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The Global Situation

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The Global Situation

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Click on worldmaking.interconnections. Your screen fills with global flows.

Imagine a creek cutting through a hillside. As the water rushes down, it carves rock and moves gravel; it deposits silt on slow turns; it switches courses and breaks earth dams after a sudden storm. As the creek flows, it makes and re-makes its channels.

Imagine an internet system, linking up computer users. Or a rush of immigrants across national borders. Or capital investments shuttled to varied offshore locations. These world-making “flows,” too, are not just interconnections but also the recarving of channels and the remapping of the possibilities of geography.

Imagine the landscape nourished by the creek. Yet even beyond the creek’s “flows,” there are no stable landscape elements: Trees sprout up, transforming meadows into forests; cattle browse on saplings, spreading meadows past forest edges. Nor are forests and meadows the only way to divide up the landscape. Consider the perspective of the earthworm, looking for rich soils, or the weed, able to flourish in both meadow and forest, though only when each meets certain conditions. To tell the story of this landscape requires an appreciation not only of changing landscape elements but also of the partial, tentative, and shifting ability of the storyteller to identify elements at all.

Imagine ethnic groups, corporations, refugees, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), nation-states, consumers, social movements, media moguls, trade organizations, social scientists, international lawyers, and bankers, all swarming alongside creeks and earthworms to compose the landscape, to define its elements, carve its channels of flow, and establish its units of historical agency. We live in a time of self-consciousness about units and scales: Where shall we draw the boundaries of regions? How are local communities composed? And, most important for this essay, what is this thing we call the globe? If social scientists have had a lot to say about these questions of late, so have other people. Contestants form themselves in shifting alliances, mobilized for reasons of power, passion, discipline, or dis-ease and mounting campaigns for particular configurations of scale. Some of the most excited campaigning in the last 25 years has concerned the globe, that planet-wide space for all humanity and its encompassing habitat. Moreover, in the last ten years, talk about the globe has heated up to the point that many commentators imagine a global *era*,

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a time in which no units or scales count for much except the globe. "Globalization," the process taking us into that era, has caught up enthusiasts ranging from corporate managers to social activists, from advertisers to cultural theorists.

For many years, the creek makes only gradual changes in the landscape. Then a storm sweeps the flux beyond its accustomed boundaries, shifting every bank and eddy. Trees are uprooted, and what was once on the right side is now on the left. So, too, the social world has shifted around us. Market enthusiasms have replaced communism; national governments prostrate themselves before international finance; social movements market "culture" on a global scale. How should social scientists analyze these changes? This question is muddled by the fact that social science changes too. "Global" practices challenge social scientists to internationalize their venues, as North American and European scholars are brought into discussion with scholars from the South. Social science theories no longer take Western genealogies for granted but, rather, require fluency with a wider range of perspectives, from Latin American dependency theories to South Asian subaltern studies. The excitement of this internationalization of scholarship encourages many of us to throw ourselves into endorsements of globalization as a multilayered evolution, drawing us into the future. Sometimes our critical distance seems less useful than our participation. And yet, can we understand either our own involvement or the changing world without our critical skills? This essay argues that we cannot.

Is Globalization like Modernization?

Consider another moment in which social science was remade together with the world: the period after World War II, when social scientists were called on to participate in the international project of modernization and development. Modernization frameworks brought together scholars, policy makers, politicians, and social activists in a common program for social betterment. It offered the hope of moving beyond the colonial segregation of Europeans and natives to a world in which every nation could aspire to the highest standards of livelihood and culture. Even social scientists who feared its destructiveness or despised its imperiousness thus came to imagine modernization as the world-making process of the times. The charisma of the notion of an era of globalization is comparable in many ways to the charm of modernization in that postwar period. Like modernization theory, the global-future program has swept together scholars and public thinkers to imagine a new world in the making. Do globalization theories contain pitfalls for engaged social scientists similar to those of modernization theory?

Modernization, like globalization, was seductive. It was many years before social scientists moved beyond endorsements, refusals, and reforms of modernization to describe modernization as a set of *projects* with cultural and institutional specificities and limitations. Only when the shine of modernization began to fade did scholars ask how it managed to capture the hopes and dreams of so many experts, how its formulas were communicated to such a variety of social groups and within such a diversity of situations, and how its features were transformed in

the process for multiple uses. Recent literature on modernization in its guise as “development” for the Third World is exemplary in this regard. A number of analysts, including Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1990), have shown the discursive specificities of development, which often thrived more through the coherence of its internal logic than through any insight into the social situations in which it was expected to intervene. The commitment of experts to development drew material and institutional resources to its programs even when they were quite obviously destructive of the human well-being that formed its ostensible goal. Meanwhile, development was also reformulated through its constant negotiation and translation within particular settings, and it assumed multiple forms. Recent studies have shown how development policies diversified as they become entangled in regional political struggles (e.g., Peters 1994) and as they were reinterpreted in varied cultural settings (e.g., Pigg 1992). This rich literature has inspired new attention to the making of modernization. Its example can stimulate attention to the multiple projects of imagining and making globality.

Studies of modernization as a set of projects look in at least three directions. First, analysts attend to the cultural specificity of commitments to modernization. They may make these commitments seem exotic to remove them from the reader’s common sense. (How odd, the analyst might say, that sitting in uncomfortable chairs is considered more modern than squatting.) Analysts explore the elements through which modernization projects make assumptions about the world. For example, modernization projects create notions of time through which groups and activities can be situated in relation to stories of progress. Second, analysts attend to the social practices, material infrastructure, cultural negotiations, institutions, and power relations through which modernization projects work—and are opposed, contested, and reformulated. Modernization projects do their work through educational practices, military coercion, administrative policies, resource entitlements, community reorganization, and much more; these arenas and practices both make and are transformed by modernization. To examine the effects of modernization commitments requires attention to the social worlds both of and beyond modernization visions. Third, analysts use the promise of questions and dilemmas brought up in modernization programs without becoming caught in their prescriptions for social change. For example, through its emphasis on critical reflection as a mode of “modern” thought, modernization draws attention to the awkward relationship between representation and its object and to the craft and creativity through which social life must be described. Analysts of modernization projects make use of this insight without assuming the framework of progress that helped generate it.

These directions of analysis seem equally useful to understanding projects of imagining and making globality. Certainly, commitments to globalism are strange enough to warrant cultural analysis. Furthermore, as globalization becomes institutionalized as a program not only in the academy but in corporate policy, politics, and popular culture, it is important to attend to these sites to understand what projects of globalization *do* in the world—and what else goes on with and around them. Finally, I think there is enormous analytic promise in

tracing global interconnections without subsuming them to any one program of global-future commitments. A global framework allows one to consider the making and remaking of geographical and historical agents and the forms of their agency in relation to movement, interaction, and shifting, competing claims about community, culture, and scale. Places are made through their connections with each other, not their isolation: This kind of analysis seems too important to relegate only to studying the best-promoted “global” trends; indeed, among other uses, we can employ it to specify the uneven and contested global terrain of global promotion.

In this essay, I use these three directions of analysis to learn something about social science commitments to the newly emerging significance of a global scale. First, I examine the charisma of social science globalisms. By *globalism*, I refer to endorsements of the importance of the global. I want to know how the idea of the global has worked to excite and inspire social scientists. I pick out a number of elements that add to this charisma and argue for their obfuscating as well as enlivening features.

Second, to see how this charisma produces effects in the world, I examine reading and discussion practices in the field of anthropology, as these produce and reproduce commitments to globalization. As an observer, I try to track the excitement of my students and colleagues; yet, as a participant, I want to argue for a *better* use of the charisma of global frameworks.

Thus, third, I show how questions about global interconnections might be detached from the most problematic globalist commitments to offer a more nuanced and critical analysis of culture and history, including recent shifts that have turned attention to the global. I argue that we can investigate globalist projects and dreams without assuming that they remake the world just as they want. The task of understanding planet-wide interconnections requires locating and specifying globalist projects and dreams, with their contradictory as well as charismatic logics and their messy as well as effective encounters and translations.

Globalization draws our enthusiasm because it helps us imagine interconnection, travel, and sudden transformation. Yet it also draws us inside its rhetoric until we take its claims for true descriptions. In the imagery with which I began, flow is valorized but not the carving of the channel; national and regional units are mapped as the baseline of change without attention to their shifting and contested ability to define the landscape. We lose sight of the coalitions of claimants as well as their partial and shifting claims. We lose touch with the material and institutional components through which powerful and central sites are constructed, from which convincing claims about units and scales can be made. We describe the landscape imagined within these claims rather than the culture and politics of scale making. This essay suggests approaches to the study of the global that seem to me to hold onto the excitement of this endorsement of planetary interconnection without trading our critical stance for globalist wishes and fantasies.

