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# Cultural Globalization and Transnational Flows of Things American

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## 1. Introduction

It has been argued that there is an emerging “global culture,” which is heavily American in origin, structures, and contents. While it is certainly not the only player in the global cultural arena, America’s transnationalizing culture is expected to remain the most dominant one in the foreseeable future (Berger, 2002: 2-3). This chapter takes a fresh look at today’s cultural globalization and explores the various interconnections and underlying dynamics, focusing more particularly on its American and Americanized components. Needless to say, the emerging global culture actually consists of a plurality of global cultures. In various cultural domains globalizing tendencies occur, which neither all run parallel nor all show the same tempo; there have been lively debates on the cultures of globalization in the plural. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience the single term “global culture” will be used here too; it refers first of all to the prevailing forms that originate as yet mostly from the West, although we do find reverse cultural flows from the East as well.

Classifying countries into different subsections of the globe is a tricky and inexact business, since there is a high level of interpenetration and cultural exchange between countries as this chapter will illustrate too. One should be wary of Western centrism or a more specific Euro- or America-centrism, as manifested in forms of Orientalism especially (which have their Eastern counterparts of Occidentalism). The terms “West” and “East” are used only as a rough indication and should certainly not be reified. What is meant by the two terms changes both in historical time and geographical space; there are many mixed forms, and behind each of both labels all kinds of subdivisions are hidden.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The same holds true for the distinction between “North” and “South,” although it has become the primary one to approach global inequality today (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004: 107-119). It might be interesting to look more specifically at transnational cultural flows along these lines. The use of the terms “First,” “Second” and “Third World” has become problematic, especially after the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The terms “developed” or “advanced” societies versus “less developed” or “developing societies” have drawbacks too, because of increased differentiation between the rich and poor countries -- and differing degrees of industrialization and capitalist globalization between countries -- of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000: 10; Sklair, 2002: 13). One must also be cognizant that “Asia” is a geo-historical construct rooted in a Euro-centric view of the world, and each country in Asia is different in terms of its relationship with Europe and the U.S. (and other parts of the West). Furthermore, many Asian countries have a continuing legacy of cultural and intellectual connections with former colonizers such as Great

## 2. The dialectical interplays of globalization

More generally, leading cultural theorists on globalization emphasize “deterritorialization” as one of the major driving forces in the modern world (Appadurai, 1996). It is not a new process, of course; local cultures have long been influenced – and even shaped – by outside forces, and, historically, have become detached from their local anchorings under capitalism. The current phase of globalization differs from the past because of the dramatically increased transnational movement of material foods, images, and people, which leads to new mixtures of culture or hybridization. Transnational capitalism’s division of labor and free trade produce multivariiegated fusions, blurred borders, cultural “homelessness” as well as cosmopolitanism. Its worldwide infrastructure of airports, malls, computer terminals, chain restaurants, and other “nonplaces” erase distinct space and history, whereas its basic means of communication, the Internet, is even more radically deterritorialized (Tomlinson, 1999: 108-120). Cultural goods with indefinite origins abound; what appears to be traditional, on closer inspection is invented, and what seems to be homogeneous, is hybrid. “American” and various other “nationally” made products often entail design and engineering ideas, parts, and labor from many nations, which makes it hard to specify a country of origin.

The major dynamics involved in cultural globalization can be summarized in terms of the following dualities and related dialectical interplays:

- *Universalization versus particularization.* Whereas globalization universalizes certain aspects of modern social life (e.g., the nation-state, production and management processes, consumer trends etc.), it simultaneously encourages particularization by relativizing both “locale” and “place” so that endeavors to articulate uniqueness or difference are stimulated.
- *Homogenization versus differentiation.* Globalization tends to bring about a certain sameness to the surface appearance and institutions of modern social life across the globe. On the other hand, it also entails the incorporation and re-articulation of the global in relation to local circumstances.
- *Integration versus fragmentation.* Whereas globalization leads to new forms of global, regional and transnational communities or organizations that unite people across geographic boundaries, it also divides and fragments communities, both within and across nation-state boundaries. For example, ethnic and racial divisions are more articulated as the “others” become more proximate.
- *Centralization versus decentralization.* Globalization facilitates an increasing concentration of power, knowledge, information, capital etc. (embodied by various transnational political organizations and corporations), but it also generates a powerful decentralizing dynamic as local entities, communities and groups attempt to obtain more power over the forces that influence their situation and further development.
- *Juxtaposition versus syncretization.* Globalization brings about the coexistence of different cultures, ways of life, and social practices. This reinforces boundaries and articulates sociocultural differences and prejudices, but simultaneously creates shared cultural identities and social spaces, in which an intermingling of ideas, knowledge, values, lifestyles and so on takes place (McGrew, 1992: 42-43).

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Britain, France, and the Netherlands, while they are inevitably influenced by the presence of the United States in this entire region as a superpower particularly since World War II (Notoji, 2002: 105).

One overarching feature needs to be highlighted here: The emerging global culture brings along transnationally shared discourses encompassing sets of common structures and categories that organize differences. This means that the various cultures of the world are becoming different in uniform ways, which amounts to the emergence of “structures of common difference” (Wilk, 1995). This term refers to a new global hegemony, that is a hegemony of structure, not of content. The new global cultural system promotes difference, but selects the dimensions of difference, thereby celebrating particular kinds of diversity, while submerging, deflating or suppressing others.

In order to get a good intellectual grip on cultural globalization we need to broaden our perspective. The key to understanding today’s globalization as a whole is to conceptualize it as a product of particularly the third technological revolution and the global restructuring of modern capitalism in which economic, technological, political, and cultural features are intertwined. This means that we should avoid both technological and economic determinism and all other one-sided perspectives on globalization in favor of a view that sees globalization as a highly complex, contradictory, and thus ambiguous set of institutions and social relations, as well as one involving flows of goods, services, ideas, technologies, practices, cultural forms and people. As Douglas Kellner puts it, “The transmutations of technology and capital work together to create a new globalized and interconnected world. A technological revolution involving the creation of a computerized network of communication, transportation, and exchange is the presupposition of a globalized economy, along with the extension of a world capitalist market system that is absorbing ever more areas of the world and spheres of production, exchange, and consumption into its orbit” (Kellner, 2002: 287).

The dynamics of globalization are very unevenly distributed around the globe, between regions and between different strata of the population within regions. A significant factor is the unequal geographic power distribution of globalization. How individuals experience and respond to the forces of globalization is, to a great extent, a consequence of their economic, social, and geographic positions in the world. Globalization is predicated on a complex interconnection between capitalism and democracy and “haves” and “have-nots” that involves both positive and negative features and both empowers and disempowers individuals and groups, undermining and yet at the same time creating potential for new democratic projects of all kind. Globalization imposed from above can be contested and reconfigured from below (Steger, 2002: 145-147). This is not to suggest that one form is per definition “bad” and the other “good” from a social-emancipatory vantage point. Global forces from above may very well advance democratization and the spread of human rights in various areas of the world, while globalization from below may promote special interests or reactionary goals (for example, in the case of transnational right-wing movements, extreme fundamentalist-religious groups or terrorist networks).

