

Networked Society and Globalization: Unraveling Dynamics, Challenges, and Advancements

Hehuazi Zhang*

Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Macau University of Science and Technology, Avenida WaiLong, Taipa, Macau, China

**Corresponding author: hehuaziz@gmail.com*

Keywords: Globalization, Network Society, Neoliberalism, Internet, Communication

Abstract: With the relentless march of technological progress, globalization has insinuated itself into myriad facets of our world, leaving an indelible imprint on the domains of politics, economics, culture, and more. Empowered by the omnipresence of the networked society, globalization has wrought its influence upon individuals and societies, touching upon multiple dimensions of existence. In this milieu, a schism emerges, with proponents asserting that the fusion of the networked society and globalization begets numerous advantages, propelling societal advancement, while dissenting voices staunchly reject this contention, citing a litany of challenges and deleterious repercussions. It is an incontrovertible truth that the amalgamation of the internet and globalization will inevitably engender certain challenges, yet the scale tips unequivocally in favor of the advantages far outweighing the disadvantages. Consequently, this treatise shall embark upon a comprehensive exploration, delving into the profound symbiosis between networked societies and globalization. It shall elucidate the intricate web of positive and negative interrelationships that underpin this complex dynamic.

1. Introduction

With the advent of technological advancements, globalization has gradually evolved into a contemporary phenomenon that has permeated multiple facets of our world over the past few decades, encompassing the realms of politics, economics, culture, and various other domains. In the wake of the emergence of the internet, the potency of globalization has surged, extending its influence both far and wide. The ubiquity of the internet stands as a tangible manifestation of globalization's prowess [1]. Concurrently, the networked society has elevated the quality of communication and interaction among individuals, proffering an avenue and platform for information dissemination that further catalyzes the momentum of globalization.

In the present era, characterized by escalating levels of consumption and a quest for intellectual enrichment, individuals demand a more permissive and expansive milieu wherein they can exchange not only material commodities but also ideas. Furthermore, under the backdrop of capitalism, whose insatiable mandate is the perpetual expansion of markets [2], capitalists, too, require a more liberal conduit to promote their wares across broader vistas and amass greater profits.

As articulated by David Harvey (2007), neoliberalism is a doctrine that "liberates individual

entrepreneurial liberties and competencies within an institutional framework characterized by robust private property rights, unfettered markets, and unencumbered trade" [3]. Given that conventional mode of communication, often characterised by one-way transmissions, no longer suffice to satisfy the demands of both the public and capitalists, there exists a palpable need for a more accessible and unbounded medium—the networked society—enabling individuals to function as both producers and consumers to fulfill their exigencies.

Buoyed by the support of the networked society, globalization has exerted its influence on individuals and society across an array of dimensions. While some espouse the notion that the confluence of the networked society and globalization yields a plethora of advantages, bolstering societal development, others vehemently oppose this perspective, contending that it precipitates myriad challenges and deleterious consequences.

In the author's estimation, certain challenges may inevitably emerge with the fusion of the internet and globalization, but the advantages far outweigh the drawbacks. Subsequently, this essay will delve into an incisive analysis, to elucidate how the networked society has bolstered globalization and delineate the intricate nexus of positive and negative correlations between them.

2. How the Network Society Contributed to Globalization

In exploring how the networked society has catalyzed the phenomenon of globalization, we turn to the insights of David Harvey. Harvey posits that the architecture of networks serves to compress both temporal and spatial dimensions [3], birthing a boundless cyberspace that finds itself inexorably linked with globalization.

In the bygone era, globalization found itself constricted by the conundrums of time and distance. While the human consciousness harbored aspirations of global exchanges encompassing products and knowledge, the limitations imposed by temporal and spatial boundaries consigned production to a state of inefficiency. However, the advent of the internet shattered these constraints, propelling a seismic improvement in the efficiency of information dissemination and hastening the march of globalization.

