

## Chapter 13

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# GEOGRAPHY, CULTURE AND GLOBAL CHANGE

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### Topics covered

- A definition of culture
- The 'cultural' and 'spatial turns' in the social sciences
- An evaluation of the extent of cultural globalization
- The relationships between place and cultural identity
- Cultural production and consumption
- Progressive ways for geographers to think about culture

### 13.1 What is culture?

This chapter explores some of the challenges posed by and for culture in the twenty-first century. First, however, it is necessary to define what is meant by culture. This is a complex and difficult task. By the 1950s, for example, there were over 150 different academic definitions of culture. As Mike Crang (1998: 1) argues, despite sounding like the most airy of concepts, culture 'can only be approached as embedded in real-life situations, in temporally and spatially specific ways'. Cultures are part of everyday life. They are systems of shared meanings that people who belong to the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world, and to reproduce themselves. These systems of meanings are often based around such things as religion, language, ethnicity, custom and tradition, and ideas about 'place', which can exist on a number of different spatial scales (local, regional, national, global, among communities, groups or nations). Cultures are one of the principal means by which identities are constructed. They give us a sense of 'who we are', 'where we belong' – a sense of our own identity and identity with others. Cultures are embodied in the material and social world

and are dynamic rather than static, shifting and changing historically through processes of cultural mixing, diffusion and transculturation (discussed below).

Cultures are also socially determined and defined and, therefore, not divorced from power relations. Dominant groups in society attempt to impose their ideas about culture and these are challenged by other groups, or **subcultures**. The latter might include various types of youth culture, gang culture, and different ethnicities or sexualities, where identities are organized around different sets of practices and operate in different spaces from dominant cultures (Crang 1998). Culture makes the world meaningful and significant. Geographers suggest that we should think of culture ‘not as a thing, but as a relationship’ (Mitchell 2000: xviii) or as a process in which we are all involved. Cultures include those social practices that produce meaning, as well as those practices that are shaped by those shared meanings.

### **13.1.1 The ‘cultural turn’**

Culture has generated a great deal of interest in recent years, for academics, policy makers, and at the popular level. Geographers have turned their attention towards cultural explanations of global, national and local phenomena, exploring issues such as the cultural embeddedness of economic processes (e.g. James 2007), the relationship between cultures, identities and consumption (see Chapter 19), and cultural constructions of social relations of gender, ethnicity and class that shape people’s lives (e.g. Nelson and Seager 2004). However, the current popularity of culture is not simply a trend in academe, but is reflective of a broader cultural turn in (Western) society as a whole.

The world has changed fundamentally in the past three decades and these changes are deeply cultural in character. For example, enormous changes have occurred in ‘advanced’ economies since the early 1980s (the decline in manufacturing, the growth of services, the feminization of the workforce, increased flexibility – all characteristic of ‘post-Fordism’ as discussed in Chapter 3, pp. 77–8). However, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1996: 233) argued, if ‘post-

Fordism' exists, it is as much a description of cultural as of economic change. Florida (2002) characterizes this as a shift from an industrial to a creative age, with 40 per cent of people in the US and UK economies now working in 'creative' sectors of science, technology, culture, arts and entertainment, and creative economies burgeoning in cities as diverse as New York, Shanghai and Bangalore. Culture has increasingly been brought into governmental and economic spheres, with creative economy initiatives developed for a number of years for small towns and small- and medium-sized cities as well as rural regions in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (Christopherson and Clark 2007; Christopherson 2008). These initiatives hinge on the arts and community cultural activities, including festivals and special events, which are believed to contribute to community identity, increase community pride and foster participation in local economies. Creative industries, it is argued, boost the local economy by attracting tourists, employers and a workforce who appreciate the sense of community that they generate.

Cultural and creative industries have also recently become a policy priority in international development. Global trade of creative goods and services reached a record of US\$ 624 billion in 2011, more than doubling from 2002 to 2011 (UNCTAD), with a 12.1% annual growth in export of cultural products from countries in the global South. Cultural industries (audiovisual products, design, new media, performing arts, publishing and visual arts) are thus one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy and a highly transformative one in terms of income generation, job creation, and export earnings. A recent report (UNESCO 2013) argues that unlocking the potential of the creative economy is a means for promoting the overall creativity of societies, affirming the distinctive identity of the places where it flourishes and clusters, improving quality of life, and enhancing local image and prestige. Culture is increasingly viewed as core to local creative economies in the global South and vital to forging new development pathways. This is illustrated by cities such as Cape Town, designated World Design Capital 2014; Johannesburg, actively promoted as a world class African city of culture through arts festivals and city-wide cultural events; Rabat, labelled Moroccan Capital of Culture; Gwangju (South Korea), Yokohama (Japan) and Quanzhou (China), each designated an East Asian City of Culture in 2013; and Hue (Vietnam) nominated ASEAN City of Culture in

2014). In all these cities, culture is seen as a major lever for increasing tourism and investment, as well as, often, achieving social development, urban regeneration and economic growth at both the urban and national scales. This is clearly an instrumental view of culture, which many in the arts might wish to resist, and brings with it the danger of the commodification of culture while leaving structural inequalities untouched (discussed in section 13.5.3), but as we shall see culture is also seen as a route through which to foster inclusive social development, and to create dialogue, understanding and respect between peoples (*ibid.*). Culture is thus a terrain in which politics, culture and the economic form an inseparable dynamic (Radcliffe 2007).

**[Insert Plate 13.1 near here]**

Modern consumption is also a cultural process and also depends overwhelmingly on image (for example, the marketing of food and drink products and fashion clothing) (see Plate 13.1). Movements around the world of images, symbols, modes of thought and communications are unparalleled in terms of their volume, speed and complexity. As computer technology, video imagery and electronic music demonstrate, the material world of commodities and technologies is profoundly cultural. In addition, culture has become increasingly commodified; in other words culture is being translated into material goods that can be marketed and sold. We can see this in the rise of ‘cultural tourism’ (Gibson 2009). In southern Africa, for example, many ‘cultural villages’ have sprung up in rural areas to showcase local traditions and sell crafts. These villages are intended to change the relationship between consumers in the global North and peoples in global South, being less exploitative of the latter in economic terms and supposedly fostering greater cultural exchange. However, as Saarinen (2007) points out, these cultural villages have developed largely in response to what tourists want; communities package and sell a version of their culture that fits with Western ideas of what African culture should be.

### **13.1.2 The ‘spatial turn’**

There has also been a ‘spatial turn’ in explanations in cultural and social theory. The world is changing fast, and the rate of change is probably greater than ever before. Fast-developing tech-

nologies such as the Internet and satellite communications mean that the world is becoming more global and more interconnected. The increased speed of transport and communications, the increasing intersections between economies and cultures, the growth of international migration and the power of global financial markets are among the factors that have changed everyday lives in recent decades. There is no historical equivalent of the global reach and volume of 'cultural traffic' (Held *et al.* 1999) through contemporary telecommunications, broadcasting and transport technologies. The challenge for geographers is to find ways of understanding and interpreting these changes.

