

Culture, Globalization, and Social Cohesion: Toward a De-territorialized, Global Fluids Model

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Abstract: To conceptualize the interrelationship among culture, social cohesion, and globalization, this paper uses Urry's three "social topographies" of space: region, network, and fluids. Fluids describe the de-territorialized movement of people, information, objects, money, and images across regions in an undirected and non-linear fashion. They are characteristically emergent, hybridized, urban, and cosmopolitan. Drawing upon Appadurai's five dimensions of global cultural flows (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes) and using examples from Britain, the U.S., and Canada, the paper argues for greater research and policy attention to the processes whereby transnational and hybrid identities are forged in cities. It concludes by introducing some empirical indicators of cosmopolitanization that represent a starting point for further research into the linkages between global cultural fluids and social cohesion.

Résumé: Pour conceptualiser le rapport entre culture, cohésion sociale et mondialisation, cet article emprunte à Urry ses trois « topographies sociales » de l'espace: régions, réseaux et fluides. « Fluides » se rapporte aux mouvements non-linéaires, sans direction particulière, d'une région à une autre, de personnes, d'information, d'objets, d'argent et d'images. Ces fluides ont la caractéristique d'être émergents, hybrides, urbains et cosmopolites. Cet article se rapporte en outre à Appadurai et ses cinq flux culturels mondiaux (paysages ethniques, techniques, financiers, médiatiques et idéologiques) et utilise des exemples britanniques, canadiens et américains. Il fait appel à plus de recherches et d'analyses politiques sur les manières dont les identités transnationales et hybrides se forment dans les villes. Il conclut en présentant les signes empiriques d'un cosmopolitisme accru qui représente un point de départ pour mener des enquêtes futures sur comment les fluides culturels mondiaux et la cohésion sociale s'influencent réciproquement.

While a formidable body of literature has emerged over the last decade concerning the economic impacts and prospects of globalization, the relationship between culture and globalization is less well understood. As Vásquez & Marquand (2000) have observed, scholars are sharply divided as to the overarching cultural effects of globalization. One school, which they term the "homoge-

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nizers,” argues that globalization inevitably leads to uniformity; as the lifestyles and values of the core capitalist societies roll out across the globe, peripheral societies are inundated by a tidal wave of images derived from American popular culture. Other analysts of the globalization process are more sanguine. These “heterogenizers” argue that the global media encourage the strengthening of local discourses and practices by providing new access routes from those formerly available. In particular, the Internet is cited as expanding and democratizing communication channels. Scott (1997) concludes that if some local/regional cultures are currently under serious threat, others are finding widening and receptive audiences as their outputs are channeled into ever more spatially extended networks of consumption.

In examining the interrelationship among culture, social cohesion, and globalization, my strategy is to follow the lead of the British sociologist John Urry (2000) and employ three distinct “social topographies” or metaphors of space: region, network, and fluids. *Regions* represent geographically restricted clusters, most notably the bounded nation state, but also continental trade and cultural unions and even the global economy itself. By nature, regions are vertical structures that possess a centre, a concentration of power, a vertical hierarchy, and a formal or informal constitution. *Networks* are sets of interconnected nodes. For example, in a network of global financial flows, stock exchange markets constitute nodes, as do coca fields, poppy fields, clandestine laboratories, secret landing strips, street-gangs, and money-laundering financial institutions in a network of drug trafficking (Castells, 1996). Global *fluids* represent the de-territorialized movement of people, information, objects, money, images, and risks across regions in undirected and non-linear fashion and at variable speeds. Fluids move in particular directions at certain velocities but with no necessary end-state or purpose. Different fluids intersect in such locations as airports, international hotels, cable television, and the Internet (Urry, 2000).