Hurting through Space

To invoke the global at the turn of the second millennium is to call attention to the speed and density of interconnections among people and places. In this imagery, the planet overwhelms us in its rush toward the future; we must either sit on top of it or be swamped and overcome.¹ It seems worth hesitating for a moment to consider the difference between this aggressive globe, hurtling through space, and an only slightly earlier fragile planet, floating gently in its cloud cover. This fertile yet vulnerable green planet was conjured by the global environmentalism that emerged in the United States and Europe at the end of the 1960s and blossomed in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. As Yaakov Garb (1990) has shown, the global environmentalists' globe gained its power from the visual image of the earth first seen in photographs from space in the 1960s; this awe-inspiring image was repeated in many forms and contexts to mobilize sentiment for the kind of nature that most needed our respect, love, and protection.² It became possible to imagine this nature as extending across the planet because global environmentalism brought together the universalist morality of 1960s social justice politics and the transboundary expertise of an emergent ecological science (Haas 1992; Taylor and Buttel 1992). Politics and science, working together, conjured an earth worth studying, managing, and fighting for at multiple but compatibly stratified scales and levels of advocacy and analysis.

Global environmentalism also participated in building another image of the global, in which globality represented the goal of a *process* of building transnational political and cultural ties. Beginning most intensely in the 1980s, social movements—including environmentalism, human rights, indigenous rights, and feminist causes—extended themselves through NGOs; they sought to work around the restrictions of nation-states by forging transnational lines of financial, scientific, and political support (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Activists put pressure on their respective governments with these resources; national policies were also pressed to respond to international agreements. The global here is a never-ending process of “networking” and building lines of support. Annelise Riles (1998b) has shown how the aesthetics of global network formation developed such charisma within NGOs that it became a major objective in itself. Global process here encourages participants to speak up, to learn from each other, and to extend themselves. But it does not yet push us over the edge of an evolutionary abyss.

It was only at the beginning of the 1990s that the process of “globalization,” as the definitional characteristic of an *era*, became popular in the media and advertising. The triumph of the capitalist marketplace had been proclaimed with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and enthusiasm ran high for national economic deregulation and privatization in the North and more thorough forms of structural adjustment in the South. In this atmosphere, *globalization* came to mean an endorsement of international free trade and the outlawing of protected or public domestic economies (Chomsky 1998). Yet the term came to encompass much more. Corporate reorganizations required not just markets but also the ability to transfer operations and finances transnationally to find the most

profitable conditions; these kinds of corporate transfers, although reaching several decades back, became caught up in the talk of globalization. Furthermore, social commentators reminded the public that the new mobility of labor was tied to capital mobility and global market guarantees (e.g., Sassen 1998; Schiller et al. 1992). Cosmopolitan connoisseurs have delighted in the new availability of West African music, Brazilian martial arts, and Thai cuisine, as Southern arts blossomed in wealthy Northern cities (e.g., Appiah and Gates 1997). A variety of public debates and discussions came to be seen as “globally” interconnected: not only labor-and-capital-oriented fights about immigration, unionization, downsizing, subcontracting, and impoverishment but also debates about the worldwide spread of U.S. media productions, the role of national governments, the dangers and promises of multiculturalism, and the growing influence and proper management of new computer-based communications technologies. Indeed, the popularity of “global” terms and approaches drew from their evocation of multiple causes, agendas, and historical layers of imagery.³

At the turn of the century, then, globalism is multireferential: part corporate hype and capitalist regulatory agenda, part cultural excitement, part social commentary and protest. Within this shifting agenda, several features attract and engage an expanding audience for imagining the globe: first, its futurism, that is, its ability not only to name an era but to predict its progress; second, its confluences of varied projects through which the populist and the corporate, the scientific and the cultural, the excluded margins and the newly thriving centers, all seem wrapped up in the same energetic movement; and, third, its rhetoric of linkage and circulation as the overcoming of boundaries and restrictions, through which all this excitement appears positive for everyone involved. These elements are worth examining separately.

Futurism

Globalization is a crystal ball that promises to tell us of an almost-but-not-quite-there globality. This is powerful stuff for experts, politicians, and policy makers. Social scientists are particularly caught by the force of this charisma. The rush of prescience returns social science to the period after World War II, when the field charted the development of the new nations of the South and, in the North, the welfare state. Since then, social scientists have been better known—like economists and sociologists—as technicians of the present or—like anthropologists and geographers—as collectors of ancient survivals. Now the opportunity has come to look forward with a new expertise. The crystal ball inspires us to rush anxiously into the future, afraid to be left behind.

The future orientation of this discussion of the global requires the assumption of newness. If global interconnections do not define the contemporary era, setting it off from the past, to examine these interconnections shows us complexity rather than direction. Analysts of globalization force attention to the break that differentiates the present from the past because in the context of that break they can see forward.⁴ The assumption of newness has other benefits. It can help us see the distinctiveness of a historical moment. It can inspire a “bandwagon”

effect whereby unexpected and creative alliances among different kinds of analysts may be forged.⁵ In this spirit, it can break up too-comfortably established fields, inspiring new forms of discussion.⁶ However, the assumption of newness can also stifle other lines of inquiry and disallow questions about the construction of the field for which it forms the starting line. In history and anthropology, for example, the idea that global interconnections are *old* has only recently been revitalized, muffled as it was for much of the 20th century by the draw of nationally contained legacies, in history, and functionally contained social worlds, in anthropology; it seems unfortunate to lose this insight so quickly.⁷

Perhaps the worst fault of the assumption of global newness is that it erects stereotypes of the past that get in the way of appreciating both the past and the present. This fault has been particularly glaring in the discussion of the nation inspired by talk of globalization.⁸ In interpreting the defeat of various national attempts to control financial capital, analysts have imagined an unprecedented world-historical defeat of the nation, as if nations, until now, were unquestioned, consistent, and everywhere hegemonic. Yet national control of finance may itself have been a recent, ephemeral product. After World War II, economic regulations emerging from the Bretton–Woods agreement made it possible for nation-states to control domestic financial capital, providing funding for welfare states. An earlier free-flowing internationalization of finance was cut off, as national capitalisms were set in place (Helleiner 1993).

Similarly, political commitment to national territorial boundaries and the importance of regulating population movements across national borders has a particular history. The new nation-states that emerged after World War II in Africa and Asia, for example, developed special concerns for territorial sovereignty to declare their autonomy from the colonial condition; their national histories and geographies stress self-development, not regional and transregional flow.⁹ To turn nationalist visions from this period into a description of a homogeneous past seems likely to lead to distortions.

Given long-term commitments in the humanities to tracing intellectual lineages and civilizational commitments, it is perhaps surprising that literary critics have embraced the assumption of era-making global newness to put together anthologies on “the cultures of globalization” (Jameson and Miyoshi 1998).¹⁰ The anthologies they have created are in many ways extremely exciting: Here are a variety of themes, a breadth of places discussed, and a diversity of scholars that form a striking intervention into the narrowly Western, textual orientation of most humanities. This is not scholarship as usual; it has the political energy and passion of cultural studies. This development is so important that it is awkward to say anything else. But I am suspicious of cultural stage theories, with their determinations of who is at the peak of human evolution and who will be left behind. Without denying their contribution, it may be useful to question how the articles in these anthologies are connected to each other. To discuss globalization, the editors make the a priori assumption of a cultural political era.¹¹ The era must have a cultural logic, and the descriptions of culture gathered in the book must form part of that logic.¹² I think we can discuss global projects,

links, and situations with a better frame: one that recognizes the making and un-making of claims about the global, even as it examines the consequences of these powerful claims in the world we know, and one that recognizes new and surprising developments without declaring, by fiat, the beginning of an era.¹³

Yet global futurism is seductive. It can be conjured equally by a technical mathematics or by an enthusiastic and suggestive vagueness. Frederic Jameson (1998b:xi) is perhaps the most up-front about all this, claiming that questions about the definition of the global era to which he devotes his book are not only premature but decidedly uncool. Surely, we will find that the disparate cultural and political processes we investigate in these times will turn out to be the trunk, limbs, and tail of that elephant not recognized as a single beast by the blind men. He disarms critics: Anyone who has questions about the elephant must certainly be a curmudgeonly old elephant hater, who believes that there is nothing new under the sun; this exhausts, for him, the options for dissent (1998a:54). And yet, might it not be a *newly* productive strategy to pay close and critical attention to these different limb-like global projects and agendas, to appreciate their articulations as well as their disengagements and mismatched encounters?

Conflations

Jameson (1998a) argues that globalization is best understood through the Hegelian dialectic: its ideological logic produces both a dark and a light side. This is a useful reminder that the global developments that we, as social commentators, find promising are often deeply connected to those we find dangerous. But why jump quite so quickly into the assumption that the vast array of transcommunal and transnational ideas and activities around us form a single ideological system? There are some important advantages. Overlaps among ideological projects produce an added intensity all around. When the machinery of corporate and state publicity has converged on a single image, it is doubly hard to avoid the sense of complicity, for better or worse. In analyzing recent developments, it would be silly to argue for autonomous institutional, regional, or political-cause domains. It is clear that the appreciation of synergy among varied globalist projects is at the heart of the new enthusiasm about the globe. My point is that this very search for overlaps, alliances, collaborations, and complicities is one of the most important phenomena we could study. We might look at how particular projects become formulated, how they are tied and transformed in the process, and how they sometimes interrupt each other despite themselves. The “globalization” that is formed from these hit-and-miss convergences would be considerably more unstable, and more interesting, than the one posited by any single claimant as a world-making system. One step in looking for this kind of globalization must be to recognize that there are varied agendas, practices, and processes that may or may not be deeply interconnected at a given historical moment.

