public and national interests of the host and recipient countries, given that broadcast media contents are both ideological in nature and marketable to some extent. The relevant processes and subsequent effects are always dynamic, which provide us useful references for learning about the case in China.

The third section and the fourth are interconnected. The author puts various aspects of current international communication practices of China’s broadcast media under examination, highlighting its differences with other countries. China’s broadcast media outlets are public-owned and party-led, but they also have important economic attributes and can make profits in a market-led economy. Aptly establishing narratives on three levels, the author focuses on identifying the problems at each level and their overall limits, enabling the readers to ponder over the causes and solutions of the problems and analyse future prospects, which is the focus of the last section. The last section’s title is also the research question that aims to figure out effective strategies for projecting China’s voice. Ranging from the reform of the broadcast communication systems and transformation of administration and operation modes of media organisations to the diversification of media messages and agenda-setting, the author lists many efforts that have been made and suggests improvements. Strategies aimed at achieving meaningful communication are not just associated with a single aspect and specific analyses are required from case to case. In a nutshell, contemporary attempts to reform international communication practices of China are apparently aimed at better projecting the Party’s propaganda overseas while disseminating the image of a peacefully rising China and enhancing its global influence in a rapidly changing global environment.

The author has managed to gather abundant information from national institutions, state-owned and local media organisations, and social media. This book is a unique monograph that systematically and elaborately touches upon several topics revolving around China’s international communication strategies centred on radio and television. With the book’s Chinese version published in 2013, its English version has been persistently rectified, updated and enhanced in terms of the book’s structure and addition of new examples and discussions. Thus, even after 4 years of its initial publication, the book is still worthy of a thorough reading, as it offers latest insights into China’s international communication strategies, which are faced with an ever-increasing need for improvement given the nation’s rising. The book is especially useful for young researchers and graduate students who need related knowledge and guidance in developing their own research projects. It also has value for practitioners in governmental institutions and media organisations.

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New questions emerge amidst rapid changes

Terry Flew, New Media (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, 2014

It is an established fact that the new media has profoundly shaped the modern world. However, many issues revolving around this phenomenon remain debatable because the concept of ‘new media’ is always in a dynamic state. How can we define new media? How can we evaluate the
social functions of new media? How can we analyse new media in a grand social context beyond simple technologies? Few studies have addressed these vital research questions on new media. In this backdrop, *New Media*, written by Terry Flew, have emerged somewhat like a textbook on the subject. The book discusses the aforementioned questions with a very sophisticated approach. I would like to review this book from four perspectives explained hereunder.

First, it is noteworthy that we are looking at this book’s fourth edition, published in 2014, following three editions in 2002, 2005 and 2008, respectively. These upgrades are attributable to the rapid changes in media technologies and the entire media landscape. The term ‘new media’ is always in an unstable and dynamic form. This means the word ‘new’ shall always be relative. As Sonia Livingston (1999) notes, the idea is to ask, ‘What’s new about new media?’ than simply pondering over ‘What are the new media?’ (p. 60). In this edition, compared to the situation in 2002 when this book’s first edition was published, new media has evolved from being merely a technological wonder to a social platform based on technologies – a virtual society with real elements. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are changing our lives, as they shape how the society relates to the Internet. For example, ranging from Obama’s election to events such as the Arab Spring, the whole world witnessed the rise of new media as a means for political participation. Besides politics, issues revolving around laws, copyrights, policymaking and education systems are essentially involved in new media’s development. Flew (2014) states,

> We need to acknowledge just how many changes have been occurring in media production, distribution and consumption over the last two decades, and the extent to which they have been linked to wider transformations in work, lifestyle, identity and culture, as well as economics, politics, global affairs, and forms of social interaction. (Flew, 2014: 2)

The first perspective explained above points at the rapid pace at which the new media is being upgraded from a simple technological domain to being a vital constituent of the society, deeply rooted in every aspect of our daily lives.

This brings us to my second perspective of this book: Which clues should we follow to trace the future trajectory of new media? At the inception stage, the new media were a product of academia’s pursuits for innovation, featuring unorthodox approaches and collaborated pursuit of knowledge in a community-oriented working environment. At present, advancements in new media are focused on intellect-driven creation of heritage in the spirit of publicity and sharing. In fact, almost each case that Flew discusses in the book shares the aforementioned characteristics. For example, as the foundational concept of new media revolution, Flew (2014: 14) describes Web 2.0 as having the following key elements: participation, interactivity, collaborative learning and social networking. Coincidentally, Flew uses the definition from United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2010: 4) to characterise creative industries, which are regarded as the most outstanding fruit of technological innovation. Per definition, these industries have the following characteristics:

1. Their production requires some input of human creativity;
2. They should be vehicles for symbolic messages to those who consume them and/or have a larger communication purpose;
3. They should contain, at least potentially, some intellectual property that is attributable to an individual or group.
Simply put, key words for creative industries are creativity, meaning-making and intellectual property, which expost the characteristics of new media in a narration on economy. Likewise, supporting proof could be found from the political view presented in Chapter 11, ‘Internet Law, Policy and Governance’. Flew (2014) notes, ‘The blurring of boundaries between media forms and industries and the greater ability of media consumers to themselves become producers and distributors of media content across global platforms …’, ‘… same media content can increasingly be accessed across multiple devices’, ‘… this in turn not only requires new policies for new media, but also points to the need for a wider rethinking of both the principles of media policy and the regulatory instruments through which it is enacted’ (p. 186). Such blows to the traditional approaches of governance could be recognised as a new spectacle that technological innovation brings to communication, thereby transforming the old pattern of media production and distribution, which is characterised by decentralisation and widely dispersed nodes in communication networks.

