
Book Reviews

Terhi Rantanen (2005) *The Media and Globalization*, London: Sage. ISBN: 0761973125

Daya Thussu

Communication and Media Research Institute
University of Westminster

That the media have played an important role in the process of globalization is often mentioned in constantly growing academic material on the subject but rarely discussed in any systematic and convincing detail. By elevating media to the centre of globalization discourse, Terhi Rantanen's new book attempts to fill this gap in the burgeoning globalization literature. Rantanen, Director of Global Media Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science is very well placed to undertake such an endeavour. Rantanen defines globalization thus: 'Globalization is a process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space' (p. 8). Thus the media becomes central to her project.

The book opens with a short overview of the works of some of the main writers who have profoundly influenced the globalization discourse. Among these, Anthony Giddens, her former boss at the LSE; the Cambridge sociologist John Thompson and the US-based anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. But it is Appadurai who features a lot in the book. Rantanen skilfully deploys by now well-known 'scapes' that made Appadurai's work so widely quoted in 'global' studies but Rantanen emphasises an important individual interpretation to such theorisation. She also adds two new 'scapes': timescape (age, generation, calendar) as well as 'languagescape' (education, knowledge of language) to Appadurai's famous five 'scapes': - 'ethnoscapes' (the flow of people), 'technoscapes' (technology transfer across national borders), 'finanscapes' (international flow of capital), 'mediascapes' (global electronic media) and 'ideoscapes' (ideological aspects of culture).

What is more, Rantanen pursues an innovative research agenda and develops a new methodology which she calls 'global mediagraphy'. Her methodology aims to 'incorporate individuals and their media use in a structured way' into a phenomenon she calls 'mediated globalization'. Rantanen studies individual life histories of four

generations of three families and their 'mediated globalisation': apart from her own family, she studies a Chinese family and a Latvian Jewish family which had migrated to Israel.

Such trans-generational and transnational studies have been undertaken in the past – particularly in the field of anthropology, however the conceptualisation has been mainly in relation to the nation or the individual. What makes Rantanen's study different is her belief for the need to de-territorialize, a plea for going beyond national cultural spaces to share a more cosmopolitan reflexivity. She writes: 'De-territorialization contests not only the traditional thinking of land and culture tied together but also the idea of geographical territories matching people's citizenships, nationalities and identities. Increasingly, because of media and communications, people are able to live in different spaces that may match with their locations, but are also able to reach out. The fact that people have been able to reach out of their locations through media and communications to share a national space indicates that they could go even further to share a global space.' (p. 158).

It is the book's comparative framework which I found appealing. The book is a culmination of extensive research that Rantanen undertook over a period of years. It uses a range of material - drawn from oral tradition (memories and family histories) as well as historical research, interviews and photographs. The information thus gleaned is then subjected to 'introspection and reflection'.

The book's autobiographical tone is also refreshing. Academics have a tendency to write in convoluted sentences and most of them prefer indirect speech but Rantanen writes with feeling, one gets a sense that she wants to privilege the personal. Two of the three dozen pictures that enliven the book are from Rantanen's own family, including the author as a child, a young mother and a lost soul in the United States.

Mediographies should enable us to better understand the role of media in daily life. 'The components of individual mediographies, Rantanen writes, 'make it possible to compare the lives of individuals not only within one generation but also across different generations in different places.' The changing nature of the access and use of media and communication among the three families is diligently recorded. Rantanen notes that her interviewees watch 'a shared core of films – such as James Bond and *Lord of the Rings*' but does not seem to be interested in asking why that might be the case? Could it be that these are superior films per se or might it have something to do with what Herbert Schiller once called the 'special effects industry' of Hollywood and its power to set the agenda for the so-called 'global-popular'. It is this question of power which I would have liked to see more of in an otherwise innovative and interesting book