

Examples of good globalization



When attempting to come up with a good example of globalisation, the first things that come to mind are McDonalds and children from third world countries wearing USA t-shirts. Anthony Giddens mentions in his book *Runaway World* how a friend of his was doing field studies in a village in central Africa. She was invited to a local home to enjoy an evening she thought would be culturally informing; however, the families entertainment turned out to be a viewing of the American movie *Basic Instinct*, and the movie hadn't even been released in London yet (Giddens 2002). This is merely one of many examples that go to show how the world we live in is undergoing a drastic transformation that is impossible for anyone to ignore. Whether it is noticeable or not, globalisation is affecting every person on earth, in every aspect of our lives and in everything we do.

Most skeptics and radicals look at the economic side of globalisation and toss the other aspects of globalisation to the side. Globalisation is technological, political, and cultural, just as much as it is economic. It is modifying and influencing, but not destroying, cultural identities across the globe. No matter what country comes to mind, almost all have a word in their own native language for 'globalisation'.

“ This global trend is impossible to miss, from curry and chips-recently voted the favourite dish in Britain-to Thai saunas, Zen Catholicism or Judaism, Nigerian Kung Fu, or ' Bollywood' films, made in Bombay-Mumbai and mixing Indian traditions of song and dance with the conventions of Hollywood” (Burke 2009).

This is not to say that we are undergoing global ' hybridisation' or falling to ' transnationalisation', but rather, that the cultural blending happening all around the globe is helping us gain knowledge of the world through the many means of communication out there. Also, globalisation is not diminishing cultural identities, but rather, it is heightening an individual culture's sense of self. Many believe a World Order is indeed falling upon us, some being for it and some against, but if we were to undergo the transition to a single World/Government Order, we would lose all sense of culture identities and individualism.

If we had a global state, what would prevent the leaders of this new order from dictating a world of secularization? Who would want to be forced to be in a World Order where everything is dictated and all are forced to more or less become a puppet to one world government? Whether it is seen as a World Order, a global society, or a world system, its presence is unnecessary in today's world. Emile Durkheim, a sociologist not opposed to World Order and solidarity, states that,

" any society is motivated by its need to normatize the event of its togetherness by constructing and adhering to common symbols, beliefs, and practices. Those common symbols, beliefs, and practices do not exist, therefore, simply for the sake of their intrinsic value, truth, or logic. In other words, they have no intrinsic essence" (Bamyeh 2000).

In saying that the societies and cultures in today's world lack intrinsic essence in their beliefs, traditions, and practices, Durkheim is underlying that these societies have no innate feelings for their own cultural identities,

and that these identities have been formed out of the necessity to bring people together to form a society. If Durkheim were to simply take into account all the religious and cultural turmoil going on, she would see that a cultures beliefs, symbols, and practices do hold intrinsic essence to the people within.

A largely discussed topic pertaining to globalisation revolves around Benjamin Barber's thesis, distinguishing the differences between the forces of " McWorld" and " Jihad." These are two general attitudes in regards to globalisation. McWorld represents global mass culture and the unification by consumerism and transnationalism. Jihad, on the other hand, represents the deterioration of local traditions and histories due to globalisation (Cowen 2002). My idea of how globalisation is shaping the world and cultural identities is a mix of the two. Yes, mass cultural communication is unifying the world is every aspect of our lives, but it is not deteriorating local traditions and histories, nor are the world's cultures subject to transnationalisation. Globalisation is, if anything, allowing individual cultures to expand their knowledge of other cultures and allowing them to use and share products, ideas, and customs of other cultures in unison with their own cultures. The blending of nations and cultures is going on as we speak. It is at our fingertips every day with global communications and the Internet. These forms of communication due to globalisation are how we can be enriched by other cultures and share what we have to offer, but the main difference is our choice to choose what we want to study, admire and aspire to be more like or what cultures we want to melt into our own.

Without falling to the grips of a single World Order or system, and without cultures falling to transnationalism, it is possible for globalisation to continue throughout the world, as we know it. As Bamyeh (2000) proposes, the process of globalisation is beginning to create a common knowledge system, which is being communicated across the entire globe. This common knowledge system is being communicated by means of: international media, through films and music; mass travel, through students studying abroad and backpackers trekking across nations; and the Internet, through Facebook, blogs and chats, and international News websites. All of these forms of communication have aided in the widespread knowledge of the worlds cultures, making way for the adoption of international influences on a freedom-of-choice level (McQuail 2002).

Communication is what enhances feelings of togetherness in societies and cultures. It is what essentially started the formation of societies and individual cultural profiles. With the improvement of technological communication over the past few decades, communities that have been isolated from each other have been able to exchange cultural elements of interest between one another (for example, the Basic Instinct movie in the central African village mentioned in the introduction) (Bamyeh 2000).