Two recent studies of the cultural logic of global “network” formation are useful to compare in this regard. Roger Rouse (1997) analyzes a series of advertisements produced for the telephone company MCI that promote the company’s

ability to build an interactive multimedia communications network. This communication network is advertised as part of a world-changing, future-making re-vamping of space and time, in which instantaneous communications within a personalized web of ties will replace geographically grounded routes and central-place hierarchies. The “network” MCI promotes is simultaneously the material technology of telephones, computers, and the like and the individualized, flexible, transnational set of contacts and associates that citizens of the future will be able to maintain through these technologies.

A similar but contrasting global network-in-the-making is analyzed by Annelise Riles (1998b), who studied women’s organizing in Fiji in preparation for the United Nations–sponsored international conference on women in Beijing in 1995. The women she studied had formed NGOs addressing gendered concerns; these organizations were connected to sister organizations, funders, and other kinds of political supporters all over the world. What they learned from this system of ties, Riles shows, is the importance of “networks,” that is, webs of imagined interconnection through which groups in one area were to exchange information and support with other groups on what was seen as an egalitarian, voluntary basis. Riles argues that networks took on a formal aesthetic value and, through this formalism, the Fijian women organizers saw themselves as part of an emergent global process.¹⁴

These two globe-making projects have a lot in common. Both have educational goals to teach people to visualize a future globalism in which “networks”—rather than nations or bureaucracies—will be the organizing aesthetic. Both value personal contacts over long distances and individual initiative over the recognition of preset roles. Yet it is also clear that each project has come into being along a different historical trajectory, with different material and political resources and objectives, and their convergence is broken by those differences. As Rouse shows, MCI’s presentation of its product as a “network” separates wealthy professionals (i.e., those in the network) from the underpaid workers and other poor people to whom they have some responsibility in the public space of the nation. Only through this separation can they build a constituency for the global mobility of corporate resources and the wealthy niche marketing of corporate products. The globalization this network promotes, then, is one that ties privileged consumers and their corporate sponsors in a self-conscious forgetting about the rest of the world. In contrast, the NGO networks discussed by Riles are intended to build a transnational women’s solidarity that brings women’s rights *into* particular national contexts rather than excluding network builders from participation in nations. Attention to national and regional “levels” of network building is supposed to strengthen the call of public responsibilities within these units rather than eviscerate them. Even as they bypass state bureaucracies, the women are called on to act as national representatives; in this capacity, Riles argues (1998a), the Fijian women bring national cultural sensibilities to the imagination of global network activities by focusing on a formal aesthetics grounded in other Fijian cultural work.

One further striking contrast between these two images of the network is their differential gender content. MCI's network, as Rouse explains it, rescues vulnerable young girls through the patriarchal security of a privatized globe. The Fijian women's NGO network creates new arenas of all-female sociality that draw on but extend local forms in transnational translations. The contrast provides rich grounds for thinking about emergent forms of subjectivity and agency in varied global projects. There is a lot going on, and it does not all match up. Were we to limit ourselves to one of these visions as a description of the new global landscape, we would miss the pleasures and dangers of this multiplicity. Furthermore, we might overvalorize connection and circulation rather than attending to the shifting, contested making of channels and landscape elements.

Circulation

Interconnection is everything in the new globalisms. And interconnection is created through circulation. Many things are said to circulate, ranging from people to money; cultures to information; and television programs, to international protocols, to the process called globalization itself. "Circulation" is in global rhetoric what the "penetration" of capitalism was in certain kinds of Marxist world-systems theory: the way powerful institutions and ideas spread geographically and come to have an influence in distant places. The difference is significant; where *penetration* always evokes a kind of rape, a forcing of some people's powerful interests onto other people, *circulation* calls forth images of the healthy flow of blood in the body and the stimulating, evenhanded exchange of the marketplace.

Both bodies and markets as models for understanding social process have been much criticized in social theory in the 20th century. Images of society as organically interconnected like a body were important in establishing the social sciences, but they have been largely discredited as disallowing the study of power, meaning, conflict, disjuncture, and historical change. Images of society as a market have had a different kind of lasting power. Caught up in the endorsement of capitalism as an economic system and free trade as its ideal political context, they have been revived and given new authority in celebration of the end of communism and the Cold War. Marxist scholarship, however, continues a substantial record of criticism of these images. Market models assume a "level playing field" of exchange that erases the inequalities of property and the processes of labor exploitation. Market models appear to be inclusive, but they privilege social actors who, because of their economic resources, are able to participate in markets. Most importantly in the context of the post-Cold War enthusiasm for market models, Marxist scholars have shown how bourgeois governments and social institutions have promoted market thinking to naturalize class and other social distinctions. By training the attention of citizens on the equalities and opportunities of circulation and exchange, they justify policies of domination and discrimination. Recent endorsements of "global circulation" as the process for making the future partake in the obfuscations of inequality for which market models are known.

Global circulation is not just a rhetoric of corporate expansion, however. Leftist social commentators often find as much good use for circulation models as capitalist apologists. Circulation is used to discuss the breaking down of oppressive barriers among cultures, races, languages, and nations, including immigration restrictions and segregation policies. Diasporas circulate, bringing the wealth of their cultural heritage to new locations. Authoritarian regimes prevent the circulation of information, inspiring democratic movements to create underground channels of flow. The circulation of film inspires creative viewing practices. Circulation is thus tapped for the endorsement of multicultural enrichment, freedom, mobility, communication, and creative hybridity.

In part, the acceptability of circulation rhetoric among liberal and leftist social scientists derives from a self-conscious rejection of the Marxist emphasis on capitalist production and its consequent deemphasis on market exchange and consumption (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Baudrillard 1975). Leftist critics of corporate globalization point to the importance of marketing and consumption in contemporary corporate strategies for reaching out to new fields of operation (e.g., Jameson 1998a); these are topics that need to be discussed. The growth of managerial and service professions (e.g., Ong 1999; Sassen 1998) also calls out to critics to abandon an exclusive analytic focus on factory production to attend to the variety of economic forms of contemporary capitalism.

The form and variety of capitalist economic activities are not, however, the only issues to raise about the use of the rhetoric of circulation as a ruling image for global interconnections. There are hidden relations of production here that may have nothing to do with labor in factories: the making of the objects and subjects who circulate, the channels of circulation, and the landscape elements that enclose and frame those channels. A focus on circulation shows us the movement of people, things, ideas, or institutions, but it does not show us how this movement depends on defining tracks and grounds or scales and units of agency. This blindness may not be inherent in the idea of circulation itself but, rather, may be caused by the kinds of circulations that have delineated the model. For historically layered political reasons, the model has been closed to attention to struggles over the terrain of circulation and the privileging of certain kinds of people as players. We focus on the money—the *ur* object of flow—instead of the social conditions that allow or encourage that flow. If we imagined creeks, perhaps the model would be different; we might notice the channel as well as the water moving.

In this spirit, Saskia Sassen (1998) has addressed channel making in relation to global circulations of corporate communications as well as labor. She argues that “global cities” have developed as centers for transnational corporate operations because of the density of corporate real estate, professional service workers, and telecommunication connection grids. Corporate rhetoric aspires to an infinite decentralization and deterritorialization of management operations, but this rhetoric ignores the material requirements for dispersed communication, for example, telephone and computer connections, as well as the specialized labor of advertising, finance, and other services, all of which is concentrated in

particular cities. The much touted mobility of information, capital, products, and production facilities depends on these coordinating centers. Similarly, Sassen shows that immigration, often discussed as the mass product of individual mobility, requires the creation of institutional ties linking sending and receiving areas. Histories of direct foreign investment or military intervention, for example, have predictably produced flows of immigrants from the targeted regions to the United States. "Flow" is movement stimulated through political and economic channels.

Sassen's work shows that the alternatives to conventional models of circulation are not just to close off our attention to travel and trade. Analysts can also examine the material and institutional infrastructure of movement and pay special attention to the economic coercions and political guarantees that limit or promote circulation. In order to do this, however, we would need to redefine the common distinction between the "local" and the "global." Most commonly, globalist thinkers imagine the local as the stopping point of global circulations. It is the place where global flows are consumed, incorporated, and resisted (Pred and Watts 1992). It is the place where global flows fragment and are transformed into something place bound and particular (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996b). But if flow itself always involves making terrain, there can be no territorial distinctions between the "global" transcending of place and the "local" making of places. Instead, there is place making—and travel—all around, from New York to New Guinea.¹⁵

Place making is always a cultural as well as a political-economic activity. It involves assumptions about the nature of those subjects authorized to participate in the process and the kinds of claims they can reasonably put forth about their position in national, regional, and world classifications and hierarchies of places. The specificities of these subjects and claims contradict and misstate those of other place makers, even as they may form overlaps and links imaged as "flows." The channel-making activity of circulation, then, is always a contested and tentative formation of scales and landscapes. To avoid letting those who imagine themselves as winners call all of the terms, we need to attend to the missed encounters, clashes, misfires, and confusions that are as much part of global linkages as simple "flow."

