GLOBAL ETHNOGRAPHY

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■ **Abstract**   Globalization poses a challenge to existing social scientific methods of inquiry and units of analysis by destabilizing the embeddedness of social relations in particular communities and places. Ethnographic sites are globalized by means of various external connections across multiple spatial scales and porous and contested boundaries. Global ethnographers must begin their analysis by seeking out "place-making projects" that seek to define new kinds of places, with new definitions of social relations and their boundaries. Existing ethnographic studies of global processes tend to cluster under one of three slices of globalization—global forces, connections, or imaginations—each defined by a different kind of place-making project. The extension of the site in time and space poses practical and conceptual problems for ethnographers, but also political ones. Nonetheless, by locating themselves firmly within the time and space of social actors "living the global," ethnographers can reveal how global processes are collectively and politically constructed, demonstrating the variety of ways in which globalization is grounded in the local.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization poses a challenge to existing social scientific methods of inquiry and units of analysis by destabilizing the embeddedness of social relations in particular communities and places. By locating themselves firmly within the time and space of social actors "living the global," ethnographers can reveal the socioscapes that people collectively construct of global processes (Albrow 1997), thus demonstrating how globalization is grounded in the local (Burawoy et al. 2000). At the same time, globalization also poses problems for ethnography. The potential and uneven delinking of the spatial and the social under conditions of globalization upsets ethnography's claim to understand social relations by being there and thus demands that we rethink the character of global ethnography.[1]

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[1]Appadurai (1995) poses a similar question to anthropology: how can we undertake ethnography in a world where locality is contested and shifting.

Globalization has exploded onto the sociological agenda in the past 10 to 15 years.[2] The first generation of globalization studies was concerned with how to define globalization; which aspects of globalization represented historical continuity and discontinuity; and how to theorize the relationship between globalization and modernity, postmodernity, and postcoloniality. As such, these studies were concerned primarily with understanding the character of globalization as a social phenomenon (Beck et al. 1994, Featherstone & Lash 1999, Giddens 1991, Harvey 1990, Robertson 1992–see Guillen (2001), Lemert (2002), and Waters (1995) for reviews of this generation of studies). More recently, however, scholars have begun to ask what implications these sociohistorical changes may have for social science itself, and they have addressed the metatheoretical, epistemological, and political implications of that older body of literature (Abell & Reyniers 2000, Albrow 1995, Gane 2001, Hargittai & Centeno 2001, Kilminster 1997, Pieterse 2000, Tsing 2000). A few studies have even started theorizing the nature of global ethnography (Amit 2000, Burawoy 2000a, *Ethnography* 2001). Our goal in this review is to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize the achievements of these newer responses to the challenges globalization poses to sociological inquiry, especially as they apply to qualitative methods and fieldwork.

In the first section of the paper we analyze existing attempts to re-define the character of social relations in an era of globalization. We pay special attention to how the relationship between society and space is theorized and the implications for our understanding of ethnographic sites. Where is the "there" where these theorists imply global ethnographers should be? Some advocate replacing ethnographic place-based sites with locations within networks and flows, within transnational social formations, or at the borders of places where difference is produced. We argue that place still provides a foundation for global ethnographers, but as a location from within which ethnographers can explore the sociopolitical projects that are remaking social relations and places.

The second section reviews a series of global ethnographies. Here we'll differentiate among three perspectives of globalization: the global as forces, connections, and imaginations. The third section turns to methodological issues raised by our redefinition of ethnographic sites as politically constructed. We explore the implications of working in sites that extend across multiple places and spatial scales, that extend in time, and the boundaries of which are deeply contested.

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[2]According to the Cambridge Sociological Abstracts, between 1985 and 1990 twenty-nine of the studies abstracted assigned globalization as a keyword, in contrast to the 14 abstracted between 1965 and 1984. There were 240 such works in the first half of the 1990s, 410 in 1995 alone, and a whopping 985 in 1998. Today the cumulative total of sociological studies (including reviews) addressing globalization is 4,876. While these data of course can only be suggestive, the trend is clear: From 1990 there is a sudden increase in sociological efforts studying globalization, culminating in close to a thousand annual publications and conference papers by the new millennium.

