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globalization + autonomy

CULTURAL

Frictions and Connections

AUTONOMY

Edited by Petra Rethmann, Imre Szeman, and
William D. Coleman



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Preface

The Globalization and Autonomy Series: Dialectical Relationships in the Contemporary World

THE VOLUMES IN THE Globalization and Autonomy series offer the results from an interdisciplinary Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). SSHRC set up the MCRI program to provide a vehicle to support larger projects with research objectives requiring collaboration among researchers from different universities and across a range of disciplines. The MCRI on Globalization and Autonomy began in April 2002. The research team involved forty co-investigators from twelve universities across Canada and another twenty academic contributors from outside Canada, including scholars from Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovenia, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Drawing on additional funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the project became affiliated with a separate interdisciplinary research team of twenty-eight scholars, the Groupe d'Études et de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur la Méditerranée (GERIM). GERIM is based in Tunisia and includes members from France, Spain, Jordan, and Lebanon as well. Scholars from the following disciplines participated in the project: anthropology, comparative literature, cultural studies, economics, English literature, geography, history, music, philosophy, political science, and sociology.

The project was conceived, designed, and implemented to carry out interdisciplinary research. We endeavoured to put disciplinary-based theories and conceptual frameworks into dialogue with one another, with a view

to developing new theories and understandings of human societies. Four conditions needed to be met if research was to be done in this way. First, we brought humanities and social science disciplines into a relationship of mutual influence, where perspectives were integrated without subordinating one to another. To achieve this integration, the team agreed on a set of core research objectives informed by existing writings on globalization and autonomy. Members developed a number of research questions designed to address these objectives and a research plan that would permit them to address these questions in a focused, systematic way. Second, team members individually were encouraged to think inside disciplines other than their own and to respect differences across disciplines in terms of how the object of knowledge is constructed. Third, team members were selected to ensure that the research was carried out using multiple methodologies. Finally, faced with researching the complex relationships involved in globalization, an interdisciplinary approach meant that our work would be necessarily pluri-theoretical. We held to the view that theories would be most effective when, in addition to applying ideas rigorously, their proponents acknowledged the limitations of any particular theoretical perspective and consciously set out to cross boundaries and use other, sometimes seemingly incommensurable, perspectives.

To ensure intellectual integration from the start, team members agreed on this approach at the first full meeting of the project and committed to the following core objective: *to investigate the relationship between globalization and the processes of securing and building autonomy*. To this end, we sought to refine understanding of these concepts and of the historical evolution of the processes inherent in both of them, given the contested character of their content, meaning, and symbolic status. Given that *globalization* is the term currently employed to describe the contemporary moment, we attempted to:

- determine the opportunities globalization might create and the constraints globalization might place on individuals and communities seeking to secure and build autonomy
- evaluate the extent to which individuals and communities might be able to exploit these opportunities and to overcome these constraints
- assess the opportunities for empowerment that globalization might create for individuals and communities seeking to secure and to build autonomy

- determine how the autonomy available to individuals and communities might permit them to contest, reshape, or engage globalization.

In seeking to address the core objectives for the project, we moved our research in three interrelated directions. First, we accepted that globalization and autonomy have deep historical roots. What is happening today in the world is in many ways continuous with what has taken place in the past. Thus, the burden of a contemporary examination of globalization and autonomy is to assess what is new and what has changed. Second, the dynamics of the relationship between globalization and autonomy are related to a series of important changes in the locations of power and authority. Finally, the globalization-autonomy dynamic plays out in the construction and reconstruction of identities, the nature and value of community, and the articulation of autonomy in and through cultures and discrete institutions. In each of these three areas, the team developed and agreed to answer core questions to provide clear direction for the research. The full text of the questions is available at <http://globalization.mcmaster.ca/ga/ga81.htm>.

Over successive annual meetings of the team, our research coalesced around the following themes: institutions and global ordering; democracy and legitimacy; continuity and rupture in the history of globalization and autonomy; history, property rights, and capitalism; community; culture; the situation and struggles of indigenous peoples; and the Mediterranean region as a microcosm of North-South relations. The researchers addressing these themes tended to be drawn from several disciplines, leading to interdisciplinary dialogue within each thematic group. The themes then crystallized into separate research problems, which came to be addressed by the volumes in the series. While these volumes were taking form, the project team also developed an online publication, the *Globalization and Autonomy Online Compendium* (see next page), which makes our findings available to the general public through research summaries; a glossary of key concepts, organizations, people, events, and places; and a comprehensive bibliography. The ultimate objective of all of these publications is to produce an integrated corpus of outstanding research that provides an in-depth study of the varying relationships between globalization and autonomy.

Globalization and Autonomy Online Compendium

Readers of this volume may also be interested in the *Globalization and Autonomy Online Compendium* (available at www.globalautonomy.ca). The *Compendium* is a collective publication by the team of Canadian and international scholars who have been part of the SSHRC Major Collaborative Research Initiative that gave rise to the volumes in the Globalization and Autonomy series. Through the *Compendium*, the team is making the results of their research available to a wide public audience. Team members have prepared a glossary of hundreds of short articles on relevant persons, places, organizations, events, and key concepts and have compiled an extensive searchable bibliographical database. Short summaries of the chapters in other volumes of the Globalization and Autonomy series can also be found in the *Compendium*, along with position papers and peer-reviewed research articles on globalization and autonomy issues.

Acknowledgments

THE EDITORS WOULD LIKE to express their immense gratitude to Nancy Johnson and Sonya Zikic, the project editors for the MCRI on Globalization and Autonomy, for their excellent work, support, and committed professionalism. We are also grateful to Jennifer Clark, Sara Mayo, and Cassandra Pohl for administrative support throughout the project. William Coleman acknowledges that the research for his contributions to the book was undertaken, in part, thanks to funding from the Canada Research Chairs Program. Finally, the editors and volume authors would like to thank the peer reviewers of this book for their helpful and insightful comments and suggestions.

Cultural Autonomy

chapter 1

Introduction: Cultural Autonomy, Politics, and Global Capitalism

William D. Coleman, Imre
Szeman, and Petra Rethmann

THE ACCELERATED GROWTH OF transplanetary connections and relations characteristic of contemporary globalization has profoundly influenced how individuals, collectivities, and institutions engage in meaning-making activities and how these, in turn, shape and change them. Although meaning-making activities – which are normally referred to as “culture” – were long shaped by the forces of belonging, identity, memory, and space associated with nation-states, many of these forces spill outside their territorial boundaries. Although the role played by nation-states in shaping nationality and citizenship remains strong, these forms of belonging and social meaning are themselves evolving as states come to play new roles in responding to and supporting a still developing, globally networked capitalism. The centrality of information and communication technologies, the dominance of finance capital, and the power of transnational corporations – forces that have led to the commodification of ever more facets of daily living, including cultural practices – distinguish contemporary capitalism from earlier forms.

