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The Academic Digital Divide and Uneven Global Development

Arjun Appadurai

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The Academic Digital Divide and Uneven Global Development

Description

CARGC Paper 4 reprinted Appadurai's October 2015 Distinguished Lecture at PARGC. In it, he warned against the dangers of "knowledge-based imperialism and scholarly apartheid" and offered possible ways to avoid them. Appadurai identified a growing rift between media studies and communication studies, with scholars concerned with institutions, power, resources, and large-scale data on one side, and scholars concerned with interpretation, texts, languages, and images on the other. Yet, despite the history of this divide, in CARGC Paper 4, Appadurai outlined what we can do to close the growing distance between media and communication studies.

Disciplines

Communication

Comments

CARGC Paper 4

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PARGC PAPER 4
SPRING 2016

The Academic Digital Divide and Uneven Global Development

*The 2015 PARGC Distinguished Lecture
in Global Communication*

PARGC
PROJECT FOR
ADVANCED RESEARCH IN
GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

 **Annenberg**
SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA





The Project for Advanced Research in Global Communication at the Annenberg School for Communication hosted **Arjun Appadurai** in October 2015. As our Distinguished Visitor, professor Appadurai gave a doctoral masterclass and delivered the PARGC Distinguished Lecture in Global Communication, which became PARGC Paper 4.

Introducing Arjun in a way that gives justice to his accomplishments would take more pages than the entire paper. Here is my balancing act: Arjun Appadurai is the Goddard Professor in Media, Culture and Communication at New York University; Honorary Professor in the Department of Media and Communication, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Tata Chair Professor at The Tata Institute for Social Sciences, Mumbai, India; and Senior Research Partner at the Max-Planck Institute for Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany.

Previously he was the John Dewey Distinguished Professor in the Social Sciences, Provost, and Vice President for Academic Affairs at The New School; the William K. Lanman Jr. Professor of International Studies, Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Center on Cities and Globalization at Yale University. Before, he held professorial chairs at the University of Chicago, and the University of Pennsylvania, and visiting appointments at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), the Universities of Delhi, Michigan, Amsterdam, and others. He has advised many foundations, international organizations, and museums.

In addition to numerous distinguished lectures, awards, prizes and fellowships, Arjun Appadurai is the founder and now the President of PUKAR (Partners for Urban Knowledge Action and Research), a non-profit organization in Mumbai, India. He was also a founder of the journal *Public Culture*, which is to this day an important forum for scholarship and public engagement. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1997. In 2013, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Erasmus University in the Netherlands.

An eminent voice in debates on globalization, modernity, culture, transnationalism, development, cities, and the imagination, Appadurai has authored numerous books and articles, translated into many languages, including *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Duke 2006) and *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (University of Minnesota Press 1996; Oxford India 1997).

Arjun Appadurai epitomizes everything PARGC is about. Boldly imaginative, his work is grounded in real places, often but not always India, which he beseeches us to see as an optic, not as an object, of research. His work transcends divisions within and between disciplines and area studies, to advance truly trans-disciplinary conversations. His writing is deeply felt, meticulously researched, rigorously conceptualized, and gracefully crafted.

Appadurai's impact on global communication is most evident in his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, which was nothing short of a manifesto for those of us grappling with the global, trapped as we were in the gravitational field between cultural studies, then a largely British-North American-Australian enterprise, and the sparkling and messy world beyond. His influential 1990 essay, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," remains, a quarter century after publication, the most read and most cited article published in *Theory, Culture and Society*. The essay inspired PARGC's yearly theme, and our 2016 Symposium, "Convergence and Disjuncture in Global Digital Culture," which we held in April 2016.

Modernity at Large introduced new optics on globalization, twinning media and migration via the imagination, understood as a major global cultural and political force. The argument against thinking of globalization as a flattener of difference, or glibly associating it with a cultural Americanization of the world, has become so commonsense that we risk missing how revolutionary it was when Appadurai first articulated it.

