

Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives

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Lecture No. 07

Cultural Globalization – Introduction II

Welcome back to the class, and we are continuing our discussion on globalization and culture. So, in the previous class, we spent some time trying to understand the concept of culture, especially its trajectory in anthropology. While extremely popular in the English language and disciplines like sociology or anthropology, we found that this term does not have a given definition or a definition that is not changing. The ideas about culture, the conception of culture, and the arguments about the culture keep changing.

So, we had a brief detour into the evolution of different meanings of culture. We saw different attempts to make sense of this culture within the discipline of anthropology. Understand it as an interpretive mechanism and use various ways of making sense of this whole culture.

Following that, we are moving to the next class, which is more directly related to culture and globalization. Understanding this whole phenomenon of globalization culture or cultural globalization is essential. Like other political, economic or social dimensions of globalization, cultural globalization is also an essential or central aspect. Moreover, I am using the book Cultural Globalization: A User's Guide by Macgregor Wise in this class.

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- Cultural globalization needs to be understood, through a theory of culture, territory, and identity. A territory is an area of influence that one has.
- Each territory draws on a culture, but is not completely representative of that culture. Each territory may draw on elements from diverse cultures and inflect them in a particular way. Those cultural elements used to mark territory (and identity), are also those that make it possible to move through and live in society. The territory needs to be recreated continuously.
- link between the processes of territorialization and processes of identity. Identity is part of one's own self-formation, but also the consequence of what groups and others impose on one. The concept of identity as territorialization is important to understand cultural debates about identity.



So, cultural globalization needs to be understood through culture, territory and identity. A territory is an area of influence that one has. Where do one locate this whole notion of culture in the globalization debate? Because in the tradition of anthropology, culture was seen as those capabilities, beliefs, values systems, ideas internalized or used by the people of a particular society. That is how mostly the tribal societies were understood. So, in that sense, it was much easier to understand culture as a total of all their belief system, values, cultures, knowledge and everything they have produced as a member of their society.

However, the definition becomes inadequate in a globalized society because you are no longer an isolated entity in a globalized society. All societies are no longer wholly insulated. There is solid cross-cultural flows taking place. We are all living in an integrated society. So, in that scenario, the author Macgregor would argue that cultural globalization needs to be understood through a theory of culture, territory and identity. The relationship between culture, territory, and identity is significant, and globalization occurs through these categories. You need to understand globalization as a process taking place through the categories of cultural territory.

And identity and territory he defines as an area of influence that one has. It is a very broad definition. Usually when we talk about territory, we understand territory as a given geographic

area but, in this literature, territory does not have that notion of a geography thing. A territory is a more broadly defined. Maybe you are an Indian, but you live in London. So, your room becomes a territory for you. Maybe you want to create your own space. So, it is an area of influence that one has. So, you have a specific influence in your room and want to create that space as per your wishes.

Maybe you want to put up photos of Indian gods and goddesses. You want to put up the posters of Indian film stars or Indian cricket stars, your family members photos, or you want to create an Indian atmosphere in your house or room. However, the moment you walk out and step out of your room, it is completely different. So, similarly, places in UK or another place which Indians predominantly inhabit. So, that locality again has this kind of a particular character. Maybe with temples or Indian restaurants, shops, a host of things. So, you realize that place gets the character of an Indian territory not only because of these physical objects but also because it can affect culture.

So, this argument that in the era of globalization, you are trying to understand culture as something closely connected with territory and identity. So, you have these highly interconnected connections. So, each territory draws on culture because it is the territory as I mentioned territory; we do not talk about the geographical boundary but rather the kind of space or quality associated with a kind of space. Each territory draws on culture, but it is not entirely representative of that culture.

Each territory may draw its elements from diverse cultures and inflect them in a particular way. Those cultural elements used to mark territory and identity make it possible to move through and live in society. The territory needs to be recreated continuously. So again, this whole idea of territory is not a static one. You constantly recreate that particular place. You need to reconstitute that particular place constantly, and it does not mean a particular space because you draw upon a particular culture. That culture gives a definitive character to that particular space. It does not give a kind of a particular identity to that particular place. The fact that you are from India does not give you a particular identity the way you want.

