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Commercial Cultures

In the previous chapter three ways of exploring connections between consumption and production were discussed. Geographers have endeavoured to look beyond the broad contours of connections to the imbrication of culture, production, economics and consumption and their mutual constitution in space. Within geography, research on commodity and commercial cultures has been at the forefront of challenges to consumption and production as dichotomous categories. This chapter examines commercial cultures by exploring three case studies: music, the serial repetition of McDonald's, and indigenous tourism. These case studies reveal how assemblages of people, entities, are brought together in place, and how commercial cultures shape and position subjects in different ways. The concept of commercial cultures also enables one to critique views of globalization as producing homogeneous and unidirectional consumption experiences and spaces, and to understand how flows of knowledge, commodities and people are caught up in transnational spaces.

Understanding Commercial Cultures

Culture comprises the social practices of everyday life through which people create meaningful relationships, experiences and places. Mort suggests 'cultures of consumption are the point where the market meets popular experience and lifestyles on the ground' (1988: 215). The term 'consumer culture' is usually a reference to groupings of consumers based on propensity to consume, consumption practices, lifestyle or objects of consumption. Rather than inferring consumption is only a 'cultural' matter, we may use the term 'commercial culture' (see Box 6.1) to encapsulate the linkages between consumption and production, and the inseparability of production and consumption, commerce and culture, the material and the symbolic.

BOX 6.1 COMMERCIAL CULTURES

Over the last two decades consumption geographers have endeavoured to find ways of reconciling opposing ways of seeing and overcoming dualisms between economic and cultural, symbolic and material (see, for example, Clarke and Purvis, 1994; Gregson et al., 2001b). In a book entitled *Commercial Cultures* editors Peter Jackson, Michelle Lowe, Daniel Miller and Frank Mort advocate research which explores how aspects of cultural production 'are inherently concerned with the commodification of various kinds of cultural difference' (2000: 1). Research on how hybrid 'commercial cultures' emerge also forms a way of understanding how the market and processes of commerce are embedded in a variety of cultural processes. Tracing the connections between economies, practices and spaces provides a means of understanding commercial cultures (2000: 3). This involves understanding the particularity of practices, flows, networks and relationships and their movement, assemblage, displacement and permeability through temporal and spatial contexts.

The interdependence of culture and economy has been addressed in numerous studies, for example, McDowell and Court's (1994) research on service cultures, and Bryman's (1999) discussion of how 'Disney culture' pervades service industry delivery. However, studies which recognize the inflection of the cultural in the economic, or the economic in the cultural, may restate rather than overcome the culture–economy divide. Gregson et al. (2001b) suggest that culture is often used as an additive in the explanation of phenomena and activities which are seen as primarily economic, as in studies of cultural industries or in the culturalization thesis – the idea that 'economies are increasingly about the production, distribution and consumption of items that are cultural in character' (2001b: 621). If culture is about the production of meaning and the processes and practices which comprise routinized ways of doing and seeing, then for 'economy and cultural to be conjoined, meaning and practice must be regarded as inseparable' (2001b: 630). However, the challenge remains as to how to reconcile such binaries without privileging either side.

Examination of commercial cultures must be underpinned by a sense of their spatial constitution but also via an exploration of how power operates and is distributed (see Chapter 5). Jackson (2002b: 15, citing McRobbie, 1997: 85) argues a politics of consumption must involve thinking across material and symbolic realms to identify anxieties and tensions which provide opportunities for political debate and social change. The discussion on music which follows examines how 'cultural' questions of aesthetics, taste and style cannot be divorced from 'political' questions about power, inequality and oppression (Jackson, 1993: 208).

Music: Exploring the Politics of Commercial Culture

Commercial music provides fascinating insights into how meanings are constructed and power is articulated through cultures, economies, practices and spaces. The purchase, use and experience of music delineates boundaries between self and others, providing a means of thinking about spatiality and the politics of its production. Music is also a site of social struggle: discursive and material practices surrounding the production and consumption of sound are gendered, racialized and classed (Revill, 1998) and music is a sphere in which the politics of First and Third Worlds and the intersection between global and local is constituted (Kong, 1995: 190).¹

Music is transgressive, with sounds and meanings of music being 'linked to geographical sites, bound up in our everyday perceptions of place, and a part of the movements of people, products and cultures across space' (Connell and Gibson, 2003: 1). Music has been used in strategies of political socialization and the constitution of patriotism or national identity (Smith, 1994) and as a component of 'place-making' through the promotion of cultural industry, tourism and local economic development strategies. Music plays a significant role in the construction of particular narratives of the local. For example, the illegal use of industrial warehouses for house dances in Blackburn, England (and associated consumption of the drug Ecstasy) established new and transgressive soundscapes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, invoking tensions between partygoers/organizers and owners of the premises, police and local residents, politicians and local authorities (Ingham et al., 1999).

While much geographic attention has been focused on analysis of the lyrical contents of songs and their textual representation (Kong, 1995), 'sound itself has an important and active role to play in the organization of social, economic, and political spaces' (Revill, 2000: 597). Accordingly music should be considered a means of communication in itself rather than just a medium for some other communicative practice, for example, as a vehicle for lyrics or as a channel for social interaction and display (2000: 597). An emphasis on music as performance rather than text shifts the methodological and theoretical focus towards how geographies are embodied, experienced and made rather than simply 'read' (S.J. Smith, 2000).

