

Cultural Identity and the Body

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the fact that the dominant, global, industrial culture does not accept the traditional bodily appearance of persons belonging to indigenous cultures. Although these cultures are in the majority - out of the approximately 7000¹ cultures on this planet, 4000 to 5000 are considered indigenous, out of which 2000 live in very traditional ways - they remain largely ignored by the dominant culture. There is no mutual acceptance of lifestyles. Rather, the standards are dictated by the industrial culture. In their idiosyncratic physical appearance, which, in tropical areas, is often unclothed, indigenous persons would have a slim chance to be acknowledged as citizens, let alone apply for a passport.

This situation contrasts sharply with some basic claims of the global culture. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) clearly demands the acceptance of indigenous lifestyles. Despite this safeguard, the dominant culture is now poised to extinguish any reminder of what has been typical for the human species for most of its history.

We shall analyse the issue by examining the specific contact situations of dominant and dominated culture, i.e. the situations from where problems arise, and then consider possible interventions that are effective.

1. 1 International law

A major step has been taken by the United Nations with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which has been adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. Since then, it is part of International Law, and it should be respected worldwide. According to the Declaration, indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination (Article 3), their cultures have to be protected (Articles 8 and 31), they have the right to revitalise their traditions (Article 11), and to have educational systems of their own (Article 14) –

“States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities” (Article 8, 2 a).

Being part of the dominant culture, we should be concerned to understand the mechanisms of *any action*, which could eventually have the *effect* of destabilising an indigenous culture, and strive to avoid such actions.

¹ Based on language as a parameter; see <ethnologue.org> for the latest figure.

One of the early United Nations conferences focussed on the Freedom of Information.² This topic is very important for the pragmatics of securing traditional cultures. If some conservationists would call for the isolation of traditional cultures, then this would be a violation of the freedom of information and other basic rights, because people would be deprived of their possibility to communicate. This aspect has to be especially taken into consideration with regard to missionary activities: Interestingly, a prohibition of such activities would imply a form of thought control. Those, who prohibit proselytising, implicitly prohibit certain ideas that would reach the people concerned, and would thus decide, what they are permitted to think, and what they should not even know. But an essential effect resulting from the freedom of information is the freedom to decide. This can only be granted if the alternatives are known at all. The more information available, the greater is the freedom of choice. However, when providing any information from culture to culture, mutual respect and acceptance are of outmost importance. If one side dominates the other, specific social-cognitive effects would counteract the freedom of choice. Without mutual respect, a person's decision, made under cultural dominance, cannot be considered free, because it would only be a reaction to that dominance, in order to avoid a feeling of inferiority.

1. 2 Cultural identity

There are some examples of cultures living in contact with other cultures, without giving up their traditions. It is not the contact as such, which destabilises and eventually destroys a culture, but rather the form, in which the contact takes place. Whereas cultural dominance exerts a destructive effect on the dominated culture, mutual respect secures cultural sustainability. Both dominance and respect come into bear through communication. Since indigenous cultures usually have a particular language of their own, nonverbal, visual communication plays a central role. To understand this role, it is, at first, necessary to understand how identity is constituted and communicated.

Only the external, and not the internal, manifestations of identity are relevant within the social context. If someone, for whatever reason, would have the strange idea that he or she were an alien from another planet, then this person would have quite an unusual identity; however, as long as this person would keep this idea for him- or herself, then this identity would be irrelevant to the social context. Only, what others perceive, matters to them. Therefore, the external manifestations are those of importance. It is by way of self-presentation through which a person defines his or her identity. People can present themselves in different ways; the externally manifest identity is malleable. An indigenous person, who moves to a city, usually integrates into this new context, communicating an adapted identity by wearing clothes and submitting him- or herself to the modern standards of visual communication in terms of self-presentation.

² United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information, held at Geneva 23 March - 21 April 1948.

1. 3 Cultural dominance

The dominance exerted by the global culture on indigenous cultures can easily be seen if we examine intercultural contacts taking place in indigenous territories. Usually, the dominant representatives of the global culture do not integrate into the indigenous culture in the same way as indigenous cultures integrate into globalised contexts. In indigenous territories, globalised invaders usually do not unclthe, but rather signal their superiority by presenting themselves with the signs of the industrial culture. It is this social pressure of cultural dominance to which indigenous people are exposed, resulting in a feeling of inferiority in the indigenous persons. They then try to evade this perceived inferiority by changing their external identity manifestation. In previous decades, more and more indigenous persons have worn clothes, but they have not done so out of enjoyment. In fact, if you compare wearing clothes in hot and humid rain forests, with the natural nudity that has always been prevalent and 'fashionable' during the past millennia, then the traditional way of self-presentation is the most comfortable. In these environments, clothing instantly becomes drenched with sweat, in which germs and dermatophytes thrive, thus often leading to serious skin disorders. The imitation of globalised behaviour patterns such as covering the body is rather irrational; it can, however, be explained by the psychological mechanisms of cultural dominance (Groh, 2005b).

