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INTRODUCTION: ‘TRACING ENTANGLEMENTS IN MEDIA HISTORY’

Christoph Hilgert , Marie Cronqvist  and Hugh Chignell

KEYWORDS Entangled history; cultural transfer; transmedia; transnational; *histoire croisée*; *Verflechtungsgeschichte*

History is complex, and so is media history. Hence, entanglements are phenomena of particular concern for media historiography. While media history has often been studied as the history of one specific medium in one specific national context, the transnational and transmedial dimensions activated by concepts such as entangled media history opens up past communication patterns, practices and phenomena, and lift their complexity, interrelatedness and variability. In the historical sciences, concepts such as *histoire croisée/Verflechtungsgeschichte* or *transfert culturel/Kulturtransfer* have prominently pointed to the value of understanding such interlaces. Taking their ideas into account for studying the history of mediated communication is of key importance for promoting an integrated media history.¹

In an article in this journal in 2017, we presented the basis for the research network Entangled Media Histories (EMHIS), which was formed in 2014 as an arena for international dialogue on the historical dimensions of transnational as well as transmedial flows in mediated (public) communication. The network has until now been financed by STINT, the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education. Originally, our members were from Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden, but over the years the network has expanded to other countries and even continents. Apart from a series of internal meetings, workshops and research visits, an international conference ‘Tracing entanglements in media history’ held at Lund University in May 2016 further explored the theoretical and methodological implications of our request for an integrated media history. The conference had an open call and ended up with over 40 paper presentations about various interconnected media histories held by participants from 17 different countries and several academic disciplines such as history, media and communication studies, film and literary studies.

To this special issue, we invited some of these paper presenters to submit articles on their respective case studies. We chose contributions that did particular justice to, or aimed to expand or sometimes even challenge, the idea of entanglements in media history. Of course, this selection was no easy task and does not suggest any definitive judgment on what might be the ultimate way of studying entanglements in media history. The



exploratory dimension is highlighted in the title of this special issue as well as the 2016 conference; it is a matter of tracking or tracing media historical entanglements in any shape or form they may come. The metaphor of tracing is particularly useful to describe the work of historians in general, to find or discover the unobvious by a close examination of historical sources. Most often the historian concludes that people, things and events in the past were far more complex, intertwined or indeed entangled than he or she first anticipated.

This special issue thus comprises a set of articles that trace and shed light on different forms and aspects of entanglements in media history. To begin with, tracing entanglements can imply following the footprints of particular historical agents and to zoom in on their transnational or transmedial activities. In her response to our 2017 article, Michele Hilmes addressed this dimension specifically saying that '[e]xploring the trail that such individuals leave behind can unlock the way that transnationality, and also transmediality, function at ground level.'² One example of transnationality on this ground level is Sune Bechmann Pedersen's and Marie Cronqvist's article, which partly follows the footprints of one particular East German television foreign correspondent in Scandinavia, Heinz Sachsenweger. His monthly reports back to the GDR are a mix of everyday technical trials and tribulations, political reflection and economic predicaments of a foreign correspondent who served as transnational actor and intermediary.

Individual entangled agency with regards to transmediality rather than transnationality we find in Hugh Chignell's and Kate Terkanian's article about BBC journalist Nesta Pain, who crossed both genre and media boundaries during her outstanding career. Producing content for radio, television, stage as well as printed media, Pain expressed her broad interests in different fields like popular science and history as well as literary drama. Moreover, she did bridge the gap between journalism and academic research by translating science into informative and entertaining programmes for BBC's popular Light Programme and its highbrow Third Programme alike. Chignell and Terkanian argue that individual media producers may assume a role as a 'cultural translator', both part of and driver of transmedial initiatives.

To compare different national media histories and/or tracing processes of cultural, technological or intellectual transfer processes is a means of also identifying things that *are* specific for a particular national context. Several articles in this issue address this entanglement of national and transnational. In his contribution, Pol Dalmau investigates how agency in the national development of media communication is connected to the cultural transfer of ideas and ideals in journalism from the United Kingdom to Italy and Spain at the turn of the twentieth century. Past glory still made *The Times* newspaper—regardless of its then state of decline—the benchmark for quality journalism. As Dalmau demonstrates, adaptations of journalistic methods and ideas in different national or regional contexts constitute an entangled history indeed, which are far from linear flows.

