Cultural Globalisation and Challenges to Traditional Communication Theories

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Abstract: This article reviews existing traditional media theories, and analyses the challenges that the current developments of globalisation present to them. The article provides a short history of the concept of globalisation, and reviews the primary theoretical approaches to globalisation that are critical to communication scholars. The article also examines how globalisation challenges the ways in which media and communication have traditionally been theorised. Specifically, the cultural imperialism theory is discussed, as well as the main challenges to the theory. Audience reception studies, which focus on how audiences negotiate meaning differently in specific cultural contexts, are highlighted as the key critique of cultural imperialism.

Cultural Globalisation and Challenges to Traditional Communication Theories

Few contemporary phenomena elicit such academic and political controversy as globalisation. Following the collapse of state socialism, the worldwide consolidation of capitalism and the culture-ideology of consumerism, academic discussion of globalisation has intensified (Sklair, 2002). These crucial developments have coincided with the electronic revolution, and together have transformed communication media. While globalisation has many facets – economic, political and cultural – it is cultural globalisation that occurs through the media.

Cultural globalisation refers to "the emergence of a specific set of values and beliefs that are largely shared around the planet" (Castells, 2009, p. 117). The source of most global informational flows is mass media. Traditionally this entails a flow of information in a single direction, a dispersion from one to many. Throughout the developed world the globalisation of media is often argued to be tantamount to the globalisation of culture. Indeed, cultural globalisation is familiar to almost everyone; prominent icons of popular culture, like Coca-Cola and McDonalds, are common examples that can be found 'everywhere'. Looking at global cities (Sassen, 1991) where a consistent brand-name consumerism exists, cultural globalisation can appear to act as a solvent, dissolving cultural differences to create homogeneity across the globe. Is culture becoming increasingly homogenous? For the most part, no.

This article will examine how globalisation challenges the ways we have traditionally theorised media and communications. In order to do this, we must first discuss and conceptualise

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the phenomena of globalisation. We will look at paradigms of traditional media theories, specifically the homogenous school of thought. The cultural imperialism theory will also be discussed, and the article will demonstrate how globalisation poses significant challenges for this theory, which cannot sufficiently explain media and communications processes in today's world.

The Globalisation Debate

Globalisation has become a key research field in the social sciences and continues to be a hotly debated topic. No single definition of globalisation exists; as with all core concepts in the social sciences, its precise meaning remains contested. For this discussion, we will use David Held and Anthony McGrew's definition of globalisation, which "denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction" (2002, p.1).

Sociologist Roland Robertson (1992) is considered a key founder of the concept of globalisation, which he defines as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (p. 8). Robertson provides an excellent overview of the historical development of globalisation. He argues that an interest in globalisation arose from a division between sociology, which dealt with societies comparatively, and international relations and political science, which dealt with societies interactively. However, as this division became destabilized, an interest in globalisation developed as a result of new academic fields such as communication and cultural studies.

Held and McGrew (1999) also provide a useful framework for analysing globalisation. They discuss three main schools of thought in globalisation research: the hyperglobalists, the skeptics and the transformationalists. Hyperglobalists argue that we live in an increasingly global world. Globalisation is a direct threat to the nation state, which diminishes in power as the global marketplace comes to rule. Their focus is on economic globalisation, which is argued to denationalise economies, creating global markets that transcend state control, resulting in a loss of autonomy and sovereignty for the state.

The second school, the skeptics, argue that globalisation is a myth (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). They argue that what the hyperglobalists describe as economic globalisation is just a heightened level of economic interdependences. Therefore, they do not think the current global situation is unprecedented. Skeptics also question what exactly is 'global' about globalisation – if it is not a universal phenomenon, then the concept is not valid and lacks specificity. For example, skeptics point to the fact that much of the economic interdependence is limited to OECD countries, and is therefore not really global.

A synthesis between these two competing approaches is represented by transformationalist scholars, who argue that globalisation has structural consequences and is a driving force in society which influences political, social and economic change (Giddens, 1990; Held & McGrew, 1999). Globalisation is not just a shift in the intensity of exchange, but leads to a re-articulation of political, cultural and economic power. There is a structural transformation and a global shift in how power and authority is organised (Held & McGrew, 2007). The best example of this is the change in state sovereignty and autonomy. There has been a 'reconfiguration of political power' (Held & McGrew, 2007) which is understood as neither globalist nor skeptic, but transformationalist. Globalisation is not a debate about either convergence or divergence, but represents a dialectical process, which can both integrate and fragment, creating both winners and losers.

