Indigenous Choice in the Global Sphere

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INDIGENOUS CHOICE IN THE GLOBAL SPHERE

By

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Abstract

In a world where the exploitation of global forces and processes traditionally has been viewed as an accomplishment of the West, indigenous people are starting to become aware of these forces and are using them for their own purposes. Indigenous people recognize that all aspects of life, from money to people to images, easily and efficiently flow around the world. Global awareness has given indigenous people a sense of power and global agency, an ability to resist or accept Western culture as they deem appropriate. This recognition can be seen in the Shipibos of the Peruvian Amazon and the Aboriginals of Australia. They illustrate how some indigenous people choose to keep their heritage while others use their agency to actively emulate Western culture. For these reasons I conclude it is unclear whether globalization brings cultural homogeneity or heterogeneity.
Introduction

Recently, New York City held the World Economic Summit. During this weekend conference, economists, artists, businessmen, and politicians convened to debate the state of the world economy. Why was this summit important? For one thing, it illustrated the influence that global thinking has come to possess in economic affairs. Globalization has become a byword when discussing matters of international trade, policy, and currency. A summit designed to gather influential people from all over the world in one place to discuss issues surrounding the global economy is indicative of the growing awareness that certain trends supersede traditional political boundaries.

However, there is a second point of interest that is buried within the ideology of the summit. By dealing only with the economic aspects of globalization, the conference willfully ignored the many other factors that play into the overarching concept known as globalization. One definition of globalization is “a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding, and in which people act accordingly” (Waters 5). The World Economic Summit’s sole focus on economic issues is at the heart of a growing problem in global theory. There is a large disconnect between business leaders and politicians who focus on economic development and other people who look at more than just economic issues. These people scream from the margins that their culture is being destroyed by economic development that happens too quickly. These objections sometimes turn violent, and situations like the riots at Seattle’s World Trade Organization (WTO) conference occur.
Unfortunately, both the leaders who run these economic forums and the anti-globalization protesters who object to their policies are both missing the same point. They both assume that globalization is a force that is used by one population on another. Where members of the WTO see their use of globalization as a way to improve and develop poorer areas, anti-globalization protestors see an exploitative, rich power forcing change on an unwilling poor. However, both groups are making the same wrong assumption—that globalization is a force that can be turned on and off like a faucet to serve certain needs. I contest that globalization is neither an evil harbinger of cultural homogeny nor an angel that will lead to economic salvation for the entire world. Instead, globalization is a framework in which the world now works. As Thomas Friedman, foreign affairs columnist for the New York Times, states, “globalization is not the only thing influencing events in the world today, but to the extent that there is a North Star and a worldwide shaping force, it is this system” (Friedman xxi). Thus, factors that influence an entrepreneur in the Silicon Valley of California also affect a bushman of Africa or a fisherman in the Canadian wilderness. Processes that aid a multi-national corporation based in London network around the world also aid Aboriginals in the Australian outback to maintain cultural continuity over large geographic spaces. Quite simply, although global forces and processes have traditionally been seen as exclusively exploited by people of developed areas, the indigenous people of the world are now using them as well.
Background to Research

When I started researching this topic, I developed several broad questions. What constitutes globalization? Who are “winners” and “losers” of globalization? Is globalization affecting indigenous people? How is it affecting them? There are many generalizations about globalization that are widely accepted that were necessary to discard. For example, the traditional view that globalization automatically leads to cultural homogeneity—if allowed to continue, McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken will replace all the cuisines of the world. Or, on the other side of the argument, that development of so-called Third World countries was a necessary step that was in the world’s best interests.

To move past these generalizations, I explored the underlying theory behind globalization. The work of Arjun Appadurai has been particularly influential on my research. His semantically framework of globalization gave shape to my understanding of the process. After achieving a level of theoretical understanding of globalization, I was able to narrow my field of questions: How are indigenous people harnessing the forces and processes of globalization for their own use? In a world where they have less power than wealthier populations, how can indigenous people attain global agency?

To answer this next set of questions, I delved into case studies of indigenous people. Although my research took me on a journey all over the world, I focused my attention on the Aboriginals of Australia and the tribes of the Peruvian Amazon. These two groups provide excellent examples of how indigenous people can use the processes of globalization for their own use.
Finally, I set about thinking what this all meant. What is the affect of the
indigenous use of global forces? Can indigenous agency increase global diversity and
cultural heterogeneity, or does globalization, in all of its forms, always lead down the
path of cultural homogeneity? Basically, to what end does the indigenous use of
globalization come?

Thus, my paper has developed into three main bodies of thought. The first section
will deal with the theory underlying globalization—an attempt to explain the mechanisms
that make globalization occur—with a particular anthropologic slant. The second section
will explore ethnographic case studies of indigenous people that have come to harness the
forces of globalization for their own purposes. The final section will discuss the
implications of these findings.

Chapter One: The Theory of Globalization

The mid-twentieth century saw a major global event in the form of war. By name
as well as by deed, World War II was an event global in scope. Men and women fought
and died in almost every corner of the globe, from the battlefields of Europe to the
islands of the Pacific Ocean. Even American blood was spilled on its own soil in the
attack on Pearl Harbor, as well as many other parts of the world as the United States
became more involved in the war on all fronts. Americans could no longer dismiss the
rest of the world and remain an isolated, albeit large, island. The world had become
smaller, and all areas of the globe needed to be taken into account.

