

The Limits of Cultural Globalisation?¹

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The proliferation of studies on virtually every aspect of globalisation has not clarified the central terminological conundrum of the field. Globalisation studies do not share a univocal set of terms and concepts, so that the loose usage of the very term globalisation has led to polysemy and homonymy. Accordingly, 'globalisation' is now used to describe everything and its opposite, from the Roman Empire to WWI, from cosmopolitan behaviour to Genghis Khan's conquests, and even the Neolithic age. The task of critical globalisation studies should thus be to re-contextualize the phenomenon and re-locate it where it belongs. In contrast, the term Americanisation has been used more sparsely, therefore maintaining an autonomous conceptual strength. However, both manufactured opinion and scholarly studies tend to argue that globalisation and Americanisation are wholly distinct phenomena. Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) have adamantly defended that they are not vehicles of Americanisation and that the result of their actions in neoliberal markets is rather a form of 'indigenization' or 'domestication' through adaptation to local cultures. Similarly, much of the globalisation literature has not come to term with the unidirectional nature of globalisation in the field of culture. This article argues that both globalisation and Americanisation should be historicized, and their respective trajectories identified as beginning in distinct epochs, operating through waves of diffusion and within specific ideological frameworks, and culminating in periods of military and economic expansion. Finally, I argue that, if cultural globalisation is studied in tandem with Americanisation, it can be conceptually circumscribed and its finite nature better identified.

The proliferation of studies on virtually every aspect of globalisation has not clarified the central terminological conundrum. This article identifies three main areas of confusion: globalisation's time scale, the confusion between globalisation as a practice and

globalisation as an ideology (both in its neo-liberal and cosmopolitan varieties), and, finally, the distinction between cultural forms of globalisation and Americanisation, as the two often overlap. In contrast with much current literature, I date globalisation back, at most, to the post-1948 international agreements marking the global triumph of American power, and culminating in the demise of the Soviet bloc. I shall begin by tackling briefly the problem of periodization, followed by the distinction between the ideology and practice of globalisation, and then concentrate for the rest of the article on differentiating cultural globalisation from Americanisation, while noting the close similarities between the two.

Task 1: Setting the right time scale, resisting *global primordialism*

Possibly the greatest obstacle in the study of globalisation is the terminological chaos surrounding not merely the definition of globalisation but its very time span and duration. In fact, I argue that the two are closely interrelated. If we do not know when globalisation began, then we are unable to understand what globalisation is. For, if we think, as some authors do, that the Roman Empire entailed forms of globalisation, what use is such an expanded definition of the concept for understanding our present predicament? Similarly, what is the usefulness of arguing that Genghis Khan, 'the world conqueror' and 'the emperor of all men', inaugurated the pattern of 'modern' globalisation (Weatherford, 2004, p.16), if not to de-historicize the concept? Why should long-distance contact during late antiquity be described as 'incipient globalisation' (Harris 2007)? In this vein, even the Neolithic age could be invoked to promote an enlarged version of globalisation. We can indefinitely shift back the rise of globalisation to the expansion of the first forms of plankton 'colonizing' the planet.

Borrowing from the nationalist studies literature, this backward looking attitude can be defined as 'primordialism'. Primordialism is the claim that modern entities and institutions, particularly nations and ethnic communities, originate back in the distant past as intrinsic, given features of human societies (Horowitz, 2004), often based on factual 'lines of physical descent' (Smith 1998, p.192), also cited in (Brown 2000, p.164). Most 'primordialists' are nationalists themselves and have vested interests in exaggerating or falsifying the origins of their nations, while imagining thousand-year continuities and, eventually, describing national communities as 'natural' forms of human organization. The related concept of *perennialism* can also be used to identify a community, institution or phenomenon as immemorial and everlasting "insofar as *recurrent instances* of this formation could be found in various periods of history and in different continents" (Smith 1998, p.190). Although not all primordialists and perennialists are nationalists, they share a common perception that nations and nationhood are pre-political and ancient. And, although some comparative historians concur in stretching the rise of

nations before modernity (Hastings, 1997), the majority of 'primordialists' work from within other disciplines, or entirely outside academia. These are important, yet often unnoticed, parallels between the use and abuse of key concepts within both nationalism studies and globalisation studies.²

Although its roots can be traced back to the political economic choices inaugurated by the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944 (Korten, 2001), globalisation as such is more recent: Bretton Woods set the basis for the International Monetary Fund (IMF, f. 1944) and the World Bank (f. 1944), establishing, in the IMF's own words, a system of "global surveillance activities" (IMF 2007). In Western Europe, the Marshall Plan (1947–51) pushed for the transfer of the US industrial management model (Kipping and Bjarnar 1998). As argued by Saskia Sassen (1996, p.20):

The most widely recognized instance of Americanisation is seen... in the profound influence U.S. popular culture exerts on global culture. But it has also become very clear in the legal forms ascendant in international business transactions. Through the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), as well as the GATT, the U.S. vision has spread to - some would say been imposed on - the developing world".³

