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Privacy and the illusion of Cosmopolitan Culture in the Age of Digital Societies
Attempts to Critique Liquid Culture and Revitalize the Question of Infiltration

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Abstract

This research paper addresses cultural particularity as a form of distinction and difference among peoples and societies. It argues that cultural particularity continues to face processes of penetration under the illusion of cosmopolitan culture, which in reality does not aim to embrace cultural diversity as much as it seeks to devour cultures in order to impose a single, hegemonic cultural vision. Despite the opportunities offered by digital technology to highlight cultural particularity, it simultaneously compels it to reshape itself according to a universal perspective in which the very notion of particularity dissolves. Within a critical framework, this paper discusses Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid culture," attempting to strip down this notion and reveal that it is merely an extension of the cosmopolitan culture that spread at the end of the twentieth century. The study concludes that the cultural particularities of societies still resist the penetration imposed by digital technology, though their levels of resistance vary.

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Introduction

Culture is one of the most complex and multifaceted intellectual issues, where even the most astute mind stands bewildered before its labyrinths, often compelled to suspend its efforts to unravel its intricacies until time brings clarity. In recent decades, culture has undergone radical transformations due to the major technological shifts experienced worldwide. It has come to derive its values and meanings from the digital world, which has invaded our daily lives in an unprecedented way in human history. The digital dimension has thus become an inseparable part of the very essence of culture, posing a real threat to the previous meanings and values that still persist, to varying degrees, within cultural institutions in every nation.

With the accelerated development of digital technologies, humanity has entered a new chapter of transformation unlike any it had experienced before. This chapter has given rise to new forms of practices, relationships, and social,

cultural, economic, and political institutions, all built upon and centered around the digital space as their foundational structure.

The digital space has created new conditions that humanity has been compelled to accept, imposing requirements that have become indispensable for managing daily life. These conditions are gradually shaping a global cultural space that transcends traditional boundaries between different cultures. Accordingly, local cultures can only be present within its digital forms by either fully submitting to its conditions or adapting to them in ways that ensure their presence and preserve their continuity.

Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that the digital space has provided greater opportunities for human communication and offered new possibilities that make the prospect of cultural coexistence more optimistic than in previous decades. In theory, all cultures, regardless of their backgrounds, are assumed to have equal access to this space and the ability to participate in shaping it. Yet in reality, practices of cultural domination persist, employing newly devised methods and increasingly sophisticated techniques. Under the dominance of a single culture whose proponents seek to impose it as a transcendent universal vision, the boundaries of national, religious, and subcultural identities become increasingly fragile, their cultural walls ever more susceptible to penetration.

It is true that the universal nature of digital spaces renders the existential meaning of any culture a digital one, such that only in this sense can it be active, dynamic, and capable of asserting its presence alongside other cultures. Yet reality does not reflect this cosmopolitan illusion of a global culture encompassing humanity in all its diversity, nor the false promises propagated by proponents of projects of peaceful coexistence among cultures.

If Zygmunt Bauman announced the dawn of a new era of global culture what he termed "liquid culture," centered on individual freedom of choice and built upon dazzling, enticing displays full of allure and temptations (Bauman, 2018, p. 21) then his project is nothing more than a continuation of the illusion propagated by globalization concerning a unified global culture. Rather, it represents yet another chapter in the ongoing threats and intrusions faced by local cultures under the pressures of digital globalization.

1- Methodological Considerations:

The central problem of this paper revolves around the impact of accelerated digital transformations on the cultural identity of peoples under the dominance of digital space, as well as the challenges local cultures face in maintaining their existence and continuity in the face of the phenomenon of "liquid culture" promoted by cosmopolitan thought in the age of digital globalization.

The objectives of this paper are to:

- Understand how culture transforms under digital technology and how this affects traditional values and meanings.
- Provide a critical reading of Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid culture," showing how it represents a continuation of cultural hegemony in the age of digital globalization.
- Highlight how cultural domination continues to operate within digital space, despite promises of cultural coexistence.
- Analyze the illusion underlying the idea of a borderless global culture, showing that reality reflects cultural domination more than coexistence.

This paper employs both the critical and analytical approaches. The critical approach is used to provide a critical examination of Bauman's idea of "liquid culture," to deconstruct the cosmopolitan illusion promoted by digital space, and to highlight its contradictions with reality. The analytical approach is adopted to analyze the impact of digital technology on culture, and to examine how cultural values and meanings are transformed within the digital space.