Thus, globalization exists of fundamental transformations in the world economy, politics, and culture, which entail contradictions and ambiguities, that is, both progressive and emancipatory features *and* oppressive and negative attributes. Such internal conflicts and tensions are more generally characteristic of modernity, which can be framed in two separate discourses, one of liberation and another of “disciplinization.” Each discourse emphasizes only one side of the double-edged sword of modernity, that is, its fundamental internal tension between an emphasis on human autonomy and the restrictive controls inherent in the institutional realization of modern life (Wagner, 1994: 40-41). Contrary to modernization theorists of the 1950s and 1960s who tended to attach merely positive values of progress to such processes, classical theorists of modernity recognized that the modern

world was ambiguous in its capacity to deliver human happiness and fulfillment. Modernity, in particular the scientific rationality and the liberal-democratic political projects associated with the Enlightenment, delivered emancipation from many forms of domination. But modernity also entailed costs, new forms of cultural pathology that classical theorists have tried to capture through concepts like “alienation” (Marx), “anomie” (Durkheim), the “iron encasement” of instrumental reason (Weber). Each of these views recognized that one form of domination had been replaced by another – they differed in their precise analysis of the source of this domination (Tomlinson, 1991: 142-144).

To the extent that this heritage of classical sociology acknowledges the discontents at the core of modernity (as well as its historical changes) it still has its merits as a living tradition for analyses of modern life today (Turner, 1999). But in trying to develop a more up-to-date approach, we must account for the existence of multiple modernities, that is, a number of different sites and forms of modernity, including those outside the West (Featherstone et al., 1995). Western patterns of modernity are not the only “genuine” modernities, even though they have historical precedence and continue to be a major reference point for the others (Eisenstadt, 2000: 2-3). Processes of modernity may be globally alike to the extent that they all entail the demolishing of the old order to make room for the new. But the values, norms, and cultural forms and practices that result from these processes, the way in which they are interpreted, and even the driving forces behind them, may differ from one cultural context to the other (Therborn, 1995).

### 3. Reconfiguration of the state and capitalist globalization

In his book *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (2004) the historian Michael Denning sees the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 as the symbolic moment when the current era of globalization can be said properly to begin, with the “corporate states” of the Cold War being superseded by the “beginnings of a transnational cross-fertilization” as peoples, capital and commodities began to flow more freely across frontiers. Denning stipulates that area studies (such as American Studies) in the traditional sense fitted well with the period between 1945 and 1989 when the world was conventionally divided into discrete, partitioned spaces: the capitalist First World, the communist Second World, and the decolonizing Third World. But as an intellectual enterprise, area studies made much less sense after interventions of the International Monetary Fund and the flourishing of “postnational” economies had destabilized government forms on both sides of the political spectrum, thereby undermining the legitimacy of national authorities and forcing their territorial autonomy to be repositioned within a global system (Denning, 2004: 24, 9, 2-4, 46). Thus Denning, a protagonist of a transnationalized American Studies, seems to have joined the chorus of “hyperglobalist” thinkers of globalization, who contend that transnational capitalism, international governance, and hybrid global culture have effectively put a halt to the modern nation-state.

This position is open to question, however. The increasing importance of transnational corporations and other non-state actors and agencies notwithstanding, many states have survived intact and a number of new ones have been founded. The available evidence points to the sustained importance of the nation-state as a political and economic entity, and this certainly holds true for the United States. On balance, nation-states are not withering, but rather undergoing a transformation in their structures and processes, which implies the modification of their institutional forms and their policies by transnational forces (Cohen &



Kennedy, 2000: 89-93). These changes are a pre-condition for further globalization *and* a consequence of it. But this reconfiguration is to some extent a question of deliberate choice. The rapid expansion of global economic activity since the 1980s is first of all a result of political decisions made by governments to lift the international restrictions on capital as part of a more general adoption of neoliberal policies. Once these decisions were implemented, the technology came into its own, and accelerated the speed of communication and calculations that helped bring the movement of money to an extraordinary level. The implication is that nation and territory do still make a difference – even in a globalized context. These conventional political units remain as yet important, operating either in the form of modern nation-states or “global cities” where global processes carried by corporate complexes and supporting specialized services (financing, accounting, information processing etc.) actually take place. The latter strategic places are embedded in national territories and therefore stay, at least partly, within the judicial orbit of various state-centered regulatory systems.

In the ongoing process of capitalist transnationalization, corporate geography has been reconfigured into a new system of worldwide time-space connections, but they are neither hardly decentered nor fully integrated, retaining a hierarchical structure and uneven distribution. Like other business organizations, transnational corporations (TNCs) are certainly not “placeless” or “derritorialized entities.” The reason is that hypermobility of capital and time-space compression of corporate globalization need to be actively produced and this requires vast concentrations of material and not so mobile facilities and infrastructures. Most TNCs still have their headquarters in the richest developed countries, that usually provide the best overall socioeconomic, political, and legal bases for their operations, and where their owners and managers reside.

Yet, the growing importance of electronic space in the global economy, and the accompanying “virtualization” of economic activities do raise questions of control in the global economy that not only go beyond the state but also beyond current notions of non-state-centered systems of coordination. Private digital networks bring along forms of power that differ from the more widely distributed power associated with public digital networks. Major examples are wholesale financial markets, corporate intra-nets, and corporate networks bringing together borrowers and lenders in a private domain rather than the public domain of stock markets. The vastly expanded global capital market that emerged in the 1980s has the structural power and organizational connections with national economies to make its requirements felt in national economic policymaking. In providing some of the norms for national economic policymaking the operational logic of the capital market exerts an influence that goes far beyond the financial sector. However, the supranational electronic market space, which partly operates outside any government’s exclusive jurisdiction, is only one of the spaces for finance. There is also the embeddedness of global finance in the environments of actual financial centers, places where national laws continue to be operative, although these often entail greatly modified laws (Sassen, 2006: 336-338, 382).

#### **4. Disseminators of globalizing American culture**

For a good understanding of globalizing American culture outside its country of origin it is necessary to examine the local appropriations in relation to the projections of American powers (hard and soft; military, economic, political, social and cultural) in the international

arena. This entails a *theoretical* middle ground between the cultural transmission model, which if taken to its extreme amounts to a crude version of “cultural imperialism,” and the assimilationist view, which can exaggerate the capacity of local recipients to creatively appropriate things American (Kuisel, 2000: 209). Yet it does not imply that the actual process of globalizing American culture is necessarily always located in a neat middle position between American projections of power and domestication of “traveling American culture” by locals across the world responding to its various manifestations. In other cases this process may tilt towards being “imperial” or the very opposite, complete incorporation into the local culture.

While popular culture, mass media, and cultural industries have high visibility and receive much attention in this context, significant components of America’s global reach that concern economic policies and international politics and security are underexposed or ignored. The latter are, to a degree, “cultural” too, but less overtly so, and not as visible in everyday life (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004: 80-81). Important American cultural influences are implicated in U.S.-style capitalist globalization and the corporate cultures, business, management and labor practices associated with it, along with economic, cultural and political development policies for developing countries, as well as academic and professional cultures and so forth. It must also be recognized that intercultural influence does not by definition run parallel with international political and economical relationships. A local society may demonstrate complex hybridizations in its indigenous production and reproduction of culture vis-à-vis a globalizing world, while as a nation it becomes voluntarily or involuntarily more implicated in U.S. projections of economic, military, social and political power (Bell & Bell, 1993: 199).

