

# Culture and Globalization

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## Abstract

How should we define culture and globalization? How does each affect the other? And what are our shortcomings in understanding the heterogeneous outcomes for cultural production and expression in a globalizing world? This essay begins with foundational understandings among sociologists, political economists, and anthropologists regarding the facets of globalization and the way that it is shaped by and in turn shapes local cultures. The essay turns to the widely varied, disjointed attempts to explain the phenomenon and then offers suggestions for advancing studies of culture in the context of globalization.

## INTRODUCTION

What happens to culture in a globalized economy? And how does culture shape globalization? Culture's fate is not dependent on globalization but constitutes and is partly constituted by the latter. *Culture* refers to two things: (i) the symbols, categories, and material arts a group of people deem significant as well as (ii) the normative interpretations of situations and symbols that a collectivity largely shares. These constitutive and regulatory forms of culture explain why groups of people tend to agree on (or contest) the value of objects and to articulate similar criteria for assessing value and values; moreover, the regulatory forms of culture (such as rituals and routine practices) shape how people internalize these criteria and how these criteria affect the organization of production, distribution, and exchange (DiMaggio, 1990, 1997; Swidler, 1986; Wherry, 2012).

The concept of *globalization* refers to the temporally compressed processes facilitating commerce and the shared interpretations of what problems are (and the set of thinkable, appropriate strategies to address them) generating the categories and routines for commercial exchange. In his review of the debates on globalization, Mauro Guillén explained the phenomenon as both an ideology (a way of seeing and *not* seeing the world, regardless of the empirical evidence) and "a process leading to greater interdependence and

mutual awareness (reflexivity) among economic, political, and social units in the world, and among actors in general" (2001, p. 236). The constitutive understanding of culture is built into the definition of globalization because globalization carries a set of values and social categories that facilitate greater economic, artistic, and political integration. These understandings of globalization build on Roland Robertson's recognition that it intensifies "the consciousness of the world as a whole" (1992, p. 8) as well as Anthony Giddens' (1990) claim that it indicates the compression of social ties linking localities and symbols that are geographically far away. The question remains how these values and categories affect what is produced, how, and under what conditions exchanges take place; likewise, the culturally forged systems of production and exchange have varying effects on the symbols, traditions, and the material arts of the integrating societies.

Ethnographic depictions of culture in global markets present some indications of how markets may be placed in the service of cultural preservation. In Mali, for example, villagers gather their artifacts and document their traditional uses and origins. The more verifiable information the villager can provide, the greater the loan the villager can obtain from the Culture Bank. The villager's object acts as collateral, but it is also deposited in the Bank's museum, earning money from the entrance fees charged to tourists (Wherry & Crosby, 2011). What social capital—defined as the capacity to mobilize resources by virtue of one's social ties—did for the Grameen Bank (Woolcock, 1998), symbolic capital has done for the Culture Bank, utilizing symbolic assets to generate economic capital while promoting cultural preservation, but these villages are not closed systems. Global traders move across local and national boundaries with greater ease and with fewer regulations as the speed of globalization accelerates.

Is the diversity of cultural forms increasing or decreasing? And why does homogenization or cultural deterioration matter for the well-being of individuals, households, and communities? While there are instances of creative destruction—innovative cultural forms emerging as some traditional ones wane—in the arts (Cowen, 2001), there are no guarantees that creativity will overcome the tendency to standardize (Wherry, 2006, 2008). Investigating the structural and the symbolic systems that culture constitutes enables social analysts to identify general sources and processes of cultural change in a globalizing world.

## FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH

The foundational texts address what happens to cultural products in the capitalist marketplace and the role of culture in facilitating (or hindering)

commercial exchange. This section begins with the question of how capitalists markets affect the material and performing arts.

#### CULTURE INDUSTRY THESIS

If one defines globalization strictly in economic terms, it means the spread of capitalism around the world, and its spread changes the character of arts and music by transforming its relations of production. In Karl Marx's *Capital (Volume 1)*, the production of orchestral music became subject to the same mechanistic market pressures just as the production of any other commercial commodity would. A single violin player may function as his own conductor, but at the moment when a musician must coordinate with others to produce orchestral music, the laws of capitalism apply. By virtue of requiring a division of labor and needing economic capital to facilitate "the work of directing, superintending, and adjusting" (Marx, [1867] 1906, p. 363) the music and its performance, the members of an orchestra begin to see themselves as a group with a shared fate and with a common external antagonist. Marx writes:

A single violin player is his own conductor; an orchestra requires a separate one. The work of directing, superintending, and adjusting, becomes one of the functions of capital . . . As the number of the co-operating labourers increases, so too does their resistance to the domination of capital, and with it, the necessity for capital to overcome this resistance by counter-pressure. The control exercised by the capitalist is not only a special function, due to the nature of the social labour-process, and peculiar to that process, but it is, at the same time, a function of the exploitation of a social labour-process, and is consequently rooted in the unavoidable antagonism between the exploiter and the living and labouring raw material he exploits.