Culture, specificity, and place making have conventionally been the domain of the discipline of anthropology, particularly as practiced in the United States. Because these kinds of issues are so often missing from discussions of the global, the stakes are particularly high in seeing their incorporation into global questions in anthropology. Yet it is not these issues that first chaperoned globalism into U.S. anthropology. Instead, the charisma of the global was introduced to forward a disciplinary transition away from an overzealous and nonreflective localism. It is from the perspective of this trajectory that it is possible to examine the specific disciplinary practices through which globalist frameworks are being read by U.S. anthropologists.

Readings in Anthropology

Social science globalisms take particular forms in relation to disciplinary reading and discussion practices. They gain their influence not only because they are adopted in the work of articulate practitioners but, equally importantly, because they enter local trajectories of disciplinary momentum. They are rebuilt to speak to disciplinary challenges as these, in turn, are understood in relation to specific social locations of scholarly practice. In the process, social science globalisms pick up regional and disciplinary frameworks and assumptions, even as they throw themselves as objections against others.

Anthropologists do not merely mimic the understandings of globalism of other experts, even as they are influenced by them. No anthropologist I know argues that the global future will be culturally homogeneous; even those anthropologists most wedded to the idea of a new global era imagine this era as characterized by “local” cultural diversity. Disciplinary concern with cultural diversity overrides the rhetoric of global cultural unification pervasive elsewhere, even though, for those in its sway, globalism still rules: Diversity is generally imagined as forming a reaction or a backdrop to the singular and all-powerful “global forces” that create a new world. (Globalisms are not themselves regularly regarded as diverse.) Politically progressive anthropologists sometimes show how this kind of circumscribed, reactive, self-consciously “local” diversity is a form of resistance to the proliferation of globalist capitalism and hypermodernist governmentality; however, the possibility that capitalisms and governmentalities are themselves situated, contradictory, effervescent, or culturally circumscribed is much less explored. Anthropologists who have argued against simplistic models of “global culture” have also, then, naturalized globalist ideologies of the global.

In the United States, the excitement of this globalism for anthropologists draws from a rather “local” disciplinary heritage: a more than 25-year journey away from analyses of “cultures” as autonomous, self-generating, and bounded entities. In the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. anthropologists criticized the discipline’s complicity with colonial projects of conquest and administration. Historical, anticolonial, and world-systems frameworks moved to the discipline’s center, ousting functionalism, and interpretive accounts of national and nationalist commitments replaced descriptions of isolated cultures. In the 1980s, ethnographic research and description were interrogated for their role in making cultures appear isolated, and U.S. anthropologists recommitted themselves to more open, reflexive, and textually responsive ways of approaching the inequalities and interconnections among people and places. The recent turn to the global takes its alignment within this pathway of disciplinary self-criticism.

Globalism within this trajectory renews stereotypes of the anthropological past in order to confront them. The “old” anthropology imagined here describes cultures so grounded that they could not move out of place. This anthropology imprisons its objects in a cell; interconnection and movement in the form of “global flows” are thus experienced as a form of liberation. Furthermore, these flows fit most neatly inside the discipline when, in deference to past teachers and

conventions, the boundedness of past cultures goes unchallenged; global flows can then take the discipline, and the world, into a freer future.

This “freeing up” variety of globalism is both exhilarating and problematic. On the one hand, it shows us new dreams and schemes of world making; on the other, as an aspect of its liberatory project, it also turns attention away from the quirky eccentricities of culture and history that have perhaps been U.S. anthropology’s most vital contribution to critical thought. In the process, too, anthropologists tend to endorse the globalist dreams of the people they study, and thus we lose the opportunity to address the located specificity of those globalist dreams.

The three features I have discussed as creating the charisma of social science globalisms are prominent in U.S. anthropology. Each has been endorsed for good “local” reasons. Yet the very enthusiasm that each of these features has provoked has made it easier to erase specificities to create a misleading portrait of a single global future. It is hard not to universalize a globalist framework. But let me see if I can locate these globalisms—and in the process get them to do some very different work.

Futurism

U.S. anthropologists come to an endorsement of a singular global future from their interest in the macroeconomic context of cultural diversity. An important part of the disciplinary trajectory away from the study of isolated cultures has been attention to the capitalist world system. Anthropologists have been able to show how even out-of-the-way and exotic cultures respond to capitalism’s challenges. This is crucial work. At the same time, risks and dilemmas remain in this analysis: In turning one’s gaze to the systemic features of world capitalism, it is easy to lose track of the specificity of particular capitalist niches. In coming to terms with the transnational scope of contemporary finance, marketing, and production, it is easy to endorse globalism as a predictive frame. Indeed, it is in this context that anthropologists most commonly imagine singular global futures. Even as critics, we are caught in the hyperboles imagined by advocates of neoliberalism, structural adjustment, and transnationalization.

Particularly in its critical versions, this global future forms part of a narrative of the evolution of capitalism. Furthermore, most anthropologists attracted by this narrative take their model from a single source: David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989). Within much globalist anthropology, Harvey’s book establishes the fact of epochal change, laying the ground for global futurism. Yet I find this a particular, peculiar reading of Harvey, and it is worth considering in its own right: For anthropologists, Harvey provides the evidence for a new era. As readers, they pick out “flexible specialization” and “time-space compression” as the characteristics of this new era.¹⁶

Yet, when I turn to Harvey’s book, it seems to me that the central argument is that the “cultural aesthetic” of postmodernism is related to the economic logic of flexible accumulation. The first section of the book reviews modernism and postmodernism as trends in the arts and letters, including architecture

and philosophy. This is “capital C” culture: a genealogy of great men and their ideas. The second section of the book turns to the economic “regimes of accumulation” of Fordism and post-Fordist “flexible accumulation.” The book’s original idea is to juxtapose these two bodies of literature and to argue that post-modernism mirrors post-Fordism. It takes a certain amount of economic determinism to make this argument, in which Culture acts as a mirror of economic realities.¹⁷ But in this gap, space and time come in. For Harvey, the “experience” of space and time mediates between Culture and the (nonculturally organized) economy.

For me the space and time section is the least satisfying section of the book. Harvey describes categories for understanding human encounters with space and time, representations of space and time in the arts and letters (and, in one chapter, in two films), and anecdotes about space and time in the capitalist workplace. No ethnographic sources for understanding spatial and temporal texture or diversity are consulted. The concept of “experience” is never explained. Because the mirror relation between arts and letters and the economy has already been established, their mediation by experience is a formal requirement, needing no substantiation.

In this context, it is strange that anthropologists so often pick only “the acceleration of space-time compression” along with “flexible accumulation” out of this book. In the process of citation, too, the book’s tone changes. Harvey’s book is polemical. He ranges over a wide variety of scholarship to criticize post-modern aesthetics. This is not a science experiment but, rather, a book-length essay. Yet somehow Harvey’s description of economic evolution comes to have the status of a fact when drawn into globalist anthropology. Harvey brings with him the ability to read economics, a skill few anthropologists have developed. It may be that anthropologists ignore the discussion of aesthetics, thinking they know more about culture than he does, and go for the accumulation strategy and associated space-time requirements because they feel like the macroeconomic facts that are outside of their knowledge base.

The result is that a selection of Harvey’s terms is used to build a noncultural and nonsituated futurist framework, “beyond culture” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). One set of problems derives from the attempt to make this future global; as anthropologist Michael Kearney admits, Harvey’s thesis is “not dealing with globalization per se” (1995:551). Indeed, Harvey has a distinct blindness for everything outside dominant Northern Cultures and economies; to make his story applicable to North–South articulations is not impossible, but it is a challenge. Another set of problems seems even more intractable. If we drop Harvey’s discussion of aesthetics (as Culture) but still ignore the ethnographic sources through which anthropologists identify culture, just how do we know the shape of space and time? The pared-down Harvey readings preferred by anthropologists have lost even literary and filmic representations of temporal and spatial processes; we are left with economic facts. Without “Culture” or “culture,” we must assume rapid circulation, fragmentation, compression, and globality; certainly, we cannot consult either popular or official representations,

discourses, or cultural practices. Anthropological analysis, which could look at scale-making claims and representations in conjunction with the social processes that support and result from those claims and representations, becomes reduced to building starships on millennial fantasies.

Another way Harvey's work could be used is to scale back its epochal claims to look at some limited but powerful alliances between aesthetics and economics. Harvey's claim that postmodernism and flexible accumulation have something to do with each other could be pursued by locating patterns and players more specifically. This kind of project, however, diminishes the excitement of another globalist reading practice, which I have called "conflations." Let me examine how this practice both brings to life and impoverishes the anthropology of global interconnection.

Conflations

Not all anthropological globalism is engaged in understanding the systemics of capitalism; another significant sector attempts to hold onto "culture" as an anthropological object while showing its increased contemporary mobility and range. In this genre, anthropologists have done exciting work to specify modes of cultural interconnection that tie people in far-flung locales or travel with them across heterogeneous terrains. This work offers the possibility of attention to regionalisms and histories of place making within an appreciation of interconnection. However, to the extent that this work has been harnessed for the search for a singular anthropological globalism, it has blurred the differences among places and perspectives to emphasize the break from past localisms. This anthropological globalism renaturalizes global dreams instead of examining and locating them ethnographically. Moreover, it leads readers to assume that all globalisms are at base the same; thus, most readers read globalist anthropologists as an undifferentiated crowd.

