
Anthropology of the Global, Globalizing Anthropology: A Commentary

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The articles in this volume successfully tackle the challenge of doing ethnographic analysis of global/local processes, a sorely needed remedy to the general lack of such empirical grounding in much of the literature on globalization. While I myself have often been associated with such overgeneralized statements about the world system, I must confess here that my own introduction into the global was via ethnographic encounter, primarily that of my partner Kajsa Ekholm Friedman who wrote the first articles on this issue in the early seventies (1975, 1976). These were hard times for global thinking and I was quite negative to it myself at the start. However, long battles convinced me of the necessity of this approach. Ekholm Friedman's confrontation with the global resulted from her fieldwork in northern Madagascar, on the island of Nossi Bé where she discovered that it was impossible to account for the nature of the local societies without an understanding of the way in which they were constituted in (if not by) their position within the Indian Ocean trade with all its shifting power relations over the past 500 years. This led to what we felt was a need to delve into the understanding of the mechanisms of what was then designated as the global system. As virtually no anthropologists were interested in the global in this period and were even quite hostile to the approach, we began working with ancient historians, archaeologists and geographers. This co-operation led to a series of publications that were obviously external to the community of social and cultural anthropologists who were quite anchored in the local until well into the eighties when "globalization" became a popular topic in a whole range of discourses that filtered into anthropology. This required a great deal of theoretical and quite abstract reasoning from our point of view, but after several years of this we did in fact return to a series of ethnographic based studies, in Central Africa, in Hawaii and more recently in Sweden.

We are not of the opinion that there is any contradiction in maintaining a theoretical position as well as insist-

ing on ethnographic detail. But I think it can be argued that following the decline of materialism in the social sciences in the early eighties, there emerged a clear rejection of any sort of theory in anthropology. Geertz (1973) championed this kind of strategy in arguing against the theoreticism of Lévi-Strauss and insisting that anthropology was primarily about the amassing of *exotica*, an argument that reduced theory to a kind of western folk model. This was not an idea without its merits of course and was worthy of discussion, but there was no discussion. Instead this kind of totalizing relativism in which all propositions about the world could be reduced to culture became institutionalized in the early work of Rorty (1979) and postmodernism. The entire relativist project was reinterpreted as cultural radicalism by Marcus/Fischer (1986) and others who saw the *revelation* of cultural difference as an exposure in and of itself to alternative ways of going about the world, a kind of museum of revolutionary futures, in which Marx was replaced by Mead, followed by Geertz, implicitly designated as a kind of Lenin of relativism. One product of this was a plethora of atheoretical monographs in which it was not always clear what issue was to be tackled. Globalization, which was imported into anthropology from already existing discourses in cultural sociology, business economics, economic geography and cultural studies (especially in its postcolonial variant) emerged in this period in which culturalism was dominant as an understanding of the world. Thus globalization was dealt with as a cultural process or at least culture was identified as the substance that was to be globalized. The logic of this argument is as follows: culture is textualized in Geertz and most post-Geertzians including the postmodernists although this is messed up by the proliferation of voices. The textualization is equivalent to a substantialization of culture as a thing in itself that can be read, stored, interpreted without the necessity of always placing it within an interactive context of social life. Globalization then operates on this substance via the action of diffusion, which is why certain globalists, such as Appadurai (1990) and Hannerz (1996) are so positive to the notion of diffusion.

I have argued in this context that there is a crucial difference between the globalization approach and that developed within global systemic anthropology and even world systems models. Globalization in other fields was based on empirical analysis, not least in business economics and economic geography where it was measured and located physically (Dicken, 2001; Harvey, 1990). This is also the case for Castells's (2000) work which relates globalization to the rise of network-based society. For most of these authors, globalization is accounted for in terms of new

