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McDonald's, Wienerwald, and the Corner Deli

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GLOBALIZATION IS EVERYWHERE.[1] States, economies, and societies are increasingly integrated, with flows of goods, capital, humans, and cultural objects forming a global web. There is little doubt that we are undergoing a process of compression of international time and space. Globalization is also nowhere. Although lacking a coherent empirical or theoretical underpinning, the concept has become a catchall phrase in academia and the mainstream media, simultaneously meaning everything, and nothing at all. In order to understand the global flow of information, we first have to examine the various meanings of "globalization."

Our title hints at three dominant perspectives.

The "Corner Deli" phenomenon describes interdependent globalization. The nice elderly couple still owns the store, but they now offer Belgian chocolates, flowers from Kenya, and Japanese novelty soda. This shape of globalization resembles that of the Internet—a network without hubs and with low variance in the probability of any node's being connected to any other node.[2] In this way, the model may be described as a noncentric spider web without stratification or hierarchy. In many ways, it is the utopian vision of classic liberalism and *laissez-faire* policies.

"Clustered globalization" is exemplified by the Wienerwald chain. This group of German and Austrian restaurants imposes a culinary and managerial model (similar to what opponents of globalization claim happens on a global basis) but is limited by region. Similar multinational, but nonglobal, chains can be found in different parts of the world, such as the Jollibee fast-food chain in the Philippines. This large chain captures clustered globalization in a different sense—restaurants are found in the countries of Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Brunei, and the United States. While Jollibee is "global" in the sense that it transcends a specific region, the locations are marked by historically large Filipino migration patterns. A third type of clustered globalization can be seen through the creation of ethnic-specific enclaves—such as "Little Senegal," "Little Manila," "Little Italy," and "Chinatown"—in cities marked by historically large immigrant populations. This model, then, sees the global system as consisting of cliques or subgroups linked by culture, history, and/or geography. The most ominous view, of course, is Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. Not so dissimilar is an Orwellian vision of an Oceania and a Eurasia engaged in perpetual struggle. Less ominously, we may also expect to find vestiges of old empires or regional cooperatives—a good example of this may be the European Union.

McDonald's exemplifies hegemonic globalization. A less polite or less politically correct term might be "empire." In such a case, we do have a spider web, but now it has a very distinct and clear center. Another image is that of a bicycle wheel without a rim, possessing a strong center and spokes unconnected to one another. In this instance, a single taste and organizational regime is imposed on the world, and it becomes impossible for local actors to survive.

These three distinct perspectives represent ideal types of globalization, and overlap may, and does, occur. For instance, the global chain of McDonald's displays regional variation through localized menus. The now (in)famous dialogue between two of the main characters in the Oscar-winning American movie *Pulp Fiction* demonstrates this variation.[3] Despite these localized changes on the menu, McDonald's may still be viewed as a hegemonic model because of the American-based institutional and management-related patterns enforced in each chain. The restaurant is marked by a brand that is wholly and distinctly American, and despite localized features, these structural and cultural meanings are influential in changing local societies.[4]

We can imagine parallel versions of these perspectives outside of restaurant management. There is the locally owned TV broadcast station as opposed to Al Jazeera and CNN. The *International Herald Tribune* has a global footprint, while the *South China Morning Post* has a regional one and *El Clarin* is read only in Argentina. Hollywood actors are known worldwide, Bollywood actors in the subcontinent and Indian diaspora (although it may be argued that the Bollywood milieu is fast becoming a global phenomenon because it was featured in the multiple-Oscar-winning movie *Slumdog Millionaire*), while Moscow TV stars are not recognized outside of Russia.

