Global Villages and Rural Cosmopolitanism: Exploring Global Ruralities

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Abstract

This paper explores the meaning of globalization in rural places, as well as the emergence of rural globalities, and even of rural cosmopolitanisms. While the discussion about globalization has been mainly localized in urban places, and mostly in some core cities, rural places are also intertwined with globality, and can became important nodes in the production and circulation of capital, culture, and ideology. To account for this, I explore a new meaning for the concept of “global villages”, not used in McLuhan’s sense, but rather in terms of rural places that become truly global. As case studies, the paper addresses three “global villages” in Latin America: the Central Valley in Chile, a node in the global food system; Otavalo in Ecuador, a core of cultural representations; and La Realidad, in Chiapas, Mexico, a center of ideological production.

El presente documento explora en el significado de los procesos de globalización en lo rural, así como también la emergencia de globalidades y cosmopolitanismos rurales. Mientras la discusión acerca de lo global de ha localizado en los espacios urbanos, y principalmente en ciertas ciudades centrales, las localidades rurales también se imbrican con lo global y pueden constituirse en nodos importantes de la producción y circulación
de capital, cultura e ideología. Para dar cuenta de ello, exploré en un nuevo significado para el concepto de “aldea global”, no en es sentido de McLuhan, sino en para referir a lugares rurales que se vuelven auténticamente globales. Como casos de estudio, el artículo tres “aldeas globales” en América Latina: el Valle Cantral chileno, un nodo en el sistema alimentario global, Otavalo en Ecuador, un centro de representaciones culturales y La Realidad en Chiapas, México, un centro de producción ideológica.

**Introduction**

Debates about globalization have mainly been focused on urban places, and more specifically on certain core cities, often with reference to a sort of transnational urban elite (Sassen, 2001; Sklair, 2001; Castells, 2000; Clark, 1996). Within this framework, rural places, as well as small towns, have been considered marginal to the globalization process and are generally defined as “localities”. This distinction between the local and the global is reified in some discussions of globalization, which conceptualize the two spheres as antagonistic (opposite, but in a mutually necessary relationship), by which the production of the local is a reaction against the globalization process and is firmly linked to traditional and “tribal” identities (Friedman, 2000; Barber, 1996). In this scenario, the inhabitants of global cities become an elite of privileged cosmopolitans, while the inhabitants of rural places and “non global cities” become “locals”, “indígenes”, “natives” or “jihad” (Friedman, 2000; Barber, 1996). This sharp distinction between globalities and localities does not account for the numerous interactions that exist between them. Rural places are not distant, isolated, and pre-capitalist spaces, but rather have become fully integrated into the global economy. Such spaces, for example, play a
significant role in world food production—a factor that can hardly be ignored in the production of the so called “global cities”. Rural places are not outside of the cycles of production and circulation of capital, culture, and ideology, but rather are fully integrated therein. They do not represent a fixed space of tradition, but instead are constantly involved in processes of transformation and hybridization. Seeking to rectify the general neglect of rural spaces in the study of globalization, I propose that it is time to explore a new the meaning of the term “global village”, in which real global villages (not the Mac Luhan metaphor) have become a key site of expression for the global rurality.

Approaching the newly globalized realities of rural life must begin from the recognition that it is not possible to make a reified distinction between the global and the local, and that in fact the global is no more than the articulation and interdependence of different localities (Robertson, 1996). In this sense, globalization trends are not exclusive of the “global cities”, nor even of cities in general, but are also a matter of rural places. Hence, global and local, urban and rural, are not pure categories that one may find separated by impermeable boundaries, but rather are hybrids that constitute sites within a continuum. In this sense, rural inhabitants can be understood to create their own forms of cosmopolitanism and global life (Mattelart, 1994; García Canclini, 1995, Nederveen Pieterse, 1995).

From this perspective, classical definitions of rurality that describe it as a pre-industrial and pre-capitalist residue are no longer meaningful. To work toward a new definition of the rural that takes this global and hybrid reality into account, I propose assigning a new meaning to the classical term “global village”. In McLuhan’s (1989) definition, the global village was used as a metaphor to describe a world shrunk by global
communications. Following Afshar (1998), I propose to use the term “global villages” in a literal, rather than metaphorical sense, as a way of referring to all small settlements that participate in the globalization of processes related to economy, ecology, culture, migration, technology, and other aspects of life.

