Thinking globalisation

As we’ve begun to see, since the nineties, globalisation, a word with multiple meanings, has replaced 'postmodernism' as a master term used to name, interpret and direct the social and technological transformations of the contemporary era. Among its various meanings, two stand out. It refers to the colonisation of more and more areas of life with market forces in more and more places. As such, it overlaps with neoliberalism, since neoliberalism names the doctrine and policies that most consciously promote this colonisation. It overlaps with capitalism as well, since capitalism is the mode of production by which contemporary markets are supported. Globalization, then, names the global dissemination of capitalism, especially in its more market-orientated forms.

Globalisation also refers to the process by which planetary distance is being overcome. As the theory has it: a new ‘borderless world’ is appearing, freed from the tyranny of distance. At the very least this transformation means that local acts increasingly have consequences or objectives across a distance – which is Anthony Giddens’ influential definition of globalisation (Giddens 1990, 64).

These two meanings of ‘globalisation’ seem to point in slightly different directions: one social, the other spatial, although in fact, and as will become apparent, there are many points at which they merge. The mapping of the social and the spatial means that it is easy to over-emphasise the degree to which market forces and capitalism are extending unto all corners of the world. In particular, it is easy from the fastness of middle class life in the world’s metropolitan regions to forget that, for instance, much production in sub-Saharan Africa is not capitalist at all. Or that about 2 billion of the world’s population are
not on the electricity grid while 4.5 billion have no access to telecommunications. And, finally, the notion of globalisation encourages the processes it describes: Paul du Gay, for instance, argues that the discourse of globalisation allows various kinds of authorities to intervene 'to shape, normalise and instrumentalise' institutions 'in the name of making "globalisation" more manageable' (du Gay 2000a, 116).

**Space**

At any rate, to think through the concept of the 'global' is—or seems to be—to think more in terms of space than of time. This in itself is a sign of a shift in our analytic habits. Over the past thirty or years or so (not coincidentally the time frame of contemporary globalisation), thinking about space has changed. It used to be that time was the dimension that primary authority by social and cultural theory. Space had little or no agency. That is to say, history changed while geography provided the ground upon which history worked. This way of conceiving the space–time relation was a heritage of that progressive temporality developed during the West's modernising era in which history promised much. Conversely, identities and societies that had not yet entered the processes of modernisation (and were thus placed outside history) were defined in spatial terms. Such societies were, so to say, trapped in their locality.

But today geography has been transformed. Its object is now what Doreen Massey has called 'the junction of social relations over space' (Massey 1994, 23), or, otherwise put, the way that the geography orders and enables (particular forms of) society and culture. In the academy, this means that, disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, geography footsies for space with cultural studies. More concretely, at the intersection of cultural geography and cultural studies, the older, modernist notion of space (as abstract grid detached from the human world) is replaced by notions of place (space broken down into localities and regions as experienced, valued and conceived of by individuals and groups). (See de Certeau 1984, 91–110, for the classic definition of the space/place opposition.) This leads to a problem for the category of the "global": it cannot be experienced in the ways that, say, a town or even a country can. And yet it is not an abstract grid either: it has a real presence in everyday life. Furthermore, it soon becomes obvious that articulations of space (and time) differ within and across cultures, and articulations of space (and time) are at stake in the struggles around how to organise and plan for the future. Indeed it becomes apparent that space and time are not easy to pull apart. For instance, at the moment there are far fewer political issues than whether one is for or against globalisation—and the terms of that debate make it clear that globalisation is a temporal, social and political concept as well as a spatial one. They address divisions about what future society should be like in the same breadth that they deal with questions about how we might manage to defeat the tyranny of distance.

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**THINKING GLOBALISATION**

A brief history of globalisation

Given globalisation's complexity, it is useful to have a sense of its history, which in part duplicates the underlying conditions of 'postmodernity' discussed above. Popular understandings of globalisation seem to regard it as a more or less continuous (if uneven) process leading to a contemporary borderless world as its more or less inevitable endpoint. This has become a contested topic among historians and sociologists, but, for instance, fierce debates about whether national economies are more globalised today than they were around 1900, or whether national governments play a greater or lesser part in ordering their citizens' lives than they did in the past (for a recent introduction into one 'global history' school, see Hopkins 2002; for the argument that the late nineteenth century saw more globalised economies than today, see Hirst and Thompson 2000). And because globalisation by definition is not simply a Western process, the history of globalisation, like the history of modernisation (a topic to which it is intimately related), leads to the question: what are the non-Western trajectories towards globalisation?

Historians today speak of 'archaic globalisation'—exchanges between regions, and especially non-European regions, which existed outside modern states and economies (Bayley 2003). However, the 1648 Peace of Westphalia stands as a key moment in the emergence of modern globalisation since it was then that the modern idea of the sovereign state first gained widespread recognition. This paved the way for all regions of the globe to share a single political structure (i.e. the state) and for international relations to take shape as relations between nation-states who, between themselves, possess sovereignty over the total land mass.

At another level globalisation needs to be regarded as the outcome of a history of Western expansionism, which began in 1492, and which reached its apex in the late nineteenth century when the major European powers (along with the USA) drew the rest of the world into their economic and/or political spheres. Nineteenth-century imperialism was driven not just by military power but by a set of communication technologies which are the most important were the railway, refrigeration, steam shipping and the telegraph (which first freed communication across a distance from transportation; see Carey 1989). These modes of transportation and communication necessitated the division of the globe into a universally accepted grid of latitudes and longitudes, as well as the establishment universally of Greenwich Mean Time in 1884. Abstract global space as understood in our terms comes into existence at this point.

