Time and the Nation: Conceptualizing the Temporal Effects of a Global Media System

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Abstract

The vast expansion of the electronic media—and especially the rapid growth of digital media—in the last decades have brought about vast changes in the ways people interact and the spaces they inhabit. However, this article argues that in a mediated world, where technology has for all practicality conquered space, the temporal dimension, that is, communication across time, is all too often overlooked. As more and more scholarship on globalization looks at ways in which digital media are blurring the local and the distant, the public and the private, the 'here' and the 'there' of social interaction, I make a case for the importance of investigating the temporal dimension of communication in the construction, development and maintenance of societies.

As this article argues, despite the importance an understanding of time has played in theories about cultural and social development, little work has been undertaken by media and communication scholars to investigate ways that the electronic and digital media articulate a community's relation to the past. Hence, this article brings together a varied body of literature from diverse fields of inquiry that have focused on different aspects of these issues. While many of these works have often been cited, the article does a rereading in order to excavate some of their central, yet overlooked, ideas in an attempt to construct a framework for understanding the temporal arrangement of communication in society and the nature of the media's role in these arrangements.

Keywords

Globalization, nation, memory, time, temporality

Introduction

While the relationship between the media, the nation and globalization has been a central concern for media theorists for more than two decades, the majority of work undertaken has by-and-far dealt with changing social structures in terms of the effects on national and transnational space. Most of the concepts that have developed thus far, for example, global flows, global scapes, transnational media systems, the solvency and structuring of national borders, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the local verses the global, glocalization and the global village, all work in terms of metaphors of space. With such a spatial bias, one key aspect of the nation that many theorists have overlooked while investigating the media's relation to the nation and globalization is the way in which the nation has been organized along temporal arrangements as well.

This article examines an important element that has been missing from much of the work dealing with the changing relationship between media and nation, in terms of globalization; that is, the way in which narratives about the past acts as crucial link to the maintenance of social structures in the present. This article brings together a varied body of literature from diverse fields of inquiry that have focused on different aspects of these issues. While many of these works have been often cited in works on media and globalization, this article excavates some of their central, yet overlooked ideas, in an attempt to construct a framework for understanding the temporal arrangement of the nation, and the nature of the media's role in these arrangements.

If we are to understand the developments of transnational media in a specific national context, we must take into consideration the specificities of historical

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developments in that society. At the same time, we must develop a more thorough and theoretically grounded understanding of globalization that moves us beyond ideas about the local and the global and shifts our focus from media systems, texts and audiences to more subtle processes of modernity in which the media are enmeshed.

Media and Globalization

We have moved far beyond the traditional gulf that once existed between the political economists of global media systems (for example, Herman & McChesney, 1997; Mattelart, 1979, 2000; Schiller, 1989) and those emphasizing the cultural autonomy of local individuals (for example, Ang, 1985; Liebes & Katz, 1990; Lull, 1995). Major works by the likes of Golding and Harris (1997), Couldry et al. (2000) and Curran and Park, (2000) have provided media theorists with an understanding for the need to break down the boundaries between perspectives. Marwin Kraidy's (1999) work on the interaction of Lebanese youth with both transnational and locally produced cultural products, for example, borrows the term 'glocalization' from the anthropologist Roland Robertson (1990), in order to investigate the ways in which the global and the local interact to form hybrid spaces of cultural activity. He looked at both the structural changes in local and transnational media, which have brought about changes to the Lebanese cultural system, as well as the individual reactions to these changes. Such inquiry reminds us that while taking into consideration the systematic changes in the global media environment, it is the local contingencies of globalization that need be illuminated. However, while such a perspective helped us move beyond the bifurcation of global structures and local agency, it still places too much emphasis on the idea of locality as a geographic space of cultural production. It is precisely this understanding of the relationship between the media, individuals and the nation that needs to be investigated in order to reframe the way we see the relationship between the media and the nation.

