Global Media Cultures

A Research Programme on the Role of Media in Cultural Globalization

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The objective of the research programme is to undertake an extensive and focused analysis of the ways in which media cultures take part in processes of globalization, including how they challenge existing cultures and create new and alternative symbolic and cultural communities. The research programme will address these questions through a theoretical discussion and reexamination of existing international research and through a series of individual empirical studies. The programme is cross-disciplinary in nature, and involves a series of media. Thus, theories and methodologies draw upon both humanistic and social science disciplines and a multiplicity of media cultures is examined: television, Internet, advertising, news, sports etc.

The point of departure is the crucial role played by media in particular electronic and audiovisual media, in the cultural, political, economic and social processes that together constitute the process of globalization. By globalization is meant a development through which the constraints of geography on social and cultural structures are reduced, an increased social and cultural interconnectivity across time and space is created, and a heightened consciousness is developed about this secession of social and cultural interaction from geographical constraints. Globalization, however, is neither an unambiguous concept, nor does it refer to a single and specific socio-cultural phenomenon. Similarly, globalization is not a historically new phenomenon that is only confined to the 20th century. Consequently, one aim of the research programme is to advance a comprehensive understanding and critique of globalization both as a concept and a socio-cultural phenomenon.

The media have an important impact on cultural globalization in two mutually interdependent ways: Firstly, the media provide an extensive transnational transmission of cultural products and, secondly, they contribute to the formation of communicative networks and social structures. The rapidly growing supply of media products from an international media culture presents a challenge to existing local and national cultures. The sheer volume of the supply, as well as the vast technological infrastructure and financial capital that pushes this supply forward, have a considerable impact on local patterns of cultural consumption and possibilities for sustaining an independent cultural production. Global media cultures create a continuous cultural exchange, in which crucial aspects such as identity, nationality, religion, behavioural norms and way of life are continuously questioned and challenged. These cultural encounters often involve the meeting of cultures with a different socio-economic base, typically a transnational and commercial cultural industry on one side and a national, publicly regulated cultural industry on the other side.

Due to their very structure, global media promote a restructuring of cultural and social communities. Just as media such as the press, and later radio and tv have been very important institutions for the formation of national communities, global media support the creation of new communities. The Internet, for example, not only facilitates communication across the globe, but also supports the formation of new social communities in which members can interact with each other. And satellite tv and radio allow immigrants to be in close contact

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with their homeland's language and culture while they gradually accommodate to a new cultural environment. The common point of departure for the research programme and its individual projects is the assumption that a series of international media constitutes a global cultural supply in itself and serves as an independent agency for cultural and social globalization, in which cultural communities are continuously restructured and redefined.

Thematic Areas

The research programme is organized around a set of thematic areas of particular relevance to the processes of cultural globalization. These thematic areas will each be taken up in one or more of the subprojects and concern: 1) the experience of modernity, in particular time/space categories, 2) socialisation and the formation of cultural identity, 3) mediated communities and action, and 4) democracy and political culture. These thematic areas involve cultural globalization at both: a) the general cultural and societal level; b) the institutional level, c) the social group level, and d) the individual level.

1) The experience of modernity in a global culture. A key element in the analysis of the experience of modernity as both a general form of mentality and a mode of aesthetic production, is the loosening of time and space from the bonds of locality and tradition. In the globalized reality of high modernity, the disassociation of cultural and social activity from local constraints has radical consequences: almost all of those institutions that during the 19th and 20th century have ensured a modern structuring of cultural and social experience, typically at a local or national level, have either been significantly influenced by globalization or have been challenged by other transnational institutions. The family, the national educational system, the arts, the political system, the mode of industrial production etc. have all been influenced by the transnational networks and institutions that have emerged in the wake of globalization.

At the same time, the very processes of globalization have made it apparant that in spite of the existence of globalized cultures, including a global media market, the experience of modernity is not a unified phenomenon. The experience of modernity among the well-educated and economic elite living in industrialised regions of the world is literally worlds apart from the ways modernisation processes are experienced by immigrants in the same regions of the world or by people living in the third world. The media play a significant role for both homog-

enisation and differentiation, and this duality will be a central feature in the analysis of cultural globalization.

