

Susan S. Silbey, "Globalization" in
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globalization

Described as a new world order, some scholars argue that globalization is an unprecedented 21st-century reorganization of **time**, **space**, people, and things. It is variously portrayed, sometimes as "globalism" by advocates and promoters, or as a postmodern form of unrestrained capitalist expansion and **imperialism** by members of anti-globalization movements. In both instances, the object of support or resistance is a global system of interconnected communication and transportation **networks**, economic **markets**, and persons, covering almost the entire planet. An essential feature of this system is that it is deterritorialized, that is, the connections and collectivities exist primarily in electronic networks of communication. Some authors, such as Arun Appadurai in his "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Public Culture* (1990), refer to this as a form of pan-locality, with multiple nodes of transaction or "scapes" - ethnoscapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, mediascapas, ideoscapas, linguistically echoing the notion of landscape for segmented networks in this now deterritorialized, fluid, transnational, global social **organization**. Through the electronic connections and diverse scapes, elements of human **culture** move around the globe separately from geographic, institutional, or relational contexts.

A scientific-technological account of globalization describes a world engirded by a finely wrought network of cables, satellites, air, and sea lanes, as well as old familiar land routes, that transport **information**, things, and people from one place to any other on the globe in anything from a minute to a day. This is a world in which boundaries that once had been created by time and space have been eroded by scientific and technological developments, especially in communication and transportation.

These innovations have roots in ancient times when exploration and trade by land and sea was apparent in the Mediterranean basin and Asian seas, and in medieval and Renaissance times when scientific and technological innovations began to spread around the globe. Scientific and technological development escalated noticeably, however, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, with exponential rates of both invention and **social change** in the twentieth century, the spatial and temporal distances that had historically moored distinct populations, **languages**, cultures, markets, and political systems have been made porous through regularized and continual communication. In this techno-scientific account, emphasis is placed on the cumulative effects of the **Enlightenment**, and how humans slowly accumulate the knowledge and ability to produce ever increasingly rational forms of social organization and technological innovation, in the end overcoming ignorance, superstition, **myth**, **religion**, and **scarcity** to create relative abundance, human freedom, and worldwide mobility. The mixing of peoples, languages, and cultures has brought about what is now a transparent **hybridity** in human **groups** and cultures. While few human cultures, in history or contemporary times, have been unaffected by exchange with others (enemies or friends), the degree of hybridity and technologically driven hybridization is at a scale and pace heretofore unknown.

A political-economic account of globalization places less emphasis on the technological sources of globalization than on the political and normative claims of capitalist investment. Rather than being a portrayal of the success of science and **technology**, a political-economic account describes the historic triumph of the market **economy**. It is an account of how the market - as a means of coordinating production and distribution - is now worldwide, after more than a century of being confined within national and regional boundaries. This view of globalization depicts markets as both the engine and product of human energy and imagination, now in the twenty-first century overcoming what is described as backward and inefficient systems of centralized planning and socialized ownership that governed a good part of the globe during the twentieth century.

Some accounts of globalization emphasize the international coordination of scientific research to control disease, prolong lifetimes, and improve conditions of **everyday life**. Others focus on the

transnational flow of people, goods, and capital that creates a global division of **labor** with an equally global diffusion of material and cultural goods. For example, goods produced with Korean or Chilean labor, from materials mined in Zaire or grown in India, are sold in the shops in Paris, Los Angeles, or Tokyo. People born and raised in Mexico, Guatemala, Turkey, Algeria, Ethiopia, or Zimbabwe travel north to find work to sustain families left behind. At the same time, music from American urban **ghettos** is played in the shops in Japan and Australia or the streets of Budapest and Russia, portable telephones manufactured in Finland adorn the hips of laborers from Santiago to Cape Town, and television stations around the globe fill their schedules with the product of Hollywood studios while munching on American-style fast **food** of Big Macs and French fries.

As the same time as local sites become linked in a global circulation of people, signs, materials, and goods, globalization is understood to be reshaping the parts of the world now joined communicatively and economically. While some people and phenomena are ripped from spatial and territorial moorings, others – for example, social groups based on ethnic, linguistic, or religious practices – become re-territorialized, making claims to specific pieces of geography with newly recognized boundaries as the ground of their participation in the global world order. While some localities experience a marked increase in standards of living (measured in terms of reduced infant mortality, longevity, **education**, and calories consumed), others experience an equally marked decline in material, psychological, and sociological conditions of everyday life. In the techno-science account, the global **community** is linked internally by its actively shared cultures and externally through its collective scientific exploration beyond this globe.

