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## Explaining Global Media: A Discourse Approach

Ulrika Olausson  
Örebro University  
Sweden

### 1. Introduction

That communication technologies in general and the media in particular are essential ingredients in the process of globalization has long been a commonly accepted assumption in the social sciences (Thompson, 1995). The deterritorialized nature of new communication technology generated early idealistic ideas about the emergence of a “global village” (McLuhan, 1964), and in response to the rapidly increasing complexity of global communication infrastructures, theories about the rise of a “network society” (Castells, 1996) followed. Satellite technology has enabled the simultaneous distribution of news across nation-state borders, and transnational<sup>1</sup> media networks such as CNN have “become emblematic of a world in which place and time mean less and less” (Hjarvard, 2001: 18). Transnational news services are believed to offer new styles and formats for journalistic practices, contributing to the loosening up of national identities, and arguments about an emerging “global public sphere” have been pursued (e.g. Volkmer, 2003). Thus, the media are allegedly key elements of the compression of time and space, one of the salient features of globalization (Harvey, 1989), and are viewed as both products of and significant contributors to the fluidity of globalization (Chalaby, 2003).

However, these notions about the media’s pertinent role in globalization processes have also been fiercely challenged by quite a few media scholars, who instead emphasize the continuing stability and centrality of the nation-state paradigm. National propaganda is often present in transnational media as well, not least in CNN, as are stereotypical and negative depictions of the “others” (Hafez, 2009; Thussu, 2003). Given the existence of obstacles such as language barriers and the “digital divide,” which separates the “haves” from the “have nots” with regard not only to communication technology itself, but also to the skills necessary for using it, there are no real signs of a media network with the ability to constitute a global public sphere (Hafez, 2007). Severe scepticism concerning the notion of global media has also been expressed by scholars within the political economy tradition who claim that global media are in fact better described as Western or American media, and only contribute to maintaining Western dominance (e.g. Herman & McChesney, 1997). Some authors are critical of the very idea of globalization, of the way the concept has developed

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<sup>1</sup> The term “transnational” is here used to describe events, technology, processes, connections, etc. which transcend nation-state borders but do not necessarily encompass the entire globe (Hannerz, 1996).

and been used in the social sciences (e.g. Calhoun, 2007; Sparks 2007a, 2007b). Thus, within the field of global media studies there is an ongoing conflict between the “globalists,” proponents of the fluidity argument, and the “sceptics,” who pursue the stability argument (Cottle 2009: 30f).

Nonetheless, these two positions – their obviously conflicting views notwithstanding – have in common one fundamental and largely taken-for-granted assumption about global media: global media are interpreted as media networks or technology whose nature is global (or at least transnational) in terms of geographic reach. I would propose, however, that having global reach is not a necessary condition of global media. From a discourse theoretical perspective, an emergent trajectory of the research field (Cottle, 2009), “global” is instead understood as a discursive feature. From this point of view it could be argued that global media cannot be reduced to transnational media networks; a global discourse might develop in any kind of media, be it local, national, or transnational, as well as in any kind of media content – local, domestic, or foreign (Berglez, 2008; Olausson, 2010). Any medium might, in fact, be labeled “global” if it provides its audiences with a global interpretative framework. Thus, *the argument put forward in this chapter is that the view on global media as transnational media networks and technology needs to be supplemented with a discourse theoretical approach, which also includes national media and takes the very knowledge production of the global into consideration.*

I will develop this position first by examining the arguments of the line of research that equates global media with transnational media networks, including its contradictory arguments about the ability of these networks to contribute to or be part of globalization processes. Following this, the discourse perspective will be introduced and exemplified with some empirical examples from a study on the emergence of a transnational (European) identity in national news reporting on global climate change (Olausson, 2010). The chapter ends with a discussion in which the discourse theoretical approach is put in relation to broader issues of cultural and political transformation, conclusions are drawn about the media’s relationship to globalization processes, and suggestions are made for an integral explanation of global media.