technologies, especially computer and internet-based technologies. All of these more empirical works detail the intensification of global interconnectedness over the past two decades and especially the increase in global flows of financial capital that has been facilitated by new technologies. This is no doubt the case at least at a descriptive level, but the account of globalization in these works is based on a relatively short historical perspective that post-dates World War II. This misses the fact stressed by a number of researchers, quite early by Bairoch and Kozul Wright (1996) and later by Hirst and Thompson (1996), that the same kind of globalization occurred in the period between 1880 and 1920. More important still is the fact that after 1920 there is a clearly documented de-globalization of the world that continued until the 1950s when American capital export again triggered a similar process that took off on a major scale in the 1960s and 70s. This kind of data falsifies the simple technological argument. While new technology has clearly speeded up the process there is no evidence that it is an evolutionary phenomenon. On the contrary, at least in the past centuries globalization has been a periodic phenomenon. Technological change has had the effect of time-space compression but this has not as yet transformed the nature of the world system.

Globalization versus Global Systems

Cultural globalization as a discourse has none of the benefits of empirical analysis of the kind referred to above. It is based on the general image of globalization that exists in the media and which is greatly reinforced by the immediate experience of privileged travel among academic elites and the vantage points of elite global institutions such as CNN, Bilderberg, UNESCO and the World Bank. For Robertson (1992) it begins at the turn of the century, with the increasing conscience of the world as whole that saturates the League of Nations and continues up to today's New Age religion. Although he has modified this position he still takes a position that is evolutionary. For Appadurai and Hannerz, it is all even more recent and for Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) it is the sign of things to come. The metaphors that saturate the latter are the end of the nation state, a diasporic world in which hybridity becomes dominant in a post national or transnational world order. Without in anyway denying the existence of contemporary globalization, this discourse leaves much to be desired with respect to the analysis of both dynamics and class. But it is also entirely unreflexive in its participation in this increasingly hegemonic ideology.

Global systemic analysis has a very different source as indicated above. Braudel (1984) wrote of globalization

as a phenomenon that happens at the end of hegemony wherein an old centre finances the development of a new centre as the result of large scale capital export. This is a strictly economic definition of course, but in the Braudel scheme of things the capitalist world can be understood as a complex of social, cultural and political relations that are very much dominated by macro-economic forces even as the former partly constitute the latter. In this approach, transnational connections are ubiquitous if variable in intensity, and they are themselves the product of the changing structure of transnational relations in which they are embedded. War and trade are not entirely different phenomena but aspects of the same set of processes. For globalization adherents, the lack of existence of global connections is seen as the opposite of globality, whereas, for the global systemic approach, isolation and separation are most often systemic products. Further, it is not simply the relations between units in the larger arena that are the subject of analysis but the way in which both the relations and the units themselves are constituted. This is indicated in the studies by Wilmsen (1989) and Gordon (1992) on the way in which the San became a hunting gathering small scale representative of an evolutionary past rather than a more recent reconfiguration of social existence within a larger transforming world system. This kind of analysis is not about crossing borders but about the ways borders are formed and transformed and the way in which they disappear. My critique of globalization approaches is based on this lack of systemic as well as historic depth in their analyses and the way they fall into or perhaps champion a boundary bashing cosmopolitanism without seeking to understand where such a position might come from. The results of this approach are that globalization is historically a periodic and even cyclical phenomenon the evidence for which can be found in the history of all commercial civilizational systems.

Boundaries are the practiced and represented (thus also practiced) mechanisms of differentiation within such systems, both in class and in regional terms. The transfer of things, people and information across boundaries is as old as society and more so it is not simply a fact of transfer that is important but the way in which such relations are constitutive of social worlds, not because of the cultural information that is born in such movement and which can be mixed in any one place, but the way in which social structural arrangements are organized around such movements, from the elementary structures of kinship which are based on the necessity of external exchange to the massive slave and capitalist regimes of labour and capital movement that characterize capitalist civilizations.

