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## Exploring Cultural Globalisation

### *New Forms of Experience and Citizen-driven Change Processes*

In the following, I present *two perspectives* that each serve as a comment on Joseph Straubhaar's keynote presentation. 'Global, Hybrid or Multiple? Media Flows and Identities in the Age of Satellite TV and the Internet'. In each their way, my comments refer to the analysis of cultural globalisation which lies at the heart of Joseph Straubhaar's presentation.

1. The first perspective is a *developmental and change perspective*. Here, I wish to connect Joseph Straubhaar's mapping and stratification of recent media development trends to a discussion on *the particularities of the globalization process*. I see Joseph Straubhaar's presentation as a very useful point of departure for assessing the social and cultural change processes we are experiencing today. New media and communication technologies are at the heart of these change processes.

However, I also wish to raise questions about the *drivers of change* in our society today. Who are the drivers of change, or agents of change, and who are not? Is it media conglomerates that drive the process? What about ordinary citizens? The question is: *who are the agents of change in our contemporary process of cultural globalization?* This question speaks to issues of *power relations and citizen engagement in development processes*. By highlighting such a developmental and change perspective, I suggest a stronger connection between the issues Joseph Straubhaar deals with and the growing research area of communication for development and social change.

2. The second perspective I will highlight is a *media sociological perspective*. Here, I wish to connect Joseph Straubhaar's presentation to questions about the role of new media in identity formation. This speaks to the relationship between media use and a broad range of contextual factors. My question is: *What role do the new media and communication technologies play in the formation of people's social and cultural identities?* Or, when it comes to impacting on identity formation: What is different about the new media and communication processes compared to older and more well-known media and communication processes?

Joseph Straubhaar's presentation outlines some interesting scenarios, fundamentally arguing that we are experiencing radical changes both in our organization of time, space and social relations and in our articulation and formation of cultural identity. I would argue that these radical changes may be less radical than we interpret them at first glance.

## 1. The Developmental and Change Perspective: Globalization as a Particular Development Process?

If we take a closer look at my first perspective, the developmental and change perspective, my point today is to suggest an assessment of cultural globalization in which issues of *power relations and citizenship* are emphasized. Cultural globalization is, as many scholars have argued, obviously integrally associated with political and economical globalization.

Such an assessment also requires a closer examination of who the drivers of today's change processes are.

Joseph Straubhaar's presentation provides a *very useful mapping of key developmental trends*. He provides an interesting stratification of markets, insights into geo-cultural and cultural-linguistic markets and also outlines core tendencies in the reconfigurations of markets and communities. Furthermore, socio-cultural characteristics of interconnectivity, transnationalism and cultural hybridity are outlined as emerging as part of the socio-cultural changes seen in our society today.

Based on the media development trends Joseph Straubhaar outlines, my Swedish colleague, Oscar Hemer and myself have previously argued for the need to reassess current change processes from what Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse calls a '*critical globalist*' perspective (Hemer and Tufte 2005, Pieterse, 2001). While there currently is a strong on-going debate about social change processes within development studies, it also fits well into today's media and communication discussion. Development is no longer a process reserved for 'developing countries'. All societies are developing as part of a global process, making the dichotomy of 'first' and 'third' worlds obsolete – at least in a geo-political sense. The entire world is 'in transition', and development must therefore be rethought as a regional, transnational, global project (Pieterse 2001: 45). In this context, and following the fundamental post-colonial deconstruction of development, we can now witness a gradual reconstruction of this debate with Pieterse's referral to '*world development*' as a 'new' grand concept.

Among the main potential new agents of social change in the context of world development are the transnational advocacy networks, or TANs, as they are called. They form an increasingly important part of the NGO world and are part of what Arjun Appadurai calls 'grassroots globalization' or 'globalization from below' (Appadurai 1996 and 2001).

What the developmental and change perspective I here have outlined can help us understand is that these *processes are not neutral processes*, which simply happen as media and communication technology is innovated and applied by creative industries. Instead, by deconstructing the whole power geometry of this world developmental process, and of the cultural globalization processes in particular, issues of citizenship, cultural citizenship, citizen media and participatory governance can be understood. This can open conceptual pathways to building a developmental and change perspective on to Straubhaar's analysis, and into communication and media studies. This is what is known today as the research field of *communication for development and social change*. (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte; 2006)

## 2. A Media Sociological Perspective: The Relationship between Media Use and Identity Formation

Let me now turn to my second perspective, which is the media sociological perspective on how media use relates to identity formation. This has long been a continuous debate in media and communication research. The question is: *What characterizes the relationship between the arrival of new media and communication technologies and people's patterns of identification?* Do people's cultural orientations, their senses of belongings – their patterns of identification at large – change when new media become part of their everyday lives?