As is known, these initial agreements were implemented during different stages, rather than suddenly. In the wake of Reagan's mid-1980s deregulation campaign, the consumer's legal protections established approximately since the Progressive Era (1890s–1920s) were dramatically reversed. After the 1970s energy crisis, studies sponsored by various institutions in the US, like the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution, began to preach deregulation at all levels of society. Since the 1980s, famous economists like Milton Friedman advocated a global, free market 'shock doctrine' (Klein, 2007). Although Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter all played a part in advancing 'trade liberalisation', it was under the Reagan presidency that the doctrinaire and global character of deregulation became explicit and inflexible. Ideologically based on a further reduction of government spending and state regulation of the economy, 'Reaganomics' was advanced during the Cold War by all the above international institutions. Structural adjustment loans (SALs) were used to "blast open Third World economies once "the Reagan Administration came to power with an agenda to discipline the Third World" " (Bello, 1999, p.27; See also p.16).

The process continued under George H.W. Bush. During the Clinton presidency, globalisation accelerated and expanded so aggressively that voices of concern began to coalesce and organize throughout the world, by articulating popular movements as in Seattle and elsewhere (Gill, 2000; Halliday, 2000; Kaldor, 2000; Scholte, 2000). Most importantly, hard science began to highlight the catastrophic impact of

globalisation on climate change (Barkin 2003; Depardon and Virilio 2008; Lipschutz & Peck, 2009).⁴ But this global opposition was indefinitely halted during the 'War on Terror', which froze debate and distracted public opinion into a global security scare (Lipschutz, 2009; Lustick, 2006), reinforcing the already present totalitarian drift of globalisation (Barber, 1996). American-led globalisation then turned into war (Barkawi, 2006), with its indissociable component of cultural hegemony (Bartholomew 2006). For Stieger (2005a, p.xii), "the remarkable merger of Clintonian neo-liberalism and the Bush administration neoconservative security agenda marked the birth of imperial globalism. Indeed, after 9/11, the link between globalism and the U.S. empire became apparent to the rest of the world in a stark new light". Globalism's agenda became less 'hidden' and the humiliation suffered by many victims of the 'war on terror' prompted early calls for global revenge, which in turn reinforced the spread of media-induced obsessive delusions (Smith, 2006). Residual cosmopolitan hopes waned as post 9-11 globalisation oscillated between obedience to US diktats and open anti-Americanism. In turn, this prompted a larger nationalistic backlash which ripped Europe at its core.

The impact of Reaganomics on cultural practices was perhaps even more extensive than in the economic and financial fields. In Reagan's years, the robust nexus between politics, economics, military and the expansion of mass consumerism was amplified through the media industry (Barber, 2008; Moffitt, 1987). For some, 1985 became a watershed year for global Americanisation or, at least, a rapid acceleration in trend (Hilger, 2008; Schröter, 2008a), but the same trend was experienced at different times and levels in different countries. Global deregulation led to the collapse of native film industries, which in most European and many Asian countries began to be massively replaced by products launched in the US via mass distribution agencies. Thus the 1980s marked "a period of pivotal transformation for the media industry", as "Hollywood embraced the global marketplace and came to depend on this market to recoup spiralling production costs" (Holt, 2002, p.26).⁵ However, this sort of 'revolution' began to affect most other forms of popular expression through a 'culture-ideology of consumerism' (Sklair, 2001, p.255-301), which, for some authors, was bent on destroying democracy at its very core (Barber, 2008). The ideological content of globalisation and its various offshoots, like consumerism, is addressed in the next section. In some countries, deregulation prompted the collapse of the local creative industries and their replacement by media monopolies under US supervision, like in Berlusconi's Italy (Ginsborg, 2004; Gray, 1996; Hopkin, 2005; Pasquino, 2005).⁶

To sum up, I have stressed that the inception of *cultural globalisation* can be dated back to various post-war periods, but the 1980s should be particularly stressed as a time when deregulation of the entertainment industry rapidly accelerated, increasing its dependency on foreign markets in order to compensate for the high production costs and the diminution of support at home.

Task 2: Distinguishing ideology from praxis. Globalism vs. Globalisation?

As a first step, *globalisation*, the actual practice of corporate power, must be disentangled from *globalism*, its accompanying ideology. For the globalist ideologue, globalisation is largely an integrative process, leading to convergence, efficiency, development and, generally, more harmony. In fact, the ideology underpins and legitimates the expansion of mega-corporations without any possible restraints except from other, more powerful, mega-corporations. The vision of globalisation as an integrative process has been tacitly or overtly assumed within globalisation studies from its very inception in the 1990s. However, the distinction between globalisation as praxis and globalisation as ideology is crucial in order to understand what globalisation means and how globalisation can be 'spun' from a predetermined, one-sided, partisan ideological angle. A few authors have addressed globalism as a distinctive ideology. In particular, Manfred B. Steger has heuristically distinguished it from the process of globalisation itself (Steger, 2002; 2005b; See also Rupert, 2000).⁷

On the other hand, the 'domain' 'globalism' has been pre-emptively seized by yet another brand of globalisation apologists. The 'neo-liberal' IR school has attempted to appropriate the term globalism, associating it with the notion of "complex interdependence", rather than to any unilateral or unidirectional phenomenon which would 'risk' identifying a more precise causal nexus (Keohane and Nye, 2001). For instance, Nye (2000, p.112) partly rejects the idea that globalism can be "a network with an American hub" hurrying to reassure us that globalisation does not lead to US-led homogenization.

