

## **The Changes to Cultural Identity in a Global World**

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### **Abstract**

Increased global flows of people and things impact cultural identity and change how societies interact. In ethnographic terms, this does not lead to hyper globalisation or homogenisation as some have claimed but rather creates several forces that allow for competition between different local groups. In this, and revolutionaries approach to change occurs with some ideas integrating into the local concepts and culture. This is not a system that replaces local culture but rather enhances and changes cultures based on new concepts and the exchange of memes and ideas globally.

### **The Changes to Cultural Identity in a Global World**

Globalisation has changed the movement and global flows of people and things across nations and continents. Some who propose that globalisation has gone too far and seek to reverse the tide of human migration argue that globalisation is, in fact, a form of homogenisation (Tomlinson, 1995; Conversi, 2014, p. 29; Scholte, 2017, p. 471). However, it is more accurate to argue that the global movement of people and ideas improves human society. Humanity is more than a set of objects that need to be preserved. Culture changes, and it is up to the individual to embrace and invigorate those aspects of the culture they wish to maintain. However, generational changes and natural misunderstandings result in cultural changes through generations, even without interaction (Rudolph et al., 2021).

Individuals are subject to cultural influences but may reject or embrace these new ideas based on interactions with others in society or reject the existing status quo. Culture is not forced upon people (Hall, 2019). Even when the post-modern decolonialisation movement is investigated, it becomes clear that accepting and believing ideas spread by others remains a choice. Whilst pressure can be applied; it is impossible to make another believe and embrace values against their will. Moreover, the spread of global culture and globalised ideas has led to many movements designed to embrace the uniqueness and diversity of an individual's particular culture.

Globalisation and the resulting embracing of local cultures is also not a new trend. For example, the integration of Scottish dress, including the kilt, was used to create a false narrative of a national identity that never truly existed (Crome, 2018). Over time, many such forms of national or cultural mythology have developed. Individuals join with others to create group identities and cultural identity that gives them a foundation in an

increasingly global world. Through this, the integration of local customs and knowledge helps people develop a sense of self, create local communities, and develop the shared mythology of nationhood (Anderson, 2006).

The enlightenment concept of rationality has been treated negatively in recent times (Pinker, 2018). The post-modern reintroduction of identity politics places collective groups above the individual. In this, certain groups of intellectuals act as proponents of stifling change to protect a romanticised concept of how other people should live. Whilst the concept of a global community and cosmopolitan citizenship has existed since at least the time of the classical Greek city-states (Held, 1992), this in itself provides an alternative cultural identity as some individuals embrace a homogenised international culture while rejecting a local norm. In this, the individual seeks to separate and form identity, not through embracing the local identity but through embracing a more homogenised and cosmopolitan identity.

While globalisation may be argued to promote a concept of cosmopolitan identity, the exposure to differences also create localised cultural identities and enforce these by cementing ideas that exist around a shared cultural character. In being exposed to multiple cultures, some ideas are integrated whilst others are rejected in favour of others that create a local group identity. Additionally, new forms of social and group identity are being formed by adopting technologies that allow individuals to communicate over vast distances (Centola, 2018). The spread of social media has also increased the ability of people in different nations to communicate and form cultural subgroups based on virtual communications and exchanges. As Mayer et al. (2020), the growth of social media has created new platforms that allow individuals to express themselves as individuals.

### **The Impact of Technology**

While the movement of people and the exchange of ideas is not new, the spread of network-based interconnectivity that has developed following the growth of the Internet has increased the pace at which information is distributed (Rooppa et al., 2019). This has led some to refer to a global village. While the rise of multinational corporations has integrated many global markets, each of these still requires the development of localisations that significantly change the experience between different cultures, such as those within the United States of America and those within the People's Republic of China (Khan et al., 2022).

Angelone (2019) presents a novel argument that the growing virtualisation and the creation of online forums produce new ethnographies based on virtual membership and groups. However, this post-positivist approach merely creates an untestable and unfalsifiable theory about theories. For example, theories involving the strength of ties over social media, such as Granovetter's weak tie theory of social networks, may be tested and falsified using methods presented by Weng et al. (2018), who tested the second hypothesis on the relativity of weak social ties. Rather, as Tapsell (2019) demonstrates, the integration of new technologies, including smartphones and social media apps, can lead to the empowerment of the people in a society and further aid in promoting local culture.

### **The Homogenisation of Society**

Lewellen (2002, p. 9) argues that while many in the media claim that the homogenisation of culture is a criterion of globalisation, the explosive increase in group and ethnic politics and local organisations coupled with both secular movements and religious fundamentalism demonstrate the opposite. Importantly, the author notes that over

80% or more of production is destined for domestic consumption. So, while societies change, globalisation has a force that moves in an evolutionary methodology, leading to multiple local cultures that change based on the ideas tested in many global cultures. But, as Lewellen (2002, p. 10) further demonstrates, globalisation “represents a change in degree, not in kind.”.