In sum, those cultural elements that are relevant to self-definition, when imported by representatives of the dominant culture into an indigenous context, can be adopted by members of the dominated culture, thereby eliminating the indigenous identity and replacing it with a more globalised identity. With a global identity, the indigenous persons will then, in turn, abandon traditional behaviour, including the transgenerational passing-on of specific knowledge. This destabilising influence, exerted on traditional cultures by the dominant culture, contributes, in a causal chain, to the complex problems that have recently started to threaten the planet, such as deforestation, the loss of species, desertification and climate change.

1. 4 Counteracting destabilisation

When persons of the industrial culture come to the territories of indigenous cultures, they may counteract the destructive processes and even contribute to the re-stabilisation of those cultures. If he or she integrates into the particular culture while being there, or, in the case that there has hitherto been some destabilisation, this would encourage the indigenous people not to be ashamed of their traditional appearance. By also appearing in that manner, he or she communicates acceptance and respect towards that culture.³ Incidentally, the same would apply to and be expected from indigenous persons, who come into a globalised context.

However, adapting to the traditional appearance is the most obvious - and most important - aspect of integration. An example of another integrative behaviour aspect would be the application of singing. Indigenous cultures usually have a large

³ Aspects relevant to field research as discussed in this article, have been presented by the author at the 6th African Conference on Psychotherapy (Kampala, Uganda, 14.-16. Dec. 2010).

repertoire of songs. It would not be appropriate, though, to just tell indigenous people to sing. In our own field research we have tried and tested the notion that we should sing some songs.⁴ It is very likely that the indigenous persons will then respond with their own songs. This is a practical application of the principle of reciprocity. It allows both parties to communicate in dignity. If you want to hear indigenous people sing, you should sing yourself. If you want to see indigenous people in their natural state of nudity, you have to be nude yourself. Any other constellation would be asymmetrical, and the indigenous people would be deprived of their dignity. If the visitors were clothed, looking at the naked indigenous persons, then this would be akin to an ethnological zoo. If they would tell them to dance, it would resemble a circus. The minimally invasive approach, in turn, is confidence-building and brings about a situation of mutual respect.

2. A practical example: Tourism as a threat to culture⁵

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries; its economical potential can hardly be overestimated. As a socio-economic system, it reacts in a very sensitive way to contextual changes. If, for example, Mombasa Beach adapts its features too much to other globalised destinations, this can quickly result in a decline of bookings. Until recently, cultural value was added for tourists in Kenya by offering half-day jeep safaris to local villages, where they visited the indigenous people. But this way of using local resources turned out to be unsustainable. As in many other places, the typical culture deteriorated after only a few years of these contacts with tourists. The formerly authentic villages soon became slums, and thus lost their attractiveness. The tour agents then rearranged excursions to more distant villages, knowing full well that this would trigger the same deterioration processes in these places, too. Meanwhile, such trips are carried out by aeroplanes in Kenya.

In this process of cultural loss, the tourism industry's role is quite paradoxical. On the one hand, it depends on culture as a resource, while on the other hand, it introduces external cultural elements into the local cultures. These dominant elements not only eliminate and replace the traditional cultural elements, but they also prove to be incompatible with the particular context.

In the situations of contact between the dominant and a dominated culture, the relation of the parties is very asymmetrical. In a typical situation of contact, when tourists visit an indigenous village, the tourists come as consumers; their sense of entitlement is based on the fact that they have paid for the trip. The locals, in turn, are rather objects, whose self-presentation is merely staged in this arrangement. Such a situation is not really about personal contact, but a business transaction.

As long as the visitors come as dominant representatives of globalisation, who do not integrate into the indigenous culture, there is a high level of invasiveness, triggering the processes of destabilisation. In the present phase of history, mobility on this

⁴ For confidence-building reasons, it is helpful when the researchers are a mixed couple. If the group of researchers is larger, the number of men should generally not be larger than the number of women, as polygyny is common among indigenous cultures.

⁵ Cf. Groh (2005a) for aspects relevant to tourism as discussed in this article.

planet is as high as never before. But this mobility, too, is asymmetrically distributed. In today's world the more mobile people are, the more industrialised their background is. More traditional people, in turn, have less access to effective means of transport. Air transport has increased enormously during the past years, enabling both arranged group and individual backpackers to reach exotic places, and to interfere with the traditional cultures.