The phenomenon of cultural transfer and national adaptation is also addressed by Laura Saarenmaa although her article places the focus on travelling media content. Saarenmaa explores photo reportages about East–West human smuggling between the two Germanies in the context of the Cold War. Using Swedish men's magazines as a historical source, the author shows that original German manuscripts and photographs did cross the national border of Sweden, but that the reports were heavily edited to fit the Swedish male gaze—not only by adding information necessary to understand what was going on but

also by underscoring certain aspects of 'boyish adventures'. In her article, Saarenmaa demonstrates the entangled nature of the genre of written Cold War reportage using the men's magazine as a lens.

Transnationality is taken up as well in Nelson Ribeiro's contribution, which adds an important perspective by tracing entanglements not only across the so-called Iron Curtain during the Cold War, but also along the (post)colonial trajectories between Portugal and its (former) African colonies from the 1950s to the 1970s. Looking at Radio Free Europe as well as Voice of Liberty and Radio Free Portugal, which formed a unique radio ensemble transmitting from and to Portugal in order to bypass domestic media and to influence the political debate in the targeted countries, Ribeiro illustrates how these media created entanglements between societies located in different political, cultural and geographical settings.

Finally, two articles in this issue are linked specifically, though in quite different ways, to the interesting and expanding research on media and migration. Histories of migration are entangled almost by definition. A comparative perspective is laid out in the joint contribution by Christoph Hilgert, Alina Just and Gloria Khamkar. Together the authors explore the United Kingdom and West German public service radios' abilities to reflect on and to address the specific needs and expectations of migrant groups. Using the programmes specifically directed to Asian migrants in the UK and the *Gastarbeiter* (foreign workers) and *Spätaussiedler* (repatriates from East Europe) in Germany between the 1960s and 1980s, the authors identify similar programming strategies, despite the obviously different challenges related to migration in the two countries. Media communication through radio is here also studied as a factor of identity management.

Also raising the issue of media, identity and migration, Philipp Seufferling and Hans-Ulrich Wagner address in their contribution the mediatisation of memories, a topic linked to contemporary mediated communication. The authors first raise theoretical questions around how cultural memories of migration can evoke what they call 'mnemonic imaginations' of diverse groups within societies across time, cultures and media. In a comparison between two distinct cases of contemporary television documentary of migration from Germany and Sweden in the years between 2011 and 2016, the authors then illustrate the way in which remediated memories of migration can time-travel across media but also between cultures.

Although taken from different national or transnational contexts and exploring media histories between the late nineteenth century up until today, the contributions in this special issue offer a range of avenues for media historians to explore and trace entanglements in media history. The empirical examples are taken from both written and audiovisual news journalism, television documentaries, radio programming, and weekly magazines. The special issue should be seen as a way of empirically addressing some of the theoretical points we made in our 2017 article with regards to how to trace entanglements in media history. Taken together, the contributions also in other ways form an illustration of the bottom-up approach we have attempted to apply in our EMHIS network. 'Entangled media histories' is still a concept left open to explore further; it is more an analytical approach or a perspective rather than a final 'meta-concept'³ or theoretical imperative with a finalised methodology.

As EMHIS now moves on from its original funding framework, co-ordinated from the Section for Media History at Lund University, there are specific traits we would like to further cultivate in the years to come. These traits include a clear focus on collaborative work, recurrent workshops, joint seminars, transnational academic approaches—and not least a firm emphasis on facilitating intellectual environments where young researchers and PhD students can grow in an encouraging international environment together with senior scholars. In other words, by networking internationally we have actively been expanding our horizons and tracing the entanglements between our own thinking and others.

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Notes

1. For a longer discussion on the core ideas of *histoire croisée/Verflechtungsgeschichte* and *transfert culturel/Kulturtransfer* and such concepts' relevance for integrated media historical perspectives, see our previous article in this journal. Cronqvist and Hilgert, "Entangled Media Histories," 130–41. We are also grateful for the responses to our article by professors Michele Hilmes and Bridget Griffen-Foley. Hilmes, "Entangled Media Histories," 142–4; Griffen-Foley, "Entangled Media Histories," 145–7.
2. Hilmes, "Entangled Media Histories," 143.
3. See Lehnert, "Trans, Inter, Hybrid, or Entangled?"

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