3 -Cultural Particularity:

Although discussions on "cultural particularity" have receded in intellectual arenas during the postmodern era which has tended to move beyond the notions of collective identity and shared culture the entry of contemporary peoples into digital spaces has had profound consequences and implications for many aspects of life, including the cultural dimension. The issue no longer receives the same attention it did two decades ago. The digital environment has revived debates around culture, particularly concerning "cultural particularity" and the future of this concept, which is now more threatened than ever, especially in a digital world where almost all the particularities that historically distinguished the peoples of the world are at risk of dissolution.

Despite the prominent place of the concept of culture in intellectual debates throughout the past century especially among scholars engaged in social and anthropological studies there has been a noticeable presence of critics who opposed the concept of culture, questioned its depth, or even dismissed it altogether as unhelpful for addressing researchers' questions. Mathew Engelke (2020) identified a current of critics who undermined or ignored the significance of the concept, to the point that explicit attention to it, at least as an analytical term, declined in Britain for a long period. Interest in culture diminished significantly after the death of Malinowski, only to regain recognition later with the emergence of the Birmingham School, whose members Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall produced literary and social works that came to be known as "cultural studies" (Engelke, 2020, pp. 57–58).

Apart from this British approach that marginalized the concept within the academic field, culture has retained a central role across various disciplines of the humanities. In anthropology, this was evident in the works of Edward Tylor, James Frazer, Malinowski, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. In sociology, it featured prominently in the works of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986). Even in media and critical studies, the Frankfurt School contributed through the works of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, in what became known in their research as the "culture industry" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 94). Culture has been, and continues to be, the most essential and prominent component in defining the identity of peoples. Indeed, the importance of the cultural question is underscored by the impossibility of distinguishing between different peoples once culture is neutralized.

I- The Concept of Cultural Particularity:

In order to address the issue of cultural particularity, it is first necessary to define the concept of culture so that its meaning is clear in this context. Without delving into the complexities of definitions or the linguistic root of the word "culture," we adopt Edward B. Tylor's definition, which, in its broad ethnographic sense, refers to "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Edward, 1920, p. 01). In this broad sense, culture refers to a shared conception that we hold with others in understanding the world around us and in shaping forms of interaction with it. At the same time, it points to differences between one society and another, and from one nation to another.

Tylor's definition leads us to infer the implicit significance of particularity in the cultural question of every society and nation. Culture is inseparable from cultural particularity, as it is bound up with three interrelated dimensions: first, its determination by place; second, its permanence in time; and third, its tendency toward organization. This stands in sharp contrast to the view of Engelke (2020), who argues that the word "culture" is too vague to be of much analytical value when applied in practice.

The confusion encountered by Engelke and those who share his view stems from the absence of clear boundaries between "here" and "there," from its continual transformations throughout history, and from its lack of qualities such as consistency, coherence, and regularity. This confusion also derives from the postmodern knowledge paradigm, which rejected the essentialist view of things. According to Diana Fuss, essentialism means "a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity" (Fuss, 1989, p. xi). What happened with these thinkers is that they moved beyond the essence of culture and the essence of cultural particularity on the grounds that essences tend to freeze what is not by nature fixed, and to mold what is not by nature stable.

What has further complicated the issue of cultural particularity is the instability that constitutes a part of its very essence. It unites opposites within itself and reconciles contradictions within its structure. Among its features are:

a. Stability and Change:

One of the most important contradictory features embedded in the structure of cultural particularity is its ability to

embody both stability and change simultaneously. Its stability lies in its capacity to preserve the intrinsic characteristics accumulated throughout history, in harmony with its internal environment, through its interaction with cultural and social institutions that emerge from within it, and through its responsiveness to the political and economic events it has experienced. Its changeability, on the other hand, is manifested in the flexibility it demonstrates by adjusting certain of its forms and symbols, or by abandoning them altogether.

b. Interrelation and Differentiation:

Culture possesses considerable flexibility in interacting with surrounding cultures. It overlaps with them to the point where the contours of particularity nearly vanish, and yet it differentiates itself from them to such an extent that this distinction becomes the primary criterion for distinguishing among peoples and nations. For this reason, researchers studying cultures often focus on identifying their similarities and differences. This stems from the ability of cultures to draw from one another the tools of their continuity and the means of their adaptation, depending on the historical conditions imposed upon them. Interrelation and differentiation thus refer to the capacity of a culture to engage with other cultures by exchanging symbols, values, and cultural forms giving and receiving, inspiring and being inspired, exporting and importing, rejecting and localizing.

c. Particularity and Universality:

The concept of privacy, as defined by Warren and Brandeis in their 1890 study published in the *Harvard Law Review*, is "the right to be let alone" (Sale, 2017, p. 354). Each culture has its own characteristics that distinguish it from others, features that set it apart and grant it uniqueness. Particularity endows a culture with individuality, with the capacity to maintain distinctive features, to recognize its own essence and existence, to remain conscious of its historical and geographical conditions, and to preserve its ethical mission and value-laden heritage. Ultimately, particularity constitutes a civilizational asset belonging to a specific nation, but it is also, conversely, a human legacy that transcends historical and geographical boundaries. The more a culture distinguishes itself, elevates itself, and internalizes positive values and civilizational achievements, the more it inspires others, providing them with what they deem necessary for their survival and continuity. Thus, culture embodies both particularity and universality.

