

CHAPTER 11

Global Communication and Imperialism

Since the 1990s, 'globalisation' has been one of the most frequently used keywords in politics and academia. The basic claim is that societies have become more global and that we now live in a global society. It is often said that communication technologies play an important role in globalisation. A critical theory of society needs to engage with globalisation and internationalisation. Globalisation sounds very positive, but in reality, global capitalism has resulted in the increasing wealth of transnational corporations, an increase in the exploitation of workers, and nation-states that compete to implement tax breaks for capital. This chapter approaches the topic of globalisation and global communication based on the concept of the new imperialism and critical globalisation studies.¹ First, the chapter engages with the notion of space (section 11.1). Second, the focus is on global space and globalisation (11.2). Third, the relationship of capitalism and globalisation is analysed (11.3). Fourth, the chapter sheds light on the connection of communication, capitalism, and globalisation (11.4).

11.1. Space

In chapter 1, it was argued that space is a fundamental aspect of matter. Matter is based on a dialectic of space and time. Space has to do with the next-to-one-another of concrete existences. In capitalism, space has to do

¹ See: David Harvey. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Richard P. Appelbaum and William I. Robinson, eds. 2005. *Critical Globalization Studies*. New York: Routledge. Leslie Sklair. 2002. *Globalization: Capitalism and Its Alternatives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

How to cite this book:

Fuchs, C. 2020. *Communication and Capitalism: A Critical Theory*. London: University of Westminster Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/book45>. License: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

with the next-to-one-another of workers, workers and capitalists, political actors, private individuals, commodities, accumulated capital, accumulated power, and the relations between such entities. Globalisation has stretched the distance between such social entities, but at the same time has enabled them to interact and communicate over a distance.

The two most influential Marxist theorists of space are Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. Harvey has built on and extended Lefebvre's theory into a distinct form of Marxist geography that studies capitalism's spatial relationships as well as urban, regional, international conflicts, and class struggles. Both Lefebvre and Harvey build on the tradition of Humanist Marxism.

The Production of Social Space

One of Henri Lefebvre's key ideas in his most widely read work *The Production of Space* is that humans not only produce social relations and use-values, but in doing so also produce social space.² The social relations of reproduction organise personal relations, sexual relations, family relations, and the reproduction of labour power. These relations of reproduction form, together with the relations of production, social space.³ Space is neither a container⁴ nor a thing⁵. Social space is at the same time a means of production and a social product.⁶ There is a dialectic of social space and human action.

When humans enter social relations, they produce and reproduce the social. And as part of this process they create meanings. They make meanings of one another and of society. Social systems are regularised social relations between humans. They have a regular existence in space and over time. They have some continuity, which means they occur again and again in some locales. There are economic, political, and cultural dimensions of all social systems. But a certain dimension is dominant. A workplace is an economic system, but there are also processes of governing the workplace (politics) and particular philosophies and cultures of work. Social systems are based on the dialectic of action and structures. Structures are particular properties of social systems that make the latter durable and continuous. They dialectically interact with practices by enabling and constraining the latter and being produced and reproduced by practices. Institutions play a role in society at large. They are social systems organised on a large scale. Institutions contain multiple social systems. Examples of institutions include the education system, the health care system, the legal system, the market system, the parliamentary system, etc.

² Henri Lefebvre. 1974/1991. *The Production of Space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

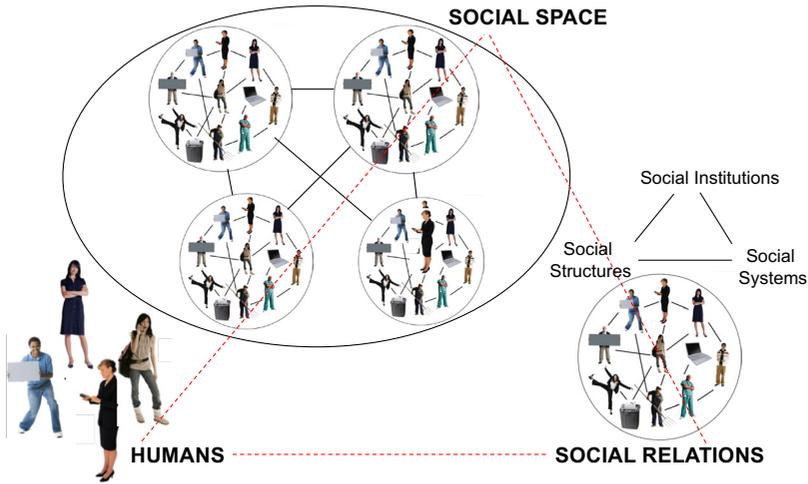


Figure 11.1: The dialectic of humans – social relations – social space.

Social spaces bring together social institutions, social practices, social relations, social structures and social systems within a bounded realm. All social systems are organised in space, have their own space, and are part of larger social spaces. Lefebvre argues that human beings create and reproduce social relations and thereby produce social space. He therefore speaks of the production of social space. Social space is a bounded collection (i.e. an organisation with boundaries) of multiple subjects, objects and social relations.

Figure 11.1 shows the dialectic relationship of social space, social relations, and human beings.

Human beings create social relations. These relations have boundaries (a spatial start and end) and are organised as social spaces. Humans in social relations create and reproduce social structures. These structures condition social practices. All societies have key institutions. Human beings create and reproduce social relations, social structures, groups, organisations, social systems, institutions, and social spaces. These social entities enable and constrain social practices. And they are the result and medium of social practices.

Lefebvre established a theory of society and social space. He did not, however, clearly outline the role of communication in society. A social system does not of necessity break down if a certain individual no longer participates in it. Another human being might take on the same social role. If for example a programmer in a software company leaves, they may be replaced by another software engineer with comparable qualifications.

Social systems and social spaces abstract from individuals that are part of these systems. They are not simply abstract, however, but are embedded into human being's everyday lives. Social systems and spaces are lived in the routines of

practical life. Communication is the concrete process of how humans live in social systems and social spaces in everyday life. In everyday life, humans employ certain means of communication (codes, languages, information technologies, communication technologies). The means of communication enable and constrain the production and reproduction of social space and the social in general. Human beings create social relations. In doing so, they make sense of each other and of the social world and thereby reproduce the social that conditions communication. Communication is the production and reproduction of structures, social relations, social systems, and social institutions that constitute social spaces. Communication therefore is also the process of the production of social space.

Spatial Practices, Representational Space, Spaces of Representation

Table 11.1 summarises the main dimensions of social space that Lefebvre identifies.

In Lefebvre's approach, conceiving, perceiving, and living social space are rather separate processes. But social life brings together these processes of mental perception, mental conceptions, and social practices in social, communicative relations. Perception and conception are mental processes that result in information. But they are also material and social practices because they are part of society. When we perceive something, we form mental conceptions of the world. Conceiving is a form of perceiving by which we create information about the world. Social life is the process of the conception, perception, and production of society in social relations. Perception, conception, and living are social processes. The three levels of social space that Lefebvre identifies reach into each other dialectically.

How can we make sense of table 11.1, that shows Lefebvre's main insights about space, in relation to figure 11.1 that visualises a model of social space? Spatial practices are practices that produce and reproduce social space. These social spaces are made up of social structures, social systems, and social institutions. Social spaces are the objects of spatial practices. They produce and reproduce practices and enable and constrain spatial practices. The production of social space results in social relations and social structures, and along with these also the production of knowledge that symbolises social relations and practices. This is Lefebvre's dimension of the representation of space. Representations are forms of knowledge that represent practices and inform the creation of society's structures, individual knowledge, and social knowledge. Representations are the symbolic and knowledge dimension of societal structures. Individual and social knowledge is knowledge oriented on individual and collective actors. Humans, through social practices, produce and reproduce individual and social knowledge at the level of the individual and the group, and societal structures and representations at the levels of society's subsystems and society as totality. Representations are forms of mediation operating at the level of social relations, where they help to organise social relations and communication processes.

