

Handbook of Cultural Sociology

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different scales and trajectories are now dependent on the same complex technological systems shifts our understanding of the coordinates of "public" and "private" and alters the space-time texture of our everyday lives.

Finally, we might note that media not only enable new forms of mobility through their capacity to bridge time and space, but they are increasingly becoming mobile themselves. This shift from fixed and discrete points of production and consumption—centered around key sites such as studio, home, and office—to pervasive networks that can be accessed on the run is reconfiguring the characteristic spatial experiences and rhythms of social life. Foundational presumptions of sociology, such as the emphasis on structure and "solids," are being challenged. Indeed, the social is reconceptualized as "liquid" (Bauman 2000), "mobile" (Urry 2007), and composed of "flows" (Castells 1989).

In this chapter, I will analyze some of the ways in which media technologies have contributed to the transformation of social relations of space and time. To conceptualize space and time as social relations is, first of all, to insist that they are neither "natural" nor "objective" systems. Rather, understandings and valuations of space and time emerge from complex interactions involving technologies, institutions, material infrastructures, forms of knowledge and imagination, embodied experience, and social practices.

My analysis here will trace the historical role played by different media technologies in helping to constitute the nation-state as a dominant frame for modern culture and social life. After identifying some of the tensions in this project, I will conclude by arguing that contemporary developments, such as the emergence of global digital networks, have accentuated gaps in the alignment of territory, culture, and sovereignty that once defined the ideal nation-state, incubating new patterns of cultural affiliation and belonging not yet solidified into formal institutions.

Clearly, media comprise only one force at work in contemporary debates over globalization, and they need to be assessed in the context of other dynamics, including new processes of economic exchange affecting trade, investment, and production; new patterns of migration affecting the movement of people; and new "global risks" such as climate change that increasingly drive demands for "post-national" forms of governance. Nevertheless, focusing on media offers strategic insights into emergent relations between national and global formations at a number of levels. Media not only form a primary source of information and images about both "home" and "foreign" territories—helping to orchestrate complex processes of identification and belonging—but media flows offer visible demonstrations of the impact of global processes on national sovereignty. National regulatory regimes are more difficult to maintain in the face of satellites and the internet, as China found during the Beijing Olympic Games, while national regulation of intellectual property is increasingly challenged by digital "piracy," on the one hand, and standards established by powerful content producers such as the United States, on the other. These examples serve to remind us that media, in the broad sense, underpin globalizing processes in most other sectors, enabling the rapid, ubiquitous, and distributed forms of communication that are becoming the taken-for-granted backdrop to social life in the twenty-first century.

Space, time, and modernity

The period of "modernity" is often characterized by distinctive shifts in the social relations of time and space. The most influential political economist of the nineteenth century,

Media technologies, cultural mobility, and the nation-state

Scott McQuire

It's August 2008 and I'm in Melbourne watching a live telecast of sprinter Usain Bolt winning the 100 meters gold medal at the Beijing Olympics. I'm not at home, or even in front of a television set, but peering at the screen on a friend's mobile phone as we walk down the street. Suddenly a message arrives from friends in London with the first photos of their newly born baby. We look at them, and then ring a colleague to discover that the place we're heading for is actually just around the corner. I text my partner to let her know where I am, and then glance at the first news coverage of Bolt's record-breaking run.

Although the details of the above account are imagined, exchanges along these lines are increasingly commonplace, albeit more common in some places than others. The point of my story is to highlight the way in which routine social interactions now often involve complex technological mediations operating across a number of levels. At one level, global events are screened on a variety of media platforms, including television, internet, and mobile phones. These events garner massive audiences across the world: the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony claimed the largest ever "live" screen audience—around two billion. In addition, the process of responding to and interpreting events has accelerated; instead of news cycles defined by the arrival of the morning paper or the broadcast of the evening news, we now have journalism metered by the speed of pervasive "real time" media. The blurring of the lines between event, live presentation, and interpretation gives rise to the rolling twenty-four-hour news coverage that characterized the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

At a second level, private communication now routinely occurs across great geographic expanses, enabling widely dispersed communities to maintain forms of "distant intimacy" stitched together by the frequent exchange of small messages. If the content of such messages often seems mundane to outsiders (and even to participants), the significance of the process of exchange should not be underestimated. Media have become integral to the enactment of social ties via social networks distributed over vast territories. As Scott Lash (2002: 15) puts it, "because my forms of social life are so normally and chronically at-a-distance, I cannot navigate these distances, I cannot achieve sociality apart from my machine interface." Moreover, routine communication not only bridges vast distances but reconfigures local practices, such as visiting friends. The fact that these