Culture can be said to operate at three spatial scales: local, national and global. Two main interpretations have dominated discussion. The first highlights the global aspects of change. At its simplest, this approach suggests that it is possible to identify processes of cultural homogenization – the idea that everywhere is becoming the same – dominated by the USA and most easily recognized in terms such as 'Coca-Colonization', 'McDonaldization' and 'Hollywoodization' (Jackson 2004) (see Chapter 19). This *cultural globalization* involves the movement of people, objects and images around the world through telecommunications, language, the media industries, radio and music, cinema, television and tourism. The second interpretation places emphasis on the local and the localization of people's everyday lives and experiences. Instead of homogenization, emphasis is placed on the diversity of culture, on the ways in which global brands such as Coca-Cola or McDonald's are reinterpreted locally so that they take on different meanings in different places. The emphasis here is on the *interconnectedness* of global and local processes. For example, although the same event can be witnessed simultaneously around the world (e.g. an incident broadcast in a CNN news report, or an international sporting event), this event will be interpreted differently in different places. Furthermore, locality does not necessarily refer to the opposite of globality. For example, some environmentalists imagine the world as a locality, a 'global village'. Cultural theorists have a growing interest in how increasing globalization, especially of cultural production and consumption, affects people's sense of identity and place at both local and national levels (Goss 2006). Thus a geographic or spatial

perspective has become central to studies of culture more widely. These are some of the concerns that form the focus of this chapter. Subsequent sections explore in more detail ideas about a global culture, examine ways of rethinking local cultures, and explore progressive ways of thinking about cultures in contemporary contexts.

## **13.2 Towards a global culture?**

### **13.2.1 Imagining a global culture**

Processes of cultural globalization have a very long history and are not peculiar to contemporary times. Through global patterns of trade and migrations, and through the spread of religions and empires, people, objects and ideas have been circulating for centuries (see Chapters 1–3). However, contemporary globalization is distinctive in extent, form, rapidity of change, intensity and impact. Some commentators suggest that the idea of a global culture is becoming as meaningful as the idea of national or local cultures, with different places and cultural practices around the world converging and becoming ever similar. As Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994: 76) argue, a global culture might be the product of two very different processes:

- 1.** The export or diffusion of supposedly ‘superior’ cultural traits (e.g. Western time-frames – the 24-hour day and the Gregorian calendar) and products (e.g. the motor car, television) from advanced countries, and their worldwide adoption (‘Westernization’, ‘Americanization’, ‘modernization’). This is believed to create global cultural convergence – people around the world are becoming increasingly similar in terms of consumption, lifestyle, behaviour and aspirations (see Case study 13.1). It can be perceived positively (as ‘modernization’ or ‘development’) or negatively (as ‘cultural imperialism’, where ‘we’ assume that others in the world should aspire to be like ‘us’).
- 2.** The mixing, or hybridization, of cultures through greater interconnections and time–space compression (the shrinking of the world through transport links and technological innovation), leading to a new universal cultural practice. This challenges the notion of unidirectional ‘Westernization’ and allows us to consider how Western cultures have influenced and

are also being influenced by this mixing of cultures. Flows of music, food, ideas, beliefs and literature continue to percolate from around the world into the cultures of the West. Consider, for example, cultural influences from the east: the global phenomenon of Korean K-Pop (Psy's 'Gangnam Style' was a global hit in 2012); Japanese sushi being sold in North American and European supermarkets; the popularity of traditional Chinese medicines (such as acupuncture) and martial arts (such as karate, aikido and judo), which originate in East Asian spiritual traditions; the increasingly popularity of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Persian poet Rumi or the teachings of Jewish Kabbalah.

In reality, both these processes are flawed explanations for what is happening today. If a global culture exists, it is far from a product of unidirectional 'Westernization'. However, alternative ideas about cultures mixing to produce a universal global culture are also problematic. Cultures are mixing, but this does not necessarily mean we are all becoming the same.

### **13.2.2 Debunking global culture?**

A different departure point for discussing global culture is that there is no such thing. Ideas about a singular global economy, politics and culture imply some sort of worldwide commonality that does not exist. First, the image of rampant cultural imperialism by the West, and especially the USA, is flawed since apparent cultural sameness is limited in scope, located only in the consumption of certain products and media images. The possibilities of 'westernisation' eroding centuries of local histories, languages, traditions and religions are far-fetched and people in different parts of the world respond to these images and products in different ways. On the one hand, many millions of people are not able even to access the Internet. For example, in 2009, there were on average only about 4 Internet users per 1000 people in Bangladesh and about 40 per 1000 people in Malawi, compared with 770 per 1000 in the USA and 905 per 1000 in the Netherlands (*CIA World Factbook* 2014). There is no single global culture in part because of the unevenness of globalization. On the other hand, it is also important to acknowledge the cultural dynamism and assertiveness of countries and peoples around the world. The enormous

Indian film industry is very different to the global film industry (dominated by Hollywood) in terms of its level of informality, fragmentation and patterns of investment, reflecting contingent structural, cultural and geographic conditions (Mukherjee 2008), but it too has a global audience, particularly among the Indian diaspora. Similarly, there is a mosaic of urban and national scenes across Asia involving the production and consumption of putatively Asian cultural products, such as the Hong Kong and Korean film industries, Cantopop and Mandarin pop, Japanese manga and anime productions, and animation and digital media industries. The Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood) is increasingly popular with audiences across Africa, to the extent that some film-makers and intellectuals elsewhere across the continent are critical of what they see as the ‘dumping’ of these rough-and-ready videos in their national markets and the ‘pollution’ of their own cultural spaces (UNESCO 2013). Paradoxically, the circulation of these diverse cultural products is often enabled by apparently homogenizing technological platforms such as YouTube and Facebook (see case study 13.2). What is certainly clear, however, is that given the significant growth of the middle classes in countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, India and China, the notion of western global cultural dominance is becoming increasingly anachronistic.

## **Thematic case study 13.1**

### **The globalization of culture: some examples**

#### ***Fashion***

Clothing is globalized both in terms of the cultural identities to which different items appeal (‘African’ prints, ‘Indian’ embroidery) and in terms of the global commodity chains through which they are produced and sold. Through multiple media including magazines, television, blogs and websites, trends travel rapidly across the world. The production, distribution and consumption of clothing have a particular geography. Fashion design happens mainly in ‘global cities’ in the West, while the labour of cutting and sewing is concentrated in the developing world. These divisions of labour illustrate the uneven distribution of the benefits of global cultural industries: while Western designers and models are



glamorised and often handsomely rewarded, factory workers in Asia and Africa typically work long hours under harsh conditions for meagre pay (Crewe 2008). This unevenness manifests not only along geographical lines but also along lines of gender. While men dominate the design industry, women are the main targets and consumers of fashion and also make up the majority of clothing factory workers (see Dwyer 2006). This unevenness was exposed most dramatically by the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh in April 2013, killing over a thousand people, mainly women garment workers. The disaster exposed the appalling pay and working conditions of Bangladeshi women making clothes for brands such as Benetton, Mango, Primark and Walmart, and prompted protests at flagship stores in Europe and North America.

### ***Food***

Food has perhaps the longest history of globalization of any cultural artefact. Spices, tea, and sugar are just three of the commodities whose trade have shaped our modern global economies. The globalization of food cultures is exemplified in the idea, famously put forward by the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, in 2001 that chicken tikka masala was now the British national dish (*The Guardian* 19/04/01). Equally, as India's own economy has boomed since the 1990s, that country's rapidly growing middle classes increasingly demand the local availability of ingredients and dishes that they have sampled elsewhere. Fast food and convenience food corporations are only too willing to fill this gap, and in the last five years chains including McDonalds, Krispy Kreme, Taco Bell and Burger King have all expanded or announced their plans to do so within the Indian market. Even as demand increases for exotic and more convenient foods, the environmental and political geographies of what we eat have increasingly come under discussion. Growing consumer awareness of the environmental impacts of food production and travel (food miles), and the potential health risks of mass agriculture and genetic modification have in many societies contributed what Jackson (2010) calls 'an age of anxiety'. In response, movements promoting locally produced, organic food and 'slow' food have emerged in many places. Similarly, consumer recognition of the often exploitative nature of food production in developing countries has boosted sales of fair trade and other 'ethical' products in Western supermarkets. While these movements aim to break down unjust social divisions, we

should also pay attention to the ways in which they may reinforce or re-shape identities of class (organic, 'slow' and fairly traded foods typically cost more) and understandings of 'Third World' producers as 'other' (Cook *et al.* 2010).