An Alternative Framework: Media and Modernity

Such a reframing of issues concerning culture, communication and globalization suggests that rather than focusing on the issues associated with the transnational flow of media systems per se, or the mediated products circulated within them, we might best understand the media's role in processes of globalization within a larger framework that has looked at the spread of a global cultural modernity (Appadurai, 1997; Harvey, 1990; Tomlinson, 1991, 1999). For media studies, work undertaken in this realm has provided a rich understanding of the role of the media in processes of globalization.

A starting point for media and cultural theorists might be to reinvestigate Arjun Appadurai's (1997) insightful understanding of globalization as a project of constructing a diverse array of social imaginaries. As he suggested, the transnational flows of finances, people, ideas, images and technologies interact in different ways in different places, creating a disjunctured world, in which these global flows are used as the building blocks to imagine and reimagine the world. Such a perspective demands that we view the global and the local as existing in tandem, as the local is seen as being constructed out of these global flows. However, the local for Appadurai is not simply a spatial metaphor about which he makes assumptions. Hence, we can take a closer look at Appadurai's sophisticated understanding of locality in order to explore the types of concepts with which we media theorists must begin to grapple.

In *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai (1997) devotes a chapter to the idea of locality and the changing relationships upon which society is based. Appadurai understands locality not in terms of space, but as a relational formation. As he asserts, locality is 'constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts' (Appadurai, 1997, p. 178). Appadurai views locality as the practices by which local subjects and their material surroundings are produced, rather than the situated locations in which these processes take shape. In other words, the materiality usually associated with locality is a consequence of, not a condition for, the production of locality. Locality, then, is 'a structure of feeling that is produced by particular forms of intentional activity' (Appadurai, 1997, p. 182).

This is not to say that the space in which locality is produced is no longer important. As Appadurai suggests; local subjects produce contexts in the form of neighbourhoods (understood as a locale, a place, a site), as a way of recognizing and organizing social life. If the neighbourhood has been the context in which locality was produced, then as Appadurai suggests, the production of locality faces extraordinary challenges, as the nation-state, global flows

of immigration and electronic media compete. Appadurai's understanding of locality suggests that we need to think about social formations and categories in innovative ways. While the local is surely still produced within specific spaces, it should not be confused with those spaces. This awareness for Appadurai can infuse us with a new way of looking at issues of globalization and the nation. If the nation is no longer simply thought of in terms of geo-political borders and the terrain but rather as the sum total of a myriad of social practices taking place, then the complexity of the nation as a social, cultural and political form can be appreciated.

Such an understanding moves us away from the spatial and institutional analyses that much work on globalization has undertaken. We might want to reconsider the work of Anthony Giddens (1990) and John Tomlinson (1999), who have suggested that 'globalization', as a consequence of modernity, actually involves a host of social processes by which localities become disembedded from their particularities, becoming enmeshed in institutional form stretching across immense spaces. By taking up Tomlinson's idea of complex connectivity, where modern social life is experienced in networks that are interconnected and interdependent, we can better illuminate the ways in which cultural producers in specific spaces react to and negotiate meanings—sometimes without their awareness—in such a rapidly changing environment. Such a framework allows us to move away from tracing the linkages between what has been isolated as separate moments of the local or the global, the 'here' and the 'there'. What is most interesting about this perspective is that it takes into account that globalization is not simply understood in terms of the spread of modern institutions (like the media) on a global scale, but rather the deeper transformations of the way in which life is experienced. Ultimately, as both Giddens and Tomlinson have suggested, this experience is related to the way in which time and space are perceived and organized (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 48).

Space, Time and Globalization

While media scholars have been very interested in the ramifications of technology on the construction of social spaces (on the local, national and transnational levels), the question as to the problematic of time when it is freed from the burden of space, has been largely overlooked. We might look to theorists who have investigated this relationship between time and space, as they relate to globalization, the

nation and cultural reproduction in order to come to terms with this neglect.