For the time being, the United States maintains a strong position in many of the domains that matter most in the current era of globalization. Examples include the standards and rules governing the Internet and other international communication networks; securities law and practice; and international legal, accounting, and management practices. Much of the information revolution originated in the United States and a large part of the content of global information networks is manufactured there, giving globalization a U.S. face (Nye, 2002: 79, 81). Various technologies and technological devices that propel current globalization have been largely invented and originally popularized in the United States. Eminent examples are: Automated Teller Machines (ATMs); the newly structured money market and financialization of capitalism taken to a new extreme; “flexible manufacturing” and “just-in-time” production; franchising and McDonaldization; airfreight and containerized freight along with the use of bar codes, the Global Positioning System (GPS) and advanced logistics; computing and the associated search habits and preferences fostered by prevailing software (Marling, 2006: 144-193). These technologies entail important *cultural structures* that both enable and constrain people’s everyday behaviors around the world and are all involved in enhanced time-space compression.

An influential religious movement that carries cultural globalizing from the West is evangelical Protestantism, particularly in its Pentecostal version. In the past fifty years or so U.S. “new-style,” fundamentalist Protestantism (as distinct from “old-style,” separatist fundamentalism) has made major inroads in large areas of East and Southeast Asia, in the Pacific islands, in sub-Saharan Africa, and most dramatically in Latin America. In many of these places new fundamentalist Protestant ministries from the United States – mostly neo-Pentecostalist and evangelist strains – have been holding crusades in which they disseminated their versions of the Gospel. They often combined these with a belief system

such as “prosperity theology” that is very much in tune with U.S.-style capitalist culture, and the emerging global culture of consumption and consumer gratification. This “business” of exporting the American gospel of success, wealth and prosperity has significantly expanded since the early 1980s when Christian fundamentalism became a more dynamic social and political movement in America. It has turned into one of the most significant cultural influences from the United States (Brouwer et al., 1996; Corten & Marshall-Fratani, 2001).

The American face of much of today’s globalization is partly a result of the prevailing world orientation among American globalizers. By the turn of the new millennium, a major study among senior managers and chief executives of U.S.-based transnational firms and nongovernmental organizations, all global leaders in their respective fields, revealed strong American ethnocentrism. These leaders proved to share a “market idiom” that equates neoliberal deregulation with “human progress and enlightenment” and resistance to the process as thick-skinned irrationality. The executives claimed to be totally objective and neutral about their views on globalization, and seemed oblivious to the fact that their American background might limit their vision. The attitudes of these “parochial cosmopolitans,” as Hunter and Yates call them, evolve from a pattern of large-scale physical mobility along with a strong tendency of remaining in a protective “sociocultural bubble” through similar physical localities, means of traveling, lodging and leisure and entertainment all across the world, which precludes them from serious engagements with the local cultures that they influence. When they visit other countries, they stay in U.S.-style hotels, health clubs, restaurants, office buildings and so forth, and associate almost exclusively with like-minded Western-educated professionals who are conversant in English, thereby sidestepping the necessity of learning foreign languages. Their way of working also shields them from serious doubts about their activities because of insufficient feedback from locals and others. There were notable exceptions, however, among people employed by international nongovernmental organizations that focused on environmental protection, human rights, emergency humanitarian relief, and the like. These individuals tended to have more face-to-face interaction with local populations and organizations at the grassroots (Hunter & Yates, 2002: 332-336).

Of course, living and working in a particular sociocultural bubble is not an exclusively American practice, as corporate business managers and professionals from many other countries move around in the same insulated transnational world. And members of international professional organizations as well as professionals and politicians allied with organizations like the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Arab League or the United Nations may have their own sociocultural bubbles. Nonetheless, because, for the time being, Americans predominate among the movers and shakers of current globalization, they continue to play a central role in setting the agenda and general tone of today’s globalization.

This leads us to one other important issue. The Western culture that is conveyed through globalization has a conflict-laden heterogeneity that is carried along too. This certainly applies to the American or Americanized components of this globalizing culture, given America’s diversity. It means that criticisms of the dominant American way of life (and specific parts thereof) by, among others, American anti-capitalists, environmentalists, feminists, concerned journalists, intellectuals, and politicians are spread abroad as well. American culture wars and identity politics have been exported as part and parcel of the



globalization process. Clashes between “pro-life” and “pro-choice” protagonists around the abortion issue have been taken to the global level by American agencies. This is the major point of contention. But the American culture wars are also being fought on foreign ground around broader issues surrounding sexuality, the family, and education by progressive and conservative special interest groups. These have established offices and staffs around the world to lobby foreign governments and international organizations on behalf of their respective causes. All of this concerns more generally Western culture wars transposed to the global level, but the discourses and practices of the agencies concerned are as yet strongly modeled after American exemplars; these agencies may even merely be global extensions of American organization movements and other institutions. The language that these globalizers and their foreign contacts use is English (usually its American version) and the vocabularies of their “global speak” derive from the social sciences, and the idioms of human rights, the market, and multiculturalism as these have first of all developed in the United States. This also means that initially American discourses obtain a broader, transnational character (Hunter & Yates, 2002: 326, 337-341).

Thus, the global spread of the ideology of “universal human rights” has great potential for ideological and judicial support to oppressed individuals across the world. But one must be aware that at times the United States and other Western countries have used (and still use today) “human rights” selectively as a political instrument to advance their own interests in their meddlings in other countries’ affairs. America’s defense of human rights also tends to exclude rights of individuals in the economic sphere, that is, regarding social security and conditions of work and standards of living (Johnson, 2000: 166-167).

The emerging global culture is most visibly manifest in the domain of mass-popular culture. Needless to say, however, most forms of European-originated “high culture” (classical music, opera, ballet, sculpture, paintings and literature) have always operated on an international scale. Modernist art in post-World War II America was internationalist from the start as well. European émigrés who were fleeing from Nazism and World War II brought the impulses of European modernist art to the United States. It was from the creative synergy of European-born painters and U.S.-bred talent that a dynamic cultural scene emerged, which would generate a series of art works that drew worldwide acclaim. In the 1940s and 1950s, the abstract expressionist painters created the first internationally significant U.S. art and turned New York into the center of the modern art world (Best & Kellner, 1997: 167-170). In recent decades, one can witness a restructuring of older patterns and transnational flows of high culture (especially concert hall music). This development results from the usage of global communication technologies, cross-media marketing and distribution techniques by globalizing cultural industries, as well as the increased transnational significance of the culture of performance and attendant celebrity cults originating in the United States.

The postmodern shift in the arts (and its intricate mixtures of “high” and “low” culture) has helped to generate the new global culture of postmodern forms in a variety of aesthetic fields (ranging from architecture, painting, and literature to multimedia art), media, computer, and consumer culture traveling across the globe with high speed (Best & Kellner, 1997: 188-189). Postmodernist forms of global culture often have an American imprint, because of the global outreach of U.S. art worlds and cultural industries, and the undeniable fact that postmodernism is preeminently American. As Malcolm Bradbury pointed out, the United States has been the site of both the Americanization of modernity – the condition

that resulted from processes of modernization – and the Americanization of modernism – the iconoclastic, anti-traditionalist movement in the arts that took off in late-nineteenth century Europe. These two forms of Americanization have merged into one within the crucible of postmodern culture in America during the late twentieth century (Bradbury, 1995: 463).