2. 1 Socio-cognitive processes

Paradoxically, the labelling of a traditional village as being especially authentic enforces the destruction of its culture. This irrational collective behaviour of tourists is deeply rooted in an identity problem of the industrial culture. Travellers carry out their own culture's inner conflicts at the expense of the indigenous cultures. This does not lead to any solution of the conflict; it only is a symbolic act, which can exacerbate the problem. A driving force of the travellers' interest in exotic, archaic indigenous cultures is a search for their own origin. There is some consensus that in former times, our own culture has been similar to present-day indigenous cultures. Therefore, visiting indigenous peoples is a search for the roots and foundations of one's own identity. As the mythical past is idealised, it is also a search for paradise lost. The Garden of Eden seems therefore accessible - almost: The projection of the own culture's past onto indigenous cultures is amalgamated with the idea of a tropical paradise as the ideal world. Margaret Mead (1928) contributed much to establishing this myth even in the social sciences, which, after unfolding its potential over several decades, was then refuted by Freeman (1983).

The identities of persons of the industrial culture contrast very much to indigenous identities, and the visitors see themselves as quite different from the people that live traditionally. The tourists perceive their own culture as having, long ago abandoned conditions, in which indigenous peoples are perceived. As the visitors identify themselves with their own culture, they see that change from a "primitive" to a "better" state as an active progression, based on a collective decision. The implicit comparative judgement can be cognitively explained as a justification of irreversible progress. Otherwise, it would be contradictory to return back home after the visit, and to continue life in the globalised setting. Both collectively and individually, the visitors are committed to the progress of the industrial culture.

There is an interplay of myths from the collective memory about the others, and the real experience of the other culture. Both are complementary, in a way that the myths fill the gaps between the fragmentary knowledge gathered from reality.⁶ If reality contradicts the myths, then, to a certain extent, the perception can be suppressed or reframed, in order to maintain the projected image. The expectations, which result from these prejudices, filter the perceptions and tint the cognitions. The filtering pertains to unknown cultural elements, which remain inapprehensible and are therefore blotted out (Bartlett, 1932), while the tinting occurs as misinterpretations due to the lack of knowledge of the other culture. The most prevalent misconception, ever since the early-20th-century cultural theories (Freud, 1913; Mead, 1928) is the

⁶ Cf. Kohonen (1988), Palm (1982), for the modelling of cognitive completion. See Lévi-Strauss (1973) for the function of myths.

connotation of indigenous nudity with sexuality. Since this interpretation is dissonant to the industrial culture's values, it yields assumedly necessary corrective measures, ranging from individual tourists' interferences of giving clothes to the indigenous people to misrepresentation in the media coverage (infringing Articles 15 and 16 of the UN Indigenous Rights Declaration by veiling the indigenous persons, since the naked truth is considered unacceptable), to large-scale interventions on the political level.

2. 1. 1 The dominants' valuation of indigenous cultures

Within the well-established field of Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1957), there is an area of research on Effort Justification. This area is relevant to us, because persons of the industrial culture invest time, money and other efforts, when travelling to see an indigenous culture, thereby needing to justify the trip as "good", "nice" and somehow "positive". Systemically, there is a backlash of the fact that after the short encounter, the visitors return home, on their valuation of the indigenous culture. Consciously or subconsciously, the tourists take the position that their life back home must be the "better" one, and that the indigenous culture is "not worth" remaining with. When a person sees a connection between his or her decision and the consequences, then that decision is quite resistant to changes. The decision in favour of the globalised culture prevails, and it would only be revised if any dissonant arguments would be overwhelming (cf. Frey, 1981). Generally, persons strive to reduce dissonances as long as possible, by devaluating the dissonant arguments.

Also, if we examine the encounter situation during the visit of globalised persons to an indigenous people from a Field Theory perspective (Lewin, 1951), then the visitors' cognitions, as well as their overt behaviour, are determined by their role of being representatives of the industrial culture, and this sense of belonging fundamentally determines the valuation of the indigenous culture.

2. 1. 2 Cognitive effects of the dominants' visits to indigenous cultures

The mutual perceptions and attributions go along with attributions of prestige. These assessments are based on inferences regarding the effectiveness, and they also imply comparisons of the cultures involved, as well as the consensual preferences yielded by the comparisons. Among the persons participating in an encounter of cultures, a view will prevail that one culture is superior, and the other is inferior. In effect, the dominant culture will be seen as more attractive than the dominated one.