His work minted a new lexicon for deciphering the global condition: one example is the notion of “mediascape,” which has become so naturalized that many no longer attribute it to its rightful coiner. In later work, he advanced the notion of “globalization from below,” underscoring the scholarly and ethical imperative to study the global from the perspective of those we think of as the periphery, the powerless, the huddled masses.

In *The Future as a Cultural Fact* (Verso 2013), Appadurai lay foundations for a scholarship of the future “that can assist in the victory of a politics of possibility over a politics of probability.” He stitches a compelling argument for why culture matters in development and warns of the cost of marginalizing culture by economics. The “capacity to aspire,” Appadurai argues, articulates culture and agency with the future.

The future is now a central category across a wide variety of realms—preemptive war, predictive policing, digital marketing—and the many uses of big data mining and analysis, including financial derivatives, the subject of Arjun’s latest book, *Banking on Words: The Failure of Language in Derivatives* (University of Chicago Press 2015).

A fulsome engagement with the future, Appadurai reminds us, is vital. In PARGC Paper 4, “The Academic Digital Divide and Uneven Global Development,” he explores how infrastructures of knowledge production and the norms and agendas they spawn, impact how we understand the world. Appadurai rings the alarm about what he calls “knowledge-based imperialism and scholarly apartheid.” But as a longtime reader of Appadurai, I know that critical assessment comes with a vision for a better future; if I were to try capture his thought, I would describe him as a scholar of our imagination, who blends an

unsparing diagnosis of the world as it is, with an unbounded optimism towards what the world could be.

Arjun’s admonition that another world is possible, and with it, another kind of global media and communication studies, could not be more timely. On July 1, 2016, the Program for Advanced Research in Global Communication merges with the Center for Global Communication Studies, consolidating the Annenberg School’s global scholarship into a new Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication. CARGC will be an institute for advanced study focused on knowledge incubation, production and dissemination. Competitively selected fellows will work in clusters to address enduring questions and grapple with urgent contemporary issues. They will combine deep knowledge of the languages, histories, cultures and politics of specific regions of the world with theoretical innovation and methodological rigor.

At the heart of CARGC’s mission is an inclusive notion of globalization, one that takes into full account marginalized actors worldwide, paying special heed to the forces shaping globalization from below, pushing against inequities in the contemporary global order. In coming years, expect CARGC to focus on enduring scholarly questions that are also pressing contemporary problems—inequality, sustainability, dignity, conflict, emancipation, change, in their communicative, socioeconomic, geopolitical and cultural manifestations—in the broad interdisciplinary space between communication and globalization. Read PARGC Paper 4 carefully, for it is a harbinger of things to come.

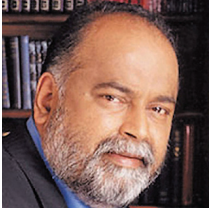


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The Academic Digital Divide and Uneven Global Development *The 2015 PARGC Distinguished Lecture in Global Communication*

I will begin first with thanks. First to Michael Delli Carpini, who has done so much to make the Annenberg School a continuing remarkable part of the Penn landscape, and of the Communications landscape. And secondly, I thank Marwan Kraidy, whose work and whose friendship I have enjoyed for some time with great delight. I am very pleased to be a guest of the Project for Advanced Research in Global Communication (PARGC).

I want to address today what I see as the growing rift between media studies and communication studies. These terms are in the title of the Annenberg School and of my own department at New York University, Media Culture and Communication, which is a retooling of an older name, associated with Neil Postman, when it was called Media Ecology. One way to look at this rift is that it reflects the old divide between political economy approaches and cultural approaches. So, let us look at these two sides. The tension goes well beyond communication studies and leads into anthropology, and even into other humanistic and social science fields. On the one side are those scholars who are concerned with institutions, with power, with resources, with inequality, and, in terms of methodology, with aggregation, and often with large-scale data. That is one set, and typically these are scholars that are concerned with political economy, and they may also have a sharp political view, concerned with inequality, sometimes Marxists in its inspiration. The other side is not concerned so much with those things, but with some sort of interpretation, with texts, languages and images. This divide has a long history, and it is clearly alive and well in programs concerned with both media and with communication.

