the same time, strong state control of the broadcast media has meant that community television on both sides of the border has failed to materialize.

Outside the realm of news and information, home-produced fiction and chat shows emerged as the dominant form through which taboos like sex and religion could be explored. Gibbons highlights the importance of serial dramas like *The Riordans* (1965–1979), *Tolka Row* (1963–68), and the chat program *The Late Late Show* (1963–), which allowed people to "re-work the specificity of Irish culture."⁷⁹ A number of Irish-made films challenged the dominant Irish/Paddy stereotype and the ideal of the West portrayed in films like *The Quiet Man* (1952), exploring instead the bleak realities of life in the 1950s/60s/70s and 80s. Luke Gibbons eloquently describes the country as "a first world country . . . with a third world memory."⁸⁰ The media play an important role in constituting and exploring that memory.

How have technology and globalization processes influenced the contemporary mass media in Ireland? In all the media sectors examined, it is clear that technology has changed processes of production and distribution, accommodated the development of new media products, and offered access to more globally dispersed audiences. At the same time, European and national deregulation of terrestrial broadcast systems has brought increased competition for audiences and advertisers from English language media companies abroad. Indeed, this competition is not only for readers and viewers but also, in some cases, for the company ownership itself. From an early period of direct government control and censorship in the name of the public interest in Ireland, there are now two independent bodies that issue terrestrial broadcast and telecommunications licenses to private companies, and oversee

ownership and content in the public interest. Outside of these two realms there is less regulation and the trend is clear: concentration in the newspaper industry and the dominance of American-owned companies in cinema distribution and exhibition. The trend is also towards increasing cross-ownership of the media.

Concentration of ownership is not in itself a problem if the quality, diversity, and service offered serve the cultural and political diversity of the audience. However, analysis of the content offered by TV3, the first commercial national television channel, has shown that this clearly is not happening.⁸¹ Thus, the challenge for Ireland is how to ensure the provision of a diverse range of content and equitable access to distribution networks for Irish producers, regardless of who owns the networks. Historically, state initiatives to support public service have been piecemeal and dogged by opportunism and political clientelism. A brief examination of several mass media sectors—newspapers, television and radio, film, and the Internet—will highlight the complexity of the issues faced.

A. The Newspaper Industry in Ireland

Newspaper readership is still relatively high in Ireland and the circulation of the national dailies has been increasing over the last decade although readership is down. The four daily indigenous newspapers include three broadsheets and one tabloid: *The Irish Independent*, owned by Independent News Media, a publicly quoted company under the directorship of Dr. Anthony O'Reilly; the *Irish Times*, owned by the Irish Times Trust Ltd.; *The Examiner*, owned by Thomas Crosbie Holdings Ltd.; and the *Star*, a joint venture between Independent Newspapers and United Newspapers Plc., owners of the Express Group in the U.K. Among the indigenous papers, *Independent News* holds a very strong position, with interests in five national papers (two dailies, one evening, and two Sundays). *Independent News* argues that it does not hold a dominant position in the Irish market when both British and Irish newspapers are taken into account. When a recent commission on the newspaper industry examined this situation, they found that despite the company's size there was good diversity in the marketplace in terms of different types of newspapers and the range of content. They ascertained that the papers had good editorial independence and generally upheld professional codes of conduct. In addition, the National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI) association lists over 60 regional newspapers on its website, and the commission found that they were serving local and regional news needs well.⁸²

An important characteristic of the national newspaper market is the prevalence of British newspapers (ten dailies and nine Sundays). The market share of British newspapers has been increasing in Ireland over the past decade and was estimated at about 28 percent of the daily market and 34.6 percent of the Sunday market in 2002. Representative organizations in Ireland, like the NNI, point to anti-competitive practices operated by British papers that are sold at "below average marginal cost" and are not subject to tax, while Irish papers pay 12.5 percent, the highest rate in Europe.⁸³ Indeed, most British newspapers are a third cheaper than their Irish counterparts. The NNI also points to the large economies of scale operating in the U.K., where one newspaper can have double the total circulation of the largest circulating newspaper in the Irish market (presently 444,000).

The NNI argument is not entirely valid given that British newspapers, despite their cheaper price, did not sell well initially on the Irish market. Since then British newspapers have been busy establishing Irish offices and hiring Irish journalists to

produce content about Ireland. New technologies have facilitated this trend, with offices in the U.K. and Ireland able to share news stories and photographs over local area networks and direct input systems. *The Star* is an example of a paper that developed from the Irish edition of an English paper into an Irish paper with a considerable amount of English sports news of interest to an Irish audience. The *Star* is 50 percent owned by the Express Group, which is now sharing content with the *Star* to develop an *Irish Express* newspaper. Indeed, the computer system in the U.K. office is used to back-up the computer system in the Irish office. Similarly, *The Times*, owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, has established a Dublin office and increased the amount of Irish content and advertising in its Irish edition.

