Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to global media: key concepts

Media as technologies, institutions and culture

Communications media have long been central to the major developments of modern societies. The creation of nation-states and national identities; ideas of citizenship and freedom; the development of political culture and the public sphere; the growth of capitalist commercial enterprises; and modern consumer culture – all of these developments owe a great deal to the development of communications media. Historically, communications media have been integral to the rise and fall of empires, to diplomacy, war, the spread of languages and cultural norms, and to the processes we refer to today under the general terms of globalization and modernity. In the twenty-first century, we find that social media, carried through digital networks and the global internet, are enabling a highly diverse array of individuals, groups, organizations and movements to produce and globally distribute media content. This presents new challenges to how we understand the media, as it blurs mass communication era distinctions between media producers and audience-consumers, and between professional and amateur creators and distributors of media content.

When we refer to *media*, we are using the term in a threefold sense. First, it refers to the *technological means of communication*. The term 'media' is an extension of 'medium', or the technical means through which a message is sent and received, and associated questions of how messages are stored and distributed over time and space. Technical media that have been prominent through human history have included print (paper and movable type), broadcasting (radio and television), telecommunications and the internet.

When thinking about a media technology, we need to acknowledge that the particular technological device we are referring to constitutes only one of an ensemble of elements requiring our attention. We also need to consider the practices that were associated with that technology, as well as the institutions that have shaped, and are shaping, its ongoing development. Lievrouw

and Livingstone (2006) argued that communications and media studies needs to get beyond the level of artefacts and devices, or technologies in the narrow sense. To understand why a new media device, or indeed a new content form, is new, we always need to ask not only why this is a new device or form, but also what is new *for society* about it. They argued that this requires a threefold concern with:

1. The *artefacts or devices* that enable and extend our capacities to communicate;
2. The *activities and practices* that people engage in to use these devices for communication;
3. The *social institutions and organizational forms* that develop around those devices and practices.

They make the point that the relationship between these three elements is circular rather than linear. This ensemble of relationships between technological devices, communication practices and social institutions is shown in Figure 1.1:
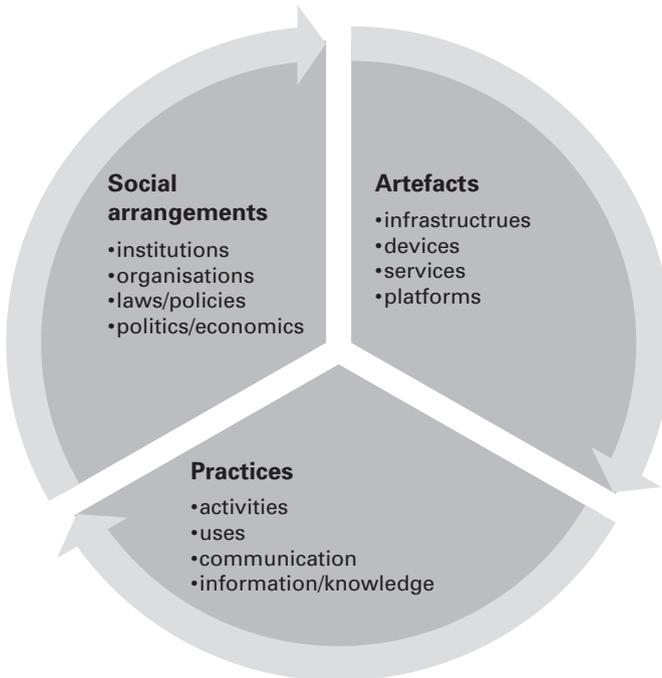
Figure 1.1 Constituent elements of media

Source: Author's own diagram based on Lievrouw & Livingstone (2006).

Adapting this framework, we therefore think of the media in three dimensions. First, it consists of the technologies of production, distribution and reception, and the associated infrastructures that enable media messages to be shared, which is the first precondition of technologically mediated communication, i.e. all forms other than direct, face-to-face communication. Second, the media consists of the industries and institutions through which decisions are made about what media content is produced and distributed for audiences or other groups of users larger than those that can be gathered together for direct interpersonal communication. Third, the media consists of its content, or the cultural and symbolic forms that are shared, and which generate meaning for individuals, communities, nations and – potentially – the global population. It is noted later in this chapter that these three dimensions of media interact with four overarching frameworks: the economic framework; the policy framework; the cultural framework; and the digital framework.

Media technologies and infrastructures

In order to better understand the relationship between media forms and social change, there is a need to reflect upon the relationship of mass communications media to the emergence of modern societies. The rise of mass media is generally associated with the print revolution of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which enabled the dissemination of written works in the forms of books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets etc., as well as the rise of a 'reading public' that had both the capacity to read and write – print literacy – and a preparedness to engage collectively with ideas and insights derived from such printed works. In *The Media and Modernity*, John Thompson (1995) observed that 'the important point about mass communication is not that a given number of individuals … receives the product, but rather that the products are available in principle to a plurality of recipients' (Thompson, 1995, p. 24). Thompson argued that mass communication forms have five characteristics:

1. They make use of a *technical medium* that allows information and symbolic content to be 'fixed and transmitted from producer to receiver' (p. 18);
2. They are the products of *media industries*, as 'organizations which … have been concerned with the commercial exploitation of technical innovations' (p. 27);
3. They are associated with a '*structured break between the production of symbolic forms and their reception*' (p. 29), which may be over space, over time, or both;

4. They become *increasingly mass media forms*, i.e. they 'are made available to more individuals across larger expanses of space and at greater speeds' (p. 30);

5. Mass communication involves 'the public circulation of symbolic forms', playing a key role in *ordering (and transforming) public space and public culture* through being 'made visible and observable to a multiplicity of individuals who may be, and typically are, scattered across diverse and dispersed contexts' (p. 31).

The technological means of communication constitute the *infrastructure* that makes media communication possible. While the component elements of this infrastructure may be technical mediums – printing presses, TV and radio antennas, copper wires, broadband cables, satellites orbiting the globe, and so on – their broader impacts are social and cultural. Questions of 'how to infrastructure' (Star & Bowker, 2006), have frequently been approached from a technical or engineering perspective, but there is also a need to consider their impacts upon social relations and human interactions, alongside an awareness of the technical properties of different media. The history of media infrastructures also reveals a complex and ongoing relationship between the national and global scales. The internet emerged as a global information infrastructure developed by and for the US scientific community and the military, but it possessed an 'architecture of openness' and freedom from government controls that have been a vital part of its evolution as a global communications network ever since (Castells, 2001).