### ***Tourism***

Tourism is one of the most obvious forms of globalization. Until relatively recently, the geography of tourism has been skewed, dominated by people of all classes from developed countries (North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia). However, domestic and outbound tourism is now burgeoning in emerging economies with rapidly expanding middle classes. For example, in the past decade, Chinese domestic tourism had a continuous increase of around 10% each year, and outbound tourism increased by 18% from 2012 to 2013 (<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/tourism/> accessed 15/01/2015). Domestic tourism in Brazil has more than doubled since 2004 (<http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-business/domestic-tourism-rises-with-middle-class/> accessed 15.01.2015). Tourism can be exploitative, particularly through the growth of international sex tourism and the dependency of some developing economies on the exploitation of women. However, it is a form of international cultural exchange that allows vast numbers of people to experience other cultures and places. It also locks specific places (tourist destinations) into wider international cultural patterns. For example, the English Lake District 'only really became part of England when many visitors, especially artists and writers, travelled to it from the metropolitan centre at the end of the eighteenth century onwards' (Urry 2005: 80). Many key English writers became known as 'Lake poets' even when they were not from the area, and poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge became tourist attractions, 'locking' the Lake District into a relationship with broader ideas of landscape, literature and romance, which persists today as people from all over the world travel to the area on literary tours.

Second, some theorists would argue that national cultures remain stronger than global cultures. This is borne out when we consider the many conflicts occurring throughout the world along the geopolitical fault-lines of national cultures (the ongoing conflict between Pakistan and India is but one example of this). For the past 200 years, nation-states and national cultures have

monopolized cultural power (state television is one example of a national institution influencing national cultures within national territorial boundaries). At the end of the twentieth century, this balance began to change, with international telecommunications and media corporations challenging the centrality and importance of national cultures. However, it could be argued that despite these changes a great deal of cultural life is still organized along national and territorial lines.

Third, if culture is a system of shared meanings, then looking at the world today there are clearly many systems of shared meanings and many different cultures. People in different places use different techniques and technologies to reproduce culture, such as oral histories, literature or television and cinema. These techniques have different patterns of dispersion, penetration and scale. Therefore, some cultures are more likely to become globalized than others – those reproduced through television, cinema and increasingly through digital media platforms have a greater range and speed of dispersion than those reproduced through oral histories. However, this does not mean that globalized cultures completely erode localized cultures; the ways in which these different cultures intersect is important. Those ‘things’ (products, symbols, corporate entities) that have become global signifiers are clearly globalized (they are recognized the world over), but the ways in which people around the world make cultural responses to them are complex and multiple (see Case study 13.2). Globalization of products and symbols does not necessarily equal Westernization. For example, Japanese consumer goods do not sell on the back of exporting Japanese culture but on a market strategy based around the concept of *dochaku* (‘glocalism’). This involves a global strategy not of imposing standardized products but of tailoring Japanese consumer products to specific local markets. These goods are, therefore, both globalized and localized. Consequently, how intersections between cultures are played out at local levels are of significance, and this suggests that imagining a universal global culture is quite problematic.

### **Thematic case study 13.2**

## **Culture and social networking**

Since their introduction in the early twenty-first century, social network sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, Facebook, Bebo and Cyworld have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. At one level, we might think of the globalization of SNSs as evidence of an emerging global culture. However, while the technological phenomenon has a global reach (with the caveat outlined previously that millions of people still do not have access to the Internet), the ways in which people around the world make cultural responses to SNSs are complex and multiple. As Boyd and Ellison (2007) argue (see also Miller 2011), while their key technological features are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around SNSs are varied. For example, most sites help maintain pre-existing social networks, but others enable strangers to connect with each other based on shared interests, political views or activities. Some sites deliberately cater to diverse and heterogeneous audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared identities, such as ethnic, sexual, religious or nationality-based identities. Sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging and photo/video-sharing.

The question of whether and how much cultural differences impact upon the way people respond to and interact with social networks is an important one. It could be argued, for example, that networks such as Facebook mainly reflect and accommodate values and norms prevalent in Western cultures, which explains why they were at first more successful in countries such as the UK, USA and Canada than elsewhere. However, the design and use of SNSs also varies in different locations and are often adapted to local cultural norms, tastes and preferences. For example, the page design of SNSs varies from place to place, with greater use of pastel or muted colours and emoticons on South East Asian sites, in contrast to the bolder, darker colours used by sites in Europe and North America, for example. Different cultural expectations around privacy and personal modesty also shape the use of SNSs. For example, some users are often uncomfortable with posting pictures of themselves, preferring to use avatars. Therefore, while technologies such as SNSs become increasingly global, local and national cultural norms continue to shape how people use social networking.

### 13.2.3 Rethinking global culture

Instead of imagining a global culture that is erasing local and national cultures, we can think of local, national and global as three important, interconnected spatial scales at which culture operates. Those aspects of culture that operate at the global level are ‘third cultures’ (Featherstone 1995: 114). National institutions are no longer in complete control of cultural globalization and ‘third cultures’ (sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions and lifestyles) have developed in ways that have become increasingly global and independent of nation-states. Phenomena such as patterns of consumption, technological diffusion and media empires are part of these third cultures, and transnational and multinational corporations are the institutions that make them global. In this sense, global cultures exist but only as third cultures, outside national and local cultures, yet intersecting on both these scales in different ways around the world.

Acknowledging that ‘our’ global view might be very different from that of people elsewhere, living in very different contexts, is also important. It is clear that multiple global cultural networks exist, such as those connecting the overseas Chinese with their homeland, or those linking Islamic groups around the world. These networks disrupt any notion of a singular global culture. Power and inequality bring into question the idea of global cultures. As Massey (2009) argues, a **power geometry** exists, which gives people with different access to power different notions of what global means. New institutions (like global media corporations) for the production, transmission and reception of cultural products are creating infrastructures supporting cultural globalization, including electronic infrastructure (radio, television, music, telecommunications, digital platforms), linguistic infrastructure (the spread of bi- and multi-lingualism, particularly the dominance of English), and corporate infrastructure (producers and distribution networks). As we have seen, these new institutions often operate at scales beyond the nation state, and they are sites of power in the production of culture. The ownership, control and use of these institutions remain uneven across and within countries (Held and McGrew 2007), thus creating ‘power geometries’ that are centred overwhelmingly on the West. People have very different experiences of culture because of their different locations in the world and their relationship to

these sites of power. Mapping this power geometry, identifying sites of power and revealing the marginalization of some peoples around the world by cultural globalization are increasingly significant. Of equal significance are forms of resistance, such as **culture jamming** (Dery 2010) by anti-consumerist social movements. This involves tactics such as media hacking, information warfare, satire, ‘terror-art’ and graffiti to invest advertisements, newscasts and other media artefacts with subversive meaning, or to refigure logos and product images in order to challenge what is considered as ‘cool’. Another form of resistance is exemplified in ‘buycotts’, the purchasing of oppositional products aiming to provide a socially acceptable alternative to a more powerful brand. A good example of this is Mecca Cola, marketed in the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa as providing a means of expressing solidarity with Muslims worldwide (Littler 2009). Promoted as an alternative to the archetypal American product Coca-Cola, Mecca Cola purports to offer consumers a way to subvert what the company sees as American imperialism, especially as displayed in the support offered by the US to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the US invasion of Iraq in 2007. It is also important, therefore, to take account of the ways in which marginalized peoples might be empowered by engaging with, and perhaps transforming, the new institutions driving cultural globalization.

