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GLOBAL VILLAGE

[See also: *Electronic Media; Internet; McLuhan, Marshall*]

The term *global village* was coined in the 1960s by media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911–80) to describe how human beings are increasingly connected by electric (or electronic) technologies, which virtually eliminate the effects of space and time so that the globe contracts into one interconnected, metaphorical 'village.' According to McLuhan, technologies are extensions of human physical and mental capacities; the wheel is an extension of the foot, the book an extension of the eye, and electric circuitry an extension of the central nervous system. When the central nervous system is distributed in a global embrace through electronic technologies, awareness of others is heightened and humans return to tribal conditions. The term 'global village' has entered the language as a popular idiom. Scholars point out that the notion is significant for having anticipated some of the conditions and effects of the wired world in an era of globalization and the World Wide Web.

Electronic Extension, Secondary Orality, and the Retrieval of Tribal Culture

The advent of electronic media in the *electric revolution* is the third major technologi-

cal milestone in the history of communication technology that began with the *literate revolution* in the fifth century BCE, which moved humans out of the mindset of oral and tribal culture and into a literate mentality. The *Gutenberg revolution* accelerated the millennia-long expansionist forces of change and shifted people out of the culture of the manuscript, producing mechanization, specialization, and alienation. The effects of the two previous revolutions were reversed when human capacities achieved a global reach. Whereas the ancient Greeks went from primary orality and tribalism to literacy – and the Gutenberg revolution hastened these processes of change – the electric revolution has touched off an implosion that retrieves tribal culture in an era of 'secondary orality.'

McLuhan's concept of the global village was likely influenced by Catholic theologian Teilhard de Chardin's notion of the 'noosphere' (from the Greek *nous* meaning 'mind' and *sfaira* meaning 'sphere' or 'globe'), a form of global consciousness emerging from the interaction of human minds in increasingly complex forms of organization and integration, a process which is fostered and accelerated by widely distributed communication connections leading ultimately to the unified mind of the Omega Point, conceived as evidence of the 'body of Christ.' Teilhard's interpretation was censured by the Catholic Church, and his writings circulated underground for years, influencing a generation of Catholic scholars. McLuhan appears to have borrowed and adapted Teilhard's vision, arguing that electric technologies make it possible to instantly translate any code or language into any other code or language. Extending our senses and nerves around the world creates a state of unified collective awareness that may have been similar to the condition of human beings before the fall at the Tower of Babel.

While McLuhan's retribalized global village has most often been portrayed as a peaceful and harmoniously functioning community – and this was indeed McLu-

han's hope for the future – his vision was not as straightforwardly optimistic as much popular use of the term would suggest. Life in the global village has a shadow side that is hostile. As McLuhan stated in his final television interview, 'tribal people, one of their main kinds of sport is butchering each other.' The negative effect of the shift to global communication is that being linked to everyone leaves many people feeling overwhelmed and without a personal identity. The response is violence. War, torture, terrorism, and other violent acts are 'quests for identity' in the global village. To many, McLuhan's observations concerning the global village were prescient. Understanding both the positive potential and the negative effects of life in the global village has become one of the pressing challenges in today's increasingly interconnected world of communication.

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GLOBALIZATION

[See also: *Global Village; Mass Communication; McLuhan, Marshall*]

The term *globalization* refers to the process whereby the lives and destinies of people across the world are increasingly linked economically, politically, and culturally. Simply put, it is the awareness of the world as a single place. Such planetary consciousness is necessary, some argue, because the

results of global warming, environmental erosion, the AIDS pandemic, global terrorism, and nuclear proliferation are likely to affect all humans, regardless of their geographical location or material conditions. But the adjective *global* functions to signify less catastrophic scenarios as well. A new vocabulary has emerged in which the *global* attaches to a range of phenomena that either reflect or shape the ceaseless traffic of people, images, and ideas at the present time. References are being made to global fashion, global youth, global tourism, global cities, global community, and so on, both in newspaper reports and in academic research. Globalization suggests both the benefits and the costs of an interdependence that has become the hallmark of the contemporary era.

Indeed, globalization informs every aspect of life, as events or trends in one part of the world, such as those of fashion or modelling, can get adopted in another, affecting standards of beauty, health, and self-esteem of a significant part of the population. Such interchanges are numerous, but complex to analyse or even explain. Thus, in the social sciences, globalization is 'poorly defined and difficult to research systematically' (Crane 2002: 1) and 'there are as many conceptualizations of globalization as there are disciplines' (Pieterse 1995: 45). The most common understandings stem from economics, in which globalization is the system generated by the movement towards integrated world markets in production and finance. In the fields of political science and sociology, international relations and history, communications, cultural studies and urban studies, attempts have been underway since the late 1980s to reorganize modes of analysis to accommodate the global into local and national frameworks. New terms such as 'glocalization' served to emphasize continuities and changes in the 1990s. And what is new in the way the contemporary world works is itself a matter for definition. For example: 'What is new about the modern global system is the chronic in-