Urry adapted his typology from Annemarie Mol & John Law (1994) who used it to compare the differing diagnoses, tests, and treatments for anemia in the Netherlands against those used in tropical Africa. Mol & Law rejected the image of two separate geographic regions, each with its own preferred methods. Nor were they attracted to a network metaphor, either in the form of a single clinical network that is exported globally or two interweaving networks, laboratory and clinical, each of which is characterized by “variation without boundaries and transformation without continuity” (p. 658). Instead, they visualized a continuously altering mixture of the network of the laboratory (tests, forms, technicians, machines) with elements of a clinical network that relies upon a visual inspection of potential anemia patients. In a sense this is very similar to the scenario of “hybridization” or “co-adaptation” which Kazimierz Krzysztofek identifies in his article in this issue as one potential outcome of the trend toward globalization.

Urry recognizes that these metaphors of space are directly relevant to the understanding of globalization. One conventional conceptualization of globalization, he observes, is to treat it as the replacing of one region (the bounded,

nation-state society of the “West”) with another (that of the global economy and culture). This assumes the shape of an “intra-regional competition” in which the larger global region defeats the smaller societal region. Globalization may also be conceptualized as being the triumph of global networks such as those maintained by such corporations as American Express, McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, and Sony. Comprised of technologies, skills, texts, and brands, they ensure that more or less the same product is delivered in more or less the same manner in every nation in which the enterprise operates. A third way of conceptualizing globalization is to regard it as taking the shape of global fluids which move chaotically across regions in strikingly faster and unpredictable shapes (Urry, 2000). Whereas global regions and networks seem to be what the “homogenizers” have in mind when they refer to the negative cultural fallout of globalization, global fluids more closely conform to the more positive interpretation of the “heterogenizers.”

Culture and globalization: “The good, the bad, and the ugly”

Regions

In the globalization debate, local and national regions are generally thought to be the “good” characters in contemporary cultural life. This reflects our belief that music, art, and literature that bubbles up from geographic proximity and shared historical experience must be superior to that which is portable and de-contextualized. For example, “East Coast” music such as that coming out of Cape Breton Island is celebrated in Canada as being genuine and worthy of support at the same time as global pop superstars such as Celine Dion and Shania Twain are sometimes criticized on the grounds that their music is too generic. At the national level, communications policy has long been grounded by the requirement, as expressed in the 1968 *Broadcasting Act*, that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) contribute to the development of national unity and provide for the continuing expression of Canadian identity. Here, cultural policy is clearly aimed at linking individuals and reinforcing social cohesion. Cultural institutions such as the CBC are meant to connect Canadian citizens from coast-to-coast in ways that would otherwise be impossible. Several years ago, a letter that my then 78-year-old father had written to the CBC Radio music request program *RSVP* was featured on air by host Shelagh Rogers. Within minutes of being broadcast, my parents’ telephone lit up with calls from friends and relatives from across the country. My father’s letter, a sentimental account of an encounter nearly half a century ago in Ottawa with the famed Italian tenor Benjamino Gigli, could probably never have reached this audience in a more globalized setting with a near infinite choice of radio stations.

At the same time, boundedness has its price. Since they characteristically assume the form of vertical hierarchies, regions run the risk of formalizing and reifying culture by yoking it to bureaucracies, programs, and policies that may stand at a distance from the populations which they serve. Sometimes this may be manifested in the exclusion of minorities and other marginal sub-populations who operate beyond the pale of the dominant cultural loop. Frequently, more estab-

lished cultural producers such as the Stratford Festival and the National Ballet dominate arts grants at the expense of smaller producers whose work tends to assume greater aesthetic and moral risk. In some cases, granting agencies may ignore the tastes and preferences of audiences, relying instead upon the judgment of cultural insiders who have their own agendas. Thus, at the same time that regions have the power and resources to secure cultural institutions and practices through subsidization, protection, and regulation, they interfere with the ability of artists, writers, and performers to grow and adapt.