Since then, this process has continued, and has even accelerated. Information can
be sent around the world twice in a matter of seconds due to the technology of the
Internet and the speed of e-mail. People can move about the world in an increasingly
effortless manner; from airplanes to cruise liners, there are few places an intrepid
vacationer cannot visit in today's world. In a new world such as this, old theories
regarding the world, such as the core/periphery model, no longer apply.

One of the main problems that exist with older models is that they fail to take into
account differences between global economy, global politics, and global culture. Too
often, older theories only take into account the affairs of the global economy, which
results in a chaotic vision:

"The new cultural economy has to be understood as a complex,
overlapping disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in
terms of center periphery models (Even those that account for multiple
centers and peripheries). Nor is it susceptible to simple models of push
and pull (in terms of migration theory), or of surpluses and deficits (as in
traditional models of balance of trade), or of consumers and producers (as
in most neo-Marxist theories of development) . . . The complexity of the
current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctions
between economy, culture, and politics that we have only begun the theorize" (Appadurai 33).

In order to understand a world with these disjunctions, but nevertheless has become
increasingly linked, a new theoretical framework is needed. Arjun Appadurai has
developed such a model.

Appadurai's theory is one of "five dimensions of global cultural flow which can
be termed: (a) ethnoscapes; (b) mediascapes; (c) technoscapes; (d) finanscapes; and (e)
ideoscapes" (Appadurai 33). These five scapes, called thus because of their fluid,
uneven nature, are theoretical masses that shape the globalized world. These flows are
separate entities, but have many points of overlap. Through them, information, people,
ideas, and money stream to and fro, all over the world. While keeping in mind Waters'
definition of globalization, one can use Appadurai’s scapes to create a structure in which it is possible to frame the processes that form the foundations for the global interconnectedness that is increasingly defining the world today.

The chief purpose of these scapes is to act as “building blocks [for] . . . imagined worlds” (Appadurai 33). They shape the way people understand their own subjective realities, or the “multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the globe” (Appadurai 33). For example, although similar flows affect the lives of a homeless man in Chicago, a Hindu priest in India, or an Arab small-business owner in Berlin, they perceive these flows in very different ways. This creates disjunctions between different people’s belief in how the global system works. However, it is imperative to remember that these people, despite their different views, are still being affected by the same flows.

The first scape that Appadurai mentions is the *ethnoscape*. By this, he refers to “the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, and other moving groups and individuals” who have begun traipsing around the globe at a speed not even conceivable to those who lived a mere one hundred years ago (Appadurai 33). These shifts of people have political, economic, and cultural ramifications. People who have lived in a community their entire lives find their stability eroded by sudden influxes of immigrants from distant, strange lands. On the other side of the coin, people with the means to travel from their home have a huge range of options from which to choose. For example, Jews from Argentina have begun immigrating to Israel to escape the economic crisis of their home country.
Choice is the mainstay of the ethnoscape. Years ago, the adventuresome American tourist could travel to Mexico for a truly exotic vacation. Now, he or she can choose from any unusual locale, from safaris in Africa to spiritual quests in Tibet. Similarly, a political refugee from Cuba can decide between a life in the United States, Western Europe, or anywhere else of his or her choosing. People, however, are not the only things that move around the globe. Technology can, and often does, traverse the world much more quickly than humans ever can.

The technoscape refers to all of the ways that technology of all sorts, from theoretical to mechanical, "now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries" (Appadurai 34). Information can easily be transmitted via Internet from one country to another. It is not inconceivable that, given the proper resources, a farmer in the Sudan could find all the information he needed about the latest irrigation techniques from Israel by completing a simple Internet search. This type of technology practically obliterates the geographic notion of space; an educational trip that used to be time-consuming and expensive, if not impossible, can now be completed from ones home.

Also, in an overlap with the ethnoscape, technology is transmitted through the movement of skilled workers, engineers, and academics around the world. Many times, this shift flows west, where more money is available for research as well as salaries. For example, India now exports software engineers to the United States as well as unskilled laborers (Appadurai 34). To understand the reasons why the West has so much more money than other areas of the world, it is useful to look at the ways that money and capital move around the world.
The financescape is the general framework that follows the movement of global capital, which is "now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before, as currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations" shift at astonishing speeds and the issues of one country can have a ripple affect throughout the rest of the world (Appadurai 34). Recent examples of how the economic issues of one country have global implications abound. For one, the economic troubles of Argentina promises to have a large effect on the region as well as the larger global economy, just as the fall of the Asian Tigers in 1997 did. When the travails of a country in the Southeast Asia can affect a small business owner in the middle of the United States or Western Europe, it is clear that the financescape has made the world smaller.