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These articles focus on concrete aspects of global/local relations while making it clear that the global is a property of interlocality rather than an autonomous level of reality, a place of its own. Thus it might be a good idea to find another vocabulary to express such relations, one that acknowledges that all intentional action is localized even as the effects of such action and the description of relations in larger interlocal space can be said to be global. This avoids the misplaced concretizing of the global as if it were an actor associated with a place, the globe. Milgram and Smart examine the way in which global commodities are inserted into particular projects. Barber stresses the often ignored class aspect of Filipino labour migration. Aiyer, Meneley, and Ulin investigate the relation between world products, such as gold, wine and olive oil, and the instabilities of the world market. They discuss the dependent relation between the latter and the functioning and social transformation of local areas of production. Swedenburg finally takes up the way in which global shifts in identity politics affect the markets for regionally identified music. This is much more than globalization. It is about broader sets of relations, the conditions of action and of social reproduction in the world system as they are revealed in the concrete relations that can be discovered on the ground.

Thus the use of cognac among Hong Kong Chinese is informed by local strategies that have assimilated foreign goods as well as global colonial hierarchies of values into their lives. In this respect Milgram's insistence that social lives have things and not the reverse as suggested by Appadurai is important to keep in mind. There are real actors possessed of real intentionalities that cannot be reduced to figments of the globalization of goods. It is those intentionalities that account for much of the particular in globalization. Most of the articles here are critical of the celebratory tendency of much of the globalization literature in anthropology and they clearly document the basis for their arguments. The properties of the local are also an important aspect of these analyses and here I think it is important to stress that the global as such refers only to properties of relations in space that are by definition always "local"...even in the space of an airplane, as any terrorist knows. Wine, is clearly a geopolitical product, global for hundreds or even thousands of years. Bordeaux, of course, obtained its position in the world market as part of the British occupation and investment in the region. The fact that migration is a highly differentiated phenomenon, and that it is not equivalent to the mere circulation of culture and the formation of

hybridity, is another important critical counterpoint to recent celebratory literature on this theme. The fact that Filipino migrants must be understood in terms of class, both at home and abroad, that the state has become a major exporter of remittance-producing cheap labour resonates with other similar examples in the literature (Glick Schiller Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1992). The circulation of people, things and information cannot be understood in terms either of diffusion-globalization or hybridization. Instead, what these articles offer is an ethnographic corrective to such shorthand representations of what is going on the world, and the shorthand is by and large a misrepresentation of reality. When commodities enter the life worlds of people who did not fashion them themselves, they are assimilated to the social projects of those life worlds and this occurs at the same time as those life worlds as wholes are integrated into the global system, an integration that can transform the way lives are constituted and thus the way in which commodities are eventually appropriated. This is a more complex picture than the juxtaposition or flat mixture implied by hybridity or creolization (in the cultural if not in the linguistic sense). The word articulation is certainly a better choice to cover such processes since it allows us to specify exactly what is going on. It also allows us to relate the process of circulation to its changing conditions of existence.

Articulation versus Hybridity

A clear example of the systematic complexity of this kind of articulation is illustrated in recent work on the emergence of child witchcraft accusations in Central Africa. Ekholm Friedman in a recent study in Angola (2003) has argued that the roots of the current and unprecedented accusation of young children lie in warfare and total impoverishment. These dire conditions have triggered the collapse of the basic family relations of socialization and aroused the concomitant fear of children who are still *in Nature*, thus powerful and dangerous (as well as potential armed child soldiers). This is a particular historical situation, of course, but the logic of witchcraft remains unchanged. Now for some anthropologists, modern witchcraft is necessarily a question of an alternative modernity. It must be modern because to assert anything else is tantamount to racism (Meyer and Geschiere, 1999). From my point of view the usage of modernity here is nothing more than the assertion of contemporaneity with the added interpretative assumption that the latter implies modern. This leads to a definite stance with regard to history and the notion of cultural continuity. Meyer and Geschiere admonish me at one point for falling back upon such a colonial notion of continuity. I cite this in its total-

ity because it is such an interesting example of the way globalists have defined the issue.