Networks

While global networks (frequently regarded as the “bad” characters in the globalization debate) have the capacity to reach well beyond the provincialism of regions, they are constrained insofar as they are increasingly being colonized by corporate giants who are situated at the centre of a rapidly emerging global entertainment economy in which branding is a key activity. These corporations, Scott (1997) notes, “continuously scavenge the world for production sites, synergistic takeover and merger opportunities and market outlets” (p. 334). In addition, many are “engaged in developing electronic platforms for the dissemination and consumption of cultural products on a global basis” (p. 334). The latter are delivered in a predictable, calculable, routinized, and standardized fashion from node to node across the global network. Consider, for example, Sony Corporation’s new U.S.\$132 million “Mediage” entertainment complex in Tokyo. Two of its signature attractions, “Where the Wild Things Are” and “Airtight Garage,” initially debuted at Sony’s “Metreon” destination in San Francisco while a third, “The Beatles Yellow Submarine Adventure,” opened at the “Sony Center” in Berlin (Emmons, 2000). While there may be minor revisions so as to take into account local conditions, the package is essentially the same from country to country. Elsewhere, I have described this as leading to the emergence of “fantasy cities” (Hannigan, 1998) that are assembled in modular fashion from a common menu of themed restaurants, megaplex cinemas, interactive high-technology arcades, casinos, and book and record megastores. This commercial model is being exported to the rest of the cultural sector where libraries, museums, science centres, and art galleries have come to see their future as having shifted from curatorial duties and education to public entertainment.

There is a lively debate about whether these standardized (and usually Americanized) cultural packages that are being diffused through global corporate networks with increasing speed and scope are being received by consumers in different societies in exactly the same way. Some academic commentators cite the phenomenon of “glocalization” whereby the negative effects of a global consumer culture are progressively mitigated as interaction with local values and social structures increases. Thus, the contributors to James Watson’s (1997) edited book, *Golden Arches East: McDonald’s in East Asia*, claim that consumers in that part of the world have effectively eliminated the “fast” from fast food, transforming their McDonald’s outlets into local institutions where the relations between serving staff and customers have become personalized (Beijing, Hong Kong) or

political (Taipei). In many parts of the region, the Golden Arches have come to house leisure centres, after-school clubs, and meeting halls. Other observers, however, point to a steady erosion of national cultures in favour of these new global invaders. In some regions of Mexico, for example, the traditional "Day of the Dead" festivities are being displaced among young people by the more commercialized American-style Halloween, while in Hong Kong nearly 160,000 patrons attended a 13-day Halloween event last October (Burnside, 2002).

Fluids

Global fluids represent the "ugly" here, not because they are repugnant but because they are unpredictable, at times even chaotic. Since they are neither hierarchical nor territorially bound, they lack the discipline and concrete geographical expression of regions and networks. At the same time, they may represent our best chance at achieving a new globalized form that is both humane and sensitive to the realities of a changing world.

This sense of the fluidity of globalization has been sensitively captured by the cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990) who proposes a typology of five dimensions of global cultural flows that together constitute the building blocks of the "imagined worlds" of persons and groups spread around the globe. These are: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, and ideoscapas.

By *ethnoscape*, Appadurai means the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other groups and individuals on the move. The warp of existing stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, work, and leisure are, Appadurai says, "everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move" (pp. 33-34). The term *technoscape* describes the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology moving at high speeds across national boundaries and around the globe. This refers not only to mechanical technologies such as those used in auto plants and steel mills, but also informational technologies. It is not unusual today to have a corporate computer file begin the day in Asia and end it in California with stops in New York and Chicago along the way. The nature of these technoscapas, Appadurai notes, is determined "by increasingly complex relationships among money flows, political possibilities, and the availability of both un- and highly skilled labor" (p. 34).

By *finanscapas*, we mean the flow of megamonies through currency markets, stock exchanges, commodity speculations, and other national turnstiles at blinding speed. For the most part much of this process remains impenetrable to ordinary citizens, although we occasionally get a glimpse when a rogue money trader is caught out or an offshore financial scam is uncovered. While there are obvious linkages among ethnoscapas, technoscapas, and finanscapas, Appadurai describes the relationship among human movement, technological flow, and financial transfers as "deeply disjunctive" in that each "is subject to its own constraints and incentives" (p. 35).