Karl Marx, identified territorial expansion of markets and the acceleration of capital circulation as central to the dynamic of industrial capitalism. For Marx (1973: 539), "the more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space with time." New transport technologies such as railways and steamships played key roles in beginning to link the world as a global entity. Increased mobility powered the extension of industrial capitalism and altered the patterns of human habitation. At a national level, migration from country to city became the dominant demographic trend, providing the conditions for the urbanization of social life. At a transnational level, new forms of technological mobility underpinned the colonization of much of the globe by the West, and ushered in the "age of migration" characterized by the flow of Europeans to "settler societies" such as the US, Canada, and Australia. Both trajectories produced significant collisions in space-time patterns, as the slower, cyclical rhythms of rural existence and the supposedly "backward" condition of indigenous populations increasingly became measured against the emerging norms of uniform linear time and urban speed (McQuire 1998).

Similar disjunctions in space-time experience have been observed in recent years. Sociologist David Harvey (1990) has theorized the experience of "space-time compression" to be at the heart of contemporary life. Harvey argues that the new capacity to bridge distance at high speed "so revolutionize[s] the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves" (1990: 240). Similarly, Anthony Giddens describes contemporary global society "as expressing fundamental aspects of time-space distanciation"; he goes on, "globalization concerns the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations 'at distance' with local contextualities" (1991: 21). For Giddens, space-time distanciation is not simply about the heightened capacity for distant events to intrude into everyday consciousness via avenues such as news media; it also concerns the ways that intimate exchanges with family and friends are now routinely mediated across vast distances.

Media technologies such as telephone, television, and the internet cannot be regarded simply as the "cause" of contemporary "space-time compression" or "time-space distanciation." As I have indicated above, other factors must be considered—the impact of technologies such as new transport systems, and logics such as the emergence of abstract forms of knowledge, bureaucratic systems of organization, urbanization, patterns of migration, and the systemic expansion of industrial capitalism into a global market. Nevertheless, media technologies play a significant role in conditioning the current global order, by coordinating dispersed sites of production and consumption essential to expanded markets, by underpinning the rapid data-processing and exchange essential to the global financial system, and by promoting the rapid circulation of cultural and symbolic forms across transnational circuits.

Print media and the formation of the nation-state

Towards the end of his career, Canadian economic historian Harold Innis examined how different modes of human communication exerted a wider impact on social existence, including forms of economic life, politics, religion, education, and culture. Innis (1951)

proposed that different media were "biased" according to whether they favored distribution in space or time, and he argued that changes in dominant media platforms were a significant factor in explaining major shifts in social organization. At one extreme, media such as stone and clay tablets are time biased—durable, but heavy, bulky, and hard to transport. At the other end of the spectrum, paper is space biased—light and easily transportable, but also fragile and susceptible to the depredations of time. Innis (1951: 116) argued that whereas time-biased media such as clay "helped sustain centralized religious forms of tradition, transportable media favored the growth of administrative relations across space, thereby facilitating the decentralized growth of secular and political authority." In his account, the invention of paper, and its spread from China to the Middle East and then to the West, was a central factor in the decline of traditional oral culture, and the subsequent emergence of spatially extensive forms of political authority such as the Roman Empire.

Innis's work proved influential on another Canadian scholar, literary professor Marshall McLuhan, who shot to fame in the 1960s on the back of his provocative argument concerning the transformative effects of television. McLuhan has often been criticized, notably by Raymond Williams (1990), for espousing a form of technological determinism that treats technology as an autonomous cause of social change. Williams insisted that new technologies and their patterns of use were not simply "invented," but depended upon the interplay of a range of specific conditions—such as corporate power to determine patterns of investment or the settings of government policy—in conjunction with more general conditions relating to the enhanced importance of mobility in an expanding capitalist system.

Although it is true that McLuhan pays scant attention to questions of power, he nevertheless offers important insights into the impact of modern media. Prior to McLuhan, the dominant paradigm of communication studies tended to treat the medium as "neutral" and to limit debate largely to questions of "content." In contrast, McLuhan (1974: 27) insisted, "the effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception." He followed Innis in extolling the importance of print media—the so-called "Gutenberg Galaxy"—and in particular the newspaper, which he dubbed the "architect of nationalism." McLuhan (1974: 158) also recognized the rise of print culture as one of the conditions for the growth of modern rationality and individualism. But spatial extension came at a cost. Although print functioned to fragment and compartmentalize the individual human mind, in organizational terms it promoted a centralized, "top-down" culture governed by bureaucratic forms with rigid hierarchies.