By necessity, the two perspectives on global media are outlined here with rather broad strokes and the presentation might be somewhat lacking in detail and precision. This is the price to be paid when trying to squeeze the complexity of a research field into rather rigid “boxes.” Nonetheless, this categorization will hopefully elucidate the argument that the established understanding of global media as media of transnational reach needs to be complemented with a discourse approach that also includes national media if we want to achieve an integral explanation of global media.

## **2. Global media as transnational media networks**

Cross-border communication technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, and satellites have contributed to the deterritorialization of space over the last decades, and transnational media networks and news services such as CNN, BBC World News, FoxNews, and Al-Jazeera have entered and transformed the media landscape. In a dialectic fashion, these media are believed both to constitute and to be constituted by globalization, transforming understandings of time and space (Chalaby, 2003; Thompson, 1995). Due to their deterritorialized nature, diverse audiences, and independence of any national loyalties, arguments about their ability to loosen up distinctions between domestic and foreign have been pursued:

“The cross-border coverage of transnational television networks, their multinational audience and international production operations tear apart the relationship between place and television and challenge the traditional relationship between broadcasting and the nation-state.” (Chalaby, 2003: 457)

Global broadcasting corporations not only provide people with a better understanding of global politics (Chalaby, 2003), they also offer new journalistic styles and formats able to transgress the nation-state outlook and, in a dialectic relationship with national news angles, give rise to new horizons for political identity and citizenship (Volkmer, 2003). Accordingly, transnational media have been attributed the potential to constitute a global, or at least a transnational, public sphere (Chalaby, 2003; Volkmer, 2003).

The idea that transnational media networks are able to move beyond the nation-state paradigm has, however, not escaped criticism. Hafez (2007) argues that there is not enough empirical evidence of a media system that could accurately be described as “global” in the sense of enhancing the possibilities of a global public sphere. On the contrary, the majority of empirical evidence points in the direction of reinforced stability of the nation-state paradigm. Information and news may be transnational in character, but the media in fact still are, to a considerable extent, local and national phenomena. In times of war, Western propaganda is also present in transnational media, as are polarizing perspectives of “us” and “them” and stereotypical depictions of the “other” (Hafez, 2007; Thussu, 2003):

“Today’s international exchanges of images and information, it seems, are no guarantee for global intertextuality in news, for growing awareness of ‘the other’s’ stories and perspectives, and for an increased complexity of world views in the mass media and beyond.” (Hafez, 2009: 329)

Even though CNN, as the topical case in point, under regular circumstances does contribute various “global” perspectives and viewpoints, it is extremely sensitive to American patriotism and displays bias in times of military conflicts in which the US is involved, such as the 2003 Iraq war (Hafez, 2009). Not even the communication technology most associated with cross-border communication, the internet, has according to Hafez (2007) proved to fulfil this expectation. Most people use this technology locally – to communicate with people in their nearby surroundings – not to engage in cultural interaction across nation-state borders. Furthermore the necessary technological means are far from being globally diffused; “no electricity, no internet,” as was pointed out by Sparks (2007b: 152). The nation-state paradigm is, according to this view, as powerful as ever before and has, in several respects, even gained in importance. Hafez (2007) illustratively labels this viewpoint in the field of global media studies “the myth of media globalization,” and Sparks (2007a) dismisses the entire theoretical framework of globalization arguing that current developments are better explained as part of the continuing capitalist and imperialist expansion (cf. Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001).

The scepticism surrounding global media is far from new. The well-established field of international communication, based on the political economy tradition, has a long history of persistently arguing that global media are in fact best described as Western (or American) media, at most of global scope (e.g. Herman & McChesney, 1997; Schiller, 1993). The central argument of these scholars is that escalating media conglomeration has led to a notable Western (American) bias both in terms of ownership and with regard to the distribution of media products. The media achieve their global characteristics as a result of purchases made by a small number of Western-, predominantly US-based multinational media giants, who distribute their products – permeated with neoliberal values and Western lifestyles – all

over the globe. Even the “glocalization” that takes place when cultural products are tailored to fit a specific local market is viewed as a commercial strategy and as such nothing more than yet another sign of cultural imperialism (Sparks, 2007b). The rise of competing non-western media networks such as Al-Jazeera notwithstanding, the westernizing tendencies of global media have not been eliminated since the power of western, and particularly US-dominated media networks such as CNN, is not only restricted to their own large-scale activities; they set the agenda also for other networks (Thussu, 2003).