At the same time, as the internet became more of a global network from the mid-1990s onwards, the role played by nation-states, most notably the United States, in shaping its evolution became increasingly apparent. In particular, the development of a National Information Infrastructure (NII) strategy by the Clinton Administration in 1993, and Vice-President Al Gore's guidelines for a Global Information Infrastructure (GII) at the International Telecommunications Union Summit in Buenos Aires in 1994, were critical moments in shaping the global internet in the preferred interests of dominant players. The associated policies were by no means value-neutral and purely technical: the guiding principles of the GII as articulated by Clinton and Gore favoured private investment over public in infrastructure provision, free markets and competition over national monopolies, and the removal of all barriers to foreign investment in telecommunications systems (Mattelart, 2003, pp. 117–123; Flew & McElhinney, 2006).

Media industries and institutions

The second sense in which we refer to media is in terms of *the media industries*. Media industries provide the *institutional and organizational forms through which media content is produced and distributed*. The study of media industries draws attention to *media economics*, and the distinctive features of media economics and markets will be discussed below. It is important to note that there are different traditions in media economics, most notably between those who approach the field from the perspective of mainstream economic theories, also known as neoclassical economics (Picard, 1989; Finn *et al.*, 2004; Albarran, 2010; Doyle, 2013), and those who analyse media industries from the perspective of critical political economy (discussed at length in Chapter 3). While these have been antagonistic traditions, there is significant recent work which suggests the possibility of reconciling them. Drawing upon analytical tools provided by media economics to develop critical accounts of media industries, Napoli (2009), Picard, (2011a), Winseck (2011), Ballon (2014) and others have drawn attention to the implications of concentration of media ownership and the relationship between the economic power of media companies and the 'public interest' expectations that exist around media as technologies of public communication.

The media industries perspective draws attention to the critical position of *media production*. Media producers include those who generate original creative content, and include actors, animators, producers, directors, designers, journalists, photographers and camera people. There are also other professionals whose work contributes to the sustainability and growth of media industries, such as advertisers, marketers, public relations professionals, lawyers, accountants, etc. (Deuze, 2007). In the influential theory of the *creative class* proposed by Richard Florida (2002), those directly engaged with the generation of new ideas, concepts, designs and creative works were the 'creative core', and their work was supported by creative professionals working across a range of knowledge-intensive industries. For Florida, this creative class was the fastest-growing segment of the US economy, and its values of individuality, creative self-expression, meritocracy and commitment to diversity and openness were transforming society and culture, particularly in those urban centres where they were most concentrated (Florida, 2002, pp. 72–80).

From a more critical perspective, Hesmondhalgh (2013) and McRobbie (2016) have identified that distinctive features of cultural labour, such as the desire for creative autonomy, are often pursued in the context of irregular employment and uncertain career prospects, making such work often highly stressful and prone to exploitation and self-exploitation. Creative workers have distinctive relations to creative managers, with the latter often

preferring 'soft control' and management by contract over direct oversight of the creative process, and to cultural intermediaries in industries such as advertising, fashion, public relations, publishing, arts management and other sectors, who undertake 'the symbolic work of shaping the perception and reception of goods, services, and ideas', and are 'key market makers in contemporary consumer economies' (Matthews & Maguire, 2014, pp. 3–4).

Understanding media as institutions has a dual element to it. At one level, they are firms that produce, package and distribute media content in particular ways in order to achieve particular objectives, be they profit maximization for commercial media enterprises, or a range of 'public interest' goals for publicly funded media (Doyle, 2013, p. 5). But an institution is much more than a 'black box' through which inputs are turned into outputs. From an institutional economics perspective, Douglass North has defined institutions as 'the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction', arguing that they 'reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life … [and] a guide to human interaction' (North, 1990, p. 3). Formal and informal institutions shape the *rules of the game* by which media systems operate, which can be changed through conscious human action, but which also appear as historically derived constraints at any point in time.

Following Williamson (2000), we can think about media institutions as operating across four levels, with each having its own historical timeframe:

1. Institutional arrangements within the media organization itself (e.g. how production and distribution of content are organized internally) and its dealings with other key market participants (interactions between media buyers, advertising agencies and corporate clients, dealings with rights holders, etc.);
2. Interactions between media institutions and policy and regulatory institutions that shape regimes of media policy and governance;
3. Interactions with formal institutions that shape the institutional environment and enforce its rules, which include media companies, but also government agencies, trade unions and producer guilds, industry associations, lobby groups etc.;
4. Relationships to informal institutions, which include the norms of behaviour, conventions, customs, traditions, norms and values, codes of conduct, ideologies and belief systems through which institutional arrangements are shaped, which differ from one nation to the next and are subject to historical path dependency.

As institutions are culturally embedded in society, there is more to understanding media institutions than simply approaching them as either profit-maximizing agents indifferent to the society in which they operate, or as the neutral

arbiters of the public good as it pertains to media and culture. Moreover, there are both national and international institutions associated with media governance, and the interactions between these two levels as they shape media industries is a matter that will be considered in detail in this book.

Media content and cultures

The third sense in which we understand the media is in terms of culture. The media can be formally described as *the informational and symbolic content received and consumed by readers, audiences and users*. This is the 'common sense' understanding of what the media are, as it refers to the content that comes to us through our newspapers, magazines, radios, televisions, personal computers, mobile phones and other devices. It is received through the technical infrastructures and institutions that enable its production, distribution and reception.

When we consider the nature and significance of media content as it is received in the public domain, the question that arises is the extent to which media now define the culture of modern societies. Thompson has referred to 'the *mediatization of modern culture* … [where] the transmission of symbolic forms becomes increasingly mediated by the technical and institutional apparatuses of the media industries' (1990, pp. 3–4). Douglas Kellner has argued that 'we are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society, and thus it is important to learn how to understand, interpret and criticize its meanings and values' (Kellner, 1995, p. 5).

