

## WorldWideWhale.Globalisation/Dialogue of Cultures?

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**Abstract** *This article questions the assumption that globalisation has fostered cultural dialogue. In order to understand how globalisation has specifically impacted the sphere of the cultural, it starts by examining the way cultural practises are transformed in its wake. Does globalisation yield new, global forms of culture? To address this conundrum, this article takes the example of a cultural movement that has sought to project itself on a global scale, the anti-whaling culture, exploring both its origins and the distinctive cultural forms it has constituted. It then raises anew the question of dialogue: what of the dialogue between this global anti-whaling movement and local cultures where whaling still occurs? And how does such 'global culture' negotiate with demands for cultural diversity?*

The advent of interactive technologies has opened up a world of possibilities for communication. As the Internet came to replace television, the message could begin to flow both ways. This effectively offered the promise of an infinitely multiplied potential for dialogue. The integration of various modes of communication into an interactive network has been hailed as a cultural revolution on a par with the alphabet. The network is virtually limitless, extensible across the entire globe, as well as inclusive, and capable of comprehending all forms of cultural expressions. What has been made of this potential for dialogue? Has globalisation allowed for a real exchange between cultures, some sort of vast chorus of cultures? In this paper I attempt to unbundle the 'globalisation package' in order to see what it entails for the cultural, and to ask whether processes of globalisation have fostered or impeded a dialogue. Second, if such dialogue is possible, are cultures then maintained in their diversity, or does globalisation inherently entail the emergence of new forms of 'global cultures'? What does this in turn signify for local cultures?

'Globalisation' essentially refers to a boundless intensification of *fluxes*—movements of goods, capital, people, images, information, etc. Whereas its economic and geographical effects have been amply documented, less attention is paid to the way in which the practise of everyday life is altered and notably how it impacts on *culture*. In the first part of this paper I unravel the complex bundle of concepts that are often implicitly conveyed together under 'globalisation', in order to settle on related processes that are better at capturing the cultural repercussions of the phenomenon. This sifting process is a necessary step, in order to shift the grounds of analysis away from the current

emphasis on economic expressions of globalisation, and to recast the focus on how culture is changing in a globalising world.

In the second part of the paper, I apply the insights acquired to the analysis of a 'global culture'. One of the first protest movements to systematically project itself onto a global scale was the struggle to halt commercial whaling. The scale of the protest needed to be global, first because the hunt was taking place around the globe's oceans, and second, it involved more than one nation (in the decade following World War II many nations had reinitiated plans for the development of their whaling industry). The movement succeeded in bringing about significant cultural change, namely, the end of global commercial whaling. With almost 40 years of expressive activism, the movement has asserted itself as a 'virtual community', effectively creating one of the first global cultures. Yet the save-the-whale movement has set itself *against* other cultures founded on the whale. What, then, of the dialogue with these various local cultures? In the last part of this paper, I examine the current dialogue, or rather, its failure, illustrating how the issue of 'dialogue of cultures' is relevant to the study of international relations.

### Theoretical template

'Globalisation', a protean notion often diluted into the proliferation of images it has generated, merely conjures up a rather confused sense of changes occurring all over the world in the way people conduct business, communicate, in sum, *live*. But how precisely do these changes impact the 'life-world' where these practises take place? And what new cultural forms have these transformations yielded? One major effect in the realm of culture has been the emergence of the so-called global cyber culture, a terrain that was also rapidly invested in by the global save-the-whale movement. Yet cyber culture, as Arturo Escobar observes, originates in a well-known social and cultural matrix, that of capitalist modernity (Escobar 1994). This matrix, then, is a useful starting point for understanding what processes are at work in the rise of 'global cultures'. The purpose of this section is to tease out the key changes in the conditions and practises of everyday experience that are relevant to understanding how the save-the-whale movement constituted itself as a global 'virtual community', and subsequently what forms of dialogue are possible with this type of culture.

Globalisation brings the local and the global in counterpoint, sometimes in opposition. As a process it requires some uprooting from the local. Historically, however, this *de-localisation* is an inherently modern effect. Anthony Giddens has shown how the experience of modernity reorganised the grid of human experience, reshaping the very categories of human perception, space and time (Giddens 1990). Time has become disconnected from space. Furthermore space is separated from *place*; in that community life is no longer embedded in specific 'locales' to borrow Giddens' term.<sup>1</sup> This disjunction of space and time creates the conditions for the emergence of new types of linkages between individuals who need no longer share *one* time and place. In other words, it allows for the

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<sup>1</sup> Locales refers to 'the physical setting of social activity situated geographically', in Giddens (1990, p. 18). Thus for Giddens modern activities have lost this 'situatedness', and social relations their correlating embeddedness.

emergence of communities spanning different locations on the globe, such as a community of individuals organised against whaling.