The agenda seems rather like another apology for neo-liberalism and other free-market ideologies. Can globalism thus be seen as identical to neo-liberalism? For some, the very neo-liberal ideology serves to legitimize the global spread of inequalities and instability (Kaplinsky, 2005), ultimately leading to a global crisis of the state (Rapley, 2004). Samir Amin goes further by describing even more traditional forms of liberalism as Western domination.⁸ Thus, globalisation is synonymous with Westernization, particularly Americanisation, while the post 9-11 US wars are described as manifestations of 'really-existing globalized liberalism' (Amin 2004; Mosler & Catley 2000).⁹

For the globalists, the list of benefits one can gain from globalisation is unlimited. Its tools include free trade, deregulation, privatization, liberalization, financialization of previously state-bound markets, and the unfettered expansion of the capitalist mode of production, culminating in the corporatization of the remaining public sector (health, transportation, telecommunication, etc). These have certainly produced great economic rewards for those who could take advantage of the new rules.

In the field of culture, the ideology pushes for a total overhaul of local cultural productions, previously tied to regional and national markets and in some cases subject

to central state regulation, but subsequently left to the mercy of corporate expansion.¹⁰ This has remained one of the constant conditions that the IMF and World Bank attached to their developmental support packages, particularly those imposed on the poorest countries. In the cultural arena, the removal of trade barriers has led to the unfettered preponderance of American items of mass consumption and to the virtual erasure of millions of local cultural producers, an event that has been presented as an ineluctable step on the road to further development. This had led not to the kind of globalisation envisioned by cosmopolitan theorists, but rather to the assertion of a cultural hyperpower. The reinforcement of ethnic boundaries has replaced the supposed encounter, melange and inter-change (Conversi, 1999; 2009c). Moreover, after 2001, state powers have been reinforced worldwide, simultaneously with the further militarization of American society and, consequently, other societies.

In other words, if globalisation is meant as something more than naked corporate and American power, any alternative pluralist vision of globalisation has been conceptually limited by Americanisation, insofar as the two have tended to overlap. In the next section, I explore this relationship.

Task 3: Historicising Americanisation as the broader context

Susan Strange (1996, p.xiii) perceptively observed that globalisation “can refer to anything from the Internet to a hamburger. All too often, it is a polite euphemism for the continuing Americanisation of consumer tastes and cultural practices.” This section aims to contribute to the still under-theorized study of the cultural impact of ‘really existing globalisation’ as a variety of Americanisation, a key 20th century transformation whose surprising absence from scholarly debate and literature is in itself revealing. Stephen Mennell (2009) agrees that globalisation and Americanisation should be jointly studied in ‘long’-term’ perspective, while for Jan Nederveen Peterse (2008; 2009b), the US drove globalisation approximately from 1945 to 2000, when globalisation *was* synonymous with Americanisation and Westernization- although ‘hybridity’, ‘flexible acculturation’ and ‘global *mélange*’ allegedly prevailed after 2001.

In recent years, several studies have been devoted to the critical analysis of ‘Americanisation’ in various areas (Barber, 1996; 2009; De Grazia, 2005; Stonor Saunders, 1999; Wagnleitner, 1994). Some of these have explored the response to Americanisation either as the enthusiastic embrace of, or as the embittered rejection of, Americanism. But the consequences of cultural Americanisation remain among the least studied, yet most critical, aspects of globalisation. I argue that the global spread of Americanisation can be articulated with some precision through distinctive stages of expansion, followed by periods of relative and momentary recession, in turn followed by more massive forms of expansion. Americanisation is thus the broader conceptual

framework that encapsulates various interconnected phenomena, among which globalisation emerges as one of the most important.

American power has reshaped the world order in subsequent stages and continents: in Latin America and parts of Asia after the defeat of Spain (1898), in Western Europe after World War 1 and Versailles (1919), at a more global and deeper level after the end of World War 2 (1945) and, finally, in most of the world after the demise of the Cold War (1991). According to Schröter (2008a; 2008b), Europe experienced three main waves of Americanisation. The first was in the 1920s, coinciding with the rise of fascism, totalitarianism, the adoption of economic rationalization aimed at increasing competitiveness and efficiency (Taylorism, Fordism) and media-induced alteration of mass behaviour (Hollywood, Citizen Kane, cigarette smoking, advertising techniques, and so on).¹¹

