

Global System, Globalization and the Parameters of Modernity: Is Modernity a Cultural System?

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Two Versions of the Global

There are today many versions of global theorizing and analysis and there is all too often a tendency to conflate them even where they represent virtually opposing views of the nature of the "global". Below I should like to distinguish two very different approaches to global process. The first is a rather recent development combining interests from literary studies, Birmingham inspired cultural sociology,¹ which has focussed on globalization as a recognition of what is conceived as increasing worldwide interconnections, interchanges and movements of people, images, and commodities. The second is what I shall refer to as the global systems approach, which developed somewhat earlier as a kind of global historical political economy and which has more recently begun to tackle questions of culture and identity in global systemic terms. There is, of course, some overlap in these very broad approaches, but there has often been a critique leveled by the former at the latter, one that is less argued than asserted. Researchers such as Robertson, and to a lesser degree, Hannerz, have complained of the lack of culture in the analyses of World System researchers, often as if to imply that the point of departure of such analyses was somehow wrong. While it is surely the case

¹ Parsons should also be included here in the case of Robertson, Wuthnow and several other researchers.

the world system theorists have been primarily concerned with political economic phenomena, this does not exclude an adequate approach to so-called issues of culture in such a framework, nor even a unified approach in which cultural specificity is an aspect of other social phenomena. We shall be arguing for the latter and attempting to partially exemplify it in a discussion of "modernity" as a global system specific and localized product.

I. Globalization

In recent years there has developed a relatively large literature dealing with globalization. Much of this discussion has centered on what at first appeared to be an aspect of the hierarchical nature of imperialism, i.e. the increasing hegemony of particular central cultures, the diffusion of American values, consumer goods and life styles. In some of the earliest discussions it was referred to as "cultural imperialism" and there was great alarm concerning the obliteration of cultural differences in the world, not just in the official "economic" periphery but in Western Europe where in the late Fifties and Sixties, there was a genuine fear, at least among the cultural elites, of the *défi américain* and the hegemony of Coca Cola culture. Today this theme has been developed primarily in the work of cultural sociologists and sociologists and more recently among anthropologists into a more complex understanding of cultural processes that span large regions of the world. Robertson has recently formulated the question of globality as a duality of objective and subjective processes.

Globalization refers both to the compression of the world and to the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole. (1992:8)

He refers here to both an increase in global interdependence and the awareness of that interdependence. He goes so far as to suggest, contrary to his earlier articles (1991), that this compression has been going on for more than merely the past century, even for a millennium or more, although it did not have the same character. Now, in fact, the reference to compression is not unpacked with respect to the actual processes that might be involved and Robertson is almost wholly concerned with the problem of consciousness and culture. The very notion of compression refers to diminished distance among parts, to

implosion, to the kinds of phenomena detailed among proponents of the "global village". Such mechanisms are related to technological speedup and what Harvey in more precise terms has called time-space compression, referring to the rate of transport of people, sound, pictures and any other forms of information including, of course, money. In his analysis they do not just happen because of scientific development or some neutral technological evolution. They are driven by the process of capital accumulation, i.e. the specific social form of those strategies that organize the world economy. For Robertson, however, the fact that the degree of global interdependence is the exclusive aspect of the global system relevant to his argument enables him to relegate it to the sidelines of his more restricted interest in globalization as awareness of the fact of interdependency.

The essential character of globalization resides here in the consciousness of the global, i.e. consciousness by individuals of the global situation, specifically that the world is an arena in which we all participate. There are numerous aspects of this awareness. That to which Robertson addresses himself is simply the universal as a more or less concrete experienced representation, an understanding that we are all part of something bigger. Of course this might as well be God or the Absolute Spirit, as the world of humankind. His discussion, following Parsons, concentrates on the interplay of particularism and universalism, contrasting a globalization in the total sense, the idea of humanity as such and a universalization of particularisms as in nationalism. This latter phenomenon is not understood as fragmentation but as diffusion of an idea, i.e. the social circumstances of the emergence of local identities is treated very much as an intellectual or cognitive globalization.

Robertson posits four distinct yet related elements that form the framework of global processes. These are: selves (individuals), nation states, human kind, and the world system of nation states. These emergent forms are linked in the period 1870-1920 by means of a series of relations that he represents in Figure 1.