[Ibid., p. 363]

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer ([1944] 1993) extend Marx's framework to the culture industries and the liberation these industries seemed to represent. The production of music and the arts proliferates as a result of market incentives, not the authentic impulses of the artists, they argue. The production of culture becomes increasingly monopolized as spontaneous productions become marked as "amateur" and as talent scouts do the bidding of centralized capitalist control centers (their firms). The illusion of diversity masks the similarities between a film produced by Warner Brothers versus one made by Metro Goldwyn Mayer; a car designed by Chrysler versus General Motors. One detail may substitute for another in order to maximize the customer base. As capital seeks to commodify, it must also create what appear to be new varieties of goods (the variation is false) so that the markets can reach the greatest number of consumers.

## BUREAUCRATIZATION THESIS

In *Economy and Society*, Max Weber outlines the fate of charisma and creativity in a modern society. These otherwise unpredictable and unstable qualities are made routine through rational management and bureaucratization. “[C]harismatic authority is naturally unstable” (Weber, [1922] 1978, p. 1114). The charismatic leader continuously has to prove his worth by miracles or victories. If a leader becomes associated with an event that has gone badly, he loses his authority because obviously the gods are no longer smiling on him. Charismatic leaders are dangers to the state because they defy rationality: “‘It has been written . . . , but I say unto you . . . .’” (Ibid., p. 1115). Hence, the state has to coopt charisma.

The state or the large organization can coopt charisma through bureaucracy’s three key features: (i) Activities that happen on a regular basis “are assigned as official duties” (Ibid., p. 956). These activities are not done as a favor to a patriarch or to any other traditional source of authority beyond the formal organization. (ii) The distribution of authority to functionaries is stable and is not capricious. The authority of the bureaucracy’s functionaries is circumscribed by the rule structure. The visionary cannot upend the organization’s standard operating procedures. (iii) Functionaries are chosen because they possess the needed skills to fulfill their duties. “Methodological provision is made for the regular and continuous fulfillment of these duties and for the exercise of the corresponding rights” (Ibid., p. 956).

## DRAMATURGICAL PERFORMANCE THESIS

Two performance approaches inform studies of culture and globalization. In the first, nation-states, regional bodies, and businesses are presenting a favorable image of themselves to various audiences. They engage in backstage preparations to manage the impressions their audiences have of them (impression management). Performers tend to manage stigma by either pretending that the blot does not exist (covering), acknowledging the stigma and providing explanations for its emergence and for the integrity of those it marks, or they embrace the stigma and reject the norms of their observing audiences. These dynamics observed by Erving Goffman (1959, 1961) translate to globalization and cultural identity as the number of audiences increases, the capacity to segregate audiences declines, and more information and resources are brought from outside of a specific community as presentation teams decide how to present more favorable images of the collective self.

The social performance perspective developed by Jeffrey Alexander (2004) insists on the autonomy of culture, emphasizing that culture cannot always be utilized strategically in dramaturgical performance because the myths, narratives, and symbols encasing the commodification of culture become

ends in themselves. The social performances of value rely on cultural logics marking the sacred from the profane, the modern from the primitive, the developed from the developing, and the orderly from the chaotic. These cultural codes enable some scripts to resonate and others to fall flat. Not recognizing what these symbolic binaries are and how different global audiences interpret them may diminish the value of cultural objects or traditions because their power does not inhere in the objects or the practices themselves but rather in the interplay with overarching cultural codes.

## CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

### McDONALIZATION THESIS

Culture, charisma, and authenticity are likely to become routinized in the global economy. George Ritzer reformulates Weber's thesis of bureaucratization in modern society as he identifies how the exotic, the intimate, and the authentic have been studied, quantified, and repackaged in the service of global capitalism. Historical sites and "real" outdoor adventures become repackaged entertainment commodities developed (mostly) with economic profits in mind.