Irish-owned newspapers have responded to this competition by producing lifestyle supplements and by cutting costs and focusing on national and local news. A key component of their strategy to cut costs has been the introduction of computerized technology to all aspects of the process—from direct and remote input to computerized make-up; full color printing; the use of leased lines, satellite, and Integrated Service Digital Networks to access foreign news; and cheaper printing facilities, sometimes in Northern Ireland. In addition, all the main newspapers have established an electronic/interactive division, some with more success than others. In particular, the growth of *The Irish Times* online, developed into *Ireland.com*, has been interesting. Both within and outside Ireland, this paper is seen as a reputable source of news and this branding has been successfully translated into a strong web presence. The company introduced a subscription-based premium service this year and it remains to be seen if people will pay for this reputation.⁸⁴ For Irish newspapers, the Internet provides an opportunity to capture the large Irish emigrant population abroad and those interested in Ireland, which heretofore their paper product could not reach. A prime example is *The Irish Emigrant*. Established in 1987 as an online newspaper, it was so successful it began to produce a U.S.-based paper edition in 1995.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Independent Newspapers, renamed Independent News and Media Ltd., purchased an Internet service provider, Internet Ireland, and established Unison in 2000 to give free Internet access via computers or set-top boxes to the Internet. They also established an Irish news portal, which included all Independent-published newspapers in Ireland, the U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, alongside Independent and non-Independent-owned regional newspapers.⁸⁶

The newspaper industry is regulated under competition law and comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in Ireland. There is no specific legislation dealing with the cultural and social importance of the press in Ireland. However, the recent newspaper commission viewed the newspaper industry as having a special role in society and recommended that any judgments by the Competition Authority should take this role into account. The newspaper industry must be evaluated by:

its duty and its ability to reflect a sense of national identity in an informative, integrative but also critical fashion. In fulfilling this role it exercises a number of key functions . . . the accurate and fair reporting of facts . . . its capacity to reflect, in a diverse way, views, ideas, interests and concerns of the Irish people . . . the capacity to define, again with diversity, our national identity and the different strands contained within it. Such definition is necessary to ourselves but also to the world outside.⁸⁷

Given the dominant role that Independent Newspapers plays in Ireland, it is instructive to look at the horizontal and international growth of the company outside Ireland, particularly as an example of how media operators from small countries can exert considerable power outside of their domestic market. Independent News and Media PLC employs 12,100 people, has assets of €3.2 billion and turnover of €1.5 billion in operations in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Core Independent businesses are newspaper publishing, electronic media (principally radio broadcasting), and outdoor advertising. In the United Kingdom, it owns the leading newspapers in Northern Ireland, *The Belfast Telegraph* and *Sunday Life*, and the London-based Independent titles, *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*. It also holds a 19 percent stake in Lusomundo Media, Portugal's leading newspaper publisher. Despite the newspaper commission's observations, it is hard to tell how independent each newspaper is in terms of local operations but there is evidence that the Irish newspapers are used at times to promote the owner's business interests. Horgan, for example, documents how the *Irish Independent* used its front page to urge voters to elect a Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat government in 1997 when the company had failed to get the then Fine Gael/Labour government to deal with illegal television deflector schemes that threatened Independent's investment in Multipoint Microwave Distribution Systems (MMDS).⁸⁸ The main shareholder in Independent News Media and executive chairman Dr. Anthony O'Reilly holds views on media concentration and foreign ownership that appear to closely mirror those of Mr. Murdoch. He has stepped in to "save" Irish newspapers from being bought by foreign operations and sees no contradiction between this and his interest in expanding his business overseas. He is quoted as stating, "The flower of Australia democracy is not threatened by foreign ownership."⁸⁹

In sum, the increasing presence of British-owned newspapers and newspaper companies in the Irish newspaper market is forcing indigenous companies to consolidate, reduce costs, develop new electronic operations, and increase their interests abroad. Above and beyond the concentration in ownership, it appears that the range and diversity of newspapers in the market is healthy, and newspapers have had to localize and focus on national and local content as well as international news to capture market share. On the other hand, the increased competition has resulted in the growth of entertainment-orientated supplements and tabloids. Is this a gap in the market or is it a "dumbing down" of the market due to increased competition?

B. Broadcast Media in Ireland

In the broadcast media there has been a significant growth in competition and significant changes in programming schedules as a result of new technologies, changing regulations, and the arrival of global players. As noted above, even before Ireland had established a television service, homes in the east of Ireland could receive British television services. Radio Éireann, later Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), was established with a strong national and state remit. Horgan notes that the arguments surrounding their establishment were infused with discussions about the danger to Irish morals from foreign broadcasting, and the protection and development of traditional Irish culture.⁹⁰ The new television service was established as a public, semi-state body run by a government-appointed authority. For Luke Gibbons, the new

broadcaster was used more to strengthen the state than the nation, and one of the anomalies was:

in the financial structure of the new station—and one of the features which distinguished it from the BBC—was that even though it was under direct state control, the state sought to reduce its financial liability for the service, insisting that it be self-supporting as far as possible. Thus it was expected to live up to the ideals of public service broadcasting in the Irish context while maintaining its commercial viability.⁹¹

The RTÉ Authority was charged with supporting the national aim of restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing Irish culture. In addition, the government could prevent the broadcast of certain material at any time. On a number of occasions, the government saw fit to prevent RTÉ news crews from going to countries that might be seen to upset Ireland's new allies, especially the U.S. This culminated in the government dismissing the RTÉ Authority in 1972 for broadcasting an interview with the leader of the Provisional IRA. As Flynn points out, this strong form of governmental control over broadcast content fostered a form of self-censorship in RTÉ, causing them to neglect their role as public service broadcaster.⁹² In a number of instances, Irish scandals went unexposed by RTÉ, and it fell to U.K.-produced and distributed programs to raise the issues in Ireland.