A similar thesis concerning the integral relation between the newspaper and the nation-state was advanced in far more historical detail by critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (1989) and sociologist Benedict Anderson (1983). For Anderson, the rise of print culture was the structural condition that enabled "vernacular languages" to undermine the dominance of Latin and the central authority of the church. By creating unified zones of communication and exchange, print became the joint vehicle of both the emerging national economy and novel forms of national consciousness, resulting in the spread of what Anderson dubs "print capitalism." In Anderson's account, the expanded circulation of printed information is fundamental to the construction of the "imagined community" that characterizes the modern nation-state. The modern community is "imagined" because it comprises a mass of citizens who will never all meet "face to face," but who nevertheless develop forms of affective attachment and political solidarity mediated by media such as the newspaper and the book.

Jürgen Habermas (1989) also stresses the relation between expansion of markets for goods and for news, which have jointly functioned to "nationalize" the town-based economy and thereby constitute the nation-state. In his influential account of the formation of the "public sphere," Habermas locates its emergence in the transition from feudal to proto-democratic systems of political authority. The public sphere names the arena in which the ascendant bourgeoisie were able to find a political voice, as the legitimacy of noble "birthright" waned in favor of new modes of authority based on the will of "the people." "Public opinion"—a term that first entered the Oxford Dictionary in 1781—and the press as the "fourth estate" played key roles in the emergent democratic system. For Habermas, the press became the key instrument through which private citizens engage in rational public discourse to comment on "society" as a public affair. However, this ideal scenario has only rarely existed in reality. The increasing commercialization of the press, which helped to secure its independence from state control, also created the conditions for what Habermas terms a "re-feudalization" of the public sphere. Instead of articulating a broader public interest, public opinion comes to be dominated by coalitions of private interest.

Although the debates generated by Habermas's work are important, the key issue here is the role of media in establishing the nation-state as the primary frame for modern culture and social life. Spatially extended and temporally compressed communication circuits such as those established by mass daily newspapers help to create the conditions in which locally based forms of identity cede ground to widespread identification of citizens as national subjects. In Giddens's terms, the modern nation-state involved the "disembedding" of traditional, locally based social systems and a "stretching" of social relations, so that local markers of time and space such as places and seasons give way to more abstracted forms of knowledge such as news cycles and railway timetables. Like McLuhan and Anderson, Giddens (1991: 25–26) recognizes the mosaic form of the newspaper page as an index of the way that modernity produces both fragmentation and continuity. Disparate events are juxtaposed on the same page, unified only by the time of their occurrence (the present) and by the authority of the medium—an authority that is itself partly based on the novel speed and reach of the newspaper as a communication form.

Electronic media and national space

McLuhan's astounding popularity and influence in the 1960s was predicated on his spectacular extension of Innis's thesis concerning the spatial and temporal "bias" of electronic media. The "big flip" initiated by the spread of electronic media such as television involved displacement of the private detachment fostered by print by an imploding "global village" in which everyone is profoundly "involved" with everyone else. McLuhan's analysis remains contentious in terms of its sweeping claims about the effects of specific media, but it does serve to highlight the profound ambiguity of electronic media in relation to the space of the nation-state. As Thomson (1995) points out, while the late nineteenth-century newspaper gained mass distribution and was able to draw on dispersed sources of information via the telegraph, the logistics of physical distribution meant its primary audience was restricted to a single city or region. Electronic broadcasting is bound by no such limits. The capacity of radio waves to cross national borders was a key reason for the urgency with which different national governments

moved to assert control over radio spectrums in the early twentieth century, often subordinating civilian to military use. Terrestrial television signals were initially more circumscribed. However, following the launch of geostationary satellites in 1962, television could not only relay "live" events from locations across the world, but also develop networks that bore no necessary relationship to the physical bounds of the nation-state.

Despite their technical capacity to travel across borders with relative impunity, radio and television remained primarily national industries and institutions into the 1980s. Individual nation-states sought to assert control over radio and television within their territories through a combination of licensing and regulation, and (with the notable exception of the United States) the provision of funding for public service broadcasters. This system, in which the media space of most nation-states was dominated by one or, at most, a handful of television broadcasters, proved remarkably stable across the major geopolitical divides of the period. In fact, unified national programming arguably became a key means by which the "imagined community" was enacted in the second half of the twentieth century. As Colin McCabe (1986: 8) argues, "Just as national literature in the vernacular tongue was an essential component in the constitution of the ruling classes of post-Renaissance Europe, so a national broadcasting system is a crucial element in the current political settlement of the capitalist West."