Cultural Globalisation

Transformationalists understand globalisation as a multidimensional process, and not simply economic. Indeed, many scholars have divided theories of globalisation into categories of political, economic and cultural globalisation. The role of media and communications is often discussed in terms of cultural globalisation.

Debates about the cultural impact of global media are at the core of discussions on globalisation (Flew, 2007). Therefore, this article focuses on cultural globalisation. Various scholars have made the case for focusing on cultural globalisation, such as John Tomlinson (1999) who notes the importance of considering cultural practices as central to the phenomenon of globalisation. Anthony Giddens (1990) defines globalisation as "the intensification of worldwide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p. 64). Giddens views globalisation as the spread of modernity and discusses time-space distanciation, referring to the way in which instantaneous electronic communication erodes the constraints of distance and time on social organisation and interaction. Some scholars, such as Robertson (1992), talk of a global culture and 'global consciousness'. Martin Albrow (1996) moves further, arguing that globalisation results in a 'world society'. He defines globalisation as "all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society". This notion of a single global society implies homogenisation, which has led to the debate about whether globalisation results in homogenisation or heterogenisation. This debate will be discussed later in reference to media and communications.

In contrast to Albrow, Arjun Appadurai (1996) has more cautiously argued that the globalising cultural forces of media and communications produce complex interactions and disjunctures between different cultures. Appadurai (1990, 1996) discusses five 'scapes' which influence culture, and argues that these factors ensure cultural diversity, and not cultural homogeneity or domination. The five 'scapes', all of which refer to a type of movement, include ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. Ethnoscapes refer to flows of people, such as tourists and immigrants. Technoscapes include technology that crosses boundaries. Financescapes refer to flows of currency markets. Mediascapes refer to mass media technology and images. Ideoscapes also refer to images, but specifically to the political and ideological aspects. These 'scapes' influence culture not by a uniform effect, but through their 'disjunctures'. Thus, mass media plays a larger role in cultural diversity than in cultural standardisation.

Globalisation and Communication

Globalisation and communication are deeply intertwined. Marshall McLuhan is an early theorist who made the connection between media and globalisation by combining two concepts: 'the medium is the message' and the 'global village'. Indeed, many scholars have studied the link between globalisation and media and "most theorists agree that there is practically no globalisation without media and communications" (Rantanen, 2005, p. 4). Terhi Rantanen (2005) highlights the role of media and communications in globalisation, by defining globalisation as a "process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space" (p. 8). Terry Flew (2007) argues that media have a central place in globalisation due to three reasons: firstly, that media corporations have increasingly globalised their operations; secondly that the global communication infrastructure facilitates global information flows; and finally that global media play a key role in how we view events across the world in developing shared systems of meaning. This aspect of global

media culture has been the main focus of media theorists.

The breaking up of space and time, brought about by electronic media, has led to individuals being able to interact with one another and within frameworks of mediated interaction, regardless of special disparities. This has altered contemporary methods of communication, leading to new phenomena such as participatory journalism, online communities, and transnational activism organised through online networks. The ICT revolution has transformed the media environment and led to a rise of 'new media', such as digital technologies and networked environments. Leah Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone (2005) argue that new media expands the traditional concerns of media and communications studies by changing the focus from media production and audience to "the artifacts and devices used to communicate…the activities and practices in which people engage in communication or share information; and the social arrangements or organizational forms that develop around those devices and practices" (p. 2).

The expansion of communication flows and global online networks raise the possibility of a new dimension of globalisation, and new forms of global/local media flows. Broadly speaking, new media technologies allow for media content to flow easily across borders and enable users to become producers, which in turn lead to hybrid media forms. To take a specific example, alongside the convergence of previously distinct media technologies, there has also been a convergence in journalism of the roles of journalists and audiences, resulting in participatory journalism (Gillmor, 2006; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2008). New technology and the global distribution of the internet allow people to create or contribute to the news and provide new sources and forms of news.

