CHAPTER 9

Transnational Feminist Media Practices: Seeking Alliance against Global Capitalism

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Understanding Transnational Media Contexts

In this chapter, I am primarily concerned with the possibilities of transnational feminist media practices. My discussion is premised on the idea that the current context of global neoliberal, capitalist society is based on the exploitation of women, children and poor; this global society is a vehicle of dehistoricizing and excluding diverse subjectivities that make up the very fabric of our everyday lives including gender and race. Functions of exploitation, dehistoricization, and exclusion are propellers of neoliberal capitalist society’s spread and domination worldwide. In this sense, I am interested in alternative transnational media practices that utilize both traditional media platforms and new media technologies. First, I begin by discussing some contemporary debates in international, global and transnational communication. I examine such concepts as transnational media and transnational media practice. Finally, I position transnational feminist media as sites that have potential to offer platforms for alternative voices, alternative gender representations, narratives of diverse feminist experiences, and examples of non-capitalist economic practices, as well as alternative visions of globalization.

International media, global media, and transnational media scholars have long debated and disagreed about the possibility of transnational media and about the nature of their impact. Olausson discussed so called sceptics and globalists as two groups of scholars that have divergent views of the impact of transnational media. She argues that sceptics see media globalization as a process that creates inequalities between those who have access or are represented and those who are excluded from both access and representation, while globalists hold a mostly optimistic view, believing that a true transnational public sphere is possible.¹ In general, scholarship on transnational media has focused on infrastructure and content through political-economic and cultural

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transnational feminist media practices. Infrastructure studies include the analysis of the reach and nature of cross-border communication technologies. These include studies of mobile telephony and satellite television, as well as the study of the nature of national and transnational media systems, to argue that dominance of Western conglomerates and their media systems is evident. Content studies, on the other hand, delve into examinations of the types of content that these media systems produce, for example, studies of network journalism and of the role of journalists, as well as of the impact of cross-border communication technologies on migrant groups and of the ways in which transnational media create gendered subjectivities. The tension exists within the very definition of transnational media: in terms of their geographical reach or in terms of global discourse that these media deliver. For example, Olausson argues that it is precisely this global discourse that characterizes media as transnational. But that thesis begs a question whether all national media that deliver global discourse may be considered transnational and whether such epistemology would yield useful media analysis. Theorizing transnational media as global discourse, as proposed by Olausson, is a compelling thesis, but, upon further examination, such thesis seems inevitably to leave other important elements of transnational communication in the dark. How, then, is transnational media defined? Gher and Bharthapudi define transnational media, “...as communication, information or entertainment that crosses international borders without the regulatory constrains normally associated with electronic media.” A prime example is satellite TV, which has revolutionized media communication in large parts of the so called Third World. This view of transnational media is dominant, and I would agree with Olausson that a focus on the kinds of discourse and practices that these media deliver is as equally important as is the current concerns about the reach of its infrastructure. However, as it has been argued before, that any examination of transnational media must include all three


3 Urlika Olausson, “Theorizing Global Media as a Global Discourse.”


5 Ibid.