

## **The Mobilization of Indigenous Movements in Post-Colonial Latin America: Applications of Theories of Globalization and Identity, Space and Place**

Key Words: Colonization, Globalization, Identity, Indigenous, Multiculturalism

Carolina Mauersberg

Department of Anthropology

Georgia State University

Globalization has come to shape our world drastically in the twentieth century, and this era of modernity has also shifted traditional anthropological notions and discourse on the subject. More specifically, postmodern anthropology has begun to examine how globalization relates to and reconstructs concepts of identity, space, and place all under the movement away from traditional notions of culture. In understanding these concepts and transformative relationships, I utilize Gupta and Ferguson (1992) and Tsing (2005) for their postmodern perspectives. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) provide theories of rethinking notions of space, place, and identity; Tsing (2005) uses ethnography to illustrate how these concepts relate to culture under globalist forces. I apply these theorists to indigenous peoples' movements and mobilization in post-colonial Latin America. Latin America's history of colonization demonstrates how this region has received forces of globalization long before there was an actual term for the process. The paper then moves to examine how indigenous groups mobilize from transnational and national forces. I begin with a literature review on globalization, following with a focus on Gupta and Ferguson and Tsing's perspectives. I then discuss indigenous groups and mobilization in Latin America to illustrate transnational and national forces and utilize Bolivia to examine how identity leads to the creation of indigenous movements with a literature review of Otero (2004) and Nash (2001). I then apply Gupta & Ferguson and Tsing's theories to culminate the paper to discussing the connections to previously mentioned movements in Bolivia.

### **Literature Review**

The following literature establishes how concepts of space and place, identity and culture have transformed in anthropological discourse under globalization. Leach (1997) discusses how globalization affects the identities of people living and being in spaces. Leach (1997) mentions benefits and drawbacks associated with globalization. Globalization has allowed for the world to expand beyond marked borders, allowing for processes of the breaking free of narrow localism and the quest of aspirations to capitalism (Leach 1997, 3). However, these processes affect the lives of those who may not be a part of this course. Decisions are taken away from some groups, leaving them feeling powerless, as they are not on the quest of capitalism (Leach 1997, 3). Leach's commentary on globalization creates the changing of spaces and places, and the implication this can have for specific groups. Ewing (1998, 262) mentions the salience, or prominence of borders emerging from the confrontation between the old concept of bounded cultures and the new flows due to globalization across national borders.

Borders were previously used to define national boundaries and populations, which also established the national identity of the people in these spaces (Ewing 1998, 262). Thus, this prominence of borders takes on a new identity, becoming obsolete under globalized forces. I apply how mobilization can occur in transformed spaces and places, transcending borders and giving way to formations of transnational resistance movements. This concept also applies to reshaped cultural identities as well.

### **Gupta and Ferguson**

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) discuss how anthropology is at a crossroads in what we traditionally associate with the discipline and focus on space and place in association with identity. The traditional notions of societies and cultures have been thought to organize in specific divisions of space, and the world as we perceive it is “as a collection of countries...divided by different colors into diverse national societies, each ‘rooted’ in its proper place” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 6). Within these diverse national societies are distinctive cultures and communities that define themselves and how they fit within these borders, shaping spaces (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 7). However, under the forces of globalization, these boundaries no longer enclose or reflect these spaces, due to ideas and people that transcend the borders. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) then mention the problem of the mapping of cultures and the idea of “multiculturalism” as a term, because of how it dismisses multiple cultures and identities. The question of post-colonialism is also asked, as to how we look at spaces that have had colonial encounters, and what do the people living there make of these encounters (Gupta Ferguson 1992, 7-8). The last subject they raise is how we must understand social change and cultural transformation in interconnected spaces, as these interconnected spaces are how we will understand these changes and transformations” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 8). In other words, we must understand how new identities come about in post-colonized areas and what this entails. This is what characterizes indigenous movements, in that mobilizations are occurring in the interconnected space of the old world and new world in the post-colonial era. Using these questions raised by Gupta and Ferguson, I will apply them following my discussion on indigenous movements and mobilization in Latin America.