We may also consider the case of online communities. There has been a rapid growth of social relations and social organisations on the internet (Di Maggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001; Wellman, 2002). The emergence of new forms of online social networks demonstrates new communication patterns in the digital age. Online communities and social networks have led to debates about the emergence of new patterns of social interaction. With new technology, individuals are reorganising patterns of social interaction to create a new form of society, which is conceived as the network society. Online communities shed light on the emergence of new forms of sociability enabled by technology, a departure from previously spatially bounded social interaction.

Thirdly, transnational activism organised through online networks presents new formations of global/local interaction. A classic example of internet activism, where the internet is used as a mobilising resource for campaigns, is the case of the Zapatistas, which Manuel Castells (1997) has called the "first informational guerrilla movement" (p. 79). While the Zapatistas' struggle was a local one, the use of the internet as a transnational communication channel used to directly transmit messages and gain international support, led to 'global reverberations' for social movements (Atton, 2003). The internet and the communications revolution have led to new forms of media activism. Robert Hackett and William Carroll (2006) argue "the digitization and convergence of media technology which fuelled the accelerating process of globalization has…generated new opportunities for democratization through the media…and new incentives for democratization of the media, as computers and the internet bring new policy issues to the fore" (p. 96).

Overall these examples bring into question the relevance of traditional communication theories, of which there are two broad and inter-related approaches. We can look at it from a critical studies approach, such as the Frankfurt School, which focuses on the underlying economic structure and political power of communication. Or it can be viewed through cultural studies, focusing on the role of communication in the creation and maintenance of shared values.

Cultural Imperialism

The cultural imperialism thesis has long been a central, as well as problematic, element of political economy approaches to global media. The Frankfurt School and the homogeneous school of thought identify the dominance model, which proposes that globalisation leads to homogenisation of culture through media and cultural imperialism.

The cultural imperialism debate gained momentum after decolonisation led to new states in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Scholars replaced colonialism with a new form of capitalist subjugation of the Third World: neo-colonialism, which was more economic than political, more ideologically than militarily supported. Scholars argued that neo-colonialist powers turned to symbolic means of control, which was facilitated by the integration of global telecommunications systems and the proliferation of television. Armand Matterlart (1979), Herbert Schiller (1991) and Oliver Boyd Barrett (1977) have proposed cultural and media imperialist theories. The mass media, fitting in with the spread of global capitalism, push mainly American culture that promote ideologies of consumption, instant gratification, and individualism. The cultural imperialism thesis argues that media globalisation will lead to a homogenisation of culture, identity and locale. Boyd-Barrett, one of the original proponents of media imperialism (1977), has revised his thesis to take into account different types of audiences, but argues that media imperialism remains a useful analytical concept.

Challenges to Cultural Imperialism

While there is clearly a global increase in the degree to which people's lives are mediated through the media, the homogenising effects of media globalisation are much less clear. Cultural imperialism has been studied by scholars in many disciplines (Golding & Harris, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996; Straubhaar, 1991). John Tomlinson's (1997) discussion of cultural aspects of globalisation forces us to rethink critical frameworks of social and cultural analysis, in particular how we theorise media and communications. Tomlinson states, "the iconoclasm of globalisation lies in the implicit demand to re-envisage the world that arises once the nature of complex global interconnectedness and the process of time-space compression and action at distance are recognized" (p. 173). Thus, the very concept of globalisation is a major challenge for existing conceptions of world culture. Tomlinson discusses how the traditional notion of cultural imperialism tries to absorb globalisation, by arguing that globalisation is simply the latest form of western imperialism. However, he argues that we cannot infer deep and direct effects of media and cultural goods simply from their presence.

Audience Reception Studies

The first and most important problem with cultural imperialism is that it fails to recognise the active audience. Audience reception studies question the homogenising influences of mass produced media content. Studies dealing with the active role of receivers to interpret, negotiate, resist or subvert the polysemic meanings of mass media, have illustrated that audiences in western and non-western contexts have used different patterns of interpretation and media use when encountering western mass media products.