If music is constituted powerfully through its production, then this is also a characteristic of its consumption. The ways that listeners themselves 'perform' has an influence on the political, economic and emotional spaces of music as 'listening makes music too' (2000: 634). Music is experienced as a performance of power enacted by consumers which is creative and productive, bringing spaces, peoples and places into form. The music of the Australian band 'The Whitlams', for example, both reflected and helped constitute a radical politics opposed to inner city change in their home town, Newtown, Sydney (Carroll and Connell, 2000). The subsequent formation of a 'community' of Whitlam fans provided a focus for subordinate groups to negotiate the dominant power

system. Thus music can play a role in processes of identity formation and modes of personal expression, particularly with regard to youth subcultures (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002; Wallace and Kovacheva, 1996).²

Music nevertheless is also a pervasive, sometimes insidious component of the geographies of everyday life (Kong, 1995). While music is consumed directly through choices to attend concerts and nightclubs, and to purchase and listen to CDs, cassette tapes and videos, it is also consumed as part of the production of other consumption experiences and sites. Music played in a restaurant, for example, may provide ambience and 'mood' or be interpreted as 'noise' when it detracts from the consuming experience. Music is part of knowing and being in place and is consumed actively and passively in public and private spaces (Frith, 1996; see Box 6.2).

BOX 6.2 INSTORE MUSIC: THE PRODUCT AND PERFORMANCE OF CONSUMPTION

The privileging of the visual in studies of shopping malls and retail spaces (see Chapter 3) has meant a relative neglect of the pervasiveness of sound/music and its potential significance in consumption (DeNora and Belcher, 2000). Tia DeNora's and Sophie Belcher's (2000) research drew on Goffman's concept of performance (see Box 4.4) to observe and interview consumers, employees and store managers in order to examine the role of music in encouraging feelings commensurate with the displayed commodities. They discovered music played in stores ranged from music directed to the presumed identities of shoppers, to that which served to 'brand' items for sale, or to heighten the exclusivity and specificity of sales product and place (2000: 93). Music provided part of the 'scene' in which producer-consumer performances were enacted. Shoppers were observed toe tapping, moving to music, even singing. Store music also encouraged an emotional investment on the part of staff in relation to the commodities on offer, becoming a tool of surveillance for management, with head offices of retail companies determining the timing and content of music to be played and in some cases ensuring store operators could only play company music in stores. Music in retail outlets not only facilitates a tactile and bodily experience of consuming, but forms a means of establishing the social contexts of commodities and the regulation and surveillance of employees. Retail music is consequently both performative and about performance.

DeNora and Belcher's research indicates how commercial cultures which characterize contemporary music are intricately connected to cultural politics and the production of place. However, commercial cultures are constituted through a web of relationships which do not begin or terminate with the musicians or consumers (S.J. Smith, 2000). Changes in software technologies and Internet distribution systems, for example, are transforming networks of creativity

(involving creation and interpretation of music through multiple acts of performance), reproduction (dealing with manufacture of multiple copies of works), distribution and consumption (involving both retail organizations and consumers) (Leyshon, 2001: 60).

Digital technologies which allow the copying, dissemination and consumption of audio files over the Internet, and the downloading of files (primarily as compressed MP3 formats) to personal computers, have also begun to alter the material form of music networks and the commercial cultures which constitute them. MP3 and similar formats have been welcomed by some music industry agents who believe they will reorient power relations away from retailers and back to musicians and artists. Others view such techniques as a potential form of piracy which will pose a threat to sales and existing forms of ownership (and exploitation) in the music industry (2001: 52).

Tensions are emerging as a consequence of changes in the relationship between those institutions and agents involved in the production of music commodities and those involved in facilitating their consumption (such as between recording companies and major retailers). Dislocated relationships may exist between those whose expertise is based on technologies and techniques of cultural and textual production, and those whose expertise is based upon knowledge of the consumption of cultural artefacts and services (du Gay and Negus, 1994).

In addition, despite discourses of freedom, agency and expression which circulate around consumption of music, consumer choice is often scrutinized and regulated by retail management. Du Gay and Negus (1994: 411) argued that routes of consumption 'lead directly into (and out of) the design offices, marketing departments, boardrooms and assembly plants of electronic, communication and media corporations'. Executive decisions of recording companies, for example, are based around assumptions of marketability of music arising from existing and presumed consumer preferences. Information technologies, and products like SoundScan (a point-of-purchase technology) which tabulate sales to consumers, contribute to power/knowledge being vested in companies which distribute music, enabling control over the range and nature of products available to the consumer and the level of profits (McCourt and Rothenbuhler, 1997). Point-of-sale technologies also facilitate backward integration, in which retailers may have greater control of product design, development and other processes (du Gay and Negus, 1994: 397). The structure of the retail music sector, in which a small number of retail companies operate multiple outlets, has had implications for industry relationships and the commodities available and accessible to consumers. Independent stores are less economically productive for large record companies to deal with, so they are often forced to specialize in niche music (du Gay and Negus, 1994).

Thus debates over the production/consumption of music, how the industry is structured and the formats in which consumers have access to audio 'bytes' involve a politics and a geography of consumption in which relationships between

producers and consumers are both blurred and articulated through complex networks. The case study in Box 6.3 explores alliances and tensions which operate as part of the commercial culture which comprises hip-hop music.

BOX 6.3 HIP-HOP: RAP AS RESISTANCE?

The incorporation of hip-hop music in commercial cultures which operate through formal spaces of market exchange is not divorced from the cultural politics of consumption. Hip-hop and its most recognized component, rap, are said to have formed 'on the street' and in the urban neighbourhoods of 'black America' in the 1970s. The sounds and lyrics of hip-hop represent both a description of everyday life and desires, and a politicization centred upon disaffection, resistance and rage in the context of a diaspora of the 'black Atlantic' (Gilroy, 1993). Hip-hop's politics are also a politics of style as the music embodies creative and aesthetic volatility as part of its stylistic heritage (Neal, 1997). Rap involves the consumption of and creative appropriation and reconstitution of existing sounds, images and technologies, missing, cutting and scratching these as 'artifacts of locally based cultures', often through the selective reinterpretation of the music products of big business (Connell and Gibson, 2003: 183).