2) Socialisation and the formation of cultural identity. The media have increasingly become an independent institution for socialisation and the development of cultural identity. With a rapidly expanding international communication flow bringing media representations of foreign cultures into local cultural environments, the premises of cultural metabolism have changed and cultural reflexivity has increased at the level of the individual. On the one hand, global media cultures represent a cultural otherness, at times a threat to cultural tradition and autonomy. On the other hand, global media cultures often contribute to a development of local cultures, bringing them into contact and on a par with the social reality of a globalized modernity. The research programme will pay particular attention to the ways in which the media contribute to the differentiation of this continuous exchange between local and global culture and to its consequences for socialisation and the formation of cultural identity.

3) Mediated communities and action. The media and the communication technologies in general have facilitated the formation of collective communities. They have also made possible communicative and social action across time and space. Concomitant to globalization we also see the formation of communities that are almost exclusively established by means of media cultures (for instance music fan clubs, Internet chat groups etc.). This increased "medialization" of cultural communities has an impact on how interaction takes place in such communities; in particular, interactions take on a more abstract and symbolic character as compared to those taking place in social situations with non-mediated interpersonal encounters. The notion of social action changes character as well. Through the media and the communication technologies, social action increasingly takes place on a global scale; political action is carried out through the international news media, and economic action is taken through various interactive exchange services, for instance Reuter's financial services and similar organizations. Mediated action also takes place in the cultural field, but the concept of mediated cultural actions and communities must be investigated further. The research programme will examine the mediated character of cultural communities, and in particular scrutinise and develop the concept of social action when applied to mediated social encounters.

4) Democracy and political culture. An important consequence of globalization is the growth of

multicultural societies, in which people of different cultural backgrounds (ethnic, religious etc.) must coexist. Although the individual cultural groups may maintain their own language, culture, and tradition, the different groups in a multicultural society are obliged to deal with their mutual, collective problems in a common political/public sphere. This has, in some cases, aggravated the contradiction between a universal (and Western) conception of democracy, civil rights and duties, on the one hand, and a culturally specific perception of people's right to participate and the procedures of government, on the other. As, e.g., Jürgen Habermas has argued, the growth of multicultural societies makes it pertinent to analyse and discuss the relationship between universal ideals of democracy and forms of political culture and culturally specific political norms and values.

Due to increased socio-geographic interconnectedness, globalization entails a new stratification of the political and cultural spheres with the establishment of local, regional and transnational public spheres adjacent to the national public sphere. There are several ways to respond to this challenge to the autonomy of the national public sphere. One is to expand the principles of the national public sphere to a global level, thus creating global political and cultural spheres based on the national model. Another is to take the very differentiation of political and cultural spheres as the point of departure and accept that political and cultural deliberation takes place in a more complex, multi-layered set of public spheres, in which no single sphere has either universal coverage or absolute supremacy. The research programme will consider the impact of globalization on democracy and political culture at a theoretical level and as an analytical theme in several of the subprojects.

Subprojects of the Research Programme

In addition to its general activities, the research programme consists of seven subprojects. Each subproject is conducted by a member of the research group.

Mediated Communities and Discourses in Global Cultures

Responsible: Stig Hjarvard, Ph.D.
University of Copenhagen
This subproject has three aims: Firstly, to provide a critical presentation and discussion of existing theoretical approaches to the processes of globalization. Both research and theories from the social sciences

and the humanities will be examined. Secondly, to present an elaborated theoretical account of the role of media in cultural globalization. Thirdly, to undertake two empirical case studies regarding transnational news coverage and advertising in order to illustrate and challenge theoretical models of globalization on the basis of empirical evidence.