U.S.-based or U.S.-owned TNCs have contributed much to the global dissemination of forms of “superculture” (Bigsby, 1975) driven by the further development of globalizing capitalism and worldwide spread of the culture-ideology of consumerism (Sklair, 2002: 108-111). This globalizing popular culture is to some degree detached from its American roots, but on the other hand it still continues to be fed with new inputs from the changing U.S. cultural repertoire continuously hybridizing with other cultural sources. One should also realize that the manifest cultural content is not all-important. The *forms* of commercial popular culture, the genres and social relationships established through cinema, television, the Internet or otherwise, may have a more decisive influence. For example, the mediation of formal politics by the spectacular modes of television news and current affairs programs (and the rise of infotainment) originating in the United States has radically altered local politics in many places of the world. One may label such changes as part of more general processes of modernization rather than “Americanization.” Yet it cannot be denied that the genres and programs concerned express material forces and cultural practices that grew (and still grow) out of the social and media history of the United States (Bell & Bell, 1993: 187). More generally, there was a price in terms of quality to be paid in the commercialization of the local television systems in Europe and similar systems elsewhere through the adoption of the American “way of television.” This implied a deficit especially with regard to innovation, risk-taking, minority appeal, cultural authority and non-commercial values. On the one hand, the proliferation of TV channels allowed by new digital technologies enabled the development of niche markets. On the other hand, however, commercial pressures, whether driven by the quest for greater advertising or subscription revenue (largely achieved, although not exclusively, through high circulations and audience ratings) tended to induce producers to opt for the tried and tested formula and to routinize their formats or schedules rather than take creative risks (McQuail, 1996: 115-116).

The 1990s saw a huge explosion of U.S. mergers in industry as a whole, which was reflected in the cultural industries. In the early twenty-first century a small group of corporations were obvious leaders in terms of the revenues they gained from global cultural-industry markets. This also included the growing influence of U.S.-corporate style conglomerates in the cultural industries not located in America, such as at that time the French-based company Vivendi and the German-based company Bertelsmann. The names and organizational structures of these companies change regularly, as further mergers, acquisitions and sell-offs take place or are suspended by regulatory agencies. In September 2004 the seven biggest cultural-industry businesses, in descending order of 2003-2004 revenue based on company reports, were Time Warner (formerly AOL Time Warner, New York), Vivendi Universal (Paris/New York), Walt Disney (Burbank, CA), Viacom (New York), Bertelsmann (Gütersloh, Germany), News Corporation (Melbourne, New York). Below these mega-corporations there was a second tier of regional corporations consisting of 43 companies, which were, apart from one Latin American company (Televisa, Mexico) and one Australian company (PBL), all based in either North America (21 companies, including three Canadian), Europe (ten companies, including five

British) or Japan (nine companies (Variety, 2004). Overall, U.S.-based companies remain powerful in the production of a wide variety of popular cultural forms. In the past few decades intellectual property has become of major significance – that is, the cultural industries increasingly operate around the ownership rights of films, TV programs, songs, brands. This enables them to circulate characters, icons, and narratives across many different media, and deploy intensive cross-promotion (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 135-137, 143).

However, one must not overlook the co-implication of non-American investors in all of this. Ironically, French companies have been major investors in Hollywood since the 1980s. The management of conglomerates in the French film industry no longer felt obliged to defend those established values of high culture so long espoused by their intellectual compatriots. Whatever their underlying rationale may have been, companies like Canal+ and Chargeurs had no scruples about investing in Hollywood, while at the same time the majority of French producers and policymakers were engaged in a strenuous battle to prevent American movies from flowing unimpeded onto Europe's cinema and television screens (Putnam, 1998: 261). (Indeed, French intellectuals led the 1993 GATT battle over Europe's need for "culture exception" to free-trade laws in film and television. In addition to a ticket surcharge, the French government spent up to \$400 million in giving financial support of French-made films.) The restructuring of Hollywood went so far that by 2000 it was largely a place where deals were done, where studios, as Warner Brothers' vice-president Richard Fox said, were just "distributors, banks, and owners of intellectual copyrights, contracting out creative and production activities in others." The profits landed in bank accounts across the world, and the U.S. audience no longer determined what was made (Marling, 2006: 37-38). But this did not mean basic changes in cultural content. Even after this far-reaching transnationalization of economic ownership of the American film industry, most movies associated with "Hollywood" continued to have features characteristic of the various genres concerned.

At the turn of the new millennium, Americanizing forces were expected to remain strong in popular culture in the foreseeable future (Rosendorf, 2000: 110-123). However, certain American cultural media contents have become less popular around the world. Foreign sales of American TV programs have declined, as locals increasingly preferred locally produced shows. This has much to do with the cultural specificity in television drama which does not simply transfer well to all foreign cultures. There has to be a "narrative fit" between program and viewer, as research has shown regarding a large international sample of U.S. television programs shown abroad. Export programming appeared to take hold only in cultural niches of narrative compatibility (Frau-Meigs, 1996). In 2001, among the 60 countries in a worldwide survey 71 percent of their top 10 programs were locally produced. The worldwide television market is growing, but America is becoming less dominant in it. By 2002 Latin America evidenced as much Mexican and Spanish programming as American, while Asian and African stations mixed British and French shows with U.S. imports. Indian, Egyptian, and Mexican soap operas undercut the price of U.S. syndications and exploited growing diasporic language markets. Then Mexico and Brazil had even become the world's top exporters of television drama.

By 1990 Mexico's Televisa was the largest producer of syndicated export programming in the world; it also purchased *telenovas* (local versions of soap operas) produced in other countries. By 2004, Brazil's Globo corporation was as big an exporter as Televisa, its sales covering 130 countries. (However, the latter companies have extensive ties to and joint

ventures with American media companies, as well as with Wall Street investment banks. They are also primary instigators and beneficiaries of the expansion of the U.S.-dominated global media market in Latin America.) Syria has become a major exporter of television dramas to the Arabic world. China, potentially the largest cable TV market in the world, proved to be hard to penetrate by Fox, Time Warner and other big program providers. By 2002 the rate of cable growth in China had slowed to 3 percent per year, and Time Warner's access was restricted to diplomatic enclaves in the north and to the southern development zones near Hong Kong, where Cantonese is spoken. (Only 50 million Chinese speak Cantonese, however, while 874 million speak Mandarin.) Disney experiences heavy competition from Japanese, Philippine, and Taiwanese producers for the 40 percent market left for cartoons, as Chinese law requires that 60 percent of all cartoons on the air be made in China (McChesney, 2000: 107; Mann, 2003: 105; Marling, 2006: 42-43, 47).