This ability of culture to unite contradictions is what has led some to reject considering it as a central concept in the study of societies. Yet distinguishing between these overlapping contradictions within its structure is essential to forming a clearer conception of it. In this sense, culture is both a particular civilizational given and a shared universal legacy.

II. Dimensions of Global Cultural Flow:

Arjun Appadurai argues that the new system of cultural economy is complex, overlapping, and fragmented at the same time. It can no longer be understood through the traditional models of center and periphery, migration theory, surplus and deficit (as in classical trade balance models), or consumers and producers (as in most neo-Marxist development theories), nor even through the more sophisticated and flexible theories of global development. The complexity of the current global economy, he maintains, is linked to certain fundamental disjunctions between economy, culture, and politics, which we have only recently begun to examine theoretically (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32).

To explore such disjunctions, Appadurai proposes examining five dimensions of global cultural flows, which he calls: (a) the ethnoscape, (b) the technoscape, (c) the financescape, (d) the mediascape, and (e) the ideoscape.

The relationships among these dimensions are not uniform or symmetrical from all perspectives. Rather, they are deeply conceptual, influenced by the historical, linguistic, and political conditions of various actors: nation-states, multinational corporations, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groups and movements (religious, political, or economic), and face-to-face social groups such as villages, neighborhoods, and families. The individual, meanwhile, is the least influential actor within the movement of culture, since cultural flows are ultimately managed by agents who control their pathways. The individual's culture constitutes merely a representation of this broader flow.

The **ethnoscape** refers to the people who shape the changing world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other mobile groups and individuals who have become a defining feature of contemporary life. These populations appear to influence state policies and the relations among states than ever before. This dimension, as Appadurai notes, arises from globalization, which has undermined the sovereignty of nation-states and dismantled the geographical fortresses that had protected national identity and safeguarded it for two centuries (Bauman, 2018, p. 67). With the shifting needs of international capital, the demands of

production and technology, and changes in state policies toward refugees, a new kind of "liquid" societies has emerged, surpassing the rigid notions of solid nation-states (Messaadi, 2024).

The **technoscape** refers to the constantly shifting global configuration of technology, whether high or low, mechanical or informational, moving now at high speed across boundaries that were once impermeable. Many countries now serve as roots for multinational corporations. For example, a massive steel complex in Libya may involve interests from India, China, Russia, and Japan, each providing components of new technological formations. The unusual distribution of technologies, and hence the characteristics of this dimension, are increasingly driven not by clear economies of scale, political control, or market rationality, but rather by the increasingly complex relationships between capital flows, political opportunities, and the availability of labor particularly skilled technical labor in which investing countries seek to harness digital technology.

The **financescape**, in Appadurai's terms, refers to the unprecedentedly rapid flows of capital, currency, and investment, which he sees as increasingly detached from territorial anchors. The interrelation among the first three dimensions is unpredictable, each shaped by its own constraints and motivations, but each at the same time serving as both a limitation on and a measure of the movement of the others.

The **mediascape** points to the distribution of electronic capabilities for producing and disseminating information newspapers, magazines, television stations, film production studios which are now accessible to an ever-growing number of public and private actors worldwide, as well as to the images of the world these media produce. Such images involve complex distortions depending on their style (documentary or entertainment), medium (electronic or pre-electronic), audience (local, national, or transnational), and the interests of their owners and controllers. The most significant aspect of this mediascape is its ability to provide vast and complex repertoires of images and narratives in which the world of commodities becomes deeply intertwined with that of news and politics. This flow produces image-centered narratives that shape perceptions of reality, creating stories about the "Other," initial narratives of possible lives, and imaginaries that may serve as a prelude to desires for appropriation and movement.

The **ideoscape** refers to the flow of ideas, ideologies, and counter-ideologies, along with mental images such as freedom and democracy, which are often modified and manipulated according to context. These are sets of ideological images, often directly political, explicitly aimed at seizing state power or parts of it. The ideoscape consists of clusters of ideas reflecting Enlightenment ideals on a global scale. Actors seeking to impose their intellectual hegemony and political vision do so by attempting to guide the movement of thought, seeking to dominate intellectual debate within the public sphere, given the intimate link between thought, reading, and the public domain (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33).