The commodification of rap has meant it has also become concerned with the creation of identifiable and marketable products and 'intellectual' properties (Negus, 1999). Though major label companies have bought independent rap companies and allowed them to function relatively autonomously in order to maintain their assumed 'authenticity' (Connell and Gibson, 2003), Negus (1999) notes how the corporate organization of the music industry has also meant hip-hop has been marginalized. This marginalization retains the mythology of hip-hop as radical black music from the street, but creates a commercial culture which is 'central to the changing business practices and aesthetics of the contemporary music industry' (1999: 492). In the USA, the segmentation of black music into notoriously unstable divisions of major record companies has often occurred with less economic investment than other types of music, an absence of senior African-American executives above the 'black' division in the music hierarchy, and assumptions of a short 'shelf life' for the music. The assumed costs of incorporating others' intellectual property in producing tracks, and payment structures in the industry, have all meant that hip-hop and rap music has not had a (powerful) corporate space in which to establish its own agenda (Negus, 1999). Though hip-hop and rap can be constituted as a lifeline of hope for diasporic peoples, a key question is how such music can function as a viable place of working as well as thinking, one in which economic livelihoods are possible and not just desired (McRobbie, 1999).

Despite the potential for corporate 'containment' and shaping, new and radical forms of hip-hop have continued to emerge. A continual redefinition of rap as the music has crossed social and cultural barriers within and outside the USA has occurred despite, rather than because of, the ways in which the recording industry has organized the

production of popular music (Negus, 1999: 504). French and German rap, for example, bears similarities to rap which has evolved in the USA but also has important differences with regard to national and racial issues, exemplifying different challenges to the structures of the societies in which they are located (Connell and Gibson, 2003).

The commercial viability of hip-hop and the potential to diffuse its message of social critique were largely contingent on the success of the new digital technologies which it tacitly critiques (Neal, 1997). Emphasis on hybridity (see next section) and the forging of new ethnic identities in such music can too easily ignore how categories are easily packaged and commodified by the record industry marketing these sounds 'as a new take on the exotic otherness of marginal cultures' (McRobbie, 1999: 148). While the globalization of hip-hop can invoke radical resistance and opposition to forms of racism and marginalization, its politicization is tempered by commercialization (Miles, 1998b).

Commercial cultures are always in a sense hybrid, mixed and remixed differentially in place (Qureshi and Moores, 1999). Bennett's (1999) research on the consumption of hip-hop music by white Newcastle (England) residents illustrates the differing discourses and politics which emerge in place. Where hip-hop was seen as 'authentic' black music, its enjoyment and consumption were articulated around a politics which invoked a strategy of distinction by its consumers, separating knowledgeable consumers whose political affinities recognized black politics and/or who saw affinities with their own working class experiences. These consumers constructed others' appropriations of black music as inappropriate, unknowing and inauthentic (in much the same ways as 1970s retro wearers constructed those who engaged in carnivalesque modes of dress: see Box 4.6). Other consumers and producers of hip-hop in Newcastle saw it as a unique expression of being in place, as part of the actual construction of what it meant to be working class in Newcastle by its consumers (Bennett, 1999). Similarly hip-hop in Zimbabwe, Italy, Greenland and Aotearoa/New Zealand is not simply an appropriation but is constituted through complex modes of indigenization and syncretism to create a vehicle for the expression of indigenous resistance vernaculars, their local politics and the 'moral' geographies associated with them (Mitchell, 2000: 52).

Understanding the commodification of cultural practices such as music, and how actors and discourses in situated contexts frame commercial cultures, thus provides a means of understanding how consumption operates as a spatial and social phenomenon and the geometries of power which are associated with it. The discussion on music as a commercial culture has also illustrated that 'cultural' questions of aesthetics, taste and style cannot be divorced from 'political questions about power, inequality and oppression' (Jackson, 1993: 208). A key question in thinking about consumption of music is the extent to which consumers can construct their own meanings in the context of music produced for them by the music industry and how constant negotiation and flows between commerce and creativity in music create a complex geometry of power (Miles, 1998a).



FIGURE 6.1 The global homogenization paradigm is linked to Americanization of place (Herb cartoon, permission by Chris Beard)

Consuming and producing music are very much about politics, embodying asymmetries of power which result from the ways in which music commodities are made, marketed and sold, the naturalization and prioritization of some views/values above others, and how 'cultural' meanings of different groups such as recording artists, companies, retailers and consumers (such as what constitutes rap and rap consumption) are assembled, transformed, contested and reaffirmed across space. The next section explores these ideas in relation to processes of globalization, considering how best to understand flows of people, things and commodities which comprise commercial cultures.

Commercial Cultures and Globalization

Globalization is itself a contested concept, but generally seems to involve a sense of the increasing interconnectedness of the world, and the extension and deepening of social relations and institutions across space (Amin, 2002). With regard to consumption, globalization appears to have been linked primarily with concepts of cultural homogenization, cultural imperialism and/or Americanization (see Figure 6.1). Research on commercial cultures critiques this idea, arguing that globalization is simultaneously cultural and economic, and that places are not simply senders or receivers of globalizing objects, processes and knowledges.

Global homogenization

Howes (1996) argues contemporary thinking about the cultural effects of the circulation of commodities has been dominated by the global homogenization paradigm. This views globalization as comprising the convergence of global culture. Global homogenization results, with the recolonization of spaces via the

market, the replacement of local goods by mass produced commodities usually originating from the West, and the subsequent erosion of cultural difference and diversity. Transference of material objects and the practices, meanings, images and symbolism associated with them has also been associated with deterritorialization – the severing of ‘original’ identities, signs and meanings from traditional locations (Short et al., 2001). The global homogenization thesis also cites as evidence the marketing and distribution practices of companies with global branded products like Coca-Cola, Nike and Levis, despite these companies only producing a small proportion of branded goods (Miller, 1995).