The second wave took place in the period of economic expansion from 1949 to 1973 (Barjot, 2002; Barjot et al, 2002; Berghahn, 1986; Djelic, 1998; Schröter 2008a), when most West European societies experienced unprecedented shifts in their lifestyles. In this period, “new ideas, theories, and material practices produced in the public consciousness a similar sense of rupture with the past that had occurred at the time of the French Revolution” (Steger 2009, p.xx). The Italian writer and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) described in apocalyptic terms these dramatic and irreversible changes by observing the sudden shift in working-class values and daily behaviour (Casarino, 2009; Celati and Pasolini, 2009; Pasolini, 1975; Pinar, 2009). For Giovanni Sartori (1997; 2003), the new changes were related to the unreflective (nearly automatic) mass adoption of compulsive behaviour instigated by the television, with the possibility of a nearly-genetic mutation from ‘*homo sapiens*’ to ‘*homo videns*’.

The final wave of Americanisation in Europe lasted from about 1985 until the present, when US legal norms, military power and cultural industries became all-pervasive (Schröter 2005). In each phase, Americanisation deepened, encountering less and less resistance until it became a normal feature of the European scene, with 9/11 providing further stimulus for global corporate control of consumer tastes and attitudes.

The above tripartite division applies to both the cultural and the economic spheres, including an account of why Hollywood and the US entertainment industry dethroned its European rivals after the 1920s (Schörter, 2008a) - admittedly with a few exceptions like sport.

Accordingly, Americanisation preceded what we, but not the ‘global primordialists’, generally intend as globalisation. If Americanisation materialized and expanded before globalisation, can globalisation be described as one of the many consequences and aspects of Americanisation? Is globalisation thus inconceivable without Americanisation? If we firmly stand by our definition and division in historical stages, the answer is largely yes: in its present-day form, globalisation could not have

taken place without the preceding export of profit-prizing values, norms and ideology first conceived and applied by US elites.

Americanisation, like globalisation, operates at various levels (economic, legal, political, military, ethical-moral). Of all these aspects, I consider cultural globalisation the primary area of concern if only because 'culture' embraces a large enough area to cover most aspects of globalisation. To this purpose, *culture* is intended here as an open process made of values, skills, crafts, norms, general and particular knowledge, as well as material items, which are transmitted, but also enriched, from one generation to another. In turn, generational rupture leads to cultural loss and, eventually, to the extinction of human knowledge - with often an exclusive stress on business and management knowledge. As a consequence, cultural globalisation affects directly and to various degrees most forms of cultural expression, in ways that can vary from marginalization and hybridization to cultural destruction and obliteration.

Already in the late 1950s, the pioneer and founder of cultural studies, Richard Hoggart, identified Americanisation's profit-driven 'ethics', irrespective of the human costs, as having a largely destructive impact on British working class life (Hoggart, 1957).¹² His concerns have been wholly vindicated by a stream of data indicating the erosion and near collapse of British working class values and culture year by year till the present.¹³ The post-war Americanisation wave engulfed Britain before, and perhaps more densely, than many other countries. But Hoggart's analysis tied well with a broader European critique of Americanisation as inspiring wider forms of societal violence.

Before further exploring 'Americanized' globalisation, we need to address the multiple ways in which the concept of Americanisation can be used. Traditionally, Americanisation applies to the process of *acculturation* occurring among immigrants and minorities within American society. Educational scholars, sociologists, anthropologists and linguists have often used the term 'Americanisation' in this sense. At least in the past, it had strong ideological and patriotic connotations of newcomers accepting a 'superior culture' (Talbot, 1917), sometimes with an idealistic spin towards a universal consciousness transcending the boundaries of ethnicity (Aronovici, 1919).

There are other ways in which an inaccurate or careless use of the term 'Americanisation' can yield problematic results. A major problem of 'geo-political correctness' arises because US influence (what we call Americanisation) within America as a continent has been so decisive as to metaphorically obliterate the rest of the continent - often even in the rhetorical discourse of those for whom 'America' is an entirely negative reference.¹⁴ Yet another problem with 'Americanisation' is that it tends to underscore two opposed ideological statements: on the one hand, we have the US patriotic élan working under the cloak of benevolent missionary imperialism. This stresses the positive 'civilizing process' resulting from the spread of American values, artefacts and icons of mass consumption. On the other hand, mirror-image anti-

Americanism can seize on the theme of Americanisation as an entirely negative phenomenon, but is often incapable of delineating its contours. Competing terms, including 'cultural globalisation', often tend to be used a-historically, overlooking the unidirectional aspects of globalisation, hiding processes of assimilation, as well as the inegalitarian and hierarchical structure of global cultural production and consumption.