REIMAGINING THE SOCIAL IN
GLOBAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is uniquely well placed to deal with the challenges of studying social life under globalization because it does not rely on fixed and comparable units of analysis, as do survey and comparative research. However, it also faces significant challenges in reconfiguring itself for a global era—ethnography explicitly seeks to analyze the social by locating the researcher in the space of the social relations being analyzed, and this ability to straightforwardly access the social by going to the local becomes problematic under conditions of globalization. In the following we will survey recent attempts in sociology to redefine the social under globalization.

Disembedding the Social?

The conventional postwar social science view assumes that the nation is a container for everything within it, while international relations are assumed to account for all relations outside of the national. Even in world-systems theory, the subunits of the system are almost always nations, whose relationship to each other is ordered by capitalist development and interstate competition. Ethnography tends to accept these categories—either, as in sociology, generalizing to the national society or, as in anthropology, taking the local as the site of culture, which is often analyzed in terms of its relationship to the world of nations (colonialism, nation-building, etc.). However, thematic approaches to globalization identify a new empirical phenomenon that has undermined, or at least destabilized, these established hierarchies of the local, national, and international. Even as debate rages bitterly over the precise meaning and extent of globalization, including the destabilization and transformation of the nation state, the decentering of national societies is increasingly widely accepted. In our definition, building on Mato's (1997) typology, globalization signifies the increasing significance of trans-local relations, local-global relations, and global-global relations at the expense of national-national relations.[3]

Some scholars claim that globalization fundamentally reorders the classical relationship between self and the other, society and knowledge (Beck 1992, Beck et al. 1994), local and global (Dickens 1992, Hall 1991a, 1991b), and most

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[3]Mato classifies local, national, transnational, and global agents, based on the impact of their activity (1997:170–71). Local agents are those individuals and organizations whose social practices are mainly concentrated in the same locality in which they are based, although from time to time they develop these practices beyond this locality and maintain relations with social agents from abroad. Depending on the level of analysis this locality may be regarded as a small town or community, a system of towns or communities, a state or province, or a subnational region. National agents are those whose practices are regularly developed at national levels. Transnational agents are those whose practices are regularly developed across international borders. Global agents are a subclass of transnational agents whose practices are regularly developed not just transnationally but at worldwide levels.

importantly between space and society. According to these authors, we must redefine the concept of the social itself. Giddens (1991) argues that under conditions of globalization social relations are disembedded from the local and can operate in contexts where space no longer matters because shared systems of symbols and knowledge circulate globally. While disagreeing with Giddens about the modernist nature of globalization, Albrow (1995) later takes up this term to argue more broadly that social relations are disembedded from space; Albrow argues for a concept of "globality" as a new level of organization that has no organizing agent, thus freeing sociality from state control. Altvater & Mahnkopf (1997), arguing more strictly from an economic perspective, define globalization as the culmination of the disembedding of economy from society (the original meaning of the word in Polanyi), leading to a world market unbound.

While we find that these social theorists have a propensity to exaggerate the extent of this disembedding process and to ignore its unevenness, we grant the claim that globalization breaks the one-on-one mapping of the local onto the social. This in turn, makes the classic ethnographic strategy of being there much more problematic. Before we address this issue, let us see how sociologists have rewoven the broken thread connecting the spatial and the social.

The Social as Flow or Network

Lash & Urry (1994) argue that this disembedded "social" is increasingly constituted by *flows* of people, information, goods, and particularly signs or cultural symbols. For them the starting point of a "sociology after societies" (Urry 2000) is these "mobilities," replacing the hallowed concept of "community." For Appadurai (1990), the entities that "flow" around the world are "scapes" or cultural formations around finance, media, ideologies, technologies, and peoples.

Yet another group of scholars relies on the network as their central concept. Hannerz (1992) sees society as constituted by "networks of networks," down to networks among individuals. For Castells (1997) the networks are between places, and a space of flows is being superimposed upon, and replacing, a space of places. Those places left outside the space of flows are profoundly disadvantaged by their structural exclusion. Whereas Castells may not have fully elaborated the implications of the network metaphor and did generally ignore the literature on networks in sociology (Abell & Reyniers 2000), a newer set of studies consciously borrows the network concept from economic sociology and talks of a new geography and the need to draw new maps (*Am. Behav. Sci.* 2001).