The new media theory seems to have to do a lot with words like archeology, not the archeology of stones and bones, but some derived use of that word, having to do with words like algorithm, screen, archive and geology. This set of terms has some affinities with what used to be called cultural studies in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, that body of work which defined itself by the study of race, class and gender, and had generally productive effects. A lot of scholars, even those formed in that tradition, now see its limitations, and recognize that globalization and new technologies cannot be understood by simple resort to race, class and gender. But these interests never simply disappear, they appear in new forms, in this case in the form of media studies. Media studies is a new version of cultural studies, which is itself heavily embedded in two parts of the humanities.

One is literature, where it takes the form of what is now called the digital humanities, though not all scholars in the digital humanities come from English departments. The second source is philosophy. When I say philosophy I do not mean philosophy in general but certain branches of philosophy, typically continental, and in this case, once again, as many times before, it is German and French philosophy, combined in the figure of someone like Friedrich Kittler (1990). I didn't know who Kittler was ten years ago, and now I know who Kittler is, but there is also a Kittler tradition, a partial derivative of the German critical tradition of the Frankfurt School, which is basically a philosophical tradition.

The Kittler tradition is a German reaction to what some scholars had begun to see as the excessive focus on discourse, text and language in French theory, notably in Derrida and in deconstructionism. In the case of Kittler, this led him to a reaction, and an equally strong emphasis on tools, devices and technologies of communication, notably those of the first half of the twentieth century, such as the typewriter and the phonograph. His followers have retained Kittler's interest in devices, and media archaeology or history, for them, frequently involves an emphasis on devices. Kittler himself did not have much interest in the tools and machines of the Internet era, but today media theory continues to place a strong emphasis on the devices that enable communication in the era of cyber technology. Kittler had some respect for Foucault but felt that Foucault had also placed too much emphasis on discursive regimes and protocols.

The new media theory also has other referents and sources. It draws some of its energy from recent debates about posthumanism, about the relationship between humans and non-humans, about machinic agency, about vibrant matter and the entanglement of cosmic energies and forces with human actions and intentions. It is also connected with new understandings of feminism, biology and race, which owe a debt to the ideas of major scholars like Donna Haraway (1989) who created a powerful bridge between science studies, feminism and planetary sustainability, starting in the 1980s. Karen Barad (2007) is an exemplary figure in this new sort of approach to posthumanism, coming out of a career as a feminist and physicist. Also relevant are thinkers like Jussi Parikka (2015), who is a key figure on what is sometimes called "the geology of media" in which the long *durée* of evolution places human beings and their actions in the planet in deep time, and the earth is itself seen as a living, breathing and active surface which mediates and shapes the human moment. The combined effect of these various strands of thinking about media and materiality has been to move media theory strongly towards philosophy, critical theory and science studies, and away from traditional social science concerns with persuasion, communication and political economy.

And then there is France, of course, the other great source of European theory. All kinds of ideas about media have first been developed there, of which the most noticeable is the actor-network theory (ANT) of Bruno Latour (2005) and his followers. Latour is an interesting self-made person, because he is not technically an anthropologist, or even a sociologist, but rather a social critic or social philosopher. There is also a large Deleuzian space. And Gilles Deleuze preceded Latour, and had a lot to say about agency, animation and machines well before Latour (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). I have elsewhere offered some criticisms of actor-network theory, mainly to suggest that in spite of its laudable aim to widen the scope of sociality to include non-human agents, ANT in fact offers an impoverished understanding of the social, bereft of passion, contradiction and ethos, and turns the social itself into a landscape of formats and protocols anchored in nodes and networks with a distinctly mechanical flavor (Appadurai 2013, 2015). In this sense, ANT converges with the Kittlerian turn towards devices, and away from language, discourse and communication. This set of Franco-German interests supplies a basic amount of the energy in big parts of the new media

theory, and its strange effect is to emphasize connectivity (and related ideas like flow, assemblage and entanglement) over communication (and such related issues as speech, interaction and collectivity).

