

## **FILM : GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM**

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*Globalization is one of the main words of the 21-st century. We feel its presence in almost every field of our life: in economic life, politics, culture and media. It is believed that globalization of the media tends to undermine national cultures. Media might play necessary and active role concerning the meaning of culture, but is improbably to be called a "sufficient condition" for cultural resistance or submission. At what degree globalization of media can undermine national culture depends on a particular national culture.*

*This article focuses on the problem of globalization of culture and the role of film in modern world, especially in Indonnesia. This paper will discuss the different definitions of the terms 'media', 'culture', 'globalization', and 'cultural imperialism'. The article presents current arguments about the relationship between globalization, film and national cultures. The aim of the article is to study the role of media (film) in globalization process, the degree of their influence on national cultures and to determine tasks facing scholars.*

*Cultural Imperialism Theory, used in this article, states that Western nations dominate the media around the world which in return has a powerful effect on Third World Cultures by imposingn them Western views and therefore destroying their native cultures. Western Civilization produces the majority of the film, because they have the money to do so. The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than produce their own. Therefore, Third World countries are watching media filled with the Western world's way of living, believing, and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want and do the same things in their countries and destroy their own culture.*

*Key words: film, globalization, culture, cultural imperialism.*

### **Introduction**

It is no doubt that we live in rapidly changing times. Globalization is one of the main words of the 21-st century. During the 1990's there was an accelerated process of internationalization of production, distribution, and management of goods and services. Globalization is an inexact expression fora wide array of worldwide changes in politics, communications, business and trade, life styles, and culture (Hachten and Scotton : 2008). McLuhan (1960) say that globalization is narrowing of time and space, so the world as a *village*. While Manuel Castells stated that globalization is the interconnected world in all fields, as economic, social, politics and culture.

We feel that globalization presence in almost every field of our life: in economic field, politics, culture and media. Media, as Castell say, is the trigger of globalization. Newspaper, magazine, radio, film, television, and internet that causes interconnected world. It is believed that globalization of the media, tends to undermine national cultures. Media might play necessary and active role concerning the meaning of culture, but is improbably to be called a "sufficient condition" for cultural resistance or submission. At what degree globalization of media can undermine national culture depends on a particular national culture. One of the media that role for the globalization is a movie. Film presents content that very variegated.

## **Reading The Theories**

### **Film as Mass Media**

Mass media, or "media" means to technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, film, television, and the Internet. The general public typically relies on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, social issues, entertainment, and news in pop culture.

McQuail (2010) conveyed four main elements that are of significance in the wider life of mass media. First, certain communicative purposes, needs, or uses. Second, technologies for communicating publicly to many at a distance. Third, forms of social organization that provide the skills and frameworks for organizing, production and distribution. Last, forms of regulation and control. McQuail also identified the three major functions of a mass media that is surveillance of environment, interpretation of the information and transmission of heritage. But in today's generation mass media's major functions are information, entertainment, advertising and development.

Media have great influence in politics and in forming social change. For example, television can greatly influence the election of Indonesian national leader on the basis of visual image. The media involve us in concerns such as civil rights issues, violence against women and children, human trafficking, and etc. Film, as a form of mass media has power to influence its audience. Film also able to drive the audience to follow what displayed on the screen. Media give us an intimate sense of national issues and global concerns.

Film as a form of mass media began at the end of the nineteenth century as a technological novelty, but what it offered was scarcely new in content or function. Film transferred to a new means of presentation and distribution an older tradition of entertainment, offering stories, spectacles, music, drama, humour and technical tricks for popular consumption (McQuail : 2010). John F. Kennedy say that “the motion picture today is the greatest medium of expression the world has ever known. (It is/film) capable of giving life and form to all ideas, practical and emotional ...Its only limitation (is) human ingenuity” (Sanders & Norris : 2001).