The final two landscapes of globalization are both communicative. *Mediascapes* are image-centred, narrative-based accounts of reality and the infrastructure required to produce and disseminate them. They are increasingly central, Appadurai argues, in providing the scripts from which people across the planet form their imagined lives. *Ideoscapes* are also image-based but they are more explicitly political, relating to the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of social movements. They revolve around the meaning and interpretation of such terms as freedom, welfare rights, sovereignty, representation, and democracy. As is the case with the fluids metaphor that I have utilized here, Appadurai's "scapes" are more discontinuous and dynamic than the relatively stable communities and networks through which people regularly move.

It is not always easy to visualize the relationship among Appadurai's five dimensions of global cultural flows. One good illustration of this, however, can be found in the recent motion picture *Monsoon Wedding*, directed by the Indian/American filmmaker Mira Nair. Set in the week before the wedding of the daughter of a well-to-do Punjabi family in New Delhi, Nair brilliantly depicts the altering landscapes of late modernity. The groom is a computer engineer living in Houston and the bride works in a television station where she is having an affair with her boss, a talk show host. Others in the wedding party have flown in from Australia. Even as the routines of a traditional arranged marriage unfold, everyone is constantly talking on their cell phones, including the wedding co-ordinator who calls himself an "event planner" and distributes business cards with his new e-mail address. The bride's younger brother frequently skips school and spends most afternoons watching cooking shows on television. There is a sense here that members of these two Indian families are constantly in motion, actively re-inventing their lives, even as they continue to embrace tradition.

Social cohesion and the globalization of culture

In a recent essay in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Susan Fainstein (2001) addresses the relationship among competitiveness, social cohesion, and governance. She begins by quoting from a document compiled by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of the U.K. Cities Research Programme. According to the ESRC document, social cohesion is said to facilitate economic development while its antonym, social exclusion, erodes long-run competitive capacity. This is consistent with the assumptions of the "Third Way" policies of the Blair government in Britain wherein increasing cohesion (defined as creating a more diverse, tolerant, and equitable urban society) will result in economic success as well. However, Fainstein is skeptical of this argument, pointing out that "the sunny optimism underlying the assertion that economic development and social cohesion are not in conflict runs contrary to much recent scholarship which has found a contradiction between urban entrepreneurialism and social justice" (p. 884).

Fainstein is especially concerned here with the recent shift in governance from the concept of the "enabler state" to that of the "entrepreneurial state." Whereas the former prescribes a role for government that emphasizes the respon-

sibility of the state to assist its citizenry in achieving greater levels of equity and fair treatment, the latter visualizes public bodies entering into partnerships with multinational corporations in order to attract global capital and brands to local regions as part of a “revitalization” effort. For example, the City of Toronto joined forces with the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) to stage “Wrestlemania,” an annual extravaganza drawing approximately 70,000 fans to the Skydome, some from as far away as Britain, and attracting up to a million more to pay television. In the language of network theory, Toronto has become a temporary “node” on the WWF circuit that includes a highly rated pay television show and retail stores. In a similar fashion, more upscale arts institutions such as museums and art galleries are also increasingly becoming nodes in a global cultural network. Thus, the internationally heralded Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, designed by superstar architect Frank Gehry, ultimately promises to become “a mere branch plant franchise” of the New York Guggenheim office, albeit one that has taken over most of Bilbao’s public budget for cultural activities (Gómez & González, 2001, p. 899). It is this shift to a market-oriented public policy that no doubt prompted the Social Cohesion Network, in its report to the Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative (1998), to warn that “this is no time for complacency—global forces continue to pose serious threats to social cohesion and to frustrate society’s ability to achieve social justice” (p. 46).

One policy alternative here is to accord greater legitimacy to the third social topography of global space discussed above, that of “fluids.” While the blended mixtures which constitute these global fluids have yet to be fully documented, one central ingredient appears to be a growing social and cultural diversity, especially that associated with ethnoscaples characterized by transnational and hybrid identities. Diversity, it should be noted, is “one of the strengths promoted by connectedness but it is not necessarily recognized by the commercial cultural milieu” (Mitchell & Duxbury, 2001, p. 538).