Table 11.1: Lefebvre's three levels of social space.⁷

	Spatial Practice	Representations of Space	Representational Space
Subjects	Members of society, family, working class	Experts, scientists, planners, architects, technocrats, social engineers	Inhabitants and users who passively experience space
Objects	Outside world, locations, spatial sets, urban transport routes and networks, places that relate the local and the global, spaces of everyday life, desirable and undesirable spaces	Knowledge, signs, codes, images, theory, ideology, plans, power, maps, transportation and communications systems, abstract space (commodities, private property, commercial centres, money, banks, markets, spaces of labour)	Social life, art, culture, images, symbols systems of non-verbal symbols and signs, memories
Activities	Perceiving, daily routines, reproduction of social relations, production	Conceiving, calculation, representation, construction	Living, everyday life and activities

Table 11.2 gives an overview of representations of space and spaces of representation in society in general and in capitalism in particular. In capitalism, representations have an antagonistic character. Price and money mediate practices in the economy, bourgeois laws in the political system, and bourgeois norms and morals in culture. But at the same time, such practices are challenged by the logic of gifts, socialist political and legal frameworks, and socialist norms and morals. Representational spaces are systems of signs, totalities of representations. They operate at the level of society's subsystems and interact with other subsystems at the level of society as totality. In society in general, structures of distribution are economic representational spaces, modes of regulation political representational spaces, and moral systems cultural representational spaces. In capitalism, representational spaces take on the form of the market system in the economy, the legal and state system in politics and the bourgeois moral system (ideology) in culture.

Society has a social, an informational and a spatial dimension, and these interact. Table 11.3 shows three organisational aspects of these three dimensions, namely the levels of humans, social relations, and social systems.

⁷ Based on information from: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 32–33, 38–43, 362, 50, 116, 233, 288.

Table 11.2: Types of individual and social knowledge (building on table 4.1 from chapter 4).

	Societal Structures	Individual Knowledge	Social Knowledge	Representations of space	Representations of Space in Capitalism	Representational Space	Representational Space in Capitalism
Level of society	Society as totality	Individual	Groups	Social relations	Social relations	Subsystems of society, society as totality	Subsystems of society, society as totality
Economy	Use-values, means of production	Skills	Knowledge products	Forms of economic mediation	Price, money (alternative: logic of gifts)	Structures of distribution	Market system
Politics	Rules, collective decisions	Political opinions and insights	Collective political worldviews	Political rules	Laws codified by the state, oppositional legal framework	Modes of regulation	Bourgeois legal system, bourgeois state
Culture	Collective identities and meanings	Identity, meanings	Collective identities, collective meanings	Norms and morals	Bourgeois and socialist norms and morals	Moral system	Bourgeois moral system

Table 11.3: The social, knowledge and spatial dimensions of society.

Social dimension	Information dimension	Spatial dimension (social space)
Humans, human practices	Individual knowledge	Spatial practices
Social relations	Social knowledge, representations	Representations of space
Social systems	Culture	Representational spaces

Table 11.4: David Harvey's typology of space.⁸

	Physical space (experienced space)	Representations of space (conceptualised space)	Spaces of representation (lived space)
Absolute space			
Relative space (time)			
Relational space (time)			

Absolute, Relative and Relational Space

In the essay *Space as Keyword*, David Harvey draws on Lefebvre to create a typology of social space.⁹ He arrives at a matrix of space by distinguishing between absolute, relative, and relational space as one dimension and between physical space, representations of space, and spaces of representation as the second dimension (see table 11.4).¹⁰ What Harvey adds to Lefebvre's analysis of space is the distinction between absolute, relative, and relational space.

Harvey gives an example to explain the first set of distinctions. Giving a talk requires a room that has physical walls as borders of the physical space. It requires not just David Harvey or another speaker, but also an audience whose members occupy specific places in the room at a particular time and

⁸ Based on: Harvey, *Space as Keyword*, 105–106.

⁹ David Harvey. 2005. *Space as a Key Word*. In *Spaces of Neoliberalization*, 93–115. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

¹⁰ Given the theoretical framework of this book (see chapters 2 and 3 on materialism), I have substituted Harvey's term 'material space' for the term 'physical space'.

so sit or stand at particular distances from each other and Harvey. Relational space means that the audience members 'bring to the absolute space and time of the talk all sorts of ideas and experiences culled from the space-time of their life trajectories'.¹¹ Harvey sees communication as an aspect of relative space: 'I try to communicate across the space through a medium – the atmosphere – that refracts my words differentially'.¹² Audiences are positioned at relative distances in space from the producers of information. Modern means of communication allow these spatial distances to be transcended, such that the relativity of space no longer matters in the communication process and one can speak from and hear each other at every point on the Earth. Communication extends to relational social space and in fact plays a crucial foundational role there: Only via communication can humans enter social relations with others and make meaning of the social world.

Based on the concept of space, we can next deal with global space.

11.2. Global Space and Globalisation

Since the 1990s, globalisation has been one of the most mentioned keywords and most discussed topics in the public sphere. For some, globalisation is the ultimate remedy for global problems. For others, it is a catchword for describing a phase of increased capitalistic exploitation. There are both radical optimists and radical pessimists in the globalisation discourse. Hyperglobalisers argue that globalisation is a radical novel phenomenon and that the emerging global society marks a discontinuous and radical break with prior forms of society. Globalisation sceptics argue that globalisation is a myth and that there are no fundamentally novel qualities within society.

Large social systems require a permanent interaction between a more local and a more global level for their reproduction. Such systems from time to time enter phases of crisis and transformation, where more global systems emerge in order to try to overcome the contradictions at higher spatial levels of organisation. In a globalised social system, (economic, political or cultural) processes in different locations, regions, countries, and parts of the world interact with each other. Globalisation is the stretching of social relationships in space-time. A globalising social system enlarges its border in space-time. As a result, social relationships can be maintained across greater temporal and spatial distances. In a global system, practices, social relations, social structures, and social systems are organised over a large distance. Global processes are necessarily

¹¹ Ibid., p. 99.

¹² Ibid., p. 98.

Table 11.5: Three forms of globalisation.

Economy	Spatio-temporal enlargement of economic structures and practices of production, distribution and consumption
Political system	Spatio-temporal enlargement of power- and decision structures and political practices
Culture	Spatio-temporal enlargement of normative structures and practices

integrated with local processes: The global influences the local, the local influences the global. Therefore, some observers have spoken of ‘glocalisation’.¹³

The history of society has been accompanied by the globalisation of social organisation. In social life, humans at certain points are confronted with problems that cannot be overcome because of the limited availability of capacities, resources, and solutions at the local or another spatial level. They therefore try to solve these problems by extending the organisation of social systems to more global levels. Phases of social crisis can result in phases of globalisation. But society can also de-globalise to a certain extent so that the level of globalisation declines.

The spatial organisational levels of society extend from the local level over intermediate levels to the global level. The range of spatial levels includes the individual as starting point, local immediate relationships (family, friendships, colleagues, etc.), local intermediary structural relationships (local city council, local community organisations, etc.), transmediary (national) structural relationships (the state, national markets), international structural relationships (international agreements, regional political blocs, international political organisations, etc.), and global/transnational structural relationships of global reach (the Internet, the world market, the idea of human rights, etc.). Table 11.5 outlines three forms of globalisation.

Globalisation is not new, but a feature of the history of society and humankind. Historical examples of globalisation include the world religions; empires such as the Roman Empire, the British Empire, or the Han Empire; the world market; large population movements such as the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and imperialism; and the system of submarine cables established in the middle of the 19th century that formed the first global system of communication. The transatlantic cable of 1866 reduced the time of transmission of information between London and New York by over a week.

Based on the notion of global space, the next section will engage with global capitalism.

¹³ Roland Robertson. 1992. *Globalization: Global Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.