From this perspective, we may argue that every rural place, every village, is in some way a global village, since it is never completely isolated, but exposed to the fluxes of capital and culture. Thus, there are no truly local places, since all are integrated in the global economy and the global circulation of culture, being in some way cosmopolitan. The characteristics of these global ruralities, however, can be rather ambiguous and contradictory. In fact, some places—and I would argue most places—have lived this process of “global hybridization” as a dramatic and destabilizing process, in which traditional spaces of security have “melted into air” (as Marx suggested they might). These are places which have lost control over their own process of global hybridization and have become victims of all kinds of “penetrations”—with all its violent phallic meaning—by which capital, cultural products, and symbols, alter the livelihood and way of life in the village (Heffernan, 2000; Lewontin, 2000; Bonanno, 1994). There are, nevertheless, some exceptional places that have gained control of their process of global hybridization. These are places that have managed to obtain some kind of leverage vis-à-vis global processes, actually advancing themselves as spaces of material, cultural, and ideological production for the world. Such places can be found, for example, in the south of France or in the villages of Italy that became global producers of cheese. An example from the south might be Otavalo, Ecuador, which has become a truly global producer of handicrafts.
To understand the difference between these two kind of villages, the distinction between tourists and vagabonds (Bauman, 1998) is very useful. According to this distinction, everyone —and, we might say, every place— is fully integrated within globalization trends. There are no excluded places in the global world, only advantaged or disadvantaged integrations. There are, for instance, tourists who enjoy the benefit of globalization by finding a new place and home in the “global world”. There are, on the other hand, vagabonds, who have lost their homes in an already lost locality, and receive most of the burdens of the system without even finding a stable place therein. Hence, although every place is part of the global order, some places are integrated as tourists —taking advantages of the changes— while others are integrated as vagabonds—becoming recipients and even victims of the contradictions and risks generated in the globalization processes.

The groups of “tourist” places that, in one or other way, are becoming active agents in the global world may be described as global villages. The others, the vagabonds, can be described as globalized villages, emphasizing their passive relationship with the global order. These are not mutually exclusive categories. On the contrary, a place can be both a global village and a globalized village, according to different criteria. Furthermore, a tourist can become a vagabond, and a global place can have several vagabonds within its borders, as will be explained later. Furthermore, there are different ways of being a tourist or vagabond.

In what follows I explore three different forms of being a global village using as example three cases in Latin America: Chile’s Central Valley, Otavalo, in Ecuador, and Chiapas, in Mexico. One way of becoming a global village is via the sphere of the food
production and participation in global food chains, as is the case of the fruit and wine industry in the Chilean Central Valley. The main actors of these food chains are Transnational Companies and local producers, and the way in which both actors interact generates different kinds of integrations in the global order. There is relevant literature about the monopolistic character of these food chains (Williams, 1994; Levontin, 2000), which describes how a small group of transnational corporations have taken control—through vertical and horizontal integration—of the different phases of the productive process, reducing the farmer to an almost proletarian condition. In all this literature, rural places are described as “globalized” (globalized villages in my framework); that is, they are clearly passive recipients of globalization trends. In this essay, I explore a different perspective of the local/global relationships at work there, showing that the Chile’s Central Valley can be described as a “global village”. This place forms part of a successful global production chain of fresh food and wine, and constitutes a case of neoliberal integration, in which tourists and vagabonds coexist in the same “cruise ship”. The metaphor of the cruise ship is used here to describe a place that is supposedly inhabited exclusively by tourists, but that actually holds a majority of engine room stokers, and maybe stowaways, without whom the ship would be unable to navigate, leaving the tourists stranded. This cruise ship is a paradoxical place in which small villages are able to put their products in a very favored position in global markets, thus having an impact on the way of life and consumption in the “global cities”, and becoming part of the international “foodscape” (using loosely Apadurai’s “scape” concept). However, this neoliberal “global village” is a “cruise ship”, where we can also find vagabonds—engine-room stokers and stowaways—who have been displaced by this
capitalist globalization process. Among these vagabonds are the seasonal workers, and small farmers who are displaced by more successful competitors.

The second case study is the global commodification of handicraft production, which shows the ambiguity of the relationship between globalization and the production of local cultural artifacts. On the one hand, there is a clear tendency towards the homogenization of cultural artifact production and the displacement of local handcraft (Nash, 2000), and on the other hand, local handicrafts can achieve global popularity. In this sense, Otavalo, in Ecuador, and Oaxaca, in Mexico, are global villages because they produce handicrafts that are traded worldwide. These places achieve two things: (1) they place indigenous culture and artifact production in a global dimension—a kind of ethnoscape that makes local places visible; and (2) they raise the economic prosperity of local places.