This growing split between media studies and communication studies is worrisome, but there is also a split between theories of media and those of mediation, so there is a doubling of divisions. The new media theory is dominated by an interest in such things as algorithms, screens, archeology, archives, and geology, all these words as inflected by various critical humanities traditions in literature and philosophy. This media theory, involving these keywords, often involves a coronary bypass of the traditional social sciences.

Why is that? With the direct dialogue between digital humanities and science and technology studies (STS), who needs the social sciences? Who needs sociology, political science or anthropology? STS opens the window for the humanities to look directly at the history of technology, the history of machines, the history of devices, the history of tools, the history of time, clocks, watches, and measures of every kind, tools for looking, and tools for being looked at. That is all serious science stuff, so who needs the social sciences? Who needs a survey of clock use in Lebanon, or of microscope use in India, if we can go straight to the high-end analysis of instruments, tools, technologies and their assumptions? This is a business-class privilege here, which lets humanists go to the high-end history of science and technology and reduces their need for empirical studies of communication. The dispute is not about empirical methods, it is not about the preference for, let's say, ethnography over survey research, it is a more thoroughgoing bypass. I am not suggesting that this trend is entirely unproductive, since such bypasses do have their uses, but it is not a development without costs. What this move bypasses are a big range of subjects, such as public relations, advertising, propaganda, media corporatization, audience research and more. So communication studies as it used to be understood is becoming increasingly (by)passable.

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The theory gap that between media studies and communication studies is partly due to that fact that for much media theory, social research has become "screen" research, and the study of mass, aggregated collective formations has become largely translated into the study of eyes, heads, users, and other mass formations which are not in fact social except in the sense that they are effects of big data. So, we see a growing interest in patterns and pattern recognition in the absence of social interaction. That is why major social media companies like Facebook and Google are desperate for somebody to bring them some sociology, because they own a huge amount of "data," of Big Data, but they do not have good ways to ground it in the realities of everyday communication. If you have little idea of what happens in basic social interaction, what are you going to do with these masses of data on these patterns of screen effects, user effects that are not actually about social interaction? I would say we have to bring back the analysis of communication and interaction as social facts: we have to have to pay attention to the kind of thing that Penn scholars in anthropology, linguistics and communication did very well for a long time. Scholars such as William Labov, Dell Hymes, Erving Goffman and Ray Birdwhistell were pioneers in the social study of social communication long before the current domination of a world of screens, mass effects, hits, and users.

We cannot assume that social media is all that is social, because it is plainly not. The truth is that big data has converted consumers into media effects.

The interest in big data in the corporate world in industries such as PR, marketing and advertising, is becoming increasingly a matter of pattern recognition in mass consumer behavior, and of intervention in social sites, which is actually a misnomer since the sociality of social sites is only a tiny piece of sociality at large. We cannot assume that social media is all that is social, because it is plainly not. The truth is that big data has converted consumers into media effects. In other words, consumers used to be, in an older consumer language, whole people, who enter the supermarket, look at products, and choose this and that. Now, what we do when we go to the supermarket has become a derivative effect of some interaction we have with our screens, far from old fashioned consumerism, that actually looks at what products consumers like, what brands they like, what colors they like. That sort of consumer research used to be a whole branch of research with its own methods and models. But since big data has converted consumers into media effects, there is no longer any need to study their sociality directly.

Through this illusion, the social is transformed into a media effect, and what should be an object of ideological critique is naturalized as a primary reality.