Another, related, effect of modernity also brought into play in the save-the-whale movement is the process of 'distantiation' (Giddens 1991). Modern cultural contexts typically lack 'high-presence availability', that is immediate, face-to-face contact where a sense of belonging is grounded in pre-modern communities (Giddens 1979). Modernity is in fact constituted by successive mediations, for which the *media* is key, notably in developing the nation as an 'imagined community', where the direct experience of kinship is substituted by an imaginary communion with one's fellow nationals (Anderson 1983). The current emphasis on the media and communications technology in transnational activist practises equally feeds into this logic of 'distantiation', breeding essentially mediated relationships (long distance, internet based etc.) (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Two other traits typify the modern experience: the centrality of the individual and the inevitability of progress. Schematically, the disjunctures brought about by modernity have left the individual standing alone at the heart of all things, as it were. Once meaning is no longer 'given' by traditional categories (such as class, nationality etc.), it is to be construed by each individual for him/herself. Thus Ulrich Beck has identified processes of *individualisation* specific to our 'late modernity'. Late modernity is essentially a place of risks: the formidable risk of choice for the individual, risk of fragmentation of the social fabric, and global ecological risk (Beck *et al.* 1994). What is then seen to develop is strategies for reorganising the self in modern societies. For Beck, ecological discourses such as the anti-whaling discourse, perform exactly that. Second, modernity conveys with it the ideology of progress: both at once desirable and necessary, the 'arrow of progress' is the trajectory of a modernising society. The anti-whaling movement is in this sense a quintessentially modern culture: the end of whaling is conceived as social progress; and together with the other 'goods' associated with modernity it should be spread around the globe.<sup>2</sup>

Another cluster of experiences is associated specifically with global capitalism, envisaged here not as an economic driver, but in terms of the types of logic and experiences that are possible within it.<sup>3</sup> The globalising world offers evidence of an unprecedented cultural convergence (Tomlinson 1991; Berman 1983). This has led anthropologists and cultural theorists to ask whether capitalism itself has built within it certain homogenising mechanisms that smooth out differences between interacting cultures.

For anthropologists, modes of production are inextricably bound up with systems of signification (Escobar 1996). The question then becomes whether a particular way of making sense of the world is also being conveyed to other cultures via the globalisation of capitalism. At the heart of the capitalist system lies the logic of exchange.<sup>4</sup> Exchange itself is based on a fundamental abstraction (the translation of a commodity into money, the 'universal equivalent'). Abstrac-

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<sup>2</sup> For an instance of such discourse of progress conveyed by the anti-whaling movement, c.f. the 2001 pamphlet of Humane Society International, significantly entitled 'Evolving'.

<sup>3</sup> For a definition of capitalism, which captures its dual nature as an economic and cultural system, c.f. Bell (1979).

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, part 1. The emphasis on exchange, rather than use-value, is for Marx the distinctive trait of the capitalist mode of production.

tion is thus a key process of the capitalist mode of production. Coupled with another of capitalism's key mechanisms, expansion, it explains the progressive penetration of capital into previously uncapitalised areas of experience. Thus, previously un-commoditised domains of life and human relationships are progressively colonised by the logic of investment and returns. Commentators have come to view these trends as more than an incremental development, and instead a qualitative leap into a new stage, the 'third mode' of capitalism.<sup>5</sup> In the words of Frederic Jameson, this is the 'apotheosis of capitalism':

The purest form of capital yet to have emerged, a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto un-commodified areas (...) a new and historically original penetration and colonization of Nature and the Unconscious (Jameson 1984, p. 78).

This logic of expansion 'internalises' previously external relations, between distant capitals, with the natural world, aspiring to be a 'total space, a complete world'.<sup>6</sup> This in turn yields a new type of 'post-modern hyperspace' appearing as a 'heteronomy of fragments which nevertheless remains unified by virtue of expressing the logic of late capitalism' (Ruggie 1993). This captures the type of space upon which the save-the-whale movement operates. Furthermore, as we shall see in the following section, the movement appears to be observing a similar logic of 'commoditisation'.