The third case is situated in the sphere of ideological production. It has been widely observed that globalization trends tend toward cultural homogenization and the transmission of mainstream North American ideology into far flung local places. However, there are some cases in which local places become spaces of ideological contestation of the dominant ideology. This contestation may even acquire global dimensions, becoming the inspiration for worldwide movements and hence constituting part of an “ideoscape”. This is the case of two important Latin American movements: El Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army, EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico, and the Movimento Dos Sem Terra (Land Less Movement), in Brazil. In both cases, local demands have achieved worldwide fame and global implications, becoming a model and inspiration for global movements. The case of the
EZLN is particularly interesting because “La Realidad”—a town of less than 400 families—was raised to the category of global village and centre of the New Left “ideoescape”.

**Foodscapes: the Central Valley as a global village**

The Central Valley in Chile has become a “global village” in the spheres of fruit and wine production. With respect to fruit, the area has become the world’s second largest exporter of grapes, the third of kiwi, and the fourth of apples. Chile is located in the so-called “South Temperate Belt”, which is the geographical zone that produces fresh fruit during the Northern Hemisphere’s winter. Among the countries in this zone, including Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, Chile is positioned as the leader, with 47.2% of the total exports (Cassaburi, 1999). With respect to wine, Chile has become one of the main producers of the so called “semi-peripheral wines”, which occupy the lower end of the premium wine category (in which Australian, Californian and South African wines are also included) (Bonnano, 1994).

Among the advantages of Chile in the fruit and wine market are the cheap, educated labour, and the privileged Chilean agro-ecological position that offers temperate Mediterranean weather, a stable supply of water from rivers, and a relative isolation from migrant plagues. However, the most important advantage for Chilean producers comes from its geographical position, which allows a counter seasonal production, during the North American winter that slows down Mexican and Californian fruit production.
The agro-export dynamism in Chile has its origins in the active effort of the Chilean state to modernize agricultural production during the 1960s and 1970s, and in the operation of private capital during the 1980s. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the Chilean State, led first by progressive governments, focused on two elements: an agrarian reform and the formation of agricultural professionals. The agrarian reform broke traditional structures of landholding, undermined the power of conservative agrarian elites, and transferred the land to small and medium farmers, which constituted what was called the “reformed sector”. In addition, the State made a significant effort to send professionals and technicians to California and France in order to learn fruit-culture and winery, and apply this knowledge in the new “reformed” sector. During the late 1970s and 1980s, in the context of aggressive market reforms under the direction of a dictatorship, innovative elites bought land from the former reformed sector and built upon the technology and professionalism formed in the 1970s to work toward an active neoliberal integration in the global market (Barrientos, 1999).

In relation to fruit and wine, the Central Valley has become a neoliberal global village, where its global character is constructed through local practices. On the one hand, it acts globally, attracting capital from other places in the world, attracting labour from neighbour cities, and exporting products—fruit and wine with reputation closely attached to their place of origin—to more than sixty countries and to the main “global cities”. In this sense, the Chilean Central Valley has become a node in the global foodscape. On the other hand, fresh fruit and wine remain “locally” situated in material or productive terms—raising, harvesting, cleaning, and packing—Interestingly enough, these products are also ideologically “locally” situated, in the sense that they are
culturally constructed by the consumer as linked to climatic, ecological advantages and cultural advantages (such as cleaning) that have become synonymous with place-name recognition of product quality. Ideologically, fruit and wine go to the market enacting a place, and need to continue enacting the place in order to remain in the global market. Fresh fruit and wine production have then to play this hybrid tension between remaining “local” and playing global--that is, on the one hand, building a locally anchored “identity” and uniqueness, while on the other hand shaping the production process according to the concerns and demands of foreign consumers and capital.

We can compare the Central Valley with a “cruise ship”—a place of “tourists” that obtains advantages of the productive process—in which there are also many vagabonds, who are integrated in a disadvantaged position in this global production chain. Those vagabonds are wanderers, the ones that, though part of the global process, have at best a marginal place. Among them, the most important ones, and key in the productive process, are the seasonal workers. The bulk of the productive process relies on seasonal workers, mainly women, who are nevertheless in a position of extreme insecurity, lacking permanent jobs, decent salaries, and any kind of health and social protection (Barrientos, 1999).