A widely used alternative is to refer to a specific brand, rather than to an entire country or a continent. Thus, the successful Weberian concept of bureaucratic '*McDonaldization*' (Alfino et al, 1998; Hayes and Wynyard, 2002; Ritzer, 1996; 2006; Smart, 1999) faces competitors like '*Disneyfication*' or '*Disneyization*', with a stress on extreme predictability and the *infantilization* of leisure (Bryman, 2004; Schweizer, 1998), '*Walmarting*' as the streamlining of the retail sector through supply-chaining (Ehrenreich, 2001; Fishman, 2006), or earlier Cold War terms like '*Coca-Colonization*' (Wagnleitner, 1994).¹⁵ The term *Hollywoodization* has encountered more resonance in the media world, although it is less systematically used in globalisation studies (Knight, 2003). All these equally refer to socio-economic trends originated in the US and following US patterns, hence as forms of Americanisation.¹⁶ Since all these alternative terminologies refer to Americanisation, I shall stick to the latter umbrella term.

On the other hand, because of the problems discussed above, the term Americanisation has been used more sparingly, therefore maintaining an autonomous conceptual strength. Both corporate propaganda and mainstream globalisation studies tend to argue that globalisation and Americanisation are wholly distinct phenomena. MNCs adamantly insist that they endorse forms of 'indigenization' through adaptation to local cultures, rather than being vehicles of Americanisation. Typically, local outlets of fast food giants would add a local flavour to their standard American-style menu, while modifying food consumption habits of an entire generation and of entire continents.

Similarly, much of the globalisation literature has not come to terms with the unidirectional nature of cultural globalisation, particularly in the fields of mass behaviour and consumption habits. The very terms '*glocalism*' and '*glocalisation*' as applied to the field of 'intercultural' encounters describe globalisation's compatibility with the maintenance of local cultures. This, as I endeavour to demonstrate, is largely a distortion and a myth. Most local cultures have not been left untouched by globalisation. Some have survived, while others have been damaged beyond repair, as has the physical, social and natural environment around them. In the cultural field, globalisation is far from being an egalitarian, multilateral and multidirectional development, since moves in any such cosmopolitan direction have been largely prevented by the Americanisation of mass culture. In the blender of globalist de-realizations, Americanisation seems to be increasingly challenged by 'indigenous' practices and products through processes of vernacularization, domestication and hybridization (Appadurai, 1996, p.81). However, the latter have customarily to Americanize their appearance in order to survive in the

market.

For instance, despite claims that it heralds a national assertion of Indian identity, the very designation 'Bollywood' visibly echoes, and originates from, its American namesake. Although Bollywood is a broad concept including varieties of regional productions, its cultural content increasingly impersonates American tastes, rules, behaviour, norms, customs and fashions (Rao, 2007). It is also a fertile terrain for both nationalist and globalist claims, since Hindu ultra-nationalists and globalists fully converge in granting 'Bollywood' a patent of 'Indianness' (Rajadhyaksha, 2003; Ranganathan and Lobo, 2008). Militant *Hindutva* groups use it to promote an image of India "among the most powerful nations in global modernity" in an effort to subvert, essentialize and homogenize contemporary Indian culture (McDonald, 2003, p.1563). At the same time, ethnographic works have shown *how* the *artificial* elitism of the highly Westernized, consumerist, urban middle class portrayed in these films is *often* grasped by non-elite audiences, who discern in them "the brand logic of transnational capital which is redefining the meaning of the masses" (Rao, 2007, p.57).

Corporate populism, the neo-liberal rhetoric of 'let's give to the people what they *really* want', is central to the claim that mega-corporations can fit into the local through strategies of 'glocalization'. Corporate populist claims are articulated through an ideology specifically wrought to tear down the traditional barriers of both local cultures and national communities (Steger, 2002). Yet, indigenized forms of 'Americana' have been even more 'effective' in destroying local cultures as they could more easily be camouflaged behind a mask of national indigenouness. Again, the study of 'Americanization via indigenization' would deserve much more extensive work, which is beyond the possibility of this article.

Most important, the reach and preponderance of American models, norms and notions transcend the failure of neo-liberalism, the end of deregulation, and the limits of free market fundamentalism. Americanisation persists in multiple ways: the financial crisis has not halted its spread and protectionist temptations have not resulted in the fencing of indigenous cultural markets. In fact, Americanisation is so deeply entrenched that it seems immune to recession. Since 2008 many US-led franchising companies have continued to grow with thousands of new outlets opening across the globe: McDonald's reported a 80% global profit rise in 2008 and further expansion in 2009, reaching an all-time high in 2010. The huge profits occurred just when people began suffering malnutrition or "eating down" to meet budget cuts, while thousands of small independent businesses were forced to close down by a combination of market competition and lack of fiscal protection. If one would judge from McDonald's net profits, recession has been either a media lie or a phenomenon affecting someone else. But to more traditional, independent businesses the blow has proved fatal.

Like the US military machine, US cultural influence knows no rivals. But the

latter's impact has been even less questioned than the former's. While the extent of anti-US resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq has shown that the US is "not invincible" (Bello, 2005), no comparable show of resilience to cultural Americanisation has yet taken place. It is thus premature to entertain notions of a 'post-American world' (Zakaria, 2008) and even conceive a decline of US global hegemony (Nederveen Pieterse, 2008; 2009a; 2009b; Shor, 2010). Paradoxically, concerns for American decline are a recurrent obsession amongst US conservatives. The far-reaching impact of Americanisation can be further seen in two radically opposite, and increasingly merging, areas: music and the law.

