

Briefing of 10/31/2001
Global Expression of Identities in Music
by
Tim Bourke (Team #7)

1. The New Transnationalism of Immigrants

Glick Schiller et al. deal with the increasingly commonplace transnationalism of migrants, defined as multiple and constant interconnection across international borders affecting daily lives and public identities of immigrants with relationships to more than one nation state. In 1960 "transnationalism" was widely used to refer to the establishment of corporate structures with established organizational bases in more than one state. In the 1980s the term was used to signal an abatement of national boundaries and the development of ideas or political institutions that spanned national borders. In other words, the terminology has shifted and is associated with different meanings depending on context and research interest.

Glick Schiller et al. list three main reasons for the recent growth of transmigrants:

- the global restructuring of capitalism resulting from changing forms of capital accumulation has led to deteriorating "uprooting" social and economic conditions in both labor sending and labor receiving countries nurturing transnational migration because of a lack of secure locations for permanent residence.
- racism in both the U.S. and Europe contributes to the economic and political insecurity of newcomers and their offspring.
- immigrants find it difficult to become fully attached to a new host nation state when they continue to have kin, national, political, and business loyalties with their countries of origin. Examples for ambivalent relationships are immigrants to the U.S. from the Caribbean (Haiti) and the Philippines.

Transnationalism is resented by states such as the U.S. because they fear split loyalties and multiple identities questioning a state's monopoly on loyalty and patriotism. Nevertheless, research has to acknowledge and study the new facts of transnational migration and enlighten our understanding of its causes and effects from the view of the migrants themselves too.

2. Global media and cultural identity: the Turkish example

Sahin and Aksoy illustrate at the example of Turkey the effects of media privatization on national sovereignty, culture, consumerism, and identity. In 1982 there was one state-run black and white TV channel in Turkey. In 1989 three state-run color stations existed. By the end of 1992 the number had increased to six state and six private TV stations all broadcasting in color. The growth in the number of radio stations was even faster demolishing the Turkish Radio and Television state-run network. It all started with the election of Turgut Özal's free market and pro-American Motherland Party in 1983. But because of legal hurdles in the Turkish constitution, Özal could not start breaking the state broadcasting monopoly until 1989 when he suggested stations such as

CNN could legally broadcast from abroad into Turkey. In 1990 "Magic Box" announced its intention to do just that from Germany. No incidentally, one of the partners of this enterprise was Özal's elder son.

By 1992 already six TV stations had started broadcasting into Turkey from abroad. The once powerful state-run TRT was broke by 1992 with only 20% of Istanbul's radio audiences still listening. The media floodgates opened up and the Turkish people were introduced to new issues and "old wounds" relating to ethnic origin, religion, language, sex, gender roles, the problem of the Kurdish minority and Kemalism. Another aspect of the media that surfaced with the new media was the commercialization and relativization of Turkish culture. Cultural coherence and consistency gave way to a postmodern "anything goes" mood where fashions and chatter reign. International advertisement, imported and domestic soap opera series, and the culture of TV presentation itself led to a new kind of homogenization of programming.

In addition, the unitary former identity/image of Turkey became fragmented. The national "master narrative" was replaced by transnational identifications with "small communities of choice"--communities with which consumers share values, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, style of living etc. And since national boundaries disappeared, the old "imagined worlds" were contested or even subverted.

Finally, there were external effects: The establishment of TURKSAT and other channels promoted the cultural expansion of Turkey into other, newly liberated, Turkic and Muslim communities in Middle Asia creating new pan-national affiliations and memories of old (ascriptive) bonds that are of political and economic advantage to Turkey which presents itself as a model of development.

The authors draw the conclusion that global media can act as vehicle for both particularization/fragmentation AND for the unification of national identities. Overall they perceive these developments as problematic because the penetration of Turkish society by the new media was neither democratically controlled nor is it protected against the threat of commercial homogenization.

3. In praise of culture (imperialism)

Globalization promotes, according to David Rothkopf, integration, stability and tolerance. In addition it improves lives by providing information, better transportation, services, etc. Finally, it removes cultural barriers and exclusionary effects of culture that promote conflict or prevent harmony.

The author believes the U.S., the main actor of globalization, should control the planetary airwaves ("infosphere") as Great Britain once ruled the seas. It is in the U.S. national interest to promote peace, stability and U.S. values, to support English as an international language, and to set the standards in international communication since the U.S. controls the market on international transportation technology and services, since it dominates in music, movie, television and software and consequently influences the tastes, values, and aspirations of virtually every nation.

Rothkopf denounces reactions of other countries as romanticist or nationalist, e.g., France and Canada which passed laws to limit American media penetration, or Iran, China, and Singapore who put up restrictions against U.S. software and programs.

