Globalization, Anthropology of

1. The Disciplinary Context

Anthropological interest in globalization is difficult to trace precisely but can be recognized as early as Appadurai’s work on the global cultural economy (1990, 1996), Hannerz’s analysis of cultural complexity and creolization (1987, 1992), and Friedman’s work linking global capitalism and cultural processes (1988, 1994), all of which built on earlier anthropological interest in cultural exchange and world systems. From the start, such work has been part of two sets of scholarly exchanges and debates. The first links anthropology with a wider debate about globalization in other social science fields, notably geography, political science, and sociology. The other is a dialogue within anthropology with Boasian traditions in the study of diffusion, cultural change, and culture contact and with longstanding interests in problems of scale, social cohesion, and structural change made globalization a subject of growing interest after 1990. In other parts of the world, such as Latin America, Africa, and India, the anthropological interest in globalization was more closely linked to problems of ethics, development, and inequality.

In spite of these various currents of research and theorization within which the anthropological interest in globalization has developed, from the beginning there were serious doubts about whether globalization by its nature was a topic suitable to the special strengths of anthropology in the study of intimate social relations and of societies governed by nonmarket social principles. Many of these anxieties have been translated into methodological concerns, reflected in a significant body of methodological work about how anthropology ought to address the emergent world of globalization (e.g., Fox 1991). There is still a considerable body of opinion among professional anthropologists that globalization may well be a mere trend, an artifact of academic fashion, and that in any case, it is not an ideal subject for anthropological research because of its conceptual and social scale. But this rearguard anxiety, not always easy to distinguish

other scholars, trying to understand the processes that led to the breakdown of the Soviet world and to guess at the shape of things to come. They soon found themselves having to engage powerful perspectives on the emergent world order, which came out of the Marxist tradition in geography (exemplified by Harvey 1989), by a renewed interest in global political culture, exemplified by the polemical and much discussed work of Samuel Huntington (1996), and some prescient studies of the new forms being taken by global capitalism in the last decades of the twentieth century (Lash and Urry 1987). In addition, anthropologists found themselves in a rich, sometimes competitive dialogue with scholars in literary and cultural studies, notably those influenced by British cultural Marxism, and most powerfully represented by Stuart Hall (1986). In addition, the publication of Benedict Anderson’s landmark study of nationalism (1983) provoked a strikingly wide debate about the links between politics, the imagination, and national identification. These stimuli helped to shape anthropological research on globalization, which in many ways is marked by the ongoing effort to link broad structures and processes in the world economy to the subtleties of communication, interpretation, and translation that govern everyday life in all societies.

Within anthropology, the study of globalization built on several well-established currents of interest. In the United States, the study of globalization fit well with Boasian traditions in the study of diffusion, cultural change, and culture contact and with a longstanding interest in urban settings and complex societies. In Europe, anthropologists were slower to take an interest in globalization, but here too longstanding interests in problems of scale, social cohesion, and structural change made globalization a subject of growing interest after 1990. In other parts of the world, such as Latin America, Africa, and India, the anthropological interest in globalization was more closely linked to problems of ethics, development, and inequality.

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from fear of disciplinary failure, has not prevented a rich set of theoretical debates and empirical studies from emerging out of anthropological traditions, both in the Atlantic world and beyond. These studies, largely a product of anthropological work in the 1990s, are discussed in the following sections.

2. **Global Cultural Flows**

The image of ‘flow’ has been a central trope of anthropological work on globalization. In the work of Appadurai (1990, 1996), the idea of ‘flow’ was used to capture a complex dynamic in which objects, ideas, ideologies, technologies, and images were placed in a single economy of circulation, with an eye to distinguishing different emergent mosaics of cultural form and social design. In Hannerz’s use of this concept (1992, 1996), it was fruitfully linked to Kroeber’s idea about large-scale civilizational and interactional spheres—ecumenes—as well as to ideas about creolization, cosmopolitization and the professional networks associated with rapid flows of cultural commodities.

In these early usages of the idea of flow, and in subsequent elaborations of them by others, the idea of flow was sharpened to redress the assumption that cultural flows in the era of globalization were unrestricted in scope and range. A salutary emphasis on boundaries, limitations, selectivities, and exclusions reappeared, thus placing the classic debate between Marxist and cultural approaches once again at the center of attention. This broad interpretive struggle continues, and the choices it poses are reflected in many studies associated with the anthropology of globalization, on such subjects as migration (Basch et al. 1994), nationalism (Chatterjee 1993), colonialism and postcolonialism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000a), media (Feld 1999), diaspora (van der Veer 1995), and markets (Hart 1999).