Each of these models carries with it not only images of what "globalization" means but also assumptions regarding power asymmetries and influence flows. The most optimistic of them see each participant in the global system as being able to access a much broader scope of information and culture while simultaneously maintaining his or her identity relatively intact. Not accidentally, the closest parallel to such a vision is of an unencumbered mass market—a global eBay of ideas. The most pessimistic predicts monopolization of information and the standardization of tastes—a Microsoftization of the world. Although information-embedded goods such as pharmaceuticals or agri-biotechnology can be used to explore these relationships of (a)symmetrical flows, this chapter specifically highlights cultural media because it is an example of something with which most people have experience and of which they have an intimate understanding. Additionally, although institutional structures shape and modify culture—and vice versa—rapid changes in globalization may be more readily apparent in media exchanges than in modifications within economic or social structures. Therefore, if globalization is a democratizing force, we would expect cultural patterns to appear randomized, with no central hub(s) directing flows. If it is nothing more than the intensification of already existing regional ties, then we will see cultural clusters. Finally, if globalization has a single center, then we will expect to note an overall homogenization.

While much has been said in favor of or against each of these perspectives, the major obstacle to our understanding of globalization has been that theoretical treatments outpace empirical evidence. Key distinctions between globalization and internationalization, for example, lack a concrete basis. Despite the ubiquity of the term "globalization," we have remarkably little data on increasing international integration. For example, little research has examined the structure of "global" brands such as Coca-Cola or Starbucks and their relations to their country of origin (which can help determine structural inequalities and its relation to culture); tracked Internet usage and most-often-visited sites by country; collected widespread global data on the number of television shows and their national origin; conducted qualitative studies on people's perceptions of countries; or analyzed the content and form of countries' popular entertainment. Essentially, because of the dearth of empirical evidence, we lack the capacity to determine how the structure of participation in this global net affects and helps determine political, economic, or cultural outcomes.

The limited empirical work that has been done shares a series of faults. Most relevant for this essay, studies of globalization have not defined an appropriate and systemic unit of analysis. How do we measure its extent? How do we define the relevant geographical and substantive areas that have been affected? Has globalization had the same reach across the globe and all fields? How should we study the effects of globalization: in the aggregate (that is, on global totals)? Are regions more appropriate? Should we count countries as the relevant units for measuring results or persons?

Since 1999 and 2006, respectively, the Princeton International Networks Archive (INA) (www.princeton.edu/~ina) and Mapping Globalization Project (MG) (http://qed.princeton.edu/main/MG) have endeavored to answer these questions by focusing on the production of empirical data. The work of these two entities is based on two critical assumptions. The first of these is that the relevant unit in globalization and the one that can provide the best grounding for a global definition of the concept is the transaction. This can be interpreted as an exchange (be it social, cultural, or financial), an international trip, or a simple phone call. The important aspect is that transactions are the basic units through which the world is connected—they represent the basic links defining the global web. However, the world's becoming more integrated is a double-edged sword for the measurement of transactions. Although many transactions take place in a given day, these are increasingly difficult to track as technology changes; for example, the rise of cell phone use makes it exceedingly difficult to track telephone usage, and increased black market–produced and –sold media complicate measures of cultural consumption.

Our second assumption is that to appreciate the particular qualities of globalization, the metaphor of a network may be most appropriate. Most literally, networks are arrangements of connections into nets, or openwork systems linking groups of points and intersecting lines. Obvious examples are the human body's circulatory network of veins or a country's arteries of rivers, canals, railways, and roads. They may also be interconnected chains or systems of immaterial things, events, or processes. A focus on networks allows us to examine the integration of economic, social, political, and cultural regimes as a process in and of itself. Viewing globalization as a network allows us to combine different forms of interaction (e.g., trade, migration, conflict) into a cohesive portrait of international integration. Finally, network methods operate under the assumption that structural position and associated characteristics are determinant. This assumption allows for a clearer analysis of the consequences of globalization for individual societies over and above endogenous factors.

Network analysis is particularly important because what is new about this contemporary phenomenon is not necessarily its reach but rather its velocity and complexity. Thanks to new technologies, the speed with which transactions take place has astronomically increased. Perhaps more important, we can no longer speak of a globalization based on a few commodities or imperial projects. Instead, contemporary globalization consists of broader sets of exchanges. The interdependence upon which these exchanges rest upon is what makes examining contemporary globalization so complex and meaningful.

By focusing on the structural map of transactions produced by globalization, we can also better understand the *relational* aspect and the relative (in)equality of exchanges. We are more interested in the "who/whom" questions rather than in how much has been produced, transported, and bought across the world. Who has called whom, in what frequency, and who else participates in, and is isolated from, this emergent group of contracts are critical aspects for understanding the impact and consequences of globalization.