Ritzer systematizes this critique by identifying four outcomes for culture in the global economy and the conditions contributing to those outcomes. There is (i) globalization ["the imperialistic imposition of an entity on a geographic area with the goal of seeing its profits, power, and influence grow" (Ritzer, 2003, p. 193)]; and (ii) there is glocalization ["the interpenetration of the local and the global" (Ibid., p. 193)]. Each manifestation of globalization has two types. The globalization of something versus nothing; and the glocalization of something versus nothing. Globalization denotes non-local content and centralized, corporate control; however that content can be something (the holdings of a museum) or nothing (the fluff of popular culture). Likewise, glocalization denotes local content and local control, but its contents can represent something (local traditions and motifs made on terms the local control) versus nothing (tourists' trinkets lacking a deep connection to local traditions or meaningful motifs).

### PRODUCTION OF CULTURE MODEL

Peter Peterson and A. Anand (2004) develop a model of the six facets of cultural production to explain how new cultural forms emerge in the global economy. The six facets of the model are as follows: (i) technology, especially its capacity to change how communication occurs; (ii) laws and regulations creating or destabilizing barriers to entry; (iii) the industry structure, indicating how competitive pricing is in the market and whether cultural producers

and distributors are horizontally or vertically integrated; (iv) organizational structure of the cultural producers; (v) career ladders that make greater participation by cultural producers more (or less) likely, compared with cultural producers with access to other career trajectories; and (vi) the market categories differentiating higher versus lower status producers (best seller list, prestigious awards).

#### THE SOCIAL SOURCES OF CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY

Frederick Wherry (2006) identifies the contextual conditions promoting or hindering the glocalization of meaningful content in tourism markets. He identifies the social sources of authenticity, namely: (i) the reluctance of individual artisans to pursue economic profits, and thereby increasing their profitability and their autonomy in their dealings with global buyers; (ii) the reactive formation (and protection) of identity that occurs when a community feels that its cultural identity is being appropriated by outsiders; (iii) the complicit appropriation of local culture by locals with trusted outside partners possessing genuine goodwill; and (iv) the transcendental values (religious motifs, beliefs in spirits or in an afterlife) that place restrictions on how some objects may be modified or exchanged in the marketplace. These sources of authenticity operate at both the level of the individual artisans/artists and the level of the group, with cultural symbols tied to the histories of geographically specific places.

#### MONOPOLY RENTS

These social sources of cultural authenticity, however, may sometimes be subject to the tendency of market actors to increase barriers to entry for “goods” so that they can capture monopoly rents. David Harvey writes: “Some way has to be found to keep some commodities or places unique and particular *enough* to maintain a monopolistic edge in an otherwise commodified and fiercely competitive economy” (quoted in Coombe and Aylwin, 2011, pp. 2027–2028). Cultural goods generate economic value (what the author calls *rents*) because the cultural forms are scarce (hard to obtain). If the scarcity of cultural goods (uniqueness) declines, so too does its economic value.

Who will take responsibility for maintaining monopoly rents for collectively held property? No one person owns a cultural tradition; therefore, there are incentives for people to “free ride” on the cultural tradition’s reputation. There is an even lower incentive for outsiders to protect the long-term viability of a local cultural resource. Therefore, one may witness initial attempts to protect cultural heritage falter with time as the number of

cultural offerings increases (decline in scarcity). Attenuating this decline are transcendental concerns and social movements by local and transnational actors.

#### VALUE TOURNAMENTS

The economic price and importance of cultural goods often emerges from *tournaments of value*. Arjun Appadurai coined this phrase to represent four common features observed in auctions and other markets. (i) Tournaments of value are complex periodic events that are removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life. (ii) Participation in them is likely to be both a privilege of those in power and an instrument of status contests between them. (iii) The currency of such tournaments is also likely to be set apart through well-understood cultural diacritics. (iv) Finally, although such tournaments of value occur in special times and places, their forms and outcomes are always consequential for the more mundane realities of power and value in ordinary life (Appadurai, 1988, p. 21).

Different actors (given their role and their audience) employ different logics of evaluation in the tournament. Participation in an exchange does not depend on a sense of parity. Instead, the actors occupy different rungs of the social hierarchy and are expected to engage in the tournament according to their status/identity.

In special bidding contests, how do superstars emerge? Why do some actors gain an advantage in the price negotiations? The actor's ability to gain an advantage in the market depends on the actor's skill, yet the actor's skill has its basis in social convention. Objects and money flow through culturally conventional routes. And the informal rules governing those flows and the disruptions thereof can make some valuations of cultural goods resonate by virtue of how the object circulates rather than what the object is (Bandelj & Wherry, 2011; Wherry, 2008).