In order to understand the importance of audience reception studies in analysing global media and its impact on viewers around the world, it is helpful to consider the history of media effects research. Early research in the 1930s and 1940s, often market driven, measured effects of the media on audiences by matching output with input following the model of communication in which the stages of sender, message, medium and receiver are utilised (Machor & Goldstein, 2001). Research on television audiences has historically been dominated, particularly in the

US, by large-scale quantitative surveys, often designed using a model of media effects. Within the social sciences, this effects model has been challenged by what is known as the 'uses and gratifications' model. The uses and gratifications model argues that audiences respond to media for the purpose of fulfilling their personal needs, a purpose which may differ from the producer's purpose. This apparent discrepancy led to the international project on the decoding of the US prime time serial, *Dallas* (Liebes & Katz, 1990), which is discussed below.

In the 1960s, the uses and gratifications approach was challenged by a new turn in effects research, influenced by the works of the Frankfurt School. Proponents of the Frankfurt School saw media communication as the 'culture industry', which reinforced in its audience the ideology of the dominant culture. Focusing on the power exerted over the audience by the culture industry, this theory sees mass media as conduits of commodification. This effects model served as an initial paradigm for audience analysis in Britain's cultural studies field. The model was also challenged when Raymond Williams (1974) criticised the technological determinism of the effects model for ignoring how viewers may use television for social change. In the late 1970s and early 1980s this critique appeared in a series of theoretical essays by Stuart Hall, as well as in research studies, such as David Morley and Charlotte Brundson's analysis of British responses to television viewing (Machor & Goldstein, 2001). These influences led to a questioning of both the effects model and the uses and gratifications model. Both models were criticised for failing to take into account economic, political and cultural influences in receiving media. In particular, feminist critiques noted that audience position is influenced by cultural factors such as gender, race and age, not just economics and class, as the Frankfurt School argued.

Media reception has been reconceptualised to focus on the active audience. Theories of the active audience argue that direct ideological effects cannot be assumed exclusively from the presence of a media product. From Hall's 1973 paper on encoding and decoding, and his call for empirical research into audience reception, where audience research and textual analysis is combined, there has been a growing recognition of the complex process of cultural media consumption.

Some of the most well known audience reception studies, with the most detailed information and empirical data, is the work on *Dallas*, which will be briefly discussed here. Proponents of the media imperialism theory would argue that *Dallas* is a symbol of American dominance threatening the variety of world cultures. While *Dallas* is transmitted across the world, research on the consumption of the program demonstrates that cultural context is an important factor in media reception. Ien Ang's 1985 study of *Dallas* shows that Dutch women interpret the text through their own feminist agenda. Viewers may disapprove of the cultural values of the show, but still enjoy watching it for entertainment purposes. There is not necessarily a correlation between consumption of media and an ideological effect. Elihu Katz and Tamara Kiebes' 1991 study of *Dallas* compares different ethnic groups in Israel with groups of American viewers. Katz and Liebes found divergent readings and argued that different ethnic groups bring their own values and judgment to the program. Such studies of *Dallas* are the best examples that audiences are more active and critical, and their cultural values more resistant to manipulation, than media theorists assumed.

Clearly, research on audience reception is problematic when considering traditional theories of media imperialism. While audience research is crucial, we cannot conclude that the dominance of the US in television production is of no consequence. Some scholars question the validity of empirical audience research, which in their attempt to disprove a direct effects model, end up uncritically celebrating the active audience. Instead, we must recognise that

viewers are neither passive, nor completely unmarked by the media. Therefore we must balance an acceptance that audiences are in certain respects active, while recognising that the activity of reception is framed. It is also important to note that this global/local logic does not eliminate cultural domination and inequality completely. The process of globalisation results in very complex inequalities. While it is overly simplistic to assert that the globalisation of media leads to globalisation of culture and cultural imperialism, it is equally simplistic to claim that the localisation of identity resolves all problems.

In addition to audience reception research, there are other challenges to the cultural imperialism thesis. The second main critique of cultural imperialism is that the US is not the only dominant player in terms of media production. There has been a rise of regional and language based markets, labelled as 'geo-linguistic regions' (Sinclair, Jacka, & Cunningham, 1996). This idea of multi-directional flows of media and communications challenges media imperialism's idea of a homogenous culture and a one-way information flow. Globalisation has led to the international circulation of media products. Media produced in one country are distributed not only in the domestic market, but also in a global market**.** Studies by Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis in the 1970s point to the asymmetrical international flow of television programs, and how there was a one-way flow from the US to the rest of the world. However, there is now strong evidence for the multi-directionality of media flows, as evidenced by centres of television production in Mexico, Brazil, Hong Kong and India. Giddens discusses the 'reverse colonisation' of Brazilian television programs being exported to Portugal. Tunstall (2008) notes that one of the major explanations of US media decline on the world scene is the rise of Latin American, specifically Brazilian, telenovelas. In *The Media Were American*, a follow up to *The Media Are American*, Tunstall (2008) highlights the fact that media companies are owned by a multitude of global, rather than US players. Within the context of globalisation debates of media and global flows of media, Tunstall (2008) argues that national media industries are dominant worldwide, and that US media have a relatively small market share in other countries where national media is dominant.