In summary, global processes are occurring, but they do not produce a universal global culture, they are not distributed evenly around the world and are not uncontested. Global cultural processes are not simply a result of a unidirectional ‘Westernization’, since culture flows transnationally. A number of different global cultures exist as ‘third cultures’ – in patterns of consumption, flows of knowledge, the diffusion of technologies and media empires that operate beyond, but connecting with, the local and national scales.

## **13.3 Reinventing local cultures?**

### **13.3.1 Locality and culture**

It has often been assumed that there is a simple relationship between local place and local culture. Places were thought of as having a distinct physical, economic and cultural character; they were unique, with their own traditions and local cultures that made them different from other places. It is clear, however, that processes of globalization are also posing serious challenges to the meaning of place. Places and cultures are being restructured. According to Massey and Jess (1995a: 1), ‘on the one hand, previous coherences are being disrupted, old notions of the local place are being interrupted by new connections with a world beyond’. The appearance of 7–11 stores in the rainforests of northern Thailand is one example of how even the remotest of places are becoming increasingly internationalized, in this case through tourism. ‘On the other hand’, Massey and Jess continue, ‘new claims to the – usually exclusive – character of places, and who belongs there, are being made.’ We see this in contemporary Western Europe, North America and Australia, where ‘asylum seekers, migrants, Muslims, militant youths, pan-handlers, carriers of transmissible diseases’ (Amin 2010: 10) are increasingly racialized and viewed as threats to established value systems and ways of life. Similar problems have also emerged in countries such as South Africa, which experienced a dramatic rise in xenophobic violence in 2008 that persists today (Dodson 2010). Therefore, modern life is characterized both by decentralization and globalization of culture *and* by the resurgence of place-bound traditions. Following this, the impact of the new global context on local cultures has two, possibly contradictory, outcomes.

### 13.3.2 Negative sense of culture

Where global processes are perceived to pose a threat to local culture, there might be an attempt to return to some notion of the exclusivity of culture. At the extreme, this might take the form of exclusivist nationalism or even ‘ethnic cleansing’. Reactions to the perceived threat to local cultures include nationalistic, ethnic and fundamentalist responses, which also entail a strong assertion of local cultures, such as reviving or inventing local traditions and ceremonies. These can create a level of local fragmentation, with a parochial, nostalgic, inward-looking sense of local attachment and cultural identity. In this sense, cultures are thought of as **bounded**, with very

clear definitions of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in the creation of a sense of belonging, and producing **geographies of exclusion** (Sibley 1995).

For example, English rural areas are often conceptualized as the preserve of culture and identity (see Chapters 11 and 12). This idea is mobilized through the myth of the ‘rural idyll’, in which rural village communities are portrayed as neighbourly and close-knit, with villagers perceived as having a deep-seated sense of local identity complemented by strong feelings of belonging (Garland and Chakraborti 2006), and in which rural cultures are thought of as timeless, unchanging and unaffected by global processes. This cosy vision of a peaceful countryside excludes many people who live in rural areas, but do not fit this stereotype. Different notions of rural idyll create similar exclusions in other countries; for example, Canada’s rural idyll is embedded within the colonial legacy of a white settler society (Cairns 2013). The myth of the English rural idyll deems travellers, environmental protesters, hunt saboteurs, people with alternative lifestyles and people from minority ethnic communities to be ‘outsiders’ and a threat to local cultures (Garland and Chakraborti 2004). The pervasiveness of this myth of the white rural idyll made headlines in the UK in a recent controversy over the cast of popular TV drama *Midsomer Murders*, set in a fictional Cotswolds village. When questioned about the all-white cast, the producer described the programme as the “last bastion of Englishness” and stated “We just don’t have ethnic minorities involved. Because it wouldn’t be the English village with them” (in Pool 2011). As Garland and Chakraborti (2006, 2009) argue, the perpetuation of this myth obscures and marginalizes the experiences of minority ethnic residents who often feel excluded from village life. Moreover, their research suggests that conflation of rurality with notions of Englishness and ‘whiteness’ serves to reinforce this marginalization and can also lead to racist victimization. The ‘rural idyll’ is thus a selective representation, exclusive in its class, race and status connotations, is profoundly conservative and demands conformity. It is based on a very inward-looking sense of place and culture (see Plate 13.2).



Conservative reactions to change can be thought of as a kind of cultural fundamentalism through which the process of cultural change is often bitterly contested. Gender plays an important role in this. Women are often considered as guardians of the borders of culture (Yuval-Davis 1997). They not only bear children for the collective, but also reproduce it culturally. In closed cultures, the control of women's sexuality is seen as imperative to the maintenance of the purity of the cultural unit; women are discouraged from marrying outside their cultural and ethnic group. Ethnicity and culture, therefore, are seen to be one and the same. In addition, symbols of gender play an important role in articulating difference between cultural groups. Women's distinctive ways of dressing and behaving very often come to symbolize the group's cultural identity and its boundaries. Women are often the intergenerational transmitters of cultural traditions, customs, songs, cuisine and the 'mother' tongue, primarily through their role as mothers. This is especially true in minority situations where the school and the public sphere present different and dominant cultural models from that of the home. Recent controversies over the Islamic veil, for example, have seen countries across Europe wrestling with issues of religious freedom, civil rights, women's equality, secular traditions and escalating fears of terrorism. France banned Muslim headscarves and other 'conspicuous' religious symbols at state schools in 2004, and in 2010 made it illegal in public places to wear any clothes designed to hide the face. Belgium passed a similar law in 2010, banning any clothing that hides the wearer's identity in public places. Turkey, a secular Islamic country, banned the wearing of head-scarves in all civic spaces in 2005 but amended the ruling in 2008 to allow women at universities to wear scarves tied under the chin. The Italian parliament approved anti-terrorist laws in July 2005, which make covering one's features in public – including through wearing the burqa – an offence. The Dutch cabinet backed a proposal in 2006 to ban the few dozen Muslim women who choose to wear the burqa from doing so in public places on grounds that it disturbs public order, citizens and safety. In the United Kingdom in 2010, the Conservative MP Philip Hollobone proposed a law to regulate wearing in public garments that cover the face, calling the burqa offensive. The debates over Islamic dress reveal some of the issues that can arise when marginal, minority cultures are seen to clash with the norms and expectations of the majority population, which in turn

raises questions about the possibilities and challenges of multiculturalism as opposed to integration and/or assimilation (discussed below in Section 13.4).