So, the cultural elements used to mark territory and identity are also those that make it possible to move through and live in society. So, for example, for a group of devoted believers or any particular religious sect, how do they create that sense of identity that belongs to a particular religious sect? What is the kind of identity markers that they use? How do they constantly create a space for themselves to have this unique, distinct identity as the followers of a particular religious guru or those who follow a particular religious sect? How do they constantly recreate that? What is the kind of cultural resources that they draw upon? So, it is a very dynamic process inflected to these categories of culture, territory and identity.

So, the link between the process of territorialization and processes of identity. So, there is a link between territorialization and the processes of identity formation. Identity is part of one's self-formation and the consequence of what groups others impose on one. The concept of identity as territorialization is vital to understanding cultural debates about identity. So, this is again something very, very important.

You know that identity is not always what we want others to see us. We want to create a particular identity for ourselves. This could be an individual identity, a caste identity, a social group identity, an identity for a particular linguistic group or a religious group or a caste group or an ethnic group. Nevertheless, it is also equally crucial that how others see you. How do others concede to your demands to be seen in a particular way? So, it is always a kind of a dialectical process. It is always fundamental dynamics involved in that.

So, he argues that the concept of identity as territorialization is vital to understanding cultural debates about identity. So, suppose you look at identity as territorialization. In that case, you want to create your space of influence, your realm of influence in a particular way. That is precisely what identity-making means. If you want to create a particular identity for the place where you live, please keep in mind that I am not talking about a given place's geographic place. That space could be moving; that space could be a visual. It could be an imaginary space.

So, in such a scenario, you create an artificial territory. This territorialization is very closely connected with the notion of identity. So it is crucial to understand the connection between this territorialization and the role of identity in its building.

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- Doreen Massey, a well known British geographer discusses the geography of a culture as consisting of interconnections that cross multiple spaces. She writes, "The interconnections which bind together and internally differentiate a diaspora culture, for instance, cut across regions, nation states and continents, linking local areas in, say, a British city to a Turkish region of Cyprus, to a particular island in the Caribbean or a village in India".
- Rather than thinking of culture as roots, as peoples belonging to particular places and traditions and practices, we need to think of culture as routes, as the movements of peoples, goods, ideas from place to place.
- What is very important for Massey is that these interconnections are actually social relations and as such have varying levels and types of power; and that power is directional. So some social relations have more cultural power than others.



So, he invokes Doreen Massey, a critical British geographer, to discuss the geography of a culture consisting of interconnections that cross multiple spaces. So, these two terms are significant. One is interconnections and that cross multiple spaces. So, we will come across these terms and concepts in many items in the coming classes, but these are important. So, the geography of culture consists of interconnections that cross multiple spaces.

She writes "the interconnections which bind together and internally differentiate a diaspora culture. For instance, cut across regions, nation-states and continents, linking local areas in say, a British Society to a Turkish region of Cyprus, to a particular island in the Caribbean or a village in India". So, how do a group of people who have, say migrated from Punjab to Canada or to the UK, how do they create a kind of Indian identity or Punjabi identity for them in this particular foreign land? How do they create a sense of Indianess there? What does it mean to be a Punjabi there, or what does it mean to carry Punjabi culture there?

How do they construct an Indian culture or Punjabi culture there? Is it a kind of a directed transport of cultural elements from India or Punjab to these places? She says they are cut across the regions, nation-states, and continents linked to local areas. So, it is about the geographic

spaces and is highly selective. They undergo very significant transformations. Their character change. They will hold on to maybe some of the essential things. They might let go of other things and renegotiate many things.

So, it is a fascinating scene when you see how there is a very conscious process of acceptance of omission, commission, of a host of things to create a particular claim to a kind of culture. Rather than thinking of culture as root as people belonging to a particular place and traditions and practices, we need to think of cultures as routes as the movements of peoples, goods, ideas from place to place.