During the imperial epoch some Western nations became affluent to a hitherto unimaginable degree. (Historians have contested the actual economic benefits of imperialism for European states, but the weight of evidence is that empire played a crucial role in their wealth production (see Arrighi, Silver and Ahmad et al. 1999, 37–97). Partly as a result of this affluence, their political systems were slowly
democratized, and they began to fund social agencies aimed at improving (or, depending on your point of view, managing) the education, culture and health of their populations. Indeed around 1900 many socialists were also imperialist because the money to implement social policies was thought to require imperial profits. After the Great Depression of the 1930s which intensified working class activism, and, even more, once World War II had demonstrated the productive power of state-managed economies (not least in Germany and the Soviet Union), Western states developed large welfare apparatuses and blamed them at the redistribution of wealth. By that time these policies were funded mainly by the remarkable growth in trade and output between Europe, Japan and the USA – the precondition of late twentieth-century globalisation. In the ex-colonies, programmes of industrialisation and import-substitu- tion were encouraged but, despite this, immigration from poor to rich nations boomed during the post-war years, feeding funds and cultural changes back into undeveloped regions and accelerating transnational mobility generally.

As we have seen, after World War II European imperial states gradually deverted themselves from direct control of their colonies (the British had drawn back from govern- Anence of white settler-colonies from the second half of the nineteenth century). The main impetus behind the withdrawal was the resistance to colonialism and to nationalism by the subject peoples themselves, but there can be no doubt that the widespread revulsion towards racism which followed the revelations of the Nazi geno- cides, and the example of the Japanese (who fought their war in part under a banner of anti-European colonialism, although that is often forgotten), also played an important role. In the early years of decolonisation, most ex-colonies followed policies of develop- ment that involved close state management of economies and a relative lack of exposure to market forces.

There remains considerable debate as to why the Western regimes of well-being began to lose ideological steam, and why neo-liberalism and entrepreneurialism replaced it as orthodoxy. It is probably best to regard the transformation as the result of a confluence of more or less contingent factors, some economic, some technological, some political and some cultural. Among the most important of the underpinnings of contemporary globali- sation was the spread of industrialisation throughout the decolonised world, under the ideology of development and the guidance of transnational agencies. This process was spurred on by the felt vulnerability of the Western economies to the Arab oil states after World War triggered inflation and accelerated declines in profitability in first-world manufac-
turing and primary commodity sectors and thus intensified demands for economic restructuring aimed at increased competitiveness. Economic restructuring meant diverting investment into sectors where returns on capital and productivity rates were comparatively high. The constraints that fixed-currency and financial regulation imposed upon national competitiveness became more and more apparent as flights of capital punished relative losses of national productivity more and more immediately. Nation- states pursued policies that would encourage foreign investment and trade, deregulating their economies, offering tax breaks and so on as they jockeyed for advantage.

Simultaneously, relatively undeveloped countries were positioned as attractive sources for labour and attractive options for investment. Japan and Europe in particu- lar increased their share of international direct investment, clawing back US dominance in this area. Particularly in Anglophone countries, privatisation of state enterprises accelerated. Offshore manufacturing and first-world de-industrialisation meant that fewer workers in first-world economies worked as industrial (and espe- cially skilled) labourers. Unemployment grew (partly too because it was used by economic policy managers as a brake on inflation and partly because women’s partici- pation in the workforce increased from a low base in the post-war period) so that it now tends to float between 6 and 15 per cent of those in the labour market. These tendencies had profound cultural and political effects, including the loss of union influ- ence, the decline of the old left socialist parties based on labour solidarity and the downgrading of class as a category for social and cultural analysis – all of which, of course, helped cultural studies itself to emerge.

Another crucial moment for globalisation was the fall of communism in 1989, which meant the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of socialism as a legitimate political system and idea. The USA now became the sole world military superpower (which meant that more than ever it dominated economic policy through its control of transnational agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank who actively pursued neo-liberal policies). The opening up of the Eastern bloc hastened the process by which more and more corporations were becoming involved in transnational trade of one kind or other. Some firms outourced their manufacturing, without attempting to invest in or control the overseas plants, merely globalising their marketing strategies and distribution chains. Some franchised their brand and organisational expertise across nations. Others merely sought to increase the importance of export markets to their trading. The political and cultural influence of those corporations that had full-scale operations in many countries (multinational companies) increased as they took a bigger and bigger share of the global economy. But such companies differ widely in how much control is exerted by the head office over its branches.

Technological factors in the process of globalisation include the development of new communications technologies, especially the Internet, but also the application of computing to the financial system. The latter enabled the internationalisation of finance capital and services spurred on by the deregulation of banks and the floating of currencies. New financial instruments (warrants, options) became possible as computing power grew. And fast, cheap, transcontinental air travel underpinned a vast extension of global business exchange, as well as positioning tourism as a key global industry.
Asian working for a US bank's phone help line in Mumbai needs to be able to inhabit (and impersonate) a certain American daily. It's likely that globalisation will disseminate such cosmopolitanism much more widely.

A further sense of vernacular globalisation is much more particular. Globalisation in this sense means the increasing control of local and national economies by big capital and neo-liberal policies so as to reduce local autonomy and rights and increase insecurity of employment and a wider sense of dislocation. Globalisation here is regarded as being to blame for continuing and increasing economic inequalities across nations and regions. This sense of globalisation emerges more strongly as globalisation as the Americanisation of the world, sometimes for good, mainly for ill.