He emphasizes that globalisation goes together with "cultural continuity." This makes him distrust notions like "invention of tradition" or "hybridization;" instead, one of the aims of his collection of articles seems to be to understand the relation between the "global reordering of social realities" and "cultural continuity." This makes him fall back, in practice, on the highly problematic concept of "tradition," which—especially in his contributions on Africa—seems to figure as some sort of baseline, just as in the olden days of anthropology.... Similarly he relates the emergence of *les sapeurs*, Brazzaville's colourful dandies, so beautifully described by Justin-Daniel Gandoulou (who again is hardly mentioned), to "certain fundamental relations" in Congo history which "were never dissolved;" as an example of such "fundamental relations" Friedman mentions: "Life strategies consist in ensuring the flow of life-force. Traditionally this was assured by the social system itself." This is the kind of convenient anthropological shorthand which one had hoped to be rid of, certainly in discussions on globalization.... Friedman's reversion to such a simplistic use of the notion of tradition as some sort of base line—quite surprising in view of the sophisticated things he has to say about globalization—illustrates how treacherous the triangle of globalization, culture and identity is. Relating postcolonial identities to such a notion of "tradition" makes anthropology indeed a tricky enterprise. (Meyer and Geschiere, 1999: 8)

Aside from the insinuations with respect to Gandoulou (1984)—I cite his work throughout the article without necessarily agreeing with his interpretation (this was an MA thesis)—the remarks of these authors imply that I have made a serious moral-political error in arguing for historical continuity. My argument in this chapter consists in trying to demonstrate the historical continuity of a strategy of accumulation of life force as it articulates with changing conditions, determined largely by the transformations related to Congo's integration into the European sector of the global system. This is not a question of globalization, not about flows of the kind referred to in Meyer and Geschiere's edited volume (1999). It is about the transformation of conditions of existence. The continuity is not a simple example of tradition, but a question of the differential transformation of life strategies. In a situation where the kinship structure is not dissolved but only transformed, however drastically, conditions for the maintenance of a certain kind of socialization, of a certain kind of selfhood, may remain relatively stable. This I argue may account for the way in which a certain way of relating to

objects of consumption (in our terms) is continuous with the past. Meyer and Geschiere miss this entirely because they operate with a flat notion of culture as a collection of things, where the structure of experience is no issue, and where life is not apparently structured in any but globalizing terms which themselves are reduced to flows of goods, ideas, capital, information and people. In this sense doing potlatch with sewing machines is for them something entirely different than doing it with coppers. Thus if new *things* are introduced or if *new people* are implied in a relation, we are in a new ball game called modernity. My argument here is that this is not the case unless the properties of the relations themselves change. This occurs when the material integration of a particular population leads to the replacement via destruction of one form of socialization by another. In this issue the articles by Milgram and especially Smart demonstrate the way in which worlds are constructed locally and the way in which global circulation of commodities is not equivalent to the circulation of meaning as such. The practice of life, the constitution of social worlds is not the same kind of phenomenon as circulation but exists always in counterpoint to the latter.

Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) are somewhat more sophisticated than Meyer and Geschiere in their argument which they conduct without naming anyone in particular, although one suspects a colleague of theirs at Chicago:

This move is typically rationalized by affirming, sometimes in an unreconstructed spirit of romantic neoprimitivism, the capacity of "native" cultures to remain assertively intact, determinedly different, in the face of a triumphal, homogenizing world capitalism. Apart from being empirically questionable, this depends upon an anachronistic ahistorical idea of culture. Of culture transfixed in opposition to capitalism—as if capitalism were not itself cultural to the core, everywhere indigenized as if culture has not been long commodified under the impact of the market. In any case, to reduce the history of the here and now to a contest between the parochial and the universal, between sameness and distinction, is to reinscribe the very dualism on which the colonizing discourse of early modernist social science was erected. It is also to represent the hybrid, dialectical historically evanescent character of all contemporary social designs. (1999: 294)