As we will note in later chapters, culture is a notoriously slippery term to define. Thompson (1990) identified two principal conceptions of culture. One is the *descriptive* conception of culture as what people do in a particular place or at a particular time, or 'the varied array of values, beliefs, customs, conventions, habits and practices characteristic of a particular society or historical period' (p. 123). The other is the *symbolic* conception of culture, or the underlying system of social, cultural, linguistic and psychological relationships through which people, in different places or at particular times, are engaged in making sense of their wider social environment and acting within it. Media are particularly important to symbolic and signifying systems, and it in this capacity that they are taken to shape the everyday lives of people and communities, and notions of 'common sense', truth and falsehood, and right and wrong. Theories that give a central role to dominant ideologies in shaping social order tend to give the media a central role in this, as in the case of critical political economy theories of global media.

These three interconnected elements of the media – technical infrastructures, institutional forms, and cultures of reception – provide the context for a critical evaluation of global media. They focus attention on questions

of *media power*, and the extent to which communications media 'structure culture, politics and economics … [and] determine how a life may be lived' (Jordan, 1999, p. 1). In order to properly address this question, we need to consider the relative significance of *media-centric* and non-media-centric or *society-centric* explanations of society and culture, to work out the extent to which methods for analysing global media should be focused on the media as such, as distinct from other social, economic, political and cultural forces.

Media-centric and non-media-centric approaches to global media

In his account of the historical origins of international communications research, Mowlana (2012) made the point that the first US-sponsored programmes established in developing countries had relatively little interest in the mass media as such. They were primarily concerned with developing leadership communication skills for elites, and with the process of public opinion formation, insofar as political leadership in these countries played a critical role in global geopolitical alliances. At the same time, because these were rarely stand-alone programmes; they tended to be highly interdisciplinary, 'relating to and drawing from fields as diverse as economics, international studies, politics, sociology, psychology, literature and history' (Mowlana, 2012, p. 272).

Early mass communication research was strongly influenced by the *media effects* paradigm, which sought to use social science methods to identify whether exposure to particular forms of media content had direct effects on individual behaviour, e.g. does political advertising change voting behaviour? Does violent content in the media lead to anti-social behaviour? The question that was invariably raised in such research was the role played by *intervening variables*, e.g. is anti-social behaviour more associated with economic disadvantage or dysfunctional family environments than with the media? (Newbold, 1995). The critique of *media effects theories*, and functionalist theories of the media more generally, pointed to the limits of media-centrism insofar as it was associated with approaching the impact of communication on society independently of an understanding of underlying social relations. Critical theorists identified the importance of the political-economic context of the media in capitalist societies, and how different social classes and other groups related to it, arguing that these social forces were neglected in what Gitlin (1995) termed the 'dominant paradigm' of mass communication (cf. Hall, 1982).

The impact of critical theories on media studies was ambiguous. It undermined the media effects model, by demanding that media studies take account of the complex social totality within which the media operated, pointing in

the direction of more society-centric accounts of media and communications. At the same time, as media studies came to be increasingly influenced by political economy and critical cultural studies, 'the reconceptualization of the media as powerful came about … [through] neo-Marxist macro-analysis of media as "ideological apparatuses" of social reproduction' (Newbold, 1995, p. 120). The question thus came to be one of: if the media are powerful, to what ends does that power operate? And can that power be resisted, or are there instances where it fails to operate? As James Halloran posed the question in relation to these debates, 'A theory of society is needed … but what theory?' (Halloran, 1995, p. 41).

In global media studies, the most significant integration of media theory and social theory has come from critical political economy. The first generation of critical global media theorists, such as Herbert Schiller, combined an analysis of the global political economy (dependency theory) with an analysis of the cultural impacts of uneven global media flows (cultural imperialism). While more recent work in this field tends to shy away from the stronger variants of cultural imperialism theories (see, for example, Miller & Kraidy, 2016, pp. 26–32), there is nonetheless a continuing connection made between macro-analyses of where media sit in contemporary global capitalism as a political-economic system, with perspectives on the dominant ideologies associated with this system variously labelled neoliberalism, globalism and consumerism. Criticisms of these approaches tend to either question the media theory, particularly assumptions about ideological dominance, or the political economy, but typically do so in a way that does not propose a new synthesis. Globalization theories, for instance, are less clearly constituted as a distinct paradigm than critical political economy.

An example of a 'media-centric' analysis is provided by Grabe and Myrick's (2016) account of the role of media in enabling citizen participation in political life and developing informed citizenship. They argue that conventional political theory routinely underestimates the significance of media in democratic theory, because it works with a 'rational actor' model of politics that does not adequately consider 'the deliberate entanglement of emotion with knowledge acquisition and political participation' (Grabe & Myrick, 2016, p. 216). When the role of media is considered, the focus is on information media and so-called 'hard news', and not on entertainment and 'soft news' genres; this is also reflected in a preference for words over images as the primary mode of political communication. Grabe and Myrick make the argument that not only do images, entertainment media, infotainment, etc. matter in shaping citizen participation in political life, but that this is consistent with a growing body of work in the neurosciences as well as the social sciences indicating that 'affect – in concurrence with rational thought – is instrumental to living a collaborative life' (2016, p. 221). In other words, a

more media-centric approach to understanding informed citizenship enables a better understanding of trends in contemporary politics, such as the role of social media in forming 'affective publics' that engage in political action (cf. Papacharissi, 2015), political engagement outside of traditional channels such as elections and political parties, and the role of fictional media depictions of politics (e.g. *The West Wing*, *House of Cards*), political satire, and hybrid 'infotainment' formats in shaping contemporary politics worldwide (see McNair *et al.*, 2017 for analysis in the Australian context).