National economics are not the only players in the financescape. Large, multinational corporations can often control the economic fate of an area, by either building factories or initiating layoffs. The best example of this would be the automobile industry’s close relationship with the economy of Michigan. When the American automobile industry was at a peak, Michigan had great economic health, with low unemployment and high union benefits for people who worked in the Ford and Chrysler factories. However, as global competition hurt the profits of these companies, layoffs reduced many of Michigan’s car towns to unemployed shells of their former selves. Flint, Michigan, whose problems were documented in Michael Moore’s “Roger and Me,” exemplifies the plight of formerly industrial areas.

The entnoscape, technoscape, and financescape are the three main scapes that shape the world today. As stated previously, the problem with many older global theories lies in the fact that they combine these three flows into one larger amalgamation known
as the global economy. However, despite the many overlaps that occur between these three scapes, they do remain “deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable” (Appadurai 35). Each flow moves by its own rules and limitations. Thus, each must be studied according to its individual standards. Although these are the three main scapes which frame the global world, there are others that also help to shape it.

Mediascapes refers to the ways that information is disseminated around the world, be it audio, visual, electronic, or any other method (Appadurai 35). Television, radio, web sites, newspapers, and magazines are all tools that work within the mediascape. According to Appadurai, what is important about the mediascape is that “they provide ... large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics is profoundly mixed” (Appadurai 35). By this, Appadurai refers to the ways that various areas of the world process images of media differently. For example, an article written in Time magazine about Nebraska teenagers is understood differently in the United States and in the Philippines. To the average American, the piece is information about the lifestyle of a certain population in a certain section of the country. However, to people in the Philippines, the article takes on a more special significance. To them, the life described in the article is American, and therefore worthy of emulation. The article loses its meaning as information and is reborn as a symbolic lifestyle guide as it shifts through the mediascape.

Thus, this scape plays an important role in the manufacture of the imagined worlds that are created by varying perceptions of the different flows of the world. Since media images can now fly across the globe so quickly due to improved technologies like
satellite television, they are probably the most commonarbiter of culture that shape the
way people from different parts of the world view each other. The speed at which these
images move and influence culture in different parts of the world is yet another example
of how global forces are making geographic distance less important.

The other scape that deals with images and ideas is the ideoscape. However, this
scape is “often political and frequently [has] to do with the ideologies of states and the
counter ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of
it” (Appadurai 36). Concepts that move around the ideoscape are often Enlightenment
ideals, like rationality, freedom, rights, and democracy. However, as these terms move
about the world, their meaning shifts from context to context (Appadurai 36). For
example, a military dictator and an exiled rebel may use the same terms of politics to
espouse their respective causes, even though they are sworn enemies.

Also, in different parts of the world, these concepts may be imbedded in different
cultural forms: “The very relationship of reading to hearing and seeing may vary in
important ways that determine the morphology of these different ideoscapes as they
shape themselves in different national and transnational contexts” (Appadurai 37). These
disjunctures occur across the ideoscape not only in the meaning of common terms, but
also in the ways that they are presented or imbedded in cultural artifacts. Ideoscape
disjunctures can be seen in everyday items like magazines and movies. As the same
terms and ideals are increasingly used around the world in completely different contexts,
a degree of confusion is added to understanding on a global level. Although these are the
only scapes that Appadurai proposed, several more have been put forward since.
Chris Tilley, a British scholar at the University College London, has submitted that there is a sixth scape caused by the increased power of the tourism industry, the *travelscape*, which is made up of the movement of tourists around the world (Tilley 246). Western tourists traverse the globe in search of the next exotic adventure, always searching for the elusive "other." To bring these tourists, and their checkbooks and credit cards, to their villages, small communities of indigenous people try to provide legitimate cultural experiences in their villages and towns.

The chief example that Tilley cites is an experience that he had with the Small Nambes of Wala Wala Island in the Pacific Ocean. These people perform ritual dances and songs for tourists in exchange for the money that the tourists bring to their economy. They, in effect, receive monetary capital in exchange for their cultural capital. By commodifying their culture, they receive a degree of economic security: "by performing the past, [the Small Nambes can] purchase a better future" (Tilley 250). The implications of situations like this will discussed later. However, for now, it is enough to state that recreating the traditions of their ancestors for strangers that visit their island, the Small Nambes achieve the dual accomplishment of preserving their heritage and bringing in much needed money to their economy: "the past is part of the inalienable wealth of the people of Wala: something they can sell and give away while still keeping it" (Tilley 254). Tourism is undoubtedly a stronger and stronger force that shapes the world, creating tension and opportunity for different people around the globe. The travelscape overlaps the other scapes, especially the ethnoscape and the financescape, to increase connections between people and communities. However, it is not the only minor scape to
do so. I believe that a final scape exists, one that links people, ideas, and politics around the world.

The scape that I now put forth is called the *academiascape*. This scape details the way in which professors, writers, and scholars have a hand in the ways that all manners of people and concepts are understood and appreciated around the world. The imagined world that we call "the academic community" has much power, as they are seen as experts in their various fields. Thus, they have the power to change the perception of the public on matters related to their field. As I have a particular interest in anthropology, I will focus my energy on looking at the ways that anthropologists operate in the academiascape.