Contributors to this book explore the relationships between old and new forms of power and their impact on cultural autonomy – the capacity of individuals, communities, social movements, and other organized collective forms (including states) to create meanings and to respond on their own terms to crystallizations of meanings that might shape who they are and how they live. The concept of cultural autonomy is used as a conceptual

heuristic through which to examine and understand the changing character of these relationships. We argue that cultural autonomy, whether as a value or as a capability of individuals and collectivities, changes in response to these shifts in the organization of power; in addition, it opens pathways for challenging them. We thus join other researchers in noting that the use of digital technologies creates possibilities for countering the dominant forms of globalization associated with neoliberalism.

Challenging the networked form of contemporary global capitalism often requires individuals, states, and various other collectivities to organize themselves in a networked way. Entering into networked relationships backed by digital technologies raises new questions about meaning-making and thus cultural autonomy for those involved. Not only do these networks have their own cultural logic that shapes the actors involved, but they also give rise to new dimensions of cultural autonomy. Network participants embody in their relationships with one another alternative ways of politics and of living. At the same time, actors have to consider how far they integrate into networks and how much they remain outside or “autonomous” from them. The success or failure in these negotiations conditions the likelihood of social actors articulating, embodying, and acting upon alternative globalizations that challenge the dominant neoliberal form.

The authors in this book are all researchers in the Globalization and Autonomy project. They first came together at the second annual meeting of the research team in September 2003 and met as part of a workshop expected to examine culture within the overall objectives of the project, which focused on understanding the dialectical relationship between globalization and autonomy. These explorations were complex and difficult, given disciplinary differences (the authors in this volume work in anthropology, literary studies, cultural studies, film studies, history, philosophy, political science, and sociology) and intellectual trajectories. Even participants in the same discipline did not necessarily share theoretical and methodological perspectives. After long discussion, the authors agreed on two challenges that have emerged for culture in the era of globalization: (1) the impact of globalization on the links (real or imagined) between culture and autonomy and (2) the transformation of the autonomy of culture itself – that is, its relationships and imbrications with political, economic, technological, and other factors and domains. These challenges have made it essential to think about the production of symbols and meaning not only on a global scale but also across previously distinct and separate understandings of culture. In moving towards a presentation of our conclusions related

to these two foci, we begin with some of our reflections on the core concepts of autonomy, globalization, and culture.

Autonomy

How can one make sense of all of the modes and forms of autonomy or disputes over its possibility that emerge when diverse levels of culture fold in on top of one another, as they cannot help but do under the conditions of globalization? The analyses in this book deal with a number of interconnected forms of cultural autonomy. To illustrate them, we begin with a hypothetical case of an average, middle-class woman who lives in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, a country that belongs to the Mediterranean region, which is the subject of considerable research within the Globalization and Autonomy project (see Essid and Coleman 2010). We can think of numerous modes or forms of cultural autonomy experienced by this woman. To begin with, living in a state that emerged out of colonial modernity (Dirlik 2007), she has come to have a sense of individuality as a person, a common characteristic of persons living in modernity (Taylor 1991, 2). She has a sense of being an individual who, like others, creates her own meanings and chooses which public forms of culture are meaningful to her. This form of individual cultural autonomy is experienced by people across the globe to varying degrees.

As an autonomous individual, she will see herself as having choices when it comes to culture in the postcolonial modernity of Tunisia. Some of this individuality might be expressed in the clothes she wears, including whether she will put on a headscarf when she leaves the home. Unlike her grandmothers, she can choose to listen to traditional Arab music played in the home or in particular places outside the home or to Arabized versions of these traditional songs that make use of instruments and recording technologies that come from other North African countries, notably Egypt. Or she could find still other songs with Tunisian origins that have become part of world music by incorporating instruments from other parts of the world and adopting Western music's measured beat (Lakhoua 2010). And if she had the means, she could obtain other kinds of music from other parts of the world that have no relationship to Tunisian music. In having and making such choices, she exercises some degree of individual cultural autonomy.

But from here – a sense of autonomy that could already be placed into question alongside that of the “individual” that imagines possessing it –

things immediately get more complicated. We could expand our focus to include Tunisia as a society governed by an independent state in the world-system of states. We refer to collective cultural autonomy when we discuss states and other collective or communal forms of autonomy, including social movements. Hannerz (1992, 7) notes that culture has three dimensions: ideas and modes of thought, the externalization of meanings, and the manner in which the inventory of meanings and meaningful forms are spread throughout a population. Collective cultural autonomy is the capacity of a collectivity to choose ideas and modes of thought, to influence the forms in which meaning is externalized, and to steer how these forms are distributed. The Tunisian state, reflecting postcolonial modernity, sees itself as having some responsibility for Tunisian culture, the ways of cultural being particular to the people living within the territorial boundaries of the country. In particular, it seeks to negotiate the cultural transition from colonial modernity, in which cultural forms were imposed in part through colonial practices of French normativity (see Rabinow 1989, chap. 9). For example, by developing policies for what would be the first and most important language taught in the school system – Arabic – it actively helps to create a collective sense of culture. By deciding whether the colonial language – French – might be taught in schools and how intensively this teaching might be carried out, it also helps to form policies that connect Tunisian culture to global currents, insofar as French functions as both a global and imperial language. Similarly, by deciding whether English will be taught in the school system or whether it will remain a language studied through private means (see Bahloul 2010), the state influences how Tunisians connect their lives to other political entities.

In making decisions like these and others, such as whether transnational food stores like Carrefour can locate in Tunisia or whether money will be made available to support publications of fiction and poetry in Arabic, the Tunisian authorities may feel more or less constrained in what they decide and, thus, may possess more or less collective cultural autonomy. A decision about the entry of Carrefour – which is not simply a foreign company but represents the commodification of food and potentially fundamental cultural shifts in practices of shopping and, thus, of the character of daily public experience – might be related to global norms of foreign investment or contingent upon free trade agreements signed with the European Union. These contingencies might mean that the leaders feel that they have little choice. Having relatively little economic autonomy in the increasingly globalized capitalist order, they accept the arrival of Carrefour.

In this respect, we might say that Tunisia does not have much collective autonomy when it comes to sourcing and distributing foods. In contrast, its leaders might feel that they have much more room to shape their own policies when it comes to language instruction in schools. We might say that they have considerable cultural collective autonomy.¹

If we return for a moment to the middle-class, urbanized Tunisian woman, she might experience this collective cultural autonomy in contradictory ways. When it comes to Carrefour, she might think that the decision by the government to permit its entry adds to her own individual cultural autonomy because it opens up a range of possibilities for her to express her cultural preferences and organize her way of living when it comes to food. So less collective autonomy on the part of the government might lead to a perception that she has more individual cultural autonomy. In contrast, if English is not taught as a second or third language in the schools or is available principally through private companies, she might feel limitations on her individual autonomy in terms of what she can read, what kinds of jobs she might be able to obtain, or which countries she might be able to immigrate to if she wished to leave her country.