Thus, claims about cultural imperialism and cultural homogenization have been made, and warnings have been issued about the democratic dangers that surface when it is no longer possible to hold media institutions accountable to political regulation at the nation-state level. The prospects for democracy do not seem any brighter if we add the argument that active citizens, due to the commercial logic of global media, over time transform into pure consumers in Western-dominated markets (e.g. Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Herman & McChesney, 1997). The consequences of the ravages of seemingly global media, it is alleged, are harmful both to indigenous cultures and to democracy. In this fashion global media counteract rather than promote a global public sphere, and contribute to the maintenance and stability of Western (US) dominance.

In this research tradition, media conglomeration, concentration, and commercialization have functioned as the analytical point of departure – restricting the interest to the shape and structure of transnational media institutions – and claims about media effects have been made without much analytical attention being paid to the actual reception and use among locally situated audiences. As a counterbalance to this macro-perspective, the research field of cultural studies has instead focused on the micro-dimension of global media (e.g. Barker, 1999; Crane 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). Instead of viewing the impacts of global media as a one-way process that completely erases local cultures, scholars within this research tradition emphasize processes of cultural “creolization” (Hannerz, 1996) or “hybridization,” i.e. the creation of completely new cultural expressions in the encounter between different cultural forms:

“Most forms of culture in the world today are, to varying extents, *hybrid cultures* in which different values, beliefs and practices have become deeply entwined.” (Thompson, 1995: 170, emphasis in original)

The idea of the “active audience,” quite capable of negotiating and opposing media information, has been a guiding principle in cultural studies. Suggestions have even been made (though not uncontested) that the opportunities to “pick and choose” cultural forms due to the rapid development of communication technologies and the creative hybridization that follows, will most likely lead to new and improved conditions for global dialogue (Lull, 2007). Thus, cultural studies have to a considerable extent problematized the idea of the homogenizing effects of global media and questioned the cultural imperialism thesis of the international communication field.

The perspectives accounted for above are fairly well established in the research field of global media. The main arguments of international communication and of cultural studies respectively are frequently discussed in the literature (e.g. Rantanen, 2005), as are the “globalist” and the “sceptic” perspectives (e.g. Cottle, 2009). Despite their conflicting opinions when it comes to the media’s relation to globalization, the “globalists” and the “sceptics” share at least one basic viewpoint on global media, namely that the proper objects of study first and foremost are those media whose global nature is defined in terms of geographic reach. The discourse perspective that will now be discussed takes a somewhat different stance towards this assumption.



### 3. Global media as global discourse

The discourse approach to global media proposed here does not direct specific attention to the geographic reach of the media, but focuses primarily on the very *epistemology of the global* (Berglez, 2008). As pointed out by Cottle (2009: 28) in his discussion of the principle paradigms structuring the field of global media studies, it is necessary to go beyond the paradigms of “global dominance” and “global public sphere,” since these approaches to global media fail to explain how issues such as crises of different kinds are mediated and constituted in practice and how they, through their formation in the news media, achieve their “global” characteristics:

“Global crises are principally constituted *epistemologically* as ‘global crises’ through the news media where most of us get to know about them and where they are visualized, narrativized, publicly defended and sometimes challenged and contested.” (Cottle, 2009: 165, emphasis in original)

Admittedly, local or national crises, such as 9/11, the 2010 flooding in Haiti, or the 2011 Egyptian revolution, need the connectivity that a cross-border communication infrastructure provides in order to become known, more or less simultaneously, to people around the globe. But, to achieve their global features – to become *global* crises, involving people and generating action across the world – they are entirely dependent on discursive constructions of them as such.