If analysed in a short-term perspective today, it would certainly seem so. The popularity of satellite TV and not least the Internet seems to suggest this. And Joseph Straubhaar's presentation appears to confirm it as well. However, I believe we need to dig deeper into the analysis and explore *what dimensions of the new media may articulate new layers of identity, or new patterns of identification*, which I would prefer to call them. Is it the technological innovation in itself, the interconnectedness per se, the interactivity possible on the Internet, or is it the access to more or better information and entertainment that articulates changes?

In addition to digging into the details of everyday media use and its relationships to questions of subjectivity, production of meaning and personal experience, I would furthermore suggest the incorporation *a life history approach* into such studies. By introducing a life history approach, richer data can be obtained on diachronic cultural processes compared to the data that have commonly been offered by reception studies and media ethnographies. A good example is Terhi Rantanen's work from 2005 (Rantanen 2005).

While reception studies and media ethnographies traditionally have offered fine analysis of *the synchronic dimension of media use* and identity formation, the fact of complementing this with a life history approach adds a historical perspective on cultural change processes. Finally, connecting the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of media use with an analysis of *large-scale institutional transformations and market developments* can provide a deeper understanding of processes of cultural change, identity formation, and their relation to overall developmental processes in society.

I did such an analysis with a team of Brazilian colleagues in a previous research project in which four families in Porto Alegre in Southern Brazil were studied in the context of urban and media development, collecting data spanning a period of more than a century. We conducted interviews with as well as ethnographic observation of the latest 3-4 generations of family members. The families were furthermore of different ethnic and class backgrounds. The study was conducted in the late 1990s, when satellite and cable TV were being introduced on a large scale in Brazil (Tufte 1998 & 2001, Jacks et al. 2006).

In many ways our findings on the large-scale media institutional developments and urban developments connect well with those outlined by Joseph Straubhaar today. However, they also put the introduction of new media, satellite TV and the Internet, into *the historical context of introducing new technologies*, including the introduction of electricity, cars, the radio, the cinema, the TV, the video and the mobile phone.

In a number of ways, our findings confirmed but also nuanced *the process of mobile privatization* that Raymond Williams spoke of already in the 1970s (Williams 1975). This was a concept he used to characterize the cultural process within modern, urban, industrial living whereby two apparently paradoxical tendencies merged: mobility, on the one hand, and the increasingly self-sufficient family home, on the other. Increased

mobility came from the new ways of moving physically – cars, planes, etc – as well as from immaterial mobility, that is, access to new symbolic worlds via the media.

While, according to Williams, suburban homes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century became the concrete embodiments of the modern utopia, *the question today is how and whether the new media may be changing the sociological characteristics of media use, and the patterns of identification, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

To conclude this media sociological perspective, I would like to add one last comment. One significant issue, which doesn't come through in Joseph Straubhaar's work, but which was very clear in our Brazilian study, is *the generational perspective* on media use. There are fundamental differences in how the media are used and what role they play in peoples lives, depending on age and generation. Considering the thematic focus on generations at this conference, this point could deserve further attention.

## Conclusion

Globalization, as Tomlinson argued more than a decade ago, and as Giddens suggested even earlier, leads to *new forms of experience* in everyday life. In today's presentation, Joseph Straubhaar has provided us with an interesting mapping of contemporary media development trends. He has outlined the structural conditions in which people's new forms of experience – of identity formation, of socially relating, of engaging in society – occur. Furthermore, through his cultural sedimentation concept, he has offered a model of analysis of people's identity formation processes.

However, what I have suggested here today is a more articulate focus on power-geometries in current developmental processes. Furthermore, *a more articulate perspective on agency and change could deepen our understanding* of the socially and culturally inclusive and exclusive dynamics of this developmental process. Zygmunt Baumann gave this some attention in his book on globalization from 2000, and Straubhaar today rightly emphasizes the issues of difference in access to the new media.

However, a reinforced developmental and change perspective on the topic of media flows and identities in the age of satellite TV and the Internet also speaks to *a stronger connection between globalization and development.* Moreover, it speaks to an emphasis on issues of citizenship and bottom-up perspectives on globalization (Pieterse 2001). This is where the research field of communication for development and social change becomes relevant.

Second, emerging from my media sociological reflections today comes a reinforced call for *research dealing with the changing media experiences of everyday life.* The focus on the contemporary, apparently very large impact of satellite TV and the Internet on many people's lives *is a synchronic analysis* of media use. I have here suggested a deepening of this sort of analysis with a focus on *the diachronic cultural process of media development and media use.* I have mentioned the life history approach as well as a historization of large-scale relevant institutional transformations, like urban development and media development.

Finally, considering the theme of this conference, I have suggested a stronger generational focus on media use.

Joseph Straubhaar's presentation sets the scene and provides a very insightful analysis of the stratification and reconfiguration of media flows and markets in times of satellite TV and Internet. He furthermore, although less elaborately, points out ways to conduct studies on how global media, and other media, impact upon culture and identities.

I would add to this that there is a general need for *a renewed focus on audience studies or user studies* within media and communication research, a focus that also incorporates some of the issues I have touched upon in this commentary.

Thank you.

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