

COMMENTARY

Where is the Global in Media Theory (and When)?

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What are the premises of the major questions in media theory? Arguing for better questions this contribution notes the persistence of eurocentricism, mediacentricism and technological determinism and the dominance of the experience of what Jared Diamond calls the WEIRD (Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democracies) nations in framing the terms of debate and study.

Anthropology in works such as Larkin (2008) may help defamiliarise the presumptions of western media theory and more clearly address the question of 'Where is the global "Greenwich Mean Time" of Media Theory?' Arguing for the need to place the technological present in historical perspective (cf Edgerton, 2008) this contribution makes the case for the primacy of historical and spatial contexts over the immediate moment of technological invention – on which so much attention is customarily focussed. To focus on media technologies and 'inventions' without considerations of their context runs the risks of embracing such dangerous simplifications as the idea that their socio-cultural effects can be deduced from their presumed technological 'essences' – whereas any given technology may very well come to have quite different significance in varying cultural contexts.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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