The U.S. share of the worldwide web has also declined, from a half to a third during the 1990s. In 2002, 32 percent of Internet sites were American, 28 percent European and 26 percent Asian. And the non-English content of the Internet was growing very fast, which could be gauged, among other things, by the growth in registration of new domain names. By 2001 the U.S. accounted for only 40 percent of new domain names. Great Britain and Germany were second and third, each with about 10 percent, followed by Canada, South Korea, and the Netherlands. The total number of domains attributable to English-speaking nations declined from 74 percent in 1998 to 59 percent in 2001. By 2006, 605 million people could access the Internet – 183 million of them lived in the United States or Canada, but the rate growth had slowed there. Equally large numbers of Internet users lived both in Europe (191 million) and the Asian Pacific region (187 million), while there were more than 33 million users in Latin America and over 6 million in Africa (Mann, 2003: 105; Marling, 2006: 63-64).

In recent years we have seen the rise of new forms of popular culture invented, produced, and marketed in Europe, Australia or Japan which are then turned into global phenomena. Intriguingly, this takes place according to the former principles of Americanization, including those of the United States. Exemplary cases are local programs that feature "reality television" such as real-life police pursuit originating in Australia, the Netherlands, and Britain, and the popular TV show "Big Brother" from the Netherlands (Marling, 2006: 41). Even more interesting in this regard are the children's games Pokémon (short for pocket monsters) and its digitalized versions Digimon from Japan, which are transculturations of Walt Disney's Donald Duck figures and the global commerce connected with it. Donald Duck figures, which originated as popular culture in the United States and reemerged as major components of Euro-Disney in Paris and Disneyworld in Tokyo, have returned to the United States as transformed, and "perhaps grotesquely modified," products of Americanization. This transcultural traffic has been called "Americanization in reverse," which appears to be "the latest example of an Americanized world in which the world recycles Americanization and sells it back to America" (Hornung, 2002: 114). Clearly the dissemination is not a one-way process, and American popular culture undergoes changes as well through these foreign influences.

## 5. Globalizing cultural influences from outside the Western world

Next to the abovementioned globalizing forces first of all coming from the West (including cultural flows from the South, Latin America, to the North), one can notice the rise of



cultural movements with a global outreach that originate outside the Western world but impinge on the latter. In this context one should not forget the influence of Japanese and East Asian forms of capitalism and the associated business practices (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004: 38, 144-146). A specific example is the Japanese management vogue from the late 1970s, which lasted until the economic difficulties in Asia in the 1990s, when this influence began to wane. Western business elites and policy circles were bent on trying to emulate Japanese industrial policy and management techniques, which was partly an "Americanization in reverse" to American industries, however.

A large part of the globalizing cultural influence from outside the Western world concerns religion. A world religion such as Islam involves diverse cultural movements. For example, the Taliban and warlords in Afghanistan and al Qaeda's wider Islamicist movement, along with the Islamic regimes in Iran and Sudan, are all "anti-modern" in their own ways (which does not exclude using modern technologies and media). But Islamic movements in Turkey and elsewhere in the Muslim world (e.g., Indonesia, Egypt, and Morocco) do not reject modernity and seek to construct a modern society that participates economically and politically in the global system and are driven by a self-consciously Islamic culture. Other examples of influential religious movements on a global scale can be found in India, for example the Sai Baba movement (which is strongly supernaturalistic, and opposed to a modern scientific worldview) with many centers in Europe and North America, and Hare Krishna, a more visible case of an Indian cultural export. Successful in this regard as well have been a number of Buddhist movements, such as Soka Gakkai hailing from Japan and the Tzu-Chi Foundation in Taiwan with branches in forty countries. Last but not least, there is New Age culture, not conveyed by organized religious movements, but arguably the most important cultural influence coming from Asia into the West, which has affected the beliefs and behaviors of millions of people in America and Europe. This can be traced to creative reinterpretations of Hindu, Buddhist, indigenous American, and other non-Western traditions that have been going on for more than a century (Berger, 2002: 12-14). But it must be noted that in quite a few instances these processes of "Easternization" have been filtered through American and European intermediaries before impinging on other parts of the Western world.

Another interesting example of reverse cultural flows to the West is the dissemination of traditional Asian medicines, health and fitness practices and approaches to mental health. These have become popular among substantial sections of the middle classes in Europe and North America. A similar cultural influx has occurred in the case of the martial arts such as karate, judo, t'ai kwando and kung fu (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000: 243). There is also the phenomenon of "world music" under which label music from non-Western cultures has become subsumed in recent decades in the West. Transnationally operating record companies have forced an immense variety of globally available music styles into categories like "folk music," "world music," and "indigenous music," which is an eminent example of "structures of common difference" mentioned earlier. The music ranges from ethnomusicologists' recordings of relatively authentic indigenous music to music that has adopted a Western format of popular culture, to musicians that draw on diverse influences to create synthetic world music – not unlike the way in which "California" fusion cuisine is created (Hall et al., 2003: 161). However, the local producers and musicians concerned – many living and working in developing countries – tend to have little control over the categorization of their music. And Western consumers largely determine the criteria for "authenticity" and quality. In order to gain recognition and



compete on the world market, these musicians are obliged to adapt their products to the established categories and expectations (Breidenbach & Zukrigl, 2001: 116). Consequently, structural molds such as these tend to be biased towards a Western, predominantly Anglo-American staple that expresses the global hegemonic position of the metropolitan centers concerned.

## 6. Local engagements with U.S.-inflected cultural globalization

The study of cultural globalization as it impinges on local settings should always imply appropriate contextualization and localization. Context is to be understood here as a multidimensional, time- and place-bound phenomenon that includes the political-economic and technological contexts and the geographic dimension, place or location of the process; the relational dimensions, such as the social positioning of the recipients; as well as the temporal dimensions, such as historical memory (particularly of earlier globalizing influences, including alleged or real American influences in the past) and the juxtaposition of historical experience and interpretation of the people concerned. Social positioning refers to dissimilarities in gender, class, race, ethnicity, ideological, and other subject characteristics that lead to different ways in which locals respond to the cultural globalization they are facing or actively involved in. For our interest in this chapter, one should try to locate and “weigh” America’s part appropriately amidst the various influences that are part of transnational flows reaching local cultures. For pragmatic reasons, empirical studies of “Americanization” often block other cross-national transfers. This may, if not cautiously done, lead to myopia in that important influences from other countries, broader cultural-geographic areas or regional subglobalizations are downplayed or even ignored.

Some forms of globalizing culture allow for more selective borrowing and creative appropriation than others. Mass-popular culture as part of consumer culture appears to be most open to active reception. For people looking for signs and symbols of a lifestyle, U.S. popular culture – especially as metamorphosed into “superculture” – has presented itself as one big “self service store” – everywhere present and with almost unlimited choice and opportunities, offering an iconography that remains open to all kinds of readings (Hebdige, 1988: 74). By contrast, the opportunities for opposition, “creative appropriation,” “subversion,” and “resistance” by local recipients abroad appear to be much smaller with regard to cultural components of U.S. economic policies and international politics and security (Strinati, 1992: 53). The latter-day version of this “superculture” continues to provide a cultural repertoire from which people across the world borrow freely in creating their own, sometimes highly idiosyncratic versions of “things American” as they assimilate these into their everyday life-worlds. Here an intriguing process has been at work regarding local appropriations of globalizing U.S. culture. Thorough socialization into mass-mediated American culture during the formative years of people growing up in a society located firmly within the U.S. cultural orbit (such as many countries in postwar Western Europe, for example) tends to lead to an ambiguous position and attendant ‘double consciousness,’ which entails a strong reflexivity in dealing with U.S. popular culture because of being both an outsider and an insider to American culture. The responses of students in discussions about this subject in media and culture courses recently given in the Netherlands, showed diverse patterns that demonstrate the complexities of Americanization abroad, ranging from what can be seen as an interpretation in terms of U.S. imperialism on the one hand and full

incorporation into the local culture on the other. And, like among previous generations, enjoyment of American popular culture could very well coincide with criticism of U.S. politics (Kooijman, 2011).