Mapping Information Flows

If we are to understand the implications of the flows of information, we must first seek to map them and locate where in the process of global transmission different countries and societies may lie. Who are the senders and receivers? Do they face monopolies or monopsonies? Who is close to the center of the network and who is at the periphery? Only with such a map can we begin to measure what the costs and benefits may be of such positions.

Based on our data on international Internet routes, student transfers, trade, and other global exchanges, there is no question that there has been a revolutionary shift in the flow of information across the globe, in terms of the amount, the breadth of information, and the overall structure of exchanges. There has been a constant growth both in terms of absolutes and in terms of acceleration in global communications since 1970, particularly speeding up after 1990 and continuing to do so in the 2000s. The Internet revolution is only one part of this as we also observe dramatic increases (in both quantity and acceleration) in every possible form of communication: travel, media exchanges, Internet use, and the like. The manner in which this growth has occurred, however, is *not* random or uniform but reflects and also helps create global relations of prestige.

The network analysis of these transactions reveals a very different model from a simple "all talking to all":

- We see little evidence of Huntingtonian civilizations. Although countries with similar cultures and languages do tend to communicate more with one another, there is no structural evidence of cultural cliques or subnetworks.
- There is clear evidence of diasporic communities. Whether through strong Turkey–Germany telephone links or the export of Bollywood films to zones of Indian migration, these communities are important carriers of globalization and need to be further examined.
- The residue of empires is rapidly eroding with "Franco" and "Anglo" zones still present but not overdeterminant. The erosion of Russian cultural centrality from Eastern Europe after 1989 took perhaps less than a year.

- There are regional (not cultural in the Huntingtonian sense) networks, each developing significant subnetwork centrality. We see this in study-abroad destinations, media exchanges, and other forms of global exchange.
- Overall, one clear pattern emerges from this data: In all measures there is increasing centrality of the global rich. Network analyses of World Bank categories, for example, show that the "Global South" does not establish links within itself but concentrates on making connections to the rich.
- Not only do the developed countries enjoy multiple ties around the globe while developing ones have a single dominant partner, but we also find that even many of the "haves" are not communicating with one another—only their "have not" satellites *and* the United States.

The United States lies at the heart of this "global rich clique." This is illustrated by looking at trends in international trade.[5] In this instance we note regional concentrations not only around NAFTA, the European Union, and China/Japan but also the predominance of the United States as first among the rich. We find a similar pattern for global mergers and acquisitions.[6] Here we see that the vast majority of mergers and acquisitions occur between North America and Europe (e.g., wealthy regions), with North America having ties to Latin America and Australasia, and Europe connected to Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Australasia, and, to a lesser extent, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. Despite wealthy regions' enjoying ties with many parts of the world, virtually all the developing regions are connected to one dominant, high-income region rather than to one another. Additionally, we know that in East Asia and the Pacific there are a plethora of mergers and acquisitions, yet these areas remain isolated from other regions in a pattern that mimics economies even much less developed than the ones in East Asia. One way to interpret this pattern is through a Huntingtonian point of view wherein this is evidence of a deep divide based on culture and civilizations. We believe, however, there is another, perhaps more valuable interpretation—that this pattern reflects the ability of East Asian countries to build autonomous and intraregional networks that reflect their unique (1) institutional patterns of finance and (2) informal and formal regulations.

This pattern holds for practically every single type of transaction that we wish to analyze. For example, the United States remains a central global destination for postsecondary education, with only a handful of OECD countries dominating the rest of the student exchange market.[7] Similar concentrations may be seen in maps of transport and distribution networks. But the flows of cultural products may best illustrate the relative influence and centrality of some global actors and the marginality of the vast majority.