This is extremely important because when you talk about culture, we always think that your culture is a place where you are born. After all, you are deeply rooted in that culture. So, rootedness gives you an idea of a sense of permanence. You are deeply ingrained into that particular soil, that particular tradition, that particular culture. There is a sense of permanence to this particular idea of the root. However, Massey argues that that is an erroneous understanding. We think that your host culture has been unchanging for the past century; it never changed.

So, that is why you think that you are rooted in that. You represent the essence of that particular culture, which is a very erroneous understanding. If you look into your own culture, a host of things that you consider as your own, the kind of food you eat, dress, language, utensils that you have, the artefacts, the ideas, religious system, belief system - all these things have reached you from various places. This could be hardly anything that can be said that something originated in the place where you live, and this is something vital. This will also help you move beyond some of the very myopic understanding of your arguments on cultural chauvinism. Arguing that my culture is superior to others, I will not allow others to come and pollute my culture.

These arguments come from a very erroneous, shallow, narrow understanding of what culture means. All these places wherever human beings are inhabited from the past centuries, how being a part of more extensive networks, more significant global flows of they were part of larger movements of ideas, artefacts, belief systems, and value systems—much material as well as non-material aspects of culture.

So, Massey argues that instead of looking at culture as root, you need to understand culture as routes, as the movements of peoples of goods, ideas from place to place. So, then you understand the kind of culture that you want to claim. It is a product of so many different cultural roots in history. You or your community happen to take birth in a particular time. That is why you were seen as the representatives of that culture, but that culture was not something immutable.

It was not something permanent; it was always in reflex, but you were happened to take birth at a particular time, and then you think that everything was there from the beginning and you started claiming it. So, Massey's very important point is that these interconnections are actually social relations and have varying levels and types of power and that power is directional. So, some social relations have more cultural power than others. So this also is a critical point saying that these things are not very innocent in that sense, they are not devoid of power relations. They are not happening as if on a level playing field.

We know the story of colonialism, the story of slavery, and how colonial aggression has completely decimated a host of native cultures through genocide and a host of other things. So, starting from that very, from that kind of very, atrocities to more gradual cultural influence, these cultural flows have taken place throughout history. They have been taking place in history from time immemorial, but they are articulated through social relations. The moment they are articulated through social relations, the role of power comes into the picture.

And why that particular culture was able to move from one to another, why that particular kind of a cultural diffusion took place?, What were the circumstances under which a religion like Islam could spread to different parts? Or Why then Buddhism was able to travel from India to Southeast Asian countries to Sri Lanka, to China? A host of other places. So, we know that it is not only the importance or significance of those ideas of Buddhism but also definite social relations that facilitated the movement of Buddhism or any religion for that matter from one place to another.

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The question of cultural imperialism

- Cultural imperialism argues that while the old political empires have crumbled, the Western nations still control the symbolic and cultural world by controlling the mass media.
- The problem with the cultural imperialism thesis is that it assumes that the process of globalization is a one way flow: from the West (read: America) to the rest. This process is uniform and occurs in the same way everywhere. That is, it assumes that the world will become homogenized, that it will look the same wherever you go.
- Political scientist Benjamin Barber, in an influential yet problematic book entitled *Jihad v. McWorld*, argues that globalization actually consists of two different processes working in opposite directions.



Another significant point of debate, which we will take up more closely in the coming classes, is the question of cultural imperialism. So, what is happening to our culture? So, we agree that there has been a cultural flow of cultural networks happening everywhere. However, there have been many exciting, essential questions about the nature of these cultural transformations and the role of power in that? Why that specific culture is becoming very dominating at the cost of other cultures ?. Why are certain other cultures simply disappearing, not being able to compete with the kind of an invading culture?

So, that has led to many discussions about what we understand as questions of cultural imperialism. *Imperialism* is a term used in the Marxian discourse to talk about the kind of combination of both political exploitations and economic exploitation. Lenin's arguments about imperialism is very important. So, scholars within Marxian tradition firmly believe that even after the formal ending of colonialism, imperialism continues. The economic logic of imperialism continues even after the formal ending of colonialism. In other words, you no longer require physical domination over the colonies to continue with your economic exploitation. The trade is more than sufficient for that.