Extending this line of argument, when studying the production of knowledge about the global it is necessary to acknowledge national media as equally important objects of study as any media of transnational reach. As Robertson (2008) argues, the issue of media globalization is an empirical question, and the assumption of most authors that global broadcasters are, or at least should be, more inclined to produce global outlooks than national broadcasters, must be empirically demonstrated rather than axiomatically asserted. In the debate on global media, however, national media, which doubtlessly still are the media that most people turn to, are most often dismissed as not significant knowledge producers concerning the global due to their inclination to depict the world according to nation-state logic (Altmeyden, 2010; Hafez, 2007, 2009). This logic saturates much of their contents, not least in the form of what Billig (1995) terms “banal nationalism,” a national mode of reporting which makes the world orbit around the nation-state, and in terms of taken-for-granted conceptions of the world as constituted by self-governing national “islands” rather than being a complex transnational network (Berglez & Olausson, 2011). In national media the domestic and foreign worlds are, by tradition, separated, and the nation-state becomes disconnected from the rest of the world (Berglez, 2007). At best, relations between the domestic and foreign are constructed through the domestication of foreign events, i.e. by the addition of a national angle to the story from “outside” in order to make it more relevant to the national audience as it is perceived (Clausen, 2004; Gurevitch et al., 1991; Riegert, 1998).

This tendency of national media to reproduce and maintain nation-state discourse and identity must of course be acknowledged. However, the national outlook should not be viewed as totally precluding other, transnational or global outlooks on the world. As suggested by Volkmer (2003), national media are to an increasing extent influenced by transnational media style and formats. Furthermore, and even more importantly, due to the globalization of risks such as climate change, and conflicts such as transnational terrorism or the Global War on Terror (as labeled by George W. Bush), national discourse is constantly (and perhaps to an increasing extent) challenged by transnational or global discourses that

strive for the hegemonic position (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). It is thus not a question of *either* national *or* global discourse but *both-and*, with national and local views functioning in interaction with transnational or global outlooks (Beck, 2006).

In a similar fashion, Hjarvard (2001) suggests that the possible emergence of a global public sphere should be viewed in terms of *both-and*; the transnational communicative space that has come into existence through the development of transnational media should be seen as a supplement to national public spheres. The globalizing tendencies of politics, economics, and culture have put the national public sphere under constant pressure, as has the increasing connectivity with other national public spheres. This will ultimately lead to what Hjarvard labels a "global reflexivity," since fewer and fewer topics can be dealt with without including information from "outside." In this way, national public spheres will gradually become deterritorialized through the "increased presence of global *connections* within the national framework" (Hjarvard 2001: 24, emphasis added). Like Hjarvard, Cottle (2009) emphasizes the media's ability to provide...

"...a transnational and global perspective on a problem that both migrates across and transcends national frames of reference or explanation, exposing international *interconnections*, contextualizing motives and exploring both the scope of the problem and its human consequences." (Cottle 2009: 100, emphasis added)

The issue of whether or not the media are capable of displaying global or transnational connections is pivotal to the discourse approach to global media suggested here. Global discourse in the news media is, as argued by Berglez (2008), characterized by the depiction of connections – including antagonistic ones – between people, processes, events, and phenomena at the local, national, transnational, and global levels. This focus on interconnections between various geopolitical scales makes the global news style quite different from the traditional foreign news style, which primarily reports from one nation to another without displaying any connections between the two (Berglez, 2008). If a global discourse is present, the most local (in terms of geography) of all media might be labeled "global" (in terms of discourse), providing a global interpretative framework by linking national and transnational identities or positioning a local event in a global context or vice versa.

Thus, the decisive criterion of global media, from a discourse theoretical perspective, is the ability to display complex and often subtle connections between various geopolitical scales. These relations do not have to be of the "objective" or realist kind to be acknowledged as building blocks of a global discourse. More precisely, a global discourse does not have to comprise "real" relations of causality, motives, and interconnections, for instance that it is the carbon dioxide emissions of the First World that is the cause of the extreme droughts in the Third World. The connections displayed in media discourse could also be of a purely constructivist nature, i.e. be the "creations" of media logic itself. The inherent characteristics of news media, such as their preference for dramatic and emotionally charged reporting (perhaps occasionally also supplemented with the journalist's deliberate intent to incite action among citizens) sometimes lead to the emergence of a global discourse that involves interconnections between people across vast distances.