Does this new stage entail a different productive logic, and correspondingly, new modes of signification? In late capitalism the epicentre of the system of value-creation and exchange has shifted from production to *reproduction* (Jameson 1984; Baudrillard 1970; 1975). Images, signs, information are the new 'raw materials' in this mode of operation, which is also propitious to the development of 'the virtual'. They have also, as we shall see in the following section, become a new currency for the save-the-whale movement, which similarly thrives on technologies of the virtual. A correlated phenomenon is the progressive 'monopoly of consumption'.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the initial competitive phase of capitalism centred on material production, the monopolistic logic of late capitalism focuses on consumption, as an overarching system for fixing and controlling needs. Through the spread of consumptive models human needs are progressively standardised within one 'code', effectively socialised, and rid of arbitrariness (Baudrillard 1970). Capturing demand, pre-empting it, sustaining it, and effectively directing it, becomes a key (re) productive strategy. And demand is increasingly orchestrated by a logic of simulation (Baudrillard 1970; 1975). These dynamics bring a different reading into the cultural transformation brought about by the save-the-whale movement, which appear in this light as a shift from a *material* consumption to the *immaterial* consumption of the whale as a symbol/image, or even, in Baudrillard's term, as a *simulacrum*.

Finally, globalisation appears coterminous with the emergence of a novel

<sup>5</sup> After market capitalism, and a monopoly stage or stage of imperialism. The tripartite scheme is generally attributed to Ernest Mandel's *Late Capitalism* (1975).

<sup>6</sup> For developments on how capitalism progressively penetrates and internalises society's relation to Nature, c.f. Escobar (1996) and the literature on the construction of nature.

<sup>7</sup> Rather than introduce a 'new stage', like Mandel or Jameson, Baudrillard thus develops the logic of capitalism's 'monopolistic stage' to what he considers its full dimension. C.f. Baudrillard (1975).

mode of societal organisation, the network. Based on horizontal patterns of reciprocal and voluntary exchange, it breaks away from the traditional forms of organisation conveyed in either the market or the firm (hierarchies). For this reason it is particularly suited to transnational advocacy activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998), such as that practised by the save-the-whale movement. However as a model for organising human relationship, its effects extend beyond these activist practises; they are lodged in the *cultural* practises developing on a global scale. In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Manuel Castells observes: 'The emergence of a new electronic communication system characterized by its global reach, its integration of all communication media, and its potential interactivity is changing and will change forever our culture' (1996, p. 329). At the heart of these transformations is the role taken on by the network as an organising principle for society at large. In a globalising world, networks come to constitute 'the new social morphology of our societies'. Yet these same societies are simultaneously undergoing widespread *destructuring* processes, undermining the legitimacy of traditional institutions. In such contexts meaning is increasingly anchored in 'the self'. This explains how 'our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the net and the Self' (Castells 1996, p. 3). Increasingly atomised individuals on the one hand, networks spanning the globe on the other, to which individuals choose to hook themselves up, such as the anti-whaling network. What distinctive cultural forms and political practises are being created by these 'virtual communities'?

### A Global Culture

The save-the-whale movement was sparked off in the wake of a broader pacifist and ecological protest movement that developed in western societies in the 1960s. 'The whale' quickly became a symbol around which many forms of protests and often-inarticulate anxieties coalesced: a new awareness of the earth's limits and frailty, frustration against violent, exploitative societies. Saving the whale became a matter both of protecting threatened forms of life, and of taking a decisive step forward in the human consciousness. The save-the-whale movement was thus essentially reactive. Once again what is interesting to observe is the *space* it carved out for itself in construing this reaction. First the scale onto which it projected its struggle needed to be global: indeed the exploitation of whales was taking place all over the globe. In this connection the movement's emblem is significant: whales, much more than dolphins, inhabit the oceans rather than coastal waters. Thus the battle would be located on the seas, a medium rich in symbolic (and psychoanalytic) significance. Not just any kind of waters, but the high seas, a space of a-legality, an 'a-territory'. Here the founding act of Greenpeace is interesting. The series of Amchitka anti-nuclear protests in the 1960s conducted by Quakers who sailed into the testing zones were easily clamped down by the US Navy, because the protesters were US citizens acting in US territorial waters. When Greenpeace sailed off towards Amchitka in 1971 in its first mission, it was peopled exclusively by Canadian citizens. Hence arresting the boat would cause a diplomatic incident. This confrontation on the seas was the main protest strategy developed against the whalers. For Thom Kuehls (1996), this 'deterritorialisation' pertains to a broader strategy associated with this new type of politics, ecopolitics, which consists in

opening up the space of politics beyond the traditional sovereign territory. The political contest, by being displaced onto the 'smooth space beyond the state' has been 'deterritorialised'; at the same time this neutral space is being invested with political significance, conquered, 'reterritorialised'. Greenpeace has carved out a new space of expression, effectively its own territory. Meanwhile 'the extension of its support increases its territory as it deterritorialises the state' (Keuhls 1996).