So, extending that argument into the realm of culture, there are fascinating arguments about the whole question of cultural imperialism. So, cultural imperialism argues that while old political

empires have crumbled, the Western Nations still control the symbolic and cultural world by controlling the mass media. So, we know that Britain is no longer an important colonizer. Almost every country under the British Empire has been declared independent, and Britain is no longer a colonizer. No other country is a colonizer. But what happens is that the western nations still control the symbolic and cultural world by controlling the mass media.

So, there is a massive imbalance in power appropriated or unleashed by these Western countries, especially the U.S. across the globe. There is a massive imbalance in terms of these few countries' power. That leads to a kind of cultural imperialism that leads to a scenario where the American culture or European culture, now increasingly American culture. European culture may be up to the 1950s. After that, we see the emergence of this bipolar world: the USA ,USSR. America became more powerful and efficient because it adopted a capitalist system in which the commercial aspect of the culture and the possibilities of expansion are much more than that of a communist country.

So, the problem with the cultural imperialism thesis is that it assumes that the process of globalization is a one-way flow from the West, that is, read America to the rest. This process is uniform and occurs in the same way everywhere that is. It assumes that the world will become homogenized and look the same everywhere, wherever you go. So, this has been a fundamental argument, and it has been used as a like Coca-Colonization. That is another term. Coca-Colonization is that Coca-Cola is colonizing the whole world's beverage market, which is true.

Suppose you look into every society, every country, these two beverages brands, this PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. In that case, they have almost near a monopoly across the globe. They have purchased the local brands, so they have penetrated deep into every society. So, these terms like Coca-Colonization have become practical terms to indicate this kind of cultural invasion of other commercials and cultural interest from European countries or America.

So, this assumes that it is only a one-directional flow. In other words, it is known as Americanization. This term was widely used during the 1990s and then at least up to the early 2000s. That America is expanding its tentacles, its influence across the globe, not through military or not through physical force but cultural means, its products, movies, T.V. shows,

cartoons and a host of other things. So, it leads to a kind of difficult homogenization. The world we see will become almost the same everywhere. Your food habits will become the same, and your consumption will become the same, the kind of dress pattern, the kind of dress brand, the kind of music you listen to, all these things will become the same.

So, this is the kind of an argument the cultural imperialism, but it is only one side of the story. They mustn't be talking about this reception part. We know that even if something is imposed on people, people do not accept it the way initially it was intended. People use different ways of acceptance. For example, in an influential yet problematic book titled Jihad versus McWorld, another very controversial work, political scientist Benjamin Barber, argued that globalization consists of 2 different processes working in opposite directions.

He argued about this McWorld, which includes everything that starts with Mc McDonald, Microsoft, MGM films, and almost everything in the U.S., but it is expanding to the world. So, this McWorld, according to Benjamin Barber, stands everything for good. It is for progress; it is for development, for rationality. It is for people's freedom, people's choice, everything good. On the other hand, he calls it against Jihad in a very problematic adoption of this term from the Quran.

So, when he talks about everything negative, which is traditional, violent, inward-looking, against development, which is full of violence. So, he argues that while this McWorld is expanding, the other opposite tendency is also expanding with the same efficiency or speed.

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- Multiple, multi-directional cultural flows



- Global content (content distributed globally) is given a local form through the interpretations and discussions of the audiences that consume it. In a similar way global culture can be appropriated for local uses, to make a local statement about identity.
- Richard Wilk (1995) argues that the nature of globalization, of global capitalism, and, therefore, of global cultural hegemony, has changed. Global capitalism no longer promotes homogeneity, it is not trying to mass produce one widget for the entire world.



We know that these are not kind of binary forces. They are not in the two opposite directions. What we increasingly realize is a kind of multiple, multi-directional cultural flow. It is not unidirectional or in two directions or three directions. They are in an entirely multi-directional flow. So, global content, distributed globally, is given a local form through the interpretations and discussions of the audience. Similarly, global culture can be appropriated for local use to make a local statement about identity.