In addition to seasonal workers, another group of people in Chile’s Central Valley exists on the borderline between tourists and vagabonds. We might call them the engine-room stokers: the small and medium size fruit producers that have engaged in asymmetric productive contracts with “exporter” companies. Exporter companies are involved in all the different stages of the production and commercialization of products in order to ensure speed and reliability from the harvesting stage to final consumption. In fact,
exporters sign contracts with producers at the beginning of each season and provide the producers with technical advice, credit, production inputs like fertilizers and pesticides, market information, land transport, and ocean freight, sometimes using their own cooling and packing plants. In exchange, they charge the producers a commission for these services, as well as a percentage of the final profit from the sale of the product (Cassaburi, 1999; Barrientos, 1999). Therefore, the producers engage in a dependent relation with the exporters throughout the whole productive cycle. Exporters are also an important source of financial assistance, a fact that increases the dependence of producers, because once a producer is indebted to a particular exporter it becomes very difficult to break this link.

The nature of this relationship between producers and exporters constructs inequalities on two levels. First there is an unequal distribution of risk: only producers take risks, because exporters charge their cost-plus-profit risk. The net gain for the exporter does not heavily depend on the final price of the product, due to the commissions they charge that cover all of the expenses. In fact, there are situations when the producers have very low gains or losses after paying the commission, not even allowing them to pay the expenses of their own production (Barrientos, 1999). A second inequality arises with regard to information: producers do not have access to any information once the product leaves their farms; they do not know either the final price in the market or the real expenses of the exporter, a situation that forces them to accept the often unfair calculations made by exporters (Cassaburi, 1999).
Most of the exporter companies are transnational companies. In fact the transnational Dole group accounts for 11% of exports, and transnational companies share a total of 70% of the market (Barrientos, 1999).

In summary, the Chilean Central Valley is a paradoxical neoliberal global village, where the local and the global are mixed in a complex hybridization. The local becomes global through the income of international capitals and through the export of fruit and wine all over the globe. But this “global village” has to act out a “local identity” in order to keep its share in the market. This neoliberal global village is also a place that produces tourists and vagabonds, a place in which successful producers---those able to put their wines and fruits in the best markets---coexist with exploited seasonal workers and medium producers that are deeply dependent on export companies. The condition of the tourists depends upon the existence and work of the vagabonds: in this neoliberal global village, the vagabonds are the condition for the tourists’s self reproduction.
Ethnoscapes, Handicraft Production in the global village of Otavalo

The argument that globalization is led by big cities and big capital, meanwhile penetrating and imposing its conditions upon localities, has the implicit assumption that local cultural production should disappear in the face of a tidal wave of cheap clothing and other standardized mass produced goods. This trend can indeed be observed in many places (Nash, 2000). Nevertheless, the cosmopolitan spirit associated with globalization trends has also opened the market to “ethnic” commodities that are produced locally but consumed globally. This market for “authentic” ethnic commodities is associated with the rise of other kinds of “global villages” that are specialized in the production of ethnic artifacts and the public “representation” of ethnic identities. These villages become the central nodes of an important transnational consumption market, while maintaining and recreating a supposed “traditional identity” strongly linked to local places. Here, I present the cases of the Quichua people in Otavalo, a collection of indigenous communities that have become truly transnational entrepreneurs in their productive strategies, business contacts, and diasporic behaviors, becoming what Appaduray calls an “ethnoescape”.

Otavalo is a valley located in the Ecuadorian Altiplano, 65 miles North of Quito. The Otavaleños are approximately 60,000 people inhabiting 75 communities, surrounding the town of Otavalo. Otavalo is considered the second Cuzco in modern day tourism, but while the main attraction of Cuzco is its archaeological heritage, the main attraction of Otavalo is its living community of Quichua weavers, who produce a highly commercial handicraft that is exported and sold in all “ethnic markets” in the world. In fact, the Otavaleños have constituted a transnational trade diaspora that moves across the street markets of the world selling their products (Korovkin, 1998; Kyle, 1999).
The weaving tradition in Otavalo came from pre-Hispanic times, when the weaving centers of llama wool of the Inca empire were located in the area. This fact has had a beneficial impact on the Otavaleños post-Hispanic history. In fact, during colonial times, they were able to avoid the common tragic fate of other indigenous communities: being enslaved and sent to the mines by the colonial elites. In contrast, the Otavaleños enjoyed a special status, becoming weavers of cloth directly for the Spanish crown in the “obrajes” (traditional weaving workshops). At that time, the first modification of the traditional way of weaving was introduced. Indigenous designs were replaced by Spanish styles, while sheep wool and the treadle loom were introduced. Otavalo became an important source of textiles, which were exported to all the main centres of the Spanish Empire. After the industrial revolution, however, Otavalo lost its importance, and practically ceased to produce woven goods, due to the import of cheaper fabrics (Korovkin, 1998; Kyle, 1999).