Thus, the “mass” of “mass communications” is no longer the “mass” of media studies. There are now two masses, and thus there is a new sort of physics problem. The “mass” of “mass communication” is a Newtonian mass, but now we have another mass, the mass of new media, the mass of archeology, the mass of clouds, and the mass of mining. The study of groups, collectives, aggregations, mobs, and crowds are no longer seen as serious genres. So, there is great interest in connectivity, but the division between the study of social aggregation and of machinic collectives has become deeper. Thus the recent developments in media theory have abandoned traditional ideas of social collectivity in favor of a more abstract, machinic and device-driven idea of sociality. The implications are deep and wide. The idea that the most important types of social collectivity are artifacts of social media mistakes effects for causes, and falls prey to the impression that machine-based sociality is somehow more real than everyday interaction, whether face-to-face or more impersonal. Through this illusion, the social is transformed into a media effect, and what should be an object of ideological critique is naturalized as a primary reality. Where in the past the mass media were seen as a matter of social projects and mobilization, now the social is itself seen as a by-product of mediation. The biggest single symptom of this shift is the recent obsession with big data, data produced by the mediatic activities of large numbers of users, whose mining, sorting, and decoding is the central preoccupation of corporate interests as well as of the security state. Big data has become a sort of proxy social world, and the search for patterns in it, largely through algorithmic tools, has come to be seen as a more reliable source of significant social insight than the direct study of social interaction and social behavior, which are no longer high priorities of either state or market powers. There is a double danger here, one epistemological and one ethical. The epistemological danger is the risk that we mistake patterns in machine-mediated behavior for the deep logic of society and sociality. The ethical danger is that users themselves are coming to believe that it is easier, quicker and more effective to use screens and apps to communicate with one another than conversation or communication in older formats. The frequently observed sight of a group of friends sitting at a restaurant table looking at their iPhones to talk to other friends is just one sign of this ubiquitous loss of faith in the pleasures of non-machinic sociality. Although there are social theorists who have drawn our attention to the dangers of this ideology of sociality and its corporate sponsors (Lessig 1999; Vaidyanathan 2011; Turkle 2015), these critical voices are outweighed by the voices of media theorists who are content to replicate the corporate ideology that substitutes machinic sociality and big data for primary interactive processes.

Other Worlds and the World of Others

The problem of the divide between the Anglophone (and in general the Euro-American) academic world and the rest of the world is an old one and it is not getting any better.

The problem of the divide between the Anglophone (and in general the Euro-American) academic world and the rest of the world is an old one and it is not getting any better. This divide has its roots in the institutions set up by European powers in the age of empire, when they installed systems of literacy, expertise and education which degraded the knowledges and languages of Africa, the Middle East and Asia and elevated English, French, German, Dutch and a few other European languages as requirements for government, law and the professions in their colonies. This intellectual hierarchy was exacerbated by the images and narratives of the racialized other, which Edward Said analyzed brilliantly in his classic study of Orientalism (Said 1978). This Orientalizing heritage was the source of a strong bias in the modern humanities and began to be modified only with the arrival of postcolonial perspectives in literature and cultural studies in the 1970s and after. Even so, the study of non-Western languages and literatures still remains minor in the Western academic world and is largely confined to area studies and comparative literature departments in Western universities.

In the social sciences, the heritage of Orientalism has a different trajectory, and is shaped by the joint influence of development studies and modernization theory, which dominated the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s and remain influential even today, in spite of a many criticisms of the teleological, ethnocentric and Eurocentric assumptions embedded in much of this variety of social science work. The developmentalist orientation in the social sciences has its roots in the work of European and American economists in the interwar period, and became institutionalized after the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944 and after the Marshall Plan which helped to transform the war-damaged economies of Europe after World War II. The central aim of this form of economics was to tackle the problems of poverty and inequality in the underdeveloped world by transferring and installing Western technologies, values and institutional forms in non-European societies. Since this perspective often encountered obstacles in the new nations of the decolonizing world of Asia, Africa and the Middle East starting in the 1950s, what was then called modernization theory developed in sociology and political science, as a complement to development economics. Modernization theory was designed to explain the resistance of non-Western societies to Western ideals of democracy, equality, entrepreneurship and secularism. The explanatory aims of modernization theory were inseparable from its normative goals, which were to induce these societies to converge with the Western stage of modernity.