Music and the Law

Early advocates of neo-liberal globalisation typically censured hypotheses that the trend was unidirectional. In response to predictable concerns, they proposed the existence of truisms like 'world music' or the banal example of *telenovelas* export as a "testimony to the fact that globalisation leads to cultural diffusion in all directions" (Giddens, 2006, p.621). The 'disembedding' of cultural practices from their original environment posed no obvious problem to those authors who were not interested in actual practices of cultural reproduction and inter-generational transmission. For instance, 'world music' appeared to some as a genuine form of fusion and encounter, yet it has remained confined to a small cosmopolitan clientele, which often 'consumed' the music in a de-contextualized environment, far away from the cultural setting in which it was originally conceived. On the other hand, air travel and disembeddedness increased the opportunities for genuine blending, sharing, amalgamation and adventurous innovation. But this occurred independently from the logic of a deregulated market, indeed it occurred *in spite of* it. The artists' tenuous links with increasingly standardized audiences and global/'massified' publics couldn't halt their growing marginalization as they tried to resist the advance of corporate power.

In the field of music, 'fusion' most often occurs independently from, and contrary to, 'market' pressures. It happens every time a musician encounters another fellow musician from a distant musical tradition, so that their encounter can give rise to a generous blending of styles. Yet, its actual occurrence owes more to the possibility of travel and to the visionary élan of its organizers and ideators, than to any intrinsic trend within neoliberal globalisation.¹⁷ For instance, Spanish flamenco has spontaneously merged with salsa, samba, jazz, Moroccan *chaabi* and the music of Mali, whereas Neapolitan songs have combined with Sephardic chants, reggae and Congolese beat.¹⁸ In fact, all these traditions had in turn resulted from centuries of inter-cultural exchanges.

Before the First World War, *tango* and *opera* spread far beyond their cultural core (Argentina and Italy). They were both Western and Westernizing forms of music, but not export items by US mass cultural industries. They belonged to a genre that

differed in scope and intensity from 'globalisation' as they both spread before the US victory in the First World War, in other words, before 'the American century' began. The early 20th century craze for *tango* spread from the backstreets of Buenos Aires through Argentinean expatriates to Parisian high society and hence to most of the Western world and beyond (Denniston, 2007; Ferrer, 1996). Opera had reached the world stage even before (Bianconi and Pestelli, 2003); and, in its wake, Neapolitan songs began to be internationally acclaimed since at least the 1880s (Lancaster, 2005). One can think of unlimited cases of *cultural diffusion* (as opposed to cultural globalisation) and human history is inseparable from episodes of rapid or slow adoption by one or more outlying societies of specific modes of cultural production and cultural items from a particular geographical area.¹⁹ Beginning with classical anthropology, the literature on cultural diffusion is vast, and entirely beyond the scope of this article.²⁰ Cultural globalisation sharply differs in intensity, quantity, scope and reaches from previous phenomena of cultural diffusion and, as we have seen, it can be dated to a specific period.²¹

Fusion is itself distinct from the new unilateral cultural globalisation which operates within a single cultural matrix. In fact, it does not remotely have the same reach in terms of mass audience. The evidence of this dynamic, if circumscribed, reality is provided by the limited availability of concerts, as well as CDs, DVDs, blu-ray discs and other forms of technological supports. But such innovative exceptions only confirm the broader homogenization rule.

In the even more crucial field of law, there has been discussion concerning the expanding impact of the Anglo-American legal system on the rest of the world. The system is clearly hegemonic since the dominant legal codes, thought and norms influence local, national, and international laws, so that it is fully legitimate to speak of the 'globalisation of American law' (Kelemen & Sibbitt, 2004). In fact, Daniel Kelemen (2006, p.102) agrees that "although most Europeans may feel secure in their immunity to this 'American Disease', there are increasing indications that the American legal style is spreading across Europe". For instance, the US system of litigation and judicialization has entered the European Court of Justice. This has wide implications for individual citizens operating at all levels of society. For instance, US corporations in the entertainment industry have acquired increasing leverage on every European national legal system in order to protect their corporate interests (Witt, 2004). The spread of US corporate deresponsibilization through the twisting of national legal systems has reached well beyond mere entertainment into food consumption and health habits, with, for instance, US legal rules being pushed to overhaul the European ban on genetically modified food.²²

Saskia Sassen has argued that the prevalence of Anglo-American law is interrelated with

... the rationalization of arbitration know-how, the ascendance of large Anglo-

American transnational legal services firms, and the emergence of a new speciality in conflict resolution. The large Anglo-American law firms that dominate the international market of business law include arbitration as one of the array of services they offer ... The growing importance in the 1980s of such transactions as mergers and acquisitions, as well as antitrust and other litigation, contributed to a new specialization: knowing how to combine judicial attacks and behind-the-scenes negotiations to reach the optimum outcome for the client. (1996, p.21; see also Sassen, 2000, p.95).