By way of contrast, the cultural theorist David Morley has recently called for a *non-media-centric* approach to media studies. By this, Morley means that:

> We need a new paradigm for the discipline, which attends more closely to its material as well as its symbolic dimensions. If improvements in the speed of communications are central to the time-space compressions of our era, emphasis has recently fallen almost exclusively on the virtual dimension (the movement of information) to the neglect of the analysis of the corresponding movements of objects, commodities, and persons … We should aim to develop a model for the integrated analysis of communications, which places current technological changes in historical perspective and returns the discipline to the full range of its classical concerns. (2009, p. 114)

This means, for example, thinking about communications and transport as together constituting the global infrastructure that moves people, images, information, and commodities, and observing how such networked flows can be blocked as well as facilitated (e.g. nation-state restrictions on the movement of certain groups of people, or inequalities of access to information infrastructure). It rejects the idea of a sharp distinction between 'old' and 'new' media, arguing that 'material' and 'virtual' geographies are intertwined, and that it is possible to 'map' global communication and media flows just as one would map the movement of goods and people through shipping, aircraft travel, etc. It would also guard against presumptions about growing global mobility and developments associated with it (e.g. declining attachment to particular places, or the waning of a sense of national identity), to instead ask:

> *Who* is mobile in relation to *which* material and virtual geographies … who has access to what, how that access is patterned and what consequences that access has for everyday experiences of movement. What we need to avoid is … the idea that we're all mobile now, and in much the same way. (Morley *et al.*, 2014, p. 688)

The two perspectives here are not presented as polar oppositions, and the point is not that one needs to prefer one over the other. Both provide vitally important insights into contemporary media. But it is to note that an important methodological question in global media studies is the significance that one wishes to give to media technologies, industries and content, as distinct from other social, cultural, political and economic factors, in shaping global media developments.

Media and power

The question of the relationship of media to power is a vitally important one in global media studies. Thompson has defined power as 'the ability to act in pursuit of one's aims and interests … to intervene in the course of events and to affect their outcome' (Thompson, 1995, p. 13). In a similar vein, Manuel Castells (2009, p. 10) defines power as 'the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actors in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interests and values'. Castells makes the point that power can be 'exercised by means of coercion (or the possibility of it) and/or by the construction of meaning on the basis of the discourses through which social actors guide their actions' (2009, p. 10). Media power is particularly important with regards to power exercised through consent and compliance rather than through coercion. Freedman (2015, p. 274) defines media power as referring to 'the relationships – between actors, institutional structures, and contexts – that organize the allocation of the symbolic resources necessary to structure our knowledge about, and by extension our capacity to intervene in, the world around us'.

Power can be both relational and structural. The concept of *relational power*, or power as possession, owes a particular debt to the work of sociologist Max Weber, who defined power as 'the chance of a man or of a number of men [*sic*] to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action' (Weber, 1946, p. 180). In this perspective, power constitutes a form of action based on identifiable decisions, issues and social actors, or what Steven Lukes describes as 'the power of *A* to get *B* to do something they would not otherwise do' (Lukes, 2005, p. 16). Freedman associates relational power with consensus-based understandings of the social order, where 'power is widely distributed, pluralistically organized, and contributes to a relatively stable social arrangement' (Freedman, 2015, p. 275). From this perspective, the media perform both an integrative function, binding individual citizens to the nation-state and the broader society, and provide the 'mixed economy' of outlets that can cater to the diverse needs and interests of

the wider society, subject to a limited degree of state regulation of the 'marketplace of ideas'.

Structural power refers to the power, not only of one party over another in actual decisions, but power over the agenda as to what is or is not deemed important and hence requiring decisions to be made. Steven Lukes' 'three-dimensional' view of power, which involves 'power [by A over B] … by influencing, shaping or determining his [*sic*] very wants' is an example of a structural power framework (Lukes, 2005, p. 27). Theories of *hegemony* inspired by the Marxist political theorist Antonio Gramsci provide another example of structural power, with its notion that '"common sense" becomes one of the stakes over which ideological struggle is conducted' (Hall, 1996a, p. 43). It is also consistent with what Freedman terms the *contradiction* model of media power, where:

> The media as a set of institutions and practices … are implicated in the regular advocacy of 'common sense' … But … when pushed to do so by popular mobilizations and mass struggles, the media may be able to … enhance prospects for change. (2015, pp. 204–285)

The concept of structural power, or power as being enmeshed in complex networks that entail not only domination but also consent, can be also found in the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault argues that there was a need to focus not on power in the abstract, but on *power relations*, or 'the strategies, networks, the mechanisms, all those techniques by which a decision is accepted and by which that decision could not but be taken in the way it was' (1988, pp. 103–104). In his later work, Foucault became particularly interested in the relationship of strategies of power to the conduct of government, and what he termed *governmentality*, or the 'new governmental techniques' that balanced 'political power wielded over legal subjects with pastoral power wielded over live individuals' (1988, p. 67; cf. Dean, 2014). The legal dimension of power is particularly important since, for Foucault, the distinctiveness of power in modern societies is that it is exercised over free individuals: 'power is exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free' (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). For Foucault:

> The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to another than a question of government. This word must be allowed the very broad meaning which it had in the sixteenth century. 'Government' did not refer only to

political structures or to the management of states … but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. *To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.* (1982, p. 221, emphasis in the original)

Thompson (1995, pp. 16–17) identified four forms of power that operate in modern societies: political, economic, coercive, and cultural or symbolic (see Table 1.1):

1. *Political* – institutions and practices primarily concerned with coordination and regulation; this form of power is primarily held through government and the state;
2. *Economic* – the ability to control processes of production, distribution, prices in markets, and accumulation; such power is most notably held by corporations, but may also be held by other institutional agents, such as trade unions or producers' associations;
3. *Coercive* – the capacity to use actual or potential force against others, particularly in combination with political power, notably associated with the armed forces, the police, security agencies, etc.;
4. *Cultural/symbolic* – power associated with the ability to control the production, transmission and reception of symbolic forms, or the means of information and communication.

Table 1.1 Forms of power

Forms of power	Resources	Paradigmatic institutions
Economic power	Material and financial resources	Economic institutions (e.g. commercial enterprises, trade unions, producers' groups)
Political power	Authority	Political institutions (e.g. nation-states, regulatory agencies)
Coercive power	Physical and armed force	Coercive institutions (e.g. military, police, prisons)
Symbolic power	Means of information and communication	Cultural institutions (e.g. religious institutions, schools and universities, media industries)

Source: Thompson (1995, p. 17). Reprinted with permission of Polity and Stanford University Press.