A telling example of this kind of global discourse, building on pure constructivist connections, is the "globalization of emotions" (Cottle, 2009: 99) that the media have engaged in over the last decades in relation to human suffering caused by wars or natural disasters. As noted by Nohrstedt (2009, cf. Shaw, 1996), there has been an increasing tendency in the news media to display the "true face" of war, i.e. the casualties and human

suffering it causes, something which could be viewed as an invitation to audiences around the world to unite in compassionate responses. In her seminal work on “the spectatorship of suffering” Chouliaraki (2006: 24) discusses on the one hand how the various routines of the media, such as almost endless repetition, in all probability create distance between the audience and the distant sufferers, and on the other hand how the media are capable also of establishing an “imaginary ‘we’ that brings all spectators together in the act of watching.” With the purpose of exploring how distant suffering is depicted in television news, and building on Boltanski’s (1999) theories on the topic, she distinguishes between the following three different modes of representation, each of which invites the viewers to respond to the suffering observed on the television screen in a specific way: empathy, denunciation, and contemplation. Another example, which builds on the theories of Boltanski (1999), is Robertson’s (2008) exploration of the news reporting on the 2004 Asian tsunami. In searching for a global, or cosmopolitan, outlook deriving from compassion for and empathy with the sufferers, she examines five nationally-based European broadcasters and compares them with three European channels broadcasting to global audiences. Interestingly enough, the results show that a global discourse, in terms of constructions of “togetherness,” could be found on all the channels. It was far from the case that transnational broadcasters contribute more global outlooks than the national channels; in one case a transnational broadcaster even provided a less global outlook – a finding which indisputably strengthens the argument of including national media when exploring global discourse.

As Cottle (2009) points out, media research has been focused on examining how news content “positions” the audience in relation to distant suffering; there has been a lack of empirical studies that show how the “discourse of global compassion” (Höijer, 2004) in the news media actually is received and handled by the audience. Höijer (2004), however, has demonstrated that the emotionally charged portrayal of human suffering in the news tends to trigger a variety of complex responses among the audience, and her findings challenge the notion of a pronounced compassion fatigue among people in general (Moeller, 1999). Audience research has also shown that the news reporting on distant suffering has the potential to trigger transnational identification with distant sufferers, if not for more than a moment (Olausson, 2005; Olausson & Höijer, 2010). These processes of identification are characterized by the empathetic capacity for “feeling oneself in one’s fellow man” (Boltanski, 1999: 92).

The global discourse built on compassion in the news media is composed – not always but in many cases – of pure constructivist connections. There are no “real” relations between the sufferers and the spectators beyond those “created” in news discourse, which highlights the constitutive role of the media in the process of globalization. Global media are not only the products of a globalized economy and technology, or the intermediaries of pre-existing events, processes, or connections already shaped by globalization, but are to a considerable extent also contributors to the expansion of transnational identifications and connections (cf. Volkmer, 2008a).

Thus, events or processes in various parts of the world, be they natural disasters, environmental hazards or wars, take global shape not only, or even primarily, in terms of worldwide impacts or as effects of the technological reach of transnational media, but also, and most essentially in this context, in terms of their formation in the news media where people, places, and objects are linked more closely together (cf. Cottle, 2009). This discursive demonstration or “creation” of transnational connections takes place not least in national media, their inclination to apply national angles and reinforce national identity notwithstanding.