When Greenpeace set off on the high seas to chase a Russian whaler in 1975, it had two essential pieces of equipment: a camera and a radio-transmitter. Already, its previous mission had attracted significant media coverage. This time, it would orchestrate its own coverage: it generated its own images of the confrontation (the small red dinghy bobbing frailly between the whale and the harpoon of the huge ugly factory-ship); it provided daily radio reports; and its office in Vancouver drafted press releases. Significantly, several members of the group were journalists (Hunter 1980). As important as the confrontation was, the media made it an 'event' and the movement quickly caught the world's eye. The plight of the whales was rendered highly visible, as these images circulated around the globe, touching at the heart of power (the heart of President Jimmy Carter for one). With this initial act the whole movement had found what would comprise its strength: media power. Despite relatively little resources, the movement was able to wield significant power by investing in the space of symbols, signs and representations. The movement's mastery of symbolic logic—or indeed Baudrillard's 'logic of the code'—has been highlighted by textual analysis: the signifiers in the narrative conjuring up potent cultural symbols (David, as in David Mactaggart, a founding member, vs. Goliath), indeed the boat itself functioning as a 'floating signifier'.<sup>8</sup> Thus the global space of the media, and subsequently, the cyberspace of high-tech communications became the global space invested by the movement.

'Because information and communication circulate primarily through the diversified, yet comprehensive media system' writes Castells in his concluding remarks on the network society, 'politics becomes increasingly played out in the space of media' (1996, p. 476). If, by this diagnosis, the space of the media is where politics today is occurring, then the movement has successfully positioned itself at the heart of politics. Its victories seem to confirm this trend. Entire national policies were conquered, through the manipulation of images and the careful application of media pressure. In Australia the conquest was spectacularly swift: in 1977 she was an affirmed whaler, fiercely defending the interest of her land-based stations against the distant nations whaling in Antarctic seas. In 1978 she hosted the annual conference of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). In the run-up to the conference, a series of groups organised around the NGO Project Jonah waged a massive campaign of denunciation against the cruelty of whaling, again their little dinghies thrown against the whaling vessels fully capturing media attention. As these images toured the world, the pressure was relayed outside Australia through the transnational network of NGOs. In but a single year, after a parliamentary enquiry which gave full hearing to the NGOs, Australia banned all whaling in its waters, and has since championed the

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<sup>8</sup> A floating signifier (according to Levi-Strauss) occurs whenever there is inadequacy between the signifier and the signified. Thus it is essentially open and can be invested with all kinds of meaning (study by Rubenstein 1989).

anti-whaling cause. These successes equally underscore the emergence of new forms of politics, no longer bound within the nation-state,<sup>9</sup> cutting across territories, where individuals, on the basis of a common concern, are brought together via a network: the politics of 'virtual communities'.

A virtual community is understood as a 'self-defined electronic network of interactive communication organised around a shared interest or purpose, although sometimes communication becomes the goal in itself'.<sup>10</sup> A virtual community of connected activists, the anti-whaling movement brings to light these emergent social structures based around the network. What constitutes its social life? What new forms of community organisation are being generated?

The network has always been the organising principle of the anti-whaling movement—indeed its main strength, which often compensated for a lack of real resources. The save-the-whale movement was one of the first protest movements to invest in the emerging 'cyberspace' as its privileged space of expression. The many different functions of communication have always been key to the movement. It has enabled co-ordination and the formation of alliances, a central strategy for the movement. (The Global Whale Alliance is one example, an umbrella network of over 40 concerned groups). It is equally the lifeblood of the movement. For what keeps the cause alive is to communicate around it. Here the movement's websites are vital: regularly visited by the movement's members, they function as reference points, or rather, surfaces, off which to bounce and renew the visitor's sense of purpose.<sup>11</sup> Almost a virtual shrine to the whale, they provide the words and images necessary to rehearse the movement's *credo*. Via email lists and links to other websites the word is spread to a potentially global audience. The network's wires have provided the forum for a new 'electronic intimacy', to borrow Castells' term (1996), where strangers from opposite points of the globe develop a virtual relationship around a common cause. Of course, communication also becomes a marketing strategy. Flashing icons of whales punctuate these websites, calling the visitor to click on them in order to become a member of the club (by donation). There are also shops for collectors, who can buy anything from T-shirts to coasters bearing the movement's effigy. Purchase becomes the means of expressing one's adherence. Besides objects, members of this highly moral community can purchase, information, and also *whales*. For a 'reasonable fee' one has the possibility of 'adopting', say, 'the orca [*not* killer-whale] Harry', for which one receives in return a birth/adoption certificate, as well as a book with photos to learn to understand him.<sup>12</sup> Thus the save-the-whale movement essentially lives by and for its virtual network.