Robert Fisher states that an anthropologist's "ethnographic writing [can be] a political act," and anthropologists themselves have a role as "professional cultural fabricators" (Fisher 236). How do academic scientists, supposed purveyors of truth, become fabricators? Fisher is trying to say that every time an anthropologist writes ethnography, he or she is creating a text by which the general public can read into that culture. The anthropologist decodes what a society's culture means and then passes on that knowledge to his peers, students, and other interested parties. However, as an anthropologist recreates that culture for others using his own words and ideas, he thereby becomes a "fabricator." For example, looking no farther than Chris Tilley's account of the Small Nambes people, one can see how this process works. Tilley experienced the people and their traditions firsthand, and then relayed the information and his analysis to the world through his book. That information was then picked up, transformed, and passed on again by me in this paper. When this paper is read, the process will repeat
itself, with the role and meaning of the Small Nambes changing each time. Also, each time the story of the Small Nambes is passed on, the people and their customs—their very existence—is made known to a wider range of people. An anthropologist is not only a cultural fabricator, but also a cog in the wheel of the process of globalization, actively engaged in shrinking the world.

The anthropologist has much power. By writing ethnography or an article about a community, the anthropologist opens that community to the world. This is where various overlaps with other scapes occur the most frequently, as people who read the article might be convinced to travel or invest in the area. The power of anthropologists can also be seen in a legal setting, where they can be brought in to explain cultural motivation behind crimes. The following story exemplifies this.

An immigrant from the Caribbean was arrested and brought to trial for the murder of a relative. The man did not dispute this murder, but claimed he was acting in self-defense. Apparently, the relative had been cursing him with black magic, and this hex would kill him unless he murdered the relative instead. The man knew that if he committed murder, he would face the laws of the United States. However, he also believed that he would die if he did not kill his relative. Faced with the unenviable choice of criminal punishment or death, the man chose to kill his relative and take his chances with the law. He was found guilty, and an anthropologist was brought in during the sentencing portion of the trial to explain the cultural beliefs that caused the mitigating circumstances surrounding the murder. In this situation, the anthropologist has the power to legitimize or undermine the strength of man’s belief system. This power, recognized
by the United States judicial system, also works on a more subtle method in the global system (Personal Communication with Dr. Sandra T. Barnes).

The seven scapes previously outlined give a framework on how information, people, and ideas flow around the world. They give a theoretical overview into the mechanisms behind globalization. However, to properly understand globalization, one must look closer at the flows themselves. It is important to look at the actual information, people, and ideas that are moving around the world through different scapes. Since the focus of this paper is indigenous people, I will focus on the methods and reasons for the movement of culture and people.

Issues that often become impossibly intertwined are ethnicity, culture, and identity. These issues cause many tensions that exist on a global scale. People often feel that their identity is dependant upon their culture and ethnicity. Thus, it is unsurprising that cultural changes are met with such hostility. When these changes appear imminent, people fear that their very identity is in danger. Although people who face a crisis of cultural identity probably wish they could be left alone, a paradox exists in this because identity is often dependant upon knowing oneself in relation to others: “To be English is to know yourself in relation to the French, and the hot blooded Mediterraneans, and the passionate, traumatized Russian soul. You go round the globe: when you know what everyone else is, you know what you are not” (Hall 21). Thus, the first tension emerges—people need others in order to ground their identities in reality, and yet those others are also a constant threat to that same identity.

This tension leads to the overarching belief of anti-globalization activists: the culture of the world will become a single, homogenized entity, grounded in McDonalds
and the Gap. As Appadurai states, “the central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (Appadurai 32). The second tension surrounding identity is the fear that it will completely lost in the face of global mass culture, which is “centered in the West” (Hall 27). This fear is not at all groundless, but it makes an assumption that is not correct.

When one says that global mass culture will homogenize the world, one assumes that the flows of the global system only move in one direction. This is simply not true. Cultural ideas, values, and norms flow East and West, North and South. Although it is definitely a “process of profound uneasiness,” it is key to remember that the global flows are two-way streets (Hall 33). As evidence, one can look at any large American city. Different types of exotic food can be seen all over Manhattan, but one would be hard pressed to find that kind of culinary variety in the alleys of Calcutta (Hall 33). This does not mean that cultural homogenization is not a real threat, but only that it is not caused by a one-way flow of culture from the West to the rest of the world.

Some people argue that global flows only move towards indigenous people claim that they support those same people. This is what Pascal Bruckner refers to as “compassion as contempt” (Iyer 13). This argument only succeeds in removing one of the most important tools that indigenous people have—agency. Indigenous people are not children and are capable of creating and holding onto their own culture. To claim that they cannot, and need to be protected from the West by people in the West, is claiming the same thing that imperialists did in the nineteenth century; that indigenous people cannot look after themselves.
However, these claims are not wholly without basis. It can be said that “culture has always been a weapon of the powerful” (Wallerstein 99). Although within the global system, things flow both ways, there is undoubtedly a stronger flow coming from the West. The McDonalds complaint is made so often because it is difficult to find a country that does not have one of the restaurants within its borders. However, a possible reason for this is that the West has been consciously aware about the flows of globalization for a longer period of time, and even helped shape how some of these flows work. As indigenous people come into an awareness of the global system, they can better integrate themselves into it and use its forces for their own benefit. Indeed, this is already occurring, in ways that will be delved into later. For now, it is important to recognize that power does exist in the margins of the world where indigenous people live (Hall 34).