We have to point out clearly that this notion of prestige and attractiveness is a construct, based on biased interpretations and misinterpretations of fragmentary perceptions, of arbitrary assumptions and projections. Even attributions of effectiveness are made from subjective positions; if, e. g. , a tropical forest dweller would manage to obtain a chain saw, he or she might see it as very effective to cut many trees in a short time and make a lot of money from selling the timber, although, from a less subjective perspective, such damage to the ecosystem would not be effective at all.

While those that are dominant enjoy the visit as consumers, the dominated are exposed to enormous psychological pressure. It is only natural that a person wants to evade such an uncomfortable situation of being the underdog. Indigenous people might expect that in the long run, it could be advantageous for them to change sides, and to join the global culture. They would then not be considered “primitive” and “backward” any more. If they decide to fulfil such a changeover, however, they would themselves have to cope with dissonances, blotting out aspects of thus being part of the culture that plays the leading role of destroying the planet, as well as other critical thoughts. Dissonant cognitions that eventually arise would be reduced by investing efforts in convincing even more indigenous persons to abandon their traditional culture, thus further boosting the global, standard, industrial culture.

Cross-system reflections, though, would be quite dissonant to any decision in favour of the industrial culture. For those who make such a decision, it is therefore more convenient not to weigh the indigenous life expectancy against the casualties due to industrial emissions, traffic, modern warfare and other intentional killings; or the rapid loss of species, desertification and climate change against the indigenous peoples’ sustainable use of nature. Likewise, it would be more convenient not to consider the effect of the industrial culture’s stress on psychological well-being. Frey (1981) has described the strategies of avoiding dissonant information, in order to prevent any destabilisation of one’s own position; people also selectively expose themselves to cognitive input affirming a decision they have made. Persons exposed to dominance only then give in, if they cannot evade convincing arguments (cf. West & Wicklund, 1985). If they can evade, they will stick to their positions and reduce the dissonance. Due to the imbalance of cultural dominance, the decision of members of the industrial culture to remain with their culture is facilitated, as well as the attempt of indigenous persons to change over to the industrial culture. The result is called globalisation.

3. Systemic aspects

One might ask now, what is the problem? People become modernised, “civilised” - so what? But even asking this question reflects those mechanisms of ignoring critical aspects. On plain examination, the industrial culture’s behaviour of massively maltreating this planet, is irrational. Therefore, the industrial culture’s popularity, manifesting itself in globalisation, is just as irrational. But these behavioural patterns are determined by multiple factors, especially by socio-psychological phenomena. In this mechanism, it is crucial that people associate the industrial culture with social valorisation, rather than reflecting about long-term reasonableness.

If we allow ourselves some inconvenient reflection, we might be able to identify some interrelations. For example, indigenous cultures in rainforests constitute systems with their natural environment, which can be stable over millennia, as long as they are not disturbed from outside. Intact rainforest produces considerably more food for humans than could ever be produced by agriculture on the same acreage.⁷ Therefore interventions in terms of establishing agriculture in those regions are quite irrational. We also know about the effects of rainforest destruction on the global climate. Therefore, it makes sense to consider possible countermeasures with regard to these

⁷ Cf. interview with Christopher Uhl in Heine (1991).

interconnected problems. In particular, the aspect of destabilising heretofore intact cultures, thereby starting a causal chain, calls for the avoidance or, at least, minimising of invasiveness. Actually, encountering indigenous cultures would require specific training and qualification. But since mobility and long-distance tourism are part of the global market, such an obligation could hardly be established. Rather, it makes sense to discuss the causal relations, in order to sensitise the globalised world with regard to respecting endangered cultures, and to raise awareness of the problems.

Paradoxically, indigenous peoples are considered as consumables, while at the same time, their existence is almost denied by the industrial culture. The perception of indigenous peoples is usually restricted to moments of amusements, like holiday trips, pictures and film clips, eating out in exotic restaurants, ethno and airport arts and crafts, and other souvenirs. The reality which is ignored still comprises several thousand cultures on this planet. If the globalisation processes continue unabated as at present, then we can expect only ten percent of the presently living cultures to survive the 21st century; about 2000 cultures are seriously under existential threat.⁸ These cultures are usually labelled “primitive”, “backward”, “underdeveloped”, or even “naked savages” on the part of the industrial culture. In the academic discourse, we can find equivalent, though politically correct, paraphrases. Some representatives of the First World are even surprised when they hear about persons, who live outside the industrialised world, who live in natural eco systems in a sustainable way, and who wear little or no clothing. In fact, the industrial culture’s behaviour pattern, both by its individuals and as practised in its policies, is unwittingly involved at removing all of these traditional cultures from the face of the earth. The industrial culture apparently conveniently forgets that other cultures live in a way that has been typical for mankind over the millennia its existence. We are wiping out our historical past.

