

## German Cultural Studies and Cultural Sociology: Connections and Interactions.

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### Abstract

German cultural studies has evolved during the past three decades, with new perspectives emerging in response to and in contrast with those of other disciplines, including literary studies, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, and cultural sociology. Because of its multidisciplinary nature, German cultural studies have experienced these shifts and frictions. One reason for this is the academic community's growing fascination with cultural studies and the methods it uses to analyze celebrity culture, mass media, and common practices. However, there are still holes in the humanities and social sciences, therefore the results of cultural studies are contested and not universally accepted.

This talk will center on the perspectives and applications of cultural studies professionals and cultural sociologists. I'll also talk about how conflicts and cultural transformations are often used as themes in cultural studies, and how that may be used to show how inextricably linked politics and culture are.

### Keywords

Media and Cultural Studies; Inter- and Transdisciplinary Research; Cultural Sociology; the Study of the Humanities.

### Introduction

So, the process by which computers and other forms of technology change society and public discourse is called "informatization." These rules would cover more than just computers and the

internet. They would also cover movies, satellite TV, and phones. As cultures and economies change to adapt to new tools, effects are bound to happen.

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Globalization and informationization are two different ideas, but they do have effects on society, politics, the economy, and culture.

To put it simply, globalization means the coming together of different economic systems. A big part of this coming together is done through technology. Even though foreign trade has been going on for a long time, it has grown in size and speed as communication technologies have improved. It used to take hundreds of years, not minutes, for ideas and tools to spread around the world (Sprague, 2000). Electronic tools for communication make it easy for even the most original ideas to spread quickly around the world. News from one area can also have a big effect on markets around the world. These computer networks handle deals worth more than a trillion dollars every day (Kennedy, p. 51). On the other hand, globalization makes it possible for information technology to spread, creates a global market, and offers big strategic benefits for adopting it.

Some people say that globalization and technology will have affects that last much longer than the current economic situation. In fact, they are likely to have a big impact on the social and culture outcomes of society. There's no question that globalization has made people more aware of political and economic issues that affect more than one country. Issues that affect everyone around the world include human rights, workers' rights, and the environment. The new world order can be seen in Tibet, which is controlled by China. There are now more people who follow the Dalai Lama in the West than in India, for example.

Richard Gere and Steven Seagal, who is a reincarnated lama, back Tibet's human rights campaign (Lopez, 1997), even though every time they talk to someone, Tibetan Buddhism looks different.

For Masuda, the effects of postindustrial society on Europe in the 18th century will be as big, if not bigger, than the effects of the industrial revolution. The information

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revolution will change society by bringing about "information communities," active democracy, and a globalist spirit. This is similar to how the industrial revolution caused more people to live in cities, social upheaval, and the rise of new economic forms.

Masuda correctly predicted that technological advances and the growth of globalization would come together, which is similar to McLuhan's idea of a "global village."

Poster (1999) says that some academics think globalization and knowledge will weaken the nation-state as a political unit. Friedman (1999) says that multinational corporations, nonprofits, and "superempowered individuals" like George Soros are becoming more important while nation-states are becoming less important. Political, economic, and cultural processes will always have problems as these nonpolitical groups and institutions become more important.

But it's hard to say what effect these forces have on the whole. It turned out to be wishful thinking that they would bring about a new utopia where economic, political, and geographical benefits don't matter. There are clear benefits to globalization and informationalization for people, but there are also many possible downsides that make the total effect questionable. However, globalization and information technology can make it possible for people and countries to trade cultural, political, and economic goods across borders. Also, these changes make it possible for more information to flow, even from places and people that weren't exposed to it before. On the other hand, anyone with an internet link can easily get CNN and the Central Daily News of North Korea. Friedman says that progress in technology has created a "democracy of information" (p. 53).

There is also a lot of information out there about different faiths, cultures, and ways of life.

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For example, the growth of the Internet has made it possible for anyone to do business from anywhere and at any time. Customers from all over the world can now buy books on websites like Amazon.com, so they don't have to leave their country to get information that was once only available to people in the developed world. Religious tourists can "virtually visit" holy places like the Western Wall by watching live TV shows. Also, computer networks and contacts make global activism possible in ways that have never been seen before.

Nonprofit activist groups like the Ruckus Society use technology to find volunteers, spread the word about events, and teach people how to be activists for human rights and the environment. They also collect money in more traditional ways, like giving fans coffee mugs and T-shirts.

The spread of information to more people makes world peace more likely, but it's still not a sure thing.