Ritzer’s (1993) theory of McDonaldization is often seen as symptomatic of global convergence. The concept of McDonaldization is based around the notion that the principles of the fast food restaurant pervade the organization of production and consumption on an increasingly global scale. Ritzer (2002) argues that the preoccupation with rationalization through securing efficiency, calculability (through quantifiable properties of object and labour), predictability and control now extends to a wide range of other contexts, including education, family, legal and justice systems and christian churches. However, Ritzer did not clearly differentiate between McDonaldization as a set of rationalizing principles and the geographical extension of McDonalds (Smart, 1999). Ritzer’s theory provides provocative reflections on the nature of control in contemporary organizations, but it is too simplistic to view the worldwide growth in McDonalds outlets in terms of global homogenization. With the opening of new restaurants different commercial cultures have emerged (Figure 6.2) and as Box 6.4 demonstrates, the geographic extension of McDonalds embodies aspects of both cultural and economic homogenization and heterogenization.



FIGURE 6.2 The changing nature of public space. The first McDonald’s in Russia opened in Moscow in 1990, this is one of approximately 103 restaurants currently operating in the country

BOX 6.4 MCDONALD'S: CONSUMING MEANINGS IN SACRED AND THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES

Maoz Azaryahu (1999) discusses the conflict that arose after the opening of a McDonald's restaurant adjacent to a national military shrine at Golani Junction in Israel in 1994. The opening of the restaurant disrupted the meaning of Golani Junction as a memorial space. As a site of remembrance for those who had lost and continue to lose their lives as part of Golani Brigade (a prominent and active military unit in Israel), Golani Junction is also a shrine of bereavement and patriotism, a sacred space of community (1999: 482). The opening of McDonald's at Golani Heights produced a 'monument' but of quite a different kind, acting as a metaphor of 'an alleged cultural transformation of Israel society and, in particular, for the Americanization of Israel' (1999: 486). Opposition to the arrival of McDonald's was based around the assumed culture of the restaurant chain rather than its utilitarian function as a place of food consumption (which was lacking on the site). McDonald's function as a site of social rather than culinary pleasure was juxtaposed with the sombre sacredness of the adjoining memorial. Pressure exerted by bereaved parents and a direct intervention by Yitzhak Rabin (Prime Minister and Defence Minister at the time) resulted in a compromise with McDonald's officials. McDonald's undertook to close the restaurant when memorial ceremonies were held, and the visual (and symbolic) prominence of the Golani memorial site was restored by architectural modifications and planting aimed at concealing the restaurant.

However, as a symbol of Americanization the arrival of McDonald's in Israel was interpreted in complex ways. It was seen by many as detrimental to local Israeli traditions, particularly by religious Jews who saw it as symptomatic of a secular society and its negation of dietary laws (Azaryahu, 1999). McDonald's (more than other American owned fast food chains such as Burger King and Subway) represented the American way of life, one which did not necessarily evoke negative sentiments for many Israelis. McDonald's was also viewed as signifying Israel's integration into a 'homogenized, global consumer culture' (1999: 485).

Robin Kearns and Ross Barnett argue the arrival of McDonald's in New Zealand (in 1976) was also a 'potent symbol of the multinational colonization of the New Zealand landscape' (2000: 89) but since then has become a ubiquitous part of many New Zealand children's everyday lives. It was the opening of a McDonald's restaurant within the Starship hospital, New Zealand's major tertiary teaching children's hospital in Auckland, which was controversial, occurring within 'a broader narrative of the commercialization of health care in New Zealand' (2000: 81).

In 'boldly going where no health enterprise had gone before' (2000: 84) as in Israel, it was the meanings and moralities associated with McDonald's which were a source of controversy. Operating McDonald's in the Starship was seen by some as an endorsement by health professionals of the acceptability of takeaway food, the moralities of which were particularly questionable in a region where dietary problems and poverty related illness are prominent. The second was based on the perception that the deal

forged in 1997 between McDonald's and management represented the 'predatory actions of the private sector on an ailing public health system' (2000: 86). Responses in favour of the development were based around pragmatism, quality and convenience, and getting the best service for the hospital. Given that potential benefactors of the Starship are consumers of a branded image, McDonald's was part of the extension of symbolism of 'hospital as mall' for consumers, but also an intrinsic part of the saleable Starship metaphor (2000: 90) with McDonald's assisting in the imageability and marketable nature of the hospital as a product for potential sponsors. As in Israel, McDonald's was required to make various concessions (minimum external signage, nutritional extras on the menu, and two nationwide health awareness campaigns a year). Kearns and Barnett (2000: 90) argue that somewhat ironically the franchise is extending the rationality and efficiency of processes of McDonaldization in hospital care while simultaneously providing consumers with a fantasy laden eating experience in an enchanted space.

The cases of the McDonald's outlets in Golani Junction and the Starship hospital demonstrate the widely variant discourses which surrounded the opening of the new franchises. In Golani Junction, eating at McDonald's conflicted with moral geographies surrounding remembrance, patriotism and sacred space, yet for others it reinforced political and cultural alliances. In the Starship, debates were located within discourses of consumerism and commodification of healthcare, healthy eating and the formation of a friendly and normalizing therapeutic landscape. Experiences of eating thus became entangled in the debates about the commercial culture of the commodity being provided. Understanding such debates involves considering the economic and cultural (re)production of McDonald's, and the ways in which the consumption and production of meanings, imaginings, commodities and experiences are transformed in place and across space.

Thus even for a firm such as McDonald's, which has become an 'icon of global homogenization of landscapes and culinary tastes' (Azaryahu, 1999: 481), the cultural homogenization thesis may be critiqued. Places and people are not passive and receptive agents of an (unchanging) culture or cultural object which originates from elsewhere (Miller, 1998). McDonald's has altered the production, processing and marketing of commodities in particular localities, and people have responded to and shaped the McDonald's experience differently in place (a point reflected in Watson's 1997 volume *Golden Arches East* exploring McDonald's in Asian countries).