By examining the structural transformations of a culture, Tomlinson (1999) reminds communication researchers that globalization is not simply a new development, but a process that has been historically grounded in the very structures of modernization. As Anthony Giddens (1990) has suggested, these transformations are grounded in the changing relationships between time and space that began at the end of the middle ages. As he has suggested, while premodern time was dependent on place, that is, the local, technological developments in transportation, together with those that quantified and standardized time, emancipated time from the particularities of the local. To the same degree, categories of time themselves were transformed and transforming. If time became a constant, a standard to which people at great distances could relate in the same way, then individuals and groups across space would come to share a common understanding of time. As such, the coordination of time led to the control of space. With this time–space distanciation, social coordination could move from a local context to the national and global contexts, transforming the structures of lived experience for individuals and groups.

These developments in time–space distanciation, led to three conditions, which for Giddens, are crucial to modernity. The first condition is what Giddens has called the disembedding of the local, that is, the coordination of social relations across time and space. Hence, local habits and practices are imbued with forces from a distance. The second condition is the development of rationalized organization of social forms across time and space, connecting the local and global in unprecedented ways. The third condition is the development of radical historicity, in which the past is systematically appropriated to help shape the future. This idea of historicity is linked to Giddens' emphasis on the reflexivity of knowledge, by which he means the ways we come to know the world and act upon it. If the past was once an inseparable part of the present, with modernity, it becomes a form of knowledge that enables us to work on the world. As will be explored further below, this aspect of historicity has played an important role in the maintenance of social systems, including the nation-state.

Giddens argues that what we are witnessing in contemporary society is not a break with modernity, but rather, the radicalization of modernity, as the logic of modernity (including its globalizing dynamic, reflexivity of knowledge, increased rationalization and trust in abstract expert systems) comes into its own. The overwhelming nature of

change, which constantly promises a better future in comparison to the past, to the detriment of the present, is a condition brought about by the self-clarification of modern thought. Hence, the disequilibrium felt as a result of globalization and the dislocation of all modern social formations is actually embedded in the very nature of the modern structures put them in place.

Interestingly, a geographer by training can give us further insight into the importance of understanding the constant struggle over temporal arrangement associated with modernity. For David Harvey (1990), the modernist project is one of creative destruction, where one has to destroy in order to create. The consequence of this notion for the modern is that the eternal is predicated upon the ephemeral and the constantly changing. As Harvey suggests; 'Modernism could speak to the eternal only by freezing time and all its fleeting qualities' (p. 21). If the modern project is one that spatializes time, then the post-modern condition (which for Harvey, like Giddens, is an extension of the modern) is one in which the ephemeral quality of time-in-motion is celebrated.

Harvey refers to this collapse of both time and space as 'time–space compression'. He uses the term to indicate that space and time have been so revolutionized that we are forced to alter the way we represent the world to ourselves (p. 240). Harvey traces the source of transformation of space and time to transformations in capitalist modes of production. The shift from a Fordist economy, based on the production of goods, to one of flexible accumulation, based on the production of services and images, has led to the acceleration of turnover time in production, exchange and consumption of goods. If the trend in modernity was to privilege the spatialization of time, as a way to deal with time's fluctuation and change, then this development, Harvey claims, has led to the overcoming of space by time. With this, a sense of continuity, which has always been a condition for the maintenance of identity, has been torn asunder. As time increasingly becomes captured in images (photos, films, television, recordings), it is no longer the past per se that impacts on the present, but the image of the past, which are part of the present. For Harvey, '[t]he collapse of time horizons and the preoccupation with instantaneity have in part arisen through the contemporary emphasis in cultural production on events, spectacles, happenings, and media images' (1990, p. 59).