In truth, we find many real-world examples that confirm Appadurai's observations on the dimensions of cultural flow. Yet, in the digital age, these flows increasingly take the form of reinforcing cultural unidirectionality. Digital technology has managed to fuse and reshape many of these dimensions, deploying algorithms within an industrial-economic framework of culture. The technical properties of digital technology have granted unprecedented power to control the pathways of human mobility, technology, capital, media, and ideas.

III. Digital Technology and the Power of Penetration:

From the earliest foundational ideas of modernity, Western thought became aware of the capacity of technology to bring about a qualitative leap in the fields of capital and wealth production, as well as in improving the quality of social, political, and economic life. Hence, their efforts were concentrated on developing scientific knowledge directed toward advancing technology a project heavily endorsed by the major philosophers of Western modernity, who placed great hopes on this kind of knowledge as a means for humanity to achieve wealth and mastery over nature, as emphasized by Francis Bacon (Bacon, 1900, p. 470).

What stands out most in the nature of technology is its ability to standardize practices. It not only determines the ways of doing things and ways of being in the world, but also shapes the ways of carrying out abstract activities detached from concrete contexts. Real and unique practices, such as methods of baking bread, may vary from one place to another depending on circumstances, customs, and tastes. What technology such as the automated bread-making machine does is to facilitate a routine task that is not tied to a specific place. It is a routine that can be performed anywhere in the world because it is abstract in nature. The absence of standardization at lower levels undermines the foundations of technology, since standardization is its essence. It requires the abstraction of the

inherent plurality that characterizes human practices and tangible situations. This is precisely the distinction often made between tools and technologies: tools are employed in practices that are locally specific and distinctive, while technologies are concerned with more general practices regardless of local particularities (Barney, 2015, p. 64).

From here arose the interest in technology, culminating in the digital transformation that we are now experiencing. Capitalist powers realized the pivotal role of culture in shaping people's opinions, orientations, and attitudes, and its significant influence on directing consumer behavior. This, in turn, would positively affect the revenues of major capitalists if they succeeded in controlling the sources of cultural production. For this reason, multinational corporations entered the cultural field and secured leading positions among the producers and promoters of culture—naturally aligning it with their own interests and agendas.

Thus, thanks to its unique features, digital technology has managed to deeply penetrate every domain of life, imposing new and varied forms of relationships. In recent years, with the Internet and other information technologies, transformations have affected fundamental aspects of life: we no longer play or work as before; our modes of communication and consumption have changed; our methods of knowledge creation and learning have shifted; even our understanding of politics and participation in public life is no longer the same (Trend, 2001, p. 1).

5- Culture and the Illusion of Cosmopolitanism in Digital Societies:

> "There is no single human civilization, but rather multiple civilizations" (Mattelart, 2008, p. 20). Yet, as mentioned earlier, culture is defined by two existentially inseparable traits: the tendency to return to its roots through its deep connection to heritage and the past, and its capacity to open up to the world in order to adapt to contemporary conditions. However, with technology permeating human life and communications globalization taking on a cosmopolitan character, the trait of openness and forward orientation has overshadowed the trait of closure and return to the past. This situation has revived the problem of cultural particularity, which is now more threatened than ever in favor of a cosmopolitan culture, in a world whose spaces are almost entirely digital.
>
> Cosmopolitanism is a humanist orientation that advocates making the world one unified homeland for all humanity. Under the umbrella of global citizenship, its proponents reject the notions of the nation-state. According to Martha Nussbaum, cosmopolitanism does not mean that its adherents propose abolishing local and national forms of political organization in favor of a world state; rather, their view was more radical: we must not give our primary allegiance to any form of government or temporal authority, but to the moral community composed of the humanity of all people (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 7).

For cosmopolitans, cultural particularity constitutes a real obstacle to the realization of global citizenship. All cosmopolitans are compelled not to act in accordance with the dictates of local cultures or national expectations when these values and behaviors conflict with universal standards of human conduct (Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 8–14). Local cultures are thus acknowledged only insofar as they contain universal values shared by all peoples. In this way, a hybrid culture is formed, where the cultures of nations intersect within unified values, and individuals, as Samuel Scheffler explains, achieve self-realization and flourishing by shaping identities with distinctive features derived from diverse and heterogeneous cultural sources. These are not regarded as being defined by descriptive ties to a particular culture, community, or heritage (Scheffler, 1999).