Creolization, hybridity and transnationalism

A second paradigm to do with understanding how consumption objects and cultures change across borders is connected with 'creolization'. This occurs

when material objects cross borders and 'the culture they "substantiate" is no longer the culture in which they circulate' (Howes, 1996: 2). Creolization focuses on the inflow of commodities to a place (as opposed to the outflow from the First World, America or the West as suggested by the homogenization paradigm) to consider how commodities are assigned meanings and uses. Creolization emphasizes how locals selectively appropriate elements of the receiving culture in order to construct their own hybrid medium (Barber and Waterman, 1995). Culture becomes creolized as a consequence of the fusion of disparate elements which are both heterogeneous and local. The creolization paradigm stresses the active, creative and experiential role of people as cultural producers rather than passive recipients and is not premised on a notion of an authentic and potentially corruptible culture.

However, though the creolization paradigm sees cultural change as dynamic and fluid, it still relies on the notion of a 'receiving culture' where commodity meanings appear to be unchanged in processes of transference. This implies the origins of change are always 'outside' a bounded space, and processes of change are homogeneous and static in their (external) constitution. Thus the concept produces a binary which constructs culture into indigenous (traditional and local) and imported aspects (modern, global) (Barber and Waterman, 1995). While creolization allows for consumer creativity and the significance of local processes, like the globalization paradigm it retains an emphasis on the passivity of the consumer (Jackson, 1999).

Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity which has been linked with creolization is of greater use when focusing on the interface between objects and the commercial cultures which surround them. Hybrid cultures are 'much more than syncretisms; they are not mixtures from two or more sources, but a creation of something new out of difference' (Shurmer-Smith and Hannam, 1994: 139). Hybridity involves places of encounter and is constituted through the boundaries between cultures and cultural flows; it is the passage, 'the boundary, being the place where something begins its presencing' (Bhabha, 2001: 140). As a site of 'newness' the middle place/passage may be a site of displacement and disjunction, syncretism, juxtaposition, redefinition and (re)creation (2001: 140). Hybridity in this sense refers to things and processes which transgress and displace divisions between same and other, for example displacing and re-creating meanings of 'the West and the rest' which tend to underpin notions of cross-cultural consumption.³

Homogenization, creolization and hybridization are partial ways of seeing the world and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Nederveen Pieterse (1995) argues that the other side of cultural hybridity is transcultural convergence. Thus while forms of hybridity may emerge, there may also be differential experiences of homogeneous processes and new kinds of particularism. Similarly, the concept of 'reterritorialization' rather than deterritorialization might better encapsulate the ways in which cultures, identities and socialities take place and form through processes of transformation away from traditional

locations and origins (Short et al., 2001). Transformations in commercial cultures may as a consequence be destabilizing or enabling, they may be contiguous across space or polarizing. Recent research on transnationalism is beginning to address the nature of hybrid formations of commercial (or commodity) cultures by tracing what happens to people and products as they move across space (see Box 6.5).

BOX 6.5 TRANSNATIONALISM AND COMMERCIAL CULTURES

Research by consumption geographers on transnationalism avoids assumptions of bounded authentic places or cultures of origin to examine the mutual constitution of local and global by tracing the people and products of transnational commercial culture. This involves exploring how commodity differences and meanings move (Jackson's 1999 'the traffic in things'), and how they are produced, consumed, translated and displaced across space in situated contexts (Crang et al., 2003).

Using a non-linear approach (see Chapter 5) this research on transnationalism explores how people in embedded spaces engage with other objects, capitals, people and knowledges and how these constitute transnational space as a 'multidimensional space that is multiply inhabited and characterized by complex networks, circuits and flows' (2003: 441). Research on British based women's wear firm EAST and Indian based company Anokhi demonstrates how the notions of cultural difference are produced and consumed in contrasting ways transnationally. This includes consideration of how both firms imagine 'India' and of how difference is designed materially and symbolically. Anokhi, for example, emphasizes local craftsmanship and distinctive production techniques such as block printing (somewhat ironically commodifying ethical and sustainable enterprise in India), while EAST creates an ethnic or exotic look that is not place specific. Dwyer and Jackson (2003) also examined the way in which consumers in Britain negotiate and transform meanings and value, demonstrating similar tensions to the ways in which producers imagine India. They conclude that the commercial culture is an ambivalent space, noting that both EAST and Anokhi are involved in the dynamic and fluid production of ethnic difference. Consumers are viewed as actively constructing meanings of self, others and transnational commodities in spaces which are themselves 'caught up' in transnational networks (Dwyer and Jackson, 2003). The case study of Anokhi and EAST demonstrates the approach can adequately encapsulate both the materials and economies of the movement of goods and services and an appreciation of the commodification of cultural difference (Jackson, 1999: 105), demonstrating too how differently positioned producers and consumers inhabit transnational spaces (Jackson, 2002b). Studies of consumption and transnationality thus seek to develop an explicitly geographical understanding of commodities and the cultures which surround them.

Understanding the powerful effects of production and consumption networks in a globalizing world is not simply about content or the 'what' of change (as in the arrival of McDonald's or the influx of new commodities, knowledges and practices) but is also about the form of change, that is the means by which people communicate differences to each other in ways that are 'more widely intelligible' (Wilk, 1995: 124). Studies of transnationalism are beginning to unpack this, examining how relatively stable processes (such as fabric design: see Box 6.5) are actively constituted, powerfully promoting some differences while subsuming others.

Tourism: Consuming Culture as Other?