This political function of broadcasting situates the major debates that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s concerning "media imperialism" and the need for a "new world information and communication order" (NWICO) as a response to the domination of media content by the West in general and the United States in particular. The character of these debates, which began from concern over the physical importation of programming as well as the dominance over communication infrastructure, began to change in the 1980s as new technologies opened gaps in the established fit between national territory and media regulation. Fiber optics allowed cables to carry many more channels, while satellite distribution enabled cable operators to cover much larger territories. The launch of HBO as a national cable network in the US in 1975 was followed by the establishment of the first "global" channels, such as CNN (1980) and MTV (1981), which signalled the beginning of the shift away from nationally based television services. In Europe, the expansion of the number of channels coincided with growing privatization of television services and the formation of new policy settings, such as the "Television without Frontiers" Directive (1989) advocating greater cross-border media circulation within the European Union. By the close of the 1980s, direct satellite broadcasting began to provide growing competition to cable. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation relaunched Sky Television (later BSkyB) in the UK in 1989, as the first node in his ambitious attempt to cover the globe with satellite television services. However, this ambition was itself outflanked by the rapid expansion of the internet, particularly the explosion of the "world wide web" (which married hypertext to the internet, enabling easy access to linked "pages" via web browsers) from around 1994.

Digital networks, global media, and post-national space

By the late 1980s the increasing influence of the internet led scholars such as urban sociologist Manuel Castells (1989: 6) to posit "the emergence of a space of flows which dominates the historically constructed space of places." Similarly, in his influential essay

"The Overexposed City," French social theorist Paul Virilio (1991: 13) argued that pervasive electronic media fundamentally dissolved traditional spatial dimensions in favor of instantaneous interactions: "From here on, people can't be separated by physical obstacles or by temporal distances. With the interfacing of computer terminals and video monitors, distinctions of here and there no longer mean anything." As the dot-com boom gained momentum in the late 1990s, economists such as Frances Cairncross (1997) announced the "death of distance," while the "Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age," written by Dyson *et al.* (1994: 26), proclaimed: "the central event of the twentieth century is the overthrow of matter." Borders, distance, and solid structures seemed not only less constraining, but virtually irrelevant, and the alignment of culture and national territory seemed poised to be entirely overtaken by global processes.

However, in contrast to widespread assertions that "cyberspace" necessarily involved the "annihilation" of distance and space, others insisted on the need to recognize the material embeddedness of digital networks. In her pioneering work on the global city, sociologist Saskia Sassen (1991) argues that "global cities," which form the command-and-control centers of contemporary global capitalism, have a critical dependence on digital infrastructure. If the global city is partly defined by its ability to attract skilled workers in sectors such as finance, management, and legal services, it also demands high-speed communication networks to control globally dispersed corporate systems. Instead of the wholesale disappearance of physical space that Virilio, Cairncross, and others prophesied, digital networks have a distinct geography. It is no accident that the "fastest pipes" (enabling the fastest data exchange) are those linking New York and London. Sassen contends that the spatial impact of digital networks involves simultaneous processes of concentration and dispersion. In this context, Sassen (2006) contends there is a partial disaggregation of national space in favor of the emergence of new sub-national (global city) and supra-national (global market) configurations. This does not entail the wholesale dismantling of the nation-state, but does challenge the logic of the national as the primary container for economic, cultural, social, legal, and even political processes at a number of strategic points.

Sassen's analysis is useful for conceptualizing the new patterns and trajectories that characterize contemporary media flows. On the one hand, we can point to the formation of supra-national broadcasting networks based on a combination of cable and satellite. Although some of these networks, such as News Corporation's Star Television, which covers fifty-three countries in Asia, testify to the persistence of older patterns of media dominance, others, such as the formation of al Jazeera in 1996, suggest their complication and potential transformation. At another level, we can point to the heightened frequency and visibility of transnational exchanges, ranging from the highly integrated international banking system—which now enables a single swipe card to access ATMs around the world using (relatively) secure private networks—to the sort of rolling global protests coordinated via the public internet that marked the onset of the Iraq war in 2003. The proliferation of media platforms, combined with new patterns of user-generated production and dissemination of content, means that the "public sphere" of most nation-states is increasingly defined by multiple channels and sources at a national level, but also by increased frequency of cross-border flows. This development has led to new hopes for a regeneration of the public sphere—because entry barriers to media access have been substantially lowered—but also to new concerns about the fragmentation and splintering of public discourse, insofar as customized media enable users to filter out information that might challenge their own world view. Is the public sphere expanding to include

previously marginalized voices, and thus moving closer to its claim to universality, or is it being reduced to what Todd Gitlin (1998) calls "public spherules"—atomized bubbles of opinion which lack the transversal connections which might animate sectional discussions into an active discourse about the public good? How might a transnational or global public sphere be established? These key questions now demand serious consideration.