If not hampered by domestic U.S. isolationism, political partisanship, underfunding, and a lack of coordination, the U.S could become the only nation that is able to lead the world and show other nations and cultures the correct way to live.

4. Culture Wars

This Economist article argues that complaints and envy about U.S. domination of global cultural production (movie production, Rock music, popular musicals, fashion, publishing) are overblown. Therefore national protectionist measures (Examples: quotas, subsidies, trade exemptions in Canada and France) are wrong and have a rather counterproductive effects on creativity and diversity. In addition, one has to distinguish between U.S. company ownership and U.S. content. And consumers are in fact not "global" in their tastes but "local." Even in the U.S. Hollywood productions face domestic criticism and competition by ethnic and foreign language media.

But the Economist agrees that the U.S. has advantages over its competitors because of its huge domestic market, its genius of marketing, its ubiquitous language and trendsetter role, and its image as a symbol of modernism. These advantages cannot be taken away by state intervention attempting to control popular demands. Rather, an appropriate solution would be to let the consumers worldwide make their choices. Their "common sense" and taste should prevail in the culture wars.

5. Intercourse in Every Direction, America as Global Phenomenon

Following Joel Hodson, the growing concern over "Americanization," i.e., the U.S. dominance of the world's economy and cultural production, ignores that the U.S. also is a product of global processes. It's national traditions and values are equally undermined or replaced by the permissive postnational and "creolized" superculture generated by multinational corporations in search of global markets. In other words, "globalization cuts both ways" since world cultures are absorbed and transformed in the U.S., exported, and then transformed again for local use.

Hodson attempts to trace the origins of how the U.S. became the center of globalization processes. As Karl Marx predicted in 1850, the U.S. itself is the result and symbol of global modernity itself given its history of transborder movements of migrants, capital, goods and services, information and ideas as well as diseases (Examples: the introduction of deadly diseases to America including small pox, influenza, measles, plague, chicken pox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and the common cold).

The U.S. also shaped the post-WWII global order. It co-founded international organizations (UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO), it promoted democratization and free markets. Its management models became dominant, seven of its corporations rank among the 20 largest world economic entities. The U.S. remains a global agent AND at

the same time its product. It is affected itself by the negative effects of free trade it promotes vehemently.

For example, by the end of the 1970s the U.S. deficit was at 30 billion dollars. Increasing imports meant significant market share losses for U.S. manufacturers, especially in the automotive and the consumer electronics industries. Globalization in this case translated into reduced benefits and wages and lost jobs. Between 1980 and 1990 fortune 500 companies reduced their work force by a further 20%. And U.S. American companies moved their production overseas. Nike footwear, for instance, presently subcontracts 100% of its production to the third world. In fact, seventy percent of the U.S. domestic production is subject to international competition, and the American share of global manufacturing trade has decreased from 25% to 12% since 1960. Globalization thus also works negatively on the U.S. by taking a harsh toll on large segments of American society, in particular manufacturing and non-information workers, or those that find themselves on the wrong side of the Digital divide.

Another example is the continuous and strong immigration from all over the world into the U.S. It is expected that migration will profoundly change the ethnoracial make-up and national character of the U.S. in the coming decades, mirroring global diversity.

As the U.S. and its economy, consumption patterns, and everyday culture are becoming more dependent and intertwined with world markets the more the latter will also become intertwined with developments in the U.S. In other words, global transformations abroad reflect and respond to developments and processes that are also happening in the U.S.

6. Questions

- 1) Is "transnationalism" a persistent and widespread phenomenon among immigrants today? Will the 2nd and 3rd generation of immigrants maintain their ties and dual loyalties or become assimilated into their host society?
- 2) How serious is the threat of media homogenization? Won't consumers get tired of homogenization in the long run? Are media more democratically controlled in the U.S. than in the case of Turkey? What alternatives exist to involve the public?
- 3) Is the globalization of culture dominated by the U.S. Are U.S. music, movies, TV shows a "global amalgam," as Rothkopf believes? Is any resistance against U.S. cultural domination a product of nationalism and cultural romanticism? What other factors may produce resistance against a "Pax Americana" in the 21st century?
- 4) Some argue that rational consumer choices are an illusion because marketing strategies manipulate available information and because mass products have a price advantage. Therefore, isn't some education and protection needed to give "weaker" and smaller cultural products an equal chance and to protect diversity and competitiveness? Or should market forces alone prevail in cultural production and reward the strongest and those who cater to the most popular demands?
- 5) Is "globalization" an inevitable process for the U.S. and the rest of the world or do alternative forms exist? How much is globalization the product of deliberate decisions

or of "hidden" market forces behind the back of its agents? Has the U.S. more control over globalization than other countries?