Methods for Studying Non-U.S. Television
"Translation and Online Global Television Networks"
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Online television distributors such as Netflix and Viki present a shifting library of titles in each global territory where they have streaming rights, generating an unstable matrix of "global television" where the available content varies from location to location. Geoblocking and other industrial and infrastructural conditions impede the streaming of television shows across regional borders and limit the ability of scholars who travel globally to rely on streaming sites as primary television archives. While viewers may use virtual private networks and proxy servers to access restricted content in locations where Internet access is reliable even if access to individual sites is not, temporal and spatial asynchrony continue to define the online distribution of television.

Viki offers viewers a different route to access geographically restricted content: by volunteering to segment and/or translate television shows. Subtitlers who produce over 1000 subtitles earn "Qualified Contributor" status and may then watch Viki shows across online distribution borders in exchange for their unpaid labor as translators. Viki's emphasis on building a "community" of translators expands access to content not only for the multilingual viewers who volunteer as segmenters and subtitlers but also for the viewers who rely on their labor. While most online distributors boast about their expanding library of titles, Viki allows viewers to watch its library of available content in multiple languages expand in real time by posting beneath the title of each show the percentage of dialogue that has been translated into the viewer's preferred language.

A cursory comparison of the ways that Netflix and Viki define their corporate identities on their websites raises critical questions for the analysis of global television online. Netflix describes itself as "the world's leading Internet television network with over 83 million members in over 190 countries enjoying more than 125 million hours of TV shows and movies per day" and notes that "members can watch as much as they want, anytime, anywhere, on nearly any Internet-connected screen." Netflix members may be able to watch as much as they want, but "anytime, anywhere" applies only to those titles available within the member's home region. Viki brands itself as "the global TV site where millions of people discover, watch and subtitle global primetime shows and movies in more than 200 languages. Together with its fans, Viki removes the language and cultural barriers that stand between great entertainment and fans everywhere." Viki is currently available in 195 countries – similar in its global reach to Netflix. However, while Netflix labels itself as a *network* (a branding strategy that reflects its developing emphasis on producing original content both in the US and in other global regions), Viki is a "global TV *site*" – where 177, 403 fans and counting have volunteered as translators and over 1 billion words have been subtitled into over 200 languages. Viki foregrounds the barriers of global distribution borders and language and establishes its brand identity in relation to those obstructions. Viki also manages to advertise simultaneously their vast network of content, distribution, and promotional partnerships with other corporations *and* a grassroots sensibility reflected in their investment in fan labor and fan cultures, their efforts to preserve endangered and emerging languages, and their prolific production of articles, images, and videos that document their production and distribution practices. While Netflix and Viki imagine global

television and global audiences in distinct ways, Netflix is in fact one of Viki's distribution partners. In effect, Netflix and Viki are competitors *and* collaborators.

In presenting this very brief comparison of the two companies, I would like to pose a series of linked questions about how U.S. scholars should approach the analysis of global television streaming practices: How should we analyze sites like Netflix and Viki as television archives given their variability across regional borders and over time? How might scholars produce online archives of streaming artifacts and paratexts (screen shots, promotional videos, press releases, etc.) to enable the formal, industrial, and historical analysis of streaming without the temporal and geographic constraints that currently constrain scholarship in the field? To what extent is the opportunity through Viki to translate content in order to gain access to other geographically restricted content valuable for scholars, and what ethical and institutional questions do such practices raise given not only the fact that this labor is unpaid but also that translation – even in more traditional publishing contexts – is often less valued by academic institutions than original scholarship?