For all their differences, each of these approaches disconnects the social from any particular place—seeing contemporary social relations as characteristically stretching across places. Such approaches tend to reify these networks, flows, and other mobilities (Urry 2000) as themselves defining society. Despite recognizing that networks can be exclusionary, these approaches provide little analysis of power relations within networks and therefore find it difficult to explain reproduction and change in networks. Such explanations require that place-based resources and

processes be included in the analysis. Furthermore, these approaches neglect the agency of actors and their sense-making activities as forces in shaping the flows themselves. While the network is at least activated by and even defined by the connections among actors, the concept of flows posits a world of disembodied flows of information, signs, finance, and other resources—it is the actor's connection to these flows that defines the actor, not how they activate connections as in the network metaphor. In such a view, places disappear entirely. In order to go beyond the opposition of "the space of flows versus the space of places" (Castells 1997), we must develop our understanding of how places and networks constitute one another, rather than seeing them as opposing principles of social life. This conceptualization of the social as fluidity, mobility, and connectedness dooms the local to a stoppage in such flows, perceives it as a static place, rendering methods focusing on concrete places irrelevant. With Sassen (2000), we see globalization as a repatterning of fluidities and mobilities on the one hand and stoppages and fixities on the other, rather than an all-encompassing world of fluidity.[4]

The Social as Transnational

Others have sought to retain the insight that cross-national networks are increasingly significant while still providing an analysis of the structured social relations within those networks (Kearney 1998). Schiller (1997) defines transnational studies as the study of various types of border-crossings by people, texts, discourses, and representations at various geographical levels. Portes et al. (1999) limit transnationalism to activities of immigrants, migrants, transnational entrepreneurs, and cultural groups from the sending country regularly traveling to entertain emigre communities in recipient countries. The authors portray a thus-defined transnationalism as the antithesis of globalization, which is understood as a project initiated by and for the benefit of multinational corporations and by nation states.

For these authors (Portes et al. 1999, Schiller 1997, Smith & Guarnizo 1998), the emphasis is on studying globalization or transnational social relations as a new subject matter, and as such a considerable amount of conceptual rigor is required to delineate what might be properly deemed a qualitatively new social development or institution worthy of a novel term. Portes et al. (1999) define transnationalism, a narrower term than the subject matter of Schiller's transnational studies would suggest, as an emergent research field, in fact a measurable object of inquiry.

The concept of transnationalism provides many insights into the strategic action of social actors developing a new scale of social activity between the national and the global. However, this comes at the expense of a historical view that would reveal how fields of activities (including stages of production, the distribution of culture, regulatory moves, etc.) are transformed by a new division of labor among different scales. Some activities that were once the legitimate province of actors

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[4]This view also contrasts with Harvey's (1990) much referenced idea of a universal time-space compression.

at the national level may now have shifted to the scope of authority and expertise of global actors, while other activities may now have moved from the global to local levels, and so on.[5] On the one hand, the focus on the transnational level of analysis is a necessary condition of these often revealing studies and, admirably, Smith & Guarnizo (1998) provide a clear analytical and methodological basis for their preferred research program of comparative transnationalisms (pp. 24–29). However, while the focus is on understanding the transnational social formation itself, it is difficult to move beyond this site to understand how the relationship among multiple scales of social activity is being reorganized.

The Social as Border Zone

Other authors are more concerned with social relations at the borders and boundaries of social orders. Marcus & Fischer (1986) opposed the imagery of global versus local with a view of still distinct cultural worlds increasingly in communication with one another. Their "anthropology as cultural critique" sought to explore the recombinant, hybrid forms of cultural life that were emerging at these boundary points of cultures in contact with one another and enhancing the possibilities for other societies to provide us with tools for cultural critique of our own society.