The strong government role in broadcasting and the approach based on “we know what is good for you” was rolled back somewhat in 1988 to introduce a hybrid system comprised of RTÉ, on the one hand, and commercial broadcasting governed by an independent body, the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC), on the other. The context for such a move saw similar actions by the Thatcher government in the U.K. and the promotion in European legislation of a single market for European broadcasters and the dismantling of monopolies. Thus, an independent body was established in Ireland to license independent radio and television broadcasting, to promote diversity, and to regulate media ownership. At present, it regulates one national private television station, one national radio station, 24 local stations, 3 special interest stations, 13 community interest stations, 7 hospital stations, and a number of temporary stations. Renamed the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland in 2001, its responsibilities were widened to include new terrestrial, cable, satellite, and MMDS services. The establishment of the IRTC in 1988 was seen by then-Minister Ray Burke as a means to eliminate pirate radio stations, assist industrial development, and limit RTÉ's monopoly. It appears from various reports and analysis that the move was more politically motivated than spurred by considerations for increasing choice and diversity in the marketplace.⁹³ In any event, the legislation establishing the IRTC clearly specifies that commercial broadcasting should be responsive to the needs of the community on the whole island of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, and have special regard for the various cultural elements of the island, including the Irish language.

Meanwhile, the public service role played by RTÉ in relation to these particular cultural elements has decreased. The amount of home-produced programming that RTÉ screens has dropped to less than 40 percent; the percentages devoted to music, education, and the Irish language have fallen below 3 percent, respectively; and the percentage of European programs remains miniscule and entirely dominated by U.K.

productions. In addition, the amount of fictional programming imported from the U.S. and the U.K. has grown. Indeed, the percentage of RTÉ's revenues obtained from commercial sources is now 70 percent. Desperate pleas for an increase in the license fee, which has remained static since 1996, have been rejected by the government, even during the period when the exchequer was at its most liquid. As Flynn indicates, the existing license fee is less than two-thirds of the average fee charged in other EU member states to support public service broadcasting. With only 1.138 million homes, the amount available via this source is always going to be limited.⁹⁴ So is there a direct correlation between the amount of public service broadcasting being transmitted by RTÉ and the level of license fee subvention?

Certainly the amount of programming that RTÉ can produce or purchase with license fee money is decreasing while competition from commercial broadcasters increases. Since 1988, RTÉ has experienced increased competition for advertising and audiences from indigenous commercial private radio and television and British terrestrial and satellite broadcasting services. At the same time, operating losses have been worsening. While RTÉ 1 still maintains the largest percentage of TV audience share, even at peak hours, and home-produced programs consistently top the ratings, the inability of the station to compete in order to purchase the rights to domestic soccer or increase their investment in non-commercial programs is slowly eroding its public-service role and turning it into a commercial station. Just before the launch of Ireland's first private television station, RTÉ revamped its second station to compete for audience share. Its schedule is now almost entirely dominated by imported U.K. and U.S. fiction. In addition, the company has used new technologies to expand into Northern Ireland, where 50 percent of households can now receive RTÉ stations; into the U.K., with Tara TV on BSkyB's satellite; and via the Internet (www.rte.ie) to audiences worldwide. Despite this search for new revenue streams and new audiences, the company's financial situation remains precarious.

Since the 1995 Broadcasting Green Paper, RTÉ has been central to a debate about the role of the broadcast media in Irish society and the opportunities and threats afforded by technological convergence and globalization. In order to understand the debate, one must refer to Ireland's geographical proximity to and strained historical relationship with the U.K. One must also take into account Ireland's strong links with both America and Australia. To a relatively young nation that is constitutionally bilingual and has struggled to re-establish its cultural specificity, foreign media and programming have always been perceived as a threat. The recent Broadcasting Act (2001) indicated that the government supported maintaining a public service broadcaster rather than creating a pool of money to support public service programming. According to this Act, the RTÉ, as the public service broadcaster, should provide programming that includes:

a comprehensive range of programmes in the Irish and English languages that reflect the cultural diversity of the whole island of Ireland and include, both on television and radio . . . programmes that entertain, inform and educate, provide coverage of sporting, religious and cultural activities and cater for the expectations of the community generally as well as members of the community with special or minority interests and which, in every case, respects human dignity."⁹⁵

One must look behind the debates to the actions of the government. Significantly, there has still been no increase in the license fee. So while the rhetoric is of public service broadcasting, the reality is that the government is not willing to fund or support anything approximating these ideals. The most concrete government action in terms of public service has been the hard fought victory to establish an Irish language television service and the creation of an independent regulatory body, the IRTC.

Fourteen years after the establishment of the IRTC to oversee commercial stations, one review found that the regulatory body has been largely ineffectual in enforcing quotas on television and radio companies, and that commercialization has not meant more choice in terms of greater independent television production but rather more of the same imported drama and light entertainment from the U.S., Australia, and the U.K. In the case of TV3, the only national private television station in the Republic (jointly owned by Granada TV from the U.K. and CanWest), the station merely provides the same fare that the mother stations provide in other countries, most of which is already distributed in Ireland by U.K. and U.S. stations. There has been no investment by commercial operators in programming that provides more choice to Irish viewers. What they have done, however unwittingly, has been to ask questions about how RTÉ spends its license fee and what makes RTÉ a public service broadcaster. If this leads to a re-evaluation of public service broadcasting in the Irish context, it can only be a good thing. The recent Forum on Broadcasting established by the government saw a number of submissions along these lines but it remains to be seen if action is taken to remedy the situation.