Might a different kind of reading practice reestablish the potential for appreciating multiple, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory globalisms? Consider, for example, contrasts among the globalisms of Ulf Hannerz (1996), Michael Kearney (1996), and Arjun Appadurai (1996). I choose these authors because each has elaborated his ideas about globalism in a book-length exposition. Each sees his work as advancing the disciplinary trajectory of anthropology beyond the anthropology of separate, segregated cultures and societies. Each is concerned with migrants and travelers and the worlds they make and are made by; each argues that new analytic tools are necessary for new times.

Yet they conjure different global geographies. The globality of Hannerz, the "global ecumene" (1989), is a space of interaction among once-separate cultures now growing in dialogue and mutual acknowledgment. Its creolization is created by cultural flows—particularly flows from powerful centers to less powerful peripheries; it is carried and extended by cosmopolitans who, of necessity, acknowledge and extend European and North American cultural frameworks even as they incorporate and remake non-Western cultures. Center-periphery relations thus organize world culture (Hannerz 1996).

In contrast, Kearney's postmodern globality is a critique of center-periphery frameworks, which Kearney identifies with the classificatory modernist era that has passed away as we have entered transnational hyperspace and non-teleological, postdevelopmental time. The key feature of the global era is the "implosion" of center and periphery, as distinctions between rural and urban as well as South and North disintegrate. Spatial and cultural discriminations become impossible in a world of global flows, as nonunitary migrant subjects are formed in the interstices of past classificatory principles. In the unruly "reticula" Kearney conjures, however, he retains a dialogue with Marxian political economy that gives his multiplicity of identities and geographies its shape. The organization of the transnational economy creates differences of class, power, and value that forge subaltern and dominant social niches of identity and agency.

In contrast again, Appadurai evokes a globality of contested "scapes" in which no single organizing principle rules. "Financescapes," which include capital flows, are only one of several imaginative geographies that compete to make the globe; Appadurai finds that "ethnoscapes" and "mediascapes"—the cultural worlds conjured by migrants and in movies, respectively—are more decisive features in the "rupture" of the global era, with its heightened dependence on the imagination. Like Kearney's, Appadurai's globalism refuses center-periphery frames, but, like Hannerz, he situates it squarely in modernity's worldwide cultural spread rather than postmodernism's epistemological disruptions. Appadurai's globalism refuses Kearney's sociology of migrants to foreground their cultural worlds; indeed, these kinds of cultural terrains, although ungrounded in space, are those criticized by Kearney as modernist classificatory tricks.

Different subjects are at the center of each of these understandings of the global. In the best spirit of anthropology, one might read each account, indeed, in relation to the author's ethnographic experience. Appadurai imagines global scapes from the perspective of his attention to the Indian diaspora and its cultural world. Kearney theorizes from his encounter with Miztec "postpeasants": Mexican Indian farmers who have become migrants selling crafts in San Diego parking lots. Hannerz is concerned about cosmopolitans, world travelers, journalists, and city people everywhere; he returns often to his knowledge about Africa. These varied subjects assist the authors in evoking different globalisms. If, instead of assuming a single global trajectory, we attended to varied globalist claims and perspectives, what might we see?

Diasporas, almost by definition, conjure deterritorialized areas, worlds of meaning and "home" feeling detached from original territorial boundaries—like Appadurai's scapes. This kind of self-consciousness about the making of cultural worlds contrasts sharply with the cultural commitments of cosmopolitans and poor migrants, as these create focal knowledges for Hannerz and Kearney, respectively. Both cosmopolitans and poor migrants erase the specificity of their cultural tracks, although for different reasons: Poor migrants need to fit in the worlds of others; cosmopolitans want more of the world to be theirs. Cosmopolitans, like diasporas, promote projects of world making, but, as

Hannerz stresses, the projects they endorse enlarge the hegemonies of Northern centers even as they incorporate peripheries. In contrast, neither the world-making projects of Southern diasporas nor those of poor migrants fit into a center-periphery frame. They limit, rather than spread, Northern hegemonies. In this spirit, Appadurai and Kearney implicitly criticize Hannerz's center-periphery approach. Yet it is also the case that Kearney's and Appadurai's actors diverge. Poor migrants, like those at the center of Kearney's globalism, are particularly aware of their need to survive—politically, economically, and culturally—in worlds that others have made; the imagination is never enough for them to create autonomy and self-determination. Thus, Kearney (1995:553) refuses Appadurai's imagination-ruled scapes, while Appadurai and Hannerz, thinking through diasporas and cosmopolitans, respectively, stress the world-making power of imaginative perspectives.

The regional specificities of these focal knowledges may also be relevant to the globalisms imagined through them: I think of the strength of the culture and media industries of India and its diaspora, the self-consciousness about Northern cultural impositions of cosmopolitan Africans, and the centrality of transnational capitalism in Latin American studies. It also may be suggestive to compare all these knowledges with other angles for thinking about contemporary culture. Consider, for example, U.S. minority groups who have demanded protection from the nation-state against discrimination; thinking through U.S. minority culture provides a less fertile ground than diasporas, poor migrants, and cosmopolitans to imagine an inclusively postnational era.¹⁸ These differences do not make these perspectives wrong; my point is to show that these are differences that matter theoretically. The next step for readers—and future researchers and writers—is to think about that world in which the respective focal knowledges on which they draw could *all* exist, whether in competition or alliance, in mutual acknowledgment or erasure, in misunderstanding or dialogue.

This task requires that we study folk understandings of the global, and the practices with which they are intertwined, rather than representing globalization as a transcultural historical process. With some modifications, each of the perspectives I have been describing can be used for this task. However, we would have to resituate the authors' theories in relation to histories of their respective knowledges of and experiences with specific people and events. We would have to abandon the search for a single global future.

Appadurai's stress on disjunction as well as on the importance of the imagination is well suited for thinking about the interplay of varied globalist perspectives. Yet imaginative landscapes come in many kinds, and this diversity is more useful to understanding disjunction than a division into functional domains of ethnicity, technology, finance, media, and ideology, for these posit a singular formula for "society." If, instead of hegemonic domain divisions, we turned to the social and cultural struggles through which imaginative visions come to count as "scapes" at all, we might be able to incorporate disjunction not only among domains but also among varied and contested kinds of imaginative landscape making in this framework. We might contrast the cultural world of the

Indian diaspora with other globalist scapes. For example, Paulla Ebron (1998, 1999) has described the regional and global claims of African American history and memory landscapes; she traces these landscapes through many formats of discussion, which both enter and interrupt Appadurai's "mediascape" domain. Moving beyond a list of globally settled "scapes," we need to study how scales, geographies, eras, and other imaginative terrains are differentially and dialogically negotiated, refused, or erased.

Hannerz's attention to the cultural specificity of cosmopolitanisms is important to assess the power and limitations of claims about scale, era, and geography without subsuming one's own analysis under the truths these claims promote. Hannerz also usefully reminds us of the power of certain imaginative landscapes, especially those that "make people from western Europe and North America feel as much at home as possible" (1996:107). Yet these powerful perspectives do not necessarily determine the cultural evolution of the whole world; the key is to *situate* them in relation to the political economies that make them possible and the struggles over meaning in which they participate.

In the process of putting global perspectives in situated dialogue, the political economy engaged (if not often endorsed) by Kearney is essential. Imaginative landscapes mobilize an audience through material and institutional resources. Yet, as discussed in the previous section, it is difficult to give full attention to such mobilizations with a theory of the singular evolution of a monolithic capitalism.¹⁹ As J. K. Gibson-Graham (1996) argues, models that predict the stages of capitalism bow to the ideology of a single world-capitalist system rather than investigating its heterogeneous complexities. Instead, Kearney's concern with political economy, like that of Harvey, might point us toward an investigation of shifting cultural developments among surprisingly diverse capitalisms. The innovations of these approaches are not served well, however, by an overreliance on a vocabulary of "flows."

Circulation

Circulation has a deep genealogy in anthropology. I keep waiting to find an author who takes me through this legacy, perhaps tracing his or her thoughts from French structuralist "exchange" through global "flows." But I have not yet found that author. Instead, it has become easy for anthropologists to talk about global circulations as a sign of everything new and of future making.

Circulations are said to be what we are able to study as global. George Marcus is informative and clear about this in the introduction to the series of essays he edited as *Rereading Cultural Anthropology* (1992). Under the heading "Circulations," he says,

The other major related trend that concerns contemporary global transformations is a move out from local situations to understand how transcultural processes themselves are constituted in the world of the so-called "system" (modern interlocking institutions of media, markets, states, industries, universities—the worlds of elites and middle classes) that has encapsulated, transformed, and sometimes obliterated local cultures. This work examines the circulation of cultural meanings,

objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. *It shows how the global arena is itself constituted by such circulations.* [1992:xiii, emphasis added]

Circulations define the newness of the global epoch. Kearney's review "The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism" (1995) offers a useful statement of this. His field is the study of movement, both population movement and "the movement of information, symbols, capital, and commodities in global and transnational spaces. . . . Special attention is given to the significant contemporary increases in the volume and velocity of such flows for the dynamics of communities and for the identities of their members" (1995:547).