However, conceiving of the social as a border zone and emphasizing connections and contacts means that the cultural worlds that come into contact with each other are still conceptualized as self-contained, territorial worlds with readily identifiable differences that then clash. Conceiving of the social as a border zone often implies that boundary-localities are liminal, hybrid, syncretic, and fluid, an assumption that can only hold if we abstract away from the powers that create and maintain boundaries. Alejandro Lugo's (2000) ethnography of the United States-Mexico border, for example, promotes a view of borders not as spaces of mobility and hybridity but as places produced by increased surveillance at the border and discipline in the maquiladoras.[6] Berdahl's (1999) *Where the World Ended* is also an ethnography of an actual borderland: that dividing the former East and West Germany. Unlike Marcus and Fischer, she calls for an understanding of boundaries not as escaping but rather as deeply enmeshed in existing social and power relations. Her borderland is also less a place of diversity, fluidity, and hybridity than a "place of intense and inflexible lucidity," a site in which various features of the economic, cultural, and political regime on one side of the border are crystallized and manifest in their purest form. Both the East Germans' and Mexican workers' experiences of being stuck on one side of the border call forth other imagined boundaries, racial, ethnic, and both internal and external. Based on these ethnographies, instead of the assumption of liminality and hybridity (Kearney 1998),

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[5]Sassen (2001) for example talks about the production of new legal subjects as local actors are increasingly able to apply international treaties and appeal to supranational organizations in their struggles against a corporation or a nation state.

[6]Lugo explicitly takes issue with Morales' application of Foucault's notion of heterotopia to the experience of living in border zones.

we call for a focus on "the production of local differences," the political processes through which places are produced, when studying social action at the margins (Gupta & Ferguson 1997).

The Social as Place-Making Projects

Each of these approaches to redefining the relationship between the social and the local is limited, but each offers a different avenue for future conceptualization. From the discussion of flows, we see the need to redefine place in light of the multiple connections cutting across places. From the study of transnationalism, we see the critical importance of the emergence of new scales of social action and the reconfiguring of relationships among the multiple scales within which places are embedded. Finally, from the study of borders, we see the vital importance of seeing place as politically produced and contested. Together we can combine these various threads into a concept of the social as increasingly embroiled in place-making projects[7] that seek to redefine the connections, scales, borders, and character of particular places and particular social orders. These projects are the critical sites through which global ethnographers can interrogate social relations in an era of globalization.

We have argued that place continues to be central to global ethnography, albeit in a reconceptualized form. Our starting point in tackling these challenges therefore is to build a revised definition of place that builds in large part on geographer Doreen Massey's concept of a global sense of place. Massey proposes a concept of locality based on four key arguments: (*a*) places are not static, (*b*) places do not have the kind of boundaries that warrant a simple counterposition to the outside, (*c*) the identity of a place is not homogenous, yet (*d*) places are unique and their specificity resides in the distinct mixture of local and wider social relations. In short, the locality—the site—is historically produced in interaction with a variety of external connections, and this process also produces distinctive patterns of inequality internal to the locality. Together, these propositions form the basis of a global sense of place (Massey 1994).

Albrow (1997), similarly to Massey—and quite in opposition to the authors advocating the idea of the social as network and flows that imply the fixity of the local—argues that communities in globalized places are fluid and scape-like as well. People may live in the same neighborhood or town, but their meaningful social lives may reach beyond that locality to a highly uneven degree. These reaches or networks constitute what he calls sociospheres, "distinct patterns of social activities belonging to networks of social relations of very different intensity, spanning widely different territorial extents, from a few to many thousands of miles" (Albrow 1997, pp. 51). While prior to the contemporary era of globalization, these sociospheres usually intersected in the locality, new intersections are now

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[7]The concept of place-making appears in Gupta & Ferguson (1992) and Tsing (2000), but Appadurai's (1995) notion of the production of the local conveys a similar idea.

forming that he calls socioscapes. Socioscapes are fluid imaginations of spatial belonging and of the social formations created by and making possible the reach of social relations beyond the locality. Taken together, Massey's and Albrow's contribution is to advance a new sense of place that, while it is relevant to localities before this era of globalization, is all the more salient today.

Such concepts of place treat all places as if they occupied the same level in a spatial hierarchy. However, as we have seen, at different periods of history, social action is legitimated at different scales. Neil Brenner (1999, 2000) argues that any understanding of space as socially constructed requires that we take into account not only the external connections and borders of a place but also how it is located in the "politics of scale"—the negotiation of the hierarchy and legitimacy of different scales of social action. Brenner argues that the contemporary era of globalization consists not simply of a shift of power and of social interaction upward from the national to the global but of a destabilization of the existing hierarchies of spatial scales. While creating a crisis in national social formations, this also opens up opportunities for social actors to develop new combinations of local, national, transnational, and global social relations.