Rather than a portrayal of the success of science and technology, the political-economy account emphasizes the virtues of flexible production, worldwide sourcing, and low-cost transportation and communication. Just as the boundaries between time, space, people, and things are erased in the techno-science account, the economic account emphasizes the erasure of traditional distinctions among market tools – between banking, brokerage, insurance, business, politics, and consumer credit – and the promotion of strict boundaries between economics and politics. Global capital is financialized, that is, like social transactions dis-embedded from geography and social

relations, capital accumulation is also de-territorialized, mobile, residing nowhere more than in cyberspace. Ever liquid, new financial instruments are created as well as markets in these instruments, new markets in commodities, as well as markets in currencies and debts. The capital that fuels the global circulation of goods, services, and people is therefore faceless and rootless, free of national or geographic **identity**, ever mobile, moving from one locale to another, as efficiency and profit demands.

The global markets create both dispersion and integration. Global dispersion is typified by the creation of new producers and sites of production within nations and transnationally. Large and small companies increase their subcontracting and do so with several geographically distant subcontractors for the same product. Industrial homework spreads into the hinterlands of remote parts of the world at the same time as highly skilled cognitive (mind-work) laborers and professionals move their work from office to home, sometimes also at great distances from the centers of control and **management**. This diffusion of worldwide outsourcing – fueled by low transportation costs and computerized communication linkages – creates flexible production and higher profits for corporate managers and owners, while relegating labor and suppliers to hyper-competition and insecure **income**.

The territorial dispersion is accompanied by a parallel concentration of centralized control to manage and finance the dispersed production. The remotest sites of individual production are tied by centralized management through closely linked chains of financial and design control finding their apex primarily in the global cities such as Tokyo, New York, and London. The global cities produce the specialized services which, according to Saskia Sassen in *The Global City* (1991), are “needed by complex organizations for running spatially dispersed networks of factories, offices, and service outlets,” as well as the “financial innovations and the making of markets . . . central to the internationalization and expansion of the financial industry.”

The dual processes of dispersion and integration are joined in processes of what some term “glocalization,” a neologism joining globalization and localization to describe the customization of globally produced products or services for local cultures and markets. It is also used to refer to the use of global networks, for example in cell phones, to provide local services. It refers in addition to identity marketing that fetishizes local

places for the purpose of product branding, associating, for example, coffee with a particular Colombian farmer, or a unique island with the home of a generic product. According to Roland Robertson, who is credited with popularizing the term, glocalization describes the tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures. At a 1997 conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture," Robertson said that glocalization "means the simultaneity - the co-presence - of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies." The term, first used by Japanese economists in the 1980s, is also used prescriptively in business circles to emphasize that the globalization of a product or service is more likely to succeed when the product or service is adapted and tailored specifically to each locality or culture in which it is marketed. Examples of glocalization display the self-conscious cultural hybridization that is at work in global marketing. For example, the American fast-food chain McDonald's replaced its mascot, the clown Ronald McDonald, in French advertising with Asterix the Gaul, a popular French cartoon character.

Accompanying the techno-scientific and economic accounts of globalization, there are political and moral claims about the necessity of a rule of law (see **law and society**) and, at the same time, the inefficiencies of legal regulation. In the political-legal account of globalization, national boundaries are described as inefficient and should cease being barriers to trade: all national economies should be open to trade. In this moral universe, all exchanges, transactions, and engagements should be signaled solely through market prices, which are conceived as the only legitimate form of **social control** for rewarding good action and punishing bad. Public regulation of private enterprise, as an alternative to price regulation, is the enemy of the global economy and its moral universe. As a corollary to the dominant role of prices as the major form of communicating participation in the market economy, domestic prices are supposed to conform to international prices and monetary policies are expected to be directed to the maintenance of price and balance-of-payment stability. These are the basic universal principles of market economics promoted by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and neoliberal economists promoting market globalization.

Although markets depend on law to provide a stable normative environment, ensuring security of **property** and contracts, the global "marketeers" insist that the law do no more. Beyond the

assurance of mutual **trust** and normative order, the market or neoliberal account of globalization demands that the rest of economic affairs remain entirely matters of market (price) decisions rather than the consequences of political organization or legal processes. The market version of globalization urges use of law to police a fixed boundary between public and private, between economics and politics. Although national legal orders in western Europe and the United States have, for more than 100 years, created various adjustments to counteract market instabilities and imperfect competition, a key feature of globalization at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries is the fury of its critique of legal intervention and its insistence on a natural and necessary divide between public and private, economics and politics. Historical experience and legal precedents notwithstanding, the global marketeers insist that the private law regime of property and contract, at both the national and international levels, is an apolitical realm, merely supportive of private initiative and decision, immune from public or political contestations and without significant or problematic redistributive consequences.