While Harvey undertakes an insightful analysis of these changes in time and space, he relies on a Marxist/materialist perspective that relates cultural changes to the economic realm of production. As contemporary social theorists have acknowledged, a purely materialistic perspective does not seem to grasp the complexities of the modern world. As an alternative to the purely economic interpretation of the basis for these changes, we might look to Castells (1996), whose prescient theories helps us further develops this idea, arguing that linear, quantified time has been shattered by the mechanisms of instantaneity of the network society. Hence, like Harvey, Castells understands the postmodern condition to be one in which both the eternal and of the ephemeral exist at the same time. However, he maintains that the logic of the economic system is not the principle source of this shift in time; it is rather the dynamics of the global electronic network give us the ability to access signs from any place and any time in order to construct new cultural expressions.

What Castells has called the culture of real virtuality leads to the transformation of time in two forms: simultaneity and timelessness. In the same manner that social events have temporal immediacy, where people across vast spaces share the same information at the same time, technologies allow us to stop time, mix it up, create a 'temporal collage, where not only genres are mixed, but their timing becomes synchronous in a flat horizon, with no beginning, no end, no sequence' (p. 462). With this, history and memory no longer have the sense of succession and a 'chronological rhythm', but become 'arranged in time sequences depending upon the social context of their utilization' (Castells, 1996, p. 462). For Castells, this does neither lead to a relativization of time, nor to a return to myth, but to a more profound cultural transformation based on the ever-present.

Castells reminds us that this timeless time, as he calls it, exits within the virtual spaces of the network, and is juxtaposed to other forms of time, for example, biological time, work time, which structure our experiences and spaces in the world. As time is dissolved by the flow of information across nodes in the network, it encounters the diverse temporalities structured out of older social formations, leading to resistance and conflict between this new timelessness and alternative temporalities tied to space.

The Temporal Rearrangement of the Nation

While much of this work points to the erosion of modern social forms such as the nation, we need to take a closer look at the transformation, rather than the disappearance of the form of the nation, as well as the role of the media in

this transformation. In terms of the media, this could mean that we examine the ways in which media systems interact with and intervene in social, political and cultural processes at the national, subnational and supranational levels. It has become apparent that the nation-state is not simply being replaced by a new global order as some had suggested in the 1990s (Appadurai, 1997; Bauman, 1998), but rather, as Curran and Park (2000) have discovered in their investigation of national and transnational media systems, the nation-state has been a resilient social form across the world. As they claim, despite the developments of global media networks, media formations largely remain a national project for three reasons: much of what people watch is produced on a national level, nation-states are key in shaping media systems, and the nation remains to be a key marker of difference despite developments of transnational identities. Hence, by investigating the transformations of media systems and their effects on cultures, researchers can better map the relationship between the media and changing forms of the nation.

We need to begin (again) with the idea that the nation should not be thought of as an ontological fact, but rather, as Craig Calhoun (1997) has suggested, it should be thought of as an ongoing discursive project that is constantly being presented and contested. In relation to globalization, we might take into consideration what Crofts Wiley (2004) has suggested, that the nation and nationality should be conceptualized as a particular logic among others that organizes economic, political, technological and cultural territories and flows. In what he calls a 'contextualist approach', he questions the ontological status that has been bestowed upon the nation in much work on globalization in the field of communication, and calls for a way of looking at the nation as being constructed out of diverse flows and logics within a given space.

From such a perspective, a media system, then, does not simply correspond with national boundaries, but should be considered as one means by which national narratives, as well as counter-narratives, get circulated. Crofts Wiley asserts that this contextualist view of the nation does not identify the nation as a discrete space in and of itself, but is an attempt to map out the articulation of flows of various scales that give a cultural event or practice its value or effectivity. In other words, we need to assess the ways in which nations are being constructed out of various conflicting and resonant logics and practices.

However, to reiterate another important point that Schlesinger (1987) brought up in his seminal work almost three decades ago, media scholars have too often viewed the nation simply in terms of the geographical space it is thought to encompass rather than understanding the historical, dialectical and dynamic process by which the nation and national identity are constructed and maintained. This error, in part, is a result of the fact that the primary paradigm for understanding the communication process in general has been based on a model of the transportation of messages across space.