Brazilian law, for example, distinguishes between “civilised” and “savage” Indians. Only “civilised” Indians, who have adapted to the industrial culture by being clothed, who use money, live in modern settlements, speak the official language, have a job and use modern means of transport, are treated as equal to other citizens, whereas the “savages” are denied their full rights and patronised by the government. Acculturation is seen as a normal process; the imbalance of cultural dominance, the social pressure and the psychological factors behind it are deemed irrelevant and inconsequential. It is not only accepted, but even specific policy that eventually all Indians will become “civilised” Brazilians, without regretting that the world will then be a poorer place, and that destruction will then proceed unresisted, in every way.

Admittedly, eliminating other cultures is nothing new. But with the beginning of European expansion, about 500 years ago, this has increased. And since there are new technological means, it is accelerating almost exponentially. In the 20th century, we have entered a phase of rapid cultural loss. Whereas in the past centuries, relatively few seafarers were subjecting other peoples to duplicity and exploitation, the depletion of other cultures is escalating with the mobility of the industrial culture. How many aircraft are on a long-distance flight right now? How many passengers are being transported from one part of the globe to another in this very moment? How many per year? To what effect has the physical presence of persons, who can afford

⁸ Cf. <worldwatch.org> for current figures.

to be mobile, have on the millions of others, with whom they come into contact? How would they be perceived?

As pointed out above, perception is a key aspect with regard to cultural change. People see each other in very different ways, according to whether the dominant look at the dominated or vice versa. From an indigenous perspective, the dominant are by no means seen as consumables, or as humans, whose existence can be totally ignored, whenever one feels tired of them.

3. 1 Effects of cultural dominance

The loss of cultures is triggered during the actual encounters of dominant and dominated. In these situations, interaction takes place in a very asymmetrical way. While there is a flood of dominant cultural elements, washing away the dominated culture's elements, only very few elements are transferred in the opposite direction. The dominant culture, in a calculating way, only picks those elements that promise further advantage, whereas the dominated culture's wholesale adoption of the dominant culture's elements is driven by the hope of reducing the feeling of inferiority.

Without any contact of culture A with culture B, cultural change would not be launched on either side. Yet, political dogmatics alleges that indigenous cultures would in any case "develop" sooner or later, in the direction of ways of living like the industrial culture. But since they are so "backward", one would have to give them some aid, and help them to eventually become like us. The concept of development, though, is unusable for phenomena of culture, as it would imply targeted processes, which do exist in the realm of biology, but cannot be claimed for social systems. Actually, that concept has the function of a political dogma by which interventions in other cultures are being justified. Policies of "development aid" are clearly orientated at one's own way of living. The unquestioned use of those terms also has an impact on the behaviour of visitors to indigenous communities. Leaving identity-generating cultural elements, like T-shirts, in the jungle, has a destabilising effect on the indigenous cultural systems. Like other aspects of the encounter, the mutual influence, too, is very asymmetrical: Due to their dominant cultural background, the visitors' role model function sets the agenda for globalised objectives. For the indigenous, the touristic encounter has serious consequences, whereas for the visitors, it remains just an episode, just an interesting experience.

Since the industrial culture's mobility is increasing, the number of contact situations increases as well. As a result of these contacts, the process of immiseration is escalating in more and more places, and the dominant culture's only answer to this is to urge the dominated cultures to give up their traditional and hitherto stable ways of living, without providing any sustainable replacement for this loss. The destabilisation is widely ignored by the dominant, and its representatives usually do not consider that they always have an influence, regardless of intent, as it is impossible *not* to behave, since any perceivable behaviour is an act of communication. As long as neither acceptance nor respect are signalled, the influence, which the dominant exert on the dominated, is an extreme psychological and social pressure, which the indigenous will try to escape from and resolve by giving up their culture.

3. 2 Identity destruction is cultural destruction

Cultures are being destroyed by modifying their members' identities. By adopting the dominant cultural elements, the indigenous redefine their selves and assign themselves to the global culture. In this process, previous, traditional, indigenous cultural elements are being eliminated, which means that culturally specific information is being lost in the course of globalisation. Among all communicative acts of defining one's identity, the body-related elements of self-presentation are the most important ones. Compared to language, nutrition or housing, the relatedness to the body implies a constant reference to the individual. Thus, body-related cultural elements are particularly relevant for a person's definition of his or her identity (cf. Burris & Rempel, 2004).