The positive contribution of the idea of flows was to open up new questions about the relation between legal and illicit flows of commodities and persons, about the changing nature of borders and boundaries, about the implications of new regimes of financial circulation and cybercommerce, and about the evolution of new forms of diasporic identification and mobile tradition building. The image of flows also opens a potential conversation, yet to be fully exploited, between economists and anthropologists on the question of the changes in the world economy suggested by the idea of globalization, and of the best ways of measuring their scale and significance. In a general way, the engagement with cultural flows, their associated economies and interpretations, has decisively marked a shift, in which anthropologists are no longer confined to the study of simple market societies but are addressing such complex phenomena as cybercommerce, intellectual property, and new forms of genetic engineering and marketing. Likewise, the anthropological focus on cross-border flows, as we will see shortly, has opened up a useful conversation between anthropologists, political theorists and sociologists on new forms of citizenship and sovereignty.

Above all, the focus on flows, regardless of context, commodity, or sphere, has brought anthropology back to one of its earlier insights, namely that most human societies have always been in interactive relations with others, forming spheres of exchange and circulation. Thus the images of social stability, impermeable boundaries, and natural divisions between ethnic groups, polities, and communities, sometimes implicit in anthropological practice, have been put under sharp scrutiny. In turn, the widespread recognition that societies in the era of globalization are inevitably parts of wider circulatory systems and networks, has posed new challenges for how anthropologists will need to theorize classical models of cohesion, consensus, and order. At the end of the twentieth century, there is some uncertainty about how to reconcile the undisputed significance of large scale cultural differences with the reality of the velocity of cross-border flows and the uneven thickness of the membranes between societies, whether organized as nation states or not. It seems probable that the question of how social order and cultural coherence in lived communities are maintained in the face of complex and uneven cross-border flows will be a major theoretical challenge for twenty-first century anthropology.

Many of these concerns have produced a special interest in the anthropology of nationalism and a series of contested views about the salience, form, and future of the nation state as a form of global political organization. The pendulum appears to swing between those (both inside and outside anthropology) who predict the early demise of the nation state, and those who see it as growing stronger than ever. Sometimes these debates are reflections of actual differences between existing states and sometimes they are the result of blurring the lines between nations and nationalism on the one hand, and states and their powers on the other. The emerging consensus seems to be that while nation states are unlikely to disappear in the near future, they are evolving their own powers in a transformed ecology of sovereignty. This ecology is affected by changes in the velocity of global capital flows, in the scale and speed of cross-border shadow economies, and in the geography of dual, mobile, and diasporic political identifications among citizens. These processes are discussed further below (see Sect. 4).

The interest in various forms of global cultural flow, and in the nonisomorphic relationship between them, has provoked a strong debate about whether, and the extent to which, globalization is a new social regime. Many voices within anthropology argue vigorously that globalization is no more than a semiotic con-
siracy of the media and of global capital and its allies in the world of development. In this view, globalization is only a clever way to repackage colonialism, imperialism, modernization, or various combinations of these ideologies. It is old wine in new bottles. This view runs into the difficulty of having to accommodate too many new animals into an existing theoretical Ark, and suffers from the further disability that it does not provide any criteria for recognizing genuine systemic change. It ends history in the name of theory. The more widespread band of opinion among anthropologists is that something surely has changed. The challenge is, as always, to establish what has changed and how it affects the things that have not changed. Thus, there is a renewed interest in how identities are negotiated across multiple locations, how existing structures like witchcraft (Geschiere 1997) become vehicles and sites for new anxieties and energies, and of how new legal and economic arrangements (those sometimes lumped together under the rubric of neoliberalism) call forth new perceptions of danger, wealth, and risk (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000b).

Finally, ideas and debates surrounding the idea of global cultural flows have cast fresh light on a classic concern of anthropology, namely the process of identification and the production of identities. These processes have to be reexamined in a world characterized by massive information flow, heightened media images of life possibilities for ordinary people, and new fantasies of wealth and mobility. The rapid growth in mass-market media penetration across national boundaries, the associated growth in the battle between global and national media barons, the projected increase in various kinds of bandwidth, and the emergent possibility of new, hybrid instruments for cheap, high-speed communication, all combine to change the grounds on which stable cultural identities are produced and secured. Likewise, these factors make it impossible to presume the image of the local as an unchanging ground against which the tableau of global change is played out. Indeed, many anthropologists now have come to take as great an interest in “the production of locality” (Appadurai 1996) as in the dynamics of globalization.