Together, these two forces pose a grave danger to centuries-old customs, local

sovereignty, and cultural purity. To fully take advantage of the Internet's resources, for instance, it is advised that users be fluent in English (Barber, 1995). A government-level commission in Japan actually suggested looking into making English an official language in the year 2000. Because globalization creates a worldwide economic framework in which the wealthiest individuals are best positioned to profit from the global market, Friedman calls this a "winner-take-all" system (1999, p. 245). A fair playing field is promoted by technological advancements, although this has little effect on the relative sizes of rivals. The United States, for example, gains greatly from IT advancements because it is home to the majority of the world's most successful technology companies and the vast majority of all commercial websites. Another example of the West's technological superiority is the fact that there are more Internet users in Manhattan than in all of Africa combined (World

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Bank technology statement, 2000). However, the same ability to spread knowledge that benefits those with good motives also benefits those with bad ones, such as international terrorists and regular hackers.

The United Nations Development Project concluded in 1999 that the industrialized world benefited tremendously from the growth of international trade and the increasing value of knowledge and information in the international economy.

The gap between the world's richest and poorest countries is growing as a direct result of globalization. The survey found that 26% of Americans, compared to 3% of Russians, 4% of South Asians, and 2% of Arabs, use the Internet. Additionally, 80% of websites prefer English as a method of communication. (1999 UNDP)

The emergence of a hidden struggle between the new global economic system and local, or even tribal, interests is one of the possibly most catastrophic outcomes of

globalization and information forces. One of the features of the new world, as posited by Friedman, is the tension between the "lexus (global) and the olive tree (local)." Barber (1995) describes the tension between a "McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment, and commerce" and a "Jihad...against technology, pop culture, and integrated markets; against modernity itself" as an unavoidable source of future conflict. 1995, page 4.

The competitive aspects of globalization and information technology also make mutual acceptance impossible. Countries and cultures cannot stop globalization since it is being driven by political, economic, social, and even technical forces. Even if certain people are hesitant to associate with others, a country as a whole cannot succeed in today's globalized world. This overview is by no means comprehensive, but it does help to illustrate some of the most crucial factors that have contributed to globalization and

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digitization. Now I'd like to talk about how these factors affect international and intercultural communication theory, as well as address some of the most basic worries that theorists of this field may have.

As was previously said, proponents of intercultural communication theory generally point to the proliferation of globalizing phenomena like economic integration, international travel, migration, etc. as reasons why people need to hone their intercultural communication abilities. The more fundamental concerns about how these effects may affect the character of cross-cultural communication have, however, been given less attention. (Chen and Starosta, 2000 are an exception.) In this section, I will make an effort to discuss a variety of broad concerns and a couple of more substantial problems that intercultural communication theorists need to be aware of. I will classify them primarily into two groups: public and private outcomes. It may be useful to start

with interpersonal interactions, as this is the part of intercultural communication that is most widely recognized. These forces are inherently cultural and social, but I think it's important to start by examining the more major social and cultural effects.

**World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987).**

What are these forces, though, that seem to have such a big effect on our lives? The financial markets have been changed a lot by globalization and the huge potential of information technologies. What effects do these forces have on people who want to communicate with people from other cultures? How does the idea of intercultural communication help us understand these forces as well? Is the standard study of intercultural communication still useful for the new problems that globalization and technology bring? It has some problems when it comes to the interpersonal setting.

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This article will look at how these forces that change the world affect communication between cultures, as well as how cultures affect communication between cultures. Because of these influences, it also tries to show some important problems that intercultural communication theorists face and how intercultural communication helps us understand a globalized, technologically advanced world.

## Information and Going Global

To keep things from being oversimplified or misrepresented, I will first try to explain what the key terms mean. There are many ways to explain what globalization is, but the most common ones focus on how governments, businesses, and even computer networks interact with each other. Globalization is mostly about how economic and industrial units (like businesses or industries) in different parts of the world are linked to each other, without focusing on just one area. On page 7 of his book *Globalization* (1999),

Friedman says that it "involves the unprecedented integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies." Kennedy (1993) says that globalization is the coming together of mostly economic processes (p. 47). He also thinks that as economies become more interconnected, local and national governments will eventually hand over policymaking to international groups, mostly multinational corporations but also non-governmental, regional, or international groups like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

"Globalization" is mostly used to talk about an economic trend, but its effects have far-reaching social and cultural effects as well. The trade of goods between countries is closely followed by the trade of ideas, customs, and cultures. Many faiths have spread through trade between countries. For example, Buddhism went to East and Southeast Asia along the Silk Road. Islam also went to Southeast Asia, and Christianity went to Eastern Europe,

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Central Asia, and the Americas. The changes could be small, like the "Hello, Kitty" cult going global, or big, like the rise of new religious, political, environmental, or cultural movements, like the Falungong movement, whose members mostly communicate with each other through computers.

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