Exploring tourism as a commercial culture can enable one to consider how people communicate differences to each other through practices of production, representation, identity formation and consumption. A number of studies of tourism and 'cross-cultural' consumption have focused on the representation of indigenous cultures as the 'other' and the appropriation of indigenous cultural practices, images and artefacts (Scheyvens, 2002). Yet commercial cultures may produce hybridized spaces and presences which are not exploited appropriations of the other vested in notions of authentic and static 'cultures'.

Tourism, like other social processes, can only be understood in the historical, spatial and social context in which it occurs. Tourism as a consumption process may involve aspects of the mundane but also fantasy and escape, capitalizing on real and imagined differences between familiar and unfamiliar places. As a commercial culture, tourism is a conduit for organizing meaning in space (Hughes, 1998) and is bound in complex cultural politics which links producers and consumers of tourist 'products' through such media as guidebooks, advertisements and tourist brochures and participation in tourist practices such as photography, sightseeing, tourist trails and package tours.

Discourses of colonialism, imperialism, racism and gender can underpin how commercial cultures of indigenous tourism are represented and manifest. A thrust of tourism promotional literature often portrays indigenous peoples as members of primitive, static, unchanging societies, removed from relationships which characterize the 'modern' world (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). Said (1978: 1) notes that the Orient, for example, provides one of the 'deepest most recurring images of the "other" in which the East is portrayed as a place of escape' (from the West) and fantasy. The Pacific, like the Orient, has been similarly exoticized, with New Zealand being viewed as a kind of 'Pacific Arcadia' (Hall, 1998). Marginalization may occur as a consequence of the powerful tourist gaze leading to alterity, the construction and state of 'otherness' which arises out of the difference between self and others.⁴

New Zealand/Aotearoa presents a particularly interesting case study (Box 6.6) within which to study tourism as commercial culture. While tourism is about

construction of difference, in its commodified form it is also about the creation of economic value. Economically tourism is significant, being the second largest export earner behind the dairy industry, contributing \$14.6 billion to the New Zealand economy, or 9 per cent of GDP. In addition, debates surrounding the representation and practice of tourism as a commercial culture cannot be separated from processes of identity construction and the hegemonic power relations which exist between Pakeha (non-Maori people primarily of European descent) and Maori (indigenous dwellers of Aotearoa).

Since British annexation in 1840 and a second wave of European colonizers (the first occurring in the eighteenth century) the traditions, customs and histories of Maori were 'reinterpreted into a new cultural and historical framework by the knowledge "keeps" of these new migrants' (McGregor and McMath, 1993: 45). Nineteenth century colonization brought disease, conflict, land confiscation and a subsequent loss of economic livelihood. While there has been a resurgence in population in recent years, with one in seven New Zealanders (526,281 out of the total New Zealand population of 3.8 million) identifying themselves as Maori, individuals with Maori ancestry are under-represented in statistics on employment and income but over-represented in unemployment figures (27.7 per cent of all unemployed people in 1996: Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Unfortunately social statistics tend to present Maori as a form of underclass, obscuring positive aspects of Maori identity, masking *iwi* (tribe) and *whanau* (family) differences and the active participation and contribution of Maori in everyday life in Aotearoa. Yet material differences and inequities do matter; political-economic factors in tourism, for example, provide impediments to access for training and education for tourism related careers and make securing finance more difficult (TheStaffordGroup, 2001).

Since the 1970s a cultural renaissance in Maoridom has occurred, centred on representation of Maori, and issues of autonomy, land and self-determination.⁵ Sissons (1993) indicates that the cultural renaissance must also be understood in relation to state practices which have brought about the systemization of tradition involving the enhancement of the state's image as a representative of both Maori and Pakeha interests. Systemization of Maori tradition has resulted in 'ethnicization', the selective appropriation of beliefs, values, practices and places which has resulted in the fracturing and objectification of Maori culture, with the result that Maori culture has become a symbol of ethnic and indigenous distinctiveness and a strategic state resource (Sissons, 1993). This has important implications for the construction and representation of Maori within national tourism strategies, and for the commercial cultures which establish the 'indigenous tourist product'. Understanding the commercial culture of tourism in NZ as a hybrid transnational formation enables one to move beyond representing 'Maori' as an object to be consumed to understanding how consumption is produced through commercial cultures with particular outcomes for people and place (Box 6.6).

BOX 6.6 ONE HUNDRED PER CENT PURE? MAORI AS THE WELCOME PARTY OF AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

'Maori are sick of being the welcome party of New Zealand Tourism' (Maori Affairs Minister Parekura Horomia, quoted by Espiner, 2001: 2). Mr Horomia's statement was a call for Maori to be owners and investors in tourism operations rather than simply cultural 'performers'. That commerce and culture are inseparable is exemplified in the practices and discourses of Maori tourism in New Zealand/Aotearoa. Under-representation of Maori employees, low investment levels and a lack of financial resources are issues for Maori tourism as much as issues of representation involving the cultural packaging and marketing of 'things' Maori (TheStaffordGroup, 2001).



FIGURE 6.3 Maori as the Welcome Party of New Zealand: A Tourist advertisement sponsored by the New Zealand Government Tourist Bureau and Tasman Empire Airways Limited [1953] (Permission granted from NZ Tourist Board and reproducible image supplied by Alexander Turnbull Library New Zealand)

It was in the 1870s that tourism first became formalized in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Since that time, until the early 1980s Maori were represented in tourist brochures, postcards and guidebooks as 'noble savages' living in an exotic land, whose spiritual existence was romanticized and lifestyle eroticized, adding 'background colour and uniqueness to the national tourism product' (McGregor and McMath, 1993: 45; see Figure 6.3). Yet Maori were not without agency during this process. The identities of some *iwi* (tribes) in the latter part of the nineteenth century were strongly connected with their role in tourism (Ryan and Crotts, 1997). A number of Maori women guides of Te Arawa *iwi* during the colonial period also became 'a considerable economic and political force' (Taylor, 1998: 2).