The process of indigenous people reclaiming themselves has played an important role in recent global history: “our lives have been transformed by the struggle of the margins to come into representation. Not just to be placed by the regime of some other, or imperializing eye, but to reclaim some form of representation for themselves” (Hall 34). These quests have occurred all over the world, from Africa to Central Europe. Some have been peaceful, but many have been less so. The former Yugoslavia has disintegrated into a chaotic mess of ethnic hatred and violence, with each group, be it Albanian, Serb, or Bosnian, fighting for its own place within the territory. In this case, ethnicity caused problems that overwhelmed everyone’s attempts to help. However, as tragic as the example is, it shows how powerful an entity that ethnicity and culture can be.
As stated earlier, ethnicity is a huge part of a person's individual identity. However, as it is an ascribed identity, bequeathed at birth, it is difficult to understand: “ethnicity is a part of the self that is often quite puzzling to the individual, something over which he or she is not in control” (Fisher 173). Although it is often confusing, people blindly hold strong to their ethnicity, which gives it power. Although a person is born into an ethnicity, he or she still needs to learn about the different traditions of it as a part of the cultural education process. There is also power in this: “there are cultural resources in traditions that can be rediscovered and reworked into rich meanings for the present” (Fisher 174). No matter what a group faces, strength can be drawn from the cultural traditions that shape them:

“We have taken cultures to be authentic expressions of particular ways of life in particular times and places. However much ... cultures are riddled with inequality, differential understanding, and differential advantage, and however much ... cultures are at least partly constituted by forces external, and often inimical, to them, nonetheless they remain for the people who live within them sources of value, meaning, and ways of understanding---and resisting---the world” (Ortner 187).

Thus, cultural traditions have the power not only to sustain, but also to actively resist the outside world. However, these traditions cannot cause utter cultural isolation, and through the global flows that shape the world, interactions happen on a routine basis.

This contact leads to a process of creolization, or “cultural interaction that generates and organizes new diversities” (Foster 251). The issue of creolization brings about a major question: if a culture adapts and changes, does it still retain enough of its unique characteristics to remain distinctive? This seems to be the main question underlying the tension between cultural homogenization and heterogenization. Within the framework of global scapes, it is undeniable that different cultures, people, ideas,
capital, and values not only come into contact with each other, but also affect each other. People who fear homogenization think that these interactions cause adaptations that lead to a single, mass, global culture.

These fears are at times justified and at times unsubstantiated. In order to truly understand how the global system works at a local level, it is essential to look at the people who operate daily within the framework—the human beings of the world. The global system is not only navigated and used by powers of the West, but by all people who recognize its existence, including those who do not live in major Western cities. To gain a perspective on how indigenous people function within the framework of global scapes, and how they deal with the tensions that exist within this framework, I will explore the lifestyles and global choices of two distinct indigenous groups from opposite sides of the world—the Shipibo Indians of the Peruvian Amazon and the Aborigines of the Australian outback.

Chapter Two: Indigenous People in a Global System

The Shipibo are an indigenous group who live around the Ucayali River in central Peru. Although the Shipibo have been exposed to Western culture for several hundred years, they have maintained a high level of cultural identity. They rely on fishing, hunting, and gathering to fill their dietary needs. They have become tentatively active in the Peruvian cash economy through the production of rice. In the last forty years, the Shipibo have faced the most rapid cultural transformations that their people have ever seen. This is due to the emergence of missionary-run or state-sponsored schools that have centralized the Shipibo population. Also, although the Shipibo have known about
Western culture for some time, they are increasingly being exposed to it through their emergence in the Peruvian economy and the establishment of a health clinic in their region called the Hospital Amozonico (Hern 506).

Over the past forty years, the Shipibo have become increasingly less isolated, and more active in their country’s economy and culture. Thus, they are a good example of an indigenous group that is experiencing an emerging awareness of a global system, and is beginning to become an active player within it. One example of this growing participation can be seen in the actions and experiences of the traditional healers of the Shipibo culture.

In Shipibo communities, traditional healers are known as curanderos. Through the use of psychedelic brews known as ayahuasca, or “vine of the soul,” curanderos are able to entertain visions of the spirit world that give them the knowledge and ability to treat and heal patients (Proctor 14). Traditionally, curanderos used their knowledge to help their communities as a free service (Proctor 14). However, flows of people and money within the ethnoscape, travelscape, and financescape are changing this traditional methodology.

In the early nineteen-nineties, Western tourists seeking spiritual enlightenment descended on the Shipibo community. They had heard of the powers of the ayahuasca, and sought out curanderos to teach them its uses (Proctor 14). The position of the curandero suddenly became one of economic importance. For example, Mateo Arevalo, a Shipibo curandero, now leads “posh ayahuasca retreats in jungle lodges for foreigners, and hosts shamanism students in his home for three- or six-month courses” (Proctor 14). Arevalo earns two hundred dollars per month for his shamanism students and thirty
dollars per session for ayahuasca experiences. He is not the only curandero who has begun this moneymaking process. There are many jungle lodges in existence that charge up to seventeen hundred dollars for a spiritual retreat (Proctor 14).