Indeed, action is not something at which the government has been particularly adept. Six years after the introduction of digital television in the U.K., and despite calls by RTÉ for investment in digital television from the mid-1990s, the Republic has only recently devised a structure for the development of a digital terrestrial television system. Unfortunately, no one is willing to invest in such a small market.⁹⁶ The wrangling over procedures, valuations of networks, and policy has meant that effectively BSkyB has had no competitor for digital television in the Irish market since 1996. Meanwhile, by making deals with Irish terrestrial broadcasters, BSkyB has acquired local content and is starting to aggressively market itself in the Republic through a deal with Eircom, which will provide free set-top boxes and dishes. The only other player is another multinational operator, NTL, which is the main cable operator in the Republic and a major player in the north of Ireland. While NTL has a high number of subscribers and is currently rolling out digital services, the mother company is experiencing substantial financial problems. A recent report warned against allowing one or two players to achieve “first mover” advantage. It also concluded that the Irish market for digital television is:

perhaps the most competitive in Europe. With four or five delivery platforms there is a danger that the Irish television reception market may become fragmented. It is clear that if any platform is delayed then it will have little chance of catching up with the competition. . . . whilst this may not impede the growth of digital reception, it may result in some players achieving a dominant position.⁹⁷

In summary, new technologies have expanded the number of distribution options available to broadcast organizations and increased the demand for programming across Europe. Deregulation at a European and national level has allowed more

players to enter the Irish market but without adequately ensuring that they take account of the tastes and needs of the audience or that existing public service operators are able to fulfil their mandate. Indeed, heightened competition has meant that programming on all channels is increasingly valued according to cost rather than quality criteria. In effect, this means that public service operators in smaller markets, such as Ireland, have smaller streams of revenue, are increasingly unable to compete for television rights, and are increasingly subject to commercial pressures and ratings.⁹⁸ Market-driven deregulation has dismantled state controlled public broadcasting monopolies and allowed global mass media companies to enter the market as national players (e.g., NTL in cable, BSkyB in satellite, and Canwest/Granada in private television). The entry of these new players has far from improved the choice available to Irish consumers in terms of programming content. Paradoxically, at a local level, new radio stations have significantly increased the choice and range of content available. At the same time, these stations are now proving attractive to global players who wish to expand their local penetration.

C. Cinema in Ireland

From the establishment of the Irish state until 1981, Ireland was used as a location for filming by foreign companies but the indigenous industry was virtually nonexistent. In addition, over 11,000 films were either banned or censored in some way between 1921 and the 1960s in Ireland, in a continuation of the “state knows best” policy already seen in broadcasting.⁹⁹ Ostensibly, it might appear that since 1981, when the first Film Board was established, officialdom in Ireland came to recognize the need to support the domestic film industry. The reality, however, is somewhat more complex and while there is now some production finance available, the problem for film producers in Ireland is securing national and international distribution deals and the funding of marketing. Another feature of contemporary film production in Ireland is the extent of American corporate involvement—from co-production finance, to films shot on location in Ireland, to their dominance in distribution.

The increase in the number of films made in Ireland after 1981 is significant but the overall objective of state policies is less driven by a position on film as a cultural good and more related to an increasing realization that money can be made from film production. State initiatives are also dependent upon macroeconomic conditions. The first Film Board lasted for six years and was disbanded when Ireland entered a serious economic recession (1981–1987). The levels of finance available to the second Film Board, which was re-established just after *The Crying Game* won an Oscar (1993), are hardly generous. The total budget available to invest by the board this year is just under €12 million. This figure certainly pales in comparison with the average budget for a U.S. film, which is at least double that, at \$47.7 million in 2001.¹⁰⁰ This U.S. figure also understates the costs, given that another \$25 million on average is spent on marketing and prints. However, since the re-establishment of the Film Board and the introduction of a range of fiscal incentives to encourage foreign projects to shoot in Ireland, the number of films/TV dramas/animations produced in Ireland annually has risen from 4 in 1992 to 23 in 2000.¹⁰¹ The Film Board has assisted in a total of 65 projects since 1994.¹⁰² Fifty-four percent of the funding for all film and major TV dramas shot in Ireland in 2000 came from overseas sources, the most important being the United States. Irish funding accounted for 46 percent of the total and over 90

percent of this came through the section 481 investment scheme (a tax incentive arrangement) with just over 3 percent coming from the Irish Film Board.¹⁰³

The imperative for Irish stories to be told on film is important not only in enabling Irish people to explore their culture and their stories on film but also because it is a popular and easily accessible medium. Despite this, the cultural role of cinema in Irish society only partly informed the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board. According to the Irish Film Board Act of 1980:

4.2. In so far as it considers it appropriate, the Board shall have regard to the need for the expression of national culture through the medium of film-making.

Nevertheless, the reaction to certain Irish films only serves to underline the cultural role of cinema and the importance of having a diversity of perspectives available. This reaction was especially strong in the case of *Michael Collins* (1996), a film about an important historical and revolutionary figure in Ireland who fought against the English in the war of independence and signed the treaty that established partition in Ireland. This film was the highest grossing film ever shown in Irish cinemas (until *Titanic*), and generated considerable media and popular comment about Collins, affording people a chance to engage with that period of Irish history. Interestingly, there were calls for it to be withdrawn in the U.K. because of its depiction of the British government.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, it is not the only time that Irish films have been criticized or even banned in the U.K. for their perspective on events in Ireland. Anne Crilly's *Mother Ireland* (1988) was banned from being broadcast in the U.K. for its examination of the relationship between the female image and Irish nationalism. The Irish Film Board has come in for criticism for the number of films it has funded that deal with the conflict in Northern Ireland. When accused of producing IRA propaganda, the head of the Board retorted that:

What would be weird would be if no one here made films about the conflict. . . . The reason we are involved is because they are interesting films. But we don't dictate the perspective.¹⁰⁵

Of course, not all Irish films deal with the Northern Ireland issue. Indeed, not all Irish films deal with Irish issues. According to Ging, Irish filmmakers are increasingly producing films that are acceptable within the parameters established by global media players and are conveying the more romantic images of Ireland held by her emigrant community. Irish film in the 1990s preferred a more marketable shade of Irishness to critical self-questioning and social realism.¹⁰⁶ Ron Howard's *Far and Away* (1992) was filmed in Ireland with a budget of \$55 million but its content played to the emigrant markets using traditional Irish stereotypes, "Paddyisms," and the spectacle of U.S. neo-colonial frontierism. While there is a tradition of such films being made in Ireland, the investment-driven nature of film production, which relies heavily on U.K. and U.S. investment, may also encourage such depictions.