It is notable that cosmopolitan culture gained significant traction and wide dissemination during the last decade of the twentieth century, a period marked by the rise of concepts of freedom and democracy, the decline of socialist slogans, and, at the same time, the globalization of communications and media. Media, in particular, became a key vehicle in promoting cosmopolitan cultural values and standards. Paul Hopper (2007, p. 62) points out that the globalization of media was further intensified by the rise of giant multimedia corporations such as Disney, Sony, Bertelsmann, General Electric, News Corporation, Warner Media, and Viacom. The concentration of ownership of these corporations in the hands of a few conglomerates enabled them to dominate entertainment industries by controlling financing, production, marketing, and distribution of their film and television products.

It is important not to conflate the globalization of cultural industries with what might be called global culture (Wolton, 2005, p. 46). The culture disseminated by these global corporations is, in reality, a mosaic of cultures that have absorbed elements of modernity, a scattered patchwork of cultural fragments. The primary beneficiaries of exporting this cultural product worldwide are, of course, the owners of these massive media corporations. What they produce cannot, in any sense, be described as global culture, but rather as the globalization of cultural industries.

The digital transformations of the last two decades have added another, more pronounced and complex, dimension to the concept of cosmopolitan hegemony. The practices dominating the global cultural scene in the digital age reflect only a set of values and principles that transcend those upon which human cultural communities across the world were historically based. Thus, cosmopolitanism, in the end, is nothing more than the ideology of "the elites," who themselves, as Dominique Wolton notes, are firmly rooted in strong, well-defined identities (Wolton, 2005, p. 50). The term "cosmopolitan culture," even if it has receded in academic writings over the last two decades in favor of the notion of "liquid culture," does not significantly differ from it in either conceptual or ideological content.

The term "cosmopolitanism" emerged simultaneously with the spread of digital media, just as the concept of "liquid culture" appeared with the globalization of media two decades earlier. From another perspective, if digital media is nothing but a technical extension of media globalization, then the notion of liquid culture is merely an extension of cosmopolitan culture—if not the very same concept under a different label.

6- Liquid Culture or Penetrated Culture?

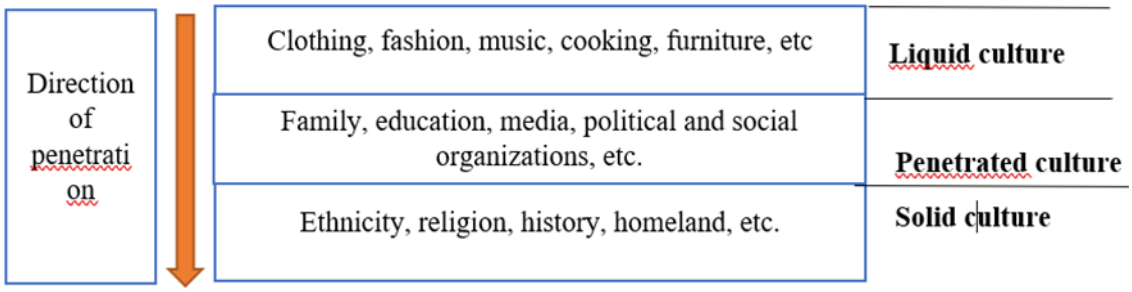
To describe the condition into which culture has devolved in contemporary societies, Zygmunt Bauman used the term "liquid modernity," referring to a state in which no form of social life is able to retain its shape for long just like liquids. In this state, culture takes shape in accordance with individual freedom of choice and the individual responsibility that accompanies it. Its function becomes the continuous maintenance of this choice as both a vital necessity and an inevitable duty (Bauman, 2018, p. 19).

In Bauman's formulation, culture no longer exercises any supervisory or disciplinary role; it is no longer the functional complex that once contained mechanisms for preserving stability, balance, and direction. Culture has suffered profound fractures, and societies have entered into a condition where "cultural identities" and "cultural particularities" are dissolving. If Friedrich Nietzsche once proclaimed the "death of God," then Bauman, in turn, proclaimed the "death of particularity" (Bauman, 2017, p. 43). This, he argues, is the outcome of contemporary societies becoming digital societies, where individuals themselves voluntarily lead their cultural even personal particularities to the "slaughterhouses" of the digital spaces, sacrificing them to its allure.

Bauman's description of contemporary societies as "liquid societies" appears to be an extreme characterization. If we view it as a product of a pessimistic anticipatory vision, then it is an exaggeration of pessimism. He paints an overarching picture of societies, with all their institutions, systems, standards, and values, sinking into boundless liquidity. For him, the dissolution of all that is solid is the essential feature of the modern form of life from its inception. Nothing is exempt from this process, not even the most solid forms, including those rooted in the historical foundations of societies.