The four thematic areas will be of central concern for the theoretical analysis and discussion. In addition to this, newer work on socio-cultural dependency and dominance will be considered in order to discuss and develop both older critical and Marxist theories of dependency and newer "revisionist" and neo-liberal theories of pluralism. The role of media as reembedding mechanisms of modernity will be related to newer studies of communicative characteristics of audiovisual media. Finally, the theoretical discussion will consider the theme of mediated communities and action through a discussion of the relationship between action and knowledge. The hypothesis is that globalization encourages a partial decoupling of social action from symbolic knowledge.

The two empirical case studies focus on the news coverage of an international conflict and transnational advertising campaigns that clearly thematise intercultural relations and conflicts. Common to the two case studies is that they are both used to illustrate and discuss questions about transcultural communication and representation, including how culturally specific values inform the presentation and understanding of global events, and how the media's affiliations to either national or transnational cultures affect their representation of other cultures. In both case studies, the methodological starting point is discourse analysis.

Interactive Worlds: Theories, Models, and Methods for Studying the Internet

Responsible: Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Dr. Phil.
University of Copenhagen
Building on the computer as a common platform, a variety of new information technologies (IT) – notably the Internet – have made possible communication and action across time and space in a form and on a scale that is without historical precedent. This project conducts a theoretical as well as empirical investigation of how communication via the Internet may contribute to a globalization both of the supply and of the uses of media across nation-states and cultures.

Earlier research on IT media has delivered many grand perspectives, but fewer systematic analyses,

although publications both internationally and in Denmark have provided constituents for an understanding of the computer as a medium. The theoretical portion of the project first performs a reexamination and assessment of previous contributions to theorizing and modeling the Internet, and next attempts an integration of three research traditions into an interdiscplinary approach. First, classical sociology (especially, Weber, Simmel, and Schütz) has thrown light on the reorganization of the forms of culture and consciousness under modernity, particularly the reorganization of time and space via new institutions and media. Second, three decades of research on literacy has produced important insights into the relationship between oral and literate cultures, with implications for digital culture. Third, media and communication research has developed models as a means of describing and conceptualizing the processes of communication associated with different media. Such models of 'old' media have explanatory value, as well, for 'new' computer media, while, simultaneously, the computer offers an instrument of research which may model and simulate its own specificity.

The empirical portion of the project consists in two case studies about the social uses of the Internet in different contexts. The objects of analysis will be two organizations, respectively a pre-existing international organization that has come to rely on the Internet as one of several windows on the world, and an organization which was constituted in and of the Internet. Among the key research issues will be the flows of communication to, from, and within these organizations, not least the participation of their members from more or less distant locations. The users' experience of, engagement with, and assessment of their virtual organization is of special interest for an understanding of how the Internet may support new forms of social interaction. In conjunction with more elaborate models of the Internet, the empirical findings may help to develop a typology of the various forms of 'interactivity' that IT media facilitate between their users and an increasingly diverse set of possible worlds.

The Talk Show: A Popular Cultural Genre in the Global and Local Television Culture
Responsible: Hanne Bruun, Ph.D.
Aarhus University
The objective of this project is to analyse one of television's important genres: The talk show. The genre will be examined in the light of an increasingly international television culture, and the ana-

lysis will be aimed at the genre's significance in the globalization processes. The talk show is usually associated with American television, where it has existed since the childhood of television. During the 1980s, however, the genre has spread considerably due to technological as well as economical circumstances, and last but not least due to its audience appeal. In terms of the history of programming, the influence of American television on European television has been substantial. Both nationally produced and American talk shows are interesting in this regard, because the genre plays a more and more important role in the programme supply in Europe.

The relatively limited research on the talk show has been focused on typologies within a national context, and American media and cultural research dominate the existing literature. From a European point of view, this means that the genre's significance in the interplay and negotiations between a global and a local context has not been assessed.