### **Tsing**

Tsing’s (2005) ethnography focuses on globalization and how this exists as “friction.” Friction occurs due to the global forces of capitalism and politics that are competing against one another to be fulfilled, as well as many groups that are working to accomplish their developments, resulting in multiple encounters that tend to counteract with one another (Tsing 2005, 1). Tsing’s discussion on post-colonial theory is important to note because these processes are specifically relevant to this era, and here she conveys the concept of culture. We are starting to see challenges between the universal and culturally specific (Tsing 2005, 1), reflecting the emerging change in the relationship between culture and identity. Tsing (2005) mentions how we have limited ourselves to only understanding cultural specificities, and we should focus more on the universal, in that we need to examine how multiple groups approach particulars. Focusing more upon the idea of culture, Tsing (2005, 152) describes cultural analysis, and how it thrives on a description of specificity which comes from “the study of small, enclosed spaces: the diverse ‘cultures’ of an imagined pre-contact world.” However, we

are moving towards cultural “units” such as nations, ethnic diaspora and international projects, and away from individual cultures (Tsing 2005). Thus, the idea of culture with identity comes into the discussion with globalization, in how the cultural concept has been reconsidered and redeveloped. These theories posited by Tsing provide a foundation for understanding how indigenous groups posture themselves under the forces of globalization and how they make use of their culture with identity. As cultural units, we can also see how this is a transnational movement across multiple indigenous groups. To illustrate this idea in Latin America, I support it with an example of Bolivia to show the emerging cultural unit.

### **Indigenous Movement in Latin America**

The following literature discusses reasons for indigenous movements and mobilization in Latin America, with origins of mobilization of indigenous groups in a case study on Bolivia. I apply Otero (2004) and Nash’s (2001) perspectives on the extent of the impact of transnational and national forces for mobilization to Latin America and Bolivia respectively. This case study on Bolivia provides cultural reasoning with identity that is discussed by Tsing (2005) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992). The perspectives focus the forces of globalization in accounting for transnational mobilization in indigenous groups. Ultimately, these indigenous movements in the post-colonial era under globalization are reflections of Latin America’s turbulent history with colonization and its impacts upon its indigenous peoples.

### **Transnational Forces in Latin America**

Attempts to assimilate indigenous peoples into mainstream cultures in many Latin American countries were common in the colonial and even the post-colonial era (Otero 2004, 328). These efforts have occurred in countries with the most substantial indigenous populations, comprising eighty percent of all indigenous people in the region, in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru (Otero 2004, 328). These indigenous ethnicities have resisted assimilation for half a millennium, along with “the reality that they have always occupied a subordinate position as a group and that Latin America states have made systematic efforts at dispossession of their land and territory, genocide, and assimilation” (Otero 2004, 333).

Indigenous groups have also demanded rights from their states and their rights to territorial lands that were taken away by their governments but have been denied these requests. The state perceives these indigenous complaints as a call against an exclusionary rule and desire for reaching power when in reality, they are looking for education, administrative restructuring, and land reforms (Jackson and Warren 2005, 554). These demands reflected how indigenous groups are marginalized and in lower classes, asking for their basic needs to be met by the state. This illustrates how indigenous groups exist in the space of their place, in the form of having to take on a forced identity under the loss of national lands and marginalization. Jackson and Warren (2005, 551) reflect these experiences, in that Latin American discourse has also discouraged indigenous identification, with policies of the era directed at assimilation and even with efforts of invisibilization. Ironically, state nationalism in the countries listed above has associated indigenous communities with the nation’s glorious and historical identity and past yet continue to marginalize them in the present except for in museums, tourism, and folkloric

events (Jackson and Warren 2005, 550). This description establishes the position and identity of indigenous groups in the post-colonial era.

Globalization in Latin America gave way to how indigenous groups make use of their identity and place and have moved toward mobilization. A resurgence of recognition of ethnicity occurred, as indigenous groups became resistant and protested against these processes (Nash 2001). This sets the formations of identity among indigenous groups, out of resistance and oppression. Indigenous movements began to use their identity to mobilize in reaction with resistance to these forces and their oppression in a form represented as “collective identity politics” (Otero 2004, 340), in which they transformed their culture into a political identity under the forces of globalization. Jackson and Warren (2005, 551) explain this further, dictating that the “state ideologies of *mestizaje*, which emphasize the cultural and biological mixing rather than ethnic-racial difference, shifted identities that valorize difference, in particular, Indianess.” Indigenous groups also asserted that the selection of defining traits to identify people is the most straightforward and practical means of identifying groups claim to cultural property (Nash 2001, 16), demonstrating this use of collective identity politics. In the reclaiming of properties, indigenous groups associated this notion of their culture with identity with ownership.