Several of the contributors to John Eade’s (1997a) edited book, *Living the Global City*, focus on themes of diasporic communities, hybrid identities, and new ethnicities as important in understanding how people create new forms of social belonging and meaning within a globalizing world. In a pioneering study of local–global relations in the South London borough of Wandsworth, Fennel and his associates (1997) discovered that fully half of the 221 respondents in their survey claimed to speak at least one language other than English and 68% “felt that their lives were affected by people, events and organizations in other countries.” Eade himself (1997b) reports that young Bangladeshis in the East London borough of Tower Hamlets felt considerable tension in trying to reconcile local, national, and superordinate Islamic identities so as to create a workable hybrid. Alleyne-Dettmers (1997) offers a case study of the Notting Hill Carnival in which she shows how masquerade designers elide and rework various African and Caribbean identities as part of the process of creating a new, “easily compressed” black national identity. As is characteristic of global fluids, the “mas” (mas-

querade) art form “continually metamorphoses. It changes shape and grows—it is always negotiated and in a constant state of becoming” (p. 168).

Canadian society shows similar evidence of increasing hybridity. For example, in his doctoral thesis, Simboonath Singh (1997) deals with ethnic identity construction in a Hindu mandir (temple) in exurban Toronto which has a rare mix of members from both the Indo-Caribbean and East Asian communities. This ethnographic study captures the process by which the members of a diasporic group choose to combine elements of past and present in order to redefine their place in Canadian society. Another venue in which this hybrid identity work often finds expression is that of world music performances and festivals. Thus, at a 1990s public New Year’s concert/celebration sponsored by the former Metro Toronto government I witnessed a strong sense of temporary community that formed as the crowd listened to groups such as “Punjabi By Choice” and the “Afro Nubians” who were consciously attempting to fuse different generational and musical styles.

Cities: Strategic sites for research

Some commentators have observed that large cities are increasingly becoming strategic sites for the global flow of capital, information, images, and people. For example, Scott (1997) has argued that the production of goods and services for sale on worldwide cultural markets is still almost certainly going to have a strong propensity to be associated with particular urban places, most notably New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, and Tokyo. One reason for this is that these metropolitan centres are the locus of the dense human relationships out of which culture flows. At the same time, the contemporary metropolis constitutes a petri dish in which “the formation of new claims materializes and assumes concrete forms” (Sassen, 2000, p. 167).

One urban setting where these claims are especially evident is in neighbourhoods that host a community of working artists and musicians. Consider, for example, the “Ironbound” section of Newark, New Jersey. Once a virtual synonym for urban crime and decay, the inner city in Newark has gradually been transforming itself into a destination for artists, musicians, and writers largely because its real estate is much more affordable than that available in New York City. According to a profile in the “Sunday Styles” section of the *New York Times* (Century, 2000), the neighbourhood has become a vibrant mix of Portuguese, Spanish, and Brazilian restaurants and bars as well as a hotbed for hip-hop and rhythm and blues. At the nearby New Jersey Performing Arts Center, “Sounds of the City,” a free outdoor concert series featuring spoken word, rap, reggae, Latin jazz, and Dominican and Haitian music, functions as a civic gathering place from June onwards. At present, the potential for the development of a sense of social cohesion characterized by a high degree of social and cultural diversity seems excellent, although some residents of Ironbound worry that an influx of sports arenas and up-scale restaurants will spark a wave of gentrification that will destroy this emergent urban flavour.