Three important events shaped the reversal of this decaying trend and the development of the Otavalo transnational trade diaspora during the 20th century. A first element was the introduction of the designs and mechanized technology of “English tweed” weaving for the urban market in 1917. This period resulted in a rejection of indigenous traditions, but consolidated a market throughout all Ecuador and abroad. A second element that shaped Otavalo as an indigenous weaving production center was the “goodwill” tour of Rosa Lema in 1940. This trip was promoted by the anthropologist Clews Parsons, who brought Rosa Lema—an elite Quichua woman, who was her principal research informant—on several trips in the United States, with the objective of showing the colourful features of the Otavalo native handcraft. This trip is considered to
have triggered the conversion of Otavalo into a tourism destination. Furthermore, it marks the moment at which the weavers stopped copying English tweed and began consciously tailoring their production for the growing tourist market at home and the desire for native handicraft abroad. Their main asset was their identity as exotic “others”. To market this otherness they not only tailored their own “native designs,” but also copied pre-Columbian motifs from various regions in Ecuador, as well as Amazonian and Navajo designs. The final event that shaped the current development of the Otavalo trade was the opening of “Poncho Plaza” in Otavalo (designed to attract tourists) and the construction of the Pan-American Highway (that facilitates the arrival of tourists). In the same period, the government started an aggressive program of education for weavers, in order to encourage the production of indigenous crafts designed to catch the tourist eye (Kyle, 1999).

By the late 1960s, the transnational trade diaspora of Otavalo had begun its consolidation. At that time, most merchant-weaving households already had substantial “colonies” in foreign cities, making periodical selling trips and temporary migration, especially to Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Panama, the United States (especially Miami and New York City), and several cities in Europe. These colonies and the system of periodical trips are now a common practice of Otavaleño producers and merchants. The trips abroad include not only selling opportunities, but also the purchase of indigenous textiles and handicrafts in countries such as Bolivia, Peru, and Panama, which are then marketed as their own either in Otavalo or in selling trips to North America and Europe. In this sense, Otavaleños are becoming the principal brokers of native craft from Latin America, even supplying handicrafts to tourist destinations lacking in colorful
indigenous populations. With that trade, there also exists a diaspora of Otavalo music and musicians that is constituted of almost one hundred musical groups formed by young Otavaleños who perform a self-conscious and Pan-Andean musical expression (Kyle, 1999).

The experience of traveling as musicians, brokers, artisan, or traders is becoming so common among the Otavaleños that almost every family has one member abroad. Moreover, the experience of traveling to Europe and the United States as a musician has became a kind of rite of passage that every young male has to complete. This fact is generating a sort of global community with a deep cosmopolitan experience of traveling, selling, and enacting their identities in the “global cities”(Kyle, 1999).

The commoditization of Otavalo handicraft has led not to the disappearance of the local culture, but to its hybridization and transnationalisation. Hybridization has occurred because, in order to became transnational, it needs to represent and enact the “exotic other” that can be lucrative when sold in the “ethnic market”. The otavaleños have taken control of the construction of themselves as others, sculpting this otherness from a position of empowerment instead of being produced as others by more powerful global actors. Otavalo has thus become the archetypical representation of the “other” in Latin America, even representing the “universal” other by becoming global. Following Kyle it is possible to say that, “Otavalo is an intentional, authentic tourist market in that most textiles sold are not commercialized versions of traditional Indian weavings, but are non-traditional textiles made with the express intent of sale to outsiders. In other words, the Otavalan handicrafts are authentically inauthentic” (Kyle, 1999: pp. 440).
Ideoscapes and counter ideological production in the global village of Chiapas

Since the emergence of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, and the Frankfurt School’s critical analysis of the mass media, a major school of thought in the social sciences has focused on the notion that ideological production is monopolized by core countries and core economic powers, which control and use the media according to their own purposes. This perspective assumes a unidirectional flow of ideological production, which reshapes the perceptions and values of people and communities without significant resistance. Individuals and communities are seen as passive recipients in this process, incapable of critical analysis of or mobilization against dominant ideology. From this perspective, the spaces of ideological production are always located in cities, while rural areas are only recipients, whose only mode of resistance is to try—usually without success—to preserve their “traditional” systems of knowledge. Here, I present the case of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army, EZLN) as a means of countering this dominant story of ideological production and consumption. In the case of the Zapatistas, a traditional system of knowledge, instead of being conceived merely as something that needs to be preserved, serves as the political resource for a locally generated but outwardly oriented ideological production, which has had a major impact on the ideological systems of the so called “New Left” in the North.