**[Insert Plate 13.2 near here]**

Societies do not evolve smoothly from closed, bounded perceptions of culture to more open, dynamic notions. The question of cultural power, identity and resistance also needs to be considered. For many groups, cultural survival is seen to depend on a closed idea of culture, with strongly marked boundaries separating it from ‘others’. The controversies over Islamic dress, and the continuing sectarianism and possible threats of terrorism that still exist in Northern Ireland despite recent progress, are examples of different cultures, religions and national identities colliding with each other. Elsewhere the mixing of cultures under the impact of globalization is often seen as threatening and as weakening the sense of cultural identity. Immigration is seen as a particular threat, creating a revival of ethnicity that cuts across the political spectrum. Examples include the ‘little England’ reaction to closer European integration, encapsulated by the rise of the UK Independence Party, which campaigns on a platform of UK withdrawal from the European Union and imposing strict controls on immigration. Migrants to Britain have become scapegoats for almost every contemporary problem, from the squeeze on public finances and services, the declining economy, and the increasing numbers of working poor. Similar attitudes are evident in post-apartheid South Africa, where since 1994 African immigrants have been associated with illegality, criminality and a struggling welfare system, in both political and public discourse. According to one commentator, “The poor and the vulnerable – especially those who do not share the same language or customs or religion – have always been a politically convenient scapegoat for a society’s various ills. It’s the oldest trick in the book” (Fraser 2014). It is also a means of turning those most affected by economic downturns and government austerity measures (e.g. working and lower middle classes) against other increasingly marginalised groups. This trend can be observed in the rise of neo-fascism across Europe, also characterized by anti-immigration and racism. Perceived threats to religious identities have also witnessed the strengthening of Islamic and Christian fundamentalism around the world.

These phenomena are not all the same, but they do share a response to globalization that involves a closed, fixed, bounded and often place-specific definition of culture, and a strong resistance to changes heralded by cultural globalization.

### **13.3.3 Positive sense of culture**

A more positive response to global processes would be to imagine cultures as fluid, ever-changing, unbounded, overlapping and outward-looking – akin to Massey’s (1994: 151) ‘progressive sense of place’. This involves people being more cosmopolitan (free of prejudice and tolerant of difference). Increasing interconnectedness means the boundaries of local cultures are seen to be more permeable, susceptible to change, and difficult to maintain than in the past. Rather than everywhere becoming the same, some nation states have reconstituted their collective identities along pluralistic and multicultural lines, which take into account regional and ethnic differences and diversity. In Europe, this involves re-creation and invention of local, regional and sub-state or new ‘national’ cultures (for example, the cultural renaissance of the Basques and Catalans, or the cultural assertiveness of minority ethnic communities in cities such as London, Paris and Berlin). The 2014 Scottish independence referendum saw Scots vote narrowly to stay within the United Kingdom, but also saw the emergence of a powerful civic nationalism – a non-xenophobic nationalism based in values of freedom, tolerance, equality and rights – as opposed to ethnic nationalism based in notions of cultural sameness. Thus, what can be perceived as destruction of local cultures by globalization might in fact be the means of creating new senses of locality and nation. This still involves notions of local and national identity, but recognizes both the differences between cultures and their interconnectedness, taking account of the positive aspects of cultural mixing and increased cosmopolitanism. This new sense of identity is based on notions of inclusion rather than exclusion.

This is not to say, of course, that all people within the same place will share the same culture and the same sense of locality. Within these more culturally pluralistic and cosmopolitan locales, different class factions, ages, genders, ethnicities and religious groupings mingle to-

gether in the same sites, consuming the same television programmes and products, but in highly uneven ways. These groups often possess different senses of affiliation to places and localities, possess different cultural identities and belong to different cultural groupings (Featherstone 1995: 97). A progressive sense of culture does not foresee the locale as a ‘melting-pot’, where everything becomes the same, but rather recognizes the different experiences of people, and that increasing interconnections might create new, dynamic and exciting cultural forms. An understanding of this is crucial to the creation of a progressive notion of place and culture, which recognizes cultures as fluid, dynamic, open and interconnected, and accepts that older local cultures might decline as new ones emerge.

In summary, localities are important in maintaining cultural difference, but can also be sites of cultural mixing and transformation. Ideas about culture can be negative (bounded, fixed, inward-looking) or positive (progressive, dynamic, outward-looking). Bounded, fixed notions of culture can lead to localized resistance, racism, nationalism, and even ‘ethnic cleansing’. Progressive ideas about culture involve the recognition of differences between cultures, the interconnectedness of cultures and their constant evolution.

## 13.4 Multi- and hybrid cultures?

### 13.4.1 Hybridity

One of the major contemporary challenges concerns what we do with the concept of culture in the changing global scene, where nation states are forced to tolerate greater diversity within their boundaries. Some want to see national identity as homogeneous and assimilatory – in other words, different cultures are subsumed into the dominant culture (the ‘melting pot’ idea) (see Case study 13.3). Denmark, for example, is highly assimilationist and has one of the toughest policies on immigration in Europe. Others call for the acceptance of ethnic pluralism and the preservation of minority ethnic cultures as a legitimate part of the national project. This is the politics of **multiculturalism**, which instead of thinking of different cultures as being absorbed

by dominant cultures, relies more on a notion of a cultural mosaic, or a ‘patchwork quilt’ of cultures. Each culture is recognized as different and distinct, but these differences are understood and valued. Sweden, for example, rejects Denmark’s assimilationist model in favour of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism might seem more progressive, but it can sometimes reinforce difference because culture is seen as essentially connected to **race**, and racial difference as rooted in biological difference. (These ideas are no longer considered acceptable; anti-racists have demonstrated that ‘race’ is socially constructed and has little basis in biology (Price 2010). We could just as easily have ‘races’ of blue-eyed and brown-eyed people.) Multiculturalism, therefore, still relies on a negative notion of bounded cultures. It might suggest tolerance, but often results in segregation and ghettoization. The United Kingdom and Netherlands, for example, have tended towards multiculturalism but have increasingly witnessed tensions surrounding the lack of integration of some Muslim communities. The murder of Dutch film-maker Theo Van Gogh in 2004, the London bombings in July 2005 and the attacks on satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in 2015 – all by apparent ‘home-grown radical Islamists’ – are seen by some to represent the failures of multiculturalism. Similarly, the 2006 riots in the suburbs of Paris were seen as a product of the deep alienation of poor, largely immigrant communities facing high levels of unemployment, discrimination in housing and jobs markets, and police harassment; the 2011 London riots have been blamed on racism, classism and economic inequality that are seen as linked to criminality, breakdown of social morality and gang culture.

In contrast, a more progressive idea of culture (and its manifestations in ethnicity, gender and sexuality) might be developed through the concept of **hybridity**. Hybridity breaks down barriers, adhering to neither the ‘melting pot’ nor ‘mosaic’ idea of cultural mixing, but rather seeing different cultures coming together and informing each other in different ways to produce something entirely new. This process has a long historical trajectory. Indeed, some argue that cultures have always been hybrid forms and processes – they have never existed in isolation

from other cultures, and thus have always been subject to change and influences from elsewhere (Werbner 1997: 15).

One of the most obvious places we can observe hybridity is in popular mass culture, an immediate example being popular music. Innovations in music have always involved the fusion of different styles to create new sounds and rhythms. Rock-and-roll, rhythm-and-blues and Latin jazz are obvious examples. We might also think of recent and contemporary forms of music that fuse different styles, such as ‘trip hop’, which emerged in the 1990s; ‘post-trip hop’, which has since integrated trip hop with other genres, such as ambient, R&B, breakbeat, drum ‘n’ bass, acid jazz and new age; ‘nu metal’, which from the late 1990s until around 2005 combined heavy metal with other genres such as grunge and hip hop; and electro house, which fuses house music with several other electronic dance music subgenres and came into prominence between 2000 and the present. Theorists such as Barthes (1972), Bourdieu (1984) and Bakhtin (1984) see popular hybridity as an exciting challenge to, or subversion of, dominant cultures and the exclusive lifestyles of dominant elites. Such popular mixings and inversions, like the subversive elements of youth cultures (Hebdige 1979; see also Hammett 2009; Carr 2010), are hybrid in the sense that they bring together and mix languages and practices from different and normally separated domains. They have the potential to disrupt dominant cultures by their ‘out-of-placeness’.