11.3. Capitalism and Globalisation

Global Spaces of Capitalism

Immanuel Wallerstein argues that the capitalistic world-system has been a global system ever since its emergence in the 16th century.¹⁴ He stresses that capitalism is a world system because it requires a global division of labour and a world market for achieving profit.¹⁵ The political structure of the capitalistic world system is based on a hierarchical, segmented division between central states, semi-peripheral states, and peripheral states. There is unequal exchange in the capitalistic world system that results in the appropriation of surplus value produced in the global economy by capital located in the core. Already Marx stressed the global character of capitalism: ‘The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country’.¹⁶

Capital accumulation processes $M - C \dots P \dots C' - M'$ require:

1. labour power
2. means of production (raw materials, technologies, infrastructure)
3. commodity markets
4. capital, capital investment

Capital drives beyond national boundaries and organises itself on a transnational scale in order to find:

1. cheap(er) labour,
2. cheap(er) means of production,

¹⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein. 1974. The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System. Concepts for Comparative Analysis. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16(4): 387–415: ‘It was only with the emergence of the modern world-economy in sixteenth-century Europe that we saw the full development and economic predominance of market trade. This was the system called capitalism. Capitalism and a world-economy (that is, a single division of labor but multiple polities and cultures) are obverse sides of the same coin. One does not cause the other. [...] Capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world-economy and not of nation-states. It is a misreading of the situation to claim that it is only in the twentieth century that capitalism has become “world-wide” (pp. 391, 401).

¹⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein. 1974. *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York. Academic Press

¹⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1848. Manifesto of the Communist Party. In *MECW Volume 6*, 477–519. p. 488.

- 3) commodity markets, and
- 4) investment opportunities.

Capital has certain economic, social, spatial and temporal limits. In situations of crisis, it tries to overcome this limit by shifting its own boundaries. 'Capital is the endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier'.¹⁷ But new conditions of capitalism's political economy again find their immanent antagonistic limits so that capitalism again tries to re-organise itself. If such a re-organisation is successful, then it encompasses qualitative differentiations in the mode of exploitation and regulation.

When capitalism enters crisis, it often reaches certain temporal and spatial limits. Overcoming these limits is the search for overcoming crisis. To accumulate capital, capitalist organisations need (a) labour power; (b) means of production (raw materials, technologies, infrastructure); (c) commodity markets; (d) capital investments and money that should be accumulated (capital). The globalisation of capitalism is a strategy that aims at cheapening the availability of the means of production, including labour-power, acquiring access to additional markets, and creating opportunities for investing capital and exporting capital. The globalisation of capitalism is often mediated by transport technologies and communication technologies. The latter are the result and the medium of capitalism's globalisation.

Capitalism is a society that aims at accumulating capital and power. It tries to organise the sale of commodities, political governance, and the exploitation of labour across spatial and temporal distances. Transport and communication technologies enable capital to overcome spatial distances and to reduce the amount of time this crossing of distances takes. Capitalism is also necessarily accompanied by acceleration. Acceleration in capitalism means the accumulation of economic, cultural, and political power in less time than before. In the economy, acceleration means the production, distribution, and consumption of more commodities in less time. In the political system, acceleration means that more decisions are taken in less time. And in culture, acceleration means that more experiences are organised in less time than before. Capitalism's logic of accumulation advances acceleration, globalisation, and financialisation. Hartmut Rosa has established a theory of acceleration, in which he argues that modernity brings about the acceleration of time.¹⁸

Given the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism, space and time are also strategies for overcoming crises. David Harvey speaks in this context of temporal fixes, spatial fixes, and spatio-temporal fixes.¹⁹ 'The spatio-temporal "fix" [...] is a metaphor for a particular kind of solution to capitalist crises through temporal

¹⁷ Karl Marx. 1857/58/1973. *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin. p. 334.

¹⁸ Hartmut Rosa. 2013. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁹ David Harvey. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

deferral and geographical expansion.²⁰ Capitalism tries to defer its crises into the future and geographically into other parts of the world. But it can only overcome and defer crisis temporarily. And certain spaces are never fully crisis-free. Crisis always returns in new forms and versions because the crisis is immanent to capitalism. The rise of new technologies is in capitalism bound up with capital's establishment of spatio-temporal fixes for stagnating accumulation.

David Harvey interprets Rosa Luxemburg's concept of ongoing primitive accumulation as accumulation by dispossession, the central feature of neoliberal capitalism.²¹ Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, and von Werlhof argue from a feminist perspective that capitalism requires milieus of primitive accumulation for its reproduction.²² Capital cannot exist without making use of unpaid resources stemming from nature, nonwage/unremunerated labour (such as housework), and the periphery. 'Women, colonies and nature' are 'the main targets of this process of ongoing primitive accumulation.'²³ They form inner colonies of capitalism. The inner colonies transform the very nature of capitalist production so that housewifed labour that is 'a source of unchecked, unlimited exploitation' emerges.²⁴ The precarious reality of the houseworker, the unemployed, and the Global South has been taken as a model for the qualitative transformation of capitalism into neoliberal capitalism. Primitive accumulation thereby not only forms inner colonies of capitalism, but also qualitatively transforms wage-labour and capitalism's core relations. Mario Tronti stresses that the extension of exploitation from the factory and the office to society not only means the constitution of capitalism's social factories and the social worker, but also the capitalist 'process of internal colonisation.'²⁵

The capitalist economy is imperialistic. In original primitive accumulation (that is also termed the formal subsumption of society under capital), capital tries to subsume specific social relations. It creates inner colonies of capitalism that are spheres of accumulation. As a reaction to crises, capitalism tries to produce new spaces of influence and accumulation. Capitalism's inner milieus do not simply exist, but need to be reproduced in order to avoid resistances. Original primitive accumulation undergoes a repetition within capitalism. It therefore turns into the process of ongoing primitive accumulation. At certain times, particular inner colonies of capitalism turn into models of accumulation so that capitalism is qualitatively transformed. As a consequence, a new capitalist

²⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

²¹ Harvey, *The New Imperialism*.

²² Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof. 1988. *Women: The Last Colony*. London: Zed Books.

²³ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁴ Maria Mies. 1986. *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books. p. 16.

²⁵ Mario Tronti. 2019. *Workers and Capital*. London: Verso. p. 32.

regime of accumulation or a new phase of the development of capitalist society emerges. Such processes are also termed the real subsumption of society under capital: Realms of ongoing primitive accumulation and the formal subsumption of society under capital become new dominant organisational models. Alternative spaces can emerge from social struggles that turn against and oppose original primitive accumulation and ongoing primitive accumulation. These are spaces that transcend the logics of capital and capitalism.

*The New Imperialism as the Globalisation of Neoliberalism:
A New Phase of Capitalist Globalisation*

In the early to mid-1970s, capitalism experienced economic, political and ideological crises that brought about a shift from Fordist mass production to post-Fordist flexible accumulation in the economy, from Keynesianism to neoliberalism in politics, and from national culture to global culture. Compared to the phase from 1945 until 1975, since the mid-1970s there has been a significant growth of the share of global trade (imports and exports) and foreign direct investment in the global GDP. The number of transnational corporations in the economy and of international non-government organisations, international political agreements (especially free trade agreements), and regional political unions has significantly grown. The EU and North America have dominated foreign direct investments and international trade. Southeast Asia has played a particularly important role as a recipient of FDIs and as an exporting region. China has become a major export country. In the global space of the capitalist world system, the international division of labour takes on a global form so that workers who produce different parts of a commodity in different places are not aware of each other, cannot communicate with each other, and cannot so easily organise themselves.

David Harvey argues that capitalism has been undergoing a new phase of globalisation that encompasses four interconnected developments: (1) financial deregulation, (2) a new wave of technological innovation, (3) the rise of the Internet, (4) technological innovation that has continuously cheapened transport and communications.²⁶ Some features of these developments are the offshoring of production, global migration, hyper-urbanisation, the emergence of neoliberal competition states, global environmental, and political problems and risks, the global cultural antagonism of Jihad vs. McWorld, spatial agglomeration, global cities and uneven geographical development.

The classical era of imperialistic development at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was characterised by massive outward capital investments of Western countries. Winseck and Pike argue that

²⁶ David Harvey, 2000. *Contemporary Globalization*. In *Spaces of Hope*, 53–72
Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

the global expansion of communications companies such as for example Western Union, Eastern Telegraph Company, Commercial Cable Company, Atlantic Telegraph Company, and Marconi in the years 1860–1930 created a close relation between communication, globalisation, and imperialism.²⁷ The era of Fordist capitalism that followed was characterised by *relatively* self-sustaining national economies in comparison to the era of imperialism. If one compares the Fordist mode of capitalist development to the post-Fordist mode, one finds a large increase of capital export and new qualities of global production such as joint ventures, strategic alliances, participative management, and diffused and outsourced forms of global production.