With its special interest in language, everyday life, and small-scale social interaction, anthropology is evolving a special purchase on the vast terrain represented by globalization, by paying particular attention to the vagaries of translation and localization and to the special role of language and semiotic mediation in producing new forms of lived experience. This has resulted in a sustained effort to examine the cultural dimension of objects and technologies that have their primary home in the spheres of law, science, and the market. Therefore, anthropologists at the beginning of the twenty-first century study the organ trade, refugee incarceration, NGOs, musical copyright law, and derivatives, to name just a few examples of social and technical forms whose cultural design is sometimes overlooked. In this proliferation of topics (some of them addressed by other authors in the Encyclopedia), there are some major crosscutting themes, three of which are briefly discussed below.

3. Heterogeneity or Homogeneity?
Most anthropologists share the widespread presumption that globalization is a new phase in the integration of the world economy, principally powered by new scales and speeds in the circulation of financial capital and the associated explosion in electronic communication technologies. When we recall that the major models of global economic processes have come out of the Marxist tradition, it helps to explain why there is a tendency among some anthropologists to argue that globalization is no more than a new phase in the generally history of capitalist commodification. From this follows the possibility that, from a cultural point of view, the forces of commodification will produce increasing levels of cultural homogenization and social standardization, particularly in the realm of media icons, social styles, and consumption values. The further extrapolation, rarely stated explicitly, is that these processes will in turn erase cultural differences both within and across societies. This is the nightmare of globalization as coca-colonization (Hollywood, McDonald’s, and Disney are the favored icons of this line of speculation). Yet the evidence that societies appropriate various forms of commodification in their own terms, that media messages are downloaded idiosyncratically, that weapons of standardization are frequently subverted to produce further brand differentiation, and that the best laid plans of the standardizers are frequently thwarted by local entrepreneurs and consumers, is mounting.

A splendid example of this process of differentiation is provided in a collection of anthropological essays on the role and style of McDonald’s, as it functions in six distinct East Asian settings (Watson 1997). The ethnographic essays in this collection illustrate that, as a global profit-making organization, McDonald’s is certainly eager to create uniformity in its products and in its outlets wherever possible. But the essays also shows that in each of these settings McDonald’s encounters a quite different set of needs, anxieties, and possibilities and is drawn into a specific local mosaic of social patterns and cultural orientations, involving age, leisure, work, and freedom. Though McDonald’s is a heavily capitalized multinational corporation, with an unerring eye for its local and global profits, its sensitivity to local markets inevitably contributes to the emergence of different desires and practices in its outlets. This does not make it any less a global corporation, but its strategies are regularly bent to fit local wishes and projects. However, these essays also show that this is not a simple matter of Goliath being repackaged to suit David, culturally speaking. In fact,
what McDonald’s produces in these settings are new and unintended styles and contexts for consumption, for sociality, and for public interaction, each culturally distinct but not in any obvious or predictable way. Many other studies, especially in the sphere of consumption (involving clothing, music, food, leisure, and housing) also confirm this process.

Heterogenization is not a mechanical product of the sphere of consumption. It is itself produced by local makers of ideas, images, and commodities who give to the culture industries of different societies and nations their own distinctive stamp. Thus, anthropologists have been able to show that the simple distinction that places global producers and uniformity on the one side, and local consumers and difference on the other, is overdrawn. We have a growing series of studies of cultural production worldwide, especially in the areas of music, film, and advertising, which let us look into the sites and institutions through which global commodities are locally interpreted by producers as well as consumers. The study of ‘world music’ by ethnomusicologists is perhaps the best developed of these subfields. In general, these studies have produced a broad consensus that cultural differentiation tends to outpace homogenization, even in this most interactive of economic epochs. Naturally, this conclusion fits with the methodological and ethical proclivities of anthropology, with its professional investment in cultural difference and its ethical commitment to cultural diversity. Nevertheless, there appears to be substantial empirical basis for this consensus. But anthropological interest has by no means focused solely on the good news of cultural differentiation and has not been uncritically celebratory in its treatment of globalization, as the following section will show.