When arguing in favor of the inclusion of national media in the search for a global discourse, it is necessary to address the question of “methodological nationalism,” raised by Beck (2006). Not only the media but also social research has been criticized as being caught in a nation-state logic in ways that do not correspond to the globalizing trends of late-modern society. However, the determining cause of methodological nationalism is not the study of national media per se; this fallacy rather comes into existence when the analysis is conducted through a national lens, and this could be the case whether the object of study is national or transnational in character. Or, to put it differently, when examined through a “national prism” both national and transnational media might take on national features, just as both national and transnational media might assume global features when examined through a “transnational prism” (Cottle 2009: 168). Indeed, the nation-state logic still permeates national news media but with a discourse theoretical approach and the analytical application of a “transnational prism” it is possible to detect at least embryonic forms of transnational or global connections also in national media, a suggestion that will be empirically illustrated below.

### 3.1 The question of a European public sphere and identity

Much research on the possible emergence of a European public sphere and a European identity has been carried out over the last years. Volkmer (2008b: 231), as an example of an “optimistic” view on this, argues that advances in satellite technology have created, if not a public sphere in the traditional sense, at least “a platform for new, interesting flows of trans-European communication.” However, there are also quite a few voices that are less hopeful regarding the possibility of a European public sphere. Sparks (2007a, 2007b) concludes that despite the development of supra-national political bodies such as the EU, there is as yet no sign of a corresponding media system; most media remain confined within the borders of the nation-state. This is commonly used by authors in the field as an argument against the possible development of a European public sphere: since there is no functioning European media system, the prospects of a European public sphere are rather discouraging. And, additionally, since the national realm has considerable power as *the* point of reference for the making of identity, the chances of creating a common European “us” are minute. The only viable way to enhance political interest at the EU-level among citizens and to instill a sense of European belonging is for national news media to present news about the political institutions of the EU: EU policy-making, EU-level actors, EU politics, etc. The more frequently EU topics appear in various national media, the better the breeding-ground for a sense of community and for the development of “Europeanized national public spheres,” it has been argued. Accordingly, EU topics in national media have been measured quantitatively - the more the EU topics, the more the transnationalization, or Europeanization, of national news media, it has been assumed (e.g. D’Haenens, 2005; De Vreese, 2007; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Machill et al., 2006).

I would argue, first, that the sheer presence of EU topics in national news media does not automatically lead to the emergence of a transnational discourse. Following the argumentation above, in order for EU topics in national media to contribute transnational outlooks and not traditional “foreign” ones, they have to be, in one way or another, discursively *connected* to local and/or national conditions. These connections should not be interpreted in terms of mere domestications of EU topics (what will happen with Swedish moist snuff when the EU legislates against it?), which rather reproduce national outlooks (Sweden *and* the EU), but through the discursive *intermingling* of EU and national horizons, for instance the forging of a common European “us,” as in the example presented below

(Sweden *in* the EU). Secondly, it is not only EU news in national media (whether intertwined with national horizons or not), that might contribute to a sense of EU belonging. Instead, such topics tend to impose themselves on national media from above as “Europeanization projects” (Lauristin, 2007). I would suggest that the everyday reporting of events or phenomena of transnational scope is just as relevant an object of study since such events, due to their borderless character, have the potential to trigger discursive transformation. According to Beck (2006), it is transnationalized threats and the suffering they cause that by necessity pave the way for a global outlook, since traditional dichotomies such as internal and external, national and international, and us and them lose their validity when confronted with these kinds of dangers (cf. Nohrstedt, 2010); a new cosmopolitanism becomes essential in order to survive in “world risk society” (Beck, 2009). The transnationalization of risks and crises such as climate change, terrorism, and financial crises pushes even national media – slowly and unsteadily perhaps, and most likely not at the same pace everywhere, yet nevertheless – in the direction of transnational modes of reporting. These transnational outlooks could well be in embryonic stages, not entirely explicit in nature, but instead common-sensical and “banal” in the words of Billig (1995), and deeply embedded and naturalized in the everyday language of news. This means that they are difficult to capture empirically without the aid of sensitive discourse analytical tools (Olausson, 2010; cf. Berglez & Olausson, 2011).