As an alternative to this paradigm, James Carey (1989) persuasively argued that an alternative view of communication—one based on a ritual model—is needed. As he advocated, the ritual model '[i]s directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs' (p. 18). While this idea of communication as the representation of shared beliefs has been taken up by those with a culturalist approach to communication and media studies, the important element of the mediation of culture over time that Carey has inserted into this ritual model has gone largely unnoticed.

With Carey's appeal in mind, media scholars need to begin thinking about the media not simply as articulating narratives across a national space, but as an integral part of a larger project by which groups recompose their boundaries and select criteria for belonging. Such a framework links research on the media to a body of literature that has located the temporal structures of the nation. As Shapiro (2000) has argued, while the project of the nation has chiefly been understood in relation to its spatial arrangements, a central concern regarding the nation-state has been the management of temporal ordering. As Shapiro illustrates, 'In official documents, histories and journalistic commentaries and so on, the nation-state is scripted in ways that impose coherence on what is actually a series of fragmentary and arbitrary conditions of historical assemblage' (2000, p. 80). This understanding of the narration of time as being part of the national project provides a new rubric through which we can better understand the changes taking place in contemporary societies.

For instance, while media scholars have widely used Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation as an imagined community, one of the overlooked aspects of Anderson's (1991) often-cited work is his illustration of the way in which the transformation of time was a central contingency for the development of the nation as a social form in its emergence with modernization. According to Anderson, the idea of homogeneous, empty time, in which all members of a social body simultaneously move forward

in linear progression, has led to the ability for individuals to imagine themselves as making up a community. As Anderson indicates, the nation, as a community with deep, horizontal ties among members who will never know most of their fellow members, yet who share a common bond, requires that each citizen imagine that others are doing exactly as he or she does at the same moment. To explicate this matter, he uses the image of a citizen reading the morning news, imagining hundreds, thousands (or millions) of other citizens doing the same thing. For Anderson (1991, p. 188), the national imagination is one in which people think of themselves as living lives parallel in time to other groups.

Anderson's work flushes out this idea of the nation as becoming a historical marker for a population, with the mass media playing a central role in linking its members. As Anderson suggests, '[t]he idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up history)' (1991, p. 26). With modernity, the nation has become a primary means by which people are tied to a shared past. Any discussion of the nation-state, then, forces us to consider the way in which history is implicated in the process of the formation of the nation, for a national historical consciousness has been a key means by which a people imagines itself as a community.

We can, then, take into account what many scholars in other fields have noted, that is, the notion of a shared past has been an important component of the way in which a population identifies with the nation. While some theorists, such as Anthony Smith (1990), have taken a primordialist position, arguing that nations have evolved from primordial elements established in indigenous cultural systems, others, like Gellner (1983) have taken a more constructivist positions toward the nation, contending that nationalism is not the awakening of pre-national cultural elements, but is the fabrication of new social forms, based upon the raw material of pre-national cultural elements. Whether the traditions that sustain national identities are invented (Hobsbawm, 1983), or are extensions of an indigenous pre-national culture, one point of agreement among all theorists is that in the attempt to construct a sense of historical continuity, ideas about the nation have been fashioned within thoroughly modern institutions.

It has been put forward that the state has played an important role in forging a sense of historical continuity and a shared history of the nation, for the claims about the nation's past (through history) has been key to political legitimization of the state. As Craig Calhoun (1997) has indicated, nationalism is an ongoing project that articulates a large-scale categorical identity by which people situate themselves vis-à-vis cultural tradition. Likewise, Wallerstein (2000) has suggested that the past is used by the state as a tool to influence the way citizens think about themselves and to control their actions in the present. It would be amiss to however, too closely connect state mechanisms with the circulation of ideas about the nation, for as Habermas (1995) has indicated, while historically linked, the two are not necessarily coterminous. The concept of the nation was built on ideas about cultural homogeneity, by which democratic forms of citizenship were supposed to operate. Often, historical accounts perpetuated by state institutions, or by elites who support the structures of the state, are contradicted and contested by alternative ways of relating to the past (Trouillot, 1995).