Cinema or film as form of mass media has become a powerful tool since the day it was introduced to the world until now. Cinema perhaps the mainstreams of all art forms and much accessed and much preferred especially in Indonesia. Film is a reflection of society for both the present and the past. Film and its innovation sometimes have to catch up to society but sometimes it leads the society and culture too. Becoming a less ‘mass’ medium, the film has not been able to claim full rights to political and artistic self-expression, and most countries retain an apparatus of licensing, censorship and powers of control.

## **Culture**

Culture defined as the totality of the mental and physical reactions and activities that characterize the behavior of the individuals composing a social group collectively and individually in relation to their natural environment, to other groups, to members of the group itself and of each individual to himself. It also includes the products of these activities and their role in the life of the groups. The mere enumeration of these various aspects of life, however, does not constitute culture. It is more, for its elements are not independent, they have a structure (Boas 1963:149).

In the book ‘Cultures and Organizations’ published in 2010 Geert Hofstede defines culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (Hofstede 2010:6). Hofstede also writes that culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social games.

E.B. Taylor defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by...(members) of society. While Murphy state that culture means the total body of tradition borne by a society and transmitted from generation to generation. It thus refers to the norms, values, standards by which people act, and it includes the ways distinctive in each society of ordering the world and rendering it intelligible. Culture is...a set of mechanisms for survival, but it provides us also with a definition of reality. It is the matrix into which we are born, it is the anvil upon which our persons and destinies are forged (Murphy : 1986).

### **Globalization**

Britannica Concise Encyclopedia globalization is defined as ‘Process by which the experience of everyday life, marked by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, is becoming standardized around the world. Globalization become a popular idea because of the rise of global communications, especially the internet, which made people feel that connections across the world were flowing more strongly, speedily and becoming more democratic. With the end of the cold war it seemed that the bipolar world had become more unified, whether through cultural homogenisation or the spread of capitalism. People became more conscious of global problems, like climate change. Economic interdependency and instability were more visible.

McLuhan (1964) state that “today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned”. Marshall McLuhan's insights made the concept of a global village, interconnected by an electronic nervous system, part of our popular culture well before it actually happened. According to Anthony Giddens, globalization is ‘the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant locations in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’ (Giddens 1990: 64).

Globalization may appear a macro phenomenon and distant, not the same as micro issues that have more of an impact on daily life. Yet large-scale global processes of economic restructuring and international political power have a big impact on our individual lives. The global economy and distribution of wealth affect, for example, our chances of employment and material circumstances. Identity and cultural experience is forged out of global inputs,

from media to music, migration and food. Which side you live on in the constellation of global political powers has significant consequences for your life chances.

In Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy, many contemporary social theorists associate globalization with :

- 1) deterritorialization, according to which a growing variety of social activities takes place irrespective of the geographical location of participants (electronic commerce, possibility of television, Internet, organization of academic video conferences).
- 2) the growth of social interconnectedness across existing geographical and political boundaries (local events in one country can impact on the development of political, economic and cultural life in other countries).
- 3) the speed or velocity of social activity (the proliferation of high-speed transportation, communication, and information technologies constitutes the most immediate source for the blurring of geographical and territorial boundaries).
- 4) a relatively long-term process.
- 5) a multi-pronged process, since deterritorialization, social interconnectedness, and acceleration manifest themselves in many different (economic, political, and cultural) arenas of social activity.

### **Cultural Imperialism Theory**

Cultural Imperialism Theory states that Western nations (USA and Europe) dominate the media around the world which in return has a powerful effect on Third World Cultures by imposing on them Western views and therefore destroying their native cultures. Western Civilization produces the majority of the media (film, news, comics, etc.) because they have the money to do so. The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than produce their own. Therefore, Third World countries are watching media filled with the Western world's way of living, believing, and thinking. The third world cultures then start to want and do the same things in their countries and destroy their own culture (Schiller : 1973).

