

"LOCAL" WITHIN "GLOBAL SPACE": CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS WITHIN THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION

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The objective of this study is to explore what happens to the "local" (culture) in a rapidly globalizing world. The construction of "global spaces" is widely discussed and debated within various disciplines such as Sociology, Geography, and Anthropology as well as in the public media. Since the normative constructions and theorizations of globalization sheds a 'birds eye view' of the process, the incorporation, elimination and manipulation of the cultural aspects which are local in nature are too often overlooked in these discussions in spite of the fact that radical interpretations of globality entails a fair degree of receptiveness to the diversity of local cultures and traditions.

Sri Lankan socio-cultural space is fast changing and is dubbed with the challenges brought by the intensifying process of globalization. The expanding global capital has introduced "Pizza Huts", "McDonalds" and overarching super markets and departmental stores which indicate a glimpse of such change in the capital city of Sri Lanka. Away from Colombo, tourist hotels have emerged catering for eco-tourism in the heartland of Sinhalese Buddhist socio-cultural history. Even within one's own living room in front of the television, a global space is framed from CNN worldwide, Discovery Channel to Nightrider and soap opera such as Santa Barbara. If one is to identify this as the "process of globalization" (?), we see an interesting tendency beneath it – how the local cultural elements are co-opted. In this study, I examine several empirical examples to explain how the local cultural forms are 'used' within the process of globalization.

What is most interesting about this process is that local cultural traditions, customs and behaviors may be distanced or even removed from their day to day material relevance and necessities and elevating to a symbolic realm within the global space accruing a rather strategic significance in the capitalist market thus making culture merely a commodity.

The study is significant in two respects. First, it shows that severe impacts of globalization can be seen in the ways in which the local culture is being used in creating and promoting new global spaces with no positive contribution towards reconstruction or conservation of the local. Second, it clearly demonstrates the subtle nature of the process of globalization in countries such as Sri Lanka manured through the dominance of western capital.