Memory: Moving Beyond History

While development of ideas about the nation and history have been firmly established in a variety of academic fields, over the last decade academic discourse on collective memory also has taken shape, providing an alternative framework for understanding the past (see, for example, Olick & Robbins, 1998; Zelizer, 1995). While memory and history have often been thought of as two different fields of discourse, as the next section will suggest, contemporary thought shows the two are often difficult to distinguish. At the same time, as will be demonstrated, the increase in electronic mediation of the past has radically changed the way in which many have come to think about both history and memory.

Although historians have been invested with the authority to speak about the past in modern times, a number of theorists have questioned the foundational idea that history somehow brings us closer to the truth about the past than other forms of recalling the past. As Paul Ricoeur (1984) has suggested, historiography is one variant of dealing with the transmission of culture across time. As he insists, '[h]istoriography is nothing more than the passage into writing and then to critical rewriting of this primordial constituting of tradition' (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 189). While historiography maintains a critical eye on the representation of the past, like other means of temporal ordering (for example, memory, chronicles and storytelling), history and narrativity are intricately intertwined.

Hence, while questions of history must be addressed when discussing the nation, a number of scholars have attempted to situate the production of history as one aspect (albeit an important one) of a wider sphere of the social production of memory. As The Popular Memory Group (1982) has suggested, the past has largely been produced in two realms: public representation and private memory. According to their perspective, history is constructed in a number of places and institutions in the attempt to represent the way in which the social group on the whole conceives of the past. These institutions include the state (in the form of educational institutions, establishment of national holidays of remembrance), semi-autonomous institutions (for example, museums and record offices), business (for example, book publishers and memorabilia), the mass media which constantly recirculates discourses of the past in framing the present, and in voluntary associations. While each of these sets of institutions present official versions of the past, they are not necessarily in harmony with one another as they are each required to work hard in order for their narratives to resonate with the public.

If history is a form of memory, rather than something radically different from it, we need to begin thinking about the past in new ways, especially as electronic media become such an important part of contemporary society. Such a position moves us away a bit from earlier work on memory, which tended to see memory and history as being polar opposites. Maurice Halbwachs (1980) for instance suggested that while memory is interior, that is, it is a part of our biography and something we live, experience and recall, history is part of our exterior, that is, something that is borrowed from others, only part of us through our imagination. From such a perspective, history is a record of changes and events put into a universal context, while memory is a depository of tradition that unfolds through time and is tied to individuals. This differentiation however is a bit artificial, as narratives of memory mingle with narratives of history, back and forth from the individual to the group.

As Halbwachs (1992) has indicated, although individuals have memories, these memories are necessarily collective, for individuals always remember the past as part of a group. Hence, memories are not simply a retrieval of past events, but a construction process by which the past is shaped by the concerns of the present. In other words, the groups to which individuals belong provide the frameworks through which they recall the past. Thus, while all memories are collective memories, the memory of the group is realized and manifests itself in individual memory. If collective memory is a process of narrating the past in support of the present, then we need to look closely at the ways in which the structures of the medium for conveying the narrative (whether in personal accounts, in writing or through electronic mediation) affects the way we remember. While narrativizing, a history has always required a choice of which elements to include and exclude in the narrative, involving the imposition of a moral order on the past (White, 1988), the ability to accomplish this on a wide scale grows as access to media decreases. Thus, when we take into account issues of the flows of technologies and economic stratification of the mass media, which media scholars have so thoroughly investigated in terms of globalization, we can see that the divide between official history and personal memory looms even larger.