From a temporal perspective, the internet precipitates an acceleration in the transmission of information, endowing communication and interaction with a newfound efficiency and timeliness. In the digital epoch, information stands as one of society's most prized and vital resources. The swifter one gains access to information, the more significant their advantage becomes. Facilitated by the internet's support, a greater volume of information can traverse the globe in markedly shorter intervals compared to alternative mediums, thereby amplifying the momentum of globalization.

The internet begets a novel virtual arena for commodification, obliterating the constraints of geographic separation. As information radiates to every corner of the globe, it propels the exchange of insights in realms such as education, culture, and entertainment. For instance, individuals from disparate regions can share their viewpoints and cultural traditions with a global audience via the Internet, which fosters cross-cultural communication and convergence. Furthermore, the network facilitates distance education, a development that has played a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge across the expanse of our planet.

With the fortuitous confluence of temporal and spatial compression, the contributions of the networked society to the grand tapestry of globalization are unparalleled by other media. Undoubtedly, there may exist certain deleterious consequences borne of the networked society within the globalization process. However, I contend that the advantages resulting from this confluence far outweigh any drawbacks. Subsequently, the forthcoming sections will scrutinize the intricate interplay between the networked society and the vast, evolving tapestry of globalization.

3. Positive Connections

3.1. Benefits of Economy and Commercialisation

A salient positive aspect of the symbiotic relationship between the networked society and globalization lies in its potential to yield considerable economic dividends for society at large.

Primarily, the networked society catalyzes the seamless circulation of capital and goods across the global landscape. An illustrative example lies in the realm of online commerce, which has assumed an indispensable role in the daily lives of younger generations. In the contemporary era of globalization, a burgeoning number of consumers exhibit a predilection for products sourced from foreign shores, such as Australian milk powder and Japanese cosmetics. Regrettably, the physical retail suppliers occasionally proves inadequate in catering to the diverse preferences of these consumers. However, the Internet grants consumers the ability to procure products directly from global official websites, and enabling sellers to dispatch their wares to customers scattered across the world.

Concomitantly, the network empowers sellers to disseminate their advertising campaigns on a global scale, effectively beckoning consumers from diverse corners of the globe. In the contemporary milieu, it has become a routine sight to behold brands from myriad nations disseminating their promotional messages across social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Through the internet's expansive reach, these advertisements can traverse the globe in the blink of an eye, a feat unattainable through traditional media channels.

Moreover, the deployment of hashtags on social media platforms represents a compelling avenue for brands to foster cross-regional consumer engagement and, subsequently, augment their business value. Take Nike's ubiquitous #JustDoIt# hashtag as an example, worldwide consumers showcase their sportswear adorned with this particular hashtag on social media, such as Instagram. Consequently, these user-generated posts metamorphose into de facto advertisements, as they come under the purview of every user who happens upon the hashtag, irrespective of their global location. Thus, the consumer seamlessly transfers into the role of a content producer, which is a dynamic testament of the network's transformative influence.

3.2. Information Transformation in Emergency Situation

Another salient positive facet of the synergy between the networked society and globalization is the rapid dissemination of information via the internet, a vital lifeline for prompt and coordinated responses to emergent crises.

For instance, the tragic nuclear catastrophe that unfolded on March 11, 2011, at Fukushima Daiichi in Japan attracted global attention and repercussions. On March 12, in the wake of the disaster, the Japanese government swiftly issued emergency evacuation directives, urgently compelling residents residing within a 10-kilometer radius of the stricken Fukushima nuclear power station to evacuate forthwith. By March 13, the Chinese international rescue team had already winged its way to Japan, poised to execute emergency relief operations.

While the Fukushima disaster undeniably wrought grave ecological consequences, it remains evident that the response, both by the Japanese government and the international community, was notably prompt and effective, propelled by the unfettered diffusion of information.