Newness is defined by increased flow. Because authors and readers focus on the excitement of this newness, there has been almost no discussion about the implied dichotomies here: circulation versus stagnation, new versus old. Does the newness and globality of movement mean that once-immobile "local" places have recently been transcended by "global" flow? If analysts must "move out of local situations" to find circulation, there must be some local folks who are still stuck inside them, being stagnant. These imagined stagnant locals are excluded from the new circulating globality, which leaves them outside, just as progress and modernity were imagined as leaving so many behind. Here we must consider which new Orientalisms will define who is in and who is out of circulation, just as frameworks of race, region, and religion defined those excluded from the idea of progress. Furthermore, if circulation is new, does that mean that the old order was static and segregated? Were there really, after all, isolated autonomous cultures out there until the circulations of the last few years? Each of these misleading dichotomies would encourage analysts to resurrect that very anthropology that has been criticized and reworked for the last 25 years: the anthropology that fixed and segregated cultures. But in each case, it would be resurrected only for special cases: the marginal, the past. A globalist anthropology of movement would reign at the center.²⁰ This will not do. To move beyond the contrast between past and local stability and present/future global flow, we need to examine different modes of regional-to-global interconnection.

The new attention to global circulation responds to real changes in the world—and in anthropology as practiced in the United States. Anthropologists once set out to study "communities"; they thought they could find society and culture within a relatively narrowly defined social sphere. For some years, it has seemed difficult to do anthropology without paying attention to much wider-ranging objects of study: national visions, elite networks, popular culture, social movements, state policies, histories of colonial thinking, and much more. One piece of the excitement of contemporary anthropology involves new ideas about how to do fieldwork on these complex objects. We rush into interdisciplinary social theory to find innovative, project-oriented suggestions. In this process, it is easy to endorse frameworks of globalization that transcend the limitations of site-oriented local research. Instead, I am arguing that we can study the landscape

of circulation as well as the flow. How are people, cultures, and things remade as they travel?

Scale as an Object of Analysis

Understanding the institutional proliferation of particular globalization projects requires a sense of their cultural specificities as well as the travels and interactions through which these projects are reproduced and taken on in new places. In thinking about where one would begin a globally informed investigation of local and global processes that avoids the pitfalls I have been discussing, I might begin with two analytic principles. First, I would pay close attention to *ideologies* of scale, that is, cultural claims about locality, regionality, and globality; about stasis and circulation; and about networks and strategies of proliferation. I would track rhetorics of scale as well as contests over what will count as relevant scales. Second, I would break down the units of culture and political economy through which we make sense of events and social processes. Instead of looking for world-wrapping evolutionary stages, logics, and epistemes, I would begin by finding what I call “projects,” that is, relatively coherent bundles of ideas and practices as realized in particular times and places. The choice of what counts as a project depends on what one is trying to learn about, but, in each case, to identify projects is to maintain a commitment to localization, even of the biggest world-making dreams and schemes. The various instantiations of capitalism can be regarded as projects; so can progressive social movements, everyday patterns of living, or university-based intellectual programs. Projects are to be traced in relation to particular historical travels from one place to another; they are caught up in local issues of translation and mobilization; although they may be very powerful, we cannot assume their ability to remake nature and society according to their visions. Projects may articulate with each other, creating moments of fabled stability and power (see Tsing 1999c, 2000). They may also rub up against each other awkwardly, creating messiness and new possibilities. Through joint attention to ideologies of scale and projects of scale making, it is possible to move into those cracks most neglected by unself-conscious reliance on global futurism, globalist conflation, and global circulation.

To illustrate such cracks, I turn to scholarship on the making of projects of environmental modernization. Although the rhetoric of globalization has much affected the reconstruction of cities, it is the rhetoric of modernization that continues to make rural hinterlands into the kinds of places that global capital and globalist planning can best use for their projects. Talk of national and international development still dominates the reshaping of the countryside; yet it is the complement of globalization talk. Global dreams require these rural modernization projects, and, thus, globalist strategies can be studied within them. Indeed, there are certain advantages of tracking the importance of globalism in an arena where this rhetoric does not amass a difficult-to-question hegemony.²¹ It is easier to see the exotic particularities and the grounded travels of scale-making commitments where these are not the only goal of the scholarship. It is

possible to read against the grain of analyses of modernism to make scale an object of analysis. I offer four examples of such starting points.

Scale Making. Certainly, a key issue in assuming a critical perspective on global claims and processes is the making of scales—not just the global but also local and regional scales of all sorts. Through what social and material processes and cultural commitments do localities or globalities come, tentatively, into being? How are varied regional geographies made real? Globalism's automatic association of particular scales with particular eras makes it very difficult to notice the details and idiosyncrasies of scale making—thus, more the reason to foreground this issue. And, because the globe is a region made large, asking about the making of global scale brings forward questions of the various forms of region making that both facilitate and interrupt global claims.

Critical studies of environmental modernization offer a number of useful examples about how social scientists might approach the investigation of regional and global scale making. “Bioregions” have been a central feature of environmental policy; how are they made? I think of Warwick Anderson's (in press) research on the hygiene-oriented experiments that helped define “the tropics” as a zone of challenge for scientific modernism, or of Peter Haas's (1990) discussion of the transnational strategies of scientists in shaping the cross-border political treaties that made “the Mediterranean” a zone in which issues of water pollution could be addressed. And what of the making of the global superregion? Richard Grove's (1995) research on the construction of global environmental science is particularly exciting in thinking about the makings of globality. Grove shows how the imperial placement of scientists in botanical gardens and research stations across the European colonies inspired continent-crossing correspondence in the late 18th century. Through this correspondence, informed by widespread fears of climate change caused by colonial deforestation, colonial scientists formulated notions of a “global” climate. This commitment to planet-wide environmental process allowed further developments in imagining both science and policy on a global scale. Obviously, this is not the only global scale that matters. But in tracing its specificity, Grove offers a model for thinking about the many kinds of globality that have become important in the contemporary world.

Close Encounters. Where circulation models have tended to focus only on message transmission, one might instead investigate interactions involving collaboration, misunderstanding, opposition, and dialogue. Attention to these processes provides an alternative to the conflation of varied scale-making claims, projects, and agents. One literature that has become unusually attentive to mixed encounters is the literature on transnational social movements, which require coalitions among extremely various kinds of people, with disparate goals and perceptions of the issues at hand (e.g., Keck and Sikkink 1998). Thus, for example, the coalitions that have been built for rain forest protection have brought together tribal leaders, union organizers, college professors, wildlife

lovers, rural workers, cosmetic entrepreneurs, and activists for democratic reform, among others (see Brosius 1999, in press; Keck 1995; Tsing 1999a; Turner in press).

To understand even momentary successes of this kind of motley coalition, analysts must attend to the changing definitions of *interests* and *identity* that both allow and result from collaborative activities. They must focus on the historical specificity of the events that resulted in alliance and the open-ended indeterminacy of the regional processes stimulated by that alliance (Tsing 1999b). These are useful reminders in rethinking transnational interactions.

It is not just in transient and defensive social movements, however, that it is important to look for social processes sparked by coalitions, dialogues, missed messages, and oppositional refusals. In considering developments in transnational capitalism, this kind of attention can offer an alternative to the blindfolded dedication to a singular unfolding economic logic that has characterized so much globalist analysis. If we investigate the series of historically specific collaborations that create distinctive cultural forms of capitalism, we might better appreciate global heterogeneity.

Peter Dauvergne (1997), for example, has shown how Japanese trading companies, requiring a mass scale of transactions, were able to form productive coalitions with national political leaders in Southeast Asia, who were seeking the support of powerful clients; together they created the distinctive features of the Southeast Asian timber industry, which has devastated regional rain forests for cheap plywood. The cultural and economic specificities of both Japanese trading companies and Southeast Asian national political regimes created a particular and peculiar capitalism that cannot be reduced to the playing out of a singular transnational capitalist logic. Instead, Dauvergne argues, it created economic and ecological “shadows” between Japan and Southeast Asia that redefined and reformulated their separate and combined regional agency. This kind of analysis should prove useful in understanding the many forms of capitalism that help to create regional and global scales.

Definitional Struggles. Circulation imagery can draw attention away from the transformation of actors, objects, goals, perspectives, and terrains that characterizes regional-to-global interaction. Instead, we might pay special attention to the roles of both cultural legacies and power inequalities in creating the institutional arenas and assumptions of world-making transitions. Every globalization project is shaped from somewhat unpredictable interactions among specific cultural legacies. Furthermore, the cultural frames and assumptions of globalization projects cannot be understood without attention to multiple levels of political negotiations, with their idiosyncratic and open-ended histories. “Definitional struggles” call attention to how these arenas are designed and the politics of their development. They can remind us that globalization both requires and exceeds the work of particularly positioned and repositioned globalizers.

Critical studies of environmental modernization can also provide illustrative guidance here. Consider, for example, how agribusiness came to power in the western United States. Donald Worster's (1985) study of the building of the great irrigation projects that stimulated the emergence of agribusiness offers a wealth of detail on the interacting cultural legacies that made the scale and design of these massive irrigation projects possible.²² The wide streets of Mormon aesthetics inspired irrigation design, breaking it away from Hispanic community water control; the legal precedence of California gold rush mineral claims allowed the fluorescence of water law that privileged state-private coalitions; the opportunity for water engineers to tour the irrigation canals of British colonial India created a parallel vision for the western United States in which the landscape should properly be managed by alien experts. Compromises between populists and business advocates congealed center-oriented land allocation policies. These, and more, legacies shaped the design of the great water apparatus that transformed the U.S. economy, bringing profitable farming from east to west and helping to build U.S. imperial strength.