It has been suggested by some scholars that in today's society, memories that exist outside the media are largely considered outside of the collective imagining and therefore are more apt to slip away into oblivion (Castells, 1996; Gross, 2000). Andrew Hoskins (2001, 2004) suggests, with the pervasiveness of television (and other media), there has been a shift in the ways that societies remember. It is not simply that we remember past media events, but it is by way of television that we remember them. In other words, the media intervene in the production of memory itself. Hence, television acts both as the source for and the mediation of memories. Hoskins suggest suggests that the repetition of images from the same event forms the electronification of memory, as television both captures and frames the events to be remembered. This, transformation into what he calls 'artificial memory' increases the media's power, for it not only creates a consensus for what is remembered, but how it is remembered as well. While perhaps overly deterministic and neglecting to view ways in which alternative processes of memory formation contest these mediated memories, he does illustrate the importance in identifying the changes underway.

These changes have had much influence on the cultural production of societies around the world. As Andreas Huyssen (2003) has suggested, changes in our relation to time have led to a crisis of history and the recent rise of memory discourses across societies. While discourse on history once guaranteed the stability of the past, anchoring the nation to it, and was used as a rubric for understanding the future, the obsession with memory, suggests Huyssen, is a result of the detemporalizing processes of a culture of consumption. What has resulted is a pervasive growth of what he calls a 'culture of memory'.

Huyssen insightfully points out the connection between what has been considered by many as the culture of amnesia and forgetting to the culture of memory. As he indicates, while information technologies have led to fast-paced, consumer-driven and perpetually obsolescent conditions of the present, they are the same technologies which sustain our ability—in an unprecedented manner—to capture and store our memories. For instance, practices such as digital archiving have given us extraordinary capability to capture the enormity of the fleeting moments of the present. As he suggests, this duality has led to a situation where '[t]he contemporary public obsession with memory clashes with an intense public panic of oblivion' (Huyssen, 2003, p. 17). As the present time persistently slips away from us, we look to the imagined past in order to escape the imminent amnesia that this loss of the present implies.

Huyssen recognizes the fact that technological change, mass media and new patterns of consumption—the elements which are most concern to media theorists dealing with globalization—are shrinking the horizon of time, so that the extension of the present is increasingly smaller. With this destabilization, many retreat to the past, or a search for places of memory (Nora, 1995), which overcome the ravages of the ever-shrinking present. However, Huyssen realizes that the '[t]he past itself is being destabilized by our musealizing culture industry' (2003, p. 24). In other words, as the past by itself becomes circulated in images and events, it no longer provides an anchor for cultural stability. Rather than despairing, however, Huyssen suggests we must come to terms with the new conditions in order to provide continuity over time. This requires what Huyssen calls productive memory. It includes making sense of the chaotic, fragmentary and free-floating memories we encounter, maintaining a discriminating eye, counteracting the myths of capitalism and globalization, which deny time, space and place, with memory practices at the local and national level. It means that we need to distinguish for ourselves what is a usable past and what is not within mass culture. As Huyssen points out, this means learning to let go of the past as well, for the nature of memory is its change over time.

While Huyssen tends to overlook the social conflicts and struggles within societies, his position is not entirely apolitical. As he suggests, '[w]e have to ask: how should even local, regional or national memories be secured, structured and represented? Of course, this is a fundamentally political question about the nature of the public sphere, about democracy and its future, about the changing shape of nationhood, citizenship, and identity' (2003, p. 26). While he too easily glosses over these relations, he does provide a point at which we can begin investigating the relation of memory and history to the media and to processes of modernity and globalization in general. We need to see ways in which conflicts within—and across—nation-states are not simply over geographic space, but as a result of the contestations of time and memory.

Despite the importance an understanding of time has played in the theories of nationalism, little work has been undertaken in terms of the way the electronic media articulate a society's relation to the past. It is here that we can bring together the three elements of this inquiry: the nation, time, and the media, within the rubric of globalization. However, rather than trying to understand 'globalization' itself, we might think of globalization as a theoretical framework for thinking about the nation and media systems without essentializing either.

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