Schiller (1973) argue about ontological assumptions of this theory that humans do not have the free will to chose how they feel, act, think, and live. They react to what they see on television because there is nothing else to compare it to besides their own lives, usually portrayed as less than what it should be. While the epistemological assumptions of this theory explains that there is one truth and no matter what that truth never going to change. As long

as Third World countries continue to air Western Civilization's programs then the third world countries will always believe they should act, feel, think, and live as Western Civilizations act, feel, think, and live. Last, the axiological assumptions of cultural imperialism theory is value-neutral and objective. It does not matter what beliefs the people of Third World may already hold the television programs or film from the Western World will communicate the same message and effect them in the same way.

Cultural imperialism theory argues that the global economic system is dominated by a core of advanced countries while third world countries remain at the periphery of the system with little control over their economic and political development. According to Galtung's theory of imperialism the world is divided into a dominant Centre (the powerful western countries and interests and dominated Peripheries (the undeveloped countries) (Phillipson 2008). Cultural imperialism is defined as a kind of cultural domination by powerful nations over weak nations. It is viewed as purposeful and intentional because it corresponds to the political interests of powerful countries.

## **Discussion**

Cultural imperialism from Western nations to the Third World nations has two major goals, one economic, to capture markets for its cultural commodities and the other political, to establish hegemony by shaping popular consciousness. The export of entertainment (film, television program) is one of the most important sources of capital accumulation and global profits displacing manufacturing exports. John Tomlinson identifies five ways of thinking about cultural imperialism 1) as a cultural domination, 2) as media imperialism, 3) as national discourse, 4) as a critique of global capitalism, and 5) as a critique of modernity (Cit. by Martin and Nakayama 2010:370-371).

The principle target of cultural imperialism is the political and economic exploitation of youth in the Third World nations. Imperial entertainment and advertisement target young people who are most vulnerable to U.S. commercial propaganda. The message is simple and direct, 'modernity' is associated with consuming U.S. media products. Youth represent a major market for U.S. cultural export and they are most susceptible to the consumerist-individualist propaganda. The mass media manipulates adolescent rebelliousness by appropriating the language of the left and channeling discontent into consumer extravagances. Cultural imperialism focuses on youth not only as a market but also for

political reasons: to undercut a political threat in which personal rebellion could become political revolt against economic as well as cultural forms of control.

The mass media, publicity, advertisement and secular entertainers and intellectuals play a major role today. In the contemporary world, Hollywood, CNN and Disneyland are more influential than religions, morals, and ethics. Cultural globalization has destroyed national identities. Television programs, films, music from the United States and western European countries are very popular and in demand in developing countries and media products from the USA are superior to those produced elsewhere and hence serve as a standard for quality work throughout the world. The effects of this type of cultural domination, reflecting the attitudes and values of Western, particularly American capitalist society are viewed as extremely pervasive and as leading to the homogenization of global culture. Imperialism with the concept of "Globalization" suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas "happening in less purposeful way".

Cultural imperialism, reconceptualized as media imperialism, which some international actors have more impact than others on global culture values, identities, and perceptions. Superhero, like Batman, Superman, Captain America, and James Bond are some example that films can be used as economic and political propaganda tools. Cultural imperialism and the values it promotes has played a major role in preventing exploited individuals from responding collectively to their deteriorating conditions. The symbols, images and ideologies that have spread to the Third World are major obstacles to the conversion of class exploitation and growing immiseration into class conscious bases for collective action.

The great victory of imperialism is not only the material profits, but its conquest of the inner space of consciousness of the oppressed directly through the mass media and indirectly through the capture (or surrender) of its intellectual and political class. Insofar as a revival of mass revolutionary politics is possible, it must begin with open warfare not only with the conditions of exploitation but with culture that subjects its victims.

## **Conclusion**

Discussions about globalization, cultural and media imperialism which began at the end of last century continue today. They include the problems of different approaches and definitions

of the concepts 'globalization' 'culture', 'cultural identity' and others. It is difficult to determine with much certainty the degree of media influence on the life of different societies.

But we can watch the globalization general trends and their influence on the processes taking place in the developing countries for which access of people to increasing amounts of information through communication technologies like Internet is an important and challenging issue. One of the main tasks facing modern scholars is to find reasonable and practical solutions to the problem of preserving and protecting national identities and integrating into the globalization process.

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