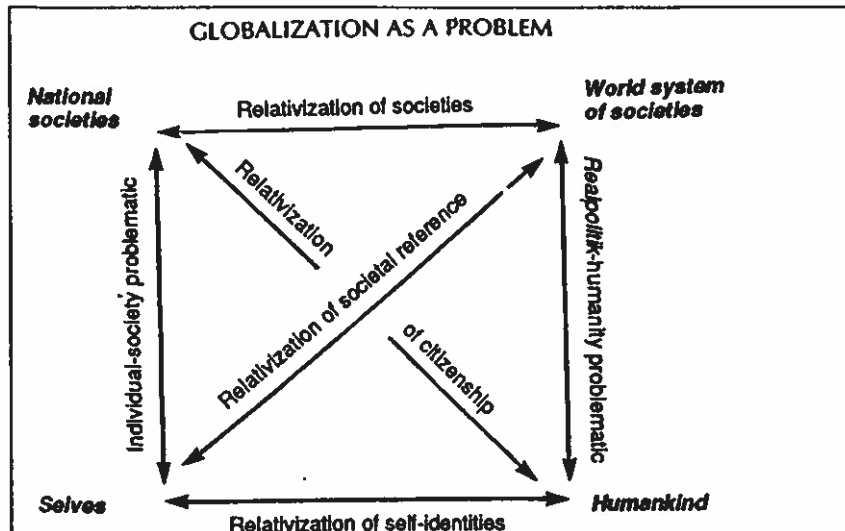


Figure 1: Robertson's Model of Globalization

This diagram is concerned to illustrate essential processes of relativization involved in the progression toward the experience of globality. The top of the diagram, the relativization of societies is, as I understand it the awareness of the larger field of interaction among states, where the bottom concerns the expansion of individual identity to include all of mankind. The hypothesis is, in any case, that the world is becoming more of a single unity. He does not predict the withering away of the state, of course, and stresses that the emergence of the nation state is itself a product of global diffusion that organizes the global field. All of the linkages between the terms are cognitive or discursive in nature. I would place these terms in the framework of what I shall refer to later as the identity space of modernity which is itself a product of developing global systems, but not equivalent to the global as such. The relativizations are expressions of processes of differentiation/separation in modernity.² Thus humankind is not an awareness of the larger world so much as a universalized vision of that world dependent upon the process of individualization itself. The organization of the world into ethno-species or races is another form of identification of "the other" in

² In the following discussion of modernity as an identity space I underscore the implicit connection between individualization, alterity and the abstraction of social identity. This process generates the possibility of a notion of a generalized humanity stripped of its historical and cultural particulars.

the same system. The recognition of a larger arena of politics and economics among state units, of course, can take several different forms, from imperial hierarchy to world competition. Robertson's diagram says nothing about the nature of the relativization process, nor about the way it might change over time. On the contrary it details a mere recognition, one that is not discovered in the world, but merely posited, i.e. Robertson's own recognition of the globalized state of the world.

Robertson does not, as I have underscored, maintain that we are all becoming identical to one another. On the contrary, he argues for two interpenetrating processes: the universalization of particularism (as in the nation state) and the particularization of universalism (the appropriation of the universal in local contexts, i.e. nationalized modernism, Japanese Buddhism). This fundamental cultural dynamic of the global is paralleled in other discussions of globalization (Hannerz, Appadurai, Friedman) in slightly different ways. Here there is also another kind of reasoning one that cannot easily be reduced to questions of meaning and interpretation. In a more recent discussion he stresses the way in which the local is itself a global product, in which the particular is an aspect of globalization rather than its complementary opposite. A whole series of local and localizing phenomena, ethnicity, nationalism, indigenous movements can be understood as global products. Localizing strategies are themselves inherently global. Here I feel that Robertson may have overemphasized the mental or semantic aspect of such phenomena. He stresses, for example, the "standardization" of locality, as if the latter were a plan rather than a social situation or context, while in our own approach, local processes are aspects of the larger global process. And while he is not always clear it appears that global culture is the basis of the spread of nation states in this century.

The proliferation of - in many ways similar - nation states in the twentieth century has, in this view, to be explained in reference to the crystallization of global political culture. (Robertson, 1992: 69)

He also seems to argue that the global is very much a question of competing interpretations of "global circumstances" and that the latter are constituting aspects of the system itself, but he provides no alternative to the political-economy models on their

own ground. Awareness of the globe, communication between its regions, competing interpretations of the globe are not specific enough it seems to me to provide a dynamic understanding of global processes. The fact that fundamentalisms, for example, provide alternative visions of the global situation, does not explain their emergence and power, nor the more interesting temporal parallel between such movements and other ethnic, indigenous and communal movements.

In my own terms globalization is very much about global awarenesses but also about the way in which they are established in definite periods of the history of already existing global systems. Globalization is about processes of attribution of meaning that are of a global nature. This should not be conflated with global processes of attribution that are local, such as nationalisms, ethnicities, balkanizations, which are in fact localizations rather than globalizations. Robertson's universal religions establish transnational identities, but they can only do so if those who participate in them actually identify as such. Buddhism, for example, is very local in Sri Lanka where it is strongly tied to the constitution of the state itself. Its more ecumenical versions in California and elsewhere, as global movements, have a very different focus. The fact that Nigerians watch Dallas might be a very localized phenomenon among actual viewers who, even while they are aware of the imported (i.e. global) status of the program, may use such status to define a set of local hierarchical relations that bear little resemblance to the society that produced the program. But the cosmopolitan who chuckles at this fact is the true representative of globalization since the meaning that he attributes to the appearance of Dallas in Africa is global in nature, the meaning of the cosmopolitan, equivalent, as we shall see, to the meaning of the modern. The formation of ethnicities and nations, I would argue, while a global product, cannot be understood in terms of cultural diffusion. While Robertson apparently agrees with Wallerstein's characterization of nationalism as a global phenomenon, the latter sees it in terms of global forces and relations themselves and not the spread of an idea. Particularization is, I shall argue, a product of the global system in particular phases of its "development" and not a general characteristic of the "global field". For example, the appearance of Fourth World movements for the re-establishment of cultural-political autonomy among indigenous peoples is a global process in social terms. It is a change in identification that has accompanied the decline of modernist identity in the hegemonic

centers of the world system. Yet the forum offered by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, the large number of media reportages, Hollywood films such as *Dancing with Wolves* have all heightened the representability of the fourth world peoples as such. The latter phenomenon is globalization, but here too, its appearance now is a determinate product of the global system in a phase of decentralization and dehegemonization.