The rise of global neoliberalism was accompanied by the rise of global consumerism in culture. The domination of a global capitalist model that originated in the USA has, to name only one consequence, resulted in the search for national and religious identities. The global fetishism of capital has resulted in the global fetishism of the nation and religion. The Western fetishism of capitalist unity that is frequently defended and enforced by violent means, as was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan, has called forth a fundamentalist fetishism of difference and separation. Benjamin Barber speaks in this context of an antagonism between Jihad and McWorld.²⁸ This antagonism is the outcome of global capitalism. It found a culmination point in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda and ISIS have practised the globalisation of terrorism as a form of political globalisation. A new vicious global cycle of violence, terrorism, warfare, and radicalisation emerged. The political antagonism between religious fundamentalism and neoliberal capitalism as two options has been aggravated by the weakness of left-wing forces and the bourgeoisification of social democracy in the 20th century, the lack of the political presence of socialism as an alternative vision and model, and the betrayal of socialism by Stalinism and Maoism. Global socialism as humanist unity in diversity is the only viable alternative to global capitalism and global fundamentalism.

The New Imperialism

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, capitalism experienced a transition from competitive capitalism to imperialism. Marxist thinkers such as Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg coined the notion of capitalism as imperialism. For Lenin, imperialism is 'capitalism at that stage of development at which the domination of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the

²⁷ Dwayne Winseck and Robert M. Pike. 2007. *Communication and Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press.

²⁸ Benjamin Barber. 1995. *Jihad VS. McWorld*. New York: Times Books.

division of the world among the international trusts has begun: in which the division of all the territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.²⁹ Rosa Luxemburg sees imperialism as the violent expansion of the accumulation of capital into particular geographical spaces. Capital wants to 'mobilise world labour power without restriction in order to utilise all productive forces of the globe.'³⁰

Lenin lists five features of imperialism:

1. monopoly capital;
2. finance capital plays an important role;
3. there is a significant degree of capital export (= foreign direct investments);
4. imperialism includes conflicts over the control of territories that take on various forms of economic and political control, including wars;
5. imperialism features struggles over influence between certain capitalist powers.³¹

For Lefebvre, the primary spatial contradiction is that between fragmented and globalising space.³² Capitalism globalises so that it can achieve strategic advantages in its accumulation processes. But accumulation also requires the creation of specialised spaces that are instrumentalised. Capitalism results in fragmented spaces that are interconnected at various spatial levels (locally, nationally, internationally, globally). For Lefebvre, this spatial antagonism corresponds to the antagonism between the relations of production and the productive forces at the spatial level.³³ Abstract space is created with the help of certain means of production. That space is abstract means that it is a realm of abstract labour that creates value, which implies class relations and exploitation, domination and instrumentalisation. Abstract space is for Lefebvre imperialist and constitutes an antagonism between central spaces and peripheral spaces. Capitalism's logic wants to 'occupy all space'.³⁴

David Harvey and Michael Hardt/Toni Negri have suggested using the terms the new imperialism³⁵ and Empire³⁶ instead of globalisation to characterise

²⁹ Vladimir I. Lenin. 1917. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. In *Lenin Collected Works Volume 22: December 1915–July 1916*, 185–304. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 266–267.

³⁰ Rosa Luxemburg. 1913. *The Accumulation of Capital*. p. 343.

³¹ Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. p. 266.

³² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 355.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁵ Harvey, *The New Imperialism*.

³⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

global neoliberal and financial capitalism's globalisation and universalisation of the commodity form and capitalist rule. 'Globalisation' is a harmless-sounding term that is not suitable as a key category of a critical theory of society. Whereas globalisation sounds positive, the categories of 'the new imperialism' and 'Empire' sound unsettling and exploitative.

Empirical analysis shows certain key features of the new imperialist capitalism in the phase from 1975 until 2008 (when the new world economic crisis started):³⁷

- *Capital concentration* took place in the economic realms of services, manufacturing and finance.
- *Monopoly capital* shaped information sectors (including communications technologies, publishing and telecommunications), but also other sectors such as finance. Financialisation, hyper-industrialisation, (the importance of the automobile and fossil fuels), and the relevance of information/communication were three key aspects of global capital. Finance was the dominating dimension.
- *Finance capital* dominated the capitalist economy. This dominance expressed itself through the influence of venture capital, insurance companies, banks, investment funds, financial derivatives, high-risk financial speculation, and the deregulation of finance markets. Financialisation is the attempt to overcome problems of accumulation by deferring crises into the future and creating speculative financial bubbles that promise short-term financial gains on the financial markets, but contain high risks of crisis.
- *Capital export* increased during the period from 1975–2008 in comparison to the phase of capitalist development that lasted from 1945 until 1975. Transnational corporations (TNCs) became a new important feature of the economy. Sectors such as finance, information/communication, mining, quarrying, petroleum, and trade were important realms of capital export. Finance dominated both world trade and the export of capital. But TNCs do not operate entirely globally. Their employees, managers, owners, sales, and profits have a headquarters in a particular nation-state, from which they operate transnationally. There is a link between the national and

³⁷ For a detailed theoretical and statistical analysis, see: Christian Fuchs. 2009. *A Contribution to Critical Globalization Studies*. Centre for the Critical Study of Global Power and Politics Working Paper CSGP 09/8. Peterborough, Canada: Trent University. <http://fuchs.uti.at/wp-content/uploads/CriticalGlobalizationStudies.pdf>

international activities of TNCs. Transnationalism is not a total quality of TNCs, but a tendency and capital strategy.

- The world was *economically and spatially divided* between developing and developed countries in the most recent phase of global capitalism that lasted from 1975 until 2008. Seventy percent of the FDI inflows were located in developed countries, 30 percent in developing countries. Sixty-five percent of world imports were located in developed countries, 35 percent in developing countries. Europe was the major source and destination of capital exports. Large parts of Africa and Latin America were excluded from the investment of capital. Asia and especially China were important destinations of capital exports. China was indeed the major country for capital exports. After 1945, North America's importance in capital export diminished. China became a more important player in foreign direct investments. By 2008, around 10 percent of all capital exports stemmed from China. In the phase from 1975 until 2008, Europe was the world's most importing region. Asia exceeded North America's share of world imports. North America's role in commodity exports declined, whereas Europe turned into the world's largest exporting region of commodities. North America's share in world exports decreased from around 30 percent in 1945 to about 10 percent in 2008. Asia became the world's second largest export region. China became the leading Asian trade country and the most important developing country in exports and imports.
- The *political division of the world* was an inherent feature of the new imperialism, which resulted in wars about the territorial, economic, political, and ideological control of certain spaces, regions, countries, and parts of the world.

Capitalism Since the 2008 Economic Crisis

In 2008, the financial crisis of the US housing market triggered a new world economic crisis. As a consequence, the global GDP decreased from US\$ 64.4 trillion in 2008 to US\$ 60.1 trillion in 2009, which meant a shrinking of the world economy by 5.2 percent. The crisis of the US housing market had to do with the use of subprime mortgages, a high risk financial derivative. But the financialisation of the housing market was not the cause, but rather a symptom of the global economic crisis. The underlying issue is profitability problems in the entire capitalist economy that capital tries to offset by financialisation.