These courses show recognition on the part of the Shipibo curanderos that there is a larger world beyond their communities, and a fundamental understanding of how it works. Curanderos realize that flows of tourists and soul-seekers have discovered their community. They also grasp that there is a global economic ladder, and that on this ladder they are at the bottom and the tourists are near the top. Thus, by commodifying their traditional practices, they can bring much needed flows of capital into their community.

Antonio Muñoz, a Shipibo curandero, exemplifies another way that global flows affect the traditional healers of the Shipibo. In strange hybrid of traditional methods and modern psychotherapy, Muñoz offers patients the safe use of ayahuasca along with therapy in order to deal with fears and distress in their lives (Proctor 15). In Muñoz’s words, his work is “much more sophisticated than that of other curanderos. In traditional healing, the shaman took the ayahuasca to acquire the powers of the plant: to diagnose the illness and discover a cure . . . [but] I give ayahuasca like any other doctor gives a prescription” (Proctor 15). This mixture of modern therapy with traditional methods of healing is a result of flows of information from the West to the center of Peru. When Muñoz plies his mixed healing to foreigners in Lima, he is sending back in return his creolized medicine to the world, healing flowing back towards the West.

Curanderos sell their cultural knowledge to the world through flows on the travelscape, ethnoscapes, and financescape. However, in order for this process to be
affective, the world must come to the Shipibo. They lack the resources to go out into the world on to share their knowledge, and lack the technology to make the knowledge available on a virtual level—on the Internet. However, on the other side of the world, a different indigenous group has begun to use the technoscape to their advantage, in both economic and cultural ways.

The Aborigines of Australia, often called Aboriginals, have developed ways to achieve a degree of agency in a country that has traditionally marginalized and even actively practiced a program of institutionalized cultural destruction. The means to this agency has been an increased use of the technoscape and mediascape. The first way that Aboriginals utilize the technoscape and mediascape is by using national media sources for their own cultural use. The second major way in which Aboriginals employ the technoscape is through use of the Internet. The history of the Aboriginals makes this resurgence of cultural identity even more impressive.

Relations between the Aboriginals and the government of Australia have not been historically pleasant. For nearly two hundred years, the government engaged in an institutionalized attempt to eradicate Aboriginals from the land. At first, this plan was implemented by massacres. For example, in 1834 British soldiers butchered eighty Aboriginal people—men, women, and children included. Settlers saw Aboriginals as animals that could be killed without moral repercussions. By the early to mid twentieth century, governmental policy towards the Aboriginals turned even more sinister. They initiated a scheme to assimilate children of mixed race into white culture by removing them from their Aboriginal families. Government agents kidnapped light skinned Aboriginals from their families and placed them in the care of the state, often brutal
boarding houses where physical and sexual abuse was all too common. The legally approved practice of child removal continued well into the nineteen-seventies! Despite these harsh experiences, Aboriginal people and their culture has survived to the present day (Knightley 107-22).

During the last twenty years, Aboriginals have started using their country's media sources as ways to increase their cultural vitality. As Faye Ginsburg writes, "indigenous media productions provide a vehicle for cultural and political communication by indigenous people to themselves [and] to majority others in the nations in which they live" (Ginsburg 557). Chief example of this is the Warlpiri Media Association (WMA), an organization whose work is deeply integrated into indigenous culture. The WMA, and other groups like it, challenge mainstream Australian television by creating their own television productions, tailored specifically for the Aboriginal population. These programs include "ceremonies, local sporting events, or MTV-inspired music videos performed with Aboriginal bands singing in native languages" (Ginsburg 558). By creating an alternative venue for media images, groups like the WMA create a situation where indigenous people are forced into cultural assimilation of mainstream Australian pop culture from a sheer lack of options. Within the larger mediascape, groups like WMA carve out their own, small flows of images customized for their viewers, in this case the Aboriginals.

Another way that Aboriginals affect the mediascape of their country is seen in the more mainstream media outlets, such as Imparja, a more American style broadcasting station. Although most of the shows on this station are not designed for indigenous viewers, certain nights of the week feature programs produced by Aboriginals for
Aboriginals. For example, one night, a viewer might see a sitcom, followed by a football game, and then by “indigenously produced segments on Aboriginal bush methods for cooking kangaroo” (Ginsberg 559). Not only do indigenously produced shows on mainstream stations give options to Aboriginal viewers, but it exposes regular Australians to images of Aboriginal life and culture.

These forms of indigenously produced media images are very good for Aboriginal culture: “from the perspective of many Aboriginal producers, new media forms are seen as powerful means of (collective) self expression that can have revitalizing effect” (Ginsburg 559). Indigenous television allows Aboriginals to maintain their culture as well as feel a sense of unity across the large area of the Australian outback. Their use of the technoscape, evidenced by the film and production techniques that create the television programs, and the mediascape, the actual shows within the broader Australian consciousness, maintains culture within a national setting. However, Aboriginals have also been able to use the technoscape to their advantage on a more global level.