When looking at the overall effects the mass media has had on globalisation, the Western nations control most of the symbolic and cultural aspects of cross-cultural communications through their media products. “ Though foreign troops may not be deployed, and a foreign government established, the presence of the empire is felt in the everyday presence of Western media products” (Macgregor Wise 2008). In this sense, Macgregor Wise is

almost saying that the globalisation of America's media is giving all other countries defensive feelings towards America, and that it poses as a major cultural threat. However, when looking at world music, literature, and visual arts, it is clearly apparent that cultures have benefited from these communal aspects of globalisation, and that America is clearly not a global threat to cultures. These means of mass media have provided a "diverse menu of choice" for cultures in developing their own cultural identities (Cowen 2002). In developing or maintaining cultural identities during the processes of globalisation, countries have developed their own unique ways in staying true to their individual identities. This goes to show that the beliefs and practices a culture maintains do indeed have intrinsic essence, as stated earlier, and that a culture can maintain its identity while also absorbing what it freely chooses from other cultures.

The world's wide variety of media products and how countries incorporate them into their own culture is a perfect example of cultures absorbing other cultures while maintaining their own. Canada, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, name the country, and they probably import Western media. Many believe that all the importation from the West's media markets is leading to 'Americanisation', but when taking a closer look, it is apparent that these importing cultures put just as much if not more emphasis on their own markets than they do the Western markets. Canada, for instance, "subsidizes their own domestic cinema and mandates domestic musical content for a percentage of radio time." Likewise, the French spend billions of dollars a year on cultural matters, aiding in the nourishing and successes of their French culture (Cowen 2002).

The fear of Hollywood devouring the markets of other countries is being countered innately by the individual countries themselves. Granted, many of the movies played in international cinemas, in France and Italy for instance, are Hollywood films. The main cultural aspect behind this is that the movies are translated into the countries own native language. This is proof that countries can uphold their own cultural aspects while absorbing those of others. When discussing movies with an Italian and a French friend, we found ourselves talking about the movie titles. The movie Home Alone (1990) to Italians is called Mamma Ho Perso L'aereo (which translates to " Mom I Missed My Flight"). The movie A Man For All Seasons (1967) in France is called Un Homme Pour L'éternité, which translates to " a man for eternity." These small changes to Western media products are only a few examples as to how countries can still maintain a cultural identity. Just because the Western culture is widely dispersed throughout the world does not mean countries are falling to ' Americanisation,' let alone ' Globalisation.' There are always steps being taken by countries and cultures in maintaining their own identity.

Many critics of the globalisation ideology refute with the fact that many cultures in the world today have already fallen to the processes of globalisation, namely ' homogenisation.' American Indian communities, for example, have been overshadowed by the entirety of the United States, and these contemporary critics believe these communities are on the verge of homogenization (Lewellen 2002). However, as Cowen stated it best, " once these individuals [e. g. the American Indian communities] have been brought into a common pool with well-developed means of communication, however,

they sort themselves into more finely grained and more diverse groups” (Cowen 2002). With an outlook like this, one can see that, even with the effects of globalisation, communities still find ways to diversify themselves from other closely sectored communities. If a culture is amongst the grips of globalisation, the effects are counter-acted by popular press, interest groups, and social movements who devote great deals of attention to these cultural dilemmas.

It is the threat of the loss of traditional identities that trigger cultures to look inwards at their own identities. This healthy narcissism that results from the fear of globalisation is what keeps cultural identities alive in the world we live in today (Burke 2009). When cultures begin to look inwards is when they begin to value greatly the differences between their own cultural identities and those of others. A culture thought to be on the brink of distinction isn't on the brink at all. The attention drawn to a troubled culture allows that culture to prevail, and in the process the knowledge and traditions of that troubled culture become known to the public. The world would know very little about, for example, American Indians, or dying languages such as Welsh, Basque, and Yiddish, if it wasn't for the troubles these heritages faced (Cowen 2000).

Globalisation isn't simply Black and White, 'McWorld' and 'Jihad', homogenization or heterogenisation. There is and always will be an in-between area, which is where the world is at now and where I feel it best belongs. With the process of globalisation, there will always be the countering effect. By resting in the middle, through mass communication, people have been able to gain knowledge of other cultures they would have

never dreamed of knowing about. The diverse cuisine menus, musical genres, film categories, and traveling opportunities have all made way for the world to gain knowledge of different cultural traditions. The world, as we know it, thrives off of the cultures that cherish and preserve their cultural identities. “ A world culture which is simply a uniform culture would be no culture at all. We should have a humanity de-humanised. It would be a nightmare” (Murali 2010). Why would the world fall completely to globalisation or a World Order when what it thrives on would simply be destroyed in the process? The absorption of cultural knowledge and traditions through the wide variety of mass communication available to us today truly heightens a culture’s sense of self, innately countering globalisation and allowing cultures to continually prevail.