

# Global cultural diversity

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## **Globalization Vis a Vis global cultural diversity**

The topic addressed in this paper is globalization in relation to global cultural diversity. In the first paper of this paper I will discuss the meaning of global cultural diversity and globalization.

They differ in their meaning though globalization leads to global cultural diversity and they are interrelated. One leads to the other. On the other part of this paper I will discuss the reasons and other points to support the argument that globalization leads to global cultural diversity. Though there are other arguments that show that globalization is a threat to global cultural diversity, I choose to support the thesis that globalization creates opportunities and is greatly and globally encouraged in order to promote global cultural diversity. Globalization refers to shrinking of the world intertwined with increased consciousness of the whole wide world.

Globalization refers to the changes and alterations made in the societies and in the world economy which result from the dramatic increased cross-border trade, cultural exchange and in investment.

The new state of globalization is an interconnected world and an international mass culture which has made the world to be referred to as a “global village” (Bentley 1993, 54). Cultural diversity refers to the variety of human cultures or societies in specific regions or in the whole world. It is a common heritage of humanity that includes the tangible and intangible cultural heritage that we shall discuss later in this paper.

**Literature review and discussion**

The processes of social transformation and globalization create conditions for renewed dialogue between different communities and this means that they give rise to grave threats of destruction, disappearance and deterioration of the elusive cultural heritage (Intangible cultural heritage, 2003). There are so many challenges and threats of globalization to the cultural diversity and cultural heritage. This process of globalization has created conditions and opportunities for transformed dialogue between the various communities.

Globalization has also increased new opportunities for dialogue and interaction, therefore contributing positively to the spread of knowledge and understanding of other cultures (David & Anthony 2003, 185). Globalization also increases people's awareness of their individual cultures. One of the results of this deepening and intensifying exchange is that it is now possible to disseminate and document information that concerns the shared intangible cultural heritage that was previously unimaginable. This opportunity to share the intangible cultural heritage of the world helps in the preservation of the same and this contributes very positively to a better understanding between the different persons globally. This understanding leads to underlining of the vibrancy and cultural diversity (Wilderer, Schroeder ; Kopp 2005). Globalization poses challenges to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in the efforts it has to fulfill its mandate in preserving cultural diversity and also in the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

Safeguarding the international intangible and tangible cultural heritage is becoming increasingly complex due to the high rapidity of the cultural

change and it has become a multi-dimensional undertaking. The culture involves oral traditions and other expressions of the cultural heritage, social practices, performing arts, knowledge, practices that concern universe and nature, festive and rituals events and finally the traditional craftsmanship and these are the elements that cultural diversity does not allow to exist in the current society (Hannerz 1996). Culture is vulnerable and diverse.

Globalization has various benefits to cultural diversity in the world.

Increasing the levels of globalization has made many people to recognize the significance of the cultural heritage whether it is intangible or tangible and this is a positive contribution to the global cultural diversity.

Dialogue and cultural diversity among the different cultures are now part of the strategic objectives that are prevalent in the area of culture. This helps to emphasize effective and efficient inter-cultural dialogue which in turn helps to foster global stability and peace. The knowledge about, respect for, tolerance of each other's cultures is only achievable in presence of real cultural diversity (Wilderer, Schroeder & Kopp 2005). UNESCO unanimously adopted a universal declaration with regard to cultural diversity in the General Conference of UNESCO that was held in November 2001 and it is a chief milestone in this demanding and huge endeavor. This Declaration states that the cultural diversity should and is a source of creativity, innovation and exchange and also that the diverse cultures of humanity are its commonwealth. Globalization increases contacts, exchange, communication and documentation of people worldwide and these factors increase the chances of the global cultural diversity (Hannerz 1996).

Globalization gives room to people of different cultures to interact and this provides the needed opportunities for dialogue and interaction. This interaction of the various leaders from various parts of the world fosters creativity which is part of culture and it only flourishes from adequate contact with different cultures. In return this would mean and lead to global cultural diversity. Great consideration should also be given to the unimportant role of the cultural heritage that is intangible as a factor that brings individuals closer together and also ensures understanding and exchange among them. This would mean globalization leading to global cultural heritage (Bhagwati 2004, 201).

Previously, the expressions of the intangible cultural heritage were deeply rooted in the specified groups or communities and were always manifested in the local markets but this has changed greatly because the necessity and importance of the intangible and tangible cultural heritage is now recognized universally. Globalization encourages the spirit of solidarity, international cooperation and mutual assistance which in turn would lead to cultural diversity internationally. Globalization is important because it ensures better visibility of the intangible and tangible cultural heritage and this heightens awareness of its significance and importance and paves the way for dialogue that enhances and respects cultural diversity (David and Anthony 2003).