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<sup>9</sup> Significantly, the movement has developed quite aside from national green party politics, even in anti-whaling countries (Germany, France). Conversely, the issue had been taken up by non-greens from all boards, left and right.

<sup>10</sup> The definition is Castells' (1996, p. 362) who bases himself on Howard Rheingold's *Virtual Community* (1993). Since 1992, 1993 virtual communities have attracted increasing interest among anthropologists of the new cyberculture, c.f. the overview by Escobar (1994).

<sup>11</sup> The websites are of two sorts: general environmental groups for whom whales is just one, albeit central issue (Greenpeace, WWF, IFAW, EIA), and groups focused exclusively on the conservation of cetaceans (Whales and Dolphin Conservation Society, Cetacean Society International, Dolphin and Whale Action Network etc).

<sup>12</sup> Harry can be adopted on the website of WDCCS, [www.wdcs.org](http://www.wdcs.org)

The movement is also organised around a certain number of *real* events, which function essentially like the rites and practises of a socio-cultural movement. These manifestations observe a calendar. The major event is the annual conference of the International Whaling Commission, sometime between May and July. Interestingly, location matters little: every year the activists invariably make their appearance at whichever town the conference is organised in, often wearing their whale costumes. For the anti-whalers, this is the one chance to come together from all over the world and have a huge celebration. The town itself becomes one vast site of expression. A festival of colourful demonstrations takes hold of the public spaces. The strategy of occupation follows a similar pattern each year: a wide area around the conference building itself, punctual occupation in front of the embassies of the whaling nations (Norway and Japan); and a third circle, broad public spaces of leisure around the town such as parks, occasionally inundated by a 'red sea' of participants all clad in red.<sup>13</sup> The aim is to bring maximum public exposure to their message, 'Stop Whaling'. The strategy also functions on an inside/outside opposition: because the 'inner' forum of IWC discussions is denied them as a space for expression (attendance is tightly controlled, and permitted only under 'observer' status) they fill up all the 'outer' space with their message. This is also symbolically the space of 'the people', of the international, conscientious, civil society, which they claim to represent.

Thus, aside from the externally oriented communication strategy, these rites and practises also serve to produce meaning for the member's themselves. The ever-intense circulation of images across the web and in the newspapers progressively constitutes a *signifier*, which anthropologists have called 'the Super-whale'.<sup>14</sup> The constitution of the Superwhale relies on a series of disjunctures from any real whale. Save-the-whale discourses evoke 'the whale' in the singular, thereby erasing the great diversity in size, behaviour and abundance amongst the 75 or so species of cetaceans. The whale has thus become a 'floating signifier' invested with a whole series of values and significations. The whale is a creature of the ocean, a medium associated with potent evocations of mystery, life and freedom.<sup>15</sup> It lives in salt and water, both purifying agents used in religious rites around the world, contrasting with the polluted soil of human societies. In addition it belongs to an anomalous category of animals, escaping simple classifications of mammals or fish. It is these animals, lying 'between and betwixt' the normal categories of our cognitive maps, that anthropologists have found to be at the origin of myths and taboos (Douglas 1966). The whale is also, of course, anthropomorphised. It is a mammal, and as such, the 'human of the sea'. It also sings (or rather only the humpback), it has nurseries (some dolphins, which are relatives of whales), it is friendly (the gray, rather than the killer whale), and it is endangered (the blue and right whales).

'The whale' then conjures up an entity possessing all these qualities. Action hinges on the last characteristic: the marvellous creature is endangered, some-

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<sup>13</sup> WDCS regularly organises fund/awareness raising marches around the time of the conference, all participants required to be dressed in red.

<sup>14</sup> Kalland (1994) and Freeman and Kreuter (1994), for example, are three anthropologists who have analysed the Superwhale.