II. Global System

Globalization refers to processes that are usually designated as cultural, ie. concerned with the attribution of meaning in the global arena. The global arena is the precondition for globalization. It is, for example, the precondition for the formation of local identities such as nation states, third and fourth worlds, ethnicities, the religious movements. While the latter are localizing strategies, they are globally generated. The global arena is a product of a definite set of dynamic properties including the formation of center/periphery structures, their expansion, contraction, fragmentation and re-establishment throughout cycles of shifting hegemony. This set of dynamic properties, which have been discussed in some detail in other publications (Ekholm, Ekholm and Friedman, Friedman) are what we refer to as the global system, or global process. There are numerous cultural processes that are directly generated in global systems. These are the processes of identity formation and fragmentation referred to above. There are other phenomena that are less systemic, such as Marco Polo's bringing back of pasta from China. Marco Polo's voyages were certainly part of a systemic process, but the fact of pasta as opposed to other products is more difficult to argue for in systemic terms. The introduction of pasta into the cuisine of the Italian peninsula is a process of globalization, and the final elaboration of a pasta based Italian cuisine is in metaphorical terms a process of cultural syncretism, or perhaps creolization. But such mixture is only interesting in terms of the practice of local identity, and not in terms of the cosmopolitan's identification of the origins of specific elements. Thus the fact that pasta became Italian, and that its Chinese origin became irrelevant is the essential culture producing process in this case. Whether origins are maintained or obliterated is a question of the practice of identity. The nature of the culture of a territory is reducible to the question of identification and thus of identity. I would argue here, that the practice of identification is properly a

question of global systems and not of globalization. The latter is the product of the former. The practice of identity constitutes and transforms the actors in the system and is the dynamic behind the creation of specific configurations of meaning. This implies that the above discussion of globalization is more properly about the global systemic mechanisms of globalization.

Global systems include globalization processes. They include the establishment of global institutional forms and global processes of identification and their cultural products. But global processes have also been the major forces of social transformation of large parts of the world even without the establishment of regular institutional networks. The collapse and transformation of great empires in both the Old and New World, the metamorphosis of "tribal" social systems as the result of the reorientation of trade, the formation of colonial societies, the production of hunters and gatherers and chiefdoms as well as pluralism, lumpenproletariats and state classes are all part and parcel of the global system, i.e. engendered by global processes. I have argued for many years that the world investigated by anthropologists is a world already transformed structurally by its integration into the global system (Ekholm and Friedman, 1980). Most of our research in what we have called global systemic anthropology has focussed on the integrative transformational processes that have generated the "ethnographic present" that ethnography, also a global system product has translated into discourses on Western identity, the discourses of evolutionism, relativism, of society as a self-contained organism, of culture as substance. The global system has pervaded the real transformation of the world's societies as well as the center's representations of the results of that transformation. Now it ought not be necessary to insist that social transformation is also cultural transformation. The emergence of cannibalism, large scale witchcraft, Frazerian sacred kings, and new clan structures in late nineteenth century Central Africa is a product of a catastrophic transformation of the entire region. The latter are major cultural changes, novelties in important respects, discontinuities even if there are clear transformational continuities (Ekholm Friedman, 1991).

The global system involves the articulation between expanding/contracting central "sectors" and their emergent/disappearing peripheries. This articulation is one of decisive transformation of life forms in the broadest sense of the word. It is moreover a long term historical process that can only be

adequately understood as such. The historical processes of global systems have specific properties, such as expansion/contraction, hegemonization/fragmentation, that inform and limit the conditions of existence, reactions and cultural strategies of those who participate in it. We shall be arguing that there is an immediate relation between the life conditions that tend to differentially emerge in such systems and the generation of what we refer to below as "identity spaces" from which culturally specific institutional/representational forms are produced. Such forms include the way central powers classify the world, and how these classifications change over time, how when and where such notions as modernism, primitivism, traditionalism emerge, but also the variety of colonial regimes, post-colonial states, and social and cultural movements. In such terms, the identity spaces of the global system are the source for much of the content of globalization.

Globalization refers in this context to the formation of global institutional structures, i.e. structures that organize the already existing global field, and global cultural forms, that is forms that are either produced by or transformed into globally accessible objects and representations. The fact that Western intellectuals interpret the world as a single place, is not in itself a fact of globalization unless it becomes a prevailing interpretation for the rest of the world system. The fact that the nation state has become a global phenomenon is not a fact of globalization, but a global system phenomenon.³ Balkanization is not globalization, but it is certainly a global phenomenon. Its dynamics are not about the establishment of organizations that span larger regions or even the globe, but about a transformation of the relations of self-identification in the world at a specific historic conjuncture.

³ It should be noted that the use of the term nation state conceals the fact that many nation states in the Third World, while using the vocabulary of Western institutions, are organized in entirely different ways. The nation state terminology has everything to do with the organization of economic and political power in the global arena. Here we may speak of an institutional tendency to globalization, but it is not the concrete national states that are globalized, merely the terminology and rhetoric. Globalized also, are the relations of access to capital on a world scale although there has been increasing decentralization here. The relation between the nation state terminology, the rhetoric of development or modernization, and the desire for international funding and support are all elements in the formation of new elites and elite identities. But these, I would argue are clearly dependent on the contours of the world system itself. In other words, globalization is a dependent aspect of the world system.