Again, since the 1980s deregulation and the 'shock doctrine' of savage capitalism have twisted and altered national laws throughout the world (Klein, 2007). In such an unbalanced situation, the transnational spread of business cannot be matched by the trans-nationalisation of regulatory systems (Snyder, 2000).

However, the very idea that legal Americanisation is occurring at all is strongly resisted by neo-conservative opinion-makers, who are aware of the European public's resistance to any such suggestion. Thus, the neo-conservative scholar Robert A. Kagan denies that there has been any form of Americanisation of European public and private law (Kagan, 2007). Kagan, who famously used the metaphor of 'weak', Venus-like Europeans vs. 'strong', martial, Mars-like Americans (See Kagan 2003), is here being consistent with his view of feminized Europe as another planet, recalcitrant, and immune from the more advanced norms of the masculine American system. Like many globalisation and IR scholars, Kagan typically describes globalisation as different from Americanisation. In sum, most suggestions that the world has been impermeable to the 'globalisation of American law' are predicated on the lack of attention to actual legal change. Even more groundless appear to be similar suggestions in relation to the music industry.

Conclusions

This article has argued that the terminological conundrum associated with globalisation studies derives from three main factors: (1) An imprecise chronological sequence incongruently dating the beginning of globalisation back to different epochs and centuries. (2) A failure to distinguish globalisation as an ideology and globalisation as a practice. (3) A disinclination to regard Americanisation as being central to the globalising process. Both globalisation and Americanisation should be historicized and their respective trajectories identified as beginning in distinct epochs, operating through waves of diffusion and within specific ideological frameworks, and culminating in periods of military, cultural and economic expansion. Although it is impossible to claim that anything prior to 1980 was not "true" globalisation, the 1980s saw a rapid acceleration of

pre-existing trends, which encountered discontinuous, and mostly ineffective, forms of resistance. However, the institutional basis of this new shift in intensity had been already established in the post-war period.

After noticing how cultural globalisation has been uncritically treated within globalisation studies, this article has addressed the dominant form of cultural globalisation, namely Americanisation. I have argued that, if cultural globalisation is studied in tandem with Americanisation, it can be conceptually circumscribed and its finite nature better identified. US domination through Americanisation is identified as the broader historical context encompassing various phases of military, cultural and economic expansion, of which globalisation is the latest incarnation.

In particular I claimed that, if cultural globalisation is to be intended as a cosmopolitan fusion and encounter, that is, beyond its limited market context, it has never fully occurred at the cultural level. Here lie the limits of cultural globalisation: centred on a hegemonic, unidirectional project, globalisation has resulted in boundary-building, new communication gaps and a collapse of inter-cultural dialogue, making largely unaccomplishable its more cosmopolitan variant (Conversi 2009b; 2009c).

The dominant globalist ideology needs to be further addressed through a *longue durée* historical perspective: globalism largely depends on a broader modernist framework and discourse (Acuff, 2010; Conversi, 2010b), which has already produced nationalism (Gellner, 2006), fascism (Griffin, 2007), the Holocaust (Bauman, 1989), various genocides (Conversi, 2010a) and two world wars (Conversi, 2009a). Globalisation itself has propelled the spread of ethnic conflict and nationalism (Chua 2003; Conversi, 2009c), the expansion of the tentacles of global mafia and organized crime (Glenny, 2008; Klein, 2007) as well as the rise of 'religious' neo-fundamentalism (Barber, 1996; Roy, 2004; Schaebler, 2004). The financial crisis derived from globalisation can in turn produce a wave of nationalism, populism and recrimination that risks pushing the world straight back into a situation similar to the one which, nearly a century ago, prepared the ground for Europe's descent into war.

Notes

- ¹ I wish to thank John Walton (Leeds Metropolitan University/ University of the Basque Country) for his suggestions.
- ² For reasons which will be described below, globalisation should not be confused with 'the age of imperialism' or the 'second industrial revolution' from 1850 to WW1 (Hobsbawm 1987), despite its recurrent description as neo-imperialism.
- ³ For instance, a recent attempt to standardise international accounting practices would in practice outlaw co-operatives (John Walton, personal comment).