The Zapatista up-rising visibly started in January 1, 1994 in the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas, Mexico), the same day on which the North American free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed. The mobilization included indigenous people of several western Mayan linguistic groups, whose spokesman was a highly charismatic masked man called sub-comandante Marcos. The mobilization was triggered
by the abolition of the “ejido” system (or system of indigenous collective lands) carried out by the government of then president Carlos Salinas de Gortari (Flusty, 2004).

The abolition of the ejido system consisted in the de-collectivization of indigenous agrarian land, through the conversion of collective land to individual title, making it transferable through sale. This change made the land available to foreign and domestic investors. The purpose behind the elimination of the ejido system was Mexico’s need to prepare for the penetration of cheap corn produced by United States farmers, which would be allowed by the NAFTA agreement. The way in which the Mexican government chose to prepare for this danger was by encouraging the transfer of land from indigenous communities into the hands of large and highly mechanized agro-industry companies that would be able to produce domestically cheap corn. The direct consequence of this strategy was an increased pressure on the material and political autonomy of indigenous communities. In fact, the ejido system was not only the basis of the survival of the communities but also constituted the material basis for indigenous traditions of collective democracy (Massimo, 2000).

The uprising in Chiapas was not a spontaneous response to the abolition of the Ejido system, but rather a long process of mobilization in the Mayan communities of the Lacandonian Forest. To understand this long term preparation for uprising, it is relevant to note that the indigenous peoples in Chiapas have lived in a particularly deprived situation, even in comparison with the already poor condition of indigenous communities across Mexico. Their situation is in large part a product of the fact that Chiapas is one of the few places in Mexico that has never experienced any kind of land reform. In fact, while Emiliano Zapata fought in the state of Morelos and Pancho Villa in the northern
states, both achieving land reforms in these areas, in Chiapas the local land lords took over much of the indigenous lands, creating huge holdings. The lack of available land for the poor indigenous population has been aggravated by the fact that the Lacandonia forest was declared a protected bio-reserve by the government, a situation that limits colonization and economic exploitation by indigenous communities (Shulz, 1998).

Deprivation and oppression are certainly key factors explaining the uprising in Chiapas, but as they are by no means unique to this region of Mexico it is necessary to look for other antecedents. Krauze (1999), Womack (1998), and Lagorreta (1998) identify the main antecedent of the Chiapas uprising in the vast labor of “consciousness raising” and organization developed by the Catholic Bishop of Chiapas, Samuel Ruiz. Ruiz arrived in Chiapas in 1960, and within the framework of “Liberation Theology”, supported the formation of more than 700 base communities, cultivated in critical biblical analysis, as well as some aspects of Marxist theory such as class struggle, alienation, and imperialism. During the 1970s, the communities arrived at the consensus that the “Plan of God” required a transformative change that should be carried out primarily by peaceful struggle, but that did not exclude the use of violence as a last resort. These communities provided a fertile terrain for the formation of the EZLN, which drawn both from the indigenous communities and “outsiders” activists.

The previous discussion shows that the 1994 armed rebellion movement was highly localized and focused on the demands of a specific group living in the Lancandonian forest. Now, ten years later, it constitutes a media phenomenon that represents aspirations of justice and freedom all around the globe. In fact, David McNally (2002) identifies the Chiapas uprising as a key factor that defined the emergence of the
New Left and Global Justice Movements; and as the major inspiration behind the mobilizations of 1995 in France, and 1999 in Seattle. How was this change in the scale of the movement generated? How has this local uprising achieved global dimensions? To answer that, it is necessary to understand the history and strategic decisions that the EZLN has taken. During the uprising of 1994, EZLN held very little political and military power. Its main military advantage was to operate from a very strategic geographical position, the Lacandona Forest. This position meant that the army would not be able to defeat the Zapatistas without a large scale campaign, which would have been politically costly for the Mexican neoliberal elite if it had turned into a prolonged and dirty war that unsettled Mexico’s investment climate. In this sense, an important part of the strategic plan of the Zapatistas was to mobilize national and international solidarity in order to press the Mexican government not to engage in this dirty war. Hence, in absence of real military power, the struggle for support networks and public sympathies, or a “war of words”, constituted from the first day the only real power of the Zapatistas (Shulz, 1998).