#### SIGN SYSTEMS AND VALUE REGIMES

The value of cultural commodities generally derives from the object's sign position within an entire system of other signs. Jean Baudrillard (1981) argues that the symbols exemplified by a cultural product are evaluated with regard to its similarities and differences with other well (or little) regarded signs. Signals of value do not inhere in the object. Instead, the object becomes intelligible only within the semiotic system.

Arjun Appadurai notes that cultural commodities "circulate in different regimes of value in space and time" (Appadurai, 1988, p. 4). If there is more dissonance between the society where the object is produced and the society

where the object is sold, retailers gain rents by connecting one regime of value to another. The dissonance is most stable where consumers in the receiving society have information about the site of production (Wherry, 2008).

#### DISJUNCTIVE GLOBAL FLOWS

Arjun Appadurai (1990) explains that facile accounts of globalization leading to cultural homogenization fail to account for the growing disjunctures between the flows of finance, national politics, multiple networks of state and non-state actors, and the proliferation of ideas, images, and symbols that travel the globe. He identifies five elements of global cultural flow that one should examine on a case-by-case basis when assessing the varied fates of cultural forms in the world economy. These elements are (i) ethnoscapes (the movement of people, be they tourists, immigrants, diasporas, and the claims they make on states and on markets); (ii) mediascapes (the electronic capacity to produce and disseminate information); (iii) technoscapes (the mechanical and informational technologies that facilitate alliances and speedier coordination); (iv) finanscapes (global capital, its movement, concentration, and empowering capacities); and (v) ideoscapes (the images and shared narratives that motivate specific kinds of action). Because these dimensions of cultural globalization are overlapping, emanating from a variety of sources, and incessantly contested, developing general laws explaining the consequences for culture in a global economy becomes impossible. Instead, one can use these concepts to approach cultural forms in their specific historical context with the specific audiences and stakeholders that are both within and outside of the geographic territory of production.

Anxiety over national identity may mean that national boundaries become more porous for the movement of non-cultural goods but less-porous for goods deemed to have significance for the identity of a people. Scholars like Patricia Goff (2000) and JP Singh (2008) demonstrate that struggles over how to classify objects and the rules that those classifications unleash make disjoin standard market logics (finanscapes) from a range of ethno- and ideoscapes.

#### THE SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH

Omar Lizardo (2008) rejects the notion that global flows of finance, technology, and status are disconnected and not predictive of global cultural production. In networked societies with mobile people, the need for symbolic resources that are difficult to reconvert increases. The changing bases of power and recognition have undermined the simpler elite-mass binaries that animated earlier studies of global culture and consumption. Consequently, there is a great deal of variation in “the national reception, vitality and



relative degree of success of both global and domestic culture” (Lizardo, 2008, p. 24). The sociocultural approach explains macro-level patterns of cultural consumption at the national and the global level that parses out the direction of influence that local versus global flows of culture have on the production of music, films, novels, and other media. The sociocultural approach offers a systemic account of general processes that the usual ethnographic studies of culture and globalization do not offer. Systemic, cross-national variations in culture include the following:

[C]ultural flows should be denser within culturally proximate and socio-economically similar countries and should be weaker between culturally distant and socio-economically dissimilar countries. Suggesting that intra-core and intra-periphery cultural exchange is a much more important facet of the global cultural economy than traditionally considered, asymmetric—core-periphery flows . . .

Demand for global symbolic goods—such as American popular culture—will be weakest in those regions of the world most disconnected from other facets of the globalization process (informational, economic, demographic, etc.), least urbanized, least economically advantaged, and more structured along segmented and localized ethnic, religious, and communal boundaries . . .

[W]ithin all nation-states, but in particular within economically advantaged and less globally connected societies we should observe a bifurcation or binary segmentation among audiences with the most privileged and globally connected strata preferring global popular culture, and the least privileged strata showing a more marked preference for local or regional cultural goods . . .

[C]onsumption of global popular culture should be highest among those who reside in the richest and most globally connected regions of the world, and should be weakest among those who reside in the least connected and least socially and economically advantaged regions of the world (Lizardo, 2008, pp. 24–26).

These predictions of the sociocultural model defy the McDonalization thesis and indicate the structural factors shaping the variation in cultural production, distribution, and reception from one site to the next.

#### CULTURAL WEALTH AND MEANINGFUL GEOGRAPHIES

Nina Bandelj and Frederick Wherry (2011) have coined the term *cultural wealth* to refer to the stocks of symbolic capital that are externally recognized as tied to a geographic territory. They propose that the reputation and status of a country have interactive effects on economic development, modifying the pace as well as the direction of development. They and their collaborators

emphasize how different audiences are developed for cultural consumption and what processes allow these audiences to recognize, appreciate, and monetize a country's symbolic capital.