- ⁴ Yet, theoretical explanations of the relationship between globalisation, poverty and environmental change have been largely absent even within a discipline like Development Studies (See Boyd and Juhola, 2009, p.794).
- ⁵ In the film business “with the industrial blueprint implemented during the 1980s, a new period...has certainly begun. Six vertically integrated multinational conglomerates engulf what we used to call the Hollywood studios...It is clear that Reagan’s legacy created a media marketplace characterized by high concentration of ownership and very few regulatory constraints.” (Holt 2002).
- ⁶ According to *The Economist* 93.9 billion lira from unknown sources had mysteriously flown to Silvio Berlusconi’s companies between 1978 to 1985. Cited by Ginsborg (2004, p.22).
- ⁷ In Issue One of this journal, Steger avoids the conflation between Americanisation and globalisation and instead proposes a fascinating three-fold division between ‘market globalism’, ‘justice globalism’, and ‘religious globalism’ (Steger 2009; See also Rupert 2000).
- ⁸ Of course, the distant ideological roots of globalism may be located in British liberal thought, as in Smith and Ricardo. But, rather than conjecturing about ‘Anglo-Americanisation’, we need to recognize here that globalism’s hegemonic and institutional core is now situated in the United States.
- ⁹ This does not imply that *all* culture that flows out of the United States is ideological, while culture spreading from other countries is not. Certainly, American culture *per se* cannot be fairly described as intrinsically ideological, although the ideology of globalism underpins the hegemonic apparatus of US cultural industries while marking their path and legitimizing their continuous expansion into new markets without moral restraints.
- ¹⁰ In response to the expansion of Americanisation in the 1950s and 1960s, several countries attempted to adopt cultural regulatory policies, including quotas on public broadcasting reserved to ‘national’ productions. However, these defensive measures have often been rendered vain by more radical forms of US-mandated deregulation, particularly since the 1980s. Frequently, these have showed to be incapable of halting the mass culture industry’s slow erosion of cultural autonomy. The study of such measures is obviously beyond the scope of this article.
- ¹¹ One important question that cannot be addressed here is what preceded Americanisation before WWI and which country exerted superpower status in the cultural field. France is the most obvious candidate in the arts, fashion, patterns of consumption and so on, while London and Paris competed on other fields, such as literature.
- ¹² Since then, ‘cultural studies’ as a discipline has moved further apart from the vision of

its founders. The original idea of culture as inter-generationally transmitted and subject to continuous creative stimuli is in stark contrast with the way the very term 'culture' is used within contemporary 'cultural studies', as key concepts are expanded to fit the 'discipline' egotistic interests, derived in part by its incomplete merging with literary studies.

- ¹³ For a recent collection on Hoggart's impact on the study of culture, see Bailey et al. (2011). For a social commentary from within Hoggart's perspective, see Clarke et al. (1979). Despite its entertaining comments on the perceived need to footnote everything, I cannot resist the temptation of using this footnote to mention one of Hoggart's most recent books (2002).
- ¹⁴ The Spanish formula '*estadounidense*' is probably the most exact.
- ¹⁵ '*McGuggenisation*' (McNeill, 2000) has been used to indicate art-related cultural franchising and other forms of Americanisation, in particular the potentially endless replicas of the successful Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. One of the proposed copycats was planned on the limits of the unique Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve in the Basque Country, with predictably damaging environmental consequences.
- ¹⁶ In labour relations, these projects were accompanied by *outsourcing* as multinational enterprises and mega-corporations expanded subcontracting across national boundaries in order to lower the production cost by using cheap labour. *Offshoring* promoted company relocation across countries in areas like manufacturing, accounting. China became a major target for the first operation, India for the second one.
- ¹⁷ A predictable question is whether travel can be considered a form of globalisation, and, if so, how this correlates to the role of Americanisation and US law making. Obviously, travel, like culture, is a constitutive attribute of all human beings. However, like many other activities, travel has been deeply affected by Americanisation - within or outside of globalisation. Just to limit ourselves to trains, since the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad opened in 1830, common carrier railways were built in the US by private enterprises and then semi-privatized (or made public at the state level), having to face complicate issues of right-of-way. One long-term consequence is that a modern public railways system never developed in the US. How has the 1980s deregulation affected our ways of conceiving travel then? With the US imprimatur, states 'Americanised' national transportation choices by discarding public transportation systems that had been built and improved through a hundred years of hard work. As for the history of tourism, it may be possible to detect a moment in which its expansion was re-organized in response to the above priorities on the wings of the American dream.

- ¹⁸ On the malleability and various forms of flamenco as a tool of resistance to oppression, see Washabaugh (1996). On the initial fusion between Neapolitan songs and opera, see Leydi (2003).
- ¹⁹ When authors distort the concept of globalisation by invoking distant pasts and dating the concept back to incommensurable times, they are usually referring to 'cultural diffusion'. However, the latter is indissociable from the very concept of culture (every culture depends on its own diffusion) and it is hence un-dateable.
- ²⁰ The classical anthropological work on cultural diffusion is Ralph Linton's *The Study of Man* (1937).
- ²¹ It worth stressing that non-American cultural expansion should not be automatically classified as "cultural diffusion". Nor does cultural diffusion include any process that is not American. Cultural diffusion is neither synonymous with 'cultural globalisation' nor with Americanisation, because it is not necessarily predicated on a centralized system of production and distribution specifically located at the core of the US mass entertainment industry while aiming to reach the entire ecumene.
- ²² Elizabeth Becker, "US Delays Suing Europe Over Ban on Modified Food," New York Times, February 5, 2003, p. 6, Cited in Shaffer (2003, p.64).

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