In stark contrast, the Soviet government's communication response and dissemination of information in the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion disaster was slow and lagging. Initially, the official message relayed to nuclear experts and Soviet leaders in Moscow was that a mere "fire" had erupted at the reactor, assuring them that no explosion had transpired. Owing to the impediments in the timely and accurate dissemination of information, scores of firefighters were

unwittingly thrust into the throes of not just a raging blaze but an invisible radiation peril as well. Countless residents remained oblivious to the unfolding disaster, absorbing lethal doses of radiation before evacuation ensued.

Compounding the tragedy, the disaster research team was stymied from submitting a comprehensive report, thereby keeping the Soviet government in the dark regarding the true magnitude of the calamity. It was not until almost a week later that Moscow finally acknowledged the severity of the accident, prompted by a notification from the Swedish government regarding the detection of elevated radiation levels over Sweden. It was only then that the Soviet government galvanized into action to mitigate the radiation's devastating effects. Nevertheless, the delayed transmission of information had already exacted a grievous toll in human lives and environmental destruction.

Through this comparative lens, the paramount importance of expeditious information transmission during times of crisis becomes palpable. In our contemporary world, where national interests intertwine across a multitude of spheres, encompassing resources, energy, and environmental considerations, a nation's calamity swiftly becomes a global concern. In such dire moments, the outstretched hand of international assistance becomes not only a testament to global peace and stability but also a safeguarding of one's own interests. Thus, the networked society emerges as a linchpin in propelling globalization, for the information it conveys through the internet is characterized by its swiftness and precision, capable of rallying the support and resources of nations when confronted by exigent crises.

3.3. Knowledge Sharing in the Era of Networked Globalization

Use 20-point type for the title, aligned to the center, linespace exactly at 14-point with a bold and italic font style and initial letters capitalized. No formulas or special characters of any form or language are allowed in the title.

Words like “is”, “or”, “then”, etc. should not be capitalized unless they are the first word of the title.

The confluence of the networked society and globalization has ushered in a profound transformation in the dissemination of knowledge, particularly in the realms of technology, education, and medical advancements. In this era, knowledge is a valuable resource that transcends geographical boundaries and is easily accessible to individuals, organizations, and communities worldwide. This synergy has given rise to a multitude of advantages, heralding an era of seamless knowledge sharing that transcends global frontiers.

In bygone eras, the diffusion of knowledge across vast distances was a laborious and time-consuming endeavor. However, in the contemporary networked society, we find ourselves in an epoch where knowledge traverses the globe with remarkable alacrity. A notable illustration of this phenomenon occurred on April 10, 2019, when humanity witnessed the historic unveiling of the first image of a black hole. This momentous event unfolded simultaneously at six distinct locations around the world. While the image was officially presented by a consortium of six institutions, its revelation instantaneously transcended geographical boundaries, courtesy of the omnipresence of the internet.

Moreover, in the realm of scientific pursuits, numerous global challenges necessitate collaborative efforts among researchers hailing from diverse corners of the globe, with climate change standing as a prominent exemplar. Confronting such monumental predicaments requires the seamless exchange of research findings and data among scientists—an endeavor splendidly expedited by the networked society. Given the scattered locations of these researchers, the internet emerges as the most efficacious conduit for them to synchronize their efforts. It empowers them to

consolidate data from various regions, facilitating comprehensive analysis and, ultimately, the resolution of these pressing global issues.

In addition, the growth of the network and globalization has facilitated the emergence of social media platforms, online communities, and forums, which are nowadays the centers for people to socialize and learn. Social learning is a concept that emphasizes the importance of social interactions in the process of learning and acquiring knowledge. In the era of networked globalization, social learning has gained significant prominence due to the widespread use of social media platforms, and the emergence of online communities, and forums, which have now become centers of socialization and learning. People can participate in discussions, share experiences, and learn from each other's knowledge and insights on these online platforms. This peer-to-peer learning is a powerful form of knowledge sharing.