### **Thematic case study 13.3**

#### **Bounded or hybrid national culture?**

Nationalists around the world cling to a notion of bounded cultures that make them distinct from others. One effect of globalization has been resistance in the form of increased nationalism to what is perceived to be the erosion of national cultures. Increased mixing of cultures is seen to pose a threat to the survival of national cultures. Nationalists seek to preserve the symbols of nationhood, such as language, lifestyles and cultural forms in the face of what are perceived to be sweeping changes. However, cultures are not unchanging; a fundamental flaw in nationalist ideology (especially ethnic nationalism) is the ad-

herence to a notion of static culture, and its reliance on a mythical history of the origin of the nation. For example, English nationalists define Englishness as distinct, which is used to justify anti-immigrationist ideas, anti-Europeanism and, in some cases, racism. But who are 'the English'? After the last ice age many communities settled Britain and Ireland from all over Europe. They lived and fought with each other and in a short space of time produced a mixed group of people who eventually called themselves English. The islands have been subject to waves of invasion and settlement (e.g. Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Normans). England has always been hybrid; peoples and cultures have mixed and evolved together. Some English nationalists avoid thinking about this point by arguing that the final invasion (by William the Conqueror in 1066) marks the origin of England and Englishness (Anderson 1983). This myth is also flawed. William the Conqueror spoke no English. Whom did he conquer? He conquered 'the English'. For many nationalists the founding father of England is French! It is also no small irony that one of the symbols of Englishness, the monarchy, changed its official name to Windsor in 1917 from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, thus hiding its German origins.

Even protectionist policies towards language are flawed; as with culture more generally, language is always hybridised and evolving. Most sentences in 'English' contain words that derive from German, French, Spanish, Latin, Nordic and Celtic languages. One legacy of British imperialism has been the incorporation of elements of the languages of the colonized into everyday English. Words from Indian languages, for example, punctuate English, including Hindi (bangle, bazaar, caravan, cot, jungle, juggernaut, pajama, pundit, shampoo, thug), Sanskrit (atoll, aubergine, avatar, bandana, candy, cash, dinghy, karma, sugar), Tamil (catamaran, curry, mantra, pariah), and Urdu (bungalow, khaki). Technological innovation introduces not only new words, but has the capacity to alter grammar: verbalising nouns (adding endings to nouns that turn them into verbs, such as 'texting', 'emailing', 'googling', 'interfacing') is now commonplace in British English. Such hybridity within national languages provides evidence for the ways in which cultures have always been dynamic and mutually influential. Similar myths of origin and notions of bounded cultures exist elsewhere in the world. In some places protectionist policies emanate from deeply contradictory ideas (anti-immigrationist views in the USA and

Australia, for example). In other places notions of bounded culture have led to conflict (for example, between Georgia and South Ossetia in 2008, between the Tamil separatists and the Sri Lankan state in 2009, and the continuing struggle by Kurdish nationalist organizations, some of whom seek to create an independent nation state of Kurdistan, consisting of some or all of the Kurdish areas in eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and northern Syria, while others campaign for greater Kurdish autonomy within these existing national boundaries). The idea of nationhood, based on fixed, bounded and unchanging cultures, is an ideological creation that masks profound cultural divisions of gender, race, class and religion within a nation state (see also Chapter 22), and ignores the fact that, in reality, all cultures are hybrid and dynamic.

In many ways hybridity is related to the notion of **transculturation**. Transculturation describes one of the key cultural processes that operate between hitherto sharply differentiated cultures and peoples who are forced (usually by the processes of imperialism or globalization, and primarily through migration) to interact. This interaction often takes place in profoundly asymmetrical ways in terms of relative power between different groups. However, communication technologies that enable simultaneous connections and transactions between people in even remote parts of the world are creating the possibility for more democratic forms of intercultural exchange. For example, intercultural exchange between schools and universities in different parts of the world is increasingly popular, facilitated by digital technologies. This has enabled such things as intercultural music-making, which promotes knowledge of and respect for cultural diversity, as well as stimulating creativity of hybrid musical forms. One example of an intercultural exchange between Tswana university students in South Africa and students in an Australian university (Klopper 2010) promoted a better understanding of their own and other musical traditions – the centrality in African cultures of music to tradition and oral histories, its inseparability from other performance arts and its links to joy and shared experience, in contrast to the technical training and individual mastery of classical music by western students (which classical musicians might point out also becomes joyful and shared when played in an orchestra). Digital and communication technologies (video, on-line chat rooms and web-cams) also allowed



the students to collaborate in making music together. As Klopper (2010: 48) argues, such technologies ensure that “cultural boundaries are no longer geographically dictated”.

Despite the illusion of boundedness, cultures have always evolved historically through borrowings, appropriations, exchanges and inventions. Cross-fertilization of cultures is endemic to all movements of people throughout history (see Case study 13.3) and it may be that new technologies simply speed up the process and enhance the possibilities. However, for those who aspire to bounded notions of culture and refuse this idea of perpetual hybridity, cultural mixing is felt to be threatening and a deliberate challenge to social order. In reality there are no fixed cultures in modern nation states, but some people cling to ideas of pure or impure cultures. For others, however, hybridity remains the site of revitalization, resistance and fun (see Case study 13.4).

## **Thematic case study 13.4**

### **Hybridity/diaspora – some examples**

#### ***Samba-Taiko in São Paulo, Brazil***

Samba-taiko is a hybrid form of music, combining the percussion styles of Japanese taiko (meaning ‘big drum’) and Brazilian samba, and a recent style of music emerging out of the Japanese diaspora in Brazil. Taiko performances are highly visual, visceral, and energetic in dynamics, rhythm, and movement, with dramatic full-body choreography and highly stylized strokes and arm movements. Solo taiko has its origins in ancient rituals, linked to Buddhism and everyday life. Taiko ensemble drumming is a relatively recent development in Japanese musical culture, which has allowed it to be appropriated and developed independently in Japanese migrant communities in both North and Latin America. São Paulo, home to the largest Japanese diaspora, has become the site of an emerging hybridization of Brazilian and Japanese percussion instrumentation and styles, which is also changing function of this music as cultural identity. Samba is a central part of Bra-

zilian national identity (*brasilidade*), referring to both the musical style and the place or circle in which the music is placed, either in the home (*casa*) or in the street (*rua*). A popular idiom used to refer to 'playing badly' is 'the Japanese in the samba', which is symbolic of a wider exclusion of the Japanese diaspora from the notion of *brasilidade*. After a century of immigration, people of Japanese descent in Brazil are not considered 'Brazilian' in popular discourse, and are regularly referred to as 'Japanese'. Samba-taiko originated in São Paulo with Setsuo Kinoshita, the first taiko professor in Brazil, who began teaching both taiko and samba in an effort to help Brazilian-Japanese students deal with exclusion and internalized racism, and to become more comfortable with their dual identities. In 2003, Kinoshita and his students began performing their innovations in hybrid samba-taiko styles (see, for example, Kinoshita's video clip at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuVSB67IDgg>), sparking a craze in Brazil, and inspiring the formation of over 150 taiko groups in which young Japanese and non-Japanese Brazilians come together through music. Through a shared tradition of percussion, it appears that a truly Japanese-Brazilian cultural rapport, particularly among young people, is emerging after a century of cultural disconnect.