Some observers argue that the global system - embodied primarily in the communication networks - allows direct cultural and economic relationships that bypass and/or subvert - depending on the point of view - traditional power hierarchies like national governments, or markets. There are some who see in globalization the possibilities of a new democratic transformation. Some stress that the circulation of capital and culture is - as the phrase suggests - a circulation, not solely a movement from the center to the peripheries. By dissolving political, temporal, and spatial boundaries, the technological revolutions underwriting this transnational exchange create capacity for movement in all directions and with less investment than was heretofore possible. From this perspective, as illustrated in Boaventura de Sousa Santos's *Toward a New Common Sense: Law, Science and Politics in the Paradigmatic Transition* (1995), globalization enables more diverse participation and more sources of **influence** - forms of enfranchisement - throughout the world-system. Those at the geographic peripheries of the world-system welcome the chance to be regular and possibly influential participants in the virtual global community. In the global networks of communication and exchange, human creativity can be unleashed from traditional cultural and material constraints to find new forms of expression in

what seems like an unbounded space of possible interactions and connections. Here, observers point to the importance of human rights discourse, in contrast to the economic rights discourse of marketeers, in shaping actual, not merely a virtual, community, and the empirically documentable changes that discourse has wrought in heretofore authoritarian regimes. Similarly, some note the growing significance of environmental concerns in mobilizing **social movements** across traditional national, political, racial, and gender boundaries. For optimistic observers, globalizing markets pose an opportunity and challenge.

In contrast, others view globalization as a historic process leading to a more one-way relationship between the global realm, inhabited by multinational corporations, global finance, the entertainment industry, international broadcasting, the worldwide web, amoral secular humanism, and a subjugated "local" realm where the identity-affirming senses of place, **neighborhood**, town, locale, **ethnicity**, **religion**, and **morality** barely survive against the global onslaught of globally circulated, professional produced-for-profit identities. Some claim that the technoscientific account of globalization is a saga of disenchantment, as **Max Weber** predicted. Noting the immediacy with which persons, goods, information, and technologies move across vast distances, and the expanding breadth and accelerating pace of **consumption**, critics of globalization, in anti-globalization movements and elsewhere, emphasize how the loss of sacred illusions and embedded identities has left a corrosive absence at the center of human life where "all that is solid melts into air" (**Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels**, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848 [trans. 1968])). Critics note the bombardment by stimuli, the neurological overloads, and the homogenizing consequences of the escalating circulation of signs and **symbols** removed from local experiences and interpretive frameworks. Globalization seems to be characterized by isomorphisms, convergences, and hybridizations that create a sense of pervasive sameness across heretofore-diverse cultures. Some anti-globalization movements emphasize this emptying out of meaning and morality in the global markets, actively seeking a return to a religiously guided morality, **politics**, and economy – sometimes violently, such as in Islamic Jihadist groups (such as the Taliban in Afghanistan) or some anti-abortion movements in the United States, sometimes peacefully, such as among Christian fundamentalists.

Other anti-globalization movements emphasize and attempt to resist the growing **inequality** and erosion of economic security that had been promoted by the twentieth-century welfare politics.

Some observers go so far as to describe globalization as a form of postmodern **colonialism**, where the worldwide distribution and consumption of cultural products removed from the contexts of their production and interpretation are organized through legal devices and markets to constitute a form of domination, as argued by Susan Silbey in "Let Them Eat Cake: Globalization, Postmodern Colonialism, and the Possibilities of Justice" (1996, *Law and Society Review*). In post-modern colonialism, control of land or political organization or nation-states is less important than **power** over consciousness and consumption, much more efficient forms of domination. This is, for anti-globalization critics, the consequence of advanced **capitalism** and technological innovation seeking a world free from restraints on the opportunity to invent and to invest. In this most critical account, globalization describes a world in which size and scale in terms of numbers of persons (who can produce), and in numbers of outlets (to disseminate and place products), and capital (to purchase both **labor** and land) determine the capacity to saturate local cultures. Advocates of free-market capitalism worldwide acknowledge the inequalities produced, urging "measures that enlarge the scope for wage differentials without making it socially unacceptable" (Y. Kosai, R. Lawrence, and N. Thygesen, "Don't Give Up on Global Trade," in the *International Herald Tribune*, 1996). The processes of global economic **differentiation** have led to increased income for some previously poor workers at the peripheries of the system, but also for significant transfers of income from workers to upper-level managers and investors. Alongside the economic differentiation is a division of intellectual labor: the new systems that organize **work** and production are designed by relatively few highly educated, technically trained specialists, with labor and repetitive, minimal skill well distributed across the globe.

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