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24 Globalization

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Globalization has been a popular theme during the last two decades, discussed in media as well as in several academic disciplines. The term is used by scholars since the 1980s (Beyer 2007, 444). The process of globalization is firmly linked to communication, which today is world-wide and increasingly dense. Peoples, cultures, societies and civilizations that previously were more or less isolated from one another are now in regular contact (Beyer 1994, 2). Many new religions – both today and historically – are products of cultural communication and cultural migration. Thus, increasing global communication is one of the factors important for new religions, not only to form but also to spread. New religions today have the possibility to spread to other parts of the globe with increasing speed, using new communication technologies as media and the internet.

Globalization theories introduce a global level of analysis to supplement local, national and regional levels (Beyer 1994, 2; Martikainen 2004, 42). The term could refer to both compression of the world and consciousness of the world as a whole, as well as to the sense of belonging to a global community (Steger 2009, 10–13). There are different opinions as to the time span for which it is relevant to use the term. Some writers limit the historical scope of globalization to 1990s onwards, while others argue that globalization represents continuation and extension of complex processes that began with the emerging of

modernity and the capitalist world system several centuries ago, or that it has unfolded for millennia (Steger 2009, 17–36). Globalization is, however, uneven and neglects and even excludes some areas of the world (Ritzer 2011, 164).

Most globalization theoreticians divide the globalization discussion into several different dimensions. Manfred B. Steger, for example, differs between economical, political, cultural and ecological dimensions of globalization (2009). Arjun Appadurai differs between five dimensions of global flows: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, finanscaples and ideoscaples (Appadurai 1997, 296). Religion is just a small part of the immense area of the globalization debate. And within the area of religion and globalization, this essay will focus on only new religions and globalization.

Globalization could thus be discussed in innumerable different ways. I have chosen some themes to discuss, which are both common in the general globalization discussion and of great importance for new religions. These themes will form three different parts of this essay: Universalism and particularism; Transnational cultures; and Homogenization and hybridity.

Universalism and Particularism

Some theoreticians of globalization, as Roland Robertson and Peter Beyer, stress *relativization* as a key process of globalization (Robertson 1998, 29; see also Berger 1990, 151–3, for a discussion of pluralism, relativization and secularization). In a global society, all particular cultures, including religions that form part of these cultures, are relativized (Beyer 1994, 9), and individuals form their religious identity in the knowledge that their religion is only one among several possibilities (Beyer 1994, 30). The process of relativization gives rise to the dual and simultaneous process of search for, on the one hand, particularistic identities, and on the other hand, universalistic identities (Beyer 1994, 30; Robertson 1998, 100), a process which could also be expressed religiously. Globalization is thus producing universalism and cosmopolitanism, but also, as a reaction, the assertion of particularistic identities, as opposition to the conception of the world as a series of culturally equal, relativized, entities or ways of life (Robertson 1998, 102). An example of this resistance or particularism is religious fundamentalism, reacting to the cultural complexity of a globalized world as disturbing and dangerous, taking refuge in renewed and purified traditions (Giddens 2002, 4–5). Particularistic groups, however, often in different ways absorb globally transmitted cultural values – most of them do, for example, use the media technology characteristic of globalization (Rajagopal 2001; Smith 2000).

Robertson emphasizes the interpenetration of universalism and particularism. He illustrates with Japan. Robertson argues that Japan has a very long and

successful history of selective incorporation and syncretization of ideas from other cultures in such a way as to particularize the universal, and return the product of that process to the world as a uniquely Japanese contribution to the universal (Robertson 1998, 102).

New religions are sometimes quite universalistic in their identity, including and promoting global values, as for example Bahá'í, Soka Gakkai and Unification Church. Global values could be, for example, the belief that different religions are just different expressions of the same faith, or the importance of the unification of the world and humanity (Beckford 2008, 25; Hexham and Poewe 1997, 52; MacEoin 2005, 296; Warburg 2005, 8). However, there are also particularistic orientations, as for example Neopagan groups, reacting to globalization and aspiring to revive a particular tradition. Often there is, however, a mixture of universalism and particularism. Examples would be Jehovah's Witnesses or ISKCON, claiming a unique and exclusive truth, but offering their message for everyone.

Transnational Cultures

One outcome of increasing communication or globalization is the growth of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory, transnational cultures or deterritorialized cultures. In a globalized world, culture is no longer as tied as it once was to the constraints of local geography (Ritzer 2011, 165). Many new religions could be seen as examples of such transnational cultures. Members are residents of many different countries, but have a feeling of commonness, and of sharing a history and a destiny with other members world-wide. Margit Warburg calls these new religions 'transnational imagined communities' (Warburg 2008, 49–50). Examples of such new religions which function as transnational communities, are for example The Family International, or Bahá'í. In recent years, internet has become an important medium for the transnational communities to keep in contact with other members of the same group.

