Introduction

Content production has recently become a matter of policy concern in Brazil. In this country, significant advances have been registered in the areas of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), technological convergence, and the Internet. It is possible to affirm that a historic shift is underway that calls into question the hegemony of the symbolic production of culture. As it is argued, the configuration of cultural production and the media structure in Brazil have responded to accommodations and impacts from external and globalized processes throughout history.

In the first section, this chapter very briefly reviews Celso Furtado’s ideas on the genesis and development of Brazilian culture, which serve as a theoretical and historical framework. Then, within a broader context of international hegemony, the chapter defines the contentious relationship between culture and development in 20th century Brazil. This is compared, in the third section of the chapter, with the case of India since it shares with Brazil similar trends, stages, and problems of development, though in terms of cultural and communication policy the latter country has followed a more consistent and self-determinant path. And, in the last section, the chapter ends with a reflection on the general structural changes and their future prospects in Brazil.
Celso Furtado and Brazilian culture

According to Furtado (1984), to understand the roots of Brazilian culture, one must focus on Portugal during the 16th century, a time of intense cultural creativity in Europe wherein two trends were prominent: the secular rationalization of life and the expansion of the world’s borders. Whereas these two trends decisively strengthened the base of the accumulation process in Europe, Portugal played a key role especially in the first stages of the second one. In this sense, Furtado regards the expansion of Portuguese language, culture, and technology as:

A remarkable anticipation of modernity [since it implied] a coordinated effort [directed by the state] on multiple fronts, given that it involved simultaneously developing boat-building techniques suited to long-distance ocean travel, training navigators and other specialists, developing navigation skills on the high seas, accumulating cartographic knowledge, opening new sea and land routes. (Furtado, 1984: 19)

The threat of unification of the Iberian Peninsula under the command of Castile triggered an ‘early alliance’ between the Portuguese monarchy and the bourgeoisie of Lisbon that enabled this first ambitious project of European commercial expansion.

Brazil is a direct outcome of this process of articulation between the state and commercial capital, which according to Furtado foreshadows the creation of the English and Dutch trading companies – institutions of private law performing public functions. Portugal’s constant concerns to preserve and expand vast territories translated into a model of exploitation based on export-focused agricultural enterprises, which became a key component of the Atlantic System. By providing a bridge between Africa, Europe, and America under the control of big Portuguese commercial capital and the latter’s hegemonic ownership of the slave trade, this exploitation constituted a powerful lever of primitive accumulation in the Old Continent (Novais, 1979), which eventually benefited England and the First Industrial Revolution.

As a result of this process, two elements characterize Brazilian culture, according again to Furtado (1984). Firstly, the formation of the Brazilian people was extremely asymmetrical, given that Portuguese immigrants not only brought with them substantial technical superiority but ‘continued to feed on European cultural resources,’ while ‘aborigines