So, there is much compelling argument about how global content is given a local form through interpretations and descriptions of the audience that consume it. It will become apparent when we discuss. For example, McDonalidization or even substantial multinational companies who come to Indian Society for that matter or any society. They have to accept and then adapt to that because you will not get a beef burger in India. McDonald will not sell beef burgers, but they sell beef burgers in a host of other countries. So, respecting the local sentiments or a veg burger may not be a hit elsewhere. However, in India, it is an important thing.

So, every such process of cultural influence is not a very blind kind of a process. It is a more complicated one where there are a lot of negotiations and bargaining takes place. Then it is a much more complicated process. Similarly, global culture can be appropriated for local use to make a local statement about identity. Richard Wilk argues that the nature of globalization, global capitalism, and, therefore, global cultural hegemony has changed. Global capitalism no

longer promotes homogeneity. It is not trying to mass-produce one widget for the entire world. So, this is a powerful argument of Richard Wilk.

He says that global capitalism does not want to create a uniform world because it will be detrimental to its interest. There is no need for global capitalism to produce a uniform set of demands, needs, products, and everything for Society. It is not something good for them. Instead, global capitalism would be best served if it had a much broader kind of options.

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- What global capitalism does today is that it actually promotes difference (the new, the exotic), and it thrives on difference. But it promotes only a certain type of difference, and ignores other differences. It promotes the types of differences that can be easily packaged and sold, the types of differences that are not threatening to global capitalism. By promoting a limited range of difference, it limits the range of actions available to people. Wilk refers to this as *structures of common difference*.
- Wilk raises the interesting question, what if the content is local but it is expressed in a foreign (or "global") form?
- Video productions, YouTube channels, theme parks and so on



So, what global capitalism does today is that it promotes differences. The new, the exotic, and it thrives on differences. However, it promotes only a specific difference and ignores other differences. It promotes the type of differences that can be quickly packaged and sold. The type of differences that are not threatening to global capitalism promotes a limited range of different limits the range of actions available to people. Wilk refers to this as structures of common difference, a very important argument.

Suppose you have noticed some of these advertisements it directly addresses you and wants you to be different. It wants each of you to be different, but how can you be different. You can look different not by consuming their product but by consuming it. So, they would assure you that you

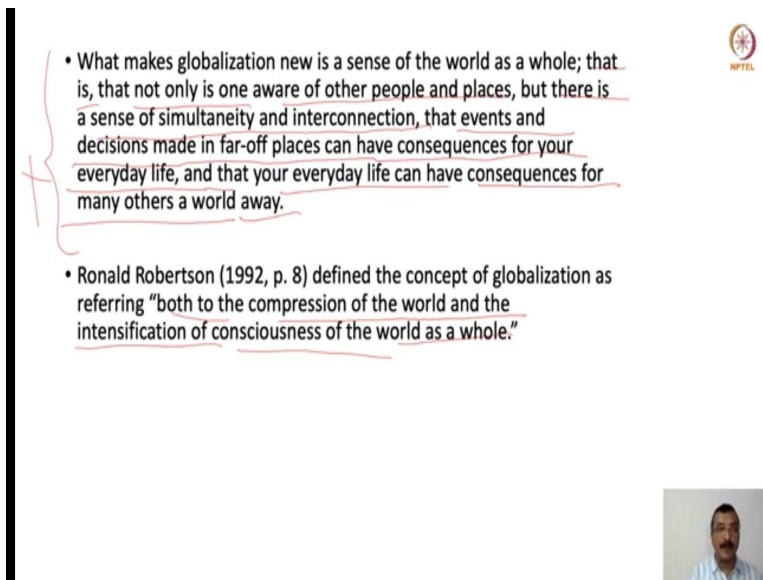
will be different from others by consuming their product. Ironically, this is their argument to everybody. That is what we see in a front-page advertisement of a newspaper.