Figure 11.2 shows that since 2008, the share of newly undertaken annual capital exports in the global GDP has significantly decreased. It increased from 0.5 percent in 1970 to a peak of 3.8 percent in 2007. In 2017, it was at a level of 1.8 percent. There was a similar trend in world trade: World exports peaked

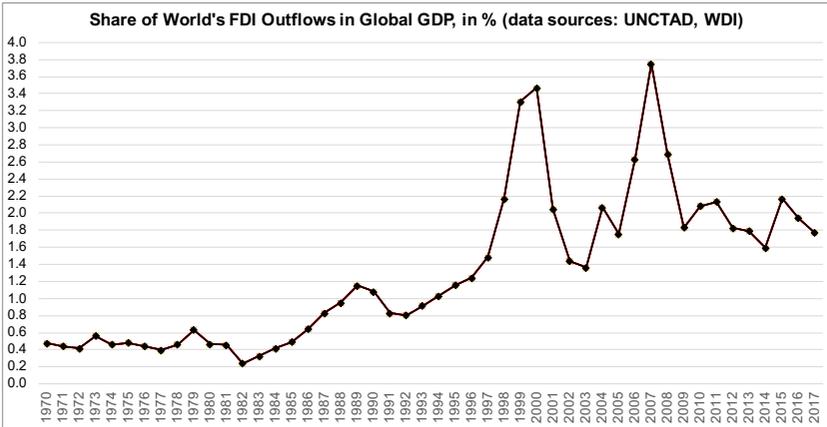


Figure 11.2: The share of the world's FDI outflows in the global GDP.

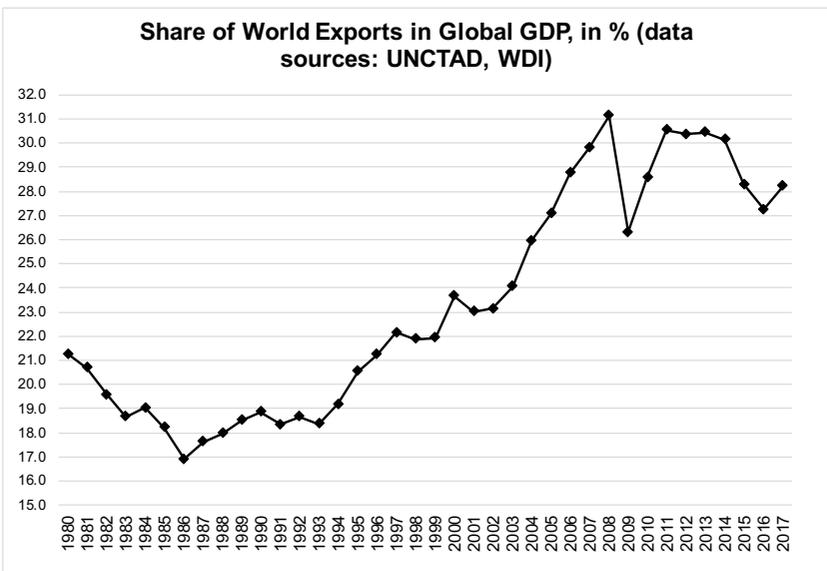


Figure 11.3: The share of the world's exports in the global GDP.

at a level of 31.1 percent of the global GDP in 2008. In 2017, the level was 28.2 percent. Whereas in the phase from 1975 until 2008, the world economy became more global, there have been tendencies of de-globalisation since 2008. This does not mean the end of global trade and capital investment, but rather its continuation at a slower pace, with phases of relative contraction, and under the increased use of higher tariffs.

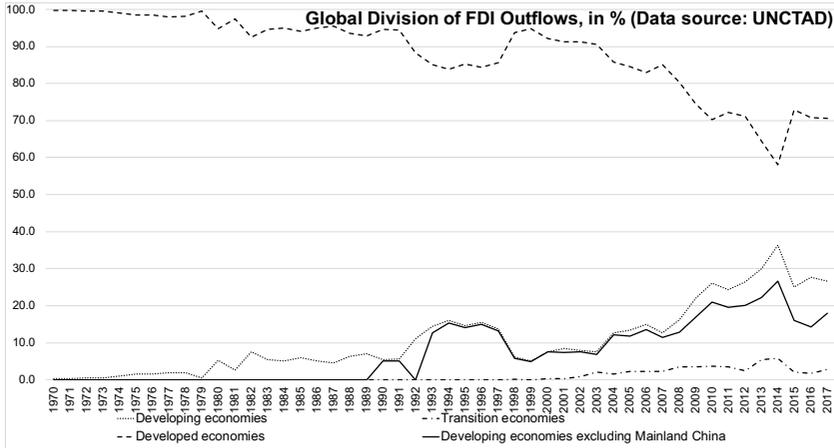


Figure 11.4: The global division of foreign direct investment outflows.

Figure 11.4 and table 11.6 show that Western economies have since the 1970s continued to dominate global capital investments. But developing economies' share in the world's capital export decreased from above 80 percent in the years before 2008 to 58.0 percent in 2014. Simultaneously, the share of developing countries in the world's capital export increased from 5.2 percent in 1980 to 36.3 percent in 2014. The most significant development is the rise of Chinese capital as global investor. In 2017, Chinese capital (including capital in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) had a share of 15.3 percent in the world's foreign direct investment outward flows (see table 11.6; Mainland China: 8.7 percent, Hong Kong 5.8 percent). Since 2014, one can observe a significant change: Developed countries have increased their share of the world's capital export from 58.0 percent in 2014 to 70.6 percent in 2017, while the share of developing countries decreased from 36.3 percent in 2014 to 26.6 percent in 2017. The USA increased its share from 18.1 percent in 2007 to 23.9 percent in 2017 and Japan's share rose from 3.4 percent to 11.2 percent, while the dominant European countries' (UK, Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands, Italy) shares continued to decline. The USA has continued to be the world's largest exporter of capital.

Figure 11.5 and table 11.7 analyse the global structure of capital imports as foreign direct investment inward flows. The shares of developing and developed countries developed in a wave-like pattern, where the overall share of developed countries was larger than that of developing countries, except for the year 2014. The most significant development since the 1970s has been the rise of China as a dominant country in the receipt of foreign direct investments. Brazil and Singapore have also played significant roles in capital imports. In 2017, China accounted for 17.1 percent of foreign direct investment inflows. Relatively cheap manufacturing labour has attracted Western capital to China. The USA's role in attracting FDI inflows decreased from 1980 until 2007, but

Table 11.6: Countries with the largest shares of the world's FDI outflows. Listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

<i>Country</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2017</i>
Canada	6.6%	7.9%	3.0%	5.4%
China (incl. Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan)	N/A	0.3%	4.7%	15.3%
France	2.6%	6.0%	5.1%	4.0%
Germany	7.6%	9.0%	7.9%	5.8%
Italy	0.8%	1.4%	4.4%	0.3%
Japan	2.5%	4.6%	3.4%	11.2%
Netherlands	9.3%	9.3%	2.6%	1.6%
Spain	0.3%	0.6%	6.3%	2.9%
United Kingdom	11.9%	15.1%	15.5%	7.0%
United States	53.7%	37.0%	18.1%	23.9%
British Virgin Islands	N/A	N/A	2.3%	5.0%

Table 11.7: Countries with the largest shares of the world's FDI inflows, listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

<i>Country</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2017</i>
Australia	6.7%	3.4%	2.2%	3.2%
Belgium	2.4%	2.8%	4.9%	0.1%
Brazil	3.0%	3.5%	1.8%	4.4%
Canada	13.8%	10.7%	6.2%	1.7%
China (incl. Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan)	0.9%	0.1%	8.0%	17.1%
France	4.7%	6.1%	3.4%	3.5%
Germany	5.8%	0.6%	4.2%	2.4%
Italy	4.7%	1.1%	2.3%	1.2%
Netherlands	4.8%	4.6%	6.0%	4.1%
Singapore	0.7%	2.3%	2.2%	4.3%
United Kingdom	11.2%	18.6%	9.3%	1.1%
United States	9.5%	31.1%	11.4%	19.3%

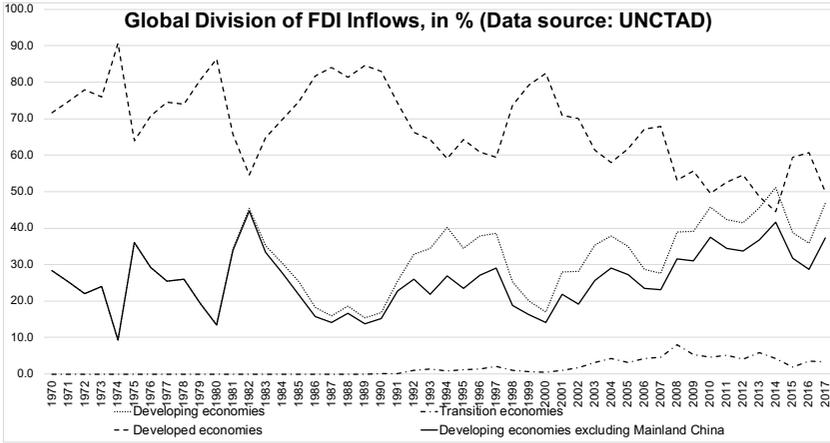


Figure 11.5: The global division of foreign direct investment inflows.