Thompson argued that media are primarily associated with forms of *cultural power*, or *symbolic power*, that arise from the capacity to control, use and distribute resources associated with the means of information and communication. Symbolic power matters because it is the principal means by which the actions of others can be shaped through the transformation of values, beliefs and ideas, or the practices and institutions of *culture*. Media are particularly important in terms of Thompson's schema, since they are not only institutional sites through which cultural or symbolic power may be exercised, but are also major corporations that invest in resources, employ people, and produce goods and services, and therefore exercise significant economic power. The shift from mass communications traditions of media research to critical media theories entailed a shift in the focus of studies of power from relational power to structural power. Whereas earlier approaches to media focused upon power in terms of influence and the impact of particular media messages, the critical media studies tradition understood the question of media power in terms of *ideology* and structural power, and the complex relationship of dominant ideologies to questions of representation, consent, and the social construction of reality, or what Hall (1982, p. 64) referred to as 'the power to define the rules of the game'.

The second major issue in theories of media power is the extent to which media power is largely reflective of other systems of social power (economic, political and coercive), or whether it has its own internal dynamics and relative autonomy from other spheres. It has been the process of drawing the interconnections between these two dimensions of media power – the cultural-symbolic and the political-economic – that has historically defined the critical political economy approach. While the mass communications tradition, and associated approaches such as modernization theories, have tended to approach economic, political, coercive and cultural power as relatively discrete in their nature and operations, the critical paradigm saw these as being interconnected.

The relationship between different forms of power, and how these play themselves out in terms of global media, also constitutes an important point of difference between political economy and globalization theories. Whereas political economists identify strong overlaps between economic, political and cultural/symbolic power, globalization theorists have often pointed to disjunctures between these forms of power. Globalization theorists tend to see power relations globally as being more diffuse and decentred, whereas political economists tend to view such power relations as highly concentrated, and becoming increasingly concentrated in fewer hands over time.

The remainder of this chapter will provide an overview of the key concepts that will inform the discussion of different approaches to global media, such

as modernization theories, critical political economy, and globalization theories. It proposes four frameworks to global media that provide analytical lenses through which key concepts can be understood. They are:

• The economic framework
• The policy framework
• The cultural framework
• The digital framework.

The economic framework

As media power is related to economic power, it is therefore important that we understand the economic environment in which media businesses operate. The field of media economics provides important insights in this regard, although it is in some key respects fragmented due to the limited history of engagement, and the often intense intellectual rivalry, between the mainstream tradition and critical political economy.[1] Nonetheless, the economics of media is important, not least because, as Gillian Doyle (2013, p. 1) has observed:

> as a discipline [economics] is highly relevant to understanding how media firms and industries operate … [because] most of the decisions taken by those who run media organizations are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by resource and financial issues.

As with other branches of economics, media economics focuses upon how firms and consumers interact through two types of structures: markets and industries. Media companies operate in three types of markets. First, there is the *market for creative content*, or the ability to produce and/or distribute material that is sufficiently compelling to audiences, readers or users for them to exchange money and/or time for access to such content. This creates a market for creative talent, professionals and specialist labour. Second, there is the *market for financial resources*, or the ability to generate capital to finance their ongoing operations as well as new investments in technology, distribution platforms or territorial expansion of their operations. Finally, there is the *market for audiences* (also referred to as readers, users or consumers), and the competition both for people's spending behaviour and the time and attention they devote to accessing the content of a particular media company, as against other uses of their time. Garnham (1990) proposed that media companies are simultaneously competing for consumer expenditure, for advertising expenditure, and for the free time of people, in what has been termed the 'experience economy' (Gilmore & Pine, 2011).

The range of media products is heterogeneous and highly complex, and Doyle (2013, p. 12) has observed that it is 'difficult to define what constitutes a unit of media content'. For example, if one purchases a newspaper or magazine, the content is the whole product, whereas with radio and television, one consumes particular programmes, rather than the whole content of a network or service. One distinctive feature of media markets that media economists have observed is that they are typically *two-sided markets*, or even *multi-sided markets*. Media businesses provide platforms that bring together two or more agents operating on different sides of a market, but whose relationships are interdependent. For example, broadcasters compete for the time of audiences with their products and services, selling access to audiences to advertisers, and hence to the producers of other goods and services who advertise on their channels (Ballon, 2014, p. 78). Similarly, digital platform providers such as Facebook reduce transaction costs for multiple agents – including both commercial agents and individual users – by easing interaction between them, and profiting from the network effects of making it a requirement to be on these platforms in order to derive such benefits (Bauer, 2014). Media organizations compete for both audiences and advertisers in particular *geographical markets*, which may be local, national or international (see Figure 1.2). In some instances, particularly in relation to the allocation of broadcasting spectrum, government regulatory authorities determine the geographical reach of the market area in terms of audiences. In other instances, most notably in relation to the internet, the global reach of the medium enables media organizations to compete in a market space that is at least potentially borderless and global.
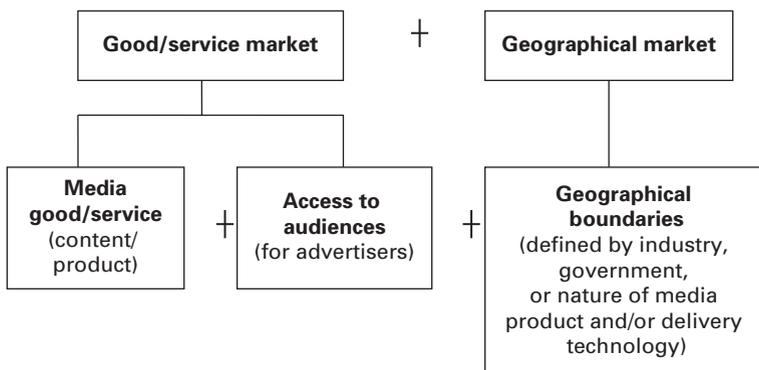
Figure 1.2 The nature of media markets
Source: Picard (1989, p. 21). Reprinted with permission of SAGE publications.