Globalization in Global Systems: Institutional Process

Global relations have always been most easily identifiable in terms of visible institutions, such as colonial administrations, transnational corporations, world banking, labor organizations but also international religious structures of Christianity and Islam, the media corporations etc. One might refer to such phenomena as globalization as opposed to global systemic processes, because they are constructed within already existing global fields. Colonial administrations reinforce and institutionalize already existent global hierarchy. Multinationals are an historically generated product of a given phase of global relations. World banking, labor organizations, religious structures etc. are the products of projects of consolidation in already existing world orders. To clarify what is meant here we can take the example of the tourist industry, one of the largest if not the largest, multinational economic activity in the world. The existence of large scale tourism has to do with emergent trends in consumption. It might be said to have emerged in the interplay of changing income structures in the center of the system as well as changing conditions of transportation. It is, as such a global systemic phenomenon. But the elaboration of the tourist industry as such, the construction of fantasy worlds away from home, the form of advertising, the very organizational structure of tourism is in our terms a question of globalization, the express creation of global social structures. Globalized structures are not new to the present global system. The mercantile companies from the 15th through the 18th centuries were globally institutionalized structures. The existence of such structures including virtual diasporas of trade colonies employed by single companies is, furthermore, a characteristic of most of the commercial civilizations dating back far into the ancient world. The great empires of the past were powerful globalized organizations and just as often powerful globalizing cultures. Even in the absence of obvious imperial structures, the trade systems of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia produced immense institutional and cultural globalization in what is usually referred to as the Hinduization of Southeast Asia and Indonesia and the Islamization of the Indian Ocean. Cable News Network, CNN, is a global organization producing reality for viewers in most of the world today. One of its own advertisements romantically depicts examples of its viewers from various parts of the world, here its different cultures

and physical appearances in a imaged argument for the unity of mankind under CNN. Robertson's humankind is also the underlying identity of the world news network itself. The socialization of the global arena in terms of regularly reproduced praxis, is the core of the institutional process of globalization.

Globalization in Global Systems: Cultural Process

It is, of course, incorrect to distinguish categorically between institutional and cultural processes, since they are simultaneous aspects of the global, thoroughly intertwined and interpenetrating. The representation of other worlds, other scenes, the primal fantasies of world travel, are embedded in the institutional organization of the tourist industry and motivate much of its activity. Mercantilist representations saturate both the practice and the self-interpretation of the great Trade Companies. However, I think it is necessary to make an analytical distinction here, one of aspects rather than of levels of reality. This is in order to more clearly illuminate the specific structures involved in such processes. As the writings on globalization have been self-consciously culturalist, this is even more important, since I have been arguing that globalization is a sub-set of global systemic processes.

The awareness of the global, the consciousness of an imploding world, a global village and all representations of the global, whether in fragments or wholes, from world music to world maps, are globalized products rather than merely our representations of the larger world **only** if they participate in or are otherwise part of a global arena of identification.

We can try here to specify the domain to which the term globalization, in the cultural sense, might apply:

1. What is required here is a stable frame of global reference, one that allows access from different parts of the global system to the same set of expressions or representations. This can apply to any kind of expression or representation be it in the form of an object or an attribute.
2. In order for the globalization to be homogenizing it is also necessary for the frames of attribution of meaning to belong to the same frame as the place where the "thing" was first produced.

The first of these requisites refers to a weak globalization. It refers merely to the existence of a global field of reference, to access beyond local communities, territories, states and regions to a wider arena. The second is the stronger form. It implies that the mechanisms of appropriation of the global have themselves become globalized, i.e. that we all understand the objects and representations that circulate in the larger arena in the same way. The basis of the first form consists in all means that communicate and mediate representations in the global system and which guarantee reception of that which is produced and transported. The basis of the second lies in the creation of subjects on a global scale that interpret the world similarly. There is a continuum of possibilities where some of those points can be exemplified in concrete form.

- a. the existence of devices such as radios and tv's able to pick up waves from various points of transmission.
1. these devices need not be used as means of communication of the content of the signal they contain, but may be simply prestige items to be exchanged at marriages and funerals, or given away to clients.
2. these devices may be used in the context of communication, but in a way restricted as follows:
 - a. the language of the communication may not be understood.
 - b. the images might be understood but interpreted in terms of local context
 - c. the images might be understood in terms of more familiar ranges of meaning attribution, i.e. identifiable types of clothing, vehicles, houses etc. and the activities of the persons represented might also be interpreted on the basis of these more generally accessible meaningful images, but as the language is not understood a very wide range of interpretation on the basis of local resonances may have little or nothing to do with the original meaning attributed to the image set.
3. these devices may be used in the context of communication but in a way restricted as follows:
 - a. the language of the communication may be understood, but the context of meaning attribution might be different.

b. the images might be understood in relation to the language used and the local range of attributable meaning, but that range might also be only meaningful in terms of local contexts. X may understand that Dallas is about millionaires and their problems with family relations and personal ambitions, and may see analogies to their own situations, but the luxury might be so crucial for the local practice of identity and status that the themes of the story become irrelevant.

The prerequisite for strong globalization is the homogenization of local contexts, so that subjects in different positions in the system have a disposition to attribute the same meaning to the same globalized objects, images, representations etc. Weak globalization entails that the local assimilates the global into its own realm of practiced meaning. Strong globalization requires the production of similar kinds of subjects on a global scale. In order to comprehend the differences in kinds of globalization it is necessary to understand to the nature of the global process itself, i.e. as a social processes that transforms social conditions of the production of meaning attribution.

Globalization and Disillusioned Cosmopolitanism

Can there be cases of trans-cultural, trans-national meaning attribution, identity or culture? In this approach, the latter is only possible where the identification process is explicitly trans-cultural, i.e. mixed or supra-national, i.e. not in-between, but above. This kind of identification, we would argue, is positional in global terms, being typical of the cosmopolitan position itself. Cosmopolitan is, in identity terms, betwixt and between without being liminal. It is shifting, participating in many worlds without becoming part of them. It is the position and identity of an intellectual self situated outside of the local arenas among which he moves. The practice of cosmopolitanism, common to the self-styled global ethnographer of culture is predicated on maintaining distance, often a superiority to the local. By his very self-definition, the cosmopolitan is unauthentic and quintessentially "modern" as we shall see below. By means of the installation of a continuous alterity with respect to other identities, the cosmopolitan can only play roles, participate superficially in other people's realities, but can have no reality of his