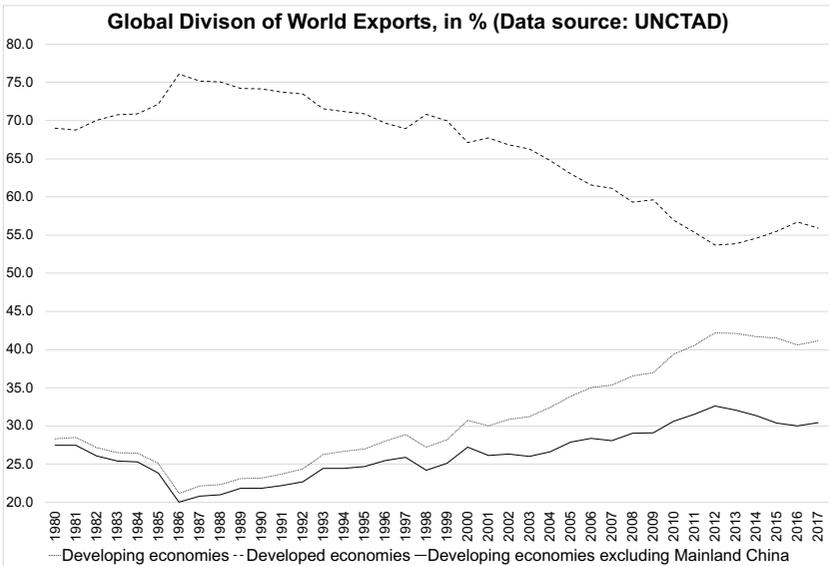


Figure 11.6: The global division of world exports.

has since increased from a share of the world's FDI inflows of 11.4 percent in 2007 to 19.3 percent in 2017.

Figure 11.6 and table 11.8 present data on the structure of world exports. Developed countries have been dominant in world exports, although their share decreased from 76.1 percent in 1986 to 53.7 percent in 2012, while the share of developing countries increased from 21.2 percent to 42.2 percent.

Table 11.8: Countries with the largest shares of world exports. Listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

	1980	2007	2017
China	2.0%	11.2%	15.4%
France	6.4%	4.3%	3.5%
Germany	9.4%	8.6%	7.6%
Italy	4.1%	3.5%	2.7%
Japan	6.2%	4.6%	3.8%
United Kingdom	6.1%	4.4%	3.5%
Saudi Arabia	4.5%	1.4%	1.1%
United States	11.4%	9.6%	10.2%

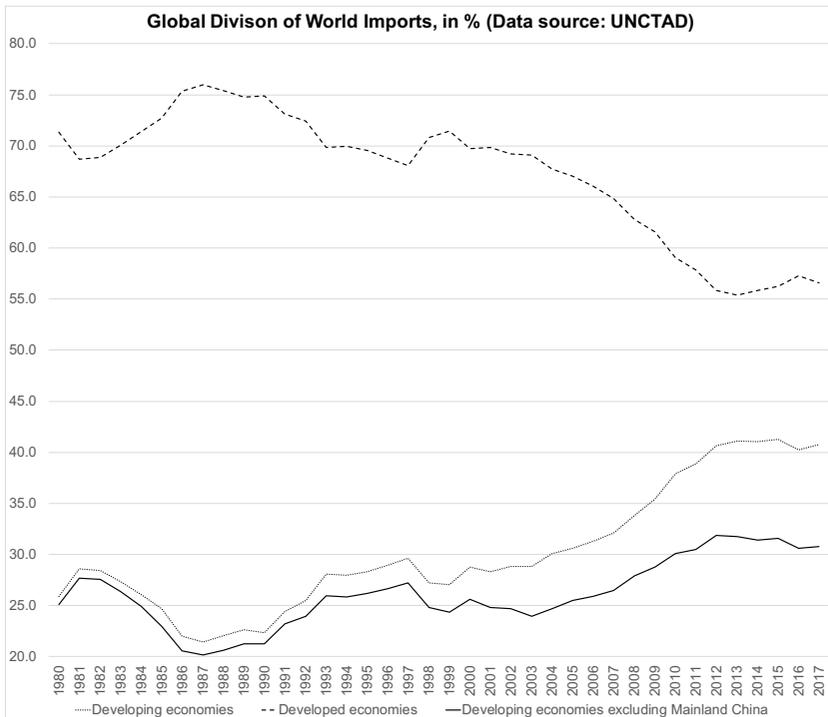


Figure 11.7: The global division of world imports.

There has been a slight counter-tendency since 2012: The share of developed countries increased to around 56–57 percent in the years 2016/2017, while the share of developing countries decreased to levels of around 40 percent. China

Table 11.9: Countries with the largest shares of world imports. Listed are all countries that had a share of > 4% in one of the displayed years, data source: UNCTAD.

	1980	2007	2017
China	2.0%	9.4%	14.5%
France	6.5%	4.5%	3.8%
Germany	9.6%	7.4%	6.6%
Italy	4.6%	3.7%	2.5%
Japan	6.6%	4.3%	3.8%
United Kingdom	5.6%	5.0%	3.7%
United States	12.2%	14.0%	13.1%

has become the world's largest exporter: It increased its share of world exports from 2.0 percent in 1980 to 15.4 percent in 2017. The USA increased its share from below 10 percent until 2007 to levels slightly above ten percent. Germany is, after China and the USA, the world's third largest exporter of commodities. It has continuously played an important role in the world economy as an export-oriented country.

Figure 11.7 and table 11.9 present data on the structure of world imports. Developed countries have dominated world imports, although their share of world imports decreased from 76.0 percent in 1987 to 55.4 percent in 2013, while the share of developing countries increased from 21.5 percent to 41.1 percent over the same period. This trend has reversed slightly since 2014 when the developed countries' share rose slightly and reached a level of 57.3 percent in 2016. The most significant development in world imports since 1980 has been that China increased its share from 2.0 percent in 1980 to 14.5 percent in 2017, which makes it the world's largest importer. The USA has had a continuously high share of world imports and was in 2017 the world's second largest importer. The USA's share slightly dropped from 13.4 percent in 2015 to 13.1 percent in 2017.

The capitalist economy continues to operate to a significant degree at the global level, although there has been a certain de-globalisation trend of capital export and foreign trade since the world economic crisis started in 2008. China plays an important role as the world's largest exporter and importer, and as the world's second largest importer and exporter of capital (after the USA).

Since 2008, the USA has extended its dominance of the world's capital export and capital import. It has slightly reduced its share of world imports while slightly increasing its share of world exports. Combined, the USA had a trade deficit of US\$ 811 billion in 2017.³⁸ In the early 1980s, the US trade deficit

³⁸ Data source: UNCTAD Statistics: Trade balance indicators

was around US\$ 20 billion.³⁹ Mainland China's trade surplus was US\$ 476 billion in 2017, making it the country with the largest trade surplus, followed by Germany with a surplus of US\$ 299 billion. Other large export-oriented countries with a large trade surplus are Ireland (US\$ 121 bn), Korea (US\$ 120 bn), Russia (US\$ 115 bn), and the Netherlands (US\$ 102 bn).⁴⁰

Authoritarian Capitalism

Crises of the capitalist economy, the state and ideology are often phases of instability that trigger the emergence of new qualities of capitalist society that sublimate the previous regime of accumulation, mode of regulation, and the disciplinary and ideological mode. Since the start of the world economic crisis in 2008, there has been an increased level of criticism of free trade from the Left and the Right. Socialists' critique of neoliberalism, capitalist globalisation, and free trade agreements has a much longer history and has persisted since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s. Socialists argue that the globalisation of neoliberalism is a strategy for increasing profits by lowering wage costs through outsourcing, privatisation of public services and resources, the dismantling of welfare and the legal protection of workers, and fostering competition. Far-right forces in contrast argue that economic globalisation, migration, and free trade have resulted in a new economic power of non-Western states such as China and have hampered Western capital and labour. They present globalisation as a threat to the economic, political, and cultural cohesion of the nation-state.