The relationship between collective and individual autonomy today is rendered increasingly complex not only by new possibilities and limits arising from the interconnected character of global relations at both the local and national levels but also by the introduction of new organizational forms. Collective cultural autonomy exercised by organizations such as states that have vertical hierarchies takes different forms than that which emerges from network structures, which are increasingly important social forms because of contemporary globalizing processes. Castells (1996) argues that the information technology revolution in the contemporary era has rendered the organizational form of the network – flexible, scalable, and adaptable – more efficient than organizations with vertical hierarchies. He writes (2004, 7): “What is specific to our world is the extension and augmentation of the body and mind in networks of interaction powered by microelectronics-based, software operated, communication technologies. These technologies are increasingly diffused throughout the entire realm of human activity by growing miniaturization.” He adds that this understanding of changes in social structure provides a sociological basis for globalization.²

Social movements and other non-governmental organizations have entered into networks to engage and counter contemporary capitalism and its economic and political supporting structures, including transnational

corporations. In doing so, these collective organizations take part in what Juris (2008, 11) calls a “cultural logic of networking.” These logics entail a set of social and cultural dispositions that orient actors towards building horizontal ties and connections among diverse autonomous elements, the free and open circulation of information, collaboration through decentralized coordination and consensus decision making, and self-directed networking. These networks create broad umbrella spaces in which diverse collectivities, organizations, and smaller networks converge.

These alliances, in turn, are driven by a cultural politics of autonomous space. Autonomous spaces are another form of collective cultural autonomy: participating organizations can express their differences with the overall network while remaining connected to it (della Porta et al. 2006, 237; Juris 2008, 255). These understandings of collective cultural autonomy draw inspiration from earlier social movements in Europe that sought to establish autonomy from political parties and trade unions (Katsiaficus 1997, 7–8). Participating in global networks in this way enhances the individual collective autonomy of a movement’s participants while they negotiate the boundaries of collective autonomy within the broader spaces created by the networks.

It should already be clear that having to think about network forms in addition to individual and collective modes of cultural autonomy creates an incredibly complex field of inquiry. But there is yet another way that the term *cultural autonomy* is used in this volume that has to be taken into account. When some scholars use this term, they refer to the degree to which cultural practices or ways of living are distinct from other social practices. The autonomy of culture in relation to other spheres of social life emerges conceptually out of Immanuel Kant’s categorization of aesthetic judgment in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) and socially out of the constitution of the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas 1996), where artistic and cultural practices were set aside from the means-ends rationality governing political and, especially, economic life. The power and limits of the autonomy of culture in general, and art more specifically, is detailed in Peter Bürger’s influential *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. It is the struggle of the historical avant-garde to carve out a culturally autonomous space for its practices and for itself that gives shape to culture as an independent aesthetic and social realm. Bürger (1985, 36) points out that with respect to art and culture autonomy is “a category whose characteristic it is that it describes something real (the detachment of art as a special sphere of human activity

from the nexus of the praxis of life) but simultaneously expresses this real phenomenon in concepts that block recognition of the social determinacy of the process.”

In short, art is not autonomous by its very nature but by the fact of a historical development that has rendered it so; this autonomy, in turn, is *real* – an outcome of modernity that enables art and culture to engage in a self-reflective critique of bourgeois culture. It can do so, however, only through a fatal separation from the dynamics of the public sphere; its effects, then, are necessarily and structurally more conceptual than real. Art can thus comment on and criticize the existing state of affairs, but without producing any real change.³ Our modern idea of culture is constructed with autonomy from other social domains at its heart. With respect to culture, the experiences of individual or collective autonomy work both with and against this idea. Individuals imagine that their cultural experiences can be autonomous in ways that their political or economic experiences cannot because of the separation of culture from other parts of social life. At the same time, culture is seen as not simply a complement to politics, the economy, and other social practices but also as the fundamental place where they are expressed and experienced, which is why a state like Tunisia sets policies regarding schooling and language.

We can explain how all these forms of autonomy are connected by returning to the Tunisian woman’s decision regarding the headscarf. That decision might be contingent on the autonomy of Islam as a religion and community of practice in Tunisia from other social spheres, including the political. Over 99 percent of the population of the country is Sunni Muslim. They observe their religion in their daily practices at work and at home and, for many, in mosques as well. We can ask whether these religious practices, a domain of culture, are autonomous from the political sphere. We might investigate whether the religious leaders or imams in the mosques are chosen and approved within religious institutions by religious leaders or are approved by the state. In Tunisia, they are appointed by the state, and we might say that religion is less autonomous from the political in this place than in some other countries where imams are chosen only from within religious institutions. Since its declaration of independence, the Tunisian state has sought to discourage, if not occasionally forbid, the wearing of the headscarf by women. It does so to promote as a value a particular notion of individual autonomy. By appointing imams, it stands in a better position to promote this practice than if it had no control over

who preached in mosques. Forms of global Islam influencing Tunisia through global cultural networks contest this evaluation of autonomy (Lakhdhar 2010).

Similarly, we might consider whether culture is autonomous from the economic realm. If we return to the Tunisian woman and her entry into the vast new Carrefour store on the outskirts of Tunis, we can see a profound commodification of culture (Duran Monfort, 2010). What might have been prepared and sold in local farmers' markets, such as lambs and chickens slaughtered on the spot in halal fashion, are now replaced by large cooled display cases that contain meats from around the world. Many, but not all, of the cases have the word *halal* proudly stamped on them. Neighbouring display cases may even have pork available, something never found in local markets. Other display cases may have processed and prepared foods from Europe, Latin America, or North America. This commodification of the preparation and consumption of foods could be interpreted as a loss of cultural autonomy in the sense that what is cultural is now more strongly defined in terms of commodity forms of capitalism and tied to global economic circuits.

The question of cultural autonomy also arises across scales of organization. Like most Muslim countries, the practice of Islam in Tunisia took on a certain distinctiveness as it assimilated and accommodated indigenous belief structures in place prior to the arrival of the Arabs and Islam over thirteen hundred years ago, the practices of Turks who governed the territory as part of the Ottoman Empire, and cultural approaches brought to the territory from other parts of the Arab world. With the emergence of institutions of colonial and postcolonial modernity, these practices came to be understood as distinctly Tunisian and, in this sense, autonomous from those in neighbouring Muslim states. With the introduction of contemporary information and communication technologies, some suggest that a global Islam, based on a particular interpretation of sacred texts and the application of Islamic law, has developed and that it is increasingly available through television and the Internet (Essid 2004, forthcoming). Here, we find the network form of organization that becomes more influential under contemporary globalization being utilized by Islamic militants and religious authorities (see Castells 2003; Lubeck 2000).