In their case study of the “Rainbow Madonna,” Vásquez & Marquardt (2000) demonstrate that local urban spaces that host the production of hybrid culture may themselves be subject to globalizing tendencies. The “Rainbow Madonna” is an apparition that has been sighted on the wall of the Seminole Finance Corporation in a nondescript suburban business district in Clearwater, Florida. Its appearance has been a catalyst for the creation of multiple new ethno- and mediascapes. Pilgrims constantly visit the site, travelling from as far away as Europe and Australia. Especially evident are transnational Mexican migrants who come to revere “Our Lady of Clearwater” as an expression of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The parking lot of the finance company “has become a cosmopolitan place, as Tampa natives meet, pray and exchange stories of apparitions and miraculous healings with pilgrims from various parts of the world” (p. 125). The story of the Rainbow Madonna has not been confined however to a local urban context. In addition to diffusing outwards on CNN and national network news, word of the apparition has spread through Internet sites, notably that maintained by an international Catholic organization called the Shepherds of Christ. Here it becomes part of a more generalized “script” in which a core interpretation of the nature and meaning of Marian apparitions across the world is widely disseminated, even as it is adapted to the local context. Vásquez & Marquardt emphasize that the articulation of a hybrid discourse in Clearwater has important implications for the creation of social cohesion at the local level. Tampa Bay residents, they claim, “repeatedly voice[d] the theme of ‘unity in diversity,’” especially salient in a region experiencing increasing racial tensions, and even riots, between blacks and Latinos (pp. 125-126).

The important message here is not that official efforts to enhance social cohesion in Canadian cities should necessarily take a religious direction, but rather that a community of shared values such as that which has emerged in a parking lot in Florida may potentially develop outside the parameters of ongoing social and cultural programs. It also illustrates that such a community can operate simultaneously in both geographically bounded space and in a “hyperspace” that transcends traditional regions. Finally, both the examples of Newark’s Ironbound neighbourhood and the Rainbow Madonna phenomenon in Florida suggest that cities are becoming rich sites for further research into the relationship between culture, global fluids, and social cohesion. In particular, ethnographic research may be valuable here in providing insight into these newly emerging scenes which must struggle for legitimacy, trapped as they are between traditional forms of citizenship that are mandated by nation states and other regions and an overpowering culture of brands propagated through global media and retail networks.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued in favour of a new approach to the relationship between culture and social cohesion in the twenty-first century that situates this debate within a theoretical model in which globalization is re-conceptualized as “de-territorialized global fluids.” In this perspective, social identities are neither exclusively tied to the nation state, nor are they determined by the commercial cul-

tural milieu created by the global entertainment economy. Rather, they are characteristically emergent, hybridized, and both cosmopolitan and urban. The term *cosmopolitan* is drawn here in a somewhat different manner from the mass communications literature where Katz, Merton, Lazarsfeld, and other pioneering public opinion researchers coined it to distinguish between those citizens who lived their lives mainly within a local community context versus those who were more plugged in to the wider world. Cosmopolitanization in the present usage does not carry with it any special connotation of cultural sophistication but rather it denotes inclusion within the ethnoscapes and mediascapes which are characteristic of contemporary global cultural flows.

In the same millennial issue of the *British Journal of Sociology* in which Urry's three social topographies of place appeared, Ulrich Beck (2000), a German sociologist who is best known for his theory of "risk society," argued that despite the inherently chaotic nature of global fluids, it is possible to study this phenomenon using standard social science methodology. Specifically, he has proposed a series of what he calls "empirical indicators of (reflexive) cosmopolitanization" (pp. 96-97). These range from rather straightforward indicators such as rates and patterns of mobility, international travel, long-distance telecommunications use, activity in transnational initiatives and organizations, and fluency in multiple languages to more complex relational indicators. For example, Beck suggests that data be compiled on such matters as: the relationship between the number and kinds of national identities (does cosmopolitanism cancel national identity?); the development of new "hybrid" cultures, literatures, and languages; transnational news coverage (to what extent is a change in perspectives detectable?); and cultural commodities (the transnationalization of the book trade). Of course, some of this is already being done but Beck's list of suggested indicators seems to me to constitute a logical starting point for a systematic research program aimed at investigating the implications for social cohesion and its five main dimensions (belonging/isolation, inclusion/exclusion, participation/involvement, recognition/rejection, and legitimacy/illegitimacy) of the increasing presence of a more fluid brand of globalization.

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