

FLC 301/Fall 2001

Instructor: H. Kurthen

Minutes of 9/5/2001
Experiencing Globalization
by
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Regina Ngan briefed class on Peter L. Bergers article "Four Faces of Global Culture, which distinguishes four separate but simultaneous processes of cultural globalization.

The "Davos" culture is the culture of international business and the elite. They usually communicate in English, dress in similar suits; and communicate by technological means. More often than not they are alienated from the masses and provoke the emergence of religious & nationalist counter-elites.

The "Faculty club" culture describes the internationalization of the Western intelligentsia, it's values and ideologies. This culture is mostly carried through the education system, the legal system, therapeutic institutions, think tanks, and the mass media. It is in conflict with the believers of liberal markets and those who follow non-Western value systems.

The "McWorld" culture is represented by all of those worldwide who accept popular Western (American) culture and consumption patterns. It's hedonism, sexual innuendo, materialism, and individualism is usually rejected by those who adhere to more traditional cultures because they feel trampled and seduced, losing their morals, values, and ideals.

The "Evangelical Protestantism" is a religious culture which promotes a "Protestant ethic" in family, socialization, gender relations, traditional hierarchies as well as a disciplined, frugal, and rational capitalist approach to work favorable to pluralism and to the market economy. This culture is also said to be a threat to traditional cultures and social norms. It is able to penetrate societies who lack their own religious spiritualism and when there is a need and desire for self-salvation.

All four cultures are strongly related to the English language as a medium of scientific, economic, and technological communication, and the "American way of life" and its governance structure. They are spread voluntarily and nonviolently through global capitalism and its technologies (PC, Internet).

The class discussed in how far these processes are inevitable or if alternatives exist. Should English or will English become a universal language? Is U.S. hegemony justifiable through the idea of democracy and economic interest? Does it genuinely help those in need to follow economic capitalism? Or is the spread of (American) capitalism mostly driven by the worldwide desire to accumulate wealth and the hunger for power?

We also touched on the issue as to why cultural diffusion seems to travel mostly from West to East and less from East to West? The conclusion the class arrived at was, that this is due to the unequal development and power nations hold in the economic world.

Another important question raised was if "globalization" brings necessarily peace and prosperity to all nations and peoples or, in contrast, has unforeseeable and perhaps negative consequences in the future? Mostly everyone in class agreed that the effects and consequences of globalization cannot be calculated and predicted as some proponents of globalization want us make to believe.

Second, one can see that there is global "progress" particularly in the use of technology. Do we have to suffer a loss of traditional culture and identification adapting to these technologies? Students felt strongly about this issue. Some argued that giving up traditions was a great loss. But others pointed out that technology also helps us to preserve traditions and helps people to easily access knowledge and practices that would otherwise be extremely expensive or impossible for them to obtain.