Here capitalism is incorporated into the cultural as if its particular properties were so different in different social and/or historical situations that one could even equate it with the notion of culture. But there is no evidence for this. The hybridity of capitalism is a superficial misnomer that could have been used to criticize the early work of Waller-

stein (1974) or Frank (1969) when they assumed that slavery and feudal exploitation could well be parts of the world capitalist system, on the grounds that capitalism must be based on wage labour alone. The fact is that the process of capital accumulation possesses a logical form that is not variable except in terms of the way in which it can be elaborated upon. To reduce capitalism to a notion of culture as in "models of/models for" is to truly mystify the issue. The same can be said of African witchcraft or magic or other structures. These phenomena cannot be reduced to recipes. They are embedded in complexes of practices and conditions of action. The fact that things exist in the contemporary world cannot be used to deny that they display a historical continuity. The same is true for capitalism of course, which is why the very term "millennial capitalism" is totally misleading. For Comaroff and Comaroff this term is simply a reference to globalization as if the term implies that we are truly in a new era. Yet the logics of capital are identical. Harvey (2000) whose name is listed in the issue of the journal in which the term is introduced, has a clearer understanding of what is continuous and non-continuous in globalized capitalism. In fact he makes it quite clear that the current "New Imperialism" is the product of a logical sequence, historically determined and not the discontinuous phenomenon implied by Comaroff and Comaroff. Marshall Sahlins to whom their critique seems to have been addressed has argued this point quite powerfully in a recent article (Sahlins 1999). On the contrary advocates of the globalization approach, which began as a celebration of globality and then was confronted by the dark side of the phenomenon, have retrenched to some extent while maintaining a basically discontinuist position in which we really *are* in a new world, whether brave or not. It is equivalent to saying that witchcraft is actually a new phenomenon in Central Africa, a form of capitalism, rather than an articulation of very different logics of accumulation.

Of course there is newness in the world, but it should not be conflated with epochal change especially when it is on the basis of one's own globetrotting experience rather than finer ethnographic analysis. The point of ethnography has always been to gain an understanding of *other people's* worlds. But many of the globalization inspired analyses simply label populations in an attempt to fit them into the popular categories, locals and globals, hybrid versus essentialist. Let me illustrate briefly:

Liisa Malkki (1992) in her book and in a well known article proceeds as follows: after dividing up the "Hutu" refugees from the former war in Burundi who inhabit Tanzania into "nationals" who remain in the camp and

"cosmopolitans" who manage to get to the local township of Kigoma and identify as other than Hutu (but why one might ask?), she takes a further ideological step. She criticizes what she understands as the moral support for indigenous peoples and asks why they should be more important or valued than migrants (Malkki, 29). But there is more! The very notion of refugees and people who have *lost* their homelands, who are thus deterritorialized, is attacked as part of Western ideology. Malkki suggests that this is the product of the national mapping of the world in which cultures are territorialized, even rooted in the earth in specific localities. This creates a certain notion of purity or perhaps homogeneity that, besides being itself the source of most evil and violence in the world, also generates categories of non-belonging that can be applied to refugees, thus stereotyping their situations. She suggests, invoking the enormously popular Deleuze and Guattari (1987), that perhaps (although she guards herself against seeing displacement as a positive phenomenon) being deterritorialized ought to be understood as progressive in some way, as the expression of the rhizomatic. Thus her "cosmopolitans" are imbued with the capacity to challenge the order of the nation state (as if Burundi and Tanzania are obvious examples of the latter). The stress on relations to "places of birth" and "degrees of nativeness" (Malkki, 1992: 38) blinds us to a greater cosmopolitan phenomenon, "the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in remembering and imagining them" (*ibid.*).