This spatial analysis is echoed in recent discussions of social structure in sociology, although the two literatures rarely enter directly into dialogue. In contrast to compositionist views of social structure, treating high levels of social structure as the aggregate of lower levels, and hierarchical views, treating lower levels of social structure as the effects of higher levels, Kontopoulos (1993) argues for a view of social structures as heterarchical, with different levels integrating in different ways in a structured but uneven manner.

Given the densely intertwined multiple levels of analysis, how can we hope to interrogate social relations and social structures from particular places? We argue that the key to this is to recognize that these shifting socio-spatial relations between levels of analysis are themselves socially and politically contested, not only in academia, but also in the real world. This interest in the political contestation of place extends anthropologists' interest in the production of difference between places (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, Marcus & Fischer 1986). Tsing (2000) argues, for example, that scholars assume a global level of analysis at their peril and must begin their analysis by seeking out place-making projects that seek to define new kinds of places, with new definitions of social relations and their boundaries. Places matter because it is in places that we find the ongoing creation, institutionalization, and contestation of global networks, connections, and borders. Instead of a comprehensive account of a self-contained set of social relations, the ethnographer now uses her location to interrogate a variety of intersecting place-making projects as they are manifested in a particular spatial location. Reflecting changes in the world itself, location in place is crucial for understanding the social relations that extend beyond it. The ethnographer is less a chronicler of self-evident places than an interrogator of a variety of place-making projects. How the ethnographer analyzes the intersection of scales depends in part on her position in a particular set of place-making projects. Such a concept of global ethnography enables us to

make sense of the variety of ethnographies dealing with global processes and to classify them according to how they identify their subjects' relations to certain place-making projects.

GLOBAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is an especially suitable methodology with which to investigate social structures that are constituted across multiple scales and sites. Even the most sophisticated statistical methods tend to rely on a nested hierarchy of scales and units of analysis, whereas ethnography can strategically locate itself at critical points of intersection of scales and units of analysis and can directly examine the negotiation of interconnected social actors across multiple scales. In this section we outline this contribution by reviewing a variety of global ethnographies through the lens of three slices of globalization—global forces, global connections, and global imaginations (Burawoy et al. 2000)[8].

In studies of global forces the social actors and places being studied are caught up in a place-making project constituted well beyond their influence that can hardly be shaped by them—although they may develop complex forms of adaptation, avoidance, and survival. Studies of global connections show how certain social actors are able to take advantage of the destabilization of sociospatial hierarchies centered on the nation-state to build new translocal and transnational connections. The social actors who construct global imaginations—a less easily classified group than those in the other two slices—are most explicitly engaged in place-making, contesting definitions of local, national, and global scales and of the relations among them.

None of these three "slices" of globalization can be understood in terms of a simple shift upward in power, a relocation of power from the national to the global, but each reflects one way in which the global order as complex multiscalar place-making projects is experienced. For this reason, studies of particular social phenomena tend to cluster together under a particular slice—studies of modernization under forces, of migrants under connections, and of political initiatives of environmental protection, regional development, and especially cultural consumption and production under imaginations.

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[8]There are perhaps only a handful of 'global ethnographies,' narrowly defined. However, we review a wide range of studies here in order to illustrate some of the potential directions which global ethnography might follow. Many of the studies are anthropological due to the importance of ethnography within the discipline and the rethinking of anthropological concepts which has been prompted in particular by post-colonial thought and which has focused anthropological theories on globalization for quite some time now. A relatively small portion of sociological ethnography addresses the kind of macro processes that we discuss in this review but we have included some studies (such as Katherine Dudley's *The End of the Line*) in order to illustrate how they are shaped by particular aspects of globalization, even if the study as a whole could hardly be called 'global ethnography.'