The Tunisian woman may have moved into the ambit of this global Islam, may have started to participate in such networks, and may now see the wearing of the headscarf as a requirement of her religion. Among other changes in her life, she may come to believe that long-standing views

about this cultural act in her country are a sacrilege. In this case, we might ask whether Islam as a set of cultural practices and institutions in Tunisia has lost autonomy to global Islam. We might pose the same question when it comes to the cultural autonomy of music, the cultural autonomy of agriculture and food, or the cultural autonomy of literature. In these cases, cultural autonomy is a matter of relationships across scales of social action but within the same category of cultural practice (music, food, literature, and so on). And as will become clear from our discussion of the woman in Tunisia, cultural autonomy – in its relationships across scales or to the economic or political spheres – has a complex relationship with individual and collective autonomy.

Globalization

Researchers who became part of the Globalization and Autonomy project did so because they have an interest in globalization. How they understand and study globalization varies considerably, given the interdisciplinary character of each team member and the varying theoretical paradigms within which they work. Some were particularly interested in discourses about globalization, whether they were celebratory, negative, or took other forms. Scholars such as Arif Dirlik see globalization as the basis for a new paradigm for looking at and understanding the world, as he notes in his chapter in this volume and in his own book on global modernity (2007). As Brydon and Coleman (2008, 6) note in the Introduction to *Renegotiating Community*, another volume in this series, the term *globalization* “has become part of daily life in the mass media, and a common part of the discourse of politicians, corporate executives, social movements, and a wide range of non-governmental organizations. Whether invoked publicly or privately, it carries a strong emotive content, signalling a position in major debates of the day, whether to liberalize trade further, to accept that environmental warming is real, to resist Western cultural influences, to give life to human rights for women, or to detect the legacies of colonialism and imperialism.” Each of the authors in this book has been a participant in these discussions.

Each author did come face to face with the question, what is globalization? while writing her or his chapter. The answers vary. Generally speaking, there are some commonalities in their understanding of globalization. They understand the word *global* as a reference to scale and to phenomena that are somehow transplanetary, to use Scholte’s (2005) term. They also

understand that the spread of transplanetary phenomena is not confined to the economic (as is often assumed in popular discourse) but includes the political, cultural, military, and non-human as well (Held et al. 1999). They also stress that the growth of transplanetary relationships is uneven: it is more pronounced in wealthier countries than in poorer ones and differentially articulated spatially even within wealthier countries. Because they are historically informed, they believe that there is nothing inevitable about globalizing processes. As scholars associated with the project argue in another volume, *Empires and Autonomy*, transplanetary phenomena have been evident and have grown in importance over several centuries. A simple glance over the past 150 years suggests that these phenomena became more pronounced between 1870 and 1914 but then receded considerably until perhaps the early 1980s (Streeter, Weaver, and Coleman 2009).

Most of the authors in this book and in the project as a whole entered into these discussions because they wondered whether the growth of transplanetary connections has accelerated since the Second World War, particularly since the late 1970s. They agree that this growth, often termed *globalization*, has taken place. There are various explanations for this acceleration. At the heart of most of them is the dynamism of capitalism that resulted from the rapid growth of fully global financial markets. The predominant position of finance capital has led to a type of global capitalism not seen before (Castells 1996). This change in capitalism is linked in complex ways with innovations in information and communication technologies that have permitted transplanetary connections to become more supraterritorial: these technologies are less bound by the physical location or the nation-state boundaries within which people live. As a result, these technologies have permitted more planet-wide connections, and their growth has led to ever greater intrusions into the daily lives of more persons than ever before (taking into account the caveats about inequalities in distribution noted above).

Culture

To this point we have worked within an anthropological understanding of culture as the meanings that we create and that, in turn, create peoples as members of collectivities. We have also followed Hannerz's (1992) suggestion to look at three dimensions of culture: ideas and modes of thought, how meanings are made accessible to the senses or made public, and how

a cultural inventory of meanings and meaningful forms is spread throughout a population and within social relationships. We accept that some anthropologists have criticized how members of their discipline think about culture (see, for example, Marcus and Fischer 1999; Roseberry 1989). Many of the authors in this book may have different understandings of culture, given their different disciplinary backgrounds and how they position themselves in their own disciplines. For our purposes, we continue to employ this definition so that readers can identify this volume's contribution to the study of globalization.

In the preceding discussion of autonomy, we noted that culture flows in different frames: in the hierarchical structures of rulers and ruled; between buyers and sellers; between collectivities such as social movements or indigenous peoples, both within and outside of networks; and on a more symmetrical basis between individual persons going about their lives. Contemporary globalizing processes are changing these flows. They amplify the cultural importance of buyer-seller relationships and commodification as they complicate the relationship between rulers and the ruled. They provide opportunities to create alternative and novel globalizing processes by facilitating transnational networks among collective actors on the one side and by lowering boundaries to expand the scale for person-to-person relations to the planet on the other. These changes, in turn, have expanded processes of creolization (the confluence of two or more widely separate historical currents that interact in what is basically a center-periphery relationship [Hannerz 1992, 264]) and hybridization (socio-cultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices [Canclini 2005, xxv]). In turn, cultural boundaries have opened up considerably. Hannerz (2001, 58) uses the term *global ecumene* to allude to the increasingly persistent cultural interconnectedness of the world through interactions and exchanges.

Investigations of culture through the lens of autonomy in the context of globalization bring to the fore the question of why we examine culture to begin with. What do we hope to learn about autonomy by exploring culture as distinct from politics, economics, or other aspects of social life? Over the course of the twentieth century, several interpretive strategies have informed critical explorations of culture. One strategy is to read cultural artifacts and practices as signs or symptoms of developments occurring in other registers – for example, the economic, the social, or the

political. This strategy is based not only on the assumption that developments in these registers occur in interrelated ways but also on the presumption of their – albeit precarious – autonomy. In addition to offering a way to understand this or that cultural practice, this mode of analysis offers insight into what is happening (say) within the sphere of the political that a direct focus on politics and policy making would not necessarily yield. In short, looking to culture as a signifying mode of processes occurring in the political and social domains allows for more complex and intricate understandings of these spheres. Several of the chapters, notably those by Susie O'Brien and Tim Sedo, follow this strategy.

A second interpretative strategy builds on the first. The assumption that culture is autonomous from other spheres of social life not only makes possible unique insights into social, economic, and political phenomena but also provides glimpses of new possibilities in the future. The separation of culture from other parts of the social enables its *projective* possibilities – culture as a sign of things to come. Both of these interpretative strategies emerged from the cultural turn taken by Marxist critics following the Second World War (Anderson 1976). Even in the very different conditions arising from globalization, the study of culture continues to be guided by the idea that it unlocks our understanding of social developments in the present. This strategy is evident in chapters by Wren Nasr and Colin Scott and by Alex Khasnabish in which strategies beyond neoliberalism are considered.

A third interpretative strategy emerged from the necessity to rethink the relationship between autonomy and culture. At one extreme, which is frequently identified with the writings of the Frankfurt School, mass culture is seen as devoid of offering any possibility of autonomy from the state or the market; at the other, mass culture is imagined as allowing for possibilities of autonomous production and consumption. If proponents of the first perspective overstate the collapse of autonomy with respect to culture, the latter seem to celebrate uncritically the possibilities opened up by the expansion of commodity culture and ignore the systemic effects that simultaneously delimit and enable autonomy. What seems clear is that the extension of mass culture to the space of the entire globe – the dominant understanding of globalization in the area of culture – has made unsustainable even the minimal separation of one culture from another or from other spheres of society.