4. Sovereignty, Citizenship, and Violence

Anthropologists have not failed to notice that the world of global cultural flows is hardly free of suffering, injustice, and dislocation. They have certainly been aware that the incidence and brutality of forced population movements have in some respects increased, producing many pockets of human dislocation and frequently of ethnic violence. They have paid attention to the dilemmas of proletarian labor migrants, who struggle with their own translocal loyalties—frequently to religious formations which are themselves increasingly transnational in scope—against the pressures of the varied ideologies of cultural and legal inclusion which characterize their new homes.

Considered transnationally, poorer migrants face bewildering new combinations of democratic ideology and racist reality. In some cases, such as the oil kingdoms of the Middle East, nonimmigrants monopolize most of the benefits of citizenship. In others, the benefits of citizenship are more widely shared, but everyday racism is a constant threat. In some cases, all refugees are drawn into multinational ethnic wars (as in Central Africa in recent years), while in other cases, the revitalization of longstanding ethnonational boundaries flies in the face of intermarriage and ethnic mixing as social realities. In Central Europe after the death of Tito, the new national constitutions frequently encouraged political campaigns that exacerbated genocidal identities parading as ‘primordial.’ Many nation states now practice various forms of cultural fundamentalism and majoritarianism, as they struggle for new forms of legitimation in a global economy. In the process, they increasingly both produce and demonize ‘minorities.’ In many of these cases, language, blood, and race are overdetermined icons of peoplehood which force anthropologists to reconcile their own knowledge of the fragility and historicity of these constructions against the popular, lived sense that these realities are timeless, natural, and nonnegotiable.

As anthropologists examine these bloody sites of ethnic violence and violent social purification (Appadurai 1998, Das 1995, Feldman 1991, Malkki 1995), they find themselves having to study a variety of antecedent and emergent social realities. These include new forms of ‘flexible’ citizenship (Ong 1999); new ideologies of citizenship and law (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000b, Sassen 1996); new battles over indigenes and outsiders (Meyer and Geschiere 1999); and new patterns of state-sponsored violence and legality. In engaging with these topics, anthropologists discover that they need to link longstanding professional interests in conflict, bodily ritual, mythologies of origin, and ethnocultural ideology, with new regimes of law, incarceration, borders, and migration.

In particular, anthropologists are now tackling the ways in which the forms of violence and dislocation produced by globalization may be related to new structures of sovereignty, new forms of nationally sponsored globalization, and new niches for the location of the global economy. They thus find themselves in a productive dialogue with scholars in adjacent fields who are making important contributions to these subjects (Castells 1997, Held and McGrew 2000, Sassen 1998). This engagement promises a more sophisticated answer to the question of how new forms of global linkage are also producing new forms of cultural fundamentalism, a question to which somewhat Manichean answers have been provided in the popular media and its favored public intellectuals in many national contexts.

In the United States, and to some extent in Europe, there have been strong alarms raised by economists and development specialists to the effect that globalization is producing both greater wealth and greater inequality. Yet, in popular opinion, especially among the wealthiest countries and classes, there seems to be an emergent sense that globalization is a world of the victors in the Cold War and their global allies who
have cracked the codes of the global market, the information economy, and the new international order. The losers are frequently viewed as cultural holdouts at best, cultural terrorists at worst, people who have not understood the new alphabet of the globalized world. Anthropological work on globalization, in this context, has a challenge and an obligation. The challenge is to take its classical strengths in the study of intimate relations, everyday life, and cultural difference and use them to cast light on circulatory processes that yield local and global results simultaneously. The obligation is to provide a way of thinking about why this era of global integration is yielding at least as much genocidal violence as it is democratic voice. That may not seem like a particularly anthropological obligation, but given that anthropology has long tried to create new ways of showing how broad human processes are found in translation, globalization may need anthropology at least as much as vice versa.