It has been argued that in contradistinction to the cultural values underlying various civilizations, which are likely to spread less easily to other cultures, consumption of mass-popular culture tends to be superficial in the sense that it does not deeply affect people's beliefs, values, or behavior. But against this it should be noted that the influx of globalizing popular culture can have a crucial impact locally. It all depends on time and circumstances, which are both critical to the meanings and effects of the cultural objects in question. In this context Peter Berger has suggested a distinction between "sacramental" and "non-sacramental" cultural consumption. The former is at stake when the adoption of a Western practice amounts to an embrace of Western culture in a deeply meaningful – sacred – way. For example, some consumption of the globalizing popular culture, such as eating a burger – especially when it takes place under the golden icon of a McDonald's restaurant – is a visible sign of the real or imagined participation in global modernity with an American face. But much consumption of Western culture takes place on a routine basis – sometimes a burger is just a burger, and thus a non-sacramental act (Berger, 2002: 7) Which type of consumption prevails cannot be decided a priori but only on the basis of empirical research of the case in question.

There are both tensions and convergences between the different sectors of today's cultural globalization. On an abstract level, in terms of conventional modernization theory, they have one theme in common, that is "individuation": "all sectors of the emerging global culture enhance the independence of the individual over against tradition and collectivity." Individuation is understood here as "a social and psychological process...manifested in the behavior and consciousness of people regardless of the ideas they may hold about this" (Berger, 2002: 9). This means that individuation as an empirical phenomenon should not be conflated with "individualism" as an ideology (although the two are frequently linked in everyday practice). Peter Berger is correct in stating that this insight helps explain the broad appeal of the new global culture. I would argue, however, that the appeal value concerns foremost a transculturally shared structure of feelings among people taking part in the dominant form of Western modernity. It does not pertain to those groups of people (even whole cultures) who are not, or to a much lesser degree, committed to this type of modernity. Their members may not feel attracted to or even be repulsed by particular elements of the new global culture (such as the excesses of possessive individualism and consumer culture, for example) as they take part in one of the other modernities there are. Capitalist modernity, especially in its neoliberal mold, uproots many people and leaves them "homeless" and feeling powerless.

Other forms of modernization may be less threatening to ordinary people in this regard, even though these modalities all experience the ongoing influence of neoliberal globalization to a lesser or greater degree as well. These alternatives include forms of social market capitalism in continental Europe, state-assisted capitalisms in East and Southeast Asia, capitalisms embedded in specific variants of Islamic culture as, for example in Anatolia, Turkey, as well as state-led (post)industrialization and mobilization of the masses in various Latin American countries with newly emerged forms of left-wing populism and socialism (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004: 143-144, Robinson, 2008). The question remains how much leeway there is for the articulation of these alternative modernities within the emerging global culture.

The challenges that the new global culture poses to the societies it impinges upon evoke a variety of responses occurring on a scale between acceptance and rejection, with in-between positions of coexistence and synthesis. In addition there is a wider variety of reactions by the target societies, including those initiated by governments. There are cases of *unreserved acceptance* as occurs among members of a global network of ambitious young people in business and the professions whose members speak fluent English and dress and act alike, at work and at play, and up to a point think alike (a yuppie-like transnational group) (Berger, 2002: 3-4). Acceptance may also lead to *cultural imitation*, especially when the “real thing” is not easily accessible or available (or too expensive) to locals in the periphery. Local culture creators may, upon being exposed to foreign culture, attempt to create imitations of it for local consumption. Imitations may range from “copycat” versions of the original to the appropriation of certain techniques or methods (Lewis, 1996: 272).

But at the other extreme there are attempts at *militant rejection*, be it from the standpoint of religion or nationalism. Some states, like North Korea and Afghanistan when it was ruled by the Taliban, have tried to hermetically close its territory and people off from alien cultural influences. There are also relatively less totalitarian forms of rejection, typically practiced by governments trying to balance global economic participation with resistance against Western globalizing culture – China is the most important contemporary example of this. Its course toward economic neoliberalization on which the Chinese Communist Party embarked in the late 1970s has led to ruthless “free market reforms” along with measures that seek either to deny entry into the country of Western cultural imports or to “harmlessly” incorporate those into the existing social, political, and cultural conditions through national gatekeeping policies (especially restrictive legislation, censorship and control of access to particular websites on the Internet).

There are many cultures that seek to resist intermingling with others by *creating new certainties*. One manifestation is the creation of new states defined on the basis of a single ethno-nationality. The new states that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of Yugoslavia provide abundant examples of an extreme tendency to homogenize the nation, based on the seriously flawed notion of an “essential” national identity. In the worst-case scenario the drive for ethnic territorialism leads to ethnic cleansing and even systematic attempts at genocide. Other groups have resisted cultural globalization through a purist reaffirmation of one’s religion or ethnicity. This new insistence on ethnic and religious difference has created serious dilemmas for established nation-states, which have shown a large variation in the extent to which they are open to newcomers or, by contrast, demand cultural and social adjustment on the part of immigrants and residents. There is also a tendency among some national governments to recognize sub-national claims for devolution or regional autonomy, as has occurred to a varying degree in Britain, Spain and elsewhere (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000: 355-356).

Then there are the cases *in-between acceptance and rejection*. Almost everywhere one finds instances of *localization*, in which the global culture is accepted but with significant modifications. This has happened, for example, with the incorporation of McDonald’s in East Asian countries. One important element was that the contract with customers had to be modified in order to allow for lingering: housewives relaxing in the restaurant after shopping or other errands and schoolchildren before going home. From the perspective of globalization theory, McDonaldization is subject to the forces of pluralism indeed. When McDonaldized models are imported they are always undergoing indigenous adaptation (Watson, 1997). These models can develop locally in a process of *emulation* and a

McDonaldized model can be employed for a variety of purposes, with different products, organization, and effects. On the other hand, however, one should not exaggerate the heterogeneity of McDonaldized systems in diverse local settings, thereby downplaying their cultural power as a major force of a homogenizing globalization predicated on Western corporate logic and business systems (Kellner, 1999).

The cultural localizations can be more far-reaching. For example, Buddhist movements in Taiwan have adopted the organizational forms of American Protestantism to propagate their non-American, non-Western religious message. These newly revitalized Buddhist groups have taken on a worldly approach through their involvements in social welfare and medical services, education, publishing books, and environmentalism, which has drastically transformed the way in which religion has been practiced in Taiwan for centuries. A local religious philosopher has interpreted this as a “renewal” of a lost tradition, that is, when the dynastic emperors espoused Chinese Buddhism, it too made direct contributions to society (Hsiao, 2002: 62-64). However, another way to look at it is that not only Taiwan Buddhists’ practices but also their belief systems have become “Americanized” by incorporating U.S.-style Protestant denominationalism and emulating the Western Christian tradition by building colleges and universities and establishing the institutional form of the foundation to promote culture, welfare, and reform causes.

