

Lecture 10

Cultural dimension of globalisation

Cultural globalisation

- Cultural G means intensification and expansion of cultural flows across the globe
- ‘culture’ is a very broad concept and refers to many things:
 - A) world polity theory: common global norms, cognitive models, scripts
 - B) popular culture: films, dress styles, music
 - C) group culture: shared beliefs, traditions, way of life, worldviews (our focus)
- Scholars of cultural G raise numerous questions

G of culture

- Not an entirely new phenomenon because expansive inter-cultural and inter-civilisational exchanges predate modernity (see Lecture 3)
- But the extent of cultural transmissions and the volume of intercultural exchange is now far greater than it ever was
- Cultural practices, images, ideas, etc. are easily and rapidly transmitted from one place to another

Global culture

- Is the emerging global culture making people more similar as the rest of the people around the world or does it result in more differences?
- A) rise of homogenising popular culture primarily influenced by the Western ‘culture industry’ – cultural homogenisation thesis (pessimistic view)
- B) cultural G generates more sameness and this is a good outcome (optimistic view)
- C) there are powerful homogenising tendencies in the contemporary world but this doesn’t mean that cultural diversity will vanish – new forms of cultural expression; glocalisation, cultural hybridity, syncretism & Creolisation – combination or fusion of culture

Glocalisation

(Roland Robertson)

- Global cultural flows often reinvigorate local cultural niches & local differences still play an important role in creating unique cultural types (for example Western music styles incorporated into traditional forms of dance)
- Cultural G always takes place in local contexts
- Rejecting the cultural homogenisation thesis, ‘glocalisation’ means a complex interaction between the global and the local & is characterised by cultural borrowing (the local is *an aspect* of G)
- The result is nothing that would be either ‘the same’ or ‘different’ but a new sort of cultural hybridity; it means the loss of traditional meanings & creation of new symbolic expressions
- Other cultures are not simply ‘replaced’ but cultures are merged or blended; Western elements are incorporated

The media

- Global media empires & powerful communication technologies influence and enable the global cultural flows
- Large TNCs increasingly dominate the global entertainment market
- - outcomes: rise of infotainment, decline of ‘cultural innovators’ (small independent media), depoliticisation of social reality, weakening of civic bonds, corporate market oriented priorities clash with professional autonomy of journalism...

Global languages?

- Globalisation of languages
- Shifting global patterns of language use: some languages are used in international communication much more than others (e.g. English, Chinese, Spanish, French), while some languages are dying out, disappearing
- Language use on the Internet (over 80 % in English)