This networking mobilization was in fact very effective in achieving its objective of exerting moral pressure on the Mexican government. In 1994, after the first uprising in San Cristóbal, the immediate reaction of the government was military (including bombardment, torture, and summary executions). However, massive demonstrations—in Mexico City and around the world—were mounted as soon as the army actions became public. Under this pressure, twelve days later, President Salinas de Gortari announced a ceasefire, fearing that a dirty war would cost him his legitimacy, and started a process of negotiations that resulted in the National Democratic Conventions (1994 and 1995). One year later, in February of 1995, the Zapatistas had to mobilize international
solidarity again. On this occasion, then President Zedillo announced on television the arrest warrants for EZLN leaders, including Subcomandante Marcos, and the beginning of a military counter-offensive. This announcement was again followed by massive protests at the national and international level, and finally Zedillo was forced to halt military actions and announce an amnesty for the Zapatista leaders. New peace talks started in April 1995 in San Andrés Larrainzar. In these talks, the Zapatistas announced a plan for an un-armed, civilian Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (FZLN) that comprised the broad network of Zapatista supporters (Massimo, 2000).

Building this network-based political power was a natural outcome of the Zapatista strategy, because starting from day one the Zapatistas framed their demands within the terms of a broader global struggle. The Zapatistas argued that the position of atomization and fragmentation within the global economy is not only a characteristic of the Mayan population of Southeast of Mexico, but is a condition of existence for all kinds of people and individuals throughout the world. Indeed, the Zapatista movement has framed neoliberal globalization as a “world war” against humanity, which aims at the “distribution of the world”. In this “distribution of the world”, the “minorities”—indigenous, youth, women, homosexuals, people of color, immigrant, workers, peasants, etc.—who are actually the greatest majority of the world population, are excluded. Fragmentation is what defines a minority, and taking these different exploitations in isolation—as unique experiences—covers the fact that these many oppressions refer to the same conditions in which power accumulates power, and misery accumulates misery. The Zapatistas' global dimension comes from their concept of themselves: as one oppressed group among many others, and one voice of resistance among many others.
Communication among different voices of resistance was considered not only as an instrument, but as part of the recognition and expression of the same common struggle (Massimo, 2000). In this sense, the EZLN emphasis can and must include divergent perspectives, in Marcos' words: “all rebels, dissidents, inconvenient ones, dreamers.” No one is asked to surrender his or her differences in order to participate (Flusty, 2004).

The global impact of the Zapatista movement is expressed in the active articulation that the movement has had with several worldwide resistance movements, and in the organization of three highly cosmopolitan encounters, called “International Encounters for Humanity and against Neoliberalism”, that grouped together dissidents and activists from different parts of the world (Flusty 2004; Massimo, 2000). These encounters, two of them hosted in the small town “La Realidad”, each congregated more than 3,000 political activists from more than forty countries, plus more than 600 journalists. The aim of the encounters was to open a multicultural dialogue to forge a transnational alliance, by defining neoliberalism as the common enemy and developing an “international network of resistance”. In fact, the encounters had a major impact on the political constitution of the New Left, since they brought together—in a physical but also virtual way, through the Internet—worldwide activists who subsequently have coordinated the anti-capitalist mass demonstrations of London, Seattle, Washington, and Prague (Flusty, 2004). The most interesting aspect of these encounters is the fact that events on this scale are usually organized by states or international organizations and hosted in “world cities”. In this case the encounters were organized by a “local” group and hosted in a small village with a population of no more than 400 families.
The Zapatistas constitute a movement that operates both locally and globally, articulating their local demands with the global demands of the Global Justice Movement. At the local level the Zapatistas are not just a military force but also a broadly defined social movement that seeks recognition of indigenous people and social justice within a democratic order. At the global level, the Zapatistas challenge global neoliberal market policies by creating global communicative leverage, constituting a new type of global movement emerging to counter globally defined threats. Their actions have had impacts not only within the Mexican boundaries but especially at the “global level”, first by opening instances of communication and encounter with different activist from all around the globe, and second by generating a “postmodernist left discourse”, which has been appropriated by the New Left and the global justice movement. In this sense, San Cristóbal de las Casas, the Lacandona forest, and especially the small town of La Realidad, constitute highly cosmopolitan places, which have generated ideological tools that are now in use all around the globe and have produced spaces of real and symbolic encounter for global activists.

**Concluding Comments**

This essay has explored the cases of three “global villages,” which represent rural globalities and rural cosmopolitanisms. The cases show that a sharp distinction between the global and the local is a fictitious construction. The global is not more than the active articulation of localities, and there are no truly “local / isolated” places because every place is now connected in some degree to global flows of capital, commodities and culture. Therefore, truly local spaces only exist in the essentialist constructions of
“locals”, “natives” or “outsiders” to the system. These three “global villages” demand that we think of rurality in terms of the way that rural places can be—and actually have been—active agents in the globalization process. That is, while recognizing the dramatic existence of hundreds of “globalized villages,” which suffer the aggressive influence of commodities, capital, and cultural flows affecting their livelihood and sustainability, there are also “global villages,” which have become powerful actors in the global world, influencing what people eat, consume, and believe in the “global cities”.