Not just definition but also struggle is at issue in the formation of projects of world transformation. Studies of the formation of the "frontier" in Amazonia, for example, could be told as the classic story of modernization, with its replacement of native traditional living spaces with cosmopolitan modern economies. But critical histories by scholars such as Hecht and Cockburn (1989) and Schmink and Wood (1992) have shown that the cultural assumptions of property and resource management that modernizers might want us to take for granted have been established unevenly, awkwardly, and tentatively, in the midst of passionate and unfinished struggles. Hecht and Cockburn stress the historically shifting wielders of power who have worked so hard, with varied success, for particular programs of frontier making. Schmink and Wood stress the uncanniness of the frontier, in which the best laid plans produce results opposite to their predictions. The works show varied histories at community, regional, and national scales; their components do not fit easily into a single story. Together, they highlight definitional struggles involved in making the frontier.

Concrete Trajectories and Engagements. In contrast to the abstract globe conjured by social science globalism, the scholarship I am imagining would stress the concreteness of "movements" in both senses of the word: social mobilizations in which new identities and interests are formed and travels from one place to another through which place-transcending interactions occur. These two senses of *movement* work together in remaking geographies and scales. Tracing them concretely offers more insight into planetary complexity than the endorsement of a heterogeneous globalism whose features ricochet helplessly between an imagined spreading global dynamism and its contained local Other.

How might this be done? A number of scholars have followed modern forestry, as developed in Europe, to examine its deployment in colonial regions. Here I am less interested in the metropole-to-colony transfer and more in the

movement from one particular place to another, say of British forest science to India. Ramachandra Guha (1989), Ravi Rajan (1994), and K. Sivaramakrishnan (1996) have all done important research on this movement, as it made and transformed forestry experts, forest-dwelling human communities, and forests themselves. Each tells of the effects of this movement: the development of colonial authority relations, involving dissent and opposition as well as compliance, between forest experts and forest peasants; the importance of reaffirming cultural and scientific standards in empire-wide conferences; the incorporation of local knowledges into Indian forestry policy; and the changing practices of foresters as they learned the Indian landscape and its social and political conventions. The concrete sites of encounter and engagement among people as well as trees shape the trajectories of the forestry project. This kind of attention to particular “routes” of travel (Clifford 1997) is equally important in tracing contemporary social and cultural processes around the globe.

In globalization theories, we have confused what should be *questions* about the global ramifications of new technologies and social processes into *answers* about global change. Each of the starting points I have suggested offers an attempt to reverse this globalist thinking to turn concerns about the global back into researchable questions.

Release

Let me return for a moment to the parallels between modernization and globalization. Many anthropologists are able to look at the dreams and schemes of modernization with a critical distance. We need this critical distance, too, in studying globalization. Globalization is a set of projects that require us to imagine space and time in particular ways. These are curious, powerful projects. Anthropologists need not ignore them; we also need not renaturalize them by assuming that the terms they offer us are true.

At this point, some readers may say, “Why not throw out ‘the global’ completely, since it exists as a fantasy?” My answer is that even fantasies deserve serious engagement. The best legacies of ethnography allow us to take our objects of study seriously even as we examine them critically. To study ghosts ethnographically means to take issues of haunting seriously. If the analyst merely made fun of beliefs in ghosts, the study would be of little use. Several other steps would be needed: a description of ghost beliefs; an examination of the effects of ghost beliefs on social life; and, in the spirit of taking one’s informants seriously, a close attention to the questions that ghosts raise, such as the presence of death and its eerie reminders of things gone. In the same spirit, an analyst of globalism cannot merely toss it out as a vacant deception. Instead, an ethnographic study of the global needs careful attention not only to global claims and their effects on social life but also to questions of interconnection, movement, and boundary crossing that globalist spokespeople have brought to the fore. To take globality as an object of study requires both distance and intimate engagement.

Other readers may object that it is important to reify globalization because of the terrible toll it promises to take on cultural diversity and human well-being. Their endorsement of a self-consciously paranoid vision of total transformation involves the choice to glimpse the terrors of the new world order it promises. Yet I would argue that by reproducing this totalizing framework of social change, critics bind themselves within the assumptions and fantasies of those they oppose. If we want to imagine emergent forms of resistance, new possibilities, and the messiness through which the best laid plans may not yet destroy all hope, we need to attune ourselves to the heterogeneity and open-endedness of the world.

This is not, however, an argument for “local” diversity; if anything, it is an argument for “global” diversity and the wrongheadedness of imagining diversity—from an unquestioning globalist perspective—as a territorially circumscribed, “place-based,” and antiglobalist phenomenon. (Since when are globalists not place based?) Unlike most anthropologists working on “global” issues, I have tried to examine some basic assumptions of globalism, using them to form a critical perspective rather than a negative or positive endorsement of projects for making a future imagined as global.

Most global anthropologists embrace the idea of diversity. Anthropologists have been critics of theories of global homogenization; at the same time, those who have joined the argument with globalization theorists have been influenced by the terms of debate to accept most of the premises of these theories in order to join the conversation. The debate about global cultural unification has encouraged anthropologists to agree that we are indeed entering an era properly called global, although that era, according to anthropologists, is characterized by local cultural divergences as much as unification. In the embrace of the argument, the cultural divergence we find must be part of the globalist phenomenon.²³

This is not, I think, a useful place to be stuck. To get out of its grip, analysts need to give up several of the tools and frames we have found most easy to work with, perhaps because they resound so nicely with popular “common sense,” at least in the United States. First, we might stop making a distinction between “global” *forces* and “local” *places*. This is a very seductive set of distinctions, promising as it does to give us both focused detail and the big picture, and I find myself slipping into this vocabulary all the time. But it draws us into globalist fantasies by obscuring the ways that the cultural processes of all “place” making and all “force” making are *both* local and global, that is, both socially and culturally particular and productive of widely spreading interactions. Through these terms, global “forces” gain the power to cause a total rupture that takes over the world.

Second, we might learn to investigate new developments without assuming either their universal extension or their fantastic ability to draw all world-making activities into their grasp. International finance, for example, has surely undergone striking and distinctive transformations in the last 30 years. Certainly this has effects everywhere, but what these effects are is unclear. It seems unlikely to me that a single logic of transformation is being produced—or a singular moment of rupture.²⁴

Third, globalisms themselves need to be interrogated as an interconnected, but not homogeneous, set of projects—with their distinctive cultural commitments and their powerful but limited presence in the world. Critical studies of modernization projects provide some thought-provoking examples of analytic direction here.

Freed up in these ways, it might be possible to attend to global visions without imagining their world hegemony. Outside the thrall of globalization, a more nuanced and surprising appreciation of the making and remaking of geography might yet be possible.

Notes

Acknowledgments. This essay began as a thought paper for the 1997 Histories of the Future Seminar at the University of California Humanities Research Institute. I thank the participants of that seminar for their suggestions and encouragement. It was resurrected for a University of California at Santa Cruz environmental politics study group in 1998; my thanks also go to the members of that group. I rewrote the essay for both the Institute of Advanced Study's volume on 25 years of social science and *Cultural Anthropology*. In that long process, I am particularly thankful for the comments of Arjun Appadurai, Kathryn Chetkovich, Timothy Choy, James Clifford, Paulla Ebron, Donna Haraway, Celia Lowe, Vicente Rafael, Annelise Riles, Lisa Rofel, Roger Rouse, Shiho Satsuka, Joan Scott, Dan Segal, Sylvia Yanagisako, and the anonymous reviewers of *Cultural Anthropology*. Their criticisms and suggestions have invigorated my writing even when I have not been able to fully incorporate them.

1. The image of sitting on top of the globe, either with one's body or one's technology, has become a mainstay of advertising. As I write this, for example, I have just received two telephone company advertisements: one, from a local telephone company (US West), features a woman sitting in an office chair on top of the globe while talking into the telephone and typing on her personal computer; the other, from a long-distance telephone company (MCI), shows a telephone receiver resting on top of the globe. This globe is a field to be mastered, managed, and controlled.

2. Garb (1990) argues that the image of the globe also brought with it political understandings about white male mastery and control; environmentalists have fought against these understandings in stressing the fragility of the earth but have also been influenced by them.

3. A fuller genealogy of the idea of globalization—whether in corporate policy, social commentary, or academic analysis—is beyond the scope of this essay. New books and articles appear on the subject every week. The inclusively imagined *Globalization Reader* (Lechner and Boli 2000) reprints a number of social science contributions to the conversation, offering a sense of its heterogeneity and breadth. Of the recent anthologies I have seen, I find *Globalisation and the Asia Pacific* (Olds et al. 1999) the most sensible and insightful.

4. Saskia Sassen nicely articulates this analytic choice, necessary to make globalization a significant field-defining process: "My approach entails . . . constructing 'the difference,' theoretically and empirically, so as to specify the current period" (1998:85). She adds, frankly, "I do not deny the existence of many continuities, but my effort has been to understand the strategic discontinuities" (1998:101).