The social anthropologist Ulf Hannerz notes that cosmopolitans may be somewhat footloose: They are as ready to move on as they are to stay in order to immerse themselves temporarily within other cultures and religions (Hannerz 1997, 240–1). According to Hannerz, a global culture is a transnational network of cosmopolitan people who self-consciously cultivate 'an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences' (Hannerz 1997, 239). My own observation is, however, that several of the new religions, although existing as transnational groups in different cultures, rather try to keep to their own culture than immersing themselves with the geographical culture where they happen to be. Children growing up in these communities,

however, often master several languages and have lived in several countries during their upbringing, and thus have a weaker sense of belonging to a specific geographic and national space. In some new religions it is common to send their teenagers to other communities around the world before adulthood, as in The Family International. In the Unification Church, there is the possibility for teenagers to attend a boarding school in Korea (Frisk 2007).

Historically, there have been transnational religions with universal aspirations, like Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, religions contradicting political boundaries (Beyer 1994, 50). Common to these has been the aspiration to include everyone, not excluding people because of, for example, nationality or ethnic origin. Hexham and Poewe observe that the new religionist practice often includes people for whom the co-existence of ideas from diverse cultures, traditions and practices is an inner experience (Hexham and Poewe 1997, 46–7). This is a common practice in the new age spiritualities, but also some new religions selectively and consciously combine aspects of many traditions to create a new culture, a process only possible under strongly globalized conditions. One example is the Rajneesh (Osho neo-sannyas) movement (Hexham and Poewe 1997, 41–3).

Homogenization and Hybridity

It is highly relevant to adopt a power perspective to globalization, as globalization affects different parts of the world in uneven ways. Doreen Massey discusses power relations between 'centre' and 'periphery' regarding different areas (like economy, politics, media) and different places. While there are increasing mixtures of cultures in all parts of the world, the directions of this mixing are unequal (Massey 1995, 70). Culture flows comparatively easily across the globe, but not all cultures, or parts of cultures, flow as easily or at the same rate (Ritzer 2011, 154). There are barriers to global fluidity like region of the world, social class, gender and ethnicity, all related to power (Ritzer 2011, 7–16). Although not all cultural flows run in the same direction, many observers point out that it is clear there are broad systematic lines and directions: from 'West' to 'rest' (Giddens 2002, 15; Massey 1995, 71). Modernization in the West has directly resulted in the spread of certain vital institutions of Western modernization to the rest of the globe, as the modern capitalist economy and scientific rationality in the form of modern technology. Some, like Anthony Giddens, emphasize democracy as a Western contribution to the rest of the world (Giddens 2002, 5; Steger 2009, 75).

Ulf Hannerz remarks that transnational cultures are, in different ways, extensions or transformations of the cultures of Western Europe and North America, and are organized so as to make people from Western Europe and North America feel as much at home as possible (by, for example, using their own languages) (Hannerz 1997, 244). Several of the new religions – as for example ISKCON, The Family International, The Unification movement – have also spread from or via the United States to the rest of the world. Some writers interpret Western practitioners of non-Western religions as a continuation of imperialism, a theft also of religious elements. This has been evident concerning native religions (see for example Rothstein 2005) and Buddhism (Plank 2011).

Peter Beyer argues, that although key globalizing structures originated in the West, globalization is not just another word for Western expansion. Globalization is more than the spread of one historically existing culture at the expense of all others. It is the creation of a new global culture, one that increasingly becomes the broader social context of all particular cultures in the world, including those of the West. The spread of the global social reality therefore occurs quite as much at the cost of the latter as of non-Western cultures. All cultures change dramatically in the process (Beyer 1994, 8–9). Hexham and Poewe argue that it is characteristic for a global culture, travelling the world, to take on a local colour. It has both a global, or metacultural, and a local, or situationally distinct, dimension (Hexham and Poewe 1997, 41). George Ritzer writes about cultural hybridization, the production of new and unique hybrid cultures that is not reducible to either local or global culture. The integration of global processes with various local realities produces new and distinctive hybrid forms that indicate continued global heterogenization rather than homogenization. This is sometimes called glocalization, defined as the interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas. The world would thus become more pluralistic (Ritzer 2011, 159; Robertson 1998, 173–4). One example, given by J. Gordon Melton, is reiki healing. In the process of spreading globally, different traditions developed in the interplay between the global and the local, in contact with other traditions in different parts of the world (Melton 2001, 73–93). Yoga is another example of this kind of development, as different kinds of yoga, some originating in the West, are spreading rapidly – also back to India in new packages (Frisk and Åkerbäck, 2013, forthcoming). There is often a tension between keeping the tradition 'pure', and between adapting to local culture. Thus, ISKCON has, for example, in Western countries developed a more equal gender practice than in the original culture (Frisk 2007).

Conclusion

New religions are often a product of globalization (increasing communication, migration and syncretism), and express a mixture of universalistic and particularistic identities, both, however, responses to globalization. Some are examples of transnational or deterritorialized cultures, an effect of a globalized world. Many of them reflect Western cultural flows; however, the integration of global and local processes also produces new forms indicating increased heterogenization.