5. Looking Ahead

It is not easy to predict what topics will find special favor among anthropologists interested in globalization in the coming decades. It is likely that some of the broad themes discussed in this essay will continue to elicit empirical research and theoretical debate, but it also seems likely that the institutional and geographical range of the anthropological debate is likely to widen. Research institutes, conferences, workshops, publications, and translations concerned with anthropological contributions to the study of globalization are appearing in Brazil, Turkey, Hong Kong, India, and in many other sites outside of the North Atlantic region. In these many sites, anthropologists are building their own critical resources as they engage with specific kinds of national debate, cultural conflict, and research tradition (Appadurai 1999). Whatever the individual outcomes of this process, two results seem likely. Anthropology is unlikely to remain a bystander in any important national debate about globalization. Moreover, these debates are increasingly unlikely to be determined by scholars, projects, and institutions confined to Europe and the United States. What more appropriate topic could there be for international research than globalization, and what opportunity could be more appropriate for anthropology to contribute to a global scholarly debate about the world we are about to build?

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Globalization: Geographical Aspects

1. Introduction

Space, place, distance, proximity, maps, boundaries, territoriality, and spatiality. These are some of the keywords of geography; keywords that distinguish the interest of geographers in the phenomenon of globalization, from that of others in the social sciences. The distinction is not clear cut by any means, not least because ‘globalization’ so centrally evokes geography: the rise of world-scale processes and phenomena, the intensification of linkage between distant places and cultures, and the associated unmaking and remaking of territorial boundaries and identities. Perhaps where the key difference lies, however, is that the other social sciences are not interested primarily in the intrinsic spatiality of globalization.

In economics and business studies, for example, studies of globalization focus on the implications of the borderless economy (driven by international market integration, global flows of money and information, and transnational production and regulation) on national and subnational economic sovereignty, competitiveness, and growth. The optimists celebrate the offer of new market opportunities, the pessimists warn of the real and discursive dangers of neoliberalism and international dependency, the historically minded reassure us that there is nothing much new (Drache 1999, Hirst and Thompson 1996), while the measured observers of qualitative change reveal the new aspects of combined and uneven development (Dicken 1998, Held et. al. 1999).

In politics and international relations, the debate has centered on the erosion/reforulation of the nation-state as a unit of authority, following the rise of nonstate institutions of regulation and governance, and on the challenge to citizenship and democracy posed by the rise of transnational political organisations (e.g., global NGOs) as well as plural, non-national sources of political rights and identification (e.g., EU citizenship). Here too there is no consensus. Some herald a new era of reduced nation state influence, eroded national welfare commitment and crisis of parliamentary democracy (Garrett 1998), some assert the continuity of national social models (Hay and Marsh 1999, Weiss 1998), others signal the rise of new forms of unsettled jostling between the nation-state and other organizations organized at local, national, and international scales (Jessop 1994, Keil 1998), while others still find new prospects for cosmopolitan government, democracy, and civic mobilization (Held et al. 1999, Scholte 2000).

In social anthropology and media and cultural studies, the attention has fallen on the implications of global consumerism, media communication, and international mobility and cultural mixture for individual and social identities and lifestyles in different local settings. Early warnings of the erosion of local difference under the weight of the same world products and consumption norms and the same global corporations (i.e., the so-called MacDonaldization of society), have given way to sensitivity to the persistence of local difference, but also the nuances of local change resulting from heightened global exposure and virtual and real linkage with different parts of the world (Robertson 1992, Albrow 1996, Hannerz 1996, Morley and Robins 1995).

Geography, to repeat, is everywhere in these studies of globalization, but the spatiality of social relations, or put differently, how place, space, and spatial difference are being reconstituted is not the prime interest. Geographical theory, in contrast, has been concerned with the spatiality of the contemporary world, and is interested in understanding whether places—cities, regions, and nations—are perforating as geographically contained spaces, how the insertion of places into geographically stretched relations matters, and how new geographical scales of organization and influence associated with globalization are challenging old scales of identification and action.

This geographical imagination, to be clear, is not confined to the discipline of geography. In fact, some of the most influential accounts of the spatiality of globalization have come from social theory outside the discipline. For example, the sociologists Giddens and Held have long argued that a key aspect of globalization is spatial connectivity and reach, such that the conceptualization of place/locale as ‘in here’ happenings and space as ‘out there’ happenings is no longer tenable. Held (1995, p. 20), building on Giddens’s idea of contemporary time-space distanciation (Giddens 1990), proposes:

...globalisation can be taken to denote the stretching and deepening of social relations and institutions across space and time such that, on the one hand, day-to-day activities are increasingly influenced by events happening on the other side of the globe and, on the other hand, the practices and decisions of local groups can have significant global reverberations.

The sociologist Therborn (1998, p. 7) too asserts that globalization should force us to think seriously...