Some authors (e.g. Schlesinger, 2008) dismiss the entire notion of a European identity and argue that there are too many obstacles, such as the lack of a common language, history, and worldview, for such an identity to evolve. However, it is not very productive to cling to this “cultural” conception of identity, which can only lead to the discouraging conclusion that a European identity is a rather unachievable project. Instead, identity could be treated in a more modest way which does not demand cultural homogeneity; from such a perspective, identity concerns the *identification with a political “us,”* in relation to some given events, phenomena, or issues more than others (Mouffe, 1995, 2005). Thus, European identity could simply be treated as, in the words of Habermas and Derrida (2003: 293), “a feeling of common political belonging” as is illustrated by the empirical example presented next.

Elsewhere (Olausson, 2010), I have shown how the embryo of a European political identity is being forged in Swedish news reporting on climate change. In the construction of this transnational outlook, the discursive transcendence of national identity is pivotal and occurs when the national and the transnational become so closely entwined that they merge into a common “us.” Admittedly, this study also confirms the common conclusion of media research that national identity holds a hegemonic position in national news media. In this case, it is constantly reproduced through, for instance, elements of national self-glorification such as “*If any country can manage this, Sweden can,*” and “*Sweden is one of the countries that have succeeded best.*” The national outlook is also nourished through domestications of the climate issue, for example when maps of Sweden recurrently fade in and out between images of flooded areas and other alleged consequences of the changing climate on the television screen.

However, it is also evident that the national mode of reporting does not entirely preclude the emergence of transnational outlooks. As a matter of fact, it seems as if national identity functions as a necessary anchoring mechanism in the construction of a common European “us” which momentarily dissolves the distinction between the national and the transnational. Sweden and the EU are on the one hand mentioned in the news reporting as two separate entities, but on the other hand they are also closely tied to each other in the sense of their all being part of the group of “climate heroes.” In contrast to the “climate

villain," the USA, "we," the EU, take climate change seriously and make earnest efforts to mitigate it, the message reads. The quotation from the broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter* "Perhaps it is not unknown to us in Sweden and Europe that greenhouse gas emissions cause great changes in the world climate" implies how national identity is transcended and incorporated into a European identity, how a common "us" is established.

Thus, the already established and naturalized national outlook becomes a means to introduce a transnational counterpart, which is not yet an integral part of everyday thinking and discourse. In the news program, *Rapport*, produced by the Swedish public service broadcaster, SVT, a sense of European community in relation to the climate issue takes shape through an intriguing blend of national and transnational identity positions. In the initial phrase of the reporter's statement a "we" that transcends the national and includes the European sphere is constructed: "Exactly the way we do things within the EU..." However, when the reporter continues, this European "we" becomes integrated within the national: "...says our Swedish Minister for the Environment," with "our" here referring to the national community.

The purpose of these brief empirical examples of the construction of a European political identity is to demonstrate that national and transnational outlooks are not engaged in discursive struggles where the destruction of one or the other is the inevitable outcome (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). As Sparks (2007a: 150) suggests, the local, national, and global exist alongside each other in news discourse and tensions do arise between them, but "the evidence does not support the contention that one is being undermined by the other two." I would even go so far as to claim that they in fact are highly *dependent* on each other: in order for less established transnational outlooks to become naturalized and integrated in everyday thinking and discourse, they need to become anchored within the familiar and established national horizon (Olausson & Höijer, 2010). Thus, there is reason to suppose that national and transnational discourses work interactively and that they mutually (re)construct each other (cf. Delanty, 2000; Olausson, 2007).

#### 4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have put forth the argument that the research field of global media needs to acknowledge not only the trans-boundary nature of media technology but to a greater extent the very knowledge production of the global that takes place not least in national media. When the given assumptions about what exactly the "global" in "global media" refers to are changed from being a matter of geographic reach to becoming a discursive feature, then it is possible to discover transnational and even global "embryos" in several as yet relatively unexplored media contexts, as has been shown (cf. Berglez, 2008).