The third critique of cultural imperialism theories is that they assume a homogenous culture and do not take into account the importance of understanding local cultures. There is evidence of the continued diversity of culture and identity, despite global media and cultural globalisation. The World Values Survey (2002) shows that national and regional identities remain far stronger than a cosmopolitan identity. Survey results show that when asked about their primary identification, 47 per cent of respondents chose local identity, 38 per cent chose national identity, and less than 15 per cent of respondents chose cosmopolitan identity.

The fourth critique of cultural imperialism is the lack of attention paid to evidence that shows audience preference for locally produced content (Chadha & Kavoori, 2000; Tunstall, 2008). Sinclair and colleagues argue that television has always been more of a local than global medium, despite the increasing multi-channel and globalised nature of the industry (Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996). While US television shows may have the most transportability across cultural boundaries, they are not the most popular programs. Viewers prefer locally produced material. "Even when there is imported content, it is no longer acceptable to read off from that fact alone any presumed effects of a cultural or political kind" (Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996, p. 8). Tunstall (2008) notes that US media companies, especially Hollywood movies and TV series, bring in large foreign revenues, but are no longer dominant in terms of market share or audience time, since "the world's people spend very much more time with their own media than with imported media" (p. 3). Indeed, Tunstall argues that people prefer their own national culture and language, and prefer to consume their own national and/or regional media, from Brazilian telenovelas and Indonesian regional language radio, to India's

national and regional film industries. We may make sense of this preference for local content through Joseph Straubhaar's work (1991) on the advantages enjoyed by local producers based on 'cultural proximity' to their audiences.

The view of consumer culture discussed earlier (where the same cultural products and transnational corporations can be found 'anywhere') masks the complex and layered contexts of social interaction, where consumption practices and cultural identities play out. Traditional theories of cultural imperialism do not sufficiently address the transnational and local circumstances of specific places. They do not resolve the seeming homogenisation of culture with the differentiation of local traditions. Theories of cultural imperialism are insufficient in studying transnational media. Instead, a closer analysis of particular contexts of economic and cultural exchange, which only cumulatively will constitute transnational networks of information, must be studied.

Imperialism to Commercialisation

Leslie Sklair (2002) argues that some studies which challenge media imperialism, such as studies on the export of Latin American telenovelas and Spanish programs which are sent to US audiences, only disprove media imperialism in the state-centric sense, and actually demonstrate the success of consumerism, whether produced by North or South Americans. Marketing's implicit selling of consumer lifestyles encourages audiences to participate in imagined communities of consumption. Michael Griffin (2002) notes that as audience members move in and out of these imagined communities, they are given socio-cultural messages about place, status and the disjuncture between such imagined worlds and realities of life. Appadurai argues that the act of consumption represents a convergence of global and cultural processes. "What we have now is something beyond a consumer revolution, something we may call 'a revolution of consumption' in which consumption has become the principal work of late industrial society" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 82). Other scholars point to the global movement towards, among other things, a life ruled by commodity capitalism. Sklair argues that it is the spread of capitalism itself that is spreading to affect people throughout the world in various degrees.

While commercialism and a consumer culture are spreading, this is not tantamount to the spread of a unified and homogenous global culture. To identify cultural and media imperialism with the US capitalism is a profound error (Hutton & Giddens, 2000). Globalisation does not equal Americanisation. The processes involved in globalisation are much more complex and multi-dimensional. Jameson (2000) discusses five levels of globalisation: technological, political, cultural, economic and social. While these five aspects reflect American influence on capitalism around the world, none of them are solely controlled by American interests. As discussed earlier, Appadurai (1996) also discusses five global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. These multiple dimensions of globalisation highlight the uneven nature of global flows, cultural interaction, and the "production of locality" (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 178-199). The interaction of these 'scapes' points to a trend of the extension of commercial consumerism. Appadurai, drawing on Anderson's concept of imagined communities (1983), discusses 'postnational locations', communities which are based on collectively imagined landscapes of commercial marketing, and not on local culture. Such communities are 'deterritorialised' and linked by their practice of consumption. The main point from this discussion is that the US does not control the global system of images; the US is only one component in the transnational construction of imaginary landscapes. Transnational consumerism does not equal the spread of American culture, nor does it equal a unified global culture.