<sup>15</sup> The imaginative power of water has been explored in the fields of literature and psychoanalysis, c.f. for example Bachelard (1947).

thing must be done. Here solidarity, compassion, fraternity and even liberty, all values normally associated with the realm of (human) politics, are thrown into the struggle to save the whale from human-imposed misery. This political action posits itself in a new field, in Beck's terms, of 'sub-politics' (1992). For Beck, just as politics (and mainstream political parties) have lost significance, the traditional arena of politics is increasingly divested of its social function. This however does not signify the end of politics altogether, in a world where the individual is increasingly left to provide meaning for himself. Rather, the political takes on new forms, penetrating into areas traditionally left outside the political debate such as sexuality, the human body, ecology. This is the era of 'sub-politics'. The Superwhale is subjected to an array of global risks: global warming, pollution, chemical intoxication, much the same risks human beings are exposed to. This construction of 'endangered-ness' thus takes on a particular significance in our 'risk societies', where the individual is faced with an unprecedented level of global risks, yet at the same time feels increasingly dis-empowered.

The Superwhale is also increasingly commoditised. This encompasses the circle of the movement's members, who can purchase, as we have seen anything from simple membership to whales-as-key-rings, even whales-as-pets. But there is a second, wider circle, which the whale-as-a-cultural commodity has conquered. This is the audience ranging from popular film-goers (*Save Willy, Flipper, Star Trek IV*), melomans ('Songs of the humpback'), sci-fi readers (*The Last Whales* by L. Abbey 1989; *Startide Rising*, D. Brin 1983), all of which have in some way or another become familiar with the whales and come to empathise with their plight. Photographs, popular posters, paintings, composed by a new brand of 'cetacean artists' circulate on the stands of image-sellers (Kalland 1994). The whale has come to feature as a cultural object in the imagery of modern urbanites. This illustrates the success of the movement's cultural-commercial logic: even in inland towns far removed from the whales natural milieu, the symbolic whale is inscribed in the visual environment. In a sense by making the whale so 'present' a relationship is recreated, or rather, simulated, between the whale and the global urban dweller. This relationship is nurtured in the consumption of images and the symbolic values projected onto the whale, and essentially founded in commercial exchange: by purchasing a whale's photograph you adopt it.

In the manipulation of images and signs the movement operates at ease within the representational logic (or 'code' in the Baudrillardian term) of the 'entertainment society'. In fact, this logic has been completely appropriated to its cause. It has created a new 'star', the whale, for which it earns money by using the image of other popular (human) stars. In the run-up to the 2002 annual conference, a 'global protest' against the whaling villains signed by the 'real' James Bond hero Pierce Brosnan was sent out on all the different sub-group email lists put together. The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society regularly sets up electronic auctions of signed photographs of various television and film stars—relying on popular image consumption to raise the stakes as high as possible. The movement displays the subtle art of playing on this demand, manipulating it, simulating it. According to Baudrillard this is one of the drives of the new 'sign economy': 'demand, in other words, needs, correspond increasingly to a model of simulation' (Baudrillard 1975, p. 91 author's translation). This

is equally the model at the core of the new economic activity of whale-watching, a practise fostered within the movement, under the somewhat contradictory label 'non-consumptive use'. This has been encouraged by states (including those who have never had much interest in whales), which have been prompt to identify the potential of this new form of tourism. Its practises fit in perfectly with current economic structures, following in the wake of the global explosion of the tourism sector, the selling of leisure-time based cheap flights and pre-packaged holiday. Advertisement for these 'whale safaris' can then easily tap into the constant circulation of images of the whale, inspiring the idea of going to see them on one's next holidays. In less than 10 years whale-watching has become a mass *globalised* tourism: over 9 million consumers in 1999, in numerous areas spread across many different nations (Hoyt 2001). Once again the experience of nature is commoditised. Although the experience is more immediate than with nature apprehended via the television set, it is still kept at a distance, and, significantly, based upon 'the gaze'. In this respect it re-enacts the very gaze that lies at the heart of the modern project to master and control the resources of nature, which is also constitutive of western (masculine) constructions of nature (Haraway 1991; Escobar 1996; Aronowitz 1988).

### **Global vs. Local: Talking Across Each Other?**

The anti-whaling movement presents itself as a virtual community potentially spanning the globe. Globality is thus part of the values and culture it seeks to foster. By contrast, cultures, which continue to whale today are local, associated with a specific sense of *place*. The dialogue between local/whaling and global/anti-whaling cultures has today broken down. Here the tension between the local and the global appears stretched to the limit. This broken dialogue contrasts sharply with the intense level of exchanges taking place on both sides, in the anti-whaling network, as we have seen, but also increasingly between the different whaling cultures. The question arises, then, as to whether the 'globalness' of the anti-whaling culture forecloses the possibility of dialogue with localised whaling cultures.