Globalisation

The key propositions of vernacular globalisation, then, are that distance and difference are both being reduced. It shares this interpretation with the mode of globalisation theory, which argues that the processes of globalisation lead to a global uniformity. Key theorists of totalising globalisation such as David Harvey and Immanuel Wallerstein, who take what is often called 'the global systemic approach', come out of Marxism, and their understanding of globalisation is a version of the Hegelian-Marxist understanding of capitalism. For them globalism is capitalism, and capitalism is a mode of production that swallows up all the alternative modes of production and radically constrains the lives of those who live inside it (see Wallerstein 1999; Harvey 1990). Globalisation is particularly dangerous from this point of view because it places democratic structures at risk. Strong democratic governance is local, so the argument goes, since the larger the territory under political control the more faint the local voices heard at the centre.

Global systems theory belongs with another post-Hegelian school, this time those who connect the global to the universal. (The difference between these concepts is crucial: what is universal is true everywhere and forever whereas what is global is merely a feature of the planet here and now.) Public intellectuals such as Francis Fukuyama have pictured the liberalisation precisely as the universalisation of universalism. As we all know, Fukuyama has urged the 'end of history' argument by claiming that all societies are tending towards democratic capitalism, as if it were a universal and basic truth that democratic capitalism is the most just and efficient mode of social organisation (see Fukuyama 1992).

One risk in all such accounts is that they lead us to underestimate how differently processes of globalisation work in different places. Indeed there are some places where globalisation locally causes something like the opposite of what 'globalisation' is generally assumed to mean: increases in unionism among Hollywood writers, or the increasing isolation of island communities (such as Pitcairn Island) which are not part
of global trade networks, especially since the decline of shipping (Mansey 1994, 148), or indeed (with qualifications since it is itself a global movement), political resistance to globalisation itself. Certainly in ways that matter a great deal there is no globalism conceived of as an overarching world community. Nothing better indicates the strength of a shared sense of global collectivity than international aid figures, which are depressing. In 1974 OECD nations promised to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GDP to aid; in 1997 the actual figure devoted to overseas aid was about 0.22 per cent (Development Aid Committee 1998). At the time of writing the USA gives 0.13 per cent of its GDP in aid. Indeed US hegemony itself works against the global community in important ways: this is the reason why co-operative action on global warming and a host of other transnational issues has stalled.

Another related risk with this Hegelian account is that they overestimate the decline of difference as such, even in spaces which are well covered by the social and political processes of globalisation. Indeed there is a case to be made that differences across the world may well not be decreasing, even though of course there are now things (technologies, cultural references, some social and economic organisation elements) that more societies share than they used to. But this in itself does not make these societies less different in any absolute sense; that depends on what else is happening in those societies, and some globalising technologies (the tape recorder, the Web) can actually intensify local differences by helping to maintain and disseminate local cultures.

In the final analysis, there is a conceptual problem in the argument about decreasing differences. How can one tell if the world contains less local differences now than it once did, since these differences are based in experiences, which are, strictly speaking, incomparable? The spread of baseball to Japan seems to create a 'sameness' between it and the USA, and yet the experience of watching a Japanese baseball match is very different from that of watching a US game (and both may differ widely among themselves). Are they more the same than the experiences of a US baseball game and a Japanese sumo-wrestling match? At one level, obviously yes, but then the sharing of a national game across two nations and two cultures allows all kinds of new differences, maybe in a more minor key, to be apparent to more sports fans. There is a sense that the convergence of games creates more difference as well as less.

To put this abstractly, to the degree that we share overarching measures of comparison and cultural references then differences increase since we have common means of, and occasions for, recognising and perceiving them. Maybe it is best to conceive of the problems like this: as communications across the world improve and as cultural forms are increasingly shared, the world is moving into a network of differences rather than of what we might call othernesses. In what is different from us less different than what is other to us? It's a complex question and one which totalising arguments about the globalising effects of cultural homogeneity tend to overlook. (For an excellent discussion of the problems of the 'end of difference' thesis in relation to 'cultural imperialism' see Tomlinson 1991.)

Global justice

In September 1999, about 40,000 demonstrators gathered in Seattle to protest against a World Trade Organisation meeting which was to discuss the further promotion of transnational free trade. Drawn together from many parts of the world and from disparate political groups, and organised largely through e-mail and web sites, demonstrators came together to protest, in particular, job losses in industries under attack from foreign competition; the downward pressure on the wage rates of unskilled workers; child labour; the rights of indigenous peoples; environmental degradation; and what is often called the cultural imperialism of a US-dominated global media. The protest garnered enormous publicity worldwide and was seen (perhaps falsely) as contributing to the failure of the WTO meeting. After Seattle a number of similar protests took place in different places, including an especially violent one in Genoa in July 2001 during which a protestor was shot by police.

These protests were a public face of what quickly became called the 'anti-globalisation movement' - a name many in the movement resisted, preferring to be called the 'global justice' movement. The movement was also helped by Naomi Klein's best-selling book, No Logo (2000), which some regarded as its manifesto and which certainly provided it with a genealogy, including Ken Saro-Wiwa's final struggle against Shell oil in Nigeria. In No Logo, Klein combines two separate if interrelated critiques. The first is a cultural critique of the dominance of branding and marketing in contemporary capitalism - she calls against image capitalism in the name of the relative innocence, spontaneity and authenticity of unbranded consumption and experience (seemingly under the influence of the sixties French avant-garde theorist and filmmaker Guy Debord and his early version of postmodernism known as 'situationism'). The second is an economic argument against the effects of offshore manufacture by first-world and multinational corporations.

The events of 9/11 and the consequent 'war on terrorism' have set the global justice movement back partly because the anti-war protests absorbed and displaced its programme, and partly because the politics of anti-globalisation shifted after Al-Qaeda's attack on US interests. After all, Islamic fundamentalism is itself a form of anti-globalisation. Yet the movement has by no means lost its energy - let the wide-scale interest in the campaigns against the mega-dams in the Indian sub-continent stand as one instance of this. Another is the continuing vitality of Europe's Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens (ATTAC), which, among other things, urges the so-called Tobin Tax, the proposed small tax on international
currency transactions. It is fairly safe to predict that in the future such agendas will be more apparent in mainstream politics.