The joint effect of the Orientalist heritage of the Western humanities and the Eurocentric underpinnings of modernization theory in the social sciences was to construct an idea of all non-Western intellectual traditions and resources as being weak, backward and anti-modern and thus scholars in the new societies of Africa, Asia and the Middle East were given the mandate of “catching up,” of ridding themselves of older habits of thought, criticism, debate and reflection and taking up new habits which were seen as more consonant with the ideals of an idealized Western modernity. Universities in these societies were pushed into technocratic curricula, into English (and to a lesser extent French, German and Dutch) language proficiency and into measuring their success by Western standards of publication, citation and scholarly evaluation. So educational careers and institutions were both forced into a modernizing mold and the intellectual worlds of

The historical backdrop and precondition of the academic divide which long precedes the digital divide.

the decolonizing societies were habituated to think of themselves as weak replicas of their Western models and mentors. This situation remains remarkably persistent well into the present. It is the historical backdrop and precondition of the academic divide which long precedes the digital divide.

Media and communications studies also took shape in the West largely under the influence of modernization theory and development studies after World War II, as well as a third force, the ideological conflict of the Cold War between the United State and the Soviet Union. So far as the new nations of the decolonizing world were concerned, the field of communications was indivisibly linked to the American version of communications studies, in which public opinion, mass information delivery systems, advertising and education were all seen as weapons in the war against the evils of communism. Before the Internet became the dominant vehicle of communication and information starting in the 1970s and 1980s, communications technologies were a vital part of the weapons of the Cold War and thus communications as a discipline was seen as an additional space for the conduct of this war. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the worldwide growth of web-based technologies and internet usage combined to render this Cold War model of communication less dominant and a more plural idea of media studies began to take shape in the universities of the United States and Europe, in which digital literacy became the new yardstick of technological maturity and global competitiveness for the societies of the previously colonial world. The tension between the older, modernization-driven model of communications and the digital orientation of the newer media studies is one historical source of the divide, which I have been addressing throughout this lecture.

This divide between media studies and communication studies, and the trend to emphasize mediation over communication, is one of the major reasons why theory in this field is likely to leave colleagues in the rest of the world behind, because if you have a view of media studies as a kind of business-class for theory, and communication studies is regarded as being about lower level empirics, then the rest of the world is likely to be doomed to remain in the second compartment. This is how I see the connection between this theory divide in the West and the academic digital divide in the era of globalization.

Such “screenification” of social processes, to which I alluded earlier, has largely become the center of theoretical innovations in the US and Europe, in the name of media theory, and it is largely concerned with the working of interfaces, algorithms and codes. This process is directly linked to highly sophisticated technologies, archives and assemblages that are of recent Western origin, which are barely available, much less understandable in many parts of the world. In other words, for this development to thrive in academic research, you have to have a lot of infrastructure around you. Here are some examples. Consider the growing use of Google Docs by academics. Here many of us are quick to say, “hey, let’s upload it to Google Docs,” but does everybody in the world have Google Docs to upload massive amounts of megabytes on to it? No. The same is true for expensive means to combine visual and textual data, through both software and hardware at high end labs such as the MIT Media Lab which allow experimentation in design, robotics, animation and the like, to cross the lines between scientific and artistic innovation. Who has the technological access, the actual infrastructure, to do this kind of innovative work? Very few people in the world do.

So the result of these developments is, as often in the past, a radical distancing of cutting-edge research in the US and Europe from the work of scholars working on Asia, Africa, the Middle East and other less sophisticated cyber settings. And this exacerbates already existing patterns of inequality that affect journals, citations, careers, funds, awards, and overall scholarly prestige and reputations. So, we now face a double problem. There is an internal problem in Europe and in the US, where communication studies and media studies have come apart, as media studies bypasses the traditional social sciences and links itself to the hard sciences through STS, and communication studies is left to do the traditional work of the social sciences on collective behavior, persuasion, corporate power and so on. This distance is being rapidly institutionalized in the US and also in Europe. And in turn this divide leaves the rest of the world at a severe disadvantage because the split itself presumes a high level of dialogue between theory and the sort of screenification of everyday life that presumes a high degree of saturation of the lives of many ordinary people by screens, codes and algorithms.

What Is To Be Done?