own other than alterity itself. Thus the opposition between cosmopolitan and local is a simple deduction from the meaning of cosmopolitan itself, a notion that presupposes the existence of at least two local cultures. The anthropologist of globalization is engaged in self-identification as he identifies his object. Now there was a time when the cosmopolitan, as the anthropologist, could pass himself off as master of otherness. This was in a world of discrete cultures, the classical mosaic of relativism. From the global systemic point of view, this was itself an illusion, the product of the imperial order of Western hegemony. As that order has collapsed, the discreteness of cultural boundaries has dissolved. The world has become for the weary exoticist, "a gradual spectrum of mixed-up differences" (Geertz, 1988, p. 147). This is, as we have argued, a symptom of disorder in power relations and not the emergence of a new truth. The anthropologist can survive in his old identity by redefining his "object". By identifying globalized products he becomes the major locus of global identification, an expert on global culture. Global cultural anthropologists join the ranks of global art curators, art and literary critics.....once monopolists of otherness, now recouping their monopoly by redefining the object as creolized, mixed up otherness, otherness at home and home amongst the others. The self-reflexivity of the anthropologist might already be the expression of a cosmopolitanism that opens the way to an understanding of the conditions of globalization. For it is the transnational structures and organizations themselves that are the locus of the transcultural. The question, however, is *why* and *when* such self-reflexivity appears, because, it is patently the case that the consciousness is no mere response to the existence of global institutions and even less so to the existence of global processes which have been here all the time. On the contrary it has, as we shall suggest below, everything to do with the conditions of self-identification among the occupants of such institutions.

Global System, Global Institutions, Globalization

Our argument has been that there is a relation of encompassment between global systems and the processes of globalization. Global systems develop internal organizations of a trans-state character. These are often of a political nature. They include alliance organizations whether political or military, cultural organizations, the media, diplomatic and aid organizations etc. At the base level

there are the multinational economic organizations, global investment and speculation machines. I have suggested that these structures are not new, nor do they necessarily produce a cultural globalization process. The latter requires the development of a global awareness, not least among the personnel involved in globalized or globalizing institutions, from world bank economists and diplomats to anthropologists. This is an awareness that is produced quite generally in certain quarters of the world system where declining hegemony and disorder combined with increasing intensity of communication have pressed the global upon everyday consciousness. But one might also suggest that there has emerged a global class structure, an international elite made up of top diplomats, heads of state, aid officials, and representatives of international organizations such as the United Nations, who play golf, dine, take cocktails, with one another, forming a kind of cultural cohort. This grouping overlaps with an international cultural elite of art dealers, publishing and media representatives, the culture industry VIPs who are directly involved in media representations and events, producing images of the world and images for the world. The news is made by them, very much about them and communicates their visions of reality. This does not imply hegemonic homogeneity. Nor does it imply that their identities are entirely the product of their location in the system. On the contrary the visions are products of the more general state of global processes of identification and self-identification which are not to be confused with the existence of global institutions and networks. Global fragmentation, thus, implies a proliferation of interpretations of the world, and it is this proliferation that is the historically specific content of global discourses. The World Bank can shift from all-out developmentalism to a serious support for tribal alternatives and ecosystem maintenance. It is not the Bank itself that is the source of either of these positions, which must be traced back; I would claim, to the specific identity space of "modernity" and its historical vacillations (see below). But there are also certain shared properties here that are attributable to the common positions of such elites. It is from these quarters that much of the globalization discussion has emerged; from the economic "global reach" to the cultural "global village".

Global processes contain and transform their own internal boundaries and articulate dialectically with the local structures that together constitute them. In this perspective, the suggestion that such processes are somehow organized by states, markets,

movements and everyday life (Hannerz) is an impractical one, insofar as the latter are themselves generated, and very variously so within the larger global process. African states do not "manage meaning" the way Southeast Asian or European states do. Cargo cults organize their worlds in very different ways than the Green Movement in West. I might suggest, on the contrary that the analysis of global phenomena should focus precisely on the way such institutional-cultural forms: states, markets, moments and everyday life, are produced and reproduced in the global local articulations of the world system.⁴

Reformulating Culture: Return to the Verb

If cultural globalization is, as we have argued, a product of the global system we might also suggest that the concept of culture is itself generated in the transformation of the centers of such systems. From the global point of view, culture is a typical product of western modernity that consists in transforming difference into essence (Friedman 1987, 1988, 1991). Its starting point is the awareness of specificity, i.e. of difference, of different ways of doing similar things. Where difference can be attributed to demarcated populations we have culture or cultures. From here it is easy enough to convert difference into essence, race, text, paradigm, code, structure, without ever needing to examine the actual process by which specificity comes to be and is reproduced. Culture, a modern tool, applied to the global context in which it emerged, generates an essentialization of the world, the formation of a configuration of different cultures, ethnic groups or races,

⁴ It is true that there are numerous activities carried out by states that might appear to be quite common, certainly in the use of violence and in the rhetoric of power and democracy. There are even certain aspects to the national project of creating a common history that can be shown to be quite global. But I do not think that these commonalities are the result of a common recipe that has been passed around the world. Rather I think it would be more profitable to look at the relations of force involved, the conditions of legitimation and the historical similarities often the result of previous globalized structures such as colonial regimes. To exemplify this more concretely, the nation state (see note 3), Papua New Guinea, has all the trappings of a modern state and it carries on many activities similar to those found in other parts of the world, including a project of national homogenization called pan-melanesianism. But the actual relation between governmental categories and the strategies of gaining and maintaining power, the immediate understanding of the function of the state and of democracy are vastly different from anything that might enable us to classify this state with others just because it is referred to as a nation state. A similar argument has been made for Africa by Bayart.

depending upon the historical period, and the professional identities of the identifiers.