Mass media is, theoretically, one of the most fluid and malleable forms of globalization given its speed and distribution. However, what we find is the continued domination of the United States in a variety of media formats. For example, in 2001, 90 percent of feature films shown on television globally came from the United States; while some local programming was growing (and news remained a fairly privileged sector), Hollywood to a large extent still ruled the airwaves.[8] Not surprisingly, U.S. distributors' foreign syndication revenues rose from $500 million in 1984 to $6.5 billion in 2005.[9] The cultural domination of U.S. and Western European programming may actually be understated as even when produced locally, many shows directly borrow concepts from the richer countries. For example, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" is licensed to more than sixty countries, while "Big Brother" and "Deal or No Deal" are produced by forty-two and sixty territories respectively.[10] Most of these countries simultaneously make use of graphics, sound effects, and questions from the original show while incorporating local cultural mores. There is indisputably some "localizing" that occurs, but the "global rich" cultural footprint is quite large.

Estimates of television viewership have become increasingly problematic with the advent of Web 2.0 and sites such as YouTube, Hulu, and others that allow you to download or view television shows. Web 2.0 sites have exploded in the past five years, and not just in connection to television shows. In 2006, the globally popular YouTube was estimated to have 100 million video views and 65,000 video uploads in one day, and it accounts for 60 percent of all videos watched online—making it the largest video-sharing site on the Internet.[11] With YouTube, we do witness a more democratizing cultural flow with international videos. A prominent example may be when the recording of Filipino prisoners dancing to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" went viral.[12] The "Playing for Change" viral phenomenon is another.[13] Yet, note that even these examples show the predominance of Western cultures because in the first, the Filipinos are reenacting an American hit, while in the second, the management and direction of the video are clearly American. Rarely does one see the reverse phenomenon of American or Western Europeans reenacting something made popular in a non-Western nation, or Western performers under non-Western direction.

The United States continues also to dominate the film industry—comparing all-time non-U.S. and U.S. box office figures, the list consists solely of U.S. films, many of which overlap.[14] In total, Hollywood films account for about the majority of total industry revenues by value, with filmed entertainment serving as a major export sector for the United States—Hollywood studios now depend on overseas revenue from more than half of the returns on any investment.[15] While the music industry, coupled with Web 2.0 technology, allows for greater local product, it continues to be dominated by giants from the OECD—particularly the United States. For example, thirty-one of the fifty bestselling albums of 2008 were from U.S. artists,[16] and 2003 global market shares for music companies were as follows: BMG 11.9 percent, EMI 13.4 percent, Sony 13.2 percent, Universal 23.5 percent, Warner 12.7 percent, and independents 25.3 percent.[17] The American domination is perhaps clearest in the nomenclature used: Artists from the United States and the United Kingdom are categorized by genre; practically all others are under the generic rubric of "World Music."

Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter have also revolutionized the Internet and global communications, but the disparities between users and sites are evident.[18] Although there is regional variation among the less frequently used networking sites, among the two most popular sites—MySpace and Facebook—we see the dominance of North American and European use. In fact, one 2008 study found that 77 percent of MySpace users were from the United States, with 5 percent from the United Kingdom, 2 percent from Canada, 2 percent from Australia, 1 percent from the Philippines, and 1 percent from Mexico. Among 2007 Twitter users, we continue also to see this familiar Web 2.0 global distribution—the increasing use and connectedness of the United States, Europe, and Japan, and the virtual non-use and isolation of Africa, South America, and parts of Asia.[19] Regarding Internet links, the map of major international Internet routes reveals an almost dictionary definition of dependence.[20] Thanks to the work of TeleGeography and its mapping project, we can clearly observe three patterns: the marginalization of much of the world; the concentration on links among the "global rich," and the central role of the United States within this Internet elite.

Data on other media is much more difficult to find for recent years, except on an anecdotal basis. Two of the most obvious cases of global publishing phenomena are, of course, the "Harry Potter" and "Twilight" properties—one a U.K., the other a U.S., young adult fantasy series. Increasingly, computer software is the critical medium for accessing global information. Here, Google serves as the number one global Web parent company,[21] while Microsoft (as the parent company to Internet Explorer) accounted for 79.79 percent of global user shares in March 2009.[22] Again, the centrality of the United States is fixed in the nomenclature of global usage because only its domains do not need to specify their geographical location with a two-letter country code—this indicates both political power in Internet governance as well as dominance in information and Web pages.