The whaling cultures represent in reality a wide variety of local cultures and forms of whaling: from the Inuit whaler in the barren Arctic environment, the ritual community pilot whale hunt ('Grind') in the Faeroes Islands, to the Japanese coastal communities. What these cultures have in common is the consumption of the whale; although the parts consumed, as well as the patterns of consumption, are a function of each culture. There is an essential difference with the large-scale commercial whaling ventures, responsible for reducing certain species to near extinction rates, and which were driven essentially by the price of whale oil. Indeed, except in Japan, most other parts of the whale were left to waste. Today's whaling cultures share similar ethnographic profiles: they tend to be fishing communities or hunter-gatherer-type societies traditionally turned to the sea. This contrasts with the essentially urban dwellers of the anti-whaling movement. In the discourse and perception of the whalers, the whale is essentially a resource, referred to as 'fish', as opposed to the 'mammal' of the anti-whaling discourses. The relationship with the animal is, however, complex. In Japanese coastal communities, for instance, shrines are built to worship the souls of the whale, while the distribution of whale parts is

integrated in traditional rituals of gift-exchange.<sup>16</sup> This type of practise is inconceivable within the grid of values of the anti-whaling discourse, which is based on a radical opposition between inhumane/killing-the-whale and loving-the-whale/'saving'-it.

These various whaling cultures around the globe began cultivating links with one another in reaction, interestingly, to the pressures brought to bear by the anti-whaling movement. In 1996 the World Council of Whalers was established, a web-based alliance of local whaling cultures around the globe, and an interface between the whalers and the rest of the world.<sup>17</sup> The whaling cultures have thus gone global, employing technological means to create a global whalers' movement. Politically, this has come to offer opportunities for the re-articulation of domestic/international positions. For example, New Zealand's stance is virulently opposed to any form of whaling, and part of her argument at the 2001 annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission consisted in presenting a unified front of indigenous and non-indigenous representatives. However the delegation did not include any Maoris, New Zealand's most important indigenous people. The Maoris' position is dissentient, calling for the right to use the whale *otherwise*.<sup>18</sup> While nationally their position is scant heeded, internationally this network of whalers presents a new forum in which to voice disagreement, and to inscribe their views within a constituted political movement. Despite this new exposure and global 'connectedness', the whalers' discourses continually emphasise local diversity.<sup>19</sup> Another example are the Makahs who, upon resuming their whaling in 1999, refused to adopt the whale killing methods advocated by the Norwegians, as they were not in line with their traditional hunting practises (IWC *Annual Report 1999*). This is an example of the effort to create alternative pathways towards globalisation, as it were, steering clear of the uniformisation of cultures.

### The Meaning of 'Nature' as a Cultural Divider

The whaling and the anti-whaling cultures are based on two different usages of the whale as a resource: harvesting, for which the whale must be killed, and watching, for which the whale has to be kept alive. The two forms of usage are not inherently incompatible: provided the resource itself is not in danger of extinction, nothing suggests they may not both take place concurrently, as in northern Norway, for example, or certain areas of Japan.<sup>20</sup> However on the ground the uses appear to need to exclude each other. What is at stake is in fact whole systems of *valuation*, more than simply an issue of economic competition.

<sup>16</sup> The extent and complexity of the ritual around the whale is detailed in several IWC studies, notably in the report on Japanese coastal whaling, IWC (2001).

<sup>17</sup> [www.worldcouncilofwhalers.com](http://www.worldcouncilofwhalers.com). The Council also regularly meets once or twice a year.

<sup>18</sup> For example, the Maoris claim the right to use the parts of beached whales. The Maoris have never actively hunted whales but have traditionally consumed them on an opportunistic basis (beached whales, for example). For a development of the Maori position (which is however uncritical towards this official line), c.f. Gillespie (2001).

<sup>19</sup> For a more general reflection on how local cultures can use a sense of space *against* global pressures, c.f. Escobar (2001).

<sup>20</sup> Whale-watching takes place in northern Norway (Andenes) and Japan, where simultaneously certain species considered safe from extinction, such as the minke whale, are harvested.

Just as systems of production are inextricably bound with systems of signification, systems of resource use are woven into systems of the meaning of nature. Here lies the real incompatibility: diverging constructions of nature. In the anti-whaling discourses and practises, as we have seen, the encounter with nature is increasingly mediated. 'Nature' gives way to images or simulations of nature. This distance between 'real' nature and its signs is constitutive of this mode of representation. Nature has been both at once tamed and internalised. The wild, whose signs are now common currency running through the circuits of an image-hungry web, no longer stands as the menacing 'other' of civilised society. Wilderness has been essentially *appropriated* through a set of organised commercial relations *between humans*. In this way the orca, one of the fiercest of all types of whales, is, via its image, appropriated and sold to a member of the audience who acquires adoption/property rights over it.