People do specific things and they attribute specific meanings, also a practice of a specific sort. Now, if such specificities can be found in a population, one ought then ask how they are possible. How does the specific practice or meaning become more or less homogeneous in the population, and to what degree? Here the functions of socialization, of authority and identity play crucial roles.

From this point of view, culture is always problematic. It is always a question of its constitution and reproduction, or of its reconstitution. We do, of course, readily admit that much of the specificity of practice is relatively automatic and/or habitual, but here, also, we have to inquire how the habitual is organized in the larger social context, how it becomes "naturalized". We must account for its role. All of this highlights the fact that cultural specificity can never be accounted for in terms of itself. It can never be understood as an autonomous domain that can account for the organization of behavior.

If the practice of meaning and of interaction are both elaborated out of historically specific (objective) conditions of subjective existence, as Bourdieu might have it, then we have a model for the production of specificity that does not need to rely on a prior notion of culture as the organization of meaning.

In other words, culture is practiced and constituted out of practice. It is not a code or a paradigm unless it is socially employed as such, i.e. to socialize or otherwise transmit a set of rules abstracted from the context of their production. The force of culture is the force of the social relations that transfer propositions-about-the-world from one person or position to another.

The most dangerously misleading quality of the notion of culture is that it literally flattens out the extremely varied ways in which the production of meaning occurs in the contested field of social existence. Most atrociously, it conflates the identification of specificity by the anthropologist with the creation and institutionalization of semantic schemes by those under study. It confuses our identification with theirs and trivializes other peoples experience by reducing it to our cognitive categories. Geertz is explicit about this in insisting that rituals, social formations, and power structures are all of the same order, i.e. cultural texts, specificities for our cultural catalogues.

Culture as the anthropological textualization of otherness, in other words, does not correctly represent the way in which the

specificity of otherness is generated and maintained. It consists merely in the **translation of the identification of specificity into the specification of identity and ultimately the speciation of identity**. Its usefulness resides entirely in its classificatory properties, and these are highly suspicious. Its weakness resides in the fact that it says virtually nothing about that which is classified, being a kind of metacommunication about difference itself. In global terms the culturalization of the world is about how a certain group of professionals located at central positions identify the larger world and order it according to a central scheme of things. The following note on "creolization" is an example of precisely such textualization in the context noted above of disillusioned cosmopolitanism. Creolization was once something that happened to the colonial others of the world, and now, in this age of fragmenting hierarchies, when there is no longer an exemplary center from which to view the other, we must literally take the birds-eye view, position ourselves above the world or perhaps in the space of the jetplane. But the concept remains logically predicated on the notion of culture as text, as substance; i.e. having properties that can be mixed or blended with other cultures.

Creolization as Confused Essentialism

Creolization is an unavoidable consequence of the use of the notion of culture that we have criticized above. It refers to the meeting and mixing of meanings from disparate sources in a single place, a situation that has apparently arisen on a global scale only quite recently.

The notion of creolization ... fairly neatly summarizes a cultural process of a type widespread in the world today. The concept refers to a process where meanings and meaningful forms from different historical sources, originally separated from one another in space, come to mingle extensively. Creole cultures in their pure form(sic!) are, to put it paradoxically, intrinsically impure; I note this as a matter of ethnographic fact, certainly without performative intent. The typical context of creolization is a social structure where the bearers of some these traditions somehow count for more than others as do

consequently their respective traditions.
(Hannerz, 1992:96)

This mingling of cultures, the fusion that leads to supposedly new products, is a metaphor that can only succeed in terms of a previous metaphor, that of culture as matter, in this case, apparently, a fluid. In strictly formal terms this substantialization of culture also leads to an understanding of the latter in terms of products rather than production. Thus, while allusion is made to the "social organization of meaning", the social organization as such all but disappears in references to **flows** of meaning, from the center to periphery and back. But the metaphor of substance is further compounded by the implicit political connotations of the notion of creolization, connotations that are ignored in the objectivist language of culturalism. The use of the concept of creole in linguistics is rather clear if heavily debated. It has usually been taken to refer to a situation or sometimes phase in which a secondary and often rudimentary language used to communicate between different groups, either in trade or in colonial situations, becomes assimilated to first language status by a new generation of speakers. The more rudimentary secondary language is often referred to as pidgin. The latter incorporates elements of at least two languages which is where the concept of mixture might be introduced. And creolization refers then to the process whereby pidgins acquire native speakers with an implied complexification of both grammatical and lexical components. The categories of pidgin and creole have recently been under attack and it has been suggested by some that they are not useful theoretical terms. It has been argued cogently that many of the world's major "natural" languages are themselves products of similar processes, thus greatly reducing the specificity of the pidgin and creole categories. While there are clear structural differences between so-called natural languages and pidgins, at least where the latter are defined more or less formally as secondary forms of communication, there are no adequate linguistic criteria for distinguishing between creole and "natural" languages. On the contrary, what is left of the category creole is its purely cultural status in relation to more "primary" or natural languages. In the sense of mixture, it might further be argued that all languages are creole, which implies that the concept has no distinctive linguistic value. When the term creole is transferred to the essentialist notion of culture it can only express the idea of mixture, the mixture of two or more "pure" cultures, i.e. pure black + pure white + pure