Another feature of the Irish cinema scene is that the increase in domestic film production since 1981 has not resulted in an increase in the number of Irish films distributed. In a recent article, Flynn and Kerr found that during the early 1990s, U.S. pictures accounted for up to 90 percent of the films shown in Irish cinemas.¹¹⁰ {110. Kerr, 2003 #862}. Also, of the 28 wholly Irish-funded films produced between 1990

and 2001, the majority did not get a cinema release in Ireland (or only received a very limited one, i.e., one print in one cinema for one week). An explanation for this can be found in the structure and ownership of both distribution and exhibition in Ireland, which is dominated by American majors. Independent producers in Ireland are increasingly forced to rely on film festivals, video, and television stations—which are forced by law to commission and show independent works—despite the increase in the number of cinema screens in Ireland during the 1990s.

Table 2. Box Office Figures and Distributors for the Top Five Irish Films in the 1990s

Film	Distributor	Box office
Michael Collins (1996)	Warner Bros	\$ 5.6 M
In the Name of the Father (1994)	UIP	\$3.3 M
The Commitments (1991)	Fox	\$ 3.1 M
Circle of Friends (1995)	Abbey Films	\$ 1.9 M
The General (1998)	Warner Bros	\$ 1.8 M

Note: Figures relate to the Republic and the North of Ireland¹⁰⁷

The strategy for major media corporations to vertically integrate and own their own distribution chains began after World War II and was reinforced by the 1948 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which limited the extent to which national governments could establish exhibition quotas for domestic films. In short, major global media corporations operate in an unregulated environment where horizontal and vertical integration have generated oligopolies that control all aspects of the production chain. These corporations produce a continuous flow of high budget films, released simultaneously in all the major markets of the world—what Tino Balio calls “saturation booking”—and accompanied by a massive advertising campaign. They are also guaranteed release in subsidiary cinemas. Balio asserts that:

the merger movement of the 1980s was characterised in part by vertical integration, the desire to control the production of programming, the distribution of programming and even the exhibition of programming. . . . a prime example of the vertical integration trend was the move by film companies into exhibition. . . . more significantly the new merger movement was characterised by . . . a desire to strengthen distribution.¹⁰⁸

While most people in Ireland and Europe are not averse to consuming American and U.K.-produced popular culture, it is critical to realize that free trade and the industrialization of film lead to oligopolies of enormous power and scope. In the face of this “hegemony of American market-driven products,” as Rod Stoneman, chair of the Irish Film Board, describes it,¹⁰⁹ independent producers and producers from societies with small domestic markets find it increasingly difficult to finance and distribute their cultural product.

D. The Internet in Ireland

As a relatively new medium, the Internet is only approaching mass status in Ireland in terms of access. The latest Eurobarometer Flash Survey found that 48 percent of households in Ireland had access to the Internet.¹¹⁰ This figure places Ireland just above the EU average for Internet access, behind northern Europe and the U.S., but ahead of southern Europe. The Irish Information Society Commission conducted a survey in 2000 of a nationally representative sample of adults, age 15 years and over, and found that while almost 52 percent of people had access to the Internet, a high proportion of these were in the ABC1 group, located in Dublin, and were working or students. Nonusers were marked by their lack of qualifications, skills, or employment.¹¹¹ While the Internet is spreading—in the last ten years almost half of the Irish people have gained access to it—in terms of national penetration and use, it is still well behind television, radio, cinema, and newspapers.

The survey discovered that by far the most common use of the Internet was for research/obtaining information (66%), followed by e-mail (48%), information on travel/leisure (23%), and entertainment (11%). Shopping and the use of chat lines or bulletin boards constituted less than 10 percent, respectively. Interestingly, this pattern points to the flexibility of the Internet since both asynchronous (websites) and synchronous (e-mail) forms of communication are used regularly; the former mirrors the mass one-to-many broadcast function of the traditional mass media while the latter indicates a new form of one-to-one communication. As a medium for news, a recent manuscript noted that the Internet is not yet a competitor with traditional mass media:

there is little to suggest from the latest surveys that Internet use will shift existing patterns of news consumption from the traditional media to the Internet. Levels of Internet use are much lower than for the traditional mass media of television, radio and the daily papers.¹¹²

An analysis of the Irish context finds significant barriers, or “social constraints” as Winston calls them, to Internet growth. While Irish people have increasing access to the Internet, a feature of the Irish landscape is that many access the Internet either through work or Internet cafés. The reasons behind the uneven distribution of the Internet among socioeconomic groups and the relatively low level of home access may be the continuing high price of use (users pay per minute) and the struggle between Eircom, the incumbent telecommunications operator, and new entrants into the market over a reasonable price for access to the telecommunications network. This issue is currently being investigated by the telecommunications regulator and it is likely that Eircom will be forced to reduce the price it charges competitors to access its network. This may pave the way for flat rate Internet access.