Centeno, Bandelj, & Wherry (2011) describe how cultural wealth is distributed globally, noting the dramatic inequalities in its distribution. For example, when comparing the distribution of cultural heritage sites versus natural heritage sites, Centeno notes that these distributions seem to suggest that the different regions of the world are roughly equivalent in their "natural endowments" of physical beauty, but only the United States, Western Europe, and a few parts of Asia seemed to be "naturally endowed" with cultural wealth. Centeno goes on to show the flows of cultural goods (books, fashion, and other cultural commodities) across the globe to demonstrate how some countries are mostly sending and others are mostly receiving highly valued cultural goods. In conclusion, Centeno outlines the conditions that facilitate the conversion of symbolic resources into economic ones. In other words, if we imagine collectives (villages, regions, or nations) as being similar to individuals, we can examine how a group's construction and deployment of symbolic capital facilitates their accumulation of economic capital.

Dario Gaggio (2011) offers a historical analysis of how cultural resources become understood as such. Ironically, a landscape's iconic status might render it unfit for (economic) market work, but political struggles unrelated to the struggles of cultural producers nonetheless shape the rules and audiences concerned with its preservation and its use. Gaggio uses the case of the Tuscan landscape to warn against de-contextualized recommendations for how to develop and convert symbolic resources into economic ones.

#### GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS

Jennifer Bair (2011) notes that the service sector (tourism) and cultural industries have not received a great deal of attention in the global value chains literature. The empirical studies of commodity chains have honed in on manufacturing, chiefly autos, apparel, electronics, and agricultural commodities such as fresh fruits and vegetables, chocolate, coffee, and fresh cut flowers. Bair details how symbolic resources and cultural wealth intersect with global trade and production networks in the multicountry tourism project known as the *Mayan Path (Ruta Maya)*. Identity politics and overlapping national jurisdictions constrain attempts to develop a single, coherent narrative about a regional culture, and the benefits accrued from cultural wealth are unevenly distributed across the value chain.

Mark Graham (2011) presents a detailed case study of commodity chains in the Thai silk industry and focuses specifically on attempts to reinvigorate the

slowly dying practice of silk production in northeastern Thailand. Producers of Thai silk usually live in poverty, while intermediaries are able to capture the bulk of value. As such, development strategies often revolve around eliminating intermediaries on the commodity chains of silk and bringing weavers into a global virtual marketplace. By contrasting chains that have been altered by the internet (e-commerce) with those that have not, this essay demonstrates that the Internet is rarely being used to successfully disintermediate commodity chains. Value within the Thai silk industry is most often created by intermediaries with a detailed knowledge of foreign customer tastes, marketing strategies, and distribution outlets, rather than simple topological alterations to commodity chains. Therefore, for most weavers, it is the detailed knowledge of intermediaries, rather than strategies of disintermediation that will continue to connect them with consumers around the globe.

#### IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Lauren Rivera (2011) examines the cultural wealth of stigmatized nations, using the case of tourism in Croatia. Rivera asks how countries with tarnished international reputations mobilize their “cultural wealth” for economic and political ends. She focuses on Goffman’s stigma management strategies and notes how impression management teams in the government and the private sector utilize these strategies. In her case study, Croatia’s government uses tourism to “re-brand” its history and culture after the war, and to enhance its international status and international revenues. She presents cultural materials as malleable, with the same history rendered strategically in different tellings.

#### KEY ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Studies of culture and globalization are flung across a variety of disciplines and subfields within disciplines. This multitude of approaches is approach for topic not long studied; however, ethnographic studies need to be brought into conversation with quantitative treatments of culture and globalization beyond the sociostructural approach outlined by Lizardo (2008); moreover, the cultural wealth of nations and regions requires greater measurement precision for the concept to take hold at the core of social science. Measuring cultural resources and cultural wealth, in particular, proves difficult because of the lack of longitudinal data on local cultural forms and how their attributes have changed as these societies have become more tightly integrated into global society. The measures available are crude, but with the advent of big data (administrative data sets) and with multidisciplinary teams of researchers, it may be possible to capture previously unexamined

attributes of cultural goods and local music and art. So long as these attempts to more precisely capture the dynamics of culture and globalization do not privilege one method over another, big data over deep observation, an interdisciplinary approach has the potential to transform our understand of what culture is across a variety of seemingly disjunctured globalscapes (Appadurai, 1990).

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