In sum, audience reception studies, evidence of multi-directional flows, continued preference for local shows, and regional production centres, all challenge the cultural imperialism thesis. However, traces of western life may be imperialising. It has been disproved by a number of empirical and ethnographic studies that media and cultural products alone do not lead to ideological effects. The thesis of cultural imperialism must be re-conceptualised to focus not only on the ideological, but the simulation of ways of life, as a more subtle form of articulation. This area, where the thesis of cultural imperialism is transformed to transnational commercialisation, is important in understanding the role of media in the context of globalisation (Griffin, 2002). There needs to be a bigger body of case studies which explore the implications of transnational and transcultural media. Study must go beyond issues of media concentration and asymmetrical flows, to include an investigation of the commercialisation of transnational media across local contexts, and how the accompanying views of consumerism are used, engaged with, adapted or resisted in multi-cultural contexts.

Pluralist Model

Very briefly, we may consider a second traditional paradigm in media and communications research – the pluralist model. In the neo-liberal environment of the 1980s and 1990s, a new orthodoxy emerged which combined the critiques of media imperialism, and presented them as an alternative approach in stark contrast to the media imperialism thesis. In challenge to the homogenisation school of thought, the heterogenisation school emerged. Instead of viewing the spread of cultural products as leading to homogenisation, this view sees the global flow of images and products as resulting in cultural diversity. Ulf Hannerz (1990) argues that globalisation results in "an organization of diversity rather than a replication of uniformity" (p. 237). This view focuses on the local, in contrast to the homogenisation thesis. Similarly, David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995) suggest that "globalisation is, in fact, also associated with new dynamics of *re*-localization" (p. 116).

This heterogeneous school of thought suggests that media in fact extends communication and culture. Many scholars have argued that media leads to enhanced understanding and democracy. This echoes McLuhan's idea of the compression of space and time boundaries through new technology leading to a 'global village'. Proponents of the pluralist model suggest that media promote ethnic and cultural diversity. For example, Marie Gillespie (1995) suggests that the media have the power to sustain identities of diasporic communities, and Lina Khatib (2003) argues that Islamic groups use the internet as a 'portable homeland' to strengthen their identities. Indeed, online communities and networks have created new forms of transnational communication.

Globalisation Concepts for Media and Communications

The above sections have argued that traditional media theories need to go beyond conceptualising globalisation to identifying the problems associated with existing media theories and paradigms. Within traditional theorising methods, we are given two opposing views with a global/local binary opposition. While cultural theorists discuss media and globalisation as a process of fostering international dialogue and increasing the democratic public sphere, political economists describe the processes of globalisation and media as homogenising forces, leading to a debasement of democracy.

Traditional media theories may not have the analytical capacity and explanatory power to make sense of the new media and communications phenomena, but we may usefully apply concepts from globalisation to understand these new forms of the local and global. Indeed,

research and theoretical approaches to media and communications are being increasingly internationalised (Thussu, 2010).

Robertson's (1995) concept of 'glocalisation' is a useful theory, as it takes into account the subtle and complex processes of globalisation and media. Robertson re-conceptualises theories away from homogenisation and heterogenisation, so that they are neither global nor local. Instead, these processes are complimentary and mutually implicative, and the concept captures the way in which homogenisation and heterogenisation intertwine. Glocalisation involves the development of overlapping global local linkages, what Appadurai calls 'deterritorialized global scapes'. The concept of glocalisation has the potential to advance understanding of global media and communications.