Globalization gives positive aspects such as new communication and information technologies and these are preconditions for the expansion of the available possibilities to the poorest countries in giving visibility to their particular cultural riches. This forms a part of the basis of diversity in culture.

The new technologies should be effectively used to safeguard, transmit, document and preserve the cultural values of the different cultures. Digital audiovisual technology is the most used and most efficient means of accomplishing his goal. However we need to be cautious because the cultural heritage is an example of living heritage and is constantly recreated by the groups or communities that are concerned (Wilderer, Schroeder & Kopp 2005). Therefore we must ensure that use of technology will not lead to any kind of “freezing” of the cultural heritage in a form or a shape which will prevent any further evolution. The existing technology should be just a tool and not a master of both globalization and global cultural diversity.

The challenges, threats and opportunities to the cultural heritage in our globalizing world are seen as one phenomenon that should be encouraged. Globalization leads to interdependency and interconnection between the different communities around the world and these lead to global cultural diversity. Responding well to the threats that we meet on the way to cultural diversity leads to reducing of the threats and on the other hand increasing the opportunities for the different people all over the world to reap and enjoy the benefits of globalization (Majid & Jeannie 2006, 64). Globalization leads to meetings of different leaders in different meetings. One of the joint conferences was held in 2001 where the United Nations Year of Dialogue between civilizations from Tokyo to Kyoto met to discuss the requirements for people of varying cultural backgrounds to correlate and live together peacefully. The leaders wanted to know how these people would respect each other, learn from each other and tolerate each other.

This was a step to encourage global cultural diversity. At the end of this conference, the leaders agreed that with some conscious efforts, globalization would work as a vehicle to bringing people together internationally and would also be a means for promotion and protection of cultural diversity (Featherstone 1995, 206). The conscious efforts mean that the technological and the economic driving forces of the globalization moving along without any checks and balances. The conference also made various recommendations aimed at ensuring that globalization would work for enhanced cross-cultural understanding and these were addressed to relevant actors on the local, national, regional and global levels for policies. There were also other consecutive meetings that were held which made it clear that globalization could be made to work very positively to all people through active and initiative involvement of a broad range of actors in both the private and public spheres of the society (Hannerz 1996, 100).

There exists a master of crafts and arts that have already been described as intangible cultural heritage; work with other practitioners of different cultural practices from different parts of the globe in order to create exciting new forms of the cultural expressions. Without the global interconnectedness which globalization has brought about, these people involved in the different experiments would probably not know about each other's work. This shows that the preservation of tradition can and will inevitably lead to creation of new culture and also enhance better understanding of the cultural and traditional practice itself which in return encourages cultural diversity. It also serves us with the useful information that globalization gives rise to global cultural diversity. Internationally, the leading motto is the promotion of

peace and progress which requires a quantum leap in better understanding of other people and their cultures; this is only brought about by globalization (Wilderer, Schroeder ; Kopp 2005, 180). The benefits of globalization include democracy, poverty reduction, freedom of expression, and affluence which are recognized universally.

There is also the universal role to transmit and protect the traditions and values of all the cultures for the sake of the future generations and this is attainable through globalization. Globalization also causes the rapid flow of information, products and people which leads to rapid cultural interpenetration and this leads to global cultural diversity. It also menaces the minority cultures and mostly the intangible cultural heritage which traditionally was to be handed down from one generation to the other. Other factors include the factor that globalization leads to stimulating and creative interaction among different cultures and also the standardization of the different cultures (Beck 2000, 160). Globalization helps to promote world peace through the preservation and protection of the cultural diversity that includes the intangible cultural heritage and also the overcoming of arising conflicts among different religions, cultures, and peoples.

This would help to promote a spirit of tolerance within the global community (Hannerz 1996). Globalization leads to greater experience and knowledge of the different lifestyles, events, and happenings locally and also globally. This encourages cultural diversity. Globalization also helps in the promotion of diversity of cultures and also reconfirmation of the significance of the cultures, respect to other cultures and the deepening mutual understanding are brought about by globalization. The mutual understanding of the various

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ethnic, religious, national, linguistic entities should be emphasized and attained through globalization. Through the same, we should strive to preserve cultural differences around the globe and this would help to make positive contributions to survival and welfare of humankind and thereby promote peace and development (Richard 2003, 150).