The invention of the Internet has had a huge affect on indigenous agency, and the Aboriginals are a prime example of this. They have used websites to create storehouses of cultural information, virtual malls where Westerners can discover information about Aboriginal art and even purchase it, and hubs of indigenous protest and activism over such issues as land rights and education. There are countless examples of web sites that deal with these topics, as any Internet search engine can show. However, there are several websites that particularly stand out. The first is aboriginalartonline.com.

This website provides a cultural museum as well as a virtual art gallery within its pages. A brief exploration of the site reveals an overview of Aboriginal culture, ranging
from their spiritual beliefs to their art and music to contemporary issues that they face. After explaining the importance of culture on Aboriginal art, the website provides a host of items for sale. The intrepid shopper can purchase prints, paintings, pottery, or even original, “museum quality” didgeridoos—an Aboriginal instrument—if he has enough money. Also available are books and guides to Aboriginal culture and art. The website features, of course, secure shopping—Visa and Mastercard only, please (www.aboriginalkartoonline.com).

This website is a clear example of the ways that Aboriginals are using the technospace and financescape to let others know about their culture while bringing capital to their indigenous community. With Western buyers keeping up the demand for exotic art, Aboriginals can maintain their heritage while making money. However, websites of this type are not the only ones that exist on the Internet.

Other websites that inhabit virtual space are specifically built for the advancement of Aboriginal interests and rights. One website—Action for Aboriginal Rights—is designed to bring together activists supporting Aboriginal goals. These interests include improved healthcare, the return of traditionally held lands, and the maintenance of cultural heritage (http://home.vicnet.net.au/~aar/). Websites such as these link Aboriginals from all over the large continent of Australia together despite large geographic separations. The technospace is used to link communities together to achieve common goals, as well as inform those who do know about the Aboriginal political and cultural situation. The most incredible aspect of the Internet is that anyone with access to a computer and a phone line can use it. Thus, a farmer in France or a student in Canada can learn about Aboriginal struggles and even help, by signing virtual petitions or
sending e-mails to Australian officials on behalf of Aboriginals. Use of the technoscape has allowed Aboriginals to make their local struggle a global one.

The example of the Shipibo and the Aboriginals is that it is not unfathomable that indigenous people can grow aware and even use the forces of globalization for their own purposes. Whether it is by running shaman clinics for Western tourists, producing indigenous television, or using the Internet to mobilize commercial and political efforts, indigenous people are just as capable of using global flows to achieve their own aims as Western people. However, this fact does not mean that global homogenization is a figment of the anti-globalization movement’s imagination. Indeed, the fact that indigenous people have become active players in the global sphere only makes deciphering whether the future of global culture is one of homogeneity or diversity even more difficult. The fact that indigenous people can and do participate in the global system is established. However, the implications of this participation are much murkier.

Chapter Three: Implications of Indigenous Participation in a Global System

As stated earlier, the greatest tension that currently exists in the world is between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization (Appadurai 32). Although it is clear that some indigenous people have the ability to become global players, the question remains: does this matter in the issue of maintaining global heterogeneity? Does global agency equate to global diversity? Given the choice, do indigenous people choose to protect their heritage against the flood of Western mass culture, or do they embrace the West? Going back to the McDonalds analogy, would an Aboriginal prefer a grilled
kangaroo steak, or a Super-sized Big Mac? These are the important issues behind indigenous agency.

To start, it is vital to analyze the way that indigenous people have entered the global sphere. Take the example of the Small Nambes of Wala Wala Island. As a people, they preserve their cultural heritage by putting on displays of traditional dances and songs for traveling academics and tourists. These exhibitions both help to preserve traditions as well as bring cash into the local economy. However, if one looks deeper, the “shows” seem to equate to little more than cultural exploitation, but by the people who own the culture. By commodifying their culture, the Small Nambes make it an object that can be sold to consumers in return for cash. If this exploitation were done by anyone other than the Small Nambes, an uproar would resound around academic and liberal activist circles. However, because the shows are self-exploitation, it is deemed to be an ingenious way to turn cultural capital into economic capital.

The answer to that argument is that the cultural practices belong to the Small Nambes, to do with whichever way they please. By putting on shows, one could assume that this act increases global diversity. However, one must also question what is being done with the cash that the shows infuse into the community. If the money is going to buy Western goods like television sets, Levi jeans, and compact discs, then the practices of the Small Nambes are not increasing cultural diversity. *When preserving culture becomes a means rather than an end, homogenization can increase.*

The example of the curanderos of the Shipibo gives further credence to this problem. When curanderos try to make money by teaching the ways of ayahuasca to foreign tourists, they often have to leave their villages for the larger cities of Peru like
Lima. This leaves the villages bereft of their traditional guides to healing while the shamans themselves get rich in more cosmopolitan areas (Proctor 15). Also, many Shipibo do not want to maintain their culture in the traditional ways, just for the sake of cultural diversity on a global scale. As one curandero states, “we, the Shipibos, are like any other human community—we need to grow and change. We can’t just stay the same so that tourists can stare at the naked Indians and the anthropologists can treat us like a living museum” (Proctor 14). This does not mean that the Shipibo are ready to forsake their culture, but it is self-serving for Western people to expect them to ignore global innovations, like computers and the Internet, simply to maintain a concrete level of global cultural diversity. Within the global system, cultures interact, and adaptations take place. The question is whether creolization breeds diversity or homogeneity.