The diagnosis of the relationship I have offered here between a continuing pattern of inequality between scholars in the rest of the world and those in the Euro-American world and the growing internal gap between media studies and communications studies with the Euro-American academy cannot be solved within the academic world alone. It certainly involves larger inequalities across and within the societies of the West and the rest and the need of huge Western players like Facebook, Apple, Microsoft and Google to develop cheap labor for hardware production as well as massive audience bases overseas while holding high-end expertise, innovation and knowhow close to their own homes and hearts. The high cost of enabling scholars in poorer countries to have easy access to the newest technologies for archiving, analyzing and sharing information is another major factor. The resistance of some regimes (such as China) to freedom of information and connectivity on the Internet is yet another factor.

Yet we can do something to close the growing distance between media studies and communication studies within our own departments and universities here in the privileged locations of the United States and Europe. To do this, we must not allow media studies to develop into an enclave of high theory and high technology which shuts out even our own colleagues who are interested in the classical study of social interactions, communications and connectivity. For if we cannot even talk to each other about basic issues that link the social and screen worlds, what chance is there that we can also remain in active and democratic contact with our colleagues in less privileged places in the world, whose worlds are not yet saturated by screen, code and algorithm? Rather than see them as poor cousins who have not yet found the means to enter our own screenified discourses, perhaps we can see them as primary collaborators who still have full access to a world which is not yet a wholly owned subsidiary of Facebook and Google. For those of us who have some reservations about this Brave New World, we have much to gain both by building bridges close to home and bridges across larger distances. I see PARGC as engaged in just this kind of mission and this is why I feel privileged to share these thoughts in this Forum.

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GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

**The Academic Digital Divide and Uneven
Global Development**

Arjun Appadurai, Goddard Professor in
Media, Culture and Communication
at New York University

OCTOBER 2, 2015

2015 PARGC MASTER CLASS

Failure and Mediation

Arjun Appadurai

OCTOBER 19-20, 2015

NIAS-PARGC WORKSHOP

**Corporeality in Arab Public Culture: The
State of the Field**

Co-Sponsored and hosted by the
Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study
in the Humanities and Social Sciences,
Wassenaar, Netherlands

NOVEMBER 17, 2015

PARGC COLLOQUIUM

**Networked Publics and Digital Contention:
The Politics of Everyday Life in Tunisia**

Mohamed Zayani, Associate Professor of
Critical Theory at the Georgetown University
School of Foreign Service in Qatar

FEBRUARY 4, 2016

PARGC WORKSHOP

**Turkey's Long Decade: Media, Politics and
Culture in the Transnational Era**

Altug Akin, Izmir University of Economics
Ece Algan, California State University,
San Bernardino

Omar Al-Ghazzi, The University of Sheffield
Miyase Christiansen, Stockholm University
Marwan M. Kraidy, University of
Pennsylvania

Lea Nocera, University of Naples

Yesim Kaptan, Izmir University of Economics

Bilge Yesil, The City University of New York

APRIL 6-7, 2016

2016 PARGC SYMPOSIUM

**Convergence and Disjuncture in Global
Digital Culture**

**Panel I - Is There a Global Digital Culture?
Universalism, Materialism and Multiplicity**

Anita Chan, University of Illinois, Urbana-
Champaign

Milad Doueihi, Sorbonne Universités

Guobin Yang, University of Pennsylvania

**Panel II - Is There a Global Rogue Digital
Culture?**

Hector Amaya, University of Virginia

Alex Fattal, Pennsylvania State University

Marwan M. Kraidy, University of
Pennsylvania

**Panel III - Is There a Global Digital Labor
Culture?**

Antonio Casilli, Telecom Paris-Tech

Lilly Irani, University of California, San Diego

Lisa Nakamura, University of Michigan

**Panel IV - Is There a Global Digital Ludic
Culture?**

Payal Arora, Erasmus University, Rotterdam

Dal Yong Jin, Simon Fraser University

Vit Sisler, Charles University, Prague

**Panel V - Is There a Global Digital
Aesthetic?**

Olga Goriunova, Royal Holloway University
of London

Laura U. Marks, Simon Fraser University

Nicholas Mirzoeff, New York University

Panel VI - Migration and Digital Culture

Dana Diminescu, Télécom ParisTech

Anna Everett, University of California, Santa
Barbara