A characteristic of media industries has been a tendency towards *concentration of media ownership*. Various studies (Finn *et al.*, 2004; Noam, 2009, 2016; Albarran, 2010) have found no media industries to be perfectly competitive, and a characteristic market structure to be that of *oligopoly*, with few sellers and very limited price competition. Gomery (1989, p. 50) observed that 'economic theory has a hard time with oligopolists', because they have a wide range of options in terms of market behaviour, and a degree of control over market pressures. Competition between oligopolists is also often marked by periodic collusion, including lobbying of politicians to maintain favourable policy conditions, and maintaining barriers to entry for potential new competitors. Expansion in the media sector involves not only competitive strategies to expand market share within particular markets, but also what is known as *vertical expansion*, or takeovers, mergers and acquisitions of related production and distribution interests within the industry supply chain, and *conglomeration*, which involves expansion into complementary activities, either through mergers and acquisitions or the development of new enterprises (Doyle, 2013, pp. 9–21). A key aim of media conglomerates is to enable productive synergies to be developed across multiple product lines 'by retooling content for additional uses, by trying to create successful cross-media concept products in films, books and games, and using staff from one media operation to provide services to another' (Picard, 2011b, p. 212). Where such strategies are successful, as they have been for many years with Disney, and as seen today with the *Harry Potter* franchise, or the cinematic adaptation of Marvel comics characters such as *Spiderman*, *Iron Man* and *X-Men* since the merger with Disney in 2009, conglomeration can develop very powerful and recognizable global media products.

The policy framework

Policy institutions have a central role in regulating the ownership, production and distribution of media in all forms. Although the precise institutional forms and underlying principles vary across nations, the regulation of communication itself is, as James Michael (1990, p. 40) has observed, 'as old as blood feuds over insults, and … as classic an issue as deciding whose turn it is to use the talking drum or the ram's horn'. Different branches of social theory identify distinctive rationales for media policy, and there are different forms that regulation can take, that can involve a mix of state and non-state actors. It is also important to note that media policy and regulation sit within the wider framework of media governance, which can include 'the totality of institutions and instruments that shape and organize a policy system – formal and informal, national and supranational, public and private, large-scale and smaller scale' (Freedman, 2008, p. 15).

In economic theory, three key arguments that underpin state intervention in media markets is commonly justified in terms of *market failure* (Picard, 2011b). Three issues in particular feature in such discussions. First, there is the *concentration of media ownership*, and undesirable consequences that stem from it, including restricting entry to potential new competitors, restricting the 'marketplace of ideas', and giving too much power and influence over the political process to 'media moguls'. Second, there are *externalities*, or costs and benefits borne by parties other than those directly engaged in producing or consuming the good or service in question. Externalities may be negative or positive: excessive violence in the media may be seen to generate negative externalities by promoting anti-social behaviour, whereas locally produced media content may promote positive externalities such as enabling citizens to develop a better understanding of their national culture, or encouraging overseas travellers to visit the country. Policies such as content standards regulations or local content rules may provide ways of minimizing negative externalities or promoting positive ones in such instances. Finally, media can constitute *public goods* that are: (1) non-rivalrous, in that one person's consumption does not prevent another person from consuming them; and (2) non-excludable, where price-based discrimination between consumers would not be appropriate. Both broadcast media and internet-based content have public good elements, and it may be that private provision leads to undersupply of some forms of content. Government support for non-profit public service broadcasters (PSBs) is often justified on this basis, as PSBs can be required by law to provide programme types that are undersupplied by commercial media and which are considered to have cultural value or positive externalities, such as children's programming, documentaries, arts and science programmes, and programmes for cultural and linguistic minorities.

The issues around the role of the media in public communication has a breadth and significance that cannot be captured by purely economic arguments. In democratic societies, plurality of ownership and dispersed distribution structures allow for a breadth of voices and representations that will most closely approximate the breadth of viewpoints in society itself (Curran, 2005). Moreover, as Baker (2007, p. 16) argued, 'the widest possible dispersion of media power reduces the risk of the abuse of communicative power'. Our concerns about media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi and others have never been purely about their economic impact. It has also been a concern that their control over media can be used to shape the political system itself, from using media to prevent the enactment of laws and regulations that may restrict media concentration to active intervention in the structure of the main political parties themselves (or, in Berlusconi's case, forming his own governing party, Italy's *Forza Italia*). In the twenty-first century, there may be a 'battle of the moguls' taking place, between

the traditional media barons such as Murdoch, and the digital media giants such as Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs such as Peter Thiel and Elon Musk.

The precise forms that media policy and regulation take are shaped by the overall national media system. One influential account of national media systems has been that of Hallin and Mancini (2004), which distinguishes between market liberal, democratic corporatist and political partisan models. The democratic corporatist models – characteristic of Germany, Austria and the Scandinavian countries – have tended to be associated with the strongest forms of public interest media regulation, although strong PSBs can exist in some market liberal environments, as seen with the BBC in Great Britain (cf. Syvertsen *et al.*, 2014 on the Nordic nations). Curran and Park (2000) proposed differentiating media systems on a fourfold axis between authoritarian and democratic societies on one axis and neoliberal and regulated media systems on the other. Such taxonomies are informed by the perception that 'ways of understanding the world's media system are unduly influenced by the experience of a few, untypical countries' and that this 'distorts understanding not only of non-Western countries but also of a large part of the West as well' (Curran & Park, 2000, p. 15).

The combination of media convergence and media globalization poses fundamental questions about the sustainability of media policy models developed in the twentieth century for contemporary media environments. As Konrad von Finckenstein, then-Chair of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), observed:

> The [media] industry is going through fundamental change in technology, in business models and in corporate structures. It has become a single industry, thoroughly converged and integrated. Yet it continues to be regulated under … Acts which date from 20 years ago. Authority continues to be divided among different departments and agencies. (Finckenstein, 2011, p. 1)

Media convergence refers to the combination of computing, communications, and media content around networked digital media platforms. It involves the rise of new, digitally based companies such as Google, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and others as significant media content and access providers, the metamorphosis of established media institutions as digital content producers and distributors, the rapid growth of social network media platforms, the proliferation of user-created content, and multi-screen accessing of media content (e.g. accessing TV programmes from tablet computers). The policy challenge posed is whether these broader patterns of media

convergence also point towards global policy convergence, with pressures to respond to the challenge of digital content platforms that lack a clear territorial basis.