It is only in the latter half of the twentieth century that Maori financial involvement in tourism developed (Barnett, 1997). There is a continued consumer demand for 'Maori tourist product', with 93 per cent of tour operators selling inbound tour packages that contain some form of Maori tourism such as *hangi* (earth cooked meal), a Maori 'concert party', a tour of Maori thermal reserves, villages and so forth – practices which are seen to typify an authentic 'Maori culture' (TheStaffordGroup, 2001: 19). The popularity and demand for activities indicate nothing of consumer experience of indigenous tourism, but for travellers from both Asian and European countries a desire for authenticity seemed important, encountering rather than just gazing upon 'indigenous people' in settings which are 'real' and not too contrived (Tourism New Zealand, 1995).

In recent years the New Zealand Tourist Board's marketing has been founded on its 100 per cent Pure campaign which focuses on representations of pristine, clean, green and spectacular environment but also hyperbole around adventure tourism and real cultural experiences of place. The campaign was criticized for cultural insensitivity over the use of images involving Maori to promote the country overseas and for its underrepresentation of Maori (Espiner, 1999). Efforts have since been made to incorporate a more contemporary focus to Maori culture by including a virtual *powhiri* (welcoming ceremony) on the website and by downplaying the use of the facial *moko* (tattoo) which the organization admits led some overseas tourists to assume they would see Maori with facial tattoos everywhere in New Zealand (Espiner, 2001).⁶

Issues of 'authenticity' in tourism have also been debated by Maori. Some suggest a tacky and insensitive 'plastic *poi*' culture has emerged – a referent to the use of plastic *pois* (small balls which hang from string swung in women's dance) and plastic *pi-pius* (skirts traditionally made from flax) (Sell, 1999). Others argue it is not the plastic *pois* which are the issue but the embodied performance of *kapa haka* (performing art) and the context in which this occurs (Murray, 2000). Tamaki Tours, a highly successful Maori operated tourist company, for example, has created an alternative to the romanticized archaic Maori image by creating 'a living village experience' which seeks to provide visitors with experiences that are 'authentic', emotional and spiritual, that present traditional and contemporary cultural perspectives developed in consultation with tribal elders to respect traditional protocols (TheStaffordGroup, 2001: 114).

However, the contested nature of 'appropriation' and 'commodification' is not just framed within New Zealand. In 2002 the British Broadcasting Corporation shot a new

opening sequence for its BBC1 programming which featured a collection of dance scenes, including a *haka* performed by a Welsh rugby team.⁷ Maori lawyer Maui Solomon believes it is ironic that the BBC 'as an icon of colonialism' chose the *haka* to rebrand itself (Quirke, 2002b: 1). Jo Hutley, the Maori londoner who taught the *haka* for the BBC1 introduction, argued that he had the right to teach 'his' culture to anyone, and that the use of the *haka* in this way was appropriate because it was undertaken in the context of education of participants about the cultural and spiritual significance of the *haka* performance (Quirke, 2002a: 3). The debate about the legitimacy of 'cultural practices' performed out of context is fascinating because it concerns judgements not only about how practices will travel and be translated as 'commercial' cultures, but about the very 'authenticity' of their productions in situated place. *Haka* specialist Pita Sharples, for example, finds pop singer Robbie Williams' arm tattoo (which derives from a particular *iwi*) more offensive than 'fun' based *haka* adaptations because he believes this is a direct appropriation of tribal intellectual property (the Maori tattooist disagreed) (*The Dominion*, 2001).

In recent years notions of hybridity and transnationalism have been implicitly acknowledged as part of discourses around commercial culture. Maori scholar and artist Darcy Nicholas, for example, believes Maori as part of the modern world are freely using symbols, materials and concepts that belong to 'other' world cultures (*The Dominion*, 2002: 19). He draws on concepts of hybridity rather than 'appropriation', suggesting because the *mana* (prestige/authority/power) of *moko* and *haka* has become diluted through their uses as decoration and entertainment, this has made these cultural practices/forms 'part of the world of design and art and all the creative possibilities beyond that' (2002: 19). New Zealand fashion designer Charles Walker also believes Maori art is living, vibrant and changing. He suggests the production of artefacts and art forms is based on a syncretism where there is no boundary between traditional and modern, where past symbols and signs are used in untraditional fields (such as contemporary fashion, media or pottery) and where traditional fields (such as carving) use modern techniques and search for ways to make their art new (Steed, 2000: 22).

Thus debates over intellectual property rights and tourist practices and representations represent more than power struggles over representations of Maori artefacts and practices; they signal concerns over material culture and how it is transformed across space through commercial cultures. 'Authenticity' not only becomes about the context in which these commodities, peoples or their representations are expressed, but is complicit in questions of how identities and cultures are constituted in place which is open to transnational flows of people, commodities, information and ideas. Most critically it reflects debates about essentialist versus more fluid understandings of what culture is, and how it is meaningfully constituted in place.

The case study in Box 6.6 has explored the 'varied, complex and often chaotic processes which characterize tourism' (Squire, 1998: 93) and the myriad of social practices which comprise indigenous tourism as a commercial culture. Economic and institutional barriers to ownership and control of Maori tourism operations;

systemization on the part of the state which 'locates' and essentializes Maori culture; representations of indigenous tourism which position Maoridom as a static spectacle or which reduce culture to a 'cultural performance': all are underpinned by constellations of power which may position 'actors' in multiple ways, making notions of 'cultural appropriation' inadequate as a basis for transformation.