To offer one example: classical music orchestras have seen their audiences drop because of the development of interest in new forms of popular

music and the expansion of recording technologies that have made attendance at the live event less important throughout the twentieth century. This development is often lamented as a sign of cultural loss, even if the potential audience for classical music has been increased massively through recording technologies and new forms of distribution, such as electronic file sharing. Western classic music is itself, however, an example of a highly globalized cultural form, even if its spread is not usually associated with cultural imperialism in the same way as more popular culture forms such as cinema or popular music. In this case we have one form of mass culture threatening a form of traditional culture. At the same time, this cultural form may displace or threaten local cultures outside the West, or it may be revitalized, even renewed, through hybridized interactions, as our Tunisian example suggests. This interpretive strategy is followed by Anna Greenspan in her examination of mass culture's assimilation of revolutionary artifacts in China and India, by Susie O'Brien in her reflections on the Slow Food movement, and by Neil McLaughlin in his analysis of global public intellectuals.

To offer another example: rapacious practices in Indonesia's rain forests have led to the emergence of local forest advocacy and United Nations environmental funding, including far-flung collaborations and interconnections with logging companies and global environmental and nature-loving groups. In Indonesia this process has led to political configurations in which certain kinds of predatory business practices on the one hand and local power struggles on the other have come to characterize struggles over definitions of *culture* and *autonomy* (see Tsing 2005, chap. 2 for an illustration; Brosius 2003). Some of the incommensurable views that mark these struggles point to one central feature in all attempts to categorize both autonomy and culture: what is at stake is not only the definition but also the *value* of these registers. The democratizing or autonomy-enhancing effect of culture (Lehman 2006) depends not only on the ways in which collective struggles are waged and individual rights are observed but also on how negotiations run and if both collective and individual autonomy are expanded. In social struggles such as the one outlined above, culture and autonomy are not simply measurable entities, they are also values that themselves are at the heart of struggles.

As we have noted, cultural autonomy, like globalization, has to be considered at different scales – global and local (Tsing 2000). Cultural autonomy is not an unproblematic given; it looms large as an issue in analyses of globalization in the first place because global relations are wildly uneven,

unequal, and unjust. As we have stressed throughout, how one approaches the issue of culture in the context of globalization is an extraordinarily complex question, one for which answers are, understandably, only slowly being produced.

Alternative Globalizations, Resistance, and Autonomy: The Contribution of the Volume

The authors in this book share a common desire to better understand how cultural autonomy relates to challenges and resistance to hierarchies of control and domination. By exploring this common interest, they reveal three contemporary social trends of particular importance. First, contemporary globalizing processes tend to increase the importance of the relationship between cultural autonomy and the global economy while diminishing the relationship between cultural autonomy and the political imaginaries of the territorialized nation-state. Second, when placed in a historical perspective, this first trend involves a change from colonial modernity – in which Eurocentrist hierarchies articulated through the imperialist nation-state form structured cultural autonomies – to a capitalist global modernity. In this global modernity, Eurocentrism is fundamentally contested, opening the door to new ways of contemplating differences, competing knowledges anchored in varying ontologies and epistemologies, and a relativization of Euro-American cultural forms. Third, the importance of the economic frame of cultural flows is intensified in many new ways through the rampant commodification of cultural products under contemporary global capitalism, particularly through the circulation of visual forms using extensive innovations in information and communication technologies. These same technologies, however, create openings for the emergence of rhizomatic networks of cultural sharing and activism that enable resistance to commodification and the violence it creates in the contemporary world.

Cultural Autonomy, Global Capitalism, and Territorialized Political Imaginaries

Following the end of the Cold War, triumphal globalization discourse announced the victory of capitalism over socialism, the anticipated end of the nation-state as we know it, the transcendence of markets from territorial

borders, and, with these changes, the end of history. The cultural side of this discourse anticipated the gradual emergence of a single global culture based on Western values, notably, consumerism and materialism. The extent of this triumph, however, quickly came into question as public intellectuals in the West, governments of less wealthy countries, civil society organizations that had formed networks across borders, and academics themselves presented competing points of view. Although few denied the rapidly increasing interdependence and deterritorialized network structure of the global economy, many contested the simplistic view of the future of the nation-state. When it came to culture, globalization scholars such as Robertson (1992), Castells (2003), and Appadurai (1996) argued that rather than moving towards a global culture, there was considerable evidence of a reinforcement, if not a multiplication, of cultural differences. The supposed end of the nation-state and the movement towards a single global culture were dealt another important blow after the attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001. The state suddenly seemed resurgent, borders were reinforced, and the volume of nationalist rhetoric was again turned to high.

Behind these discursive ups and downs, however, important changes were taking place in the relationship between the rapidly evolving global economy and the institutional form of the nation-state. Working effectively with the categories mode of production and mode of development, Castells (1996) investigates the consequences for capitalism of a shift from what he calls the industrial mode of development to an informational mode. He concludes that the result is a network society built on a newly intensified global capitalism. He adds: "For the first time in history, the capitalist mode of production shapes social relationships over the entire planet. But this brand of capitalism is profoundly different from its historical predecessors. It has two fundamental distinctive features: it is global and it is structured to a large extent around a network of financial flows. Capital works globally as a unit in real time; and it is realized, invested, and accumulated mainly in the sphere of circulation, that is as finance capital" (ibid., 471). In their influential work *Empire*, Hardt and Negri echo Castells' observations on profound change. They write: "Only in the second half of the twentieth century did multinational and transnational industrial and financial corporations really begin to structure global territories biopolitically. Corporations now directly structure and articulate populations and territories" (2000, 31).

In reflecting on these changes, it is important to avoid talking about their effects on the state. Rather, states are both midwives to and the nursemaids of this new global capitalism. In the process, Beck (2005, 52) argues that the world of business has developed meta-power “by breaking out of the cage of the territorial nation-state—organized power game and mastering new strategies of power in the digital domain in contrast to territorially rooted states.” This meta-power is not based on direct political intervention. Rather, in a global capitalist system anchored on finance and working as a single unit in real time through digital technologies, global corporations exercise their meta-power through the power of instantaneous exit. “It is the experience – one understood by everybody throughout the world – of actual or threatened *exclusion of states* from the world market that demonstrates and maximizes the power of global business in contrast to isolated individual states” (ibid., 53).