Far-right demagogues and parties advance xenophobia and nationalism as answers to global capitalism. Socialists in contrast argue for regulating and properly taxing global and national capital, advancing the global solidarity of workers and trade unions in class struggles against capitalism, improving the wage level and welfare of all workers, strengthening welfare politics locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, and uniting the workers of all lands in the struggle against capital. The far-right wants to protect national capital and does not care about the exploitation of workers at the national and international level. It presents non-Western nations and cultures as enemies and propagates the idea that there is a national interest. By arguing that there is a political, economic, and cultural conflict between nations, attention is diverted from the significance of the global class conflict between capital and labour. Whereas the far-right advances nationalist and xenophobic politics as answers to the problems of global capitalism, the Left argues for global socialist politics.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

In the years after the new world economic crisis started, the politics of right-wing nationalism were strengthened much more than socialist politics. As part of it, a particular version of protectionism that included increasing tariffs was strengthened. The clearest sign of the rise of right-wing authoritarian capitalist politics was Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election. Authoritarian capitalism is not an end of neoliberal capitalism, but a sublation and continuation of it that adds new qualities, namely a strong dominance of nationalism, xenophobia and racism, authoritarian leadership, friend/enemy politics, and repressive political rhetoric and politics directed against identified enemies.⁴¹

Donald Trump outlined his basic economic thinking in an economic policy speech during his election campaign in 2016:

America's annual trade deficit with the world is now nearly \$800 a billion a year – an enormous drag on growth. Between World War II and the year 2000, the United States averaged a 3.5% growth rate. But, after China joined the World Trade Organization, our average growth rate has been reduced to only 2 percent. Predatory trade practices, product dumping, currency manipulation and intellectual property theft have taken millions of jobs and trillions in wealth from our country. It is no great secret that many of the special interests funding my opponent's campaign are the same people profiting from these terrible trade deals. [...] We are going to start with NAFTA, which is causing so much damage to our country. We will entirely renegotiate NAFTA into a deal that will either be good for us or will be terminated until a brand new and productive deal can be signed. [...] Next, I am going to instruct my Treasury Secretary to label China a currency manipulator, and to apply tariffs to any country that devalues its currency to gain an unfair advantage over the United States.⁴²

Donald Trump's economic strategy encompasses the reduction of the USA's level of imports and aims to increase its role in the export of commodities and capital, to try to weaken China's role in capital and commodity exports, to use the state to massively reduce the US corporation tax level and, and to help American capital to commodify public resources and services. His economic policy is based on the ideological belief that there is not a capitalist class contradiction between capital and labour, but a national contradiction

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis, see: Christian Fuchs. 2018. *Digital Demagogue. Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter*. London: Pluto.

⁴² Donald Trump 2016. Speech on Jobs and the Economy. 15 September 2016. <http://time.com/4495507/donald-trump-economy-speech-transcript/>, accessed on 11 September 2018.

between American capital and labour as a united nation with one interest on the one side, and foreign nations on the other side. 'America First' means for Trump anti-immigrant and anti-refugee politics, the scapegoating of immigrants, refugees, and people of colour, and the use of state power to deepen the exploitation of American and other workers and the dominance of the export of capital and commodities. Trump believes in a Keynesian neoliberalism, where the state uses its legislative power and taxpayers' money in order to support US capital's interests, privatisation, US capital's seizure of control of public resources, its dominance on international markets and international capital investments. In order to achieve this aim, Trump introduced increased tariff levels in 2018. These tariffs include, for example, a 25 percent general tariff on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminium (with exemptions for Argentina, Australia, Brazil and South Korea), 30 percent on solar panels, a variable tariff ranging between 16 and 50 percent on washing machines, and tariffs on thousands of different Chinese products. Other countries imposed retaliatory tariffs on US exports. For example, the EU introduced higher tariffs on aluminium, boats, clothing, cosmetics, steel, and washing machines from the USA.

Based on the notion of global capitalism outlined above, we can next discuss the role of communication in global capitalism.

11.4. Communication, Capitalism, and Globalisation

The Dialectic of Communication and Globalisation in Capitalism

The use of communication technologies that transcend spatial boundaries is nothing new. The Romans established a system of postal communication. The printing press was invented in the 15th century, enabling the circulation of written texts beyond local spaces. Nineteenth century industry enabled the disentanglement of communication from physical transport. Messages no longer had to be physically transported from one location to another. The first global system of communication was established through submarine cables used for telegraphing messages. In the 20th century, global communication was extended, intensified, and accelerated. Technologies such as telephone networks, the radio, TV, satellite communications, the digital revolution, the computer, the Internet, and fibre networks supported this development.

Marx stresses the relationship of economic globalisation and communication technologies: 'If the progress of capitalist production and the consequent development of the means of transport and communication shortens the circulation time for a given quantity of commodities, the same progress and the opportunity provided by the development of the means of transport and

communication conversely introduces the necessity of working for ever more distant markets, in a word, for the world market.⁴³ Means of transport and communication are ‘the weapons for the conquest of foreign markets.’⁴⁴

Communication technologies are the medium and outcome of the globalisation of capitalism. They extend the temporal and spatial distances over which communication is possible, so that local processes are influenced by global ones and vice versa. Communication technologies simplify global communication and world trade. They advance globalisation and the outsourcing and flexibilisation of production; they are a medium of the territorial restructuring of capitalism. The generation of networks of production that are typical of transnational corporations has been made much easier by digital communication technologies. Communication technologies are also a result of the economic movements of restructuring that are a typical feature of capital. In order to optimise the accumulation of capital, capital has to increase productivity and the speed and reach of the production, circulation and consumption of commodities. As a consequence, capital strives to develop new means of production and communication. Shipping, the railway, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, the automobile, the aircraft, the computer, and the Internet have been the result of capitalism’s drive to accumulate capital and accelerate and globalise the economy in order to optimise capital accumulation.

The Role of Communication Technologies in Time-Space Compression

David Harvey argues in this context that there is a ‘history of successive waves of time-space compression generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation with its perpetual search to annihilate space through time and reduce turnover time.’⁴⁵ ‘I use the word “compression” because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us.’⁴⁶ Harvey argues that the capitalist crisis of the mid-1970s resulted in the rise of a flexible regime of capital accumulation together with a new phase of time-space compression that included the rise of new communication technologies. The ‘time horizons of both private

⁴³ Karl Marx. 1885/1978. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Two*. London: Penguin. p. 329.

⁴⁴ Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. London: Penguin. p. 579.

⁴⁵ David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford. Blackwell. p. 307.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider and variegated space.⁴⁷ 'Given the pressures to accelerate turnover time (and to overcome spatial barriers), the commodification of images of the most ephemeral sort would seem to be a godsend from the standpoint of capital accumulation, particularly when other paths to relieve over-accumulation seem blocked. Ephemerality and instantaneous communicability over space then become virtues to be explored and appropriated by capitalists for their own purposes.'⁴⁸

Capitalism requires new technologies and forms of organisation that accelerate and flexibilise production in order to function. The history of capitalism is a history of globalisation and of the technological acceleration of transportation (of data, capital, commodities, people) that makes the world a smaller place in the sense that it increasingly mediates social relationships more efficiently so that it appears as if distances are disappearing. Technological progress has resulted in an increasing separation of the movements of information from those of its carriers. The movement of information has gathered speed at a pace much faster than the travel-speed of bodies.

Competition drives capitalists to seek ever-cheaper and new spaces of production: 'The coercive laws of competition push capitalists to relocate production to more advantageous sites.'⁴⁹ The globalisation of production lengthens the turnover time of capital – the total time it takes to produce and sell commodities – because the commodities have to be transported from one place to another. As a consequence, capitalism strives to develop technological innovations in transport and communications in order to speed up the production and distribution of commodities and the circulation of capital. 'Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself.'⁵⁰

Communications and globalisation stand in a dialectical relation. Communication technologies shape society's transformation of space and time. And the transformation of space and time shapes the emergence of, the need for, the development and the use of communication technologies. Marx summarised these processes in the following words: 'Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus, the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it.'⁵¹

Information storage is the precondition of communicating information over spatial and temporal distances and from one generation of humans to later

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 288.