At the heart of the appeal of the global justice movement is the fact that globalisation has increased rather than decreased global inequities. Today the richest fifth of the world’s population in North America, the EU and Japan consume about 90 per cent of the world’s output. The combined assets of the world’s three richest men are greater than those of the population of all least developed nations and their 600 million people (United Nations Development Programme 1999).; for a perhaps rather exaggerated account of inequality and globalisation see (Greider 1997). These are traditionally ‘internationalist’ concerns, the solution to which would seem to require a centralisation of world governance.

But the movement also reacts to newer formations, that is to the way in which, because the world is increasingly interconnected, actions in one place have consequences elsewhere. Hence massive over-consumption in first-world countries (especially the USA) shapes economies and environments around the world. Choosing a four-star hotel or a car rather than taking public transport not only worsens the environment for everyone but weakens public transport industries nationally and internationally. The global justice movement, then, is consistently concerned to bring home the effects of first-world consumption on the larger world.

The difficulty that the movement faces, however, is that these arguments have an economic dimension, and the measurement of the costs and benefits of even neo-liberal economic policies is difficult. Take for instance the issue of offshore manufacturing: if the loss of manufacturing jobs in the USA leads to more such jobs in China isn’t that to be welcomed, given that it tends to international economic equity and given that job substitution is much easier in the USA than in China? And won’t increases in Chinese wages to some degree balance out decreases in US wages?

Freedom of trade, increased communications and mobility of capital all help this to happen. The problem seems not so much that market liberalisation policies are wrong in grand terms but that they are deeply connected to other social transformations: in particular the urbanisation of underdeveloped nations and the increased ease of trade-financial transactions across borders. As a result, local insecurities and divisions between winners and losers increase, and so too does the urgency of the need to compensate or protect against damage. There are issues that need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Indeed anti-globalisation critique often leads to technical and tactical debates about the size of state welfare in particular circumstances, about efficient, equitable loan mechanisms for raising public funds, about legal regimes protecting landlords, about means for providing cheap money to landless peasants, about providing for urban infrastructure and housing and so on. Behind such issues, however, lies a larger one: what kind of government (protected by what kind of legisla-
frame work of Western liberalism. It carries with it a specifically European and elite history remote from the actual flows of contemporary global culture. But more importantly it does not of itself bring any analytic power to bear on the conceptual/political difficulties that beset the analysis of global culture. As an expression of the embarrassed politics of Western liberalism in a global epoch, it does not itself provide a banner for cultural production. In fact its chief value would seem to be as a mode of critique of first world cultural nationalisms and identity politics.

We have yet to see what, if any, academic concepts and cultural maps will cover the various spheres of globalised culture at older terms such as postmodernism (and post-colonialism). Cultural studies itself, as I have suggested, is likely to satisfy itself with more modest projects which accept the power of global flows and technology to energise in all directions, along with an acknowledgment of the costs and risks involved in the world order which produces that energy.

**Globalisation and culture**

It should be clear by now that globalisation's rather abstract emphasis on large-scale, multifaceted processes, based on political economy, is rather foreign to cultural studies. Likewise, while the global justice movement is in part driven by cultural concerns it does not chime easily with cultural studies because it tends to be insipid of cultural commodification as such. A cultural studies approach to globalisation needs to resist the various rhetorics through which the concept is disseminated in order to remain sensitive to how local differences are both metamorphosed and maintained through the contemporary world system (Cilluffo 2000; Friedmann 1994). But there are a number of further cultural outcomes of globalisation to which the discipline is turning. These can be listed as follows:

1. There exists very little popular culture on a genuinely global scale (During 1997) even though globalisation has led to an increase in transnational cultural exchange and to the increased importance of export markets. What stars and products really are recognisable everywhere? Very few; maybe just one – Coca-Cola. In complex, high-investment cultural industries such as film (and to a lesser extent television), globalisation means pretty much the same as it does to, for instance, the car industry. Product is developed for various national or regional markets, tweaking marketing (and in television franchises the product itself) to take account of local differences.

2. Globalisation of cultural production restructures cultural industries. Take films: as producers sell into world markets (and Hollywood's overseas revenues are now bigger than its domestic ones), bridges for individual films increase so risks have to be minimised, leading to tighter control of the creative side of the production by market research and stars, since these are the linchpins of marketing campaigns. Finance and insurance are solicited from international investors to spread risk. Labour-intensive elements of production are sent offshore where costs are cheaper while intellectual rights, star power and overall project management usually remain domesticated in the USA. Certain styles seem from import back to export markets, the kung-fu saturation of Hollywood action blockbusters being an obvious example. Furthermore, global film profitability is increasingly dependent on the games, books, CDs and (in the case of children's films) toys that can be franchised from them. And on the other side, magazines and advertisers thrive on the star power that they help sustain again across national/regional boundaries. In a word, globalisation gigantizes and binds some cultural niches.

3. Globalisation increases the importance of national cultural and media policies and fuels debates between cultural trade desarrollers (mainly the USA and Japan, which is also a major cultural exporter) and those who want to protect local industries and cultural formations. The most famous instance was the breakdown of negotiation in the 1993 Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) when the USA and EU could not agree that culture should be treated differently from other forms of production. Here the specific issue at stake was Europe's desire to preserve quotas for local television programming, but the larger issue was the right of particular nations to cultural sovereignty – to protect their cultural industries in the name of national traditions and global cultural diversity. These concerns are largely a result of US dominance of broadcast TV and film exports worldwide: The USA accounts for about 75 per cent of television exports globally. But Japanese exports into Asia, and even the Middle East, have also caused concern among nations worried about losing their cultures.