indian. Now in fact such classification of others is a product of colonial contexts of plantation labor based on various combinations of imported and "indigenous" labor. These classifications were undertaken, furthermore, by the dominant elites and it is only in special conditions of socialization that creole became a form of self-characterization. Our argument here is that creole is a form of identification of others, a form stabilized by hegemonic arrangements that emerged in the global system. The mixed nature of other peoples cultures is only made real by means of establishing, even institutionalizing, social identities. Thus it would not be quite as simple to convince the English and French that they also were speakers of creoles or had creolized cultures. Italians have debated, needless to say, the origins of pasta, some arguing that it predated Marco Polo's voyages. But for most, the Chinese connection is today quite irrelevant for the cultural definition of spaghetti. The establishment and maintenance of creole identity is a social act rather than a cultural fact. That is, the definition of creole implies the recognition of disparate origins, a recognition that must be maintained as part of the identity of the bearers of this "objectively" mixed culture in order for the creole category to have any validity over time.⁵ The use of the concept creole in colonial contexts was a stable mechanism of identification based on an essentialized view of culture. If the world is understood as largely creolized today this expresses the identity of the classifier who experiences the transgression of cultural, i.e. ethnic, national, boundaries as a global phenomenon. The problem is not that we have suddenly been confronted with cultural flows on a world scale comparable to that which occurred in a more restricted way in the plantation sectors of the Caribbean or Southeast Asia. The problem is that conditions of identification of both self and other have changed. Cultures don't flow together and mix with each other. Rather, certain actors, often strategically positioned actors, identify the world in such terms as part of their own self-identification. Cultural mixture is the effect of the practice of mixed origins.⁶

⁵ To make matters even worse, work by linguists such as Labov have demonstrated that extreme dialect variations can result from immediate social differentiation without the introduction of other languages, i.e. without mixture, thus, for example producing language divergence (Labov and Harris 1986) that can later be the source of new recombinations which can appear in formal terms as creoles. Many linguists have argued that creolization is a general aspect of all language change and not a more specific historical phenomenon.

⁶ Now of course, the practice of mixed identity is not the privilege of anthropologists and other cultural classifiers. It sometimes becomes central to

Globalization as Disjuncture

Appadurai's approach to the global is more similar to that which I have advocated insofar as it attempts to maintain a vision of a global system **within which** cultural processes occur. But a substantialized view of culture and even of a global cultural system is introduced and it produces a vision of cultural confusion, even cultural chaos (Appadurai 1990:20), which disturbs a much more fertile potential that is contained in this work. He divides the world, somewhat arbitrarily, into ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes. Here we are free of the entanglements of the culture concept. Instead we have a series of flows in which peoples, money, technology, representations and political identities move around the world, congealing at specific points into specific configurations of regional, national and local structures. It is the increasing disjuncture among these flows that is characteristic of today, producing the mixed-up differences that others might describe as creolization. Here it is not only culture that is mixed up, but practically everything else as well. India exporting computer experts to the US and waiters to Dubai. The flowering of ethnic diasporas throughout the world is seen to be the major source of new fundamentalisms. But this deterritorialization is also the source of new consumer tastes in India and of fears in Los Angeles of Japanese take overs. The major theme of his discussion is that globalization consists in a cannibalizing dialectic between tendencies to homogeneity and tendencies to heterogeneity, a parallel here to discussions of particularization/universalization, and localization/globalization. I find myself in agreement with much of what the author writes, but I fail to see the disjunctures to which he refers. In global systemic terms, there is a logical connection between the decentralization of world accumulation and the fragmentation of identities, the emergence of new conditions of local accumulation and of survival in the world arena. The fact that India can produce hightech engineers and that much of Southern California was bought up by Japanese investors during the 1980s are not matters of disjuncture so much as of a quite systematic process of decentralization in the world

local representations of transethnic identity in the lumpenized quarters of "world cities", often expressed in world art, music and literature where it is also transformed into global representations of the world media. But the transethnic is often a weak identity, supported by cultural classifiers, in a more serious context of stronger separate ethnicities in conflict.

arena. The globalization of fundamentalisms and of powerful nationalisms is part of the same process, the violent eruption of cultural identities in the wake of declining modernist identity. The concept of disjuncture appears to detail a certain turmoil attributed to a formerly more systematic world. But what appears as disorganization and often real disorder is not any the less systemic and systematic. I might venture to suggest that the disorder is not about the introduction of randomness or chaos into the global arena, but a combination of two processes: first a fragmentation of the global system and the consequent multiplication of local projects and localizing strategies and second, a simultaneous globalization of political institutions, class associations, and common media of representation. If Brooklyn born Polynesian dancers represent the Hawaiian Hula to tourists by putting on a Tahitian fire dance on a Waikiki stage (though this no longer occurs in today's world of monitored authenticity), this need not be understood as post-modern chaos. On the contrary, it is surely one of the constants of global cultural history. It is only chaotic for the culture expert whose identification of origins is disturbed by the global processes of changing identities, a disturbance that is consequently translated into a disauthentication of other peoples "actually existing" cultures. The problem can only arise on the basis of the notion of culture as essence or substance.

The Leaky Mosaic

Common to the anthropological vision and to Western essentialism in general is the notion that culture is somehow the major actor in the global arena. This, I have argued, is a reflex of Western modernity itself. Even among those most concerned to criticize the ideal that the world is made up of discrete cultures, even, where culture is defined as the social organization of meaning, it is still seen to flow from one geographical area to another, either in the form of ethnic migration, media transmissions, or the global movement of products and services. For these anthropologists of globalization, the latter process is quite new, and apparently related to the general globalization of capital that has occurred in the past two decades, and to the obvious awareness that people have of their access to the goings on of the larger world. The result of this in terms of the former anthropological vision can be expressed in terms of a classical categorization of approaches to ethnographic reality. These