While many brands such as McDonald’s and other consumer goods have become a homogenous staple found in the majority of countries around the world, this also downplays the differences between the product offerings in each country. In a forthcoming publication, Khan et al. (2022) investigated the cultural differences in global brands, looking at a multi-country comparative study of McDonald’s. This study upholds the earlier work of Vignali (2001, p. 97), who demonstrated the requirement for global marketing to “think global, act locally” in meeting the customer needs within different cultures. For instance, in Egypt, McDonald’s released the “MacFalafel”, in Malaysia, the “McRendanag”, and in Vietnam, the restaurant has launched several rice dishes (Khan et al., 2022, p.6). While the ubiquitous McDonald’s branding remains seemingly homogenous, the variety of distinct offerings demonstrates the integration of both global culture and local variance.

### **The Hyper Globalisation Thesis**

The claim that the world is undergoing a fundamentally new process where globalisation has accelerated, transforming human life in a manner that cannot be predicted, leading to an ultimate singularity, has also been promoted (Magee & Devezas, 2011). Yet, the changes in culture depend on what people define culture to mean. Featherstone (1996) argued that culture is not a static force but develops as selected customs and habits gain

reverence all grow out of favour. Through this, culture can be seen as the sum of human behaviours in a manner that is embodied in speech, action and the artefacts created within society. Culture is thus transmitted using the capabilities of communication systems and allows for knowledge to be distributed to future generations. In this, the creation of new technologies distributes the best ideas widely.

Perraton et al. (1997, p. 260) investigated claims of hyper globalisation using production and consumption figures in an economic study. The comparison between the hyper globalisation and sceptical approaches to economic measurement showed little variation. As such, while the emergence of global economic processes has continued to increase, the authors demonstrated that this does not provide evidence of increasing globalisation and that most exchanges within economies remain local. Instead, a longtail effect occurs where a small number of global firms are recognised internationally, with most economic activity remaining locally focused.

### **The Globalisation of Local Cultural Identity**

As Deng (2005) discusses, local ethnographic identity provides people with a foundation and answer to the questions “Who am I?”, “What is my purpose?”, “What is most important to me?” and “How should I find value in the world?”. Fact cannot be taken and analysed by people without values and value judgements. When the same facts and conditions are presented to different people with different answers to the above questions, different identities and localities will determine different outcomes even in the event of globalisation. In this way, rational methodologies for determining truth lead to a deeper awareness of people's various cultural identities and make these the more strongly held (Hefner, 1993).

When given the same opportunities and same technologies, the same ideas and the same systems, leading to a series of movements that embrace and promote the uniqueness of local culture taking this to a methodology (Anderson, 2006) that led to different economic divisions creating a false concept of different races in Rwanda with the development of methodologies around the origins of Hutu and Tutsi (Mamdani, 2020, p. 41-75) led to the integration of pro-Tutsi claims of economic class and Hutu claims of “distinct racial difference”. However, both historiographic and ethnographic studies demonstrate a common ancestry.

In this, it becomes possible to see that the creation of mythologies derived through and related to ethnography can both bind and divide nations (Nagle, 2016). Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011). Following a combined path that many scholars use, Salazar (2010) creates an argument that the combination of local and global culture creates what the author calls a “glocal ethnography” with the interaction between cultures being stressed as international tourism brings new ideas and exposes people to alternative points of view.

As Roudometof (2015) demonstrates in an analysis of Salazar, the concept of a “glocal ethnography” creates a model that is different from the “nested hierarchy that is the characteristic of global ethnography”. Consequently, the interactions that people disagree with are often termed “touristic” and represent “bad ethnography” Salazar (2006). As Roudometof (2015) demonstrates, however, the growth of criticism across these various fields has also led to an emergence of fragmentation between the study of combined global and local trends compared to globalisation studies. Unfortunately, as noted before, the move towards including critical studies and post-positivist methodologies has also reduced

the ability to falsify these developing theories and hypotheses and hence limits the scientific value of such studies.

### **Conclusion**

While globalisation leads to the sharing and exchange of ideas, it does not necessarily lead to what many have termed homogenisation. This paper demonstrates that exchanging ideas leads to radically different changes in different localities. Individuals do not meekly accept and integrate ideas without rational thought, leading to regional and national cultural differences even when based on the same shared source. Different nations share different origins, and through the theory of national methodologies promoted by Anderson (2006), we see how the integration of new knowledge results in different outcomes for different populations and ethnographic groups.

Whilst science and technology can integrate new methods for communication, the theory of convergence (Meyer, Boli-Bennett & Chase-Dunn, 1975) does not hold, and the development of local cultural identities has become stronger as people embrace the methodology of their cultural past (Featherstone, 1996). In this, any global pluralist community is forming. Rather than a single homogenised culture, the introduction of globalisation has created multiple interacting cultures that differ significantly. As Khan et al. (2022) demonstrate, even when discussing global organisations and brands, these firms must localise the marketing effort and acculturate to the local conditions.

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