The new global information order is by no means egalitarian, and the "digital divide" at both national and international levels remains a major issue. Nevertheless, media and cultural flows in the twenty-first century have assumed a growing level of complexity. The partial and uneven shift away from Western, and especially US, dominance of communications infrastructure—such as the use of satellites and the electromagnetic spectrum, micro-electronics, remote-sensing capabilities, and direct satellite broadcasting—is also increasingly evident in relation to the internet. Fifteen years ago there was substantial concern that the hardware, software, and content of the internet were following established patterns of global information flows. In 1993, nearly 94 percent of internet data flowed through just four countries: the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia. India accounted for 0.01 percent, China for so little it didn't register. However, recent years have seen substantial growth of the non-English-language internet, so that predictions of English as the universal "operating system" of global communication no longer seem so well founded. By 2008 English language content on the internet had dropped well below 30 percent. Internet theorist Geert Lovink (2008: xi) notes: "the majority of internet traffic these days is in Spanish, Mandarin, and Japanese, but little of this seems to flow into the dominant Anglo-Western understanding of Internet culture." Equally important, the internet is becoming much less dependent on US telecommunications infrastructure, with the amount of traffic routed through the US dropping from 70 percent to around 25 percent over the last decade. If this development was partly spurred by the draconian security provisions of the 2001 US Patriot Act, it is also an effect of increased investment in internet backbone by countries such as India and China.

The cultural implications of these new patterns are significant. Diasporic communities, as well as many other dispersed "communities of interest," which previously fell below the threshold of a national broadcast system with few outlets, have been able to shift media communication from the physical exchange of tapes, CDs, and DVDs to the establishment of specialist cable and satellite channels. Such communities are also able to use the internet to access national media, and to support new modes of private and semi-private communication across national borders using email, skype, blogs, and social networking websites. The increased availability of such circuits facilitates new modes of cultural belonging and cultural exchange, in which place of residence is no longer the threshold condition for awareness of, or participation in, one's "home" culture.

Homi Bhabha (1994) pointed out long ago that the legacy of colonialism and a century of mass migration, whether intended or not, was that the space of the national homeland became increasingly fractured from within. Now, new, more turbulent patterns of migration and "people movement" (Papastergiadis 2000) and the rise of what Ong (1999) calls "flexible citizenship" demand that we consider the increased significance of transnational exchanges. Kleinschmidt (2006) argues that, in order to map new regional patterns of cultural exchange, we need to move away from the paradigm of what he terms "residualism" as the default setting for understanding mobility. Because residualism treats mobility principally in terms of the threat it creates to national borders and state sovereignty, it tends to obscure the productive agency of migrants as the

creators of transnational social spaces of varying scales, durations, and structures. Contemporary media technologies exercise a similar migratory effect, accentuating the sense in which "home" is no longer bound to a particular place, synonymous with a single language, homogeneous people, or unified culture. Such mediatization of social life is a significant part of the condition which leads Urry (2007) to call for sociology to shift its focus and its concepts to address new forms of mobilities, many of which are not constrained by national boundaries.

In the present context, in which neither the internal nor the external borders of the nation as "home" remain secure, new possibilities for breaking away from fixed and exclusionary stereotypes are emerging. Instead of identity being circumscribed by a subjectivity dictated by place of origin, identity might be redefined to include the overlapping, interpenetrating spaces and contradictory affiliations we inhabit in the present. The consequences of refusing to rethink the relations between identity and alterity, home and exile, familiar and foreign, and self and other have been all too evident in recent decades. Aggressive definition of a national culture based on primordial associations between blood and land often leads to discrimination, segregation, and apartheid, and to the horror of ethnic cleansing operations in Bosnia, the walling off of the West Bank, and the fencing of the Mexico-US border. On the other hand, as power leeches away from the state to other entities such as transnational corporations, the nation can become a strategic point of resistance. In his meditation on "Europe," Derrida (1992: 37) pointed out that current ruptures mean that no radical politics can afford to define itself simply in opposition to the nation-state: "in certain cases the old state structures help us to fight against private and transnational empires."

In a world facing problems such as climate change that can only be resolved through concerted global action, a transnational public sphere is not a luxury but a necessity. However, a genuinely transnational public sphere can no longer afford the pretense of a universalism that masks the imperialism of powerful nations. It requires instead the development of lateral, horizontal exchanges that emphasize both cultural locatedness and cultural exchange as dynamic processes. This is the promise and challenge of how networked digital media might contribute to what Manray Hsu (2005) aptly terms "networked cosmopolitanism."

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