As noted by Volkmer (2003), there is still a remarkable focus on the cultural impact of new communication technologies in the sociological debate on globalization. Cultural transformation has also been a dominating issue, not least in the disagreements between the fields of international communication and cultural studies over the cultural imperialism thesis. Hafez (2007) for his part, regards absence of cultural transformation generated by cross-border communication as a sign that a truly global media does not exist. Before there is reason to talk about global media it must be clarified "whether receiving cultures are changed by transmitting cultures in the process of cross-border communication through the Internet, satellite broadcasting, international broadcasting or through media imports and exports" (Hafez, 2007: 14). Thus, it seems that without the evidence of cultural transformation generated by cross-border communication, the notion of global media remains utopian.

It is true that the discourse perspective on global media, as proposed here, says little about cross-border communication and cultural transformation, but it does not totally exclude these aspects. In particular, this holds true if we go beyond the traditional technology platforms of the news media – newspapers, radio, and television – and widen the focus of research to include web-based forms of news reporting. The digital versions of newspapers, for instance, offer links to other websites around the world, hyperlinks which enable user interaction, etc. The digitalization of (national) news allows, to a greater extent than previous technologies, for cross-border communication and perhaps also cultural transformation (Berglez, 2011; Heinrich, 2008). But, what is deemed even more important here is *political* transformation – how the nation-state logic of political identity loosens up, is transgressed, and transforms into transnational political identities in certain contexts, as in the example above of the discursive construction of EU-identity in relation to climate change. I would argue that the discourse perspective contributes knowledge of a fundamental ingredient, both in a global public sphere and in what Berglez (forthcoming) describes as a global political culture, namely how and under what circumstances the media – national or transnational – provide their audiences with a global interpretative framework capable of including politically relevant interconnections between various geopolitical scales (cf. Volkmer, 2003).

A central aspect of this line of reasoning is the idea of late modernity being characterized by contingency in every respect, which means that everything that exists right now could take quite a different form in another situation and context (Mouffe, 1995). The contingent character of today implies that it is not reasonable to expect the media, be they national or transnational, to produce global knowledge all the time – the reporting on certain objects or phenomena, such as global risks, is probably more inclined to assume global characteristics than the reporting on local events such as a traffic accident. But it is also true that the media do not reproduce the nation-state logic throughout their reporting. And the same goes for the media audience; our national identity positions are, in all probability, activated in relation to quite a few of the events and phenomena reported in the media, but in certain cases and under certain circumstances, possibly in relation to distant suffering or global risks such as climate change, we accept global outlooks provided by the media and take on transnational identities, if not for more than a brief moment (e.g. Olausson, 2007, forthcoming). The national and global, as shown, are not mutually exclusive, but reinforce and reconstruct one another. Thus, it is rather unproductive to understand the media as contributing to *either* the stability of the nation-state *or* the fluidity of globalization, since they most likely contribute to *both* of these conditions depending on context and circumstances, and in a dialectic fashion. Stability and fluidity are two sides of the same coin.

The discourse approach to global media studies, for which I argue in the present chapter, is certainly not the perspective that provides us with the only “correct” version of reality. However, this perspective is currently somewhat obscured by the dominant view on global media as consisting of transnational media networks and technologies, and there is reason to draw attention to the discursive aspect of global media, which is something qualitatively different from technological reach. Nonetheless, I would like to bring this chapter to a close by emphasizing the fruitfulness of there being a variety of theoretical perspectives that pose different kinds of questions about global media and together enrich the research field. Considering their, in all essentials, complementary nature, the diversity of theoretical perspectives and approaches is indispensable for an integral explanation of global media.



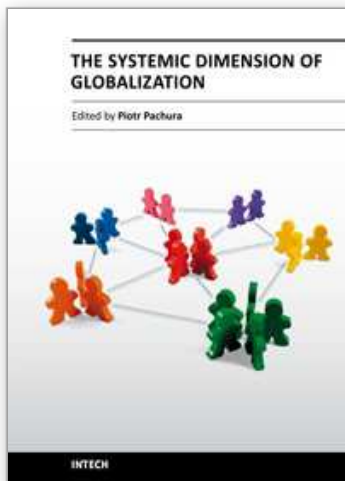
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## **The Systemic Dimension of Globalization**

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