
The Role of New Communication Media in the Process of Globalization

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The Role of New Communication Media in the Process of Globalization

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I. Technological Changes Associated with Globalization

A. The “Technological Revolution”

- New Comm Technologies (NCTs) are more powerful, prevalent, and less costly than ever before
- Internet and WWW create easy movement of info across boundaries = *technological infrastructure for the global economy*
- Changes portrayed as *inevitable* (Carl Fisch)
 - *Emphasis on Data Transmission and Flow*

B. Has the Revolution Created an 'Information Society'? Four responses:

- 1. Technological innovation and diffusion:** technological infrastructure now allows instant comm anytime, anyplace
- 2. Occupational change:** more jobs do 'information work'
- 3. Information flows:** 'cyberspace' and 'information highways' allow greater flow of info; eliminate clock time & physical presence as determining work

Problem with 1-3 is that they're differences of *degree*, not of *kind* . . .

4. Changes in the conduct of life

- » *Qualitative* change in how info is *used*
- » Theoretical & technical knowledge is now pre-eminent
- » People construct a biography that reacts to access to detailed information (e.g., MySpace)
- » Domination of technical-instrumental forms of reasoning

The information society ushers in:

- **Globalization:**

the process by which

- » the world economy becomes increasingly interconnected
- » NCTs blur spatial and temporal boundaries
- » Capitalism is restructured

C. Two Broad Views of Globalization

Positive:

- it provides opportunities for small business & entrepreneurs, and empowers excluded people & groups.
- Offers social progress: increased democratization, communication, education, culture, and entertainment
- It's a triumph of freedom

C. Two Broad Views of Globalization

Negative:

- globalization imposes a logic of market capitalism on entire world.
- Creates homogenous world culture of commercialization, commodification, surveillance, and economic domination
- It's a triumph of the capitalists

C. Two Broad Views of Globalization

Negative View sees two social factors as important in shaping NCT
Policy & Use:

- Implosion of state socialist regimes
- Breakdown of **New World Information and Communication Order** (NWICO)
 - » a movement of 'non-aligned' Third World countries that originally sought to assert national sovereignty over communication policies and priorities.
- Paved the way for neo-liberalism as a dominant governing logic in economic & social policy

C. Two Broad Views of Globalization

- Globalization does not merely happen TO people; it also happens BY people.
- Big corporations don't merely impose themselves on people in developing countries—they're often invited in
 - » Taiwan transformed itself from a poor agrarian country into a wealthy industrialized one by courting large MNCs . . . which had then to customize their labor practices and products to attract workers and consumers.
- So maybe it's more accurate to say that communities consume global capitalism, rather than being consumed by it.

D. Does Globalization Lead to Cross-Cultural Similarity or Difference?

- **Convergence Argument:** Western rationalism and individualism have triumphed and taken over the world
- *Communality*—the ability of networks to share info—is a potential basis for shared community
 - » Organizations use similar structuring and production arrangements across markets
 - » Deterministic argument: the ‘nature’ of globalization and NCTs determine cultural outcomes

D. Does Globalization Lead to Cross-Cultural Similarity or Difference?

- *Technology 'has proletarianized communication, transport and travel. It has made isolated places and impoverished peoples eager for modernity's allurements. Almost everyone everywhere wants all the things they have heard about, seen, or experienced via the new technologies.'* (Theodore Levitt)

D. Does Globalization Lead to Cross-Cultural Similarity or Difference?

- **Divergence Argument:** NCTs can support separate ‘social spaces’
 - » They can contribute to social *fragmentation*—turning away from modernity’s integrating forces
 - » ‘*Globalization from Below*’: the ways marginalized individuals, groups, and social movements resist globalization and/or use its instruments to further democratization and social justice.