There is no attempt here to document this division of the world into cosmopolitans and locals, good guys and bad. Rather her subjects are simply *used* to elaborate her own set of classifications. Ethnography is thus reordered in order to exemplify pre-existing abstract categories. Even if such were the case, i.e., that people actually identified as they are labelled, the usage of such terminology requires a more thorough analysis. Ekholm Friedman's fieldwork in Congo revealed one case, at least, of a man who claimed to be a "citizen of the world," a man who had never been outside of the Congo. His use of the word indicated something other than cosmopolitanism. It indicated an urgent wish to get out of his collapsing world and to come to Europe. The term "citizen" may have been a premonition of assumed rights in a world full of such discourses, but this is all a far cry from cosmopolitan identity. The articles in this volume are inherently critical of this approach insofar as they attempt to grasp the emics of those involved in global relations rather than imposing categories on them. Barber's article on migration demonstrates the way in which migrating subjects are truly active subjects who engage in constructing worlds that

cannot be reduced to notions on the position of an observer who has access to an external understanding of such processes.

In a sparser and more polemical tone, John Kelly (1995) has written of Fiji in similar terms, local nationalist Fijians versus cosmopolitan Indian immigrants. This is extended to Hawaii where members of the Hawaiian movement are contrasted to the Japanese.

Across the globe a romance is building for the defense of indigenes, first peoples, natives trampled by civilization, producing a sentimental politics as closely mixed with motifs of nature and ecology as with historical narratives....In Hawaii, the high-water mark of this romance is a new indigenous nationalist movement, still mainly sound and fury, but gaining momentum in the 1990s....This essay is not about these kinds of blood politics. My primary focus here is not the sentimental island breezes of a Pacific romance, however much or little they shake up the local politics of blood, also crucial to rights for diaspora people, and to conditions of political possibility for global transnationalism. (Kelly, 1995: 476)

More recently he has gone somewhat further in the affirmation of transnationalism, citing an Indian Fijian member of parliament as saying "Pioneering has always been a major element in the development of resources for the good of mankind...(Kelly, 1999: 250)." The latter continues:

People who move inherit the earth. All they have to do is keep up the good work, "in search for better opportunity." (*ibid.*)

Kelly aggressively criticizes one of the leaders of the Hawaiian movement for her nationalist penchant while lauding the Japanese for their service to the United States. Yet this is a population that has maintained the highest degree of endogamy in the Islands, and which has become, especially in the past 30 years, the most powerful political block in Hawaii, linked to numerous land scandals. But this is irrelevant for the simple dual classification project that is Kelly's. What is important is that the Japanese just as the Indians in Fiji are immigrants that "shake up the local politics of blood" represented by native peoples.

This is truly surprising for anyone coming at these issues without any particular moral prejudice, for here there are good guys and bad, cosmopolitans and locals. This is moral politics translated into ethnographic interpretation. If representatives of this globalizing position think that there is something basically evil in indigenous

movements then they should really do some serious research into the issues rather than simply labelling. And here the ethnographic ethic, if it exists, would insist on maintaining neutrality with respect of other peoples' *emics* for the sake of understanding. When the "invention of tradition" was at its height in Pacific anthropology, indigenous movements were suspected of inauthenticity because their members weren't *real* natives, weren't really *traditional*, if there ever was such a state of existence. For globalizing anthropologists a further step is taken: not only are natives inauthentic, they are also the archetypical representatives of the world's major problems—essentialism, nationalism and racism, as opposed to migrants who represent the future solution to the world's problems. Hardt and Negri (2000) reify this position in their Marxist version of globalization ideology:

Nomadism and miscegenation appear here as figures of virtue, as the first ethical processes on the terrain of Empire. (Herdt and Negri, 2000: 362)

This celebration of movement is opposed just as in these other authors to a dangerous localism.

Today's celebrations of the local can be regressive and fascistic when they oppose circulation and mixture, and thus reinforce the walls of nation, ethnicity, race, people and the like. (ibid.)

The parallels are striking and clear evidence of a powerful ideological turn, but certainly not a research result. This is spontaneous interpretation of the world and not the product of analysis. Otherwise there would be some evidence that such were the case. The reason, I suggest for this confluence of interpretations is precisely the lack of grounding in the globalization approach which is based on a set of categorizations of reality that are not products of research but immediate interpretations based on the experience related to this position, one that is above it all, globally distanced from the real world. This is truly airplane anthropology, a postmodern version of cosmopolitanism, one that encompasses the world's differences in its own self-identification. From a global systemic point of view this perspective ought itself to be an important object of analysis, but it is certainly not another *theoretical* position.