The general thesis is that the fundamentally global character of the television medium and the talk show will influence the producer's as well as the viewers' expectations of the genre. The project will focus on two questions, which are related to the four thematic areas of the research program. Firstly, the question is to what extent the different adaptations of the genre's fundamental characteristics and of its relation to the viewers entails a homogenisation of content and expression across cultural and national differences. Or whether it should be considered as a differentiation, in which cultural, sociological and institutional differences can be observed in specific aesthetic and thematic practices. Secondly, the question is whether the fundamental purpose of the talk show, which is to establish a sense of having company and of community, can create mediated community experiences of a political and social character for the viewers regardless of local, national and cultural differences.

The methodical approach is a comparative textual analysis of the audience discussion talk show in the USA, Great Britain and Denmark. Furthermore, qualitative audience research will be done on Danish audience groups's reception of national as well as imported audience discussion talk shows.

The Global Sports Community Seen from a Danish Perspective
Responsible: Kirsten Frandsen, Ph.D.
Aarhus University
This project is a reception study focusing on Danish television viewers' experience of the coverage of

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the Olympic Games in Sidney in the year 2000. Former research, mainly based on textual analysis, has shown that national media's representations of international sports games often are rooted in national and culturally specific symbolic frames.

Both sports events and media events have been conceived of as ritualistic and ceremonial events that in symbolic forms represent and confirm crucial and shared cultural values in modern society. The aim of this project is to analyse this from an audience perspective and gain a more substantial and specific understanding of how this is actually experienced by the television viewers at a big international sports event.

Right from the beginning, the Olympic Games of 1896 were meant to be an ideological tool for international integration. At the same time, they were meant to unify individuals and society through a particular ritualistic manifestation of national symbols. Today, the Olympic movement is globally organized and the games are global with respect to participation. Through television transmissions, the Olympic Games become a global media event within which the inherent ideology of both sports and the games is also distributed.

From a text analytic perspective it has been argued that media events, due to the immediacy of the transmissions, have a unique ability to create a feeling of solidarity among the media audiences despite the separation in space. This project seeks to find out whether such integrating power implies an ability to cross cultural borders as well.

By means of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies developed within audience research, the project will seek to answer crucial questions about the role of televised sports with respect to the creation of a local cultural identity in a society characterised by globalization.

Global and Local Aspects of Young Danes' Media Cultures

Responsible: Gitte Stald, mag.art.
University of Copenhagen
This project has two overall focuses: children and young people of today belong to a generation of multimedia users who look at the world, at each other and themselves through their experiences from media. Older children and young people make up a group, that more than others, turns towards international media and media texts, and yet they are also locally oriented. The aim of the project is to discuss the following general questions: to what degree do children and young people direct their media uses towards international, national and local media and media texts? What are their thoughts on the meaning of international, national, and local media? How is the meeting of internationally and locally produced media texts revealed in the youthful media cultures and, hence, how does it penetrate the children's and young people's thoughts and norms in general? Do the children's and young people's media uses indicate increasing homogeneity or are the international, national and local aspects of their media uses integrated in new patterns of understanding and experiences, that reflect homogeneity as well as diversity? How do internationally produced media texts affect the constitution and development of youthful, cultural identities? Can an international orientation towards transnational media and media products be distinguished in general and if so, does it indicate a homogeneous, transnational youth culture?

The project is primarily a reception study, that finds its point of departure in a mapping of the children's and young people's practical media uses and preferences for certain media (TV, computers, music and literature), genres and actual media texts. The first part of the project is empirically based on qualitative and quantitative analyses of data from an existing study of children's and young people's media uses ("Children, Young People and the Changing Media Environment"), and on national studies and data. The following part analyses children's and young people's thoughts on the meaning of global and local aspects of their media uses in relation to aesthetic and thematic traits in certain media texts, representing the children's and young people's preferences as described in the first part of the project. This part of the project will be based primarily on new qualitative interviews, but shall also draw on recent analyses.

The project also discusses whether access to various international, national and local media products is reflected in the children's and young people's preferences and practical media uses. Hence, a minor part of the project regards the media market and institutions, including marketing strategies and patterns of distribution of media products with special reference to the preferred media texts mentioned above.

