

**Course:** Poli Sci 2H03

**Subject:** Global/Local

**Instructor:** Dr. Vermilyea

**Section:** Evening, T01

**Date:** Nov. 6, 2012

### **Key problems**

- The way cities are portrayed in globalization is in opposition to globalization
  - Seem to be local entities, whereas globalization is a global/fluid/dynamic entity
- Portrayal of cities and cultures
  - Local cultures as helpless victims of global forces
- Cities are victims of Westernization or as creatures of the state
  - No power outside of what state gives them
  - Presented as locally-bound entities within the state

### **Global city literature**

- Idea that cities are key point in world economy
  - Cities like NY, London, Tokyo
- Tendency in literature is to localize the various processes within the boundaries of the city
- Cities positioned as competitive sites for an agglomeration for competitive processes
  - Kind of like a state trying to gain a lead in the global economy
- Cities are operating through economic relations that transcend through different spatial scales
- "Global Cities: New York, London, Tokyo"
  - Key structures of global economies are positioned in cities
  - Let firms operate closely, create networks that make cities key sites for world economy
  - Focusing on cities rather than relations that go on between them
    - We miss how what is occurring in one city may not be happening in another
- Cities need to be thought of, not as islands of competitiveness, but as network sites for relations that extend beyond the boundaries of the city itself
- Nonsensical to talk about the economy of one particular city when these things can stretch beyond that
- Makes more sense to talk about various transnational firms that operate through cities

### **Positioning of local in opposition to global**

- When we think about local culture, we think about a romanticized individuals
  - Place-based identities
  - Portrayed in opposition to uncontrollable global flows which threaten these local cultures
- Local is privileged because the argument is that it needs to be defended
  - At the same time, it is marginalized because these statements insinuate that the local has nothing to do with the processes of globalization
  - Castells and Tomlinson discuss this in the readings
- Capital (financial flows) threaten this one stable cultural space of community-based spatial organization
  - Capital/finance occupies a superior command over resources
- Local cultures seen as cultural totalities
  - Their culture somehow froze in a certain time period
  - e.g., Indigenous communities
  - Takes away agency and role of people in the grand narrative which is nostalgic and romanticizes cultures

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- Strict dualism between globalization and the space of economic flows and culture/community
  - Doesn't make sense to talk about distinct spatial scales in that sense
- The very nature of these global movements make the idea of the local in opposition to the global as problematic
- The city is a key part of globalization
  - Cities are shaped through globalization
    - It's through cities that we experience these processes

### **John Tomlinson**

- Distinction between globalization and cultural identity
  - Connected to globalization and the local, and the distinction between the 2
- Globalization in the cultural sphere has been viewed in a pessimistic light
  - Seen as contributing to the destruction of cultural identities and the acceleration of encroachment o Western consumer culture
    - Seamless extension of Western culture imperialism
- Argues that cultural identity is the product of globalization, not its victim
  - Can't separate cultural identity from globalization
  - Through globalization that cultural identity has gained so much significance
- Identity as treasure
  - Tendency to romanticize culture
- If globalization destroys culture, then we must have the assumption that cultural identity was secure and attached to a specific place
  - Undisturbed, existential possession
  - Also that it is fragile, needs protection
    - Easily lost
  - Globalization came in and destroyed everything cultural diverse
- Another competing story that cultures can fight back
  - Story of oppression and local resistance
  - What we see in connection with this threatening of local economies is this upsurging of power of local culture that offers resistance to the effects of globalization
  - Implies that cultural identity is not an easy prey of globalization
    - Considerable dimension of institutional life and modernity
  - Renewed sense of national belonging
- Argues that identities don't destruct in globalization
  - Amplification of identities/positions that are produced in response to threats of homogenous globalization
  - What we are seeing is a proliferation of local identities in response to globalization and hegemony
- Assumption that these various attachments can and must be focused through the Western idea of identity is short-sighted
  - Identities can take several different forms (e.g., religion, race, gender, etc.)
    - Division of the world into these categories is the product of the modern nation state and increasingly globalization

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- Assumption that people must fall into these categories of identity
- Refers to abstraction of social cultural practices into their institutionalization and regulation when he discusses modernity
  - Institutionalized, regulated processes that define cultural identity
  - Nationality, for example, is a modern construct that developed after the creation of the nation state
  - In modern society, we live our lives within the structures that organizes our identities into well-policed boundaries of political belonging
- Stability of identification to a space is not permanent
  - e.g., rise of ethnic conflicts threatening state nationality

**Concluding thoughts**

- Careful not to make generalized statements regarding global/local or cultures
- Must see these different positions as being relational and working through one another