The pressures on states to ensure their inclusion in the global economy has an impact on the relationship between culture and territory characteristic of the nation-state form in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather than reinforcing homogeneous national identities, states invoke the need for multiculturalism. As Beck (2005, 61) observes, “global capitalism is *polyethnic* at heart and in this respect it calls into question the national ontology of society and culture.” As they participate in the management and coordination of the global economy, states need to cooperate in much more profound ways than they did in the past. If globality is the experience of the world as one place, then states and their citizens are pulled by the forces of capitalism and the economic, environmental, and military risks they engender to reduce cultural opposition among peoples and create what Beck (ibid., 107) calls “a closed space of intersubjectively binding meanings.” In the process, the classification of states is based on their willingness to cooperate with one another and their capacity to do so (Grande and Pauly 2005).

These pressures change politics in a number of ways, and two of them are particularly important to reflections on culture. First, there is an increasing number of activities – governance, resistance, communication, doing business – that take place in a new global public domain. “This domain is an increasingly institutionalized transnational arena of discourse, contestation, and action concerning the production of global public goods, involving private as well as public actors” (Ruggie 2004, 504). Although it does not by itself determine governance outcomes any more than its counterpart does at the domestic level, the global public domain does

introduce opportunities for and constraints on both global and national governance that did not exist in the past. Its emergence, suggests Ruggie (*ibid.*), is part of a sociality that is broadening and deepening at the global level. This sociality has the potential to weaken national cultures cultivated by states.

Second, the need for the state to avoid exclusion from the global economy leads to its internal transformation. Although the institutional structures of the state may look the same, globalization is fostering denationalization *within* state structures to a degree not widely understood. In her book *Territory, Authority, Rights*, Sassen (2006) traces these developments and argues that they are a characteristic of the past two decades in particular. “A good part of globalization consists of an enormous variety of micro-processes that begin to denationalize what had been constructed as national – whether policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains. Sometimes these processes of denationalization allow, enable, or push the construction of new types of global scalings of dynamics and institutions; other times they continue to inhabit the realm of what is still largely national” (*ibid.*, 1).

This denationalization is not restricted to the political. The increased interdependence and connectivity of the contemporary world has caused not only states but also localities within states to change. As Tomlinson argues (1999, 9), the paradigmatic experience of global modernity for most people “is that of staying in one place but experiencing the ‘displacement’ that global modernity *brings to them*.” In this respect, he adds, “globalization transforms the *places* we inhabit and our cultural practices, experiences and identities” (*ibid.*, 106, emphasis in original). Castells (2003, 11) adds that the consequent decline of civil societies within states in the face of these changes leads individuals and communities to search for new sources of meaning in the reconstruction of identities. He posits that “in a world of global flows of wealth, power and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning” (1996, 3). Canclini and his colleagues (2005) explore aspects of the consequences of these searches in their study of hybridity. Hannerz (2001) adds that the long-standing processes of creolization associated with colonization have intensified in the current period. Tomlinson concludes that, when it comes to cultural awareness and life planning, the key implication for culture is enhanced relevance and a broadening horizon of choices beyond the nation-state (1999, 115).

From Colonial Modernity to Global Modernity

The diminution of the nation-state as the shaper of cultural practices and autonomies does not necessarily lead to cultural homogenization in a global economy. Homogenization suggests that the world is moving towards a centralized system of rule or that capitalism is the same wherever it operates. Academic attempts to understand how global capitalism functions in fact suggest the opposite: cultural differences have become more pronounced and cultural practices more fragmented than in the past.

Arif Dirlik postulates that globalizing forces “no longer emanate from a single center and drive the world in a single direction, as was assumed in an earlier modernization discourse, but point to a multiplicity of centers and a fractured modernity that also has deprived the future of any coherence” (2007, 11). This statement is consistent with the position of Hardt and Negri, who employ the word *Empire* to emphasize that we are faced with “a decentered and decentralizing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the whole global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. The distinct national colors of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow” (2000, xii).

Dirlik reflects upon the differences between previous phases of globalization, notably the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, and posits that the world of culture and cultural assumptions about knowledge present the most radical points of difference between the two periods. In the former, Euro-American cultures and forms of knowledge were ascendant and alternative ones were judged in relation to them. Difference was hierarchized in a temporality in which Euro-American economic, political, social, and cultural norms represented the teleological end of history. Santos (Santos 2005; Santos, Nunes, and Meneses 2007) argues that these assumptions have by no means disappeared from contemporary discourses. What is new, according to Santos, is that these assumptions now have to contend with strong alternative claims to modernity that draw on distinct historical trajectories.

This argument is supported by the ethnographic research of Tsing (2005) on universals and of Escobar (2008) on places. Tsing argues that the spread of the universals of contemporary globalization is a negotiated, engaged process wherever it touches down. In her work on global connections forged in different settings in Indonesia, she argues that the forging of

these linkages always involves friction. She employs this concept to challenge the idea that flows of goods, ideas, money, and people will henceforth be pervasive and unimpeded in global modernity. “Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call ‘friction’: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005, 3). In an examination of the intervention of the Canadian gold-mining company Bre-X in rural Indonesia, Tsing (2005) demonstrates that global, national, and subnational or regional scales are not only constructed through friction but are also mutually constitutive. In the process, changes to localities that lead to alternative cultural practices are contested, resisted, and adjusted.

In another case study of the Meratus Mountains region, Tsing demonstrates that Western universals such as development and conservation incorporate assumptions that are based on distinguishing nature and the environment from human activities:

Through these cultural assumptions, conservation biologists construct portraits in which humans necessarily threaten the existence of all species that they do not either domesticate or cordon off in preserves. When these assumptions begin to be introduced in this area, they run into alternative ontologies and epistemologies that are not based on the autonomy of human sociality. We lose a lot in this missed communication. In particular, we lose the ability to look at the intricacies of human relationships to nonhuman species ... In addressing conservation, this process of description could take us farther than the hackneyed dichotomy between use and preservation. We could study the historical and cultural variety of relations between people, plants, and animals. (2005, 173)

When universals like conservation and development arrive in these alternative spaces, we learn about gaps, “conceptual spaces and real places into which powerful demarcations do not travel well” (*ibid.*, 175). In the struggles that ensue over these global connections, universals are reshaped and reconstructed, and the nature of alternative ways of living also becomes more evident.

Like Tsing, Arturo Escobar emphasizes the resilience of cultural practices in the face of globalizing processes and does so by noting the continued importance of place as distinct from space. Echoing Tsing, he notes that place, body, and environment integrate with one another and that places

gather things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations (2001, 143; 2008). In this respect, he adds, “Next to the delocalizing effects of translocal forms of power, there are also, even if as a reaction to the latter, effects of boundary and ground making linked to places.” He stresses that people continue to construct boundaries around their places, however permeable they might be. He adds that these boundaries are grounded in local socio-natural practices, no matter how changing and hybridized those practices might turn out to be. He concludes that capturing the specificity of the production of place and culture is the flip side of reconceptualizing culture as deterritorialized and transnationally produced (2001, 147). This conclusion by Escobar – which is supported by Tomlinson, Tsing, Canclini, and Hannerz – informs most of the chapters in this book. Notably, chapters by Greenspan, Khasnabish, O’Brien, Härting, Nasr and Scott, and Sedo begin with place-based analyses.