4. Local culture is certainly not preferred to import cultures across the board. To take just one instance: Marie-Gillespie's studied consumption among young Punjabi Londoners during the early nineties. She discovered that they responded very well to Coke advertising on television because, on the one hand, it was not English and they connected Englishness with racism; and, on the other, it was not South Asian, which they associated with the restrictions that parents implied and imposed upon them. For them, being American and young was cool, liberating – although this may be less the case since the 2001–2004 Iraq war (Gillespie 1995).

5. The increased flows between regions are intensifying the position of English as a world language. This accrues economic power to English speakers and is leading to new formations whose frame of reference is not the old Anglo-American world. Indian fiction in English is a harbinger of this.

6. Global cities have emerged as places that exercise cultural and economic sway (in both government and managerial control) not just nationally but regionally, either as centres of financial industries or culturally of both. They have an
force itself works across national lines to produce locality as a spatial fact and as a sensibility, we see the beginnings of social forms without either the predatory mobility of unregulated capital or the predatory stability of many states. (Appadurai 2001, 6)

It would be wonderful if this were true. But how are we to match this invocation of the extension of the imagination into everyday life with imagination's retreat in more formal settings? For instance, hasn't the political role of the sympathetic imagination — empathy with the suffering of other peoples — declined under the rise of identity politics and globalisation? Isn't religion historically the grandest expression of imagination, which globalisation-as-secularisation minimises? Hasn't globalisation so far led, if anything, to a narrowing of Hollywood product for instance? Doesn't it produce as much fear and paranoia as 'new forms of civic association' — just think of the war on terror? Nonetheless perhaps a case can be made that globalisation, by increasing cultural choices and forms of expression, and by drawing together less predictable audiences and collectivities, can enable experimentation and intellectual adventure. Cultural studies needs to be a testing ground for this hope.

Further reading

The imagination is no longer a matter of individual genius, except from ordinary life, or just a dimension of aesthetics. It is a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways. It allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries. This view of the role of the imagination as a popular, social, collective fact in the era of globalisation recognizes its split character. On the one hand, it is in and through the imagination that modern citizens are disciplined and controlled — by states, markets, and other powerful interests. But it is also the faculty through which collective patterns of dissent and new design for collective life emerge. As the imagination as a social
thought of as the transhistorical bearers of specific and hailed cultures. Europe and
Asia in particular are reinventing themselves as cultural unities, each based on their
antiquity. As Tari Barlow has argued, the East Asian Chinese diaspora has come
together through a new notion of Chinese culture (wenhua) which involves an appro-
priation of Western racial thought even while focusing on Confucianism as an
antidote to Westernisation (see Ong 1999, 59). Movies and television shows are
produced to express (and to take advantage of) this regional identity: MTV Asia and
StarTV have been at the forefront of this move. Perhaps the most famous example of
Asianisation in Asia is the Japanese daytime TV drama Uzai, produced by NHK
(Japanese Broadcasting Corporation), which has become a hit across much of Asia by
appealing self-consciously to East Asian experiences and values (see Takahiko 1997).
Nonetheless, anxieties about domination and submission, exclusion and inclusion lie
near the surface. Japanese popular culture is saturating South Korean and Taiwanese
markets, creating cultural-nationalist backlashes against their old colonial masters,
especially in Korea. And the sense that Japan and China will one day struggle for
cultural as well as for economic hegemony in the region problematises efforts to
imagine Asia as a unity – as does the ambiguous status of the South Asian sub-continent
in a 'larger Asia'.

Similarly, Europe is becoming a more self-conscious cultural unity as nations create
tighter and tighter links economically and politically. It may be that 'European' cultural
products are still rare, and tend to be confined to the high end of the spectrum – movie
cooproductions between France, Germany and the UK say, or cultural histories that
look for the origins of a European sensibility (most of which are produced in France).
And yet in sports, tourism and holiday industries a popular Europeanism is emerging:
a familiarity with and acceptance of differences within a region that is understood as
shared. European football competitions have a broad fan base. The Brits holiday in
Spain; Germans in Greece and Italy; Italians seem to love London. Europop is a recog-
nisable genre.

It is noteworthy that the Americas barely exist as a cultural entity – this despite
work by the Cuban anti-Spanish revolutionist José Marti for instance, circa 1890, to
imagine ways that the hemisphere might 'become America' (see the essays in
Fernández and Belnap 1998 for more on Marti). Which is not to say that regionalisa-
tion is not occurring there, merely that it's happening outside or in opposition to
the hegemony of Anglo North America. It exists mainly in flows between Latin America
and the US Chicago/a and Latino/a communities (which have a population of about 33
million, having recently overtaken African Americans in number). Yet this is a very
complex phenomenon. On one level, the Spanish-language media that binds this
regionalism together is increasingly visible in the USA, and Spanish television, a feast
of imported novelas (soap operas), talk shows and music videos, creates strong
transnational imaginaries and bonds. Yet on the other hand, only about half of the US Latino/a
population regularly tune into the Spanish media, and the second generation, born in the USA, all speak English. What the future would seem to hold in the USA itself, then, is an Anglophone hybridised Latino/a culture, probably with little regional reach, leaving American regionalisms to flourish only south of the border.

In Africa, efforts to create a Pan-African sensibility and politics date back at least a century and have left a legacy whose failed hopes have yet to be overcome. Pan-Africanism, which derived a great deal of energy from African diasporic intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, who hoped to establish return enfranchise communities away from the ruins of slavery, remains alive as an intellectual and political movement. Today it draws sustenance both from the concept of (non-nationalist) Afrikanische Studien, which is becoming a standard programme of studies in the US university system, and from the failure of so many of the region's nation-states. However, it remains an open question as to whether Pan-Africanism will be able not just to overcome past disappointments but to detach itself from the abstract "Africanism" (the stereotypes of African being) in which black affirmation and white racism exist in a tangle (Ackah 1999). A post-Pan-African African-ness, focused on the region, is struggling to be born.