The use of collective identity politics by indigenous groups has also resulted in reforms to change how countries identify multi-ethnic and cultural nations. Jackson and Warren (2005, 551) mention that this “demanding and attaining of national and international recognition of identity has shown to be an overall strategy in the cultural and historical recovery.” The indigenous identity becomes a method of mobilization, and here there is an emphasis on the importance of culture. This has resulted in mobilization on the transnational level, with seventeen countries, thirteen of them being Latin American countries, having ratified the 1989 Convention 169 of the Internal Labor Organization on Indigenous Rights and Cultures. This document “acknowledges the rights of indigenous peoples and their cultures, autonomy, and self-governance, and provides implications for their control over territory in nation-states” (International Labor Organization 2003 in Otero 2004, 331). Some Latin American countries have also made constitutional changes to declare themselves as “plurinational,” meaning they recognize different ethnic groups and provide recognition to indigenous populations, one of these being Bolivia. This achievement of mobilization in indigenous movements illustrates how transnational forces can result in institutional achievements that make a difference in improvements.

Otero (2004, 325) provides a perspective that stresses how the mobilization of indigenous movements must be reflected under transnational forces, exemplified with the discussion of Latin America. Otero (2004, 326) mentions how “the ideas of nation- states and now politics and social movements must exist within transnational civil society.” The mobilization of these forces can only be attributed on a global level, as not enough of an impact can occur on the local level. He advocates with the globalist position, stating that global action and power flow occur on different levels, and thus it is due to global movements that identity can change power relations (Otero 2004, 323). This statement resonates with Tsing and the friction between different groups’ overall universals ideals, in that these are transnational forces that cause mobilization.

### **Cultural Reasoning as Identity: Bolivia**

Bolivia presents an excellent example demonstrating how identity has mobilized in changing places and spaces. Bolivia has undergone “makeovers” of its national cultural politics of identity, with the shifting of its indigenous populations into different categories, whether to have them become more visible or invisible (Albro 1998). These makeovers stemmed from the country’s independence when there was a distinction between the “Indians”, or indigenous peoples and the Spaniards, who were their colonizers. This scheme illustrates the beginnings of the close relationship between race and class and the legacies that followed. In the context of politics, the “Creoles,” or people of Spanish descent had the majority of power, and political participation was limited to this urban and elite group (Albro 1998, 99). The Indians, as to how they were referred to at the time, were blamed for the backwardness of the country (Albro 1998, 99). Consequently, to bring the Indians to the same standard as the rest of the country, and to fix the country to meet the Creoles’ ideals, there was a goal to elevate the Indian to the “*Mestizo*,” which was a “visible tendency of the erasure of specific ethnic differences within the generic category of Indian” (Albro 1998, 100). The beginnings of *mestizaje* are reflected here, a term associated with the tendency towards cultural or social homogenization. Here, the *mestizo* is the product of an “erasure of differences” (Albro 1998, 100) and the erasure of entire ethnic groups. The indigenous were subjected to become part of an entirely different ethnic group for the bettering of the country while living in an oppressed society with lower-class status.

However, a shift in indigenous identity began in the 1960s, when young people, many being of the *Aymara* indigenous group populating the rural areas, entered into universities. They formed questions on their positions of social mobility and marginality (Albro 1998, 100), laying the foundation of the *Katarismo* movement. *Katarismo* takes its name from Tupaj Katari, an Aymaran rebel in the 18th century against the Creoles. The Kataristas drew inspiration of the incorporation of indigenous identity into national identity and entered the query of “native cultural identity and political agency into the public political glare as part of national life” (Albro 1998, 100). The Kataristas used their indigenous identity to mobilize and gain attention in Bolivia and are now one of many grassroots indigenous groups in current politics. The mobilization of the Kataristas illustrates how the space of Bolivia has transformed through the post-colonial era, with the reconstruction of identity to fit this space, and how the Kataristas utilized their culture to reform their identity in Bolivia. It is important to note although these forces did not mobilize under globalization, this movement rippled across Latin America, thus showing transnational forces contributing to movements. As this is a brief history of the situation of identity and culture in only one country of Latin America, it provides a basis for understanding how marginalization and class differences upon indigenous groups serve as motives to similar movements across Latin America.