The cultural framework

As the media are central to the provision of cultural or symbolic resources globally, integral to the exercise of cultural or symbolic power, and at the forefront of contemporary forms of cultural identity, debates about the cultural impact of global media are vitally important to any discussions of globalization. The ways in which the media are linked to culture more generally are complex. One approach, which has elements of conventional aesthetic theory as well as being influenced by the neo-Marxist 'Frankfurt School', questions whether we should consider mass media to be 'culture' at all. From this perspective, the mass media – developed in advanced capitalist economies as the culture industry – have been engaged in a debasement of culture, by industrializing its production, commodifying its consumption and reducing its content to either pro-capitalist propaganda or 'mere' entertainment that provides a distraction and temporary salve to the masses (Steinert, 2003). From this perspective, mass media are seen largely as ideological supports to the dominant corporate and political interests, and 'meaningful' culture is that which is engaged in political struggle against such interests. This is not an approach that will be considered at length in this book, although elements of such an approach feature in the critical political economy tradition of studying global media, particularly where global media are seen as promoting a dominant ideology that has variously been termed neoliberalism, globalism or consumerism.

A quite different approach comes from the anthropological understanding of culture, which has been less concerned with the 'great works' works of art and literature than with culture as the lived experience of people and communities, or what Edward Tylor described in 1903 as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man [*sic*] as a member of society' (quoted in Thompson, 1990, p. 128). This is a definition of *culture as lived experience*, or what people do in a given social situation, with the resources available to them, to both produce and consume culture. Culture is understood here less as a showcase for human excellence and more as a diverse repository of symbolic forms. Raymond Williams, one of the founding figures of cultural studies, proposed that culture was not simply an 'ideal' concept concerned principally with art and aesthetics, but that it existed in the anthropological sense of being 'a particular way

of life, whether of a people, a period [or] a group' (Williams, 1976, p. 18). For Williams, this 'social' definition of culture referred to 'meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior' (Williams, 1965, p. 57).

The study of culture has been a key element of the discipline of cultural studies, which has grown in significance since the 1960s. In a key essay in the field, Stuart Hall (1986) described the *two paradigms* of cultural studies as being culturalism and structuralism. Drawing attention to the formative texts of British cultural historians such as Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson, Hall observed that these authors developed an understanding of culture as lived experience that moved beyond dichotomies between 'high' and 'low' culture, to instead 'conceptualize culture as interwoven with all social practices, and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity … through which men and women make history' (Hall, 1986, p. 39). This understanding of culture has been central to what Hall terms the *culturalist* tradition, with its focus upon the lived experience of ordinary people.

The alternative paradigm of *structuralism* was concerned less with what people did than with the overarching social conditions under which they did it. It drew attention to the ways in which individuals were the 'products' of a system of social, cultural, linguistic and psychological relationships that existed independently of the actions of particular individuals, which possessed an underlying structural 'code' that was not in itself immediately accessible to those individuals who were expected to adopt it. Structuralism was strongly influenced by developments in the field of semiotics, and its understanding of language as a system or code where, as Umberto Eco argued, 'every act of communication … presupposes a signification system as its necessary condition' (Eco, 1976, p. 9).

The relationship between culture as lived experience (culturalism) and culture as a complex signifying system (structuralism) generates some interesting tensions when applied to popular mass media forms, and in particular to the question of the relationship of critical media and cultural theories to popular media and culture. This question has been approached at the empirical level, aiming to map the relationship of media to their audiences and how people use the media, such as the *uses and gratifications* approach to audience studies in mass communications research (Curran, 1990), and at the structural level of the *dominant ideology* thesis, where it is argued that the dominant meanings of popular media reflect the class interests of those who own and control these institutions. Mark Gibson has observed that cultural studies has faced a recurring tension around how it approaches power, between viewing culture as 'a general pattern of social organization', with its own logics and determinants, and as ideology, 'requiring everything to be referenced to "real relations" at the

social level' (Gibson, 2007, p. 107). It will be argued in this book that critical theories of global media have typically worked with the second interpretation, of culture as an ideological system that serves dominant interests, and that a number of the weaknesses of the critical approach stem from this.

The other key issue raised by the relationship of global media to culture is whether there is a tendency towards a common global culture, whose shape is at least partly attributable to common exposure to the cultural products of global media. Theories of global media as otherwise diverse as Marshall McLuhan's concept of the 'Global Village', modernization theories, and dependency or 'cultural imperialism' theories all posit some version of the argument that global media are vectors for some or other form of global culture. But it is useful to think about how the terms 'culture' and 'media' are being defined in such debates. If culture is understood in the more structural sense of a shared symbolic order, with the media increasingly at the heart of such systems of communication, then global media may indeed be generating forms of global culture. It would mark the globalization of what John Thompson (1995, p. 46) termed the 'mediatization of culture' as a core feature of a globalizing capitalist modernity. If, however, the concept of culture is understood in the anthropological sense of being a *lived and shared experience*, or 'way of life of a people', then it is hard to maintain that we live in a global culture, or that we are heading towards one. Insofar as claims about a global culture entail a convergence of the customs, beliefs and ways of living between the different people of the world, then there is considerable evidence to suggest that such a convergence is not happening, even as globalization entails more interaction among different peoples and cultures.

The digital framework

The information and communications technology (ICT) revolution that has gained momentum from the 1980s onwards has fundamentally transformed the global media environment. The global popularization of the internet in the 1990s and 2000s saw all media content take a digital form, and digital media has itself been transformed with the rise of social media from the mid-2000s onwards (Meikle, 2016) and the migration of digital content from networked personal computers to a diverse array of mobile devices (smartphones, tablet devices, e-readers etc.), and to traditional media platforms such as television through digital streaming services (Netflix, Amazon Prime etc.). Transformations in digital media and ICT capabilities need to be understood in the context of what has been termed the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', defined as:

The staggering confluence of emerging technology breakthroughs, covering wide-ranging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the

Internet of things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing … [and] the fusion of technologies across the physical, digital and biological worlds. (Schwab, 2017, p. 1)

The impact of digital media is particularly profound as it is associated with *media convergence*, or the integration of ICTs, communication networks and media content, combined with a decoupling of relationships between platforms and types of media content, as content now moves seamlessly across digital platforms and media devices. It is also a force for *media globalization*, as the internet enables the global distribution of information and media content across common digital platforms, with far less formal gatekeeping at a national level than has characterized cinema or broadcasting. Media convergence occurs in parallel with a series of other changes in the global media and communications environment that include: (1) increased access to high-speed broadband internet; (2) the globalization of media platforms, content and services; (3) accelerated platform and service innovation, that makes it increasingly difficult to define the 'industry' that major digital companies are operating in; (4) the proliferation of user-created content, and the associated shift of media users from audiences to participants; and (5) a blurring of public–private and age-based distinctions, as all media content is increasingly distributed and consumed online (Flew, 2016a).