At the very least, this view creates an unsound equivalence among different cultural institutions upon which societies have been built. In his account, there is no distinction between music, prayer, fashion, religion, cinema, or houses of worship. All are thrown into the same blender, all subjected to dissolution and fusion, until they take on liquid forms, blending with one another, and their symbols and meanings merging to the point of indistinguishability. This is an overstated portrayal, for what Bauman's thesis neglects is that culture has historically formed in layers some harder and more resistant to penetration or reshaping, others more flexible and quickly subject to change and dissolution.

Figure (01): illustrates the layers of culture and the direction of penetration.



Source: by the researcher

1- Liquid Culture:

If we are to apply the metaphor of liquidity to any layer of culture or to one of its symbols, it would undoubtedly apply to the first layer of culture—namely, the manifestations of daily life shaped by market values and excessive consumption. These are reflected in clothing, fashion, music, cuisine, furniture, and so forth. Such daily practices appear almost uniform across much of the world's populations. McDonald's meals, Adidas clothing, Chanel perfumes, Samsung phones, and similar global brands have penetrated nearly all markets, becoming present in every country and accessible to many peoples, thereby blending into the cultural lives of numerous societies.

Yet, many societies still maintain their cultural identities in clothing styles, culinary traditions, musical genres, architectural methods, and furnishing practices. In these everyday manifestations, cultural differences remain evident, with many communities continuing to uphold traditions deeply rooted in history.

Bauman's inability to recognize these cultural differences stems from the Western centrality underlying his perspective, which obscures the stark contrasts between Western culture submerged in its liquid form and other cultures that have retained a more solid character. Societies of the southern Mediterranean, for instance, continue to preserve their musical traditions and wear wool and camel hair garments. Gulf communities remain faithful to the white thobe and red-checkered headscarf. Many East Asian societies still uphold authentic cultural practices, such as serving meals with bamboo chopsticks rather than metal spoons, and favoring traditional rice and fish dishes over hamburgers and McDonald's meals. Thus, we argue that if liquid culture has achieved any success, it is largely confined to the superficial and external layer of many societies' cultures. This interpretation is reinforced by Bauman himself in *Liquid Culture*, where he focused more on music, fashion, and art (Bauman, 2018, p. 25) than on the institutions that sustain them.

Indeed, there is a powerful process of cultural penetration being advanced by global economic interests seeking to impose a universal culture of their own making. However, the cultural practices encouraged by technology and promoted by digital media cannot be attributed to deeply rooted social and cultural institutions. Rather, they are practices that are quick to be adopted and just as quick to dissolve. They are contagious and spread rapidly thanks to media and global digital communications. If they are to be linked to any institutional or value-based foundation, it is only to those institutions dominated by the forces controlling the flows of capital and the global economy. In the end, liquid culture is nothing more than the product of an imperial cultural industry, the result of a pragmatic vision ultimately governed, paradoxically, by a solid hegemonic culture that resists liquefaction and dissolution.

2- Penetrated Culture:

We must first acknowledge that major institutions and corporations controlling cultural industries have succeeded in commodifying many cultural symbols, and we must also recognize that they have managed to dissolve numerous cultural practices. Yet, in contrast, these achievements continue to face considerable resistance supported by older social and cultural institutions. Families, education systems, political parties, and various social and political organizations in many societies and countries around the world remain vital, preserving the functional roles entrusted to them. Despite the fierce campaigns of penetration targeting institutions rooted in modernity and pre-modernity, these institutions still endure today, continuing to perform their functions effectively within many societies.

Although contemporary societies are undergoing profound transformations due to the digital revolution, preexisting values and biases—deeply embedded in broader social and cultural systems are reflected in the digital structure of platforms, and may even be amplified through them (Yue Qian, 2024). For this reason, some have argued that the consequences of computers themselves are no greater than those brought about by literacy. Conversely, figures like Goody and Kittler contend that the use of a new communication medium may indeed alter people's views of the world, at least in the long run (Asa Briggs, 2009).

This long-term effect is nothing but a form of penetration exerted by digital technology upon social and cultural institutions still tasked with preserving and revitalizing cultural particularity. Institutions such as the family, the arts, houses of worship, local media, and diverse social and political organizations all represent subsidiary authorities that operate in a functional harmony to regulate social practices and safeguard particularity from cultural intrusion and deviation. Because these institutions are mutually coherent and functionally interconnected, their cohesion has created a cultural wall that protects the cultural body against every attempt at penetration. The endurance of these

institutions and their resistance to rapid change is due to the culture's ongoing efforts to confront and withstand the various forms of infiltration imposed upon it by digital technologies.