Moreover, the author discusses that the worldwide new media reform is steered by technological innovation along with industrial reform and ideological rethinking. Similar to some examples stated above, Web 2.0 technologically empowers people to participate in creating a better life. It comes along with new forms of industries that require more inputs on knowledge, intelligence and meaning-making. This is ‘where social network markets bring agents and enterprises together in a more dynamic interplay than the traditional producer-consumer model’ (Potts et al. 2008). In this way, the old way of regulation and governance is confronted with new issues emerging out of a more consumer-friendly industrial environment, which deeply influences social ideologies.

In the second chapter of this book, ‘Twenty Key Concepts in New Media’, Flew takes 20 cases to identify what it is to be ‘new’. The author cites references and makes his argument per the logical framework mentioned above, discussing each concept independently. Taking the third concept ‘creative industry’ as an example, since it has been exemplified before, Flew (2014, p. 21) uses Hartley’s (2012) arguments to prove how media technologies partake in and alter the industry through ‘open innovation approaches’ that stress the role of digital networks in opening up new possibilities for user-created content and user-led innovation in a ‘technologically-equipped culture’ (p. 52). At the same time, all 20 concepts could be collectively categorised into three connected dimensions: technological innovation, industrial reform and ideological rethinking. For instance, the first concept ‘collective intelligence’ should be categorised as technology, but it is the base of the second concept ‘media convergence’, which attributes to ‘digital economy’, which can be regarded a result of ‘industrial reform’, which brings us to ‘digital capitalism’, the seventh concept.

Until this point, progression and advancement seem to be the key theme of Terry Flew’s _New Media, which_ are good terms to begin explaining how media is pushed to become more essential and revolutionary. It corresponds to how the new media create more ways to appeal to human beings through increased manipulability, networkability, participation, compressibility and impartiality. At the same time, the new media are changing themselves to a better future just as how they impact society in new ways. As with any cultural change, there exist new limitations and debates towards the fast pace of new media that comes with the shift towards digitisation, convergence and informatisation along with the problems and puzzles they leave for us. Actually, the book’s true theme is implicit in the apparent changes taking place in the age of new media. This theme is the unfinished discussion on unstable but new situations that new media has created for us, and how these situations make significant issues worth talking about. Although the author has conducted a
massive literature review, cautiously comparing different opinions and smartly using them for his own thinking, at the end of the story, it only raises more questions than it answers. This is especially true for chapters that discuss something really ‘grand and vital’, such as the seventh chapter on future journalism, the 10th chapter on education and the 11th chapter on laws and policies. The more references Flew cites, the more blurring the answers appear to be. For example, one may observe the conclusion from the seventh chapter, titled ‘A Fifth Estate?’ Although the ‘fifth estate’ is a very lively account of journalism in the age of new media, the question mark after the term is quite necessary. New media bring new phenomena, as well as new questions to be discussed, as Flew (2014: 121) notes at the end of the chapter: ‘New media are transforming questions of what is news and who is a journalist?’ Indeed, new media bring questions rather than solid answers.

This brings us to my final perspective of reviewing this book. To those of us who came through the early age of Internet and information society, which is actually not long ago, it is difficult not to look back incredulously at the rapid innovation in and adoption of technology, such as video game consoles, home computers, Internet, cell phones and other now ubiquitous forms of new media. Giving an example from China, no one could have foreseen years ago that a few apps like Alipay and WeChat could redefine our lifestyle and overwhelmingly transform the highly debated question of ‘How can a man live only by internet without going out of one’s living space?’ into ‘How can a man live without internet today?’ Reviewing the Canadian version of this book, Darren Blakeborough (2014) states,

The new edition of the book published in 2014 addresses one of the major concerns I had with the first edition (and a concern that is generally applied to all texts in this field): some of the examples or technologies discussed can appear long past their prime.

Nonetheless, considering how suddenly things can change in this area of research, the author does incredibly well to frame a range of questions for the future and remain relevant to larger discourses on the shifting nature of new media. The author underpins possibilities to future discussions that could link to the grand narration of the economic and political order. Flew never defines new media distinctly as good or bad for the society and culture; instead, he explains it as an inherent part of these two evolving constructs. According to what he has done via this book, arguments against new media have been well summarised under a list of valuable and guided frames. Therefore, for future discussions on the significance of new media, we now have a handbook to look for real questions to answer.

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