These radical changes in the media landscape require a rethink of core media policy principles, as well as how we understand the digital media economy. Identification of the key *media industry actors* has changed, with 'new' media giants such as Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Netflix, Alibaba, Baidu, Tencent etc. possessing a different relationship to media laws, policies and regulations from more traditional media giants such as Time Warner, News Corporation, Disney and other big media conglomerates. For example, media ownership rules have traditionally been premised upon a relatively stable definition of a media industry, whereas a feature of the new digital players is that they aim to move across conventional industry boundaries, having a promiscuous relationship to the traditional content providers and distribution channels. This opens up questions of regulatory parity between 'old media' and 'new media' platforms and services. Similarly, there are difficulties in applying media content rules, as there are questions of the equivalent treatment of media content across platforms as digital content now moves easily between print, broadcast and online, as well as a growing fuzziness around the distinction between 'media content' and personal communication, and between mass media that is subject to government regulations and user-created content which is for the most part free of government controls (Flew, 2014a).

As the internet is a global network, and major developments in digital platforms have happened largely independently of national governments, there has been the question of whether the turn to digital media is a factor in the weakening of nation-states. Digital media platforms have proven to be hard to regulate at the national level, partly because of jurisdictional issues – the major platforms are not territorially based in most nation-states in the world – and partly because of the bottom-up, user-driven nature of content on the platforms, which makes content monitoring by external agencies extremely difficult and time-consuming. In some instances, the rise of digital and social media has been seen as a factor behind why nationally based regulations are giving way to greater management of media content by the social media platform providers themselves, as with user flagging of inappropriate content on sites such as Google and Facebook (Crawford & Lumby, 2013). There is also the issue of whether new supranational forms of regulation are coming into play, and whether non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can work more productively with supranational agencies and perhaps with the platform providers themselves around shared policy objectives, as national forms of law, regulation and governance become increasingly ineffectual in the face of these globalizing forces (Mansell & Raboy, 2011).

An argument that is made in this book is that claims about the 'demise of the nation-state', and the inability to manage digital media flows at a national level, are overstated (Flew & Waisbord, 2015; Flew, 2016b). There are clearly parts of the world where there is, and always has been, a significant degree of monitoring and filtering of internet content: China, Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia are countries that come to mind in this regard. In other cases, crackdowns on political dissent have been accompanied by the periodic banning of particular social media platforms, as in countries such as Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey at various times. Outside of the context of authoritarian states, there are disagreements about the appropriate jurisdictional reach of government with regards to global media platforms, as seen with regulations adopted by the European Union towards platform providers such as Google with the 'Right to be Forgotten' laws and associated privacy provisions (Holt & Malčić, 2015; Rustad & Kulevska, 2015). More generally, as Iosifidis (2016, p. 29) has argued, 'states retain a central role in the growth and institutionalization of global governance', not least because 'the most significant shifts in economic globalization and the rise of multinational enterprises are heavily dependent on state support in order to provide an environment of smooth functioning'. The apparently deterritorialized nature of digital media platforms as compared to traditional, territorially based print and broadcast media, should not be conflated with the assumption that such entities can operate completely

independently of the legal, policy and institutional infrastructures that have historically been associated with governments and nation-states.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified key concepts that will inform the approach taken to understanding global media throughout the book. It has observed that when we speak of 'media' of any form, we are referring to technological means of communication, with the term 'technology' understood in its widest sense to refer to practices and institutions associated with technologies, as well as the devices and platforms themselves. The media are therefore a combination of technologies and enabling infrastructures, industries and institutions, and content that forms part of wider cultures.

A recurring challenge in communication and media studies is that of balancing media-centric and society-centric accounts of communications. Media theorists often point to the 'blind spots' that exist in other branches of social theory, such as the explanations of political behaviour and citizenship that exclude the increasingly central role of the institutions and practices of the media, in both its traditional forms and increasingly online. At the same time, the need to situate the media in a wider socio-cultural and political-economic context places limits on the need to avoid simple cause-and-effect arguments around the media and societal developments. The complexities of these relationships become apparent when we consider the relationship of media to power. Media are associated with cultural or symbolic power, as distinct from political, economic and coercive forms of power, but these are clearly categories that intersect with and overlap with one another.

Finally, the chapter sought to situate the media in four broader fields of study. First, it considered the economic framework of media, and some of the distinctive insights that economic approaches can provide to understanding media markets and ownership structures. Second, it considered the policy framework and the degree to which the activities of media organizations are tied up within nationally based structures of laws, policies and regulations, and whether and how these are being transformed by media globalization. Third, it considered the cultural framework, with particular reference to debates about whether culture is best understood in terms of distinctive ways of life or as signifying systems with their own structural logics. The relationship between the 'culturalist' and 'structuralist' approaches to media is important in the global context, as media can only operate as socially meaningful cultural forms insofar as their codes and meanings are accepted across societies and cultures: the wider cultural influences of media cannot be derived solely from the technologies themselves, or even from their industry and ownership structures. Finally, the chapter considered the

digital framework, and the challenge presented to traditional approaches to media by the internet and convergent digital technologies and platforms. The argument made, which will be returned to at different points in this book, is that we need to both recognize profound changes taking place in media around the globe and avoid falling into a determinist trap of assuming that media globalization means the end of nation-states, national cultures and identities, and territorially defined systems of production, distribution and governance. In that respect, understanding global media also requires us to set limits to 'the global' as a structural force that overrides all other ways of thinking about media and society.

Note

1   These divisions in media economics speak to much wider methodological and philosophical divides within the discipline of economics. Earl and Peng (2012) identified 12 distinct 'brands' of economic thought, meaning that the mainstream neoclassical approach is confronted not only by radical political economy, as in media economics debates, but by areas as diverse as 'old' and 'new' institutional economics, behavioural economics, evolutionary economics, Austrian economics, Post-Keynesian economics, feminist economics and others. These multiple 'heterodox' forms of economics differ not only in their underlying assumptions and their methodologies, but also in their perspectives on the capitalist economic system itself, with some being very positive (e.g. Austrian economics) and others highly critical.

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