Within the asymmetrical processes of perceiving each other and of transferring cultural elements between the dominant and the dominated, the body plays a key role with regard to cultural change. It is especially the transfer of body-related elements, which causes radical changes of self-definitions. These modifications then have impacts, both in the way how the persons concerned will then perceive themselves, and in the way they are perceived by others. The change of the identity is systemically linked with the change of behaviour patterns, which are aligned and congruous to the new identity. In the present phase of globalisations, it is very common that social systems, after having been annexed into the periphery of the industrial culture, give up their sustainable subsistence, with the result that the system's context also becomes destabilised. The causal connection of cultural loss and ecological problems has been addressed by the United Nations Environment Programme.⁹ These problems, too, have been triggered by the induction of behaviour patterns, which prove to be incompatible with the new context. The industrial culture not only triggers the problems; it is also increasingly affected itself by the repercussions. Within the processes of globalisation, body-related, and thus highly identity-relevant, self-definitions are not only directly imposed on indigenous cultures by visitors, but also through television, Internet, magazines and other media.

4. Culture and the body

To a certain extent, there is some truth in the conception that non-industrialised cultures represent ways of living, as they have formerly existed in our culture as well. A closer look at the processes of change, which started in Europe, evinces that the spectrum reaching from traditional to globalised culture correlates with the covering of the human body. Within the recent historical processes, the body has been put under a taboo, and at the same time, like many other aspects of the system, it has been reinterpreted in a function-oriented way. This functionalised perception of the body has led to its sexualisation. In indigenous cultures, nudity is not associated with sexuality in such a way, as it is done in the recent industrial culture. The sexualised perception on the part of the industrial culture even leads to efforts of covering the indigenous people's bodies, to avoid tourists visiting traditional villages becoming a form of sex tourism. For example, promotion clips for visiting Brazilian Indian villages have been filmed after having covered the indigenous women's breasts with bras.

⁹ UNEP news release, Nairobi, 8. Feb. 2001

Thus, the dominant demand from the dominated to submit to the global standards, is to encourage the feeling of shame and to give up their authentic self-presentation. The dominant do not even consider that the indigenous do not share the sexual interpretation of the uncovered body. That specific perception is a sole problem of the industrial culture. The dominant, however, do not question their own point of view; rather, they impose the problem by negating the indigenous identity definition, without caring about the effects. The supposed problem, though, is only in the eyes of the beholder; it reveals the sexualised way of thinking of the dominant.

The sexualised perception impedes the integrative encounter, as it is an obstacle to an unbiased acceptance of the others. After all, that blurred vision has *resulted* from the dominant culture's standards of covering the body. For the human being, banning the body from everyday life is a deprivation, which leads to the interpretation of naked skin within a very limited scale reaching from "erotic" to "perverse". For the globalised person, even the thought of diverging from the norm of covering the body is very emotionalised. Yet, having such a blurred vision can be evadable. The perceptions of the human body vary within the industrial culture. In continental Europe especially, health consciousness often goes along with being naked in saunas, on beaches and other resorts, without any sexual implication. So, even in the industrial culture, there is a segment of people, who generally live very consciously. Among these persons, there are certainly some with profound interest in indigenous cultures, with real acceptance and a willingness to integrate into the traditional context when being there.

Men and women are concerned to different degrees by the industrial culture's taboo of the human body. When indigenous men, wrested away from their tribal culture, have to labour in plantations or harbours, they usually exchange their loincloth for a pair of shorts. The area of the body to be covered remains the same. For indigenous women, who take up labour outside their home culture, that situation is quite different, as, in the present course of globalisation, they are subject to the imposition of a taboo on the female breast as an additional body area. This phenomenon appears globally with such consistency, that it is a marker, which enables us to assess the state of a culture from the perspective of cultural psychology. In non-globalised societies, the breast is not associated with sexuality, but rather with motherliness, nourishment, feelings of security and other affectionate aspects. Destroying female self-confidence by imposing shame on something, which throughout the millennia of human history had respectful and emotionally positive connotations, plays a key role in the destabilisation of indigenous cultures. Certainly, most female tourists do not realise the consequences when thoughtlessly, they act as a role model, promoting the breast taboo towards indigenous women.