UNESCO has the responsibility of contributing positively to security and peace of the world by enhancing cooperation in science, education and culture. UNU (United Nations University) is also another organization that is charged with the responsibility of making positive contributions in looking for solutions to the urgent and pressing worldwide issues that we come across. Through the research it carries out and the resource and human development capabilities. Globalization is neither the ultimate calamity that brings down all cultures of the world, nor is it the cure for mankind conflicts and problems. Globalization however provides required opportunities to access information and knowledge about a wide range of cultural heritage on an international scale in order to obtain visibility, to raise support and interest for their preservation, to secure the appreciation for the cultural expressions, to allow these cultural expressions to be captured in other and digital forms and to have the cultural expressions disseminated globally through the various communication and media tools. It also helps to transmit and expose diverse identities, to establish ownership and also to secure rational property rights arrangements, to also further creativity and finally to help promote new and inclusive forms of dialogue (Wulf 1998, 140).

Globalization poses threats in the beginning of a strong importance on the economic values that are inherent in the globalization process, and also

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through the dominance of certain cultural practices and languages, and this implies an accelerated tendency towards loss of indigenous languages and the extinction of certain indigenous practices. These trends tend to favor the emergence of a uniformity of approaches and expressions impinging on the intangible cultural diversity. This is discussed and explained well in an article that attempted to answer the question whether globalization heightens or diminishes the aesthetic awareness or is it that we are drowning in the tidal wave of global, superficial pop culture that is cheaply sold and very easy to digest (Richard Tomkins, Financial Times, 23 April 2004). Globalization has finally taken different forms that include linguistic, economic and religious forms with uncertain and unresearched impact on the diversity and preservation of cultural heritage. In addition to this, the effects that are related to globalization are not only being seen at the global level but are also results of the internal processes within regions and countries, regional integration and urbanization trends. Cultural heritage is not divisible and therefore calls for a holistic approach and perspective.

It comprises of the tangible or physical heritage, intangible heritage and skills and knowledge related to production of cultural artifacts. The intangible heritage includes music, dance, theater, social practices, language, oral expressions, and craftsmanship (Tomlinson 1999, 104). Globalization coupled with implementation and formulation of the required appropriate cultural policies could assist in the search and quest for preservation of the cultural heritage by drawing from the power of dialogue. These cultural policies must be aimed at empowering the local communities by ways of negotiation between the community people and the various cultural

agencies. These should also include capacity building and the encouragement of cultural creativity as a community and an individual process.

However, they should guard themselves against egocentrism, ethnocentrism and logo centrism (Tomlinson 1999, 204). In this era of interactive international, national and regional for a, there is need to strive for better and wise balancing of the responsibilities that are played by civil society and private actors in pursuit of enhancing cultural diversity. Cultural heritage represents the global public good of a unique kind and has become a part of the overarching international public good namely cultural diversity. It is therefore non-exclusive and non-rival. Globalization has helped to safeguard the linguistic diversity at the village and regional level because it does not interfere with the spoken languages either by artificially crystallizing them or by banning them (King 1997: 239). They are left alone because they are a natural process.

The threats of corporate outsourcing, structural adjustment programs and corporate media should be and are being taken as opportunities to enhance and encourage global cultural diversity (Hannerz 1996). Globalization has created breakthroughs in reconciliation and peace between societies and individuals through the commemoration of the globe's diverse cultural and artistic traditions. It also helps to harness the universal languages of culture and arts in the similar belief that peace and unity would be achieved when persons communicate with the use of the shared language. Also other culture-based initiatives serve to complement the multi-national corporation's endeavors to globalize the society through trade, business and <https://assignbuster.com/global-cultural-diversity/>

economics (Inge, Isabelle ; Marc 1999, 345). A balance is struck among culture and the “ globalizers” of trade, politics and economics in order to promote global cultural diversity. There is a very big increase in the cultural diversity which is governed by the reason of capital and it is organized within the globalization context (Hannerz 1996, 76).

Globalization however does not usually destroy the cultural differences but it brings a unique form of homogenization and still fosters the cultural differences (Hall 1991). From the above discussion in this paper I can confidently conclude that globalization leads and promotes global cultural diversity. From the well discussed points above it is discovered that globalization encourages people to interact more while still retaining their cultural values and this led to the conclusion that global cultural diversity is promoted and encouraged. The interaction of the different people leads us to the conclusion that it is a form of globalization which in turn leads to global cultural diversity. The importance of this topic is to discuss ways in which globalization is promoting and enhancing global cultural diversity.

The diversity is well required and important in the safeguarding and protection of the culture so that it could be transferred from one generation to another and also gives a sense of belonging.