Source: adapted from Sybert (2014)

### ***Cuban Santería***

Santería is an example of a syncretic (hybrid, mixed) religion. It is based on West African religions brought by slaves imported from what are now Nigeria and Benin to the Caribbean to work the sugar plantations. These religions were suppressed by the European plantation owners and in Cuba slaves were forced to convert to Catholicism. However, they were able to preserve some of their traditions by fusing together various West African beliefs and rituals and syncretizing these with elements from Catholicism. One factor enabling this process was that many of the *orishas* (primary gods) shared many of the same characteristics of Catholic saints. This enabled slaves to appear to be practising Catholicism while practising their own religions. This has evolved into what we know today as Santería, the Way of the Saints, whose traditions are transmitted orally from generation to generation. Despite suppression by Fidel Castro's Socialist Revolution since 1961, its influence is pervasive in Cuban life. Devotees are found in most households,

Yoruba proverbs litter Cuban Spanish, and high priests (*babalawos*) offer guidance based on ancient systems of lore. Today, with less religious persecution, Santería is experiencing a rise in popularity and is part of an emerging Cuban youth culture. Similar syncretic religions are found in Haiti, Puerto Rico and other Caribbean and Latin American countries.

Source: adapted from Betts (2002)

### 13.4.2 Diaspora

Related to the idea of hybridity is the notion of **diaspora**. This term was originally used to refer to the dispersal of Jewish peoples, but is now used in reference to the long-term settlement of peoples in ‘foreign’ places that follows their scattering or dispersal from their original homeland. It refers to a modern condition where a sense of belonging is not derived from attachment to territory, and where different peoples mix together through the processes of migration (forced or free). European imperialism and associated processes of globalization have set many of these migrations in motion. Diasporas are classic **contact zones** – spaces in which two cultures come together and influence each other – where transculturation or hybridization takes place. Diasporic identities are at once local and global and based on transnational identifications encompassing both ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities (e.g. Irish-Americans belong to an imagined international community of people who have ‘Irishness’ in common, but whose identities are also informed by the communities in which they live in the USA). In other words, diasporas are a direct challenge to the idea that there is a simple relationship between place and culture. They transgress the boundaries of the nation state and provide alternative resources for constructing identity and fashioning culture.

The concept of diaspora space allows us to think of ‘culture as a site of travel’ (Clifford 1992), which seriously problematizes the idea of a person being a ‘native’ or an ‘insider’. Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested. As Brah (1996: 209) argues, diaspora space is ‘inhabited’ not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are con-

structured and represented as indigenous or 'native'. In the diaspora space called 'England', for example, African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian, Jewish and other diasporas intersect among themselves as well as with the entity constructed as 'Englishness', thoroughly reinscribing it in the process. Like notions of hybridity, the concept of diaspora is important since it allows for the recognition of new political and cultural formations that continually challenge the marginalizing impulses of dominant cultures.

### **13.5.3 Selling hybridity and the commodification of culture**

In today's world, culture sells. Hybrid cultures, in particular, sell. Cities are now constructing themselves as cosmopolitan, and hybridity has become a form of 'boosterism' – where city authorities create marketing images to attract investment in the form of business and tourism. Hybrid culture is perceived as creating economic advantage. With increasing deindustrialization in Europe and North America, and many countries in the global South by-passing an industrial age to fast-forward to a knowledge- and service-driven economy, cultural strategies have become key to the survival of cities. Examples include the international marketing of cultural/religious festivals such as Mardi Gras in Sydney or New Orleans, Gay Pride Festivals in Toronto, Cape Town or London, or the importance of 'Chinatowns' and other 'ethnic' districts to tourism in cities throughout the world (see Plate 13.3). Ironically, hybridity is in danger of becoming just another marketable commodity. For example, treating the political work of some British-Asian bands as marketable, hybridity trivializes black political activity and leaves problems of class exploitation and racial oppression unresolved. As Hutnyk (1997: 134) suggests, to focus on hybridity while ignoring (or as an excuse for ignoring) the conditions in which this phenomenon exists (the commodity system, global economic inequality, inequitable political relations), is problematic in that it maintains the status quo. Hybridity and difference sell, but in the meantime the market remains intact, power relations remain unequal, and marginalized peoples remain marginalized. Moreover, as culture is subsumed into capitalism, those marginalized peoples who might be capable of oppositional politics are also subsumed under the rubric of hybridity.

**[Insert Plate 13.3 near here]**

The notion of hybridity, therefore, can be problematic. In some Latin American countries, cultural elites and nation states have appropriated the hybrid mestizo (mixed) identity, making it dominant. This has been seen to be oppressive of 'Indian' populations, who have in turn been accused of ethnic essentialism (or emphasizing their racial difference) because of their desire to protect their cultures (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996). In the West, ideas of hybridity are currently popular with highly educated cultural elites, but ideas about culture, ethnicity and identity that develop in poverty-stricken underclass neighbourhoods are likely to be of a different nature (Friedman 1997: 83–4). Evidence of racial tensions in many North American and European cities points to the fact that class and local ghetto identities tend to prevail, with little room for the mixing pleaded for by cultural elites. Such fixed notions of identity are produced and perpetuated in wealthy areas too. In Cape Town, where urban segregation persists 20 years after the end of apartheid, several violent, racist incidents in public spaces in predominantly white neighbourhoods made newspaper headlines in 2014. The global, cultural hybrid, elite sphere is occupied by individuals who share a very different kind of experience of the world, connected to international politics, academia, the media and the arts. In the meantime, the world becomes more polarized in terms of wealth, and heads towards increasing balkanization where regional, national and ethnic identities are perceived as bounded, threatened, and in need of protection. As Bhabha (1994) reminds us, hybridity is an insufficient means through which to create new forms of collective identity that can overcome ethnic, racial, religious and class-based antagonisms – it sounds nice in theory, but does not necessarily exist outside the realms of the privileged.

As Stuart Hall (1996: 233) argued, we should not view the current fashionability of hybridity in a wholly negative light. Even as cultures are increasingly commodified, we should not forget the potential for the democratization of culture in this process, the increased recognition of difference and the diversification of the social worlds in which people now operate – the case

of samba-haiko in Brazil (Case study 13.4) is but one example. This pluralization of social and cultural life expands the identities available to ordinary people (at least in the advanced economies) in their everyday working, social, familial and sexual lives. For Bhabha (1994: 9), the interconnections of different cultural spaces and the overlapping of different cultural forms create vitality and hold out the possibility of a progressive notion of culture.

We thus need to think about the place and meaning of cultural hybridity in the context of growing global uncertainty, xenophobia (fear of foreigners) and racism. Why is cultural hybridity still experienced as an empowering, dangerous or transformative force? Why, on the one hand, is difference celebrated through a consumer market that offers a seemingly endless choice of identities, sub-cultures and styles yet, on the other hand, hybridity continues to threaten and shock? Conversely, why do borders, boundaries and 'pure' identities remain important, producing defensive and exclusionary actions and attitudes, and why are the latter so difficult to transcend? Is the sheer pace of change in cultural globalization producing these reactions?

To summarize, hybridity and diaspora are examples of more progressive ways of thinking about culture. It could be argued that all cultures are always already hybrid; they are never pure, have always evolved and changed through time and through contact with other cultures, and they continue to evolve. In today's world, hybridity is being commodified, which might make it less radical. However, despite this, it has the potential to democratize culture and to allow us to rethink culture in ways that are more tolerant of difference. Finally, cultural hybridity needs to be understood in the context of growing global uncertainty, xenophobia and racism.