⁴⁹ David. Harvey. 2006. *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. London: Verso. p. 98

⁵⁰ Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 173.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 524.

generations. Information technologies that have played a role in society include, for example, archives, arts, the book, Blu-ray discs, CDs, the cinema, cloud storage, computer-mediated communication, computers, the database, digital hard drives, DVDs, FTP, human memory, the Internet, libraries, lists, myths, newspapers, radio, records, schools, servers, tapes, the telegraph, the telephone, timetables, traditions, TV, universities, writing, etc.

Each communication technology is connected with a certain organisation of time and space. Synchronous communication means that humans communicate with each other at the same point of time. Asynchronous communication means that sending information and reading or responding to it take place at different points of time. Communication between humans can take place in one locale (face-to-face) or in such a manner that humans are located in different physical places. Communication technologies on the one hand enable the distancing of communication in space and time so that asynchronous communication and communication from different physical spaces become possible. But on the other hand, communication technologies also allow the construction of common social spaces that integrate and re-embed communication that has been spatially and/or temporally distanced. With the help of communication technologies, humans can travel to distant places and stay connected with each other. Communication and transport technologies enable the mobility of humans and resources.

‘Cultural Imperialism’

Cultural imperialism has often been analysed as meaning the dominance of US-style capitalist mass culture and consumerism throughout the world. Terms such as Americanisation, McDonaldisation, CocaColonisation, or Disneyfication have been used as synonyms for this understanding of cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism is a more general term than media imperialism. Besides the media it also includes sports, food, religion, clothing, etc. Herbert Schiller spoke in the late 1960s of the emergence of an American empire that propagates commercial culture and the American way of life, especially through the means of film, radio and television.⁵²

⁵² Herbert Schiller. 1969/1992. *Mass Communications and American Empire*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Updated second edition. For an overview of the debate on cultural imperialism, see: Peter Golding and Phil Harris, eds. 1997. *Beyond Cultural Imperialism. Globalization, Communication, and the New International Order*. London: Sage. Daya Kishan Thussu. 2019. *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Third edition. Oliver-Boyd Barrett and Tanner Mirrlees, eds. 2020. *Media Imperialism: Continuity and Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

But capitalism has changed since the 1960s. In the context of the rise of neoliberal capitalism and the new imperialism, Schiller revised his own approach to argue that the decisive development has been the 'enormous growth of transnational corporate power.'⁵³ Transnational corporations globalise the capitalist model, profit making, capital accumulation, privatisation (of communications and other services), inequality, advertising, cultural sponsorship, public relations and consumerism. The universalisation of capitalism is not the consequence of American culture, but of the imperialist logic that is built into capitalism in general.

Non-Western media corporations are hardly 'distinguishable from the same services at the disposal of American-owned corporations.'⁵⁴ 'What is emerging, therefore, is a world where alongside the American output of cultural products are the practically identical items marketed by competing national and transnational groups.'⁵⁵ For example, Brazilian soaps have the same purpose as US soaps – to sell commodities produced by 'transnational corporations who advertise in Brazil as well as in the United States.'⁵⁶ The new imperialism's main cultural antagonism is not between Western and non-Western culture, but between capitalist and non-capitalist culture. Both the West and the Global South are prone to neoliberalism.

Some observers argue that Western flows of global culture are counter-balanced by contra flows emerging from the Global South, including Bollywood, Nollywood, Japanese video games, Brazilian and Mexican telenovelas, news provided by Al-Jazeera, CCTV, and Russia Today, etc. However, others argue that one must also consider the global distribution of power (profits, audiences, influence, market shares, etc.) in the analysis of global cultural flows and counter-flow. A counter-flow of culture is not a counter-flow because it comes from a certain nation or region, but can only be a counter-flow if its content is critical and its social form is non-capitalist. Not any nation or block of nations, but only socialism is a counter-flow to capitalism.

It is more important to show that the new imperialism and global capitalism encompass a global digital, cultural, and communicative capitalism than to try to show that global culture is imperialist (hypothesis of media/cultural imperialism). New imperialism is not predominantly a media or information imperialism because such an assumption implies that media and information are today the most important features of capital concentration,

⁵³ Herbert I. Schiller, 1991. Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era. In *International Communication. A Reader*, ed. Daya Kishan Thussu, chapter 14. Oxon: Routledge. p. 252.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 249

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 254

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 255

capital export, world trade, and warfare, which clearly is not the case.⁵⁷ Media and information do play an important role in new imperialism, but they are articulated with finance capital and the continued importance of fossil fuels.⁵⁸ The latter is a resource that has motivated imperialist warfare. Media are characterised by qualities of imperialism such as concentration and transnationalisation, which allows speaking of the imperialistic character of the media within the new imperialism, but not of the existence of media imperialism.⁵⁹

11.5. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise this chapter's main results:

- Space enables the next-to-one-another of entities. A social space is a bounded combination of social relations, structures, practices, social systems, and institutions. Humans produce social space by spatial practices in social relations. Social practices and social structures are represented in informational structures. Representations of space and representational space are therefore important dimensions of social space. Society has a social, an informational, and a spatial dimension, and these dimensions interact. Absolute, relative, and relational space form three types of space.
- Globalisation is an aspect of society's history. There are economic, political, and cultural dimensions of globalisation. Capital drives beyond national boundaries and organises itself on a transnational scale in order to find: (1) cheap(er) labour, (2) cheap(er) means of production, (3) commodity markets and (4) investment opportunities. New transport and communication technologies are the medium and outcome of the globalisation of capitalism. Globalisation and de-globalisation often emerge as features of society as a result of crises.
- After the crisis of capitalism in the mid-1970s, a new phase of capitalist development emerged. Neoliberalism and corporations' global outsourcing of labour in order to yield higher profits by lowering their wage costs have been an integral feature of this phase of capitalist development that can best be termed new imperialist capitalism. In comparison to the phase from 1945–1975, there has been a significant increase in the global activities of

⁵⁷ See: Christian Fuchs. 2010. Critical Globalization Studies and the New Imperialism. *Critical Sociology* 36(6): 839–867. Christian Fuchs. 2010. New Imperialism: Information and Media Imperialism? *Global Media and Communication* 6(1): 33–60. Christian Fuchs. 2016. Digital Labor and Imperialism. *Monthly Review* 67(8): 14–24.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

large corporations, foreign direct investments, world trade and global financial flows.

- China has become the world's largest exporting and importing country and a major recipient of foreign direct investment. The Chinese economy has rapidly developed from the dominance of agriculture to the dominance of manufacturing and services.
- The world economic crisis of 2008 triggered a new phase of capitalist development. It did not end neoliberalism, but in parts of the world brought about a shift towards authoritarian capitalism that is combined with neoliberalism. This form of capitalism features nationalism, xenophobia, hierarchical leadership, and coercive state politics. Its nationalism distracts attention from class conflicts. It also encompasses a tendency towards the de-globalisation of the economy, Keynesian neoliberalism, opposition to free trade agreements, and protectionism. The only viable alternative to authoritarianism is a socialist politics of worldwide working-class solidarity.
- Communication technologies are medium and outcome of the globalisation of capitalism. There is a dialectic of modern communication technologies and the globalisation of production and circulation. The rise of networked computing technologies stands in the context of a flexible regime of accumulation and a new phase of time-space compression. The notions of culture and media imperialism are in certain respects limited because they encompass the danger of nationalist idealisations of non-Western capitalism. Not any nation or block of nations and their culture and media/culture industries, but only socialism is a counter-flow to capitalism.

Capitalist globalisation as the universalisation of capitalist logic and the commodity form at society's global level brings up the question of whether there are alternatives. The next chapter will focus on this issue by discussing aspects of the communication commons. It opens this book's third part that analyses transcendental aspects of communicative materialism, namely the commons, love/death, and struggles for alternatives.