They want you to drink a particular soft drink. None of these advertisements talks about the quality of the drink because there is nothing to speak about the quality or the nutritional value. They are all selling a kind of a particular attitude to the consumer, not the quality of the product, because they know that there is nothing to talk about the quality of a Coca-Cola or a Pepsi or anything. There is nothing other than some sugar and some carbonated water. So, they are selling an attitude. They ask you to be different, but ironically, everybody will end up differently. However, ultimately it all will be the same.

So, capitalism wants you to act differently think that you are different. However, it ultimately serves the purpose of capitalism because capitalism can offer you a minimal set of options by giving you an illusion that you are the choosers, but we are not the actual choosers. The options are minimal. We only get to choose from what is being offered. So, Wilk raises this interesting question. What if the global content is local, but it is expressed in a foreign or global form? So, he talks about it in that sense, the content could be very local, but it is expressed in a global form.

Examples of video productions, YouTube channels, theme parks and a host of other things. So, can we then say that they are all examples of cultural imperialism because the form might be some of the very popular TV shows—something like Bigg Boss. Bigg Boss is a foreign show, but you see it as your own local heroes and local people in your regional channels. It has a very local flavour. So, that is an exciting combination of a global form with a local content. Now do you call it as cultural imperialism? What kind of culture does it represent?

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- What makes globalization new is a sense of the world as a whole; that is, that not only is one aware of other people and places, but there is a sense of simultaneity and interconnection, that events and decisions made in far-off places can have consequences for your everyday life, and that your everyday life can have consequences for many others a world away.
- Ronald Robertson (1992, p. 8) defined the concept of globalization as referring "both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole."

So, what makes globalization new? Suppose you are trying to sum up these discussions. In that case, we know that cultural exchanges, if you go back to Massey's argument about looking at culture not as roots but as routes, these interchanges, exchanges, interactions have been there from the past so many several centuries. What is happening now is the scale of this interaction, the degree of this interaction, the intensity of this particular interaction. So, what makes globalization new is the sense of the world as a whole that not only one is aware of other people of places, but there is a sense of simultaneity and interconnection.

That events and decisions made in far off places can have consequences for your everyday life and what your everyday life can have consequences for many others a world away. So, this captures the essence of globalization and Roland Robertson, one of the important theorists of globalization, defines the concept of globalization as referring to both the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. So, there is a compression of the world, which is also coming up here that the things that happened here will have an immediate consequence somewhere else, incidents that happened there will have immediate consequences here. So, they are all talking about compression of the world and intensifying consciousness of the world as a whole.

So, one of the fundamental aspects of globalization is increased global consciousness. The idea is that we are all living in a global world.

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And let me end this class by showing a fascinating quote from Shashi Tharoor. Shashi Tharoor is an M.P. from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, and he is known for his oratory skills. He was with the U.N.; he is a very popular M.P. who has a very high mastery of English. His vocabulary is supposed to be very good. So, this is a very, very famous definition of, not defined as such, a kind of an illustration of globalization, which is taken from one of the speeches that he delivered in person in Boston in the U.S. So, let us see what Shashi Tharoor is, how is he explaining.

So, he is talking about Princess Diana's death. You know that tragic incident where she had a car accident and then passed away. So, he is elaborating on that incident. An English princess with a Welsh title leaves a French hotel with an Egyptian companion who supplanted Pakistani. She gets into a German car with a Dutch engine that is driven by a Belgian chauffeur full of Scottish whiskey. The Italian paparazzi then chase them on Japanese scooters and bikes into a Swiss-built tunnel where they crash. A rescue is briefly attempted by an American doctor using Brazilian

medicines. The whole story is told in Boston by the Indian MP from Thiruvananthapuram. That is globalization by Shashi Tharoor.

This is just an incident. Of course, we can imagine that he must have used his artistic freedom to make it more elaborate, but it is a very definitive work. How many global players were party to that was a simple incident of Diana's death and how global it was, how many global players were party to that? How will you understand that particular incident if you do not have a more extensive understanding of the interconnectedness of that particular incident? So, let me end the class by saying that we are just into some interesting discussions on cultural globalization and will have the classes in the next session. Thank you.