In sum then: cultures based on transnational regionalism remain underdeveloped, caught between localisms and globalism.

Nations and nationalism

Regions may remain under-examined within cultural studies but nations and nationalism have received a great deal of attention, since they are, of course, much more substantial political, economic and cultural units. Nonetheless globalisation theorists have argued at length that the nation is an obsolete or ‘residual’ formation (see Ohmae 1996 for an articulation of this point of view). But the groundswell of opinion and the evidence points the other way, since, after all, capitalism requires and augments regulatory and infrastructure frameworks that remain under state control (see Hirst and Thompson 1996). Most developed nations have actively promoted policies that have accelerated globalisation (albeit some more keenly and thoroughly than others) in their own interests. And it is no accident that nations and nationhood are weakest where globalisation is weakest – that is, in Africa.

Certainly it remains one of modernity’s core features that the world is divided into sovereign nation-states with no remainder. Almost everyone is born a citizen of a particular nation-state. This does not mean that everyone lives in nation-states; people can be stuck, sometimes for generations, in refugee camps in Africa, the Gaza Strip and West Bank, Pakistan and Indonesia. And certain areas of the world – the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan for instance – are not actually under state control. But these are the exceptions rather than the rule, and indeed refugee life often generates utopian ideas of a homeland and can lead to hyper-nationalism (see Nyers 1999). Once, nations were analysed primarily as political and economic units, but since the eighties they have been understood as much as cultural units. The most important contribution to this shift was doubtless Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as ‘imagined community’ in his book of that name, which a notion which has been extrapolated onto the global level, as we have seen, by Arjun Appadurai (Anderson 1991; Appadurai 1996). Anderson, an expert on Indonesian politics and history, developed the concept of the ‘imagined community’ in his thinking about Indonesian decolonisation. He argued that individuals who had never thought of themselves as members of a national community in the pre-colonial era came to do so as readers of newspapers and participants of print culture distributed across many local (and tribal) territories. Print media invited culturally, and indeed linguistically, disparate readers to imagine themselves as citizens of a single nation, all reading about the world at the same time. Before nationalism, to quote Achille Mbembe on Africa, ‘in some cases, political entities were not defined by boundaries in the classical sense of the term, but rather by an imbrication of multiple spaces commonly joined, disjoined, and recombined through wars, conquest, and the mobility of goods and persons’ (Mbembe 2001, 27). After nationalism, individuals recognised themselves as belonging to a community of reading citizens. At the same stroke, they accepted new notions of time (time as bringing forth news and information at regular intervals; time as the measurement of national progress) and space (the borders of the nation coinciding with the reach of shared communication networks and collective interests).

Anderson’s imagined community was the result of bottom-up nationalism, the popular affirmation of the political geography devised by the decolonisers, who had divided the world ap into discrete nation-states. In this context, it is important to recall that, in the colonial world, national identities were simultaneously modern and anti-colonial identities. To be an Indonesian was to join the modern world – but not as a subject of the European colonial powers. The impetus to become a citizen of a sovereign nation was finally to be located in resistance to the colonizers, and in this sense it was more political than cultural. Indonesia itself had little substance; it was indeed an ‘imagined’ concept. Perhaps this helps explain why it could call upon extraordinary self-sacrificial passions very quickly: people were almost as willing to die for their country as they were for their religion (another ideological formation based on the organised imagination).

But it also helps explain why in many postcolonial states, including Indonesia, national unity has been so hard to sustain. Once the colonisers depart, national unity is jeopardised and communities imagine themselves once again in religious or cultural terms, that is, as sharing their own traditional inherited culture rather than a national culture. Because most national borders the world over have been set in Europe during the imperialist era (which is one way that history passes through Europe, as Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us), tensions between cultural units and postcolonial nations are
endemic (Chakrabarty 1992). This is especially the case because the geography of the nation tends to overlook internal regional inequalities and to focus on administrative and commercial urban centres. After a certain point, being a member of a national state cannot compensate for living in poor, neglected provinces.

The idea of an ‘imagined community’ works even less well in the metropolis than in the recent colonies. The common denominator of scholarship is that European nationalism emerges around 1800 when the political and economic will to autonomy is linked to demands for cultural self-expression. By this account, the invention of ‘culture’ as a concept by Herder and his romantic progeny is intimately linked to European nationalisms. For the cultural nationalists circa 1800, collective values are stored in the nationalism itgrounds, is only very indirectly linked to the media in the terms that expressive, require freedom to fulfill themselves. They ought not be governed from afar, by members of other cultures: each demands its own nation and its own state.

The new national – cultural identities were often almost indistinguishable from ethnical ones: as we shall see in more detail below, culturalism and racism are closely connected. In this context, Etienne Balibar has argued, in a post-Marxist mode, that social divisions, namely the divisions between classes (Balibar 1994). But, for him, nationalism can never quite offer the unity and satisfaction that it promises. This means that it needs to be supplemented by racism and xenophobia. His is a structural argument, a social science. In the words of theoretical Balibar's argument, it provides little help in accounting for the ways in which relations between racism, culturalism and nationalism differ in different regions and at different times. And it does not sufficiently acknowledge that nationalism is strongest when it becomes a spur for liberation.

Today, for instance, irredentist nationalism is to be found around the globe, including of course in Indonesia, and is most powerful among communities that share a language, a tradition, a religion and an ethnic identity. Yet characteristic in such cases, nationalism from the very beginning is articulated in opposition to, and the exclusion of, other cultural identities, especially that of the oppressor. Here xenophobia is not a consequence of nationalism’s emptiness as much as it is part of the armoury by which the nation is achieved.