Historically, the industrial culture's breast taboo is only a recent phenomenon. As Hobsbawm (1978) has shown, the restructuring of the society during the Industrial Revolution had a strong impact on the conceptualisation of the body. The human being became an integral component of the increasingly mechanised production processes. In this phase of history, aspects of life quality were considered quite irrelevant. Men were demanded to sacrifice a maximum of their time and power. Vegetating in backyards, the sole function of their families was to keep the system running and to procure supplies of manpower. During that time, the conceptualisation of the human body underwent a drastic change: According to Hobsbawm (1978), up

to this time, the female body was seen in a very positive, though non-sexual way, as it was thematised e. g. in allegorical contexts; but now, during the Industrial Revolution, it was dislodged by the male worker's body. Like just previously on Delacroix's « La liberté guidant le peuple », Marianne had mounted the barricades bare-breasted, it was now men, who stood there in that manner. From then on, the female body became increasingly a taboo and therefore covered. From a psychological perspective, this covering is the implementation of de-emotionalisation. The male body, in contrast, became publicly functionalised as representing the hero workman.

During that period of industrialisation, clothing suddenly became easily available, and the workers themselves and their families were the primary consumers. The possession of clothing, on the one hand, had the function of signalling prestige; but on the other hand, the covering of the body was an irrational act, which, from its beginning, implied a loss of values, which is intertwined with deep psychological functions.

In today's globalised culture, the body concept and the way the body is treated is not appropriate to our species; the human body has been alienated from nature. Now, the body is subject to shameful connotations, it is regarded under functional and commercial aspects, which especially deprives women of their dignity, which they used to have in pre-industrial societies. In the periphery of the industrial culture, where indigenous societies are being annexed to the globalised system, the situation is very much comparable to the conditions of the European industrialisation around 1800. Indigenous autonomy stands no chance, as long as the indigenous identities are being eliminated by the external induction of global forms of bodily self-presentation.

4. 1 Dominant argumentations

It is evident that there is some irrational resistance on the part of the dominant culture against accepting indigenous cultures, or even integrating into them during a visit. Behaviour, which is different from what one has internalised during one's own socialisation, is anxiety-provoking. The dominant rhetoric is not very objective, but rather affective, characterised by scoffing about the idea of integrating into an indigenous setting. This is psychologically explicable as a defence mechanism to anxiety with regard to the unknown. When the scoffing itself is made a subject of discussion, then the dominant typically argue that the pace of globalisation could not be halted, one could not change history and the like. But interestingly, the course of history itself proves these arguments wrong. In southern Africa, for example, authentic indigenous culture had much dwindled during the Apartheid time. Any attempts to restore those cultures would have had to expect that mockery, with the note, "that train has left the station", "one cannot turn the clock back", etc. Yet, after the end of Apartheid, traditional culture has been reconstructed to a large extent, especially in the Zulu region, on the level of bodily semiotics in terms of the identity-relevant self-presentation. Today, traditional festivities are again celebrated by tens of thousands with the authentic bodily appearance.

When arguing with the dominant, it is helpful to point out that any integration during a visit to an indigenous culture is a way of communicating respect towards that culture, like wearing a kippah in the synagogue or entering a mosque without shoes.

4. 2 Training and education

Training students for field work in indigenous contexts can collide with the standards of globalised contexts. A major obstacle in this respect is the association of nudity with sexuality. This association is a modern phenomenon. Nudity as such has not been equated with sexuality throughout the history of mankind. The primarily sexual interpretation of nudity is a result of the body covering norms, which have started to spread since the onset of the industrial revolution. In some places, these norms have been established some generations ago, whereas some indigenous places have not yet been accessed. However, since academic education takes place in the globalised world, precautions need to be taken to avoid the collision of the integrative behaviour, which is appropriate for indigenous contexts, with certain global standards. First of all, only those persons should be allowed to participate in research in traditional indigenous contexts, who have no difficulties and reservations in behaving absolutely normal in situations without clothes. To filter out persons not qualified for such field work, there needs to be a practical part of training with simulations of particular field situations. In these simulations, the trainees should prove to be able to communicate normally, and also carry out data collections like in the real field. The setting for this practical training needs to be absolutely secure and guarded, in order to prevent any abuse.¹⁰ As we have been carrying out these seminars for many years, we have found that students who have passed this training successfully, are apt to participate in excursions to indigenous cultures, and that one can rely on them to behave properly in the field.

In such a training, some obstacles are to be expected, since the students have been socialised in a globalised context and therefore might at first automatically reject the traditional standards of the indigenous culture, steered by affect, but often repercussively rationalised with mere projections, attributions and interpretations. However, logics can be reinstalled when the problems and interrelations are reflected from a meta-level. By doing so, it has to be especially pointed out that general sexual connotations of nudity, as they can be found in the globalised culture, are not applicable to indigenous cultures. As the theories of Social Embodiment (Barsalou et al., 2003; Niedenthal et al., 2005) have made clear, it is not only that the psychological state is reflected in the bodily state, but also the converse: The bodily state decisively influences the psychological state. Students usually confirm after the training that they have gained an entirely new way of seeing the world.