A significant issue raised regularly by businesses in Ireland is the need to create a more competitive telecommunications environment and to further dismantle the monopoly that Eircom used to enjoy. As in broadcasting, telecommunications is a field in which the monopoly player is now being forced to open distribution networks to other players. These new players are global, like British Telecom and NTL. Also as in broadcasting, the dismantling of a monopoly system has led to renewed debate about public service, as has the rebalancing of prices to reflect costs and the subsequent increase in domestic telephone prices. Interestingly, the deregulation and re-regulation process has proved far from easy. From a domestic user’s point of view,

a significant issue is why competition has not led to better services at a cheaper price. An equally vexing issue is who is going to pay to provide this new services in such a small market and in remote areas.¹¹³ The EU, the Irish government, and the Office of the Director of Telecommunications (established in 1997) are all trying to create a level playing field between competing telecommunications companies (cable, satellite, radio, voice, and data services). At the same time, they are trying to ensure that an acceptable level of public service is maintained.

Given the relatively high cost of Internet use in Ireland and the growing but still small proportion of the population who regularly use it, one might ask who is producing the information that these people (individuals, groups, companies, government, schools) are accessing, and to what extent Irish people are publishing their own information on the Internet? Indeed, we might ask to what extent the Internet is fulfilling the democratic dream promulgated by many?

The last two years saw a number of high profile multimedia company closures in Ireland. New media research departments of telecommunications companies and large multimedia companies closed in significant numbers. Indeed, many companies are reassessing their Internet ventures and applying more stringent cost/benefit analysis to them. This retrenchment has allowed global players like AOL, Vivendi, and Microsoft to expand through acquisitions and leveraging synergies between content and distribution arms. They have also begun to establish partnerships with traditional media companies in large markets in order to secure local content for their global platforms. Today, the most visible and active websites in Ireland with the “.ie” domain name are big business sites, including global portals and search engines, the websites of Irish mass media companies, travel/online booking sites, and banking and other consumer goods companies.

Of course, the Internet is not only about big business. In fact, it is often argued that anyone can develop and publish a website or other cultural form on the Internet. This is true but for many people there are still significant barriers to be overcome. My research into local community developments and publicly funded projects uncovered a number of barriers, including the lack of technological skills and technical support, and the high costs of production. For many of the projects examined there was little ongoing funding and technical support.¹¹⁴ At the same time, anecdotal evidence suggests that craft industries and musicians in particular are using the Internet on a less visible level to promote their work within their own communities (e.g., www.soundout.net). Similarly, technology-savvy individuals are using the Internet to network and create online communities in local areas and across international boundaries (e.g., games groups, fan groups like www.darkmate.com). Yet for all these individuals, there is research to suggest that Irish people are becoming more consumers than producers for the Internet. A small-scale ethnographic study conducted in North Dublin of 25 homes found that home users accessed the Internet less to network politically or to publish than to supplement existing media, for research, to e-mail friends and family, and to support education. Interestingly, they also viewed getting the Internet as essential in relation to inclusion, if not participation, in the information society.¹¹⁵

While there are certainly barriers to the growth of the Internet, there are also significant accelerators or actors promoting its diffusion and use. The information society discourse surrounding the Internet and the government's promotion of it are an important aspect of any analysis of this new medium. While the government was directly involved in establishing the television and radio networks in Ireland, it has

also played an important role in promoting the Internet as a tool for business and as a medium for communication between citizens and the state. In 1996, a review committee published the “Information Society Ireland: Strategy for Action {ISSC #210}” document, which led to the appointment of a full-time Information Society Commission charged with setting priorities, developing initiatives, and measuring progress towards an information society. The five pillars of Ireland’s strategy were awareness, infrastructure, learning, enterprise, and government. With the benefit of hindsight, some of the objectives included in the report seem rather idealistic: to provide access to broadband services for the majority of Irish households (DSL has only just been launched in the country in 2002) and to secure a leadership position for the Irish content industry. Nevertheless, the discourse has become a powerful prescriptive and motivator in itself, as the research in North Dublin shows. It has also led to some concrete initiatives. The Community Application of Information Technology initiative made €2.5 million available to 25 voluntary and community projects around the country while the Schools IT 2000 project was launched to help connect every school in Ireland to the Internet. However, the latest Information Society Commission report highlights the significant challenges that remain in relation to telecommunications costs, the lack of broadband access, and the adoption of the Internet.¹¹⁶

As with other mass media, the government is playing an active role in policing content on the Internet and addressing public fears about harmful content. A survey of 312 Internet users in 2001 found that access to pornography, unsuitable material, and unsuitable people were at the top of people’s fears about the Internet.¹¹⁷ Signaling that the Internet is viewed by regulators as a public mode of communication, akin to the mass media of television and the press, the Internet Advisory Board was established by the government in 2000 to advise Internet Service providers and users on how to avoid illegal and harmful content. In addition, the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1997 made it an offense to produce, distribute, or download pornography, and placed an onus on Internet Service providers to police the content that they distribute. The Irish police force is increasingly working with its counterparts in other countries to stem the illegal and cross-national trading of people and images using the Internet. This forceful approach contrasts with the traditional mode of regulating telecommunications, which views networks as carriers of private communications between individuals and where any regulation of content is viewed as an infringement of personal privacy and freedom. It appears that a strong approach is supported by the general public. Indeed, it is common now for companies to monitor employee’s use of the Internet and to include Internet codes of conduct in employment contracts.

