

We live in an increasingly inter-connected, interdependent and inegalitarian world. In recent social theory parlance, a globalizing world that has both accelerated and shrunk though processes of “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1989) and stretched social relations (enabling action at a distance) through “time-space distancing” (Giddens, 1990). These globalizing tendencies, moreover, have become increasingly mediated through communication flows that are now capable of circumnavigating the globe 24/7 in real-time. New digital technologies and satellite delivery systems disseminate a daily multitude of images, ideas and information to distant countries and disparate cultures. And mobile telephony and the Internet provide hitherto unimaginable opportunities for new forms of connectivity that are now being realized by vast numbers of people around the globe. This new communications-based “space of flows” underpins influential ideas of the rise of the “network society” and serves today’s global geometry of power (Castells, 1996, 2007). The central role of communications and flows of information and culture in processes of globalization are no less central to the thinking of other contemporary social theorists, whether embedded in influential ideas of “reflexive modernization” (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), “world risk society” (Beck, 1999), “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2007) or “global complexity” (Urry, 2003). Each, in their own distinctive terms, endorses the discourse and reality of globalization.