We may also use both brand awareness and brand ratings as a proxy for the flow of information. The 2009 annual listing by *BusinessWeek* of the top global brands reveals the strong position of the United States, with eight of the top ten and sixteen of the top twenty-five brands being American while the remaining brands originate from top OECD countries.[23] Additionally, the top ten countries in the 2009 Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index—which measures the nature and power of a country's brand—are all OECD countries, with the United States in first place.[24]

Finally, the distribution of officially recognized cultural capital is extremely skewed. UNESCO's program to preserve "heritage sites," for example, appears to affirm European cultural superiority through its designation of places worth preserving.[25] Half of these are in Europe and North America. If we exclude "natural" sites where it is the landscape and not human creation that requires special preservation, the overrepresentation of Europe is even more extreme. The same applies for the distribution of heritage cities and of "modern" sites worthy of special attention. The sites of the Global South, particularly those of Africa and South America, are overwhelmingly not cultural or, when they are, usually products of civilizations long gone. The message is clear: Of the past five centuries, only the "culture" produced by Europeans is worth preserving.

Consequences

Whether one divides the countries of the world into emergent groups or network cliques, one finds that the United States is the only one that communicates with all groups. It occupies the critical role of a structural hole, serving as the bridge between different regions and groups.

The next obvious question is what could be the consequences of this network structure. Let us take NAFTA as an example. Over the past fifteen years, all the members of NAFTA have seen dramatic increases in their international integration. What is remarkably different, however, is that while for Mexico and Canada, NAFTA has become more central to their international network, for the United States it has become arguably less so. If network dependence is power, then the relative position of the United States vis-à-vis its partners is increased. The United States now needs Mexico and Canada less than those countries need it, and this has become even more so over the past decade.

This is not to deny the rise of non-American globalization. A favorite example of this is the ubiquity of sushi restaurants and other national cuisines, in which the rise of these foods is associated with both diasporic communities as well as increases in cultural capital—for example, the rise of Japan's social and cultural standing and the rise of sushi popularity. While it is a cliché to remark on the McDonaldsization of global diets, sushi presents a case of globalization from other sources. Similarly, globalization—and increased travel between countries—provides opportunities for aspects of previously isolated cultures to be shared globally. As mentioned above, the very success of U.S. media on the global markets means that non-American tastes have to be factored into production; we may also be seeing the development of a dual market structure for global information and entertainment products, where one (mostly consisting of the global "North") purchases the project, while the other consumes the same, but pirated, media.[26] We would still argue, however, that the central strands tying these globalization processes together are American.

Many have spoken of the critical importance of this American "soft power" and the importance of consolidating and institutionalizing this influence in noncoercive ways. While there have been travel restrictions post-9/11 and anti-American reactions toward U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq, we also have observed the global celebration of President Barack Obama's election, the subsequent (and almost immediate) rise in America's image, and the Nobel Peace Prize's being awarded to Obama shortly after his assumption of the presidency. We are also seeing the rise of competing educational centers in Western Europe and East Asia (particularly China). But even in the fluctuations of anti-/pro-American attitudes and in the educational threat to American "hegemony," the depth of America's centrality is evident: The books and sources used in these alternative centers of relearning tend to be American, and the global impact and influence of America—its political, social, and military policies—are evident, despite fluctuations in popularity. The evidence we have indicates that American centrality is quite robust. This may be permanently altered by the spectacle of the economic failure of 2008, but in the absence of any global competitor, American dominance appears safe.

What are the consequences of this network for inequality between countries? The empirical debate has divided those who use each country as a single and equivalent unit and those who weigh values by populations. Utilizing the former, there is considerable evidence for growing inequality between the already rich nations and the more developing countries. If we assign the rapidly growing economies of India and China their appropriate population weight, the trend is reversed. The rise of these economies and the economic catastrophe that began in the United States may signal the beginning of a reversal of American cultural hegemony. But despite the increasingly important roles assumed by the new economic players, their roles are still constrained.