VII. Conclusions

This essay has shown that the search for new markets and the development of new technologies, in addition to deregulation, have combined to create transnational mass media oligopolies and, unlike the natural and national monopolies of the past, these corporate oligopolies operate with minimal accountability. Many of the criticisms of natural monopolies in the past can now be levelled at these corporate oligopolies in that they have little interest in producing for the less well-off in society, questioning the status quo, or reflecting changing social conditions. Indeed, in Ireland, the cultural paternalism of the state monopoly has been replaced by cultural homogeneity on

commercial broadcast channels, not by the global sensibility and understanding of other cultures theorized by McLuhan (1964), Bell (1974), and Giddens (1993).

At the same time, this does not tell the whole story from an Irish perspective. Resistance to these trends comes in the form of national and European re-regulation, initiatives to support national production, the growth of local and regional media, the expansion of local corporations into markets overseas, and the harnessing of new media technologies to serve the emigrant market and promote niche interests. These responses indicate levels of resistance and active audiences (as consumers and producers) but overall it appears that to compete in domestic markets, Irish mass media producers are increasingly forced to produce content suitable for export (in film and on the Internet, especially) and to fill domestic schedules and distribution space with imported rather than locally produced content. At the same time, global media operators, while clearly interested in owning Irish media operations, only care to produce the minimum of domestic content, given the small size of the market. In the context of increased competition, diversity of content and public service are secondary.

While this essay has focused on the mass media of print, broadcasting, cinema, and the Internet, my Ph.D. research focused on multimedia companies and my current research deals with the digital games industry. In both these projects I examined the opportunities and barriers faced by Irish new media companies and in particular the problems encountered in trying to balance “exportability” with national cultural specificity.¹¹⁸ As with traditional media corporations, the absence of a large domestic market forces these companies to export and compete with the media moguls who benefit from massive economies of scale and scope. It is not an even competition. A handful of Irish firms have proved fit enough to compete (e.g., Independent News Media Ltd.), but the majority are microenterprises struggling on a project-by-project basis.¹¹⁹ As Hazelkorn has observed, the “independent” media industries in Ireland are essentially dependent on large companies rather than truly independent. Furthermore, the Internet has proved to be less of a “lever” for the transition to a new form of society and economy than was originally anticipated. The barriers facing Irish independent film producers in terms of accessing international and national distribution channels remain significant and are mirrored in other industries not covered in this article, including book publishing and digital games. As the discussions at the Macalester International Roundtable 2002 elaborated, only media with low barriers to entry and low production budgets seem to be able to use the Internet to bypass conventional distribution channels.

While for Appadurai¹²⁰ the instruments of the state still play an important role as an “arbiter of repatriation” (and for a brief period in the early 1990s, a particularly unique Minister for the Arts, Culture and the *Gaeltacht* seemed to take up this role), in the main, re-regulation in Ireland has been driven by industrial development goals rather than the public interest. In fact, the development of industry associations and representative bodies over the past decade has meant that while the industry perspective is put forcibly to the relevant regulatory body, the public’s perspective remains diffuse. The deregulation of the Irish information and communications fields began back in the 1980s with the telecommunications industry. Even then, commentators pointed to the emergence of a “managed monopoly” whereby the state acted to promote integration into an international marketplace dominated by multinational capital. It saw no problem in allowing U.K. and U.S. companies to control the main satellite, cable, and mobile networks in Ireland.¹²¹ More recently in

the broadcasting field, commentators have argued that the BCI has become dominated by the foreign-owned private interests it purports to control.¹²² Currently, a tribunal has begun to ask questions about the whole political process by which commercial broadcasting licenses were awarded to private operators. Along with the BSkyB/FAI deal, these developments demonstrate that public bodies, public companies, and governments may not always act in the best interests of the public they claim to serve.

Robins and Webster argue that the information revolution is a matter of differential (and unequal) access to and control over information resources. They raise important questions about the complex relations between technology, information, and power.¹²³ It is crucially important that regulatory bodies in small countries as well as pan-national bodies like the European Commission not only recognize the economic role of the media but at the same time understand the important social role that the media plays in society, and then act to shape and protect that role in the public interest. If these bodies do not act to oversee the control of and access to communications and information networks, then the political-economic barriers to entry to these virtual spaces will be as real as the physical barriers to entry faced by Irish manufacturing industries trying to export abroad.

Deregulation in broadcasting and telecommunications has brought some good things, in particular the expansion of local media, the growth of the Internet, and the unsettling of cozy monopolies. Indeed, if I were to highlight just one thing, it would be that the struggle to deregulate both spheres has prompted ordinary people in Ireland to reassess the concept of public service in relation to both telecommunications and the mass media. The Broadcasting Act (2001) moved away from a narrow romantic concept of Irishness, in which public service is synonymous with a particular religion, history, and language, toward a more civic, inclusive, and democratic concept that includes all people on the island of Ireland. As Ireland's economy experiences a slow down for the first time in almost ten years, we will be able to see if there is the political will at all levels in society to enforce this concept of public service in global, national, and local media.

Notes

1. "Súil eile" is Gaelic, meaning another eye or another perspective. It is the slogan used by TG4, a public service television service which broadcasts in the Irish language.
2. Corless 2002.
3. Broadcasting (Major Events Television Coverage) Act, 1999, giving effect to Article 3a of Council Directive No. 89/552/EEC on 3 October 1989. A list was finally drawn up and submitted to the Commission in October 2002.
4. This essay focuses on the (mass) media of newspapers, radio, television, film, and the Internet. It will not deal with music, advertising, or education.
5. A recent report noted that from a sample list of 257 European-produced films, Irish television channels only showed four, all of which were English productions or co-productions (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2000).
6. Wickham 1997.
7. See <http://www.gov.ie/aboutireland/eng/economy.asp>.
8. Culminating in the rejection of the Nice Treaty on European enlargement in 2002.
9. Kirby 1997; Kirby et. al. 2002.