The appropriation of Maori culture is a complex issue, complicated by the conceptualization of Maori culture in terms of essentialized understandings (often bound in equally indefinable notions of tradition and authenticity), its presumed separation from other commercial cultures, and the need to articulate ownership in commodity terms such as 'intellectual property' or 'tourist products'. If culture is about everyday struggles in specific social contexts rather than signs or symbols, then Webster (1993: 12) believes only the appearances of a culture can be appropriated, with 'the real thing' remaining in the hands of those whose culture it is. But the question remains as to what 'the real thing is', and whether it can ever sit outside those aspects of culture which are appropriated by and subsumed in other commercial cultures (the '*Ka Mate*' *haka* as a prelude to a rugby test, for example, has become a symbol of national identity) (Murray, 2000).

Without implying the essentialist starting points that hybridity implies, the concept of transnationalism (Crang et al., 2003) does provide a way to understand the differing meanings and subject positions that emerge through tourism as 'places of encounter'. Transnationalism offers possibilities for conceptualizing the simultaneous existence of forms of power/knowledge associated with Maori commercial cultures as means of expression, communication, identification and livelihood (for example, the simultaneous existence of institutionalized protocols for recognition of 'authentic' Maori art forms and the commensality and benefits which also derive from mutual sharing of cultural images across social and spatial boundaries within and outside New Zealand).

The case study in Box 6.6 also highlights the need to understand the role of consumers and producers in performing transnational commodity cultures. The limited amount of research on consumer preferences and experiences only begins to explore how embodied tourist experiences are represented, created and consumed. Forms, practices, people and relations of production (concert parties, or visits to living villages) and consumption (participation, photography, video recording, buying souvenirs, sending postcards, purchasing artefacts) combine to produce differing discourses of 'Maori' and 'Pakeha' which operate across spaces, and to change them even as they are performed in situated contexts. The constitution of authenticity varies depending on where cultural commodity performances are located, whether within New Zealand or outside. Indigenous tourism as a discourse tends to separate Maori culture from the culture of everyday life in New Zealand/Aotearoa, a separation which works to perform binaries in ways which are productive of cultural politics which may be both enabling and disabling. Thus a paradox of tourism for Maori is that while discourses of indigenous or 'cultural' tourism might constitute gazing at the other (a desire for the exotic, different, authentic), they provide a means to 'achieve legitimacy in the struggle for political and economic recognition' (Ryan and Crotts, 1997: 900).

Commercial Cultures as Connections

Following Jackson et al. (2000), this chapter has explored connections between economies, practices and spaces in order to understand how commercial cultures are articulated through music, through expansion of fast food outlets and through the production and consumption of indigenous tourism. The complex networks of production and consumption which comprise commercial cultures are grounded in particular temporal and spatial contexts through which commodities, people and knowledges flow. Recent work by geographers on transnationalism has the potential to provide critical insights not only into the formation, translation and circulation of commercial cultures but also into the fluid and relational nature of space as it is constituted through particular assemblages of practices, discourses and relationships between people, things and place. Its emphasis on the spatial constitution of people and object centred relationships provides a substantive critique of more static representations of globalization through the creolization or homogenization approaches. Exploring the complex operation of commercial cultures enables one to make sense of the fusions, transformations and power geometries that occur, forming places of presencing, alterity and encounter.

FURTHER READINGS

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NOTES

- 1 Music created by black composers such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, for example, have been interpreted as closer to nature and therefore more primitive and bodily than music composed by the rational bourgeoisie (and white) Western minds (Revell, 1998).
- 2 The concept of a 'subculture' (see Hebdige, 1979), which exists in relation to a parent culture as a medium for the appropriation and transformation of material objects, has itself been critiqued. The notion of a subculture suggests that concepts of appropriation and transformation are framed (always) in relation to a parent culture from which they are derived (Bennett, 1999). Bennett argues that a view of subcultures within cultures suggests coherence around and an implied collective basis to consumption practices (1999: 4). As an alternative he argues Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'tribes' and Shields' (1992a) 'neo-tribes' are more valuable. The concept of 'tribes' recognizes the fluidity and instability of cultural affiliations which are a characteristic of late modern societies, thereby providing a basis for understanding how sites of social centrality and sociality become the focus for an individual's consumption practices (rather than belonging to or stemming from a collective grouping *per se*) (Bennett, 1999).
- 3 Doreen Massey (1999) suggests that hybrid spaces are not neutral spaces but are associated with particular power geometries which may be empowering and/or disempowering (see Chapter 5 on regulation).
- 4 One could argue that my discussion of Maori, as a Pakeha New Zealander (of European descent), also involves a process of 'othering', marking Maori as definable objects of research, as those to be spoken for or about rather than with. This is certainly not my intention.
- 5 This has involved such things as the formation of *kohanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* (preschools and schools in which Maori culture and language are fostered), increased emphasis on *taha* Maori in education generally, greater media coverage and legislative changes to redress land alienation and related grievances caused by Pakeha, measures to reduce socio-economic disparity between Maori and Pakeha, and increased visibility of Maori protests and land occupations (Webster, 1993).
- 6 The *moko* is a tattoo in which a special chisel was used to excise lines on the skin of the face (the forehead to base of the chin for men, and the chin and lips of women). 'The original intention of *moko* was to inherit the symbols that belonged to one's ancestral lines and the particular skills carried within a person' (Darcy Nicholas, cited in *The Dominion*, 2002: 19). Relatively few Maori today bear a tattooed *moko* but the symbol has been used internationally for promoting products, for example by fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier on some of his models Clarke, 1999.
- 7 The *haka* is often performed at national events, sports events and tourist shows but also at many other Maori and non-Maori community functions such as welcoming ceremonies on the *marae* (the meeting area of a subtribe or *hapu*), prize giving ceremonies, funerals and weddings (Murray, 2000: 350). The issue appears to be framed in terms of the context in which the *haka* occurs, the understanding (or lack of understanding) of the practices, meaning and significance of the performance, and the intentions of those participating in the *haka*.