Global Forces

Most ethnographic analyses of global forces begin with a construction of an external force or overarching structure—capitalism, modernity, science—which is then examined at work within the site(s) being studied. These ethnographies at their best reveal not just the impact of an impersonal force but also how localities are made penetrable by forces, how localities assimilate these forces into their own socioscapes, and how forces are resisted, accommodated to, and fled from. These forces are in reality also place-making projects but are analyzed in these ethnographies from the point of view of those caught up in these projects with little ability to influence them.

The globalization project is itself bound up in many ways with the expansion of capitalist social relations (McMichael 1996). Extensive research has explored how global capitalism shapes working conditions and politics, focusing particularly on women workers. Initial research documented the integration of third world women into the global factory and revealed the lived experience of these new industrial workers (Fernandez Kelly 1983, Mies 1986, Nash 1979, Nash & Kelly 1983). Globalization of production might be seen as unambiguous exploitation of disempowered women. However, ethnography has revealed a much more complex picture. Control strategies vary, resistance is widespread and takes many forms—even within the same locality (Ong 1987, Salzinger 2000) or at the core (Cho 1985, Hossfeld 1990). The effects of globalization are often contradictory—many young women, exploited at the factory, were still able to use their new-found income to avoid the worst of patriarchal relations in the household (Wolf 1992) and to build alternative selves based around consumption patterns (Freeman 2000, Mills 1999).

Kathryn Dudley's (1994) study of the closure of a Chrysler car factory in Kenosha, Wisconsin, reveals how, through forces beyond their control, auto workers not only lose their jobs but also their place in the world as they come to be looked down upon by the newly confident professionals of the town as dinosaurs who can't adapt to a global information economy.

Other forms of globalization have only complicated the effects of global capitalism. Female migrant workers find new lifestyle opportunities and access to the modern pleasures of life even as they are incorporated into undoubtedly exploitative relations as workers (Constable 1997, Mills 1999). Even global sex workers, often situated at the intersection of their own migration, abject poverty, and global patterns of tourism, are revealed by close ethnographic research to strategize within the overwhelming constraints of their situation (Kempadoo & Doezema 1998).

One source of the contradictory effects of global forces is their intersection with other forces—the international division of labor brings not only capitalist exploitation but also modernist consumption. Modernity is itself a project of an emergent world polity (Boli 1997). But the modern too can be appropriated in different ways in different contexts (Freeman 2000, Miller 1995, Mills 1999). This is not only linked to private consumption—workers of all kinds seek to professionalize their work on the global stage (Constable 1997, Freeman 2000, Salzinger 1991).

Modernity brings with it also the scientization of everyday life—Scheper-Hughes (1992) provides a graphic account of how the medicalization of the condition of poverty in Brazil serves to obscure the sources of that poverty (1992). The studies in Whiteford & Manderson (2000) document both the universalizing character of global health policy and the diversity and inequality of its local applications.

The modern also serves as a powerful discourse through which local concerns are expressed, appropriated, or erased. Donham (1999) showed how the Marxist revolution in Ethiopia was shaped by local struggles between Ethiopian military and intelligentsia over who would lead the country into the progressive, modern future. Ferguson (1994) studied a very different incarnation of modernity in the form of a World Bank plan in Lesotho. His ethnographic study of the failure of this plan reveals how the use of the development discourse depoliticizes a variety of local issues and strengthens the state. In a more recent book, Ferguson (1999) documents the collapse of the faith in development and how it is replaced by an aggressive neoliberalism, claiming to be no less modern, but reconfiguring the relationship between state, population, and global economy.

These studies reveal a number of aspects of forces that structural analyses do not. Any global force relies on enabling local conditions in order to take hold in a particular location—Haney (2000) documents the critical importance of Hungarian social scientists in the IMF-prompted neoliberal reforms of the Hungarian welfare system. Other analyses show how the global fails to reshape the local in intended ways yet creates new forms of domination (Ferguson 1994). Identities associated with prior eras of global or national power may be critical to the experience and politics of contemporary globalization, as revealed in Gowan's (2000) study of the experience of homelessness in San Francisco. Ethnographic analyses of forces can be particularly revealing regarding the mechanisms through which global forces operate, offering a view of reality that goes beyond a simple dichotomy of a powerful force confronted only by the weapons of the weak.