In these seminars, it is also being pointed out that with regard to methodological aspects of culture-related research, it would not make sense to influence a culture, which is to be studied. Bearing in mind the mechanisms of cultural identity definitions and their destabilisation by cultural dominance, then, consequently, we have to avoid the import of identity-relevant cultural elements into traditional cultures. This means

¹⁰ Resorts controlled by the International Naturist Federation usually provide such a security.

that we have to adapt to the traditional appearance, and abstain from veiling our bodies as we are used to in the globalised setting.

Once students have decided to take part in this training in full, free, prior and informed consent, they then are required to apply the new skills without compromise. Special care should be taken not to import or further add the breast taboo to indigenous cultures because of its particularly destabilising effect. Therefore, bras or any other covers, which communicate that women should be ashamed of the breast, have to be strictly avoided.

5. Indigenous cultural autonomy

To secure and sustain indigenous cultures, it is absolutely necessary that the dominant culture pays its respect to the indigenous peoples. It is the dominant's responsibility *not* to introduce the signs of dominance into the indigenous cultures, in order to prevent further destabilisations. Integration into an indigenous culture does not mean that the visitors have to undergo bodily modifications with decorative scars, labrets, or similar things. It rather means that bodily redefinitions by inducing or reinforcing covers should not be induced. It is important to keep in mind that

- there are effects of dominance between industrial and indigenous culture,
- behaviour modifications are determined by the imbalance of dominance,
- representatives of the industrial culture always are role models,
- modifications of the body concept profoundly affect the identity.

Anyhow, the dominant visitors can counteract these destabilisations by orientating their bodily appearance towards the authentic, traditional, culturally specific standards of bodily appearance. If the indigenous culture is already destabilised, dominant visitors, as representatives of the destructive culture, should do rescue work by reintroduction and encouragement of the traditional appearance, thus strengthening the cultural self-confidence of the indigenous persons with this act of acknowledgment and confirmation. Intervention, targeted at maintaining indigenous culture, has to focus on the body, because it is the visual communication of bodily self-presentation, which induces the destabilisation. First, the individual identities of the persons, which compose the indigenous culture, are being destabilised; then, the destabilisation of its members' identities eventually leads to the death of the culture.

All these mechanisms, those of destabilisation, as well as those of counteracting the destabilisation, are phenomena of visual communication. Intervention should be restricted to this realm, because the freedom of intellectual exchange has to be left untouched. But intellectual exchange can only then be free, if no dominance, but rather acceptance is communicated. And such a communication of acceptance takes place on the level of visual communication. The presentation of the body communicates a person's affiliation, which, in turn, implies, for the good, acceptance, or, for the worst, rejection.

6. Synopsis and outlook

The global industrial culture exerts an extreme dominance on traditional indigenous cultures. Persons from such a dominated culture, who are exposed to the cultural dominance, experience strong feelings of inferiority, which they try to avoid by adapting their self-presentation to the dominant culture. By using clothes, they would then define themselves as being globalised. This adoption implies a change from a traditional to a modern identity. Since cultures consist of persons, the deletion of the traditional identities brings about the death of the traditional culture. We, as representatives of the global culture, should *observe ethical norms*, and should therefore avoid making people feel inferior; we should certainly not destabilise or even destroy a culture. Rather, we should transform mutual acceptance and respect into action.

Since 2007, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is effective as part of International Law. We all should *respect the law*, and therefore avoid any action that could have the effect of destabilising an indigenous culture.

Since the consequent integrating into the traditional context requires the refraining from wearing clothes during the sojourn, anyone, who is not capable of behaving normally under these circumstances, should not go to an indigenous culture's territory. It would not be acceptable to make compromises, which would entail the possibility of destabilising the indigenous culture, just because a dominant person would not be willing to cope with his or her own problems. The negative connotation of indigenous nudity only exists in the eyes of the beholder; there is no reason to impose it on the cultures concerned. We should be well aware that with the elimination of indigenous identities, further processes are triggered, which contribute to the global ecological, and other, problems.

We, as part of the dominant culture, should be aware of our responsibilities. We should make use of our means to investigate the underlying processes of cultural change, and make sure that our approaches are culturally sustainable. A rational discourse about the complex interdependencies, along with the sincere determination to counteract the loss of cultures, could give hope that the destructive processes be halted.

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