Technology, Resistance, and Alternative Cultures

In their interest in alternative cultural practices and resistance, the authors in this book see both immense constraints and potential opportunities when it comes to the information and communication technologies, particularly those related to visual culture, that are transforming the world. Each is cognizant that these technologies provide an exceptional boost to the commodification of cultural forms and the global circulation of these commodities in contemporary capitalism. Not a single contributor doubts that these developments lead to the adoption of consumerist and materialist practices the world over, particularly among the middle and upper classes. Nonetheless, several chapters – notably those by Cazdyn, Rethmann, Khasnabish, and O’Brien – explore possible avenues in which these technologies might favour the promotion of cultural practices that point to alternative outcomes for globalization.

It is not simply that these technologies in conjunction with human mobility give new rein to the social imagination, a point that is made forcefully by Appadurai (1996). In addition, they create possibilities for the transnational reinforcement of alternative cultures being promoted by activists. In her extensive work on these phenomena, Sassen (2002, 2005, 2006) observes that as smaller organizations with limited resources become participants in electronic networks, the possibility of transnational politics by actors other than states emerges. This analysis is amplified in

considerable detail by Juris (2008) in his study of anti-corporate globalization networks and by Castells (2003) in his exploration of network-based collectivities that have formed around resistance identities.

Sassen identifies two types of digital activism among place-centred activist groups that focus on local issues (2006, 338–40). The first type of activism is based on the fact that specific types of local issues recur in particular localities across the world. When these activist groups become linked, the bond provides them with leverage against national or local authorities that they might not have otherwise. Escobar (2001, 167) emphasizes that “people rooted in local cultures are finding ways to have a stake in national and global society precisely as they engage with the conditions of transnationalism in defence of local cultures and ecologies.” Appadurai reaches similar conclusions in his study of anti-poverty groups in Mumbai. He concludes that digitally supported linkages give anti-poverty activists depth (2002, 46). This depth arises not only from the circulation of ideas about housing, saving, sanitation, participation, and citizenship but also from being better able to engage with local, regional, national, and multilateral agencies that purport to be concerned with poverty and citizenship. As stronger institutional partners for these agencies, these community-based groups are able “to perform more powerfully as instruments of deep democracy in the local context” (ibid.). Finally, Harcourt observes that networking and “netweaving” has enabled a women’s place-based politics that addresses cultural practices of violence against women. Again, netweaving permits movement away from the isolation of local activism. “The politics of place deliberately challenges the sense of polarity between local and global – as if the local is here and the global far away. Instead it positions the global as very closely mapped onto the local. People live with the global in their own lives and indeed shape the global at the local level” (2001, 300).

The second type of digitally based politics network is one that does most of its work in the digital network and may or may not converge on an actual place or places for activism. The mobilization of opposition to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in the late 1990s is one example. Juris (2008, 290–95) refers to this type of mobilization as short-term *tactical* networking. Massive demonstrations in major world cities in the late 1990s and early 2000s against corporate globalization also fall into this category (ibid.; della Porta et al. 2006). Resistance to specific initiatives is complemented by long-term *strategic* networking (Juris 2008, 295–96). The goal is

to overturn corporate globalization itself. Castells (2003, chap. 2) notes that although they are studied most often in their anti-capitalist forms, religious fundamentalists and right-wing patriot extremists also make use of cultural-based networks that are engaged in long-term strategic resistance. Whether through religious practices or by embodying direct democracy (as anti-capitalist networks have done), these social movements and militias are pushing for deeper and longer social change. In his chapter on Zapatismo, Alex Khasnabish explores anti-capitalist networks and suggests that the concept of resonance can help us understand how political action is fostered digitally. Khasnabish's analysis points to the particular role that visual technologies can play in creating cultural forms that challenge dominant narratives of globalization, particularly when these forms are embodied and lived by the network participants themselves. This role of the visual is also addressed by Cazdyn, Rethmann, McLaughlin, O'Brien, Greenspan, and Sedo in their chapters.

The Volume

Our understanding of the complex and varied relationships that can emerge from the interplay of globalization and cultural autonomy and the light they shed on how hierarchies of control and domination can be challenged or resisted is presented in the following ways. The first two chapters, by Arif Dirlik and Eric Cazdyn, respectively, address in more detail two of the theoretical tasks undertaken in the volume. Dirlik situates the study of culture in a historical analysis of capitalism, modernity, and globalization. He joins this historical analysis with considerable reflection on globalization as a paradigm – that is, a knowledge framework for comprehending the world. As a framework, he suggests, globalization invites us to reflect seriously on the epistemological consequences of the diminishing position of Euro-American centrism in comprehending the world. For his part, Cazdyn reflects upon the growing supersession of the political by the economic by tracing the shift from a biopolitics focused on the nation-state to a bioeconomics geared towards global economic power structures. These structures are creating new global subjects who are offered an apology for inequality that is based on the unapologetic logic of the capitalist market. Cazdyn examines this transition by tracing its characterization in visual cultures. He notes that the hard-core pessimism of Japanese filmmakers stands in contrast to political experiments taking place in Latin America, notably Venezuela and Bolivia.

The next two essays by Imre Szeman and Peter Hitchcock focus on literary expressions of culture. Szeman questions the adequacy of responses to globalization within literary studies. He suggests that the major response has been to redefine practices in light of a world of transnational connections and communications. Globalization has often been interpreted as signalling the end of the nation-state and the parochialism of national culture. He worries that this interpretation involves the extension or elaboration of existing discourses and concepts – such as diaspora, cosmopolitanism, the politics and poetics of the Other, and the language of postcolonial studies in general – and wonders whether this approach can challenge the hegemonic discourses of globalization. He challenges literary scholars to ask the question, why does capitalism need the rhetoric of globalization at this time? He suggests that literary scholars should focus on the production of new concept-metaphors that might open up politically efficacious narratives of the present to create new visions of the future. Szeman argues that the literary form can spark the imagination to better understand the contemporary globalized world and see new possibilities for it.

Like Szeman, Peter Hitchcock questions the “heady rhetoric of globalization” and streams of globalization studies that are based on the assumption that global integration is proceeding across previously separated fields of endeavour. He also questions the tendency in literary studies to assume that a world literature now exists (as an entity to be theorized or measured) either within its own autonomous space or within capitalist and homogenizing global structures. Seeing literary studies as part of an “arena of identity crisis in knowledge production,” he focuses on *autonomy* as a key word and asks what it has meant for literature to be seen as an autonomous cultural product and for literary studies to be seen as an autonomous discipline, one that is self-directing and separate from other fields of production. He argues that this autonomy has broken down and raises the question: If the literary is no longer assumed to be above or beyond the world, how is the world to be linked with the literary? Hitchcock then focuses on the concept of the world by revisiting Marx’s, Goethe’s, and Bakhtin’s concepts of world literature. In short, Hitchcock interrogates the “institutional logic of world literature” and draws favourably upon Edward Said’s notion of worldliness to model his own version of how a worldly criticism might operate.