Ferguson in his recent book on Zambia (1999) presents yet a further if clearly superior variation on this globalization ideology. The title itself, *Expectations of Modernity*, expresses the problem perfectly. Zambian proletarianization was related to copper mining and it had formidable transformative effects on the zone known as the Copper Belt. But to invoke the notion of "moder-

nity" in this is to side step the issue which should lead one to ask what this term actually means rather than simply accepting its existence, conflating in this way the contemporary with the modern. The fact that the copper mining economy declined is certainly not a discovery (see for example the work of Arrighi and Saul, 1973.). And the fact that it led to a feeling of deception in the Copper Belt is certainly no discovery but an issue that has been discussed for years. The story told in this well written work is one in which an engagement in the future is replaced by an attempt to find other values, a return to the rural, to "tradition" in local terms. This is precisely what is to be expected from the kind of model that I proposed back in 1994 in suggesting that neo-traditionalism, the renaissance of roots, the emergence of indigenous movements, religious sects and the like were products of economic decline and the collapse of formerly dominant social projects. At the same time the globalization folks are totally submersed in issues of modernity, hybridization, and the like. I am taken to task for insisting that Congolese *sapeurs* are not simply participating in modern consumption, but practicing a relation to clothes that is deducible from a more general logic of accumulation that has not been replaced in the contemporary world. The critique which echoes that of Meyer and Geschiere is based on my assertion of structural continuity. Ferguson rejoins that the *sapeurs* are, of course, African and that they are also part of the modern world. But these were not the issues. On the contrary the goal has always been the understanding of lived experience even if the latter is in its turn is dependent on larger global forces. There are, of course, two possible twists to this understanding. One might say that *sapeurs* buy modern haute couture like all other people who buy such clothing, but that they do it in a slightly different way, i.e., they attribute magical qualities to it. But these are not simply different sets of attributes. The so-called magical qualities related to life force imbue their bodies as a result of wear in a logic that equates wealth to health to beauty, in which the outside, the skin and clothing are not symbols of prestige, but prestige/wealth/health itself. To call this hybrid because two kinds of qualities are joined, i.e., modern clothing and magical attributes, is to say nothing about the way the qualities are joined, i.e., the nature of the articulation of the two, which is one where the clothing is incorporated into a strategy of life force accumulation, and not one that is about collecting things merely to wear. As I argue in the article on the *sapeurs*, the example of the depressive shopper may share some of the same attributes insofar as shopping itself revitalizes the shopper and is a kind of cure for depression. But I also argue that the specific

logic of *la sape* is quite different. Similarly to argue that modern witchcraft is a kind of alternative modernity that includes elements of a particular African world view misses the nature of the strategic logic involved in which it is the modern elements that are assimilated to the “African” strategy. Ferguson denies the existence of such articulations and is able to do so because what we observe is simply a “cultural style”:

The styles of which I speak are not expressions of something “deeper” (habitus, worldview, ideology)—they are neither “cultures” nor residues of once-distinct social types; nor are they manifestations of transition between distinct social types distinguished as traditional and modern. They are, instead, just what they seem to be: modes of practical action in contemporary urban social life. (Ferguson, 1999: 221)

This argument neatly does away with any historical continuity in the way people behave. There are only contemporary situations, totally discontinuous with respect to the past. In fact the past as such has no meaning here, and historical process is limited to the political and economic. In this way he can take me to task for arguing such continuity.