3- Solid Culture:

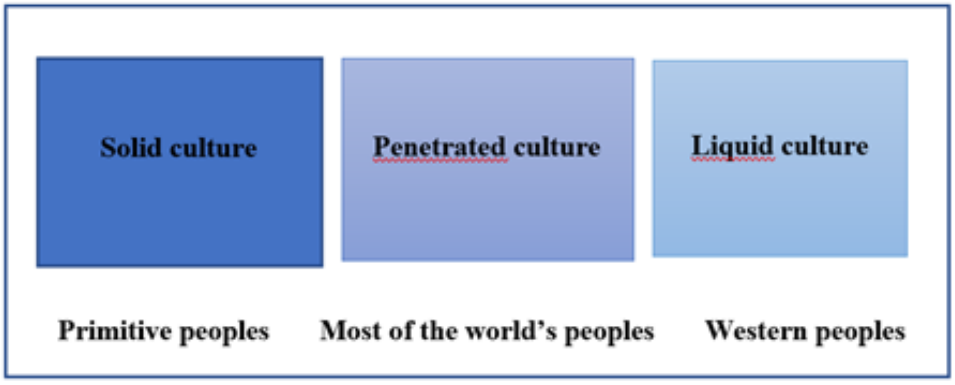
If institutions such as the family, the arts, houses of worship, local media, and various social and political organizations serve as the reservoirs where each society's cultural values are deposited, then religion, ethnicity, homeland, and shared history—accumulating experiences across time—are the great factories that generate values and from which societies derive their cultural identity. For this reason, the ultimate target of the penetrative attempts against cultural particularities has been these solid institutions, through efforts to disable their capacity to produce living values and generate meaning.

The persistence of religion, ethnicity, and homeland to this day, despite the universality of digital communications, is the strongest evidence that there are still cultures which remain solid, even if their peoples appear, in daily practices, to be dissolving into a unified cosmopolitan identity. A Muslim remains a Muslim, a Jew remains a Jew, a Christian remains a Christian, and likewise for the Eastern religions. Even nation-states, in the Westphalian sense established by classical modernity, still endure to this day, with loyalty to them remaining strong: the French are French, the Belgians Belgian, the Italians Italian, and so forth.

Despite the solidity of these major institutions that distinguish nations from one another, and despite the strength of the cultural wall safeguarding each identity, they remain vulnerable to ongoing attempts of penetration. Digital commerce constitutes an economic project aiming to undermine the sovereignty of the classical nation-state. The digital citizen represents an ideological project working to transcend local identities. The so-called Abrahamic religion constitutes a doctrinal project seeking to dissolve the three revealed religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) and fuse their laws into a single liquid global faith.

Nevertheless, these major cultural institutions are not equally solid. Some continue to maintain their historical identity, while others have endured severe shocks that disrupted their long-standing stability. Cultural particularity also varies from one society to another. Some cultures remain solid, such as "primitive" cultures living in the jungles of Africa and the Amazon forests. Others continue to experience infiltration of their institutions and structures, as is the case with most of the world's cultures. Still others have surrendered entirely to processes of dissolution and fusion, as is evident among many populations in Western Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Figure (02): Types of World Cultures



Source: by the researcher

The overlap between the concepts of cosmopolitan culture and liquid culture appears more clearly with Zygmunt Bauman, when he addresses culture by saying: *"The purpose of culture, according to its original meaning, was to be a factor of change, not a factor of maintaining the status quo. Its role was to serve as a means of leading social development toward a universal human condition"* (Bauman, 2018, p. 15). Bauman's proposition fully aligns with the cosmopolitan vision of culture, a vision that transcends cultural particularities and goes beyond local standards and values. If there is any difference between the two concepts, it lies only in the approach. While the advocates of cosmopolitanism presented this concept within the framework of providing a universal ethical vision in which the

world is governed by global human values and standards, the concept of liquidity proposed by Bauman came within the framework of providing an anatomical reading of contemporary societies governed by the standards and values of the market and excessive consumption.

On this basis, we can say that there is no cosmopolitanism except for those who benefit from it (Woolton, 2005, p. 46). It is a neoliberal cosmopolitanism governed by powerful economic forces that drive contemporary globalization and seek to establish a universal system deeply embedded in the social and political life of cultures opposed to it, while protecting the flows of global money and trade. If those who produce and control information and its means of dissemination in societies during the age of television and mass communication are the ones who rule, dominate, and impose their vision on others (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 26), then the culture of the Internet and the digital world is ruled by business entrepreneurs responsible for spreading Internet culture throughout society. According to Manuel Castells, they are those elites of businessmen operating on the Internet, who are at the same time artists, prophets, and greedy men, as they hide their social unification behind their technical ingenuity (Castells, 2001, p. 6). Thus, those who control the tools and technologies of the digital world are the most capable of shaping culture and imposing values within digital societies.