Hitchcock’s reference to Said leads nicely to Neil McLaughlin’s chapter, which reflects upon the autonomy of global public intellectuals in light of

the death of Said. As interpreters and shapers of culture, among other things, public intellectuals play a key role in many societies. In thinking about Said, McLaughlin asks whether we can speak of “global” public intellectuals and whether these persons can be autonomous. He explores this question by assessing two competing influences: the growth of the global research university and novel forums of influence provided by the Internet and digital technologies. Constraints on cultural (intellectual) autonomy have emerged simultaneously, he suggests, with increasingly close links between research universities and corporations.

Corporate shaping (if not full control) of knowledge is the phenomenon examined by Wren Nasr and Colin Scott. They investigate attempts to draw upon indigenous knowledge in environmental assessments related to hydroelectric development in northern Quebec. Both Nasr and Scott were players in the episode and have collaborated to look back at what happened. In response to earlier protests by the Cree, the First Nation whose territory contained the rivers to be dammed for power, the corporation concerned, Hydro-Québec, a government-owned firm active in world energy markets and technologies, sought to integrate the Crees’ own knowledge of their landscapes. Drawing on their experience in the process and their contacts in the Cree community, Nasr and Scott show how indigenous knowledge was rendered subservient, if not irrelevant, in a neoliberal development planning process. As a consequence, the most important dimensions of that knowledge were lost, and respect for Cree cultural autonomy was largely a sham.

Humanitarian intervention, which is part of what Heike Härting refers to in her chapter as “global humanitarianism,” complements the neoliberal developmental discourse confronted by the Cree. She wonders whether this doctrine, much like its neoliberal economic counterpart, covers up the tracks of the neo-imperialist tendencies of dominant Western states. She poses this question by providing a critical reading of Roméo Dallaire’s book, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. Dallaire was a general in the Canadian Army who served as a UN peacekeeper at the time of the Rwandan genocide. Härting coins the term *racial autonomy* and applies it to the racial logic through which autonomy is allocated or denied in the name of a universal or common humanity on a global level. She argues that racial autonomy obscures the imperial logic of domination psychology that underlies the politics of protection and compassion and its deracialized and dehistoricized understanding of the new global humanitarianism.

Petra Rethmann's contribution moves us away from literary texts to visual culture. She takes as her starting point the global images of whales created by the Greenpeace environmental movement beginning in the early 1970s. In an analysis that complements the work of Tsing, she argues that the global scale within which these images circulated was constructed through the concrete actions and strategies of cultural networks spawned by the environmental movement. The making of both autonomy and the global image of the whale took place in a constructed transboundary space, where the potential for transnational coalition politics and building existed. Members of the social movements concerned learned that the cultural recognition that mass-mediated images produced was indispensable to the reproduction of corporate power and capital. The movements acted upon the idea that mass-mediated images were indispensable for the creation of alternative ideas as well. Rethmann discusses the construction of a global scale for seeing the whale as an object worth saving. In this construction, the whale is represented through human metaphors to counter long-dominant discourses that cast the whale as a natural resource to be exploited. Rethmann encourages us to think about the potential of constructing autonomies not only for humans but also for non-humans.

Visual culture also features prominently in Alex Khasnabish's investigation of the resonance of Zapatismo as a social movement and as a set of cultural practices. He focuses on *Making Big Noise*, a film put together by an anti-capitalist group in North America that was profoundly influenced by the rebellion in Chiapas and the anti-capitalist liberation discourse that crossed the world thanks to digital technologies in its aftermath. Using this example, he argues that the language of the visual can present alternative ways of living that stimulate the social imagination and counter the atomization and individualization promoted in neoliberal consumerist advertising and government policies. In these respects, visual culture becomes a site of contestation and possibility.

Like Rethmann and Khasnabish, Susie O'Brien explores a social movement that has likewise worked to build a global scale and a form of cultural autonomy, but this time through the preparation and eating of food. She looks at the Slow Food movement, which seeks to build a local-based food culture to counter the globally networked corporate commodification of fast foods. In this case the pursuit of cultural autonomy comes through resistance to industrial monocultural agriculture and the extensive trading of food products in favour of sustainable polycultural farming and the local sourcing of plants and animals. She joins this analysis with a review of the

French peasant movement organization *Confédération paysanne* and its use of direct action to challenge the same corporate tendencies. She concludes with comments on the emergence of a global peasant network focused on food. Drawing farmers and producers from food communities throughout the world, *Terra Madre*, a biannual peasant assembly, drew more than eight thousand delegates in 2006 and provided spaces for farmers to share knowledge and form alliances for political advocacy.

In the final two chapters, Anna Greenspan and Tim Sedo focus on the vibrancy and constraints of the cultural sphere when it is decoupled from nationalism and exposed to the global economy. Greenspan pays close attention to the commodification of long-standing nationalist symbols in China (the Mao jacket) and India (ultra chic fashion made from khadi, the handspun cloth favoured by Gandhi in his fight against British imperialism). In both countries, the very symbols of autonomy in a protectionist nationalist era have become commodities to be played with by eager consumers in the new middle classes. Greenspan concludes that what is now being produced in India and China is not the autonomy of a culture but the autonomy of the cultural sphere from nationalist goals and ideology. In this respect, she wonders whether we should no longer speak of countries having cultural autonomy but of culture itself achieving autonomy from any given national space.

Sedo's chapter also focuses on China and examines the recent history of skateboarding as a cultural practice. A participant in that practice himself, Sedo traces the evolution of skateboarding from an assertion of cultural autonomy by mainly young men within Chinese society to a cultural practice that has become strongly linked both to the global economy and to a global skateboarding culture. Sedo observes that when these links are coupled with the possibility of skateboarding becoming an Olympic sport, they pose a startling threat to, if not decline in, cultural autonomy among Chinese skaters.

In summary, each of the chapters in this book investigates the possibilities for challenging the hierarchies that are shaping cultural autonomy in contemporary globalizing conditions. From time to time, the individual arguments may appear contradictory – but if this is so, then these contradictions are themselves a symptom of the different implications of autonomy and globalization. To varying degrees, the authors wrestle with the implications of new forces influencing culture outside the nation-state form and the rapid commodification of cultural forms in a global economy that is integrated and interdependent in historically unprecedented

ways. They consider whether changes in cultural autonomy linked to new digital technologies leave openings for challenging those hierarchies and forms of power that currently exist. They also note that collective cultural autonomy involves networks of persons *embodying* distinct cultural practices – whether negotiating the cultural logics of networking through direct democracy, challenging corporatization as public intellectuals, growing and eating foods, or articulating alternative visions of living with nature and of the socio-economic order. Exercising cultural autonomy involves the articulation of alternative cultural practices that resist the effects of commodification, individualization, and anomie that accompany contemporary globalization.