One can also argue, as William Marling does with regard to U.S.-originated technologies, that, through various localizations, the “ways of doing things” or “use habits” that Americans have pioneered are becoming the ways that millions of people elsewhere do things. From ATMs and container ports to airfreight and bar codes, technologies and technological devices pioneered in the United States have been adopted by other societies, which are now going into competition with and sometimes surpassing the United States. Marling correctly emphasizes that local adaptations of U.S.-originated technology are often locally superior, which sets limits to the advance of certain Americanisms, such as the drive-through ATM or burger joint. The logistical systems that deliver products and services – financial services, container shipping, airfreight, computing – will move toward standards, such as technological efficiency and economies of scale. These enable flows of goods and services across cultures. To the extent that logistical systems can, they accommodate to local cultures. For example, the language interfaces of ATMs can be local (incorporating languages locally in use), but their logistical systems will be global. The cultural “local” with its folkways (associated with language, communicative distance, food, modes of land use, habitation patterns, work habits, attitudes toward race and ethnicity etc.) endures, although its interplay with the “global” has increased, leading to further disembedding of cultures.

Sharing logistical expertise with Americans, nations like India and China are likely to be drawn closer to the United States in some ways, as they adopt practices like franchising or just-in-time manufacturing but customize them to their use. On the other hand, however, Americans still remain far ahead in the domain of logistical invention as demonstrated by the highly sophisticated level of systems integration by a company like UPS. Other Anglo-American practices, such as using the money market, allow people elsewhere in the world to invest in money market funds as well, which reduces the advantage Americans initially have had in accumulating (including the risk of losing) wealth this way (Marling, 2006: 191, 203-204). It is also true that across the world standardization in production and delivery systems and in the associated management practices of corporate businesses takes place. This is not the same as a complete leveling out of national cultural differences



and homogenization of products. Most products or practices must also be adapted to the tastes and cultural preferences of the local market.

Strictly speaking, however, there is nothing uniquely American about standardization, commercialization, automation, computerization, digitalization and the like. As early as the nineteenth century, but increasingly after World War II, many Europeans and other observers overseas thought things to be American that are merely characteristics of a modern technological age, which has flourished first and most visibly in the United States. But, "it could be argued that the typically American contributions to science and technology have been mostly concerned with the 'conquest' of distance and time" (Wagnleiter, 1993: 78). They have therefore been of particular relevance for the ongoing processes of enhanced globalization.

Global influences also can bring about a *revitalization of indigenous cultural forms*. This may lead to identification with, and stronger articulation of, the local culture; it involves the retention and creation of local cultural artifacts and forms vis-à-vis the incoming global culture in order to resist the loss of cultural identity that total assimilation may bring. Thus the inroad of Western-based fast food chains in India, Japan, and Turkey has led to the development of fast food outlets for traditional foods, and the invasion of Western fashions in Japan has fostered the development of an indigenous fashion industry marked by distinctively Japanese aesthetics (Aoki, 2002; Chase, 1994; Srinivas, 2002). The latter cultural practices have partly shaded over into processes of cultural invention, "folklorization" and "fabricated" and "staged authenticity." Entrepreneurs, in attempting to sell "authenticity," can and do invent cultural artifacts, which they attribute to local cultures and sell to outsiders as symbolic of that culture. Many tourist art objects, souvenirs, and "ritual" performances are of this sort (Lewis, 1996: 272-273).

A local response to the globalizing culture in question may entail a more *conscious cultural opposition*, whereby local culture is used to challenge or oppose (part of) it. This can take, for example, the form of an "indigenous literature movement," in which writers search for an indigenous literary identity in a deliberate rejection of modernism/postmodernism in Western literature. Such a movement can be extended to include other cultural fields like music, the performing arts, and films, as occurred in Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s (Hsiao, 2002: 61). It is against globalizing capitalism's modernity that sometimes at the local level an older form of modernity is put forward in which the older emancipatory idea of a national project and a national culture reemerges as an oppositional value. For example, in recent years several Asian civilizations reasserted the role that a nationalist project may play through the oppositional power of a national literature (as in South Korea) or a national art and cinema, with India as the prototypical example. Thus, Fredric Jameson argues, "alongside a multiple and postmodern postcoloniality, there also exist a modernist one, for which the 'liberation' brought by Americanization and American mass culture and consumption can also be experienced as a threat and a force of disintegration of traditions from which new and alternative possibilities might otherwise have been expected to emerge" (Jameson, 1998: xv).

Localization may also shade over to another response, *hybridization*, which refers to the deliberate effort to synthesize foreign and native cultural traits. An eminent example is the development of an overseas Chinese business culture from Taiwan, combining the most modern business techniques with traditional Chinese personalism extending to employer-employee relations with an emphasis on family-like harmony, unity, loyalty and emotional commitment, and a strongly family-orientated private life of managers. Thus a defining



feature of Taiwanese businesses is a strong paternalistic organizational culture. Yet in the business cultures of the locally active multinational companies as well as in many of the local companies operating in world markets some fusion of American, European, Japanese, and Taiwanese-Chinese management styles has emerged.

Now that mainland China has become more integrated into the global economy, similar hybridizations can be observed, as in the notion of the “Confucian merchant” which means that many of these elites combine the use of modern business and management practices with a traditional mentality and lifestyle regarding gender relationships, the education of children, and interpersonal relationships. In both cases the hybridization does not involve an intermixing of diverse capitalisms. The first case builds upon the coexistence (or juxtaposition) of the Taiwanese family business model with globalized Fordism from the United States and Toyotism from Japan (Hsiao, 2002: 51-54). The second case includes the state-led capitalism of this newly industrialized, communist state in which the key to business success is special connections to key persons who are in charge of relevant government agencies and determine the policies and regulations in question (Yan, 2002: 21-24).

Other interesting cases are the multiple syncretisms between Christianity and traditional religions in the African indigenous churches (Bernstein, 2002: 227-230) and between popular Catholicism, African collective memories, and indigenous (Indian) religions in Latin America (Ortiz, 2000: 250). In the case of mass-popular culture, hybridization sometimes evolves further away from the Western-originated cultural input. For example, the films produced by India’s thriving popular commercial film industry “Bollywood” do not simply imitate Hollywood’s genres. Rather they are anchored in the diverse cultures and centered on issues of Indian society (Tyrell, 1999).

Needless to say, the concept of hybridity is problematic in so far as it suggests the mixing of completely separate and homogeneous cultural spheres or identities, while the anthropological and historical records show that all cultures are hybrid. In fact, contemporary accelerated globalization entails the hybridization of hybrid cultures. The concept is acceptable, though, “as a device to capture cultural change by way of a strategic cut or temporary stabilization of cultural categories” (Barker, 2000: 203). But hybridization has another side which makes it even more complex, as Nederveen Pieterse points out. Consider examples like the following, referring to a general tendency, of which many more could be given: “Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan ... reflects transnational bourgeois class affinities, mirroring themselves in classical European culture. Chinese tacos and Irish bagels reflect ethnic crossover in employment patterns in the American fast food sector. Asian rap refers to cross-cultural convergence in popular youth culture” (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995: 50). Paradoxically, what appears from one perspective as hybridization here can, from another angle be interpreted in terms of transnational affinities in sensibility or attitude. In other words, the other side of cultural hybridity is transcultural convergence in cases such as these.