Connections

In contrast to analysts of global forces, writers on global connections have typically focused on the agency of social actors—in fact, as we have seen, writers on transnational connections explicitly position themselves against the overly determinist analyses of globalization theorists (M. Smith 2001). The starting point of analyses of connections is typically a type of strategic action or a group that exhibits, or is even defined by, strategic behavior. Migrants are perhaps the prototypical case, but traders, social movements, tourists, technical and other occupational communities also figure prominently as critical figures in making connections across social and political borders (Kyle 2000). The strategies of these various actors are explicitly tied to the making of new places but largely through the strategic action of individuals or networks, rather than the collective politicization of global imaginations.

Whereas some studies of transnational migrant communities have reformulated traditional sociological concepts such as community at a new spatial scale (Portes

et al. 1999), others have suggested that these transnational networks require a rethinking of the categories of community and center-periphery (Rouse 1991). The collection of studies in Smith & Guarnizo (1998) explore the construction of economic and political identities in transnational networks, the effect of the emergence of transnational localities on local and national politics, and the possibility of a cosmopolitan transnational culture. Ong (1999, 1996) describes the production of a new and rather mobile group of citizens acting on behalf of a distinct Asian mode of globalization. Other studies explore the reconstruction of ethnic and racial identities (*Ethn. Racial Stud.* 1999), the emergence of a variety of trading and migration brokers (Kyle 2000), the gendering of migration circuits (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), and the continuing significance of ties to the sending region in shaping the experience in the host country (George 2000).

There are often close links between the literature on migration and that on traders and occupational communities. Where factory workers are often seen in terms of forces, artisans are often seen in terms of their trading connections, implying that the latter have more agency, although they are not necessarily better off financially. Craftsmen (Cook 1998), artists, and musicians (Kyle 2000, Marcus & Myers 1995, Phillips & Steiner 1999) capitalize on local culture and the taste for the exotic in global markets, while challenging existing ideas of ethnic or national culture and authenticity.

The emphasis in the connections literature on the emergence of new social spaces is perhaps taken to its logical conclusion in the literature on virtual worlds (Hargittai & Centeno 2001). This is a unique kind of place whose participants can choose to log in or out relatively freely and can adopt a wide variety of identities (Turkle 1995). Even so, internet-based communities continue to be structured by local and national institutions (Hakken 2000) in ways that may be obscured by a narrow ethnographic focus on the communication in cyberspace alone. This may serve as a more general warning against focusing ethnographic research solely on the relations internal to networks.

Although often responding to global forces, the agency of social actors in their responses is typically seen in terms of global connections. This is clearest in the literature on transnational social movements. Thayer (2000) traces how feminist theories travel through transnational social movement space and are transformed in that process, rather than simply impacting upon localities. Elsewhere she argues that transnational feminism appears much more like a connection than a force: "Though the bureaucratic reach of funding agencies and NGOs may widen in the process of creating transnational relations, local movements are also empowered, gaining solidarity as well as discursive and material resources, and honing their negotiating skills in the transnational feminist public" (2001, p. 268).

While it would be most appropriate, relatively few studies examine global commodity chains through the lens of connections. An exception is Parreñas (2001) who documents how the transnational inequalities in both work and quality of care that underpin what Ginsburg & Rapp (1998) call stratified reproduction send migrant Filipina mothers to work as childcare and domestic workers in the

United States while creating a demand for childcare for their own children in the Phillipines.

Whereas the previous ethnographies of global connections tended to concentrate on agency from below, there is a great deal of potential for ethnographic studies of agency from above, that is, of how global connections produce global forces. Such studies could cast light on the place-making projects of forces such as capitalism and modernity, only from the perspective of those who make these projects, rather than from the perspective of those who are made by them. Over time, as world polity institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization proliferate, new potential sites emerge for the ethnographer of global connections and forces who is willing to spend time with the corporate and political elites. Interestingly there is very little ethnography of these agents and the social relations within which they are embedded. In some ways, however, these sites are relatively unproblematic for global ethnography—these are new locales operating on a global scale, but they have relatively clear institutional boundaries and are relatively easily identifiable. This is potentially a very rich vein of research–and one that is often more open to sociologists than we might think, given the huge numbers of social science consultants within these world polity institutions (see Falk Moore 2001 and Goodman 2001 for good examples of building a global ethnography around such a consulting role).

