The Changing Face of Cultural Globalization
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“The metaphor of a global village has caught the imagination of many people in Asia, including political leaders and intellectuals. Paradoxically, we find that while technology has given the world the means of getting closer together into a global village, this very same technology has also given rise to unprecedented fears of domination by the technologically powerful nations. It has created fears of cultural liquidation particularly among smaller nations… Some Asian leaders view the global village more as a threat to cultural identities and pluralism rather than as an opportunity to create a more consensual culture among neighbouring people.”

Anura Goonasekera (2001: 278)
What is globalization?

Globalization is seen as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life.
What’s new about globalization?

“Globalization is neither a wholly novel, nor primarily modern, social phenomenon. Its form has changed over time and across the key domains of human interaction, from the political to the ecological. Moreover … globalization as a historical process cannot be characterized by an evolutionary logic or an emergent telos”.

Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton (1999: 414)
Three different theses on globalization

• a (hyper)globalist perspective,
• a skeptical or traditionalist perspective, and,
• a transformationalist perspective
Globalists see globalization as an inevitable development which cannot be resisted or significantly influenced by human intervention, particularly through traditional political institutions, such as nation-states.
(2) Traditionalists

Traditionalists argue that the significance of globalization as a new phase has been exaggerated. They believe that most economic and social activity is regional, rather than global, and still see a significant role for nation-states.
(3) Transformationalists

Transformationalists believe that globalization represents a significant shift, but question the inevitability of its impacts. They argue that there is still significant scope for national, local and other agencies.
Our position

The globalist and the traditionalist perspectives are both very extreme in their views. The globalists advocate that the world changes towards a more homogenous global culture and towards all kinds of new global structures.

The traditionalists take the other extreme stance and advocate that nothing really revolutionary is happening.

In our opinion, the transformationalist perspective is not so much a compromise between the two as it is a less extreme and more modest interpretation of what is happening.
**Transnationalization thesis**

(a) The capitalistic system has evolved in recent decades from an international to a transnational or global system with the **transnational corporations** as the most significant actors.

(b) The most striking feature of the actual system is the **polarized development** of transnationalization on the one hand, and national disintegration on the other.
Transnationalization thesis

(c) Of particular interest is the emphasis on culture which is the main stimulator of a new transnational community of people from different nations, but with similar values and ideas, as well as patterns of behavior.

(d) The ultimate result is the parallel existence of varying sectors within the same national borders. In other words, the national societies are generating a variety of counter processes that assert national and/or subnational values, sometimes reactionary, sometimes progressive.
Multiplicity in One World

In sum:

processes of integration, disintegration, and re-integration
Two views on cultural globalization

- Some communication scholars adopted the globalist perspective and assumed a unified, homogeneous global culture. This monoculturalistic view on globalization builds on the modernization and media imperialism/dependency theories.
- Others emphasized a more diversified and pluralistic cultural or multicultural perspective.
In other words: Global/Local-ization

In contrast to mainstream views on globalization, which center on the political economy, the global industry and have a capitalist-centered view of the world, here, the focus is on situating the field of globalization in the local.

At the same time the debates have shifted from an emphasis on homogeneity towards an emphasis on differences.

Therefore, the total conglomerate of changes accounts for something new, and especially the issue of linking the global with the local can be identified as a central point of change.
What is ‘local culture’?

- A "local culture" is "the taken-for-granted, habitual and repetitive nature of the everyday culture of which individuals have a practical mastery" (Pierre Bourdieu)
- This and the cultural forms, the common language, shared knowledge and experiences associated with a place, are the essence of the concept of local culture.
What is ‘cultural identity’?

Various cultures manifest different identities. In the current age, collective and individual identities seem to be fragmented; identities are composed by interpreted fragments that originate from multiple levels. These levels range from the global to the local. All identities are a mixture of global and local aspects. People in local settings constantly reshape their own individual and collective identities by consuming cultural elements originating from a variety of levels.
Two ways of looking at cultural identity

- on the one hand, an *inward* sense of association or identification with a specific culture or subculture;
- on the other hand, an *outward* tendency within a specific culture to share a sense of what it has in common with other cultures and of what distinguishes it from other cultures
Two ways of conceiving cultural identity

- One essentialist, narrow and closed. It thinks of cultural identity as an already accomplished fact, as a 'product'.
- The other historical, encompassing and open. It conceives cultural identity as something that is being produced, always in 'process'.

Mass media and cultural mixing/hybridization

- The chemistry that takes place between the processes of media production and the daily routine of media consumption in the context of the family, the community and the nation (Martin-Babero)
- Global diffusion and local appropriation (Thompson)
- The mix is not only in-between cultures, but also in-between the global and the local, or the processes of cultural globalization and cultural localization.
The many faces of hybridized products (Georgette Wang)

Three types of hybridization: cultural products are

(2) *a-culturalized*, or devoid of labels or substances specific to any particular culture;

(2) *deculturalized*, or a transformation process aimed at removing elements that were perceived to be too culture-specific to be appreciated or comprehended by a global audience; and

(3) *re-culturalized*, or the modification of story lines to give a different touch of culture.
Supply vs consumption

Homogenization in the supply of products and in the production processes, does not implicitly mean that consumption or appropriation is also homogenizing.

Globalization/localization has to be approached as a(n) (inter)subjective/interpretative process. It articulates changing identities rather than homogenization.
By way of conclusion

Diversity not only exists between cultures, but also within cultures. In other words, cultures are always mixed and hybrid in themselves, and have and provide as such local cultural meaning.

Therefore, the common task of theorists and practitioners is to see cultures, on the basis of mutual respect, ‘from the inside out’ instead of ‘from the outside in’.

It is from within such a view of multiplicity that we have to ground the global in the local and to develop a framework for analyzing globalizing/localizing identities.
Thank you