His method is to invoke a generic “Congolese” culture within which the apparently Western pursuit of Parisian fashion can be understood as “really” being an indigenous pursuit of “life force.” But if the European origin of concepts like haute couture or cultural forms like the fashion show do not suffice to make the young men’s fancy dressing “Western” why should we accept that the African origin of a concept such as life force should be sufficient to make the practice “African?” (Ferguson, 1999: 290)

I am not sure why Ferguson asserts that I invoke a “generic ‘Congolese’ culture.” I suggest that there is a logic underlying the way in which desire and forms of consumption are strategically organized and that it is structurally derivative of a logic that existed previous to the accessibility to European clothing. Ferguson refuses to see that there is a difference between objects and the logics in which they are incorporated. This is the old problem of doing the potlatch with sewing machines and blankets rather than coppers and other older objects. The claim would be that with the new objects we have a new phenomenon, perhaps the *modernity* of the early 1900s. Milgram’s article in this volume demonstrates convincingly the way in which local strategies socialize foreign objects into a specific scheme of meaning. My position here is that it is arguments like Ferguson’s that are

absurd. Of course what has to be understood is the way people go about their lives, but it is not irrelevant, as Ferguson insists, to argue for historical continuities in their strategies. The problem here seems to be the culturalism that is the point of departure for all of the globalization discourses and which is so dominant in much of American Anthropology as to have achieved the status of *doxa*. Culture, understood as a text, a coherent set of elements, a homogenized whole, as meaning-substance, is problematic to say the least and it is totally devoid of any notion of structure, which is why even the notion of habitus is rejected by Ferguson. It is this assumption of substantial homogeneity that invokes so much fear in a postmodern anthropology that finds respite for the former in the notion of hybridity. Thus, places, social places, like the Congo are empty spaces in which generalized people do their things, but those things are specific enough that they need to be associated to some kind of identifiable origins, part A and part B. They are thus hybrid and they are modern which here means simply contemporary, as we all are, of necessity.

Instead of specific logics of action articulated to one another in specific ways, we have two life styles, cosmopolitan and local and all related in some way to a notion of “modernity” which is confused with “contemporary” and thus empty of any specificities. The cosmopolitan is simply the urban, the rejection of village and kinship ties and the embracing of the Western. But why is this reality cosmopolitan? African societies have almost always embraced the Western. They didn’t need cities to do so. In the history of the Congo it is the specific logic of the accumulation of prestige goods which set ever higher value on imports embodying life force, a logic that was implicated in the slave trade as well as in *la sape*. Ferguson is clearly aware of what is more like a set of social relations between the rural and the urban. Here he closely follows that Manchester School while rejecting its evolutionism. In fact his basic argument is that what he calls “cosmopolitanism” develops on the basis of the copper economy and returns again to localism as the latter declines. I could not agree more with this analysis, as it is exactly the kind of approach that we have been arguing since the 1970s (see reference to Friedman, 1994 above). But to classify Zambian reality into cosmopolitan and local also obfuscates the degree to which the logics of organization are identical within the two categories. The same problem applies to his use of the term modernity, in the title, *Expectations of Modernity*, where the emic question is never asked? Do his Zambian informants mean something equivalent to our modernity when and if they use the term. Spitulnik (2002), taking up the actual local terminology, has argued that this is a fatal

error in his analysis. If modernity is associated with the West as the source of prestigious items that possess a magical quality, then does the word mean the same thing in any sense? Why, one might ask, is the issue of continuity such an anathema to certain anthropologists? It would appear to have more to do with their own identities than with the subject matter itself. *If what is out there is completely new, then I am also a pioneer!* Good for careers perhaps but bad for understanding.

Finally

From a global systemic perspective, the production of this discourse and its clearly ideological usage to redefine ethnographic reality is an important object of analysis. Such discourse resonates successfully among a certain number of elites, cultural, academic, media and political in the Western world. The argument proffered here is that what is needed is something radically different which takes a more critical stance to the contemporary constitution of social reality. The articles here are serious contributions to such an endeavour. They are to my mind a critical step in redefining the nature of global-local relations by means of ethnographic analysis. In a certain sense they develop a global approach that is already present in the work of Braudel who insisted on grasping the relations between macro processes of exchange and production and the logics of everyday life. There is no moral politics involved in this approach. Boundaries are not the root of all evil, something to be criticized, surpassed or transgressed. Rather we should strive understand the way they are constructed and transformed over time.

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