10. Mulryan 1988.
11. Ibid., p. 5.
12. Teleffís is the Irish word for television. Éireann stands for Ireland.
13. Gibbons 1996, p. 4.
14. See <http://www.bci.ie/>.
15. One of their most popular services is providing local obituaries.
16. But this is nothing new. In fact, before Ireland established its own television service in 1961, 30,000 homes were receiving British television (Lee 1989, p. 647.)
17. Eurobarometer 2002.
18. European Commission, 2002a.
19. Other useful work has been conducted in the sociology of science and technology field but for reasons of space I will not go into that here.
20. Marvin, 1988, p. 3.
21. Ibid., p. 4.
22. Ibid., p. 192.
23. See http://www.ieee.org/organizations/history_center/milestones_photos/transatlantic_cable.html.
24. Ibid., p. 201.
25. Williams 1983, p. 84.
26. Winston 1996; 1990; 1998.
27. Winston 1996, p. 7.
28. McLuhan 1964, p. 13.
29. Bell 1974, p. 188.
30. Ibid., p. 189.
31. Castells 1996, p. 372.
32. Castells 2001, pp. 188, 202.
33. Ibid., p. 2.
34. Robins and Webster 1999, pp. 91-92.
35. McQuail 1994.
36. Murdock and Golding 1997; Robins and Webster 1999; Garnham 2000.
37. Garnham 2000, pp. 39-62.
38. McQuail 1997, p. 38.
39. Morris and Ogan 2002.
40. Mosco 1996, p. 71.
41. Garnham 2000, p. 39.
42. Ibid., p. 64.
43. McQuail 1994, p. 22.
44. Ibid., p. 28.
45. Mosco 1996.
46. Kerr and Preston 2001.
47. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/avpolicy/media/index_en.html.
48. Morley and Robins 1995; and Preston 2001.
49. Robertson 1990; Tomlinson 1999.
50. Giddens 1993.
51. Ferguson 1992.
52. Harvey 1989; Jameson 1990.
53. Harvey 1989, p. 295.
54. Mosco 1996, p. 205.

55. Golding and Harris 1997.
56. In point of fact, Appadurai adduces five independent dimensions to these global cultural flows. In addition to mediascapes, he points to ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes.
Featherstone 1990, p. 7
57. Ibid., p. 307.
58. In reality, the media is narrowed to telephones and television in his explication.
Tomlinson, 1999, p. 19.
59. Ibid., p. 178.
60. Ibid., p. 85.
61. Morley and Robins 1995, p. 1.
62. Kirby et. al. 2002; O'Connor 1998.
63. Allen 2002, pp. 89–90.
64. Paschal Preston 2001.
65. Corcoran 1999.
66. Mosco 1996.
67. See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/mergers/cases/stats.html>.
68. Sanchez-Tabernero and Carvajal 2002, p. 12.
69. Papathanassopoulos 2002.
70. Kerr 2000; Corcoran 1999.
71. Corcoran 1999.
72. Milmo 2002.
73. Allison 2002.
74. Garnham 2000, p. 39.
75. Eldridge and Eldridge 1994.
76. Morley and Robins 1995; Robertson 1990; Tomlinson 1999.
77. Horgan 2001, p. 2.
78. Kelly and Rolston 1995.
79. Gibbons 1996, p. 4.
80. Ibid., p. 3.
81. Flynn 2002.
82. Commission on the Newspaper Industry, 1996.
83. Indeed, they took a case to the European Commission on this basis and lost because the British newspapers did not occupy a dominant position in the Irish market.
84. See <http://www.ireland.com/>.
85. Horgan 2001, p. 171.
86. See <http://www.unison.ie/>.
87. Commission on the Newspaper Industry, 1996.
88. Horgan 2001, p. 170.
89. Kitney 2002.
90. Horgan 2001, pp. 78–79.
91. Gibbons 1996, p. 74.
92. Flynn 2002.
93. The Minister responsible has subsequently been the subject of a tribunal investigating corruption and bribery.
94. Flynn 2002, p. 171.
95. Broadcasting Act, 2001, p. 29.

96. The government has now abandoned its plans to sell a digital terrestrial license in Ireland due to lack of commercial interest. This has forced RTE to postpone selling its network.
97. IDATE 2000, p. 9.
98. Corcoran 1999.
99. There is still a Film Censor's Office.
100. Motion Picture Association of America, 2002.
101. <http://www.filmboard.ie/guidelines/welcome.html>.
102. Ibid.
103. IBEC 2000.
104. Lee 1996.
105. McKeone 1998.
106. Ging 2002.
107. Pettitt 2000, p. 286.
108. Balio 1998.
109. Pettitt 2000, p. 45.
110. European Commission, 2002b.
111. ISC, 2000a.
112. O'Donnell, forthcoming.
113. Lillington 2001; Irish Internet Association, 2002.
114. Kerr 2000; Kerr 2002a; O'Donnell 1998.
115. Ward 2002.
116. ISC, 2000b.
117. Amarach Consulting, 2001.
118. Kerr 2000; Kerr 2002b; Kerr and Flynn 2002; Kerr 1999.
119. Kerr 2002a; Hazelkorn 1997; Hazelkorn and Murphy 2002.
120. Appadurai 1990.
121. Bell and Meehan 1989.
122. Flynn 2002.
123. Robins and Webster 1999.

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