If Balibar’s notion that nationalism turns to racism because of a structural inability of the nation to supply its citizens’ emotional needs has its limits, there can be little doubt that its logic does seem to cover other aspects of capitalist nationalism. As we shall see, one basis of nationalism is individual attachment to the economic benefits that the state provides, but, under capitalism, these benefits are ambiguous since the economic system through which individual interests are pursued causes constant instabilities. Capitalism, after all, is committed to change, to competition, to insecurity. As such, it also has

100

101

The Regional, National and Local

Tourism

Cultural nationalism has another more direct and more powerful, if no less complex, relation to globalization – tourism. Certain national markets themselves as national cultures in order to attract both tourists and business investment, drawing upon the whole armoury of modern communications technology to do so. This is especially apparent in countries such as Thailand but also, for instance in Australia and the UK. Tourism has largely been theorised in cultural studies through the sociologist John Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze', itself an application of the theories of the 'gaze' as developed in film theory (Urry 2002). For Urry this is a historical notion, which emphasises how the emergence of tourism during the eighteenth century focused on one particular sense – vision – and required both a material and an ideological infrastructure.

Tourists, so the argument goes, travelled - and still travel – primarily for visual pleasures which involve both the pleasures of recognition (seeing sites whose value and meaning are known in advance) and of the exotic (what they could not see at home). The tourist gaze, although pleasurable, is detached and superficial, missing the deeper meanings and experiences of sites and landscapes that are toured. Following this line of thought, tourism is primarily conceived as a business enterprise whose gradual industrialisation through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries matches the processes by which cultural consumption has been massified after it became an important aspect of developed national economies – first from about 1760 in Britain.

Yet to think of tourism in this way is to cast too rigid a distinction between what tourist sites mean for visitors and what they mean for locals. After all, tourism has been an important element in the development of many local cultures, and not just under the banner of inauthenticity. Let me give two very different historical examples, the first concerning the New Zealand/Aoteaora Maori. It is widely acknowledged that Maori culture, and in particular Maori carving, survived the impact of colonisation to a degree that it did because from the mid-nineteenth century (when the colonial wars were still raging) it was involved with the tourist industry. The state supported the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute in which the craft was kept alive largely because it helped Rotorua (a North Island village) to maintain its already strong position as a tourist attraction (centred on its hot
And yet of course, at the same time first-world tourism of third-world nations can be profoundly challenging for the tourist because it often enforces encounters between the rich and the poor that are much more confrontational than any back home. I'd suggest that for the rich to withdraw from such encounters is to enter the narcissism of privilege, a blocking out of the real. It is important to know, to see, to feel, all the more so because these encounters often carry with them risk and the challenge of the unexpected. What may be another matter are tourism of melancholia (aka ‘dark tourism’) – niche tours of economic devastation, genocide memorials, natural disasters, urban chaos, war zones and so on – since they can involve not so much a confrontation with the realities of global inequality as a reaffirmation by which the touristic attention is intentionally and safely directed at cruelty and destruction (Leonard and Foley 2000).

**Patriotism and cultural nationalism**

Returning now to other formations of nationalism, it is important to remember that nationalism is powerful where it is politically and economically most viable. Indeed there are cases – Scottish nationalism for example – where rather minute distinctions can motivate nationalist partition. The Scottish and the English share a language (although they speak slightly different dialects); they have been politically unified for almost three centuries; their basic values and cultural references are more or less identical (although it does not always look that way in Scotland); migration and exchange between the two territories has been intensive for centuries. What stands between them are mainly political-economic concerns; the (well-founded) anxiety that, as a region governed from London, Scotland did not have enough autonomy to secure its own interests – an anxiety which magnified as the oil revenues began to flow in the 1970s. And that anxiety plunged into public memories of England’s past annexation of Scotland.

In general then, the cultural analysis of nationalism tends to downplay nationalism’s political and social implications. It is no accident that cultural nationalism has increased in equal step to the increase of the extent and power of the state and to democratisation. Indeed nationalism carries with it a democratic charge in that it gives status to all citizens merely by virtue of their belonging to the nation-state, and conversely democracy gives nationalism a charge by endorsing each citizen with a share of sovereignty. One reason, for instance, that China does not have a standard form of nationalism is that the Han – China’s dominant ethnic community – have not granted equal social rights to minorities, Han identity remaining civilizational rather than national or racial ethos. The national sub-stratum of nationalism is that all citizens have a stake in the nation-state, in the final instance, to the degree that they would suffer – individually and/or collectively – if the state were taken over by groups that did not represent their interests.
This is the lesson of American patriotism which, unlike most European and post-colonial nationalisms, is not based on cultural or ethnic identity but instead on a commitment to democracy on the one hand and, on the other, economic self-interest (where the self may be an individual or a family or a larger grouping still). Self-interest provides the intimate relationship between welfare and nationalism: strong support for nationalism among the working classes has relied historically (at least in part) upon the sense that a strong nation is necessary if welfare policies are to be implemented. Bruce Robbins, who argues from a basically cosmopolitan or what he calls 'internationalist' point of view, believes that it is important to negotiate between internationalism and nationalism for that very reason (Robbins 1999, 34–36).