One should also recognize that in hybridization itself power inequities are involved: “Relations of power and hegemony are inscribed and reproduced within hybridity for wherever we look closely enough we find the traces of asymmetry in culture, place, descent. Hence hybridity raises the question of the terms of the mixture, the conditions of mixing and *mélange*. At the same time it's important to note the ways in which hegemony is not merely reproduced but refigured in the process of hybridization” (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995: 57). For our purpose the basic issue is the existence, in varying degrees, of

a “U.S.-accented cultural hybridity” in various places across the world (Antonio & Bonanno, 2000: 55-56).

With regard to the dissemination of American culture abroad the anthropological literature abounds with interesting examples of creative appropriation of imported consumer goods, as well as the impact of modern means of communication and transportation in facilitating the continued interaction and identification of migrants from developing countries in America with their societies and cultures of origin. The cultural complexities of the hybridization process that can be at issue here are well illustrated by the following elaborate example borrowed from a case study of Haitian transnational migration (Richman, 1992). In order to finance the lavish feasts that their gods - the *lwa* of *vodun* - occasionally demand from them, Haitian peasants have become almost exclusively dependent on remittances from their family members who migrated to North America. This is possible, because these migrants, despite their residence in New York, Miami or Toronto, retain membership in bilateral descent groups. These social entities, known as *eritaj*, comprise ancestors as well as living kin, and membership includes not only the right of inheritance of family land, but also the obligation to serve the *lwa* associated with this corporate unit and the susceptibility to the influence of these gods. Stephan Palmié has summarized the sociocultural processes that are relevant in this context:

“Nowadays, the *lwa* not only traverse enormous distances to look after their children up north, they also shrewdly play on kinship-ties: for if neglected they tend to punish not the offenders, but their descendants. This fact, as well as others... necessitates that the migrant (usually, of course, a younger member of a descent group) participate in the ceremonial life of the *eritaj* to insure his or her own health and productivity - if only by contributing the funds to maintain the *lwa* contented. Here, modern media help translate such absentee ownership of communal rites into transnational practice: cassette tapes of ritual *chants de pwen* and, most recently, even videotaped *sèvis lwa* circulate between migrant and home communities - thus initiating a new channel of communication between men and gods. At the same time, just as money from abroad economically vertebrated the ritual system, so have the gods themselves adapted to new consumption patterns: many of them, most prominently the ‘African’ *lwa blan*, have evolved a taste for foreign products. While the more rustic and dangerous creole *zandò lwa* are fed the coarse staples and ‘unsophisticated’ beverages the peasants themselves consume, some of the *lwa blan* apparently crave and demand imported stuff: while raw native rum will do for Ti Jean, Erzili wants American soft drinks or Champagne” (Palmié, 1993: 289-290).

This can be interpreted as an instance in which the “periphery” quite successfully incorporates consumer goods from the “core.” It is not the American center that contaminates and undermines a formerly autonomous peripheral world. It is Haiti that “creolizes” an American world of consumer goods. Even the African gods in question are subjected to the magical workings of commodity fetishism. Yet they “work its magic” in their own favor by re-transforming commodities into social relationships, which proves the vitality of a “genuinely” Haitian culture. We may wonder, however, to what extent power inequities between the metropolitan and peripheral cultures are reproduced in the cultural mix in question. It also needs to be added that this focus on some peculiar aspects of *vodun* leaves out the socioeconomic context of this transnational subculture, which makes living hard for both the Caribbean labor migrants in the North-American metropolises (where they face radical discrimination too) and their peasant kinfolk in Haiti. It also ignores the implications of U.S. foreign policy with regard to the plight of Haiti’s people at home and abroad.

More generally, in studying processes of hybridization we cannot leave it at that and marvel at the variety of voices and representations in creolizing cultural forms and expressions: “The challenge rather lies in empirically charting the flow not only of meaning, but power, through culturally complex fields; in investigating the coalescence or dissipation of aggregates of symbolic matter over time – not as a free play of forms or texts, but as struggles and politics mediated by the agency of interested actors and collectivities” (Palmié, 1993: 296).

It is possible to differentiate hybridization analytically from *indigenization*, which is at stake when the cultural imports are incorporated into the indigenous culture to such an extent that they have become fully “naturalized,” that is, turned into taken-for-granted, integral components of the local culture, and are no longer recognized as of foreign origin. Ever since the Meiji Restoration, Japan has been a highly successful pioneer of this type of response (Tomlinson, 1991: 92-93). Examples in several domains (architecture, designs, customs and lifestyle, language, etc.) indicate that in borrowing things from foreign sources the Japanese tend to adopt the forms and often the rituals of these imports without being concerned with the significance of the “original.” In this process of appropriation they give new meaning to the borrowed element – a signification that is often incompatible with that of the original – or else they manage to drain it of meaning and symbolism, thereby turning the cultural import into empty form or ritual (Bognar, 2000: 63). In this connection several observers have signaled an all-pervasive “subversion of Americanization” in Japan’s encounters with America, which would set severe limits to any transformation of Japanese culture in the American mold (Delanty, 2003).

## 7. Conclusion

Cultural globalization is an integral part of broader processes of globalization driven by transnationalizing corporate capitalism, for the time being foremost in the American mold. It is a complex amalgam of both homogenizing forces of sameness and uniformity *and* heterogeneity, difference, and hybridity. It is also a contradictory mixture of tendencies that foster democratization and others that go in the opposite direction. Globalization is a contested terrain with opposing forces attempting to use its institutions, technologies, media, forms and practices for their own purposes. On the one hand, globalization entails a process of standardization in which mass-cultural forms circulate around the world, creating sameness and homogeneity. On the other hand, globalizing culture makes possible unique localizations and developments everywhere. Each local setting involves its own appropriation and reworking of global products and symbols, thus encouraging difference, otherness, diversity, and variety, and possibly evoking resistance and democratic self-determination against forms of global domination and subordination. Furthermore, cultural globalization is not only driven by Western/American cultural influences; it also moves in the opposite direction as we noted earlier with regard to forms of capitalism, religion, and health practices coming from the East. When hybridizations from outside the West are sufficiently coherent and vigorous as a cultural movement, they may manifest themselves as alternative globalizations, sometimes based on alternative conceptions of modernity, other than those in the West (Gaonkar, 1999). In this light, we can envision in the long run increasingly competing civilizational efforts to dominate globalization, notably from the West (and particular parts of it), Islam, India and China, whereby U.S.-style modernity recedes to the background as America’s global powers wane.

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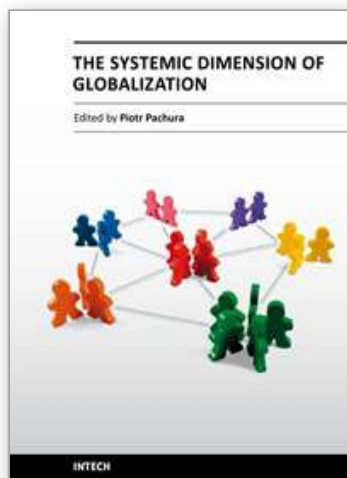


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