The INA and MG are particularly interested in assigning specific quantitative values to network position so as to test statistically the relationship between network position and economic growth. Here, the critical test is to what extent the differing economic outcomes for East Asia and

Latin America may be explained by their network position and regional structure—though it's not inconceivable that these factors are decreasing in importance.

What about inequality within countries? Once again, position within the network is critical. The creation of a global brand or standard and possibilities to re-create a nation's image are opening up opportunities for fortunate members of all societies (no matter their geographical location) to participate in the global marketplace. The possession of the cultural capital—the right university degree and the mastery of the appropriate languages—provides many the unheard-of opportunity to be a "global" citizen, something that we have seen is, in fact, rooted in American centrality and necessarily requires technological access. The question is whether these opportunities are available in such a manner as to reduce domestic inequality. Here the outlook is not optimistic. The disparity between those with access to the global marketplace and those without it can only exacerbate existing divisions.

The skill and technical costs of entry into this global marketplace are ever deepening the gulf between the haves and the have-nots, both *between* and *within* societies. Two measures of this include Internet connectivity and English literacy. The chances of one's being able to become a citizen of the world without access to English, or to the Internet (and the two may, in fact, be equivalent), are quite low. Despite improvement in the "digital divide" within the rich countries, we see no evidence of its being reduced in the Global South—particularly in Latin America. There, phone—much less Internet—penetration remains stubbornly low. What we do see is perhaps the creation of a dual system of global citizenship. The dominant class travels legally in comfort and manages the global system of flows of information while enjoying the benefits of life with the rich; the lower classes also travel the world—if only to escape the poverty of their countries—but they travel in search of employment that allows them to send home remittances to sustain their families.

Thus, international flows of informational resources produce inequality on two levels:

- It has consolidated nation-level inequality between the "center" and the "periphery."

- Within individual countries, including those in the North, it has also exacerbated inequalities between those citizens able to participate in the global economy and those not able to do so.

The consequences of globalization may be even more complex. Precisely because of the massive flows of information and media, we live in a unique moment in history. Neither globalization nor inequality is new, but the ability of the poorest to witness the lifestyle of the global rich and, conversely, the inability of the rich to isolate themselves leave the future of the global system uncertain—will inequality at this level of visibility continue to sustain itself, or will increasing knowledge of how the "other side" lives be a catalyst for sustained political, social, and cultural change?

Notes

1. One search through the ProQuest Research Library database found 11,110 scholarly articles whose topic was globalization. If you include magazines, trade publications, newspapers, and reference/reports, the search yields 21,510 documents.

2. In actuality, we realize that the Internet does, in fact, contain hubs; however, the image of a randomized Internet network best exemplifies the idea of a corner deli society.

3. The dialogue is as follows:

VINCENT VEGA: [Y]ou know what the funniest thing about Europe is?

JULES WINNFIELD: What?

VINCENT VEGA: It's the little differences. I mean they got the same shit over there that they got here, but it's just, just there it's a little different.

JULES WINNFIELD: Example.

VINCENT VEGA: Alright, well you can walk into a movie theater and buy a beer. And, I don't mean just like a paper cup, I'm talking about a glass of beer. And, in Paris, you can buy a beer in McDonald's. You know what they call a Quarter Pounder with Cheese in Paris?

JULES WINNFIELD: They don't call it a Quarter Pounder with Cheese?

VINCENT VEGA: No, man, they got the metric system, they don't know what the fu** a Quarter Pounder is.

JULES WINNFIELD: What do they call it?

VINCENT VEGA: They call it a Royale with Cheese.

JULES WINNFIELD: Royale with Cheese.

VINCENT VEGA: That's right.

JULES WINNFIELD: What do they call a Big Mac?

VINCENT VEGA: Big Mac's a Big Mac, but they call it Le Big Mac.

JULES WINNFIELD: Le Big Mac. What do they call a Whopper?

VINCENT VEGA: I don't know. I didn't go into Burger King.

4. James L. Watson writes, in his article "McDonald's in Hong Kong" in *The Globalization Reader* (2008) about how the sanitation and cleanliness of McDonald's bathrooms raised consumers' expectations, thus changing local rivals' bathroom standards, and how its marketing to children transformed aspects of familial patterns in Hong Kong.

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