7- Culture between Liquidity and Solidity in Digital Societies

Digital technology plays a decisive role in differentiating the cultures of peoples between liquidity and solidity. The relationship between liquid culture and technology is directly proportional; the more societies transform into digital societies, the more their cultures become liquid and submissive to the cultural standards imposed by the digital world. As for societies distant from the digital world, their cultures remain solid and their particularities intact, while the cultures of most peoples remain oscillating between solidity and liquidity due to the ongoing penetrations they are still exposed to.

The civilizational leap experienced by Western societies would not have occurred without the technological development they achieved in the later ages. For the rest of the world's peoples, if they wish to keep pace with this development, there is no path except through adopting digital technology, which created the glory of those societies. Yet, they must pay a price if they wish to achieve this desired catching-up, and this price is none other than willingly surrendering their cultural particularities to the authority of digital technology, which almost singlehandedly dominates the making of today's civilization. Thus, cultural identities are reshaped according to a universal vision dictated by the conditionality of the contemporary digital civilization. In this sense, Michel Foucault states: *"He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, is the bearer of the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself"* (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). This is precisely what happens with different peoples of the world: peoples engaged in the digital sphere see their cultural particularities completely violated, while peoples where digital technology is still weakly spread continue to preserve the vitality of their cultural particularities.

If we look at the rate of Internet penetration among peoples, we find that 94% of the peoples of the European Union have Internet access, according to a survey conducted in 2024 (Digital_economy_and_society_statistics, 2024); 97.1% in the United States of America (Statista, 2024); and 94.9% in Australia (Digital 2024: Australia, 2024) in the same year. These peoples are in fact the very Western societies from which Zygmunt Bauman derived his conceptualization of culture as liquid culture.

In contrast, these percentages decline among the rest of the world's peoples: 73.9% in West Asian societies, and 72.4% in North Africa, for instance societies that may be considered to have a relatively cohesive cultural background, yet are subject to continuous and significant penetrations. This description applies to most peoples and societies around the world. As for the peoples who still enjoy relatively authentic and solid cultures, Internet penetration there is low compared to others: in Central African societies it does not exceed 31.8%, and 26.8% in West African societies in the same period (Internet penetration rate worldwide, 2025).

The observation is that there is an inverse relationship between the openness of cultural particularities and the rate of Internet penetration and digital technologies within them. The more prepared societies are to transition into the digital world, the more their culture is vulnerable to dissolution and transformation into a liquid culture.

Conclusion

Throughout their long history, societies have accumulated their cultural particularities that make them differ from one another, in order to distinguish themselves from each other. Alongside inventions and experimental sciences,

they have been preoccupied with discovering existence, either to harness it for managing the affairs of life, or to adapt it for use as a weapon in their conflicts with other nations. From this, we can say that every technology created by humankind contains within it two things: its use for managing life affairs in ways that reflect its culture, and its employment as a weapon against enemies to preserve its cultural identity. In this sense, culture is the condition for the realization of the existence of human societies, and thus it precedes technology in time.

On this basis, digital technology is nothing but a contemporary form of managing increasingly complex human life, and one of the most advanced weapons through which those who dominate it seek to extend their influence over all peoples and impose their culture on all cultures.

According to Darin Barney, social researchers have differed in their outlook on what societies will become in the post-industrial stage. While Bell sees in this transformation the possibility of overcoming the most humiliating and unjust aspects of the industrial era, an opportunity to make society more prosperous and participatory, to bring about better education, a flourishing global economy, and scientific progress free of ideology, another group of theorists and researchers sees in this transformation a forewarning of societies turning into programmed, one-dimensional societies. Such a transformation would deepen capitalist alienation, exposing human life to domination and irrational exploitation under the guise of rational, objective technology (Barney, 2015, p. 17).

We can extend this divergence to the transformation that cultural life is witnessing among peoples at the present moment. While some see that the transition of societies to the digital form will provide greater opportunities for protecting cultural particularities through the possibilities of digital presence of different cultures, it can also be said that these digital transformations enhance the penetrations cultures are subjected to, represent an opportunity for the assassination of cultural particularity, and a broader extension of digital dominance and a new universal culture.

At the same time, despite the major fissures that have affected the structure of cultural particularities of different peoples due to the penetrations practiced upon them, and despite the digital tools and technologies employed for this task, we can say that many of the world's cultures are still resisting the assassinations they are subjected to. Social and cultural institutions and the mechanisms for repelling these penetrations continue to perform their functions properly. Every external authority that tries to dominate them is confronted by an internal force that works to resist it. Resistance, in the Foucauldian sense, is concomitant with power. Wherever there is power, there is resistance. If digital societies are a form of power, then many human cultures possess the capacities that make them able to generate tools to resist penetration and methods to avoid dissolution and melting away.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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