Globalization and “Minority” Cultures

Introductory Comments

Sophie Croisy

Theoretical Perspectives

Contemporary work on the relationship between minority cultures\(^1\) and globalization\(^2\)—a relationship presented as a dialectical/dialogical one by Makere Stewart-Harawira in her book *The New Imperial Order: Indigenous Responses to Globalization*\(^3\)—offers today new and hybrid perspectives on the challenges of globalization. Texts that deal with that relationship are characterized by the multifarious connections they formulate between a multiplicity of knowledge communities that defend culturally grounded social and political philosophies and a multiplicity of knowledge areas (literature, history, philosophy, sociology, political theory, international relations, etc.), which allows for the diversification of viewpoints on the topic of human development in today’s global context of economic, political and cultural systematization.

This variety of perspectives that highlight the local and global issues of minority cultures in the face of global phenomena allows for a diversification of the topics addressed by “mainstream” global studies literature and encourages the development of new strands of reflection which have not been given enough space so far in the literature that evaluates and critiques globalization processes. The inclusion of so-called “minor” perspectives\(^4\) from across the

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1. Within the context of this publication, the term “minority” refers to cultural communities (mainly diasporic communities and ethnic groups) that have suffered, and still suffer today, from multiple forms of discrimination and which have experienced therefore a lack of social, economic, political opportunities and a lack of recognition/representation within their located geopolitical spaces.
2. Globalization: set of practices imposed from the top-down that subordinate people (groups, communities, nations) to profit-driven values, or more broadly, to reductive capitalistic notions of development. Thomas D. Hall and James V. Fenelon see the contemporary world system as a “globalizing version of late industrial capitalism, intensely pursuing the neoliberal project of a system run entirely by market principles, tempered only by parallel efforts to keep current elites in powerful positions,” *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization: Resistance and Revitalization* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 123.
4. Although the majority-minority divide which implies contrasting cultural frameworks is slowly collapsing as social movements and literatures across the globe are becoming increasingly culturally multifaceted.
globe in the reflection on globalization expands the analysis on, and illuminates certain aspects of specific contemporary global phenomena which are oftentimes deleterious to human evolution as the concrete expressions of hegemonic, homogenizing forces created by profit-driven value systems.\(^5\) In “Globalization, Minorities and Civil Society,” Koichi Hasegawa describes the different facets of globalization: in a society that does not limit itself to the nation-state but has taken on a global/international perspective, capital, information and labor move across borders thanks to the development of means of communication—a movement that fosters political, social and cultural change at global and local levels.\(^6\)

Minority groups’ living conditions and cultural evolution have been historically intertwined with the development of global order and have suffered from early to present phases of globalization. Minority groups are often cited as victims of global processes since global forces increasingly dictate the fate of local communities within nations and their regions. However, they are rarely consulted for the techniques or technologies of accommodation and resistance they have implemented as a response to global processes both at local and global levels. Mainstream globalist literature does not yet offer analytical space to so-called cultural minorities in the process of questioning the values and practices of globalization. As a matter of fact, as Duane Champagne argues in his foreword to *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization: Resistance and Revitalization*, “Most contemporary theory does not conceptualize the existence or presence of indigenous peoples, let alone offers a theory or conceptualization of the cultural, political, social and territorial continuity of contemporary indigenous peoples and nations.”\(^7\) He further argues that

\(^5\) In the book he has edited with Timothy Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order*, Robert Cox defines hegemony as “an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production that penetrates into all the countries and links into other subordinate modes of production. It is also a complex of international social relationships that connect the social classes of the different countries. World hegemony can be described as a social structure, and economic structure, and a political structure...[It] is expressed in universal norms, institutions and mechanisms which lay down general rules of behavior for states and for those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries, rules which support the dominant mode of production” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 137.


\(^7\) Duane Champagne, foreword to *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization, Resistance and Revitalizations* by Thomas D. Hall and James Fenelon (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), ix.