The relationship between cultural diversity and creolization is difficult to definitely state because in different areas of the world it exists at different levels. On the far, negative side of the scale is the example of the Philippines. As Pico Iyer relates, Filipinos are “master to every American gesture, conversant with every Western song, polished and ebullient all at once” (Iyer 153). However, at the same time, Iyer discovers that the people of the Philippines are constantly degraded by the prostitution industry that exists on sordid street corners and in neon-lit strip clubs. Everywhere that Iyer goes, American music is the backdrop to poverty, desperation, and lust. In a country where high school students work at strip clubs and mothers sell their bodies for money, American style has not turned into American opportunity, only accompanied deprivation: “sadness and music were everywhere . . . smiles and rags” (Iyer 159).
However, not all examples of creolization have been negative adaptations. For example, the Aboriginals have incorporated Western means of media production into their culture, with positive results. The use of Western film and television production techniques has become a viable resource in their community. In the end, it is important to remember that when creolization creates viable alternatives to mass culture, diversity is increased, but when creolization just creates a bastardized version of mass culture, like in the Philippines, homogeneity is the result.

However, there is a third possibility, one that occurs much more often than the first two—creolization that results in new levels of cultural understanding between different people. Culture is a human creation far too complicated to be a zero-sum game. It is very rarely completely abandoned or completely accepted. When a cultural practice is shared from one people to another, its meaning subtly shifts as the second people make it their own. Then, when they pass it back to the first party, its meaning undergoes another shift, with the first people being affected by the changes of the second. The process continues on and on; in the global sphere, the continuity of culture has become the continuity of cultural adaptations.

This process can clearly be seen in Australia. When Western-style media came into the Aboriginal world, they accepted it and made it their own. They then created their own images and sent them back west. These images affected the way that other Australians perceived the media, which in turn changed the way the media sent images to the Aboriginals. The creolization of cultural ideas keeps occurring between “white” Australia and the Aboriginals on the flows of the mediascape, creating new forms of cultural meaning and understanding.
Conclusion

Globalization is not an easy issue to understand and analyze, because it is happening at the present time. With the benefit of two hundred years of hindsight that we presently lack, globalization will probably be a much easier process to comprehend. The flows of the global sphere operate on a constant basis, affecting everyone from investment bankers in New York City to village shamans in the Amazon rainforest. For a long time, globalization was seen as a tool of the West to exploit the rest of the world—a new type of corporate imperialism. This imperialism was seen as leading down a dangerous path towards cultural homogeneity. I have attempted to show that players from the West do not solely populate the global sphere; that indigenous people have also attained global agency, an awareness of global forces and an ability to manipulate them.

These forces exist within a framework of global scapes, through which different ideas, cultures, people, capital, technologies, images, and ideologies from all over the world are constantly flowing. There has always been this power in the culture and identity of indigenous people. However, their dawning recognition of their place within the global system has awakened this dormant power, resulting in an ability to affect their lives and the lives of other people in the world through the management of global forces. Indigenous power is finally being harnessed to actively accept, resist, or use outside influences, which can create new forms of cultural expression and levels of understanding. However, as evidenced by the examples of the Shipibo and the Aboriginals, indigenous agency does not always lead to cultural heterogeneity.

I began writing this thesis in a very optimistic frame of mind. When I first raised my hypothesis, I reasoned that if indigenous people had agency and could use global
flows, cultural homogenization was not as big of a problem as anti-globalization activists made it out to be. However, as I have shown, indigenous choice does not always mean that global diversity increases. Not all indigenous people want to remain culturally separate from the rest of the world. They want jeans and hamburgers and televisions. As one curandero succinctly stated, they do not want to become “living museums” just for the benefit of the Western tourists and academics.

Choice has become the underlying foundation of globalization. People have more opportunities than ever: to travel, to eat exotic foods, and to experience new cultures. Just as choice is an important aspect of life in the West, it is also thus for indigenous people. Whether someone lives in Australia, South America, or Africa, he or she can choose to join in the global sphere or to resist it. However, whatever choices are made, globalization is not a passing fad that will soon disappear. The crowning irony of the anti-globalization movement is that to resist change, they embrace the global technologies of the Internet and e-mail in order to organize their groups. Like it or not, globalization dictates much of the way the world now works.

As indigenous people become increasingly active on the global sphere, they will have even more opportunities to choose between preserving their heritage and becoming more westernized. Will those choices lead to a broad diversity of human culture around the globe or will they lead to a homogenized Americana on every continent? Will cultural adaptations create new, viable hybrids and avenues toward understanding or will they collapse into a single, mass culture? Will indigenous people follow the example of the Aboriginals and use the Internet to preserve culture and manage political activism, or
will they sell their cultural commodities to the highest bidder in exchange for Western goods? In time, the choices will be made and the answers will be known.
References Cited


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