D. Does Globalization Lead to Cross-Cultural Similarity or Difference?

- *‘Globalization is not a process whereby one form or style dominates over or eliminates all others. Rather, it is the diffusion of seemingly competing forms and styles around the world. The consumer is ready to have Italian for lunch, and Chinese for dinner, to wear Levi’s 501 blue jeans for the outdoor party in the afternoon and try the Gucci suit at night to attend a Japanese exhibition, not only changing diets and clothes, but also the personas and selves that are to be (re)presented at each “function”.’ (Firat, 1996)*

D. Does Globalization Lead to Cross-Cultural Similarity or Difference?

Of course, it's rarely 'either-or':

'Glocalization' may be becoming more common

- *global localization*--adopting global outlooks to suit local conditions
- Marketing connotation: tailoring & advertising global goods and services to suit differentiated local markets

D. Does Globalization Lead to Cross-Cultural Similarity or Difference?

- *‘On the one hand, globalization unfolds a process of standardization in which a globalized mass culture circulates the globe, creating sameness and homogeneity everywhere. On the other hand, globalized culture makes possible unique appropriations and developments everywhere, thus encouraging hybridity, difference, and heterogeneity to proliferate.’ (Kellner, 2002, p. 292).*

E. Implications for Organizations

- Access to a worldwide market of information, customers, contacts (24/7/365)
- Expanded list of suppliers, employees, partners, and customers
- More info to guide decisions
- More potential for responsiveness to partners, employees, and customers
- More flexibility for employees (place becomes less important for the conduct of work)

II. NGOs Using the Tools of Globalization

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):
 - » non-profit groups that combine resources for mobilization, information provision, and activism to advocate for changes on certain issues
 - » 'self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared toward improving the lives of disadvantaged people'

A. Three Types of NGOs

- **Direct Aid NGOs:** provide assistance to those in need
- **Empowerment NGOs:** assist local communities to increase the level of government services, or form cooperatives, access markets, etc.
- **Advocacy NGOs:** influence government or business policy formulation & conduct

B. NGOs' Use of NCTs

- The use of surveillance as a form of control
- Reliance on simulation and spectacle, rather than direct personal experience
 - » EX: [indymedia](#)
- Speed of information transmission
- Supports 'democratic' decision-making
- Distributed networking, coordination, and collaboration

. . . so globalization is not merely a benefit to corporations--NGOs can also capitalize

Examples:

- Kiva
 - » video
- Bead for Life
- In2Books
- Bangladesh - Renewable Technology Opportunities for Women

III. Implications

A. 'Digital Divide' is shrinking, but still present

- access to informational resources not evenly distributed
- . . . and it's probably more needed in developing countries
- established NGOs incorporate NCTs easily into existing routines, but smaller orgs often see them as ways to forge horizontal linkages

B. Centerless Networks

Networks of NGOs, corporations, governments, increasingly necessary to influence social problems.

- Network form makes them flexible and adaptive
- Can be 'ideologically thin': allow different political perspectives to co-exist without conflicts
- Can take time to figure out which nodes are no longer useful
- Leadership, coordination, and control become ongoing negotiations

C. North-South Problem

- Southern NGOs (SNGOs) typically from developing countries, concerned with oppression, civil war, human rights, and survival
- Northern NGOs (NNGOs) from Europe and the U.S., interested in environmentalism and social-economic justice
- NNGOs' human rights and environmental concerns tend to occur in the areas served by the SNGOs

C. North-South Problem

- NNGOs have the wealth and the ability to operate transnationally, and the SNGO becomes dependent on the NNGO's resources.
- NNGO funnels money and influence to the SNGO, and the latter sends information
- Potential to replace local concerns with developed country concerns
- So they need to partner, facilitated by NCTs ...
- ... but NCTs, seen as transmission devices, can't overcome problems in motivation or tensions about resources

D. Alter how we think about (and study) new communication technologies

- Need to see them as ‘socially constructed’

Which means:

- Examine the ongoing interplay between their ‘features’ and spirit’ . . .
- . . . While attending to the effects of power