## **13.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter it is suggested that there are two apparently contradictory tendencies in thinking about cultures – the attempt to secure the purity of a culture by conceptualizing it as strong, fixed, bounded, permanent and homogeneous, and the hybridity of most cultures. Culture is thus a contested concept. A progressive way of thinking about culture is to reject the idea of bound-

edness and internal cohesion. In the modern world especially, culture is a meeting point where different influences, traditions and forces intersect. There is, therefore, a continual process of change in cultural practices and meanings. Globalization is undermining closed, fixed ideas of culture and leading to new ways of conceptualizing cultures (transculturation, contact zones, hybridity and diaspora). However, the fact that cultures are not fixed or homogeneous does not mean that we will stop thinking of them in this way. As Hall (1995: 188–9) argues, this is because some people need ‘belongingness’ and the security that closed conceptions of culture provide.

Despite this, recent years have witnessed a decentring of culture, with nation states increasingly superseded by transnational institutions that are producing cultural globalization and greater cultural diversity. There has also been a shift in the awareness of the cultural capital of the West, and an understanding of the cultural dominance of developed countries. At the same time, there are now more voices talking back, reflecting the cultural assertiveness of marginalized groups and making us aware of new levels of diversity. Even though most people remain physically, ideologically and spiritually attached to a local or a national culture and a local place, complex cultural flows and networks ensure that it is becoming increasingly impossible for people to live in places that are completely isolated and disconnected culturally from the wider world. Thus,

if there is a global culture it would be better to conceive of it not as a common culture, but as a field in which differences, power struggles and cultural prestige contests are played out. . . .

Hence globalization makes us aware of the sheer volume, diversity and many-sidedness of culture. (Featherstone 1995: 14)

This points to a ‘more positive evaluation by the West of otherness and differences’ (ibid.: 89). For Massey and Jess (1995b: 134), globalization is not simply a threat to existing notions of culture, but a ‘stimulus to a positive new response’.

People around the world have different cultures and systems of meaning, but we cannot avoid reading the world from within our own cultures and interpreting it through our own systems of meaning. Understandings of global culture for the majority of the readers of this book are filtered through the logic of the West (Spivak 1985). Western ideas and cultural forms are still considered superior and have become hegemonic, or dominant. Similarly, one's own cultural positioning (on the basis of gender, ethnicity, class, location, sexuality, stage in life cycle, ability) also influences understandings of local cultures. The same processes operate at local levels; dominant cultures marginalize others on the basis of ethnicity, sexuality, gender and religion. However, as we have seen, those dominant cultures also produce resistances that have the potential to create new ways of thinking about culture.

The challenge is to confront the limits of 'our' knowledge, to recognize other worlds, to acknowledge the legitimacy of other cultures, other identities and other ways of life. Accepting 'cultural translation' (Bhabha 1994) involves understanding the hybrid nature of culture, the influence of marginal cultures on dominant cultures, and that people in marginal cultural systems at local, national and international levels are also active in creating their own systems of meaning. They do not simply absorb ideas from, or become absorbed into, more dominant cultures. It is possible to develop cosmopolitanism in the twenty-first century that is global, sensitive to cultural difference, and dynamic.

## **Learning outcomes**

Having read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the complexities of culture; it is a process, rather than a thing, and subject to change over time.
- Demonstrate ways in which cultures operate at local, national and global levels.
- Discuss examples of global cultural processes and how these are filtered through localities to contest notions of a singular global culture.



- Discuss examples of negative (closed, bounded), or positive (progressive, hybridized) local cultures.
- Critique and utilize concepts such as hybridity and diaspora as a progressive way of thinking about culture.
- Reflect on your own cultures of knowledge, and the ways in which these condition your ideas about global, national and local cultures.

## Further reading

[Insert ICON near here]

**Anderson, J.** (2010) *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces*, Routledge, London. This book provides a broad-based overview of cultural geography, arguing that its essential focus is *place*. The book presents specific chapters outlining the history of cultural geography, as well as the methods and techniques of doing cultural geography and focuses on topics such as corporate capitalism, nationalism, ethnicity, youth culture and the place of the body.

**Anderson, K., Domosh, M., Pile, S. and Thrift, N.** (eds) (2003) *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, Sage, London. This book offers an assessment of the key questions informing cultural geography and contains over 30 essays. It is an invaluable resource for students looking for an assessment of major issues and debates and the breadth, scope and vitality of contemporary cultural geography.

**Atkinson, D., Jackson, P., Sibley, D. and Washbourne, N.** (eds.) (2005) *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Ideas*, London: I.B.Tauris. A broad-ranging collection of mini-essays on topics germane to this chapter, including globalization/globality, travel/tourism, diaspora, hybridity, colonialism/postcolonialism.

**Duncan, J.S., Johnson, N.C. and Schein, R.** (eds) (2004) *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, Blackwell, London. A comprehensive introduction to cultural geography, with 32 chapters written by leading authorities in the field and covering debates about cultural theories, nature/culture, culture and identity, landscapes and colonial/post-colonial geographies.

**Murray, W.E. and Overton, J.** (2014) *Geographies of Globalization*, London, Routledge (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). A lively textbook providing a useful introduction to geographies, theories and histories of globalization. The chapters on ‘Globalizing Cultural Geographies’ and ‘Progressive Globalization’ are pertinent to readers with interests in cultural geographies of globalisation.

**Nayak, A. and Jeffrey, A.** (2011) *Geographical Thought: An Introduction to Ideas in Human Geography*, Routledge, London. This book is not labeled as cultural geography, but it develops many of the themes identified in this chapter. Students of cultural geography will find the chapters on the ‘Cultural Turn’, ‘Geographies of Sexuality’, ‘Ethnicity and Racialisation’, ‘Postmodern Geographies’, ‘Postcolonial Geographies’ and ‘Emotions, Embodiment and Lived Geographies’ of interest.

## Useful websites

[Insert ICON near here]

**www.culture.gov.uk** The official website of the UK government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). An animated site that includes information about the role of the DCMS, and government policy towards media and arts, heritage, libraries and museums, sport, the National Lottery and tourism. Also has links to other useful sites in each category.

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/creative-economy-report-2013.pdf> The latest report and web-documentary from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (with the United Nations Development Programme) on the creative economy and its relationship to economic and social development.

<http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/CreativeEconomy/Statistics-on-world-trade-in-creative-products.aspx> UNCTAD Global Database on Creative Economy, including lots of useful statistics.

**www.adbusters.org/home** An example of ‘culture jamming’.

**www.un.org/womenwatch** The official United Nations Internet Gateway on the Advancement and Empowerment of Women, and part of the global phenomenon of cyberfeminism, which might be considered an example of a ‘third culture’. Has useful links to other sites advancing women’s rights through new technologies.

For an introduction to Cuba’s hybrid cultures see **www.afrocubaweb.com**.

For annotated, clickable weblinks and useful tutorials full of practical advice on how to improve your study skills, visit this book’s website at **www.pearsoned.co.uk/daniels**

### **Plate**

**Plate 13.1** Image marketing is central to popular consumption: the world of commodities is profoundly cultural.

(© Benjamin Rondel/CORBIS)

**Plate 13.2** Exclusion in the countryside: travellers and other minority groups are often excluded from shops and public houses, marking their position as ‘outsiders’.

(Joanne O’Brien Photography)

**Plate 13.3** Chinatown in San Francisco: ‘ethnic’ districts are promoted as major tourist attractions in many ‘global’ cities.

(© Dave G. Houser/Corbis)