Several other key globalisation theories are usefully applied to media and communications research. People participate and respond in different ways to globalisation; there is no one experience of the phenomena, and this in itself is an important part of the process. The concept of transculturation is the process of cultural forms moving through time and space, interacting with other cultural forms to produce new forms – hybrids. The concept of hybridity has been increasingly used to make sense of the relationship between globalisation, global media and culture. Flew (2007) notes that the concept of hybridity "suggests the possibility that identity formation in the context of globalisation may not so much be suppressed as in fact proliferate" (p. 162). This echoes Tomlinson's argument that "far from destroying it, globalisation has been perhaps the most significant force in creating and proliferating cultural identities" (2003, p. 16). The concept of hybridisation has been important in media and communications research, although hybridity has only recently gained visibility in international media studies. The concept allows for more nuanced approaches in analysing global/local interaction, while taking into account how the local, global and national interaction can lead to new hybrid forms of media and cultural products. Indeed, there is a need to move beyond a local and global binary and instead examine the complex processes at work in these interactions.

Post Globalisation?

As discussed in this article, globalisation challenges the way we theorise media and communications. This is due in part to the complexity of globalisation, as we have seen from the above discussion of the globalisation debate. To return to the notion of globalisation, its processes and effects continues to be debated.

The two camps, the globalists and the skeptics, which were discussed earlier, continue to debate globalisation. Indeed, with recent world events, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the Iraq war, there has been an increase in the talk of the *end* of globalisation. Skeptics argue that in the aftermath of 9/11, there was a return to geopolitics, and therefore globalisation is not an existing condition. Held and McGrew (2007) note several scholars who discuss post-globalisation: Niall Ferguson (2005) discusses 'sinking globalisation' and John Saul (2005) writes of 'the end of globalism'. Declines in global trade and direct foreign investment, in addition to geopolitics and unilateralism, represent for skeptics "the erosion of the liberal global order which underwrote the intensification of globalisation , and the continuing primacy of the state, territorial power, geopolitics and even empire" (Held & McGrew 2007, p. 6).

The globalist assessment makes a convincing argument that globalisation continues as an important concept and description of our current state, although perhaps there are multiple globalisations, and a 'clash of globalisations', instead of a turn to post-globalisation and the end of globalisation. In the dialectic of globalisation, we can identify a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. The thesis and antithesis are seen in the debates between the globalists and skeptics,

and in the globalisation/anti-globalisation debate. A synthesis is reached between these two extremes in the transformationalists.

We can also attempt to overcome the fatalism of globalisation, and instead understand that these processes are not inevitable. Thus, we can imagine and propose alternatives. This discussion engages some of the most important political debates of our time. Indeed, Held and McGrew (2007) note that the enduring nature of globalisation deals with "some foundational questions of political life: who rules, in whose interests, to what ends, according to what ethical principles, and by what means?" (p. xi). Thus, the question of how to govern globalisation is key, and societies must confront the future trajectory of social change. Held and McGrew (2007) present a synthesis and suggest an alternative: cosmopolitan social democracy. This approach avoids the extremes of neoliberalism, which proposes no solutions to market failure, and the radical position of extreme optimism for the local to deal with global problems. Cosmopolitan social democracy "provides a framework for progressive thinking and political action…" on questions of global problems, and for how "these issues are best addressed or governed, and how global social justice and security can be provided" (p. 217).

Held and McGrew (2007) note the difficulties of implementing cosmopolitan social democracy, but emphasise that it is nonetheless important to attempt. "The stakes are very high, but so too are the potential gains for human security and development if the aspirations for global democracy and social justice can be realized" (p. 236). Therefore, scholars should continue to deal seriously with globalisation and engage with questions of how globalisation can be governed to lead to a more just and stable world.

Furthermore, the relationship between globalisation and communication, and more specifically, questions about global media governance, is an area not only of increasing interest among scholars, but also one of vital importance, given the essential role that communication plays in our lives. Manuel Castells has suggested that "perhaps the most decisive social movements of our age are precisely those aimed at preserving a free internet…carving a space of communication autonomy that constitutes the foundation of the new public space of the Information Age" (2009, p. 415). Notably, the area of social movements that aim to shape the use and regulation of the internet and other communication networks is a topic increasingly researched (Couldrey & Curran, 2003; Downing, 2001; McChesney, 2008; Movius, 2008) and an area for future research. The role of media and communications in globalisation often receives little attention from scholars outside communication studies. However, if we agree with Rantanen (2005) that there is no globalisation without media and communications, then we may argue for the need for other fields to consider media and communications as integral to the analysis of globalisation.

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