Other voices from the left have reconciled themselves to patriotism on somewhat similar grounds. Jürgen Habermas, for instance, has argued for a 'constitutional patriotism'. For him the old kind of 'organic' nationalism based on an ethnic identity can be substituted by a shared commitment to a set of political principles and institutions, to a 'democratic citizenship' (Habermas 1998). But such thinking tends to underplay the continuing culturalist, xenophobic, and indeed militarist, history of nationalism. One should not forget, for instance, that current Hindu nationalism in India which connects Hindu to being a Hindu, in opposition to official secularism and protection of the Islamic minority, is encouraged by loops between the zf-central process, the mass media and economic interests. Nor that English imperialism in the late nineteenth century is intensified by processes of democratisation just as much as nationalism. As the political franchise reached the working classes for the first time, 'jingoism' (aggressive and mass-mediated patriotism based on a sense of imperial destiny and racial superiority) became a dominant cultural form in Britain.

These ways of thinking of nationalism politically also need to be able to accept groups who understand themselves as belonging to a nation separate from that of the state in which they live. The classic example of this historically is the Jews, but indigenous peoples can also regard themselves as belonging to nations other than the ones of which they are citizens. It is probably enough to say that, typically, such groups have historically been identified as 'other' to the norm, and have been disallowed full access to social and economic goods inside their state. This has certainly been true of most indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states. The identity of the 'native' is characterized by its groundedness in ethnicity and culture, and the prejudice and exclusion that they encounter can lead to an inversion of colonial and nationalisms of their culture. But the failure of subaltern groups to co-opt into nationalism does not spoil the wider argument that cultural factors are less important to nationalism than most accounts suppose. As we shall see, one corollary of that argument is that multiculturalism is much less of a threat to nationalism than the conservatives pretend.

The local

The discourse of globalisation has had the rather paradoxical effect of highlighting the concept of the 'local' just because the global has become so important. In our analysis, the words 'local' and 'global' offer points of view on networks that are by nature neither local nor global, but are 'more or less long and more or less connected' (Leduc 1993, 122). Nonetheless, in the world in which we actually live it is often not hard to distinguish what is local from what is not, and what function can be extremely important both politically and culturally.

Indeed just as the power of nations is under challenge from transnational forces, it is also under challenge from sub-national forces. In many places in the world, as we have been able to see, there are pressures from communities and regions within nations to acquire some of the rights and cultural visibility more traditionally located in the nation-states themselves—consider the 'break-up' of Britain; the pressures for decentralisation in France; the localisation of political culture in South Asia. Ironically, at least in developed nations, technologies and the political economy of globalisation coupled with US domination help enable this since together they have reduced the cost of state administration and the provision of services. Like many contemporary cultural-political formations this push to de-nationalise does not conform to the logic of the old left-right opposition. Neo-liberals tend to applaud decentralisation on the grounds that it weakens the power of the national state; local culturalists demand the capacity to express their traditions against what are often seen as colonialist or neo-colonial regimes in power in national capitals.

The local, like the nation and the global, has a different force and direction in different places. Certain communities remain much more closely linked in their local ways of life than others; certain communities, however mobile and wired, remain more attached to locality than others. Mexican migrants in southern California for instance remain more involved with the life of the villages from which they came than do Kenyan immigrants to Germany. And certain aspects of all communities remain much more localised than other aspects: the weather, for instance, not unimportant to culture and economies, is historically local even if it is influenced by global warming.

One key to the power and attraction of local culture is the way in which it draws wealth, identity, leisure interests and public memory together locally. Let me give a personal example. The suburb I lived in for several years—Clifton Hill in Melbourne, Australia—was rocked by the building of a freeway between it and its close neighbour Collingwood in the seventies. This was seen to divide Collingwood—a working-class, immigrant suburb with a long history of struggle, liberalism and factional division to the
local Australian Rules football team — from the somewhat more affluent Clifton Hill. Many in both neighbourhoods opposed the motorway, not least because it enabled them negatively to compare the outer dormitory suburbs (whose commuting cars were breaking apart their neighbourhoods) with their own ‘inner-city’ lifestyles.

The losing fight against the motorway has not been forgotten, and Clifton Hill’s sense of itself as an unwillingly yuppie suburb is still experienced around that moment in the now not so recent past. But this memory is fading, and the more that house prices rise, and older residents sell out to richer and younger incomers, the more local history and memory decline as supports for local identity. Indeed, during a period of rising property values, the primary relation between Clifton Hill’s residents and their locality seemed to be a shared interest in what prices houses were fetching, and discussions about this topic competed with discussions about the weather in neighbourly conversations. In this case locality is not an important component of culture: apart from the Collingwood Football Club (which is of less interest to many migrants who are more attuned to soccer or to the professional middle classes many of whom have few sporting interests) and the largely funded and widely used public libraries, locality barely competes with the media and other cultural forms (including travel), which are national or global in their provenance and financing. In Collingwood itself, however, local attachments remain stronger and the old proletarian sense of autonomy and rebelliousness has been imaginatively absorbed by some members of the middle classes (mainly bohemians or starter professionals) who have moved into the area.

Of course there are many other ways of living in local culture, but from a cultural studies perspective the point of this example is that it helps show that the local–national–global triangle of differences is not always the best grid through which ‘local’ cultures are lived or should be analysed. Localities differ in their capacity to take charge of their own cultural trajectories and, as this anecdote shows, history and political economy remain essential if one is to grasp a strong sense of such differences. In thinking about Clifton Hill, space quickly gives way to social processes and economic relations, since memory and money together shape the geography of social and cultural organisation.

In general, cultural studies’ relation to space requires further thinking through. If the discipline is deeply connected to mobility, as I argued in Part 1 of this book, and is ultimately positioned against those kinds of identities and cultural formations defined in restricted spatial terms, it still needs to consider space as a primary co-ordinate of cultural formations. In particular it needs to consider, without losing sight of either, how power and the capacity for networking into global flows are spread unevenly across space and yet how the increased mobility of culture can intensify ‘local imaginaries’ also.

Further reading


106