approaches have usually been contrasted as two: "the ladder" and "the mosaic". The first refers to the notion that cultures (in this case social types) can be ordered in evolutionary time, a time that translates the distribution of societies in space into a temporal progression. This is the anthropology of hegemony, first the classical evolutionary scheme of the British hegemony, then the neo-evolutionism of the American hegemony. The mosaic is the relativist version of the above, re-transposing time into space and maintaining the vision of a world divided into well defined bounded units all of equal value or perhaps even incommensurable. The globalized vision of the ethnographic universe which is the map of the "peoples" of the world, is one that is aware of the mixtures existing at any one point in the larger world, that no culture is pure, that all contain elements from other places in the larger system (if "system" is the right word). In other words this is a vision of a leaky mosaic in which cultures run over their edges and flow into one another channeled, to some extent, by the remaining political and economic hierarchies of the world system. The popularity of this understanding of the world is, I think, related precisely to the continuity that it expresses with respect to an older cultural relativism, even more its resonance with a practice of essentializing identity that is the pervasive foundation of relativism. But if, as we have argued, the mosaic never existed, and if culture is truly the social organization of meaning, then what appears as globalization cannot be explained in terms of cultural overflows in a previously well-formed ethno-cultural map of the world.

From Culture to the Practice of Identity: The Parameters of Modernity

The issue of creolization, mixture, post-modern pastiche and what others have referred to as cultural hybridization is clearly a central problem for a good many intellectuals whose profession is to identify the world. The discussions of globalization owe most of their impetus to this experience. It is noteworthy that both creolization and hybridization employ an image of the mixing of pure or original strains to produce a new form. The image itself belongs to a more basic view of culture that is a metaphor on the notion of race. It equates the notions of population with specific practices and ways of life, in terms of a notion of common substance. This culture is simply there, like an object, to be investigated and understood. And it is this essentialist notion that

I have criticized, a notion that, as I shall argue, is not easy to shed, simply because it is very strongly implicated in our own modern identity and in the way that we configure our world.

The practice of identity is a practice of identification. It is not a question of identity possessed by an individual or group, i.e. as a label, or object. Nor is it about the identity defined by the psychologist, attributed to others, although the activity of the psychologist is very much part of what I am trying to get at here. The practice of identity is about the identification of an existential world, the attribution of meaning to the world, to objects, persons and relations. This practice identifies the self as it identifies the world. It is not the application of a code to the organization of the world by a methodological individual or actor. It is highly motivated practice rooted in the way immediate experience is structured in definite social contexts. Where codes are involved, it is because they have been actively included in such practices, i.e. because they are socialized into the process of identification. I have referred to this in terms of identity spaces, and I have in other contexts discussed the identity space of modernity. I would argue here that the terms of the globalization discussion are all derivative of the identity space of modernity. The very essentialism of culture as substance, of meaning that flows is one of a plethora of metaphors that are generated by such a space. Globalization is a flow of meaningful objects and ideas that retain their meaning in their movement. Behind such a notion are a number of assumptions:

1. The individual is separate from culture in the sense that he partakes of it, consumes it, uses it in various ways. This is a relation of externality.
2. Even where culture is a code that organizes society, it stands as a separate text, a relation of externality,
3. The relation between subject and culture here is a relation between subject and role, between an empty subject and alternative identities.
4. All identities no matter what their cultural content have the same form. They are texts of or for practice, for particular scenarios and social rules, rituals, forms of symbolism. But there is no difference in the mode of existence of these rules, rituals and forms.

It is in such terms that a Mayan or Hawaiian nationalist is represents a hybrid culture, because the very idea of nationalism is a western import. This banality does not afford us any insight into what Mayan and Hawaiian nationalists are doing but merely that they participate in the modern universe of political language.

Until relatively recently, African cloth was made primarily in Holland and Germany. The production was targeted to specific "tribes" i.e. based on specific patterns and the cloth was not obtainable in Europe. The production of local difference on a global scale is proof of a global relation in production and consumption. It is not, of course, the globalization of culture of meaning, but of the global control over local consumption via product differentiation. This is clearly a global systemic relation, but is it also globalization? It is certainly not a globalization of "meaning", except for the observer of the phenomenon, i.e. for the global researcher.

In several previous publications I have discussed a phenomenon called *la sape*, whereby young men from the Congo and Zaïre, usually from more impoverished urban areas, systematically accumulate designer clothing, moving up the ranks of finery until moving to Paris, *l'aventure*, in order to engage in becoming *un grand*. The emergence of a kind of cult group surrounding this process is well documented, with clearly defined age classes and competitive cat-walking, organized by returning to Brazzaville, center in the periphery, sewing the accumulated labels into a single jacket and performing *la danse des griffes* at the local *sape* club. Now in one sense this processes is about globalization, the globalization of people, or garments, a veritable traffic in people and goods, sometimes including drugs and often resulting in the re-import of low-end jeans and t-shirts to be sold in the African markets. What is not occurring, however, is a mixture of culture, not unless the notion is confined to the museological definition of ethnographic objects. A lumpenproletarian Congolese who flaunts his Versace suit and Westin crocodile shoes is not, in my view, a westernized African, nor is he something "betwixt and between". This is because he is engaged in a specific practice of accumulation of "life-force" that assimilates the Western good to an expression of a process that is entirely African. The Western is encompassed by the practice of *la sape*. The clothes are contained within a different project, and the properties of the clothes do not alter those of the project. The content does not shape the container. On the other hand, his entire project, as a social

practice, is in its turn encompassed by the larger global processes upon which it is, in its global specificity, entirely dependent.

Thus, instead of falling back, on a model of cultural flows or other similar metaphors, I think it better to conceive of such global cultural processes in terms of positioned practices such as assimilation, encompassment and integration in the context of social interaction. This is a relation between container and contained in the sense of the variable forms of incorporation of the products of a global field of interaction into the practice of local strategies, and the relation of these processes to the practice of identification, i.e. of meaning attribution.