5. I take the notion of the building of a "bandwagon" effect from Joan Fujimura's (1988) work on cancer research.

6. For example, discussion of globalization has stimulated a rethinking of area studies scholarship in the United States; research and teaching programs are being revamped not only at many universities but also at many of the major research institutes and funding foundations. (See, for example, Abraham and Kassimir 1997 on the Social Science Research Council and Volkman 1998 on the Ford Foundation.) This rethinking allows promising new configurations of training and scholarship. At the same time, the national discussion about area studies illustrates the problems I refer to in describing the limitations of the dogma of global newness. Too many participants, asked to rethink areas in the light of globalization, jump to the conclusion that “areas” are archaic forms beset and overcome by newly emergent global forces. Scholarship, many conclude, should either position itself with the winners, studying global forces, or with the losers, attending to regional resistance. In this configuration of choice, no attention is paid to the continually shifting formation and negotiation of “areas,” the consideration of which might have been the most exciting product of the rethinking of area studies.

7. Mintz (1998) argues in this spirit, reminding anthropologists that massive transcontinental migrations have occurred in past centuries. He suggests, provocatively, that scholars find global migration new because large waves of people of color have recently turned up in the “big white societies” of Europe and its diaspora, where, in the 19th century, they were refused (1998:123).

8. In their first waves of enthusiasm about globalization, many scholars, social commentators, and policy makers argued that it was forcing nations to disappear. This remains perhaps the most popular argument (see, for example, Appadurai 1996; Miyoshi 1996). More recently, a number of scholars have argued that the nation-state takes new forms in the context of rapid international transfers of capital and labor (e.g., Ong 1997; Sassen 1998). Even the most rapidly mobile of corporations depends on the apparatus of the nation-state to guarantee its property and contracts; in this context, national deregulation reregulates the economic domain in the interest of global capital (Cerny 1993). Nation-states have also been instrumental in forging niches of ethnic and national privilege through which the new “global” entrepreneurs secure their advantage. For these kinds of arguments in particular, an appreciation of the shifting histories of the nation and of the hegemonies of particular nation-states—as I advocate here—seems essential.

9. This set of post-World War II nationalist commitments was brought to my attention in the insightful comments of Malaysian economist Jomo K.S. at the conference “Public Intellectuals in Southeast Asia,” in Kuala Lumpur, May 1998. As an example, he pointed out that histories in which nationalism in Southeast Asia was stimulated by conversations with overseas Chinese (e.g., Pramoedya 1996) were suppressed by post-World War II Southeast Asian nations.

10. See also Lowe and Lloyd 1997 and Wilson and Dissanayake 1996a.

11. Why is globalization a new era (rather than, say, an object of reflection or an approach to appreciating culture) for these humanists? Some have come to their acceptance of cultural evolutionary stages from a slightly earlier exploration of “postmodernism” as the latest stage of cultural development; for them, globalization is a variation on postmodern culture. For some, too, the appeal of imagining globalization as a stage of cultural politics is drawn from Marxist evolutionary histories of capitalism; the cultural era is generated by the economic era as superstructure to base. For others, the main appeal seems to be the intervention into earlier civilization-bound humanities studies: the opportunity to draw together a diverse group of scholars who can talk to each other across lines of nation, language, and cultural background. Indeed, I see little evidence that most of the contributors to these volumes are themselves particularly invested in positing a

singular global era; even the editors, in their separate articles, contribute to a much more nuanced approach. It seems there is something about introductory material that stimulates era making. There is also an admirable political goal in gathering a diverse group under a common banner: Perhaps a politically united front against unregulated corporate expansion can be formed. However, this political cause can only be aided by building an appreciation of the multiple and conflicting agendas of globalization.

12. Jameson and Miyoshi 1998 does not include an editors' introduction. In lieu of an introduction, the preface and the contributions by the two editors, however, offer the reader a sense of the editors' stakes and stand in that regard.

13. A number of the contributors, including the editors themselves, offer insightful descriptions of the coming together and coming apart of varied agendas of "globalization"; they describe the scope and the exclusions of varied transnational projects; they ask about the legacies and transformational possibilities of various global interconnections. But these kinds of insights are lost in those parts of the editors' introductions that condense this richness into the definitional homogeneity of a new era.

14. Riles's analysis is not a naive celebration of the possibilities of networks for global feminism. In fact, she emphasizes the strangeness of the object the women she studied called a "network." It did not, for example, include their ordinary collegial social relationships; it was a formal design more suited for documents and diagrams than for everyday living. My goal in contrasting Riles's NGO networks and Rouse's corporate ones is not to show what Jameson would call the light and the dark side of globalization. Instead, from my perspective these are both curious ethnographic objects, and I am interested in how they are produced and maintained, separately and together, in the same world.

15. My comments are not meant as a criticism of the kind of analysis that shows how cosmopolitan ideas and institutions are translated and specified as they come to mean something in particular communities. To the contrary, I would like to see the extension of this kind of work to show the cultural specification of the cosmopolitan.

16. George Marcus makes Harvey's argument about accumulation the basis for his call for new research methods in anthropology:

For those across disciplines interested in placing their specific projects of research in the unfolding of new arrangements for which past historical narratives were not fully adequate, a firm sense of a world system framework was replaced by various accounts of dissolution, fragmentation, as well as new processes—captured in concepts like "post-Fordism" [Harvey], "time-space compression" [Harvey], "flexible specialization" [Harvey], "the end of organized capitalism" [Lash, Urry], and most recently "globalization" [Featherstone, Hannerz, Sklair]—none of which could be fully understood in terms of earlier macro-models of the capitalist world system. [1995:98; I have substituted the names of authors for the numbered references included in the original]

Michael Kearney brings up time and space:

The most cogent and comprehensive analysis of changing images of time and space associated with globalization is Harvey's [1989]. Although not dealing with globalization per se, Harvey's thesis is that a marked acceleration in a secular trend of time-space compression in capitalist political economy is central to current cultural change. [1995:551]

Kearney usefully calls it a thesis; more often Harvey is mentioned to establish a fact.

17. There is also the suggestion that Culture can provide an aesthetic blueprint for the economy (e.g., Harvey 1989:345).

18. Appadurai begins this comparison in his chapter "Patriotism and Its Futures" (1996:168–172). However, he is interested in convergences between multicultural

and postnational commitments. His goal is to mobilize a forward-looking form of post-nationalism, not to assess the contrasts among groups with varied histories of dependence on and opposition to nation-states.

19. While Kearney appears to draw on a theory of capitalist stages in his review article (1995), in his book (1996), he refutes the centrality of capitalist accumulation strategies as producing historical stages. Yet his arguments are completely dependent on the eras he posits, which neatly join scholarly theory and world history. Because he rejects forms of economic, cultural, and historical logic that might generate these all-encompassing eras, I am not sure how they might appear in such a world-hegemonic form.

20. Some globalist anthropologists conflate the excitement of new postlocal approaches in anthropology and that of new developments in the world. But, thus, they weaken the case for each. Global interconnections are not just a new phenomenon, although they certainly have important new features and permutations. If older anthropological frameworks were unable to handle interconnection and mobility, this is a problem with the frameworks and a reason for new ones but not the mirror of an evolutionary change in the world.

21. Environmental studies has generated its own local globalism. Unlike the globalisms I have been describing, it is not focused on the distinctive features of a future-making epoch. Instead, the most commonly promoted environmental globalism endorses a technical and moral “global” unit. The goal of this environmental globalism is to show the compatibility of all scales into the “global” across all time. (There has been some interest in the kinds of globalisms I have been describing here among environmental scholars, especially social scientists. But to trace the encounter between “globalization” and the technical-moral “global environment” is beyond the scope of this essay.) That “global” domain into which all other scales can be collapsed, across all time, is the domain of agency for global environmental science and activism. Social scientists and historians have been rather disruptive of this global domain, although not always self-consciously, when their descriptions establish the incompatibility of various socially defined spatial scales and historical periods, as nature is made and remade in diverse forms that evade simple confluences. The critical literature on environmental modernization, which I tap here, contributes a sense of the historical and spatial rupture of projects of making nature’s modernity. Through this distinctive antiglobalism, it can perhaps offer possibilities for nonglobalist global analyses in a different scholarly conversation, in which we might begin to get around blinding endorsements of futurism, conflation, and circulation.

22. Worster’s overriding theoretical interest in framing this book is the relationship of irrigation and state power. My discussion here turns instead to his fascinating account of irrigation history.

23. The power and dilemmas of arguing for diversity are illustrated in Albert Paolini’s (1995) insightful review of the intersections between postcolonial literary studies and globalization in sociology. Paolini argues provocatively that the overhomogenization of the Third World in postcolonial studies has led to the ease with which globalist sociologists formulate unitary frameworks of modernist progress. But he cannot give up on these frameworks even as he argues against them—despite the fact that they turn Africa into a “nonplace.” His alternative involves recognition of agency and ambiguity in African cultural formation. This seems right, but to avoid separate, segregated arguments for every neglected nonplace, we could demand, instead of worldwide modernist globalism, an examination of when, where, and how such frameworks hold sway.

24. In Tsing 2000, I explore one case of the specificity of international finance in relation to other “scale-making” claims.

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