### **Nash**

Nash (2001) focuses on mobilization of indigenous movements on a national level, exemplified with the case of Bolivia, but also moving away from the idea of recognizing interconnectedness and breakdown of old perceptions on space and place. Nash (2001) mentions how global forces are a problem for focusing on an area, due to the emphasis on the

discourse of globalization leaving little room for marginalized spaces (Nash 2001, 15) On this level, there is focus on culture in the space rather than just transnational forces affecting spaces. Nash's perspective allows for a better understanding of the relation between culture and identity and gives a basis as to reasons for mobilization. Nash (2001) focuses on how the "testimonial people" live in collective modes, which are products of practiced resistance by those who experienced trauma from conquest and civilization. The deterritorialization of peoples and communities, which have forced them to migrate (Gupta and Ferguson 1992 in Nash 2001, 16), as well as the deculturation or homogenization of cultures, are their reasons for mobilization.

Ultimately, Nash (2001) makes a strong argument of having to recognize mobilization at the national level, but transnational forces have allowed for movements to cross borders.

### **Theory Application**

When examining the mobilization of multiple groups as mentioned by Tsing (2005), we can see under Nash's (2001) perspective of how indigenous groups have mobilized in response to the forces of globalization reshaping their spaces. We also see the friction between different ethnic groups in organizing national identities with ethnicity. The relationship between culture being used in forming an identity is also seen, in both individual cultures and "culture units" to understand the processes. The example of Bolivia demonstrates the unique culture of Latin America as a whole as a cultural unit.

In applying Gupta and Ferguson (1992) to these perspectives, the mobilization of these movements is occurring at the new crossroads of places and space, as they are happening across borders. They are redefining how the state is organized regarding its ethnic groups, breaking away the idea of borders. Mobilizations of indigenous groups in Latin America surpass the transnational boundaries, and thus the space of the continent itself is transformed. The problems of assuming a state of having multiculturalism results in different implications for those who inhabit, as indigenous groups were subjected to the dismissal of their entire existence with the use of *mestizaje*. We see how they fitted this idea of multiculturalism to their political identity needs. On the concern of post-colonialism, these movements reflect the legacies of colonialism, which is an essential part of shaping their identities. Finally, we can see that Latin America itself has become a whole of interconnected space because of its legacy. This is how we are then able to look at the reasons for social change, and the justification of reshaped identities for mobilization.

Ultimately, the discussion of movements and mobilization of indigenous groups in Latin America is a mere example of the many interconnecting processes around the world. We can see perspectives of globalization on both the national and the global level, and this furthers the understandings of the scope of transnational processes. As we come to understand the relationships of space and place, and culture and identity under the forces of globalization, we are better able to understand how we can take initiatives and mobilize for ourselves, following the mobilization of indigenous groups of Latin America as an admirable example.

## Literature Cited

Albro, Roberto

1998. "Introduction: A New Time and Place for Bolivian Popular Politics." *Ethnology* 37(2): 99-115. doi:10.2307/3773999

Ewing, Katherine

1998. "Crossing Borders and Transgressing Boundaries: Metaphors for Negotiating Multiple Identities." *Ethos* 26(2): 262-2. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/640680>

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson

1992. "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology*. 7(1): 6-23.

Jackson, Jean and Kay Warren

2005. "Indigenous Movements in Latin America, 1992-2004: Controversies, Ironies, New Directions." *Annual Review of Anthropology* (34) 549-573. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25064898>

Leach, Belinda

1997. "Culture, Globalization and the Politics of Place: Introduction." *Anthropologica* 39(1/2): 3-5. doi:10.2307/25605846

Nash, June

2001. "Globalization and the Cultivation of Peripheral Vision." *Anthropology Today* 17(4): 15-22. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2678185>

Otero, Gerardo

2004. "Global Economy, Local Politics: Indigenous Struggles, Civil Society and Democracy." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 37(2): 325-346. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165644>

Tsing, Anna

2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.