4. Negative Connections

Certainly, it is incumbent upon us to acknowledge that the advent of the networked society has not been devoid of adverse ramifications for the trajectory of globalization. It is a stark reality that the diffusion of norms and values from influential cultures in the West to developing nations has transformed their cultural and social landscapes, engendering biases and disparities[4].

In the realm of political economy, certain Western powers have harnessed the potential of the network society to meddle in the internal affairs of burgeoning nations, often deploying hacker technology to pilfer state secrets and surveil unsuspecting citizens—an embodiment of digital capitalism. A salient illustration of such digital surveillance came to the fore with the revelations of the PRISM program by Edward Joseph Snowden in 2013. As per The Guardian's exposé, the PRISM initiative afforded the NSA access to the personal data of both domestic and foreign citizens, encompassing emails, video and voice communications, photographs, social media profiles, and more [5]. This event underscored that certain developed nations employ sophisticated technologies to interlope and monitor other nations and their citizenry, casting a long shadow over privacy and state security issues.

In addition to its implications on the political economy, the amalgamation of the network society and globalization has not been without repercussions in the realm of cultural communication and convergence, exemplified by the phenomenon of cultural colonization. As delineated by Yang, cultural colonization denotes the conscious or inadvertent efforts of developed nations to exert their cultural dominance—rooted in their economic and political clout—over developing countries (2008). This exertion often entails the deliberate promotion of their cultural products and values to wield influence and impose assimilation on the cultural and ideological fabric of other nations. Consequently, the cultures of smaller and less influential regions often find themselves marginalized and subjected to discrimination, thereby undermining the tapestry of cultural diversity.

However, even amid the specter of cultural colonization and its negative repercussions for developing nations, it is crucial to acknowledge the internet's role in unearthing and safeguarding the cultures of smaller regions that might otherwise fade into oblivion. Moreover, the network society, by providing equal opportunities for all cultures to showcase themselves on online platforms, has facilitated enhanced communication and convergence between diverse cultures, fostering a more pluralistic global landscape.

5. Conclusions

Globalization has become an undeniable and dominant force in the inexorable march of societal progress. While it is not without its share of challenges when melded with the networked society, it is imperative to recognize that the positive impacts vastly outweigh the negative ones.

The internet, through its ability to compress both time and space, serves as a conduit through which information traverses vast distances in an instant, bolstering the efficacy of communication and enhancing societal productivity. Firstly, within the networked society, the accelerated circulation of goods across the global landscape augments economic prosperity. Secondly, the expeditious transmission of information equips individuals with the tools to respond more effectively to emergent crises. Lastly, the internet's capacity to facilitate the sharing of knowledge on a global scale contributes to advancements in technology, medical practices, environmental stewardship, and beyond.

Nonetheless, we must not turn a blind eye to the internet's adverse ramifications for globalization, typified by intrusive network monitoring programs that pose threats to both state security and personal privacy, as well as the specter of cultural colonization. In my estimation, the existence of monitoring and colonization would persist irrespective of the presence of the networked society, but the internet imbues individuals with the power to unearth truths, for it remains accessible to all. Hence, networked communication serves not only as a platform for the rapid advancement of globalization but also as a forum that fosters uninhibited interaction among the public, ushering in a more open and boundless realm for discourse and exchange.

References

- [1] Zhu, L., *Network communication and globalization*[J]. *Knowledge of News*, 2002(6): p. 35-36.
- [2] Marx, K. and F. Engels, *The communist manifesto*. 1848. Trans[M]. Samuel Moore. London: Penguin, 1967. 15(10.1215): p. 9780822392583-049.
- [3] Harvey, D., *A brief history of neoliberalism*[M]. 2007: Oxford University Press, USA.
- [4] Yang, M., *The relationship between network communication and cultural globalization*[J]. *Chinese collective economy monthly*, 2008(09): p. 118-119.
- [5] Greenwald, G. and E. MacAskill, *NSA Prism program taps into user data of Apple, Google and others*[N]. *The Guardian*, 2013. 7(6): p. 1-43.