Finally, the project includes a comparative dimension. The aim of this part is to compare the meaning of global and local aspects of children's and young people's media uses in Denmark and three European countries: Britain, France and Sweden. The comparison will primarily be based on empirical data and analysis from the international,

comparative project, mentioned above, and on recent national studies in the four countries. The project includes the comparative aspect in order to contrast the reflection of global and local trends in Danish children's and young people's media uses. The comparative aspects should also help to reveal possible common traits in a European, transnational youth cultural discourse.

Globalization of Television

Responsible: Henrik Søndergaard, Ph.D.
University of Copenhagen

The aim of the research project is to analyse different dimensions of the current process of internationalisation of television in order to investigate its impact on the cultural role of television. One of the questions is whether internationalisation leads to homogenisation and commercialisation of the television culture or whether it gives way to more diversity, thus stimulating cultural differentiation. Attention will be given to television's communicative structure, especially its function as a meeting place for otherwise separate areas and genres, which makes possible diffusions between national and international culture.

The internationalisation of television is often considered to be a question of programme imports and is mainly understood as a consequence of the development of satellite broadcasting. However, this represents an overly narrow perspective, because it underestimates the impact of the growing tendency among national broadcasters to adapt foreign programme formats and new tendencies toward transnational co-operation between broadcasters, which also blur the boundaries between "national" and "international". Foreign cultural influence now occurs within programmes that constitute the national dimension of programming, and thus new research strategies are needed. The investigation will focus on four different areas:

1) Institutions: Co-operation and joint ventures between national and international actors will be analysed in order to describe current economical strategies and strategies of programme policy.

2) Programme production: The impact of new forms of standardised production and more market-oriented methods of programme creation will be analysed.

3) Programme output and scheduling: An analysis of developments in programme output due to increasing internalisation and of the way in which national and imported programmes are scheduled, the purpose being to describe the impact of internationalisation on programme policy.

4) Media culture: The interplay between transitional television programmes and the national context of television reception will be analysed in order to look at the cultural consequences of increasing internationalisation.

Mediated Identities and Cultural Change among Ethnic Minorities

Responsible: Thomas Tufte, Ph.D.
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Contrary to many other European countries, local multicultural societies in Denmark are rather young, developing in the late 1960s and onwards. On a national level, refugees, non-Western European immigrants and their descendants taken together constitute less than 5% of the population in Denmark. These ethnic groups are, however, concentrated in a limited number of Danish municipalities where they contribute to the formation of significant multi-ethnic societies. Two thirds of the ethnic minorities living in Denmark are located in the greater metropolitan area in and around Copenhagen.

This project focuses on these "new Danes" and their process of integration into the Danish society. Through an anthropological and, in particularly media ethnographical study among ethnic minorities from a selected neighbourhood in Copenhagen, the project will focus on the relation between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation. The purpose is to uncover patterns and strategies of media and cultural consumption among the selected groups in order to focus the analysis on their problems of integration and the grounds upon which their integration process into the Danish society is based. Media ethnography allows an approach to everyday life whereby media and cultural consumption can be linked to broader social questions.

The following questions will initially guide the study: Which mediated communities or fellowships exist among the ethnic minorities, and what is the relation between these fellowships vis-à-vis the social and cultural networks and fellowships that otherwise exist in the neighbourhood? Upon which socio-cultural grounds are the fellowships constituted (ethnicity, religion, education, age, gender, etc)? Which strategies and patterns of media and cultural consumption indicate progress in integra-

tion into the Danish society? What major challenges do the ethnic minorities pose to the dominant cultural discourses in the Danish society as such, and in the local neighbourhood in particular?

The project will focus its case study on qualitative fieldwork among a small number of families, their everyday life and media use. The fieldwork will last approximately one year and comprise participant observation, media diaries, qualitative interviews and questionnaires; the latter will be distributed among a larger number of persons in the neighbourhood. The analyses will include both gender and generational perspectives. The families will all be ethnic minorities belonging to the most significant ethnic groups in the neighbourhood.

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