In the discourses and practises of the whalers, on the other hand, the experience of nature is immediate and confrontational. The confrontation with the whale is at the heart of all forms of whaling.<sup>21</sup> Indeed the whale is met with a large variety of means; yet whether with motorised boats or canoes and spears, this is about hunting the whale. The encounter is dangerous: indeed even with highly improved technology, an injured and angry animal weighing up to 150 tonnes (the blue whale) can cause great damage to the boat pursuing it (weighing on average today in Norway and Japan around 40 tonnes). From the Bible's *Jonah* to Melville's *Moby Dick*, history and culture is rife with accounts of the encounter with a formidable, wild, lethal animal. This encounter exemplifies an ancient, fundamentally external relationship between man and nature, where nature figures as the 'the Other'. It signifies both the immediacy of close interaction, and fundamental antagonism, as man struggles against nature to survive. This battle against nature is constitutive of culture itself where, in a Hegelian perspective, man has made himself through the dialectical confrontation with nature.

The whaling and anti-whaling discourses operate as two monologues talking across each other, or, rather, struggling to occupy as much as possible of the global public space at the other's expense. So far, the anti-whaling culture has prevailed, but the whaling cultures are reorganising themselves. Both have used the same implements of globalisation: a web-based alliance, flows of images and information in the direction of a potentially global public. The anti-whaling culture possesses one distinct advantage: it has succeeded in tapping into an economic practise at the heart of globalisation, the tourism industry. The translation of the anti-whaling cause, via the whale-watching industry, into economic potential, appears to have made it the 'winning cause' of globalisation.<sup>22</sup>

In a globalising world, both pro- and anti-whaling cultures have seen new

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<sup>21</sup> For this reason the managerial distinction operated within the International Whaling Commission between 'aboriginal subsistence whaling' and 'commercial whaling', where the former is authorised and the latter (corresponding essentially to Norway and Japan) forbidden, is considered irrelevant by the whalers.

<sup>22</sup> Discourses advocating 'non-consumptive' exploitation typically quote the following figures: the whale-watching industry is now worth \$1 billion and still expanding, compared with the \$60 million worth of Japanese and Norwegian commercial whaling activities. C.f. 'Australian Government Position on Proposed South Pacific Whale Sanctuary', IWC (2001).

levels of exposure and been projected onto a global scale. Yet despite increased means for exchange between cultures, globalisation appears mainly to have deepened the rift between the two types of cultures. Dialogue has only taken place amongst cultures on the same side of the divide. Perhaps, then, the impossibility of a dialogue across differences stems from the fundamentally different *bases* upon which the cultures are founded: in the whaling cultures, cultural forms are still grounded in modes of the man-nature relationship. In the anti-whaling culture, however, to borrow Castells' terms (1996), Culture refers back to Culture itself; and Nature features as an integrated, ideal cultural form. In this sense the global anti-whaling culture heralds this new global era he identifies, where culture has 'superseded Nature to the point that Nature is artificially revived ("preserved") as a cultural form: indeed this is the meaning of the environmental movement, to reconstruct nature [the whale] as an ideal cultural form' (Castells 1996, p. 477). Nature is effaced as a pole of structural interaction, we are left with a purely 'cultural' pattern of social interaction and organisation: the self-referential network. Such is the virtual grounds on which are founded new global cultures.

## Conclusion

The case of whaling offers an insight into some of the tensions that can arise when a local culture encounters a new global culture. It also shows how some of these 'older' cultures have successfully tuned to globalisation, to renegotiate their 'localness' by developing global networks. Significantly for the study of international relations, it points to the emergence of a new political space, located beyond the nation-state, which is traditionally held as the locus of politics. Whaling politics are now played out on a global scale, while at the same time they bring into the equation questions that were traditionally left out of the political arena (issues of 'sub-politics'). In short, the whaling issue can no longer be reduced to relations between states; its dynamics reveal several levels of conflict: between states (Norway/Japan vs. other 'western' states), but also between peoples across several states (whaling communities against foreign anti-whalers), and between states and their 'first nations' (in New Zealand and the USA, for example). An analysis of such international issues needs to operate at all these levels, in order to fully encompass its different dimensions. Furthermore, this understanding is only possible by grasping how deeply these political questions are embedded in issues of culture. This in turn underlies the continued necessity to draw on multidisciplinary approaches when analysing the international.

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