Chile’s Central Valley, Otavalo, and Chiapas, are actually—in their own ways—global villages. These are local rural spaces that achieve successful integration with the global world. They have a significant influence over the so-called global cities: influencing what the habitants of these cities eat, wear, and believe. The Central Valley in Chile is a paradoxical global village that has achieved a privileged position in what I have called the “foodscape”, and is able to attract international capital and put its products—food and wine—on the global market, influencing the food and wine consumption of the inhabitants of more than sixty countries. This global action is done by enacting a local character: the clue of the global market is the ideological representation of the locality as an “ecological” place that is recognized as a kind of brand value. This neoliberal global village is a paradoxical because, like a cruise boat, it carries not only tourists but also vagabonds: seasonal workers, small farmers, and new landless peasants. These vagabonds are not undesirable stowaways of the cruiser, but are actually those that make possible its navigation, like engine-room stokers, the ones who sustain the production and reproduction of the system. The Quichua indigenous of Otavalo constitute a truly cosmopolitan group that has dispersed throughout the globe in selling circuits and
merchant colonies of handicrafts, constituting an active and self-consciousness ethnoscape. Their particular hybrid globality lies in the fact that they enact and rebuild their ethnic identity, their archetypical character of “otherness”, “strange”, “exotic”, “ethnic”, in order to become a globally desirable commodity that moves as a diaspora through the world’s global cities. The Zapatistas constitute a locally born movement that is able to frame local demands in a highly inclusive global frame that becomes an ideological inspiration to the postmodern left. The Zapatistas continually operate locally and globally, challenging both the Mexican government and the global neoliberal system. In this sense, the drama of the Mayan communities in the Lacandona forest became a world image of the consequences of the neoliberal system, and their struggle became a global struggle and inspiration for the global social justice movement. Chiapas, La Realidad, and the Lacandonian Forest became global villages in the ideoscape, that is, places of ideological production for the activist community.

The three global villages analyzed have two features in common. First, these local villages, only traceable as small points on the map, have become globally influential: one in terms of the food we consume, another in terms of the definition of an archetypical ethnic style, and the third in the production of counter-ideologies to the neoliberal system. The second common element is that this global influence rests upon the enactment of these villages’ “local” character. Chile’s Central Valley transforms its particular ecological and climatic conditions into a kind of geographical label, which is closely associated with the specific kinds of fruits and wines produced there. Otavalo enacts its ethnic identity in order to produce the exotic otherness that is the key to its insertion in global markets. Chiapas articulates its challenge to global neoliberalism on
the basis of a very localized struggle for land and dignity. To perform locally in order to act globally seems to be the particular character of the “rural cosmopolitanism” of these “global villages” that constitute places where the local and the global cannot be detached, but rather are tied in a continuum.

These three cases call for a redefinition of our understanding of rurality and its role in the global order. Rural places are not purely local spaces—if there is anyplace we could call now purely local—but rather are fully part of the globalizing world. The global participation of local places goes beyond their participation in the global food production—a fact that itself would give rural places a global status—but they also may participate in the global flows of culture and ideology. In this sense rural places are culturally and politically relevant. They do not only receive cultural and political influences from the global cities and the transnational elites, but they may be active agents in the global networks.

A question still remains: what is the peculiarity of these “global villages” that makes them exceptional and so different from the “globalized” ones. This general query can be concretized in several smaller questions: why did the movement lead by Marcos in Chiapas achieve global relevance, while the peasant movement in Bolivia has not yet? Why has the central Valley of Chile achieved a successful insertion in global markets for wine and fruit, while hundreds of other places remain trapped in the networks of Agro-food corporations? Or why have Otavaleños become producers of global culture while many other local cultural expressions gradually recede against Americanization? These questions only have answers in the particular analysis of these three places: in their histories, actors and networks. In this sense, the understanding of the process of
globalization, and the interaction between the global and the local, must move away from grand theories that try to explain in single formulas the processes lived in different places, and must focus on a particular understanding of different processes of globalization, and networks constituted in every place. However all of these places have some sense become very self conscious in remaking their locality in terms of its globality. The have been able to do so because of particular historical conditions, but that does not mean that what they have learned can not be applied elsewhere.

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