Neither does the analysis of global connections exclude an ethnography of place. Lin's (1998) *Reconstructing Chinatown* investigates the transformation of a place by globalization through the lens of global connections (see M. Smith 2001, pp. 191–92, for an insightful discussion of Lin's book as an example of global ethnography). The book reveals that Chinatown in New York, often assumed to be internally homogenous, is riven by internal conflicts often rooted in historical connections beyond the enclave. But this is not simply a case of historical ties likely to wane as assimilation occurs. In fact, Chinatown's future is negotiated through new strategies for connecting to the world outside—through tourism, new business relations, and connections to the state.

Imaginations

In studies of global imaginations, the local actively participates in public discourse about what globalization might look like. Local and national politics in many instances turns into a battle of competing visions of the global. The construction of a global vision has tangible implications for the outcome of a conflict. First of all, references to global ideas and actors today provide an entrance ticket to participating in public discourse, and those unwilling or unable to formulate their claims in global terms often find themselves invisible. Second, when local actors wage their battles with claims about the global, to acquire more credibility they themselves build connections to outside actors and enter globally circulating discourses. This not only sends an important signal that the concrete local meaning of globalization is up for grabs, but it also strongly shapes the circle of potential

allies and enemies. In short, explicit place-making through the politicization of the global scale is increasingly central to a multitude of different political projects, whether they conceive of themselves in these terms or not.

Lopez (2000) provides an example of what happens when a movement fails to develop a global imagination, as Pittsburgh's service workers' union proved incapable of countering the local goverment's vision of Pittsburgh as a deregulated global city. Klawiter (2000) shows how a new social movement emerged to challenge a globally circulating medical discourse about breast cancer. The most radical wing of this movement poses a challenge not only to stigmatization but also to the explanation of what causes breast cancer and how it should be dealt with. In the process it generates the powerful concept of a global incinerator industry spewing toxic pollutants into the environment, into food and thus into women's bodies.

In Gille's (2000) case study of a siting controversy around a Western incinerator planned in a small village in southern Hungary, both the pro- and anti-incinerator camps waged an intense battle with competing understandings of what Europe and joining the European Union mean and therefore what they imply for how local wastelands, both figurative and literal, should be cleaned up. De Soto's (2000) ethnography of a battle around the recultivation of a heavily polluted industrial region located in the middle of former East Germany also identified two competing visions—a modernist vision, supported by various funds of the European Union, that would create a high and supposedly clean-tech industrial park interspersed with green parks and lakes, and the vision supported by the Bauhaus/green group, which would reach back to local historical traditions of environmental renewal but would also preserve the monuments of socialist industrialization. De Soto argues that neither vision captures the needs of the residents living there, aptly symbolizing how debates about the nature of the East/West dichotomy can take place above the heads of citizens. Global imaginations may construct places therefore in ways that are quite different from global forces and connections, even if at other times these three elements of globalization are deeply intertwined.

Interestingly, in these studies the scales being contested were the European and local scales—not the global. Indeed, the European Union, as an increasingly muscular supranational actor acting on an increasingly significant scale of social action, has been the subject of many recent studies. Geographer John Agnew (2001) argues that the production of the Padania region in Northern Italy, as influenced by legal harmonization with the European Union, also relies on a selective collage of local/regional myths, memories, and symbols.

In each of these studies we see the importance of the politics of scale, in which actors contest the privileged scale of social life (Brenner 2000, M. Smith 2001, Tsing 2000). As powerful actors' claims to exclusively represent the global are challenged, the choice of geographical scale at which the battle should be waged becomes a crucial strategic issue for social movements, which seem a natural target and subject of global ethnography. But it is equally important to grasp

ethnographically how elites produce their imaginations, where these imaginations derive their power, and how they find resonance with imaginations forged at various geographical scales.

Goldman's (2001) ethnography of the World Bank provides an example of such a process. Goldman followed consultants to Laos and Vietnam to observe how they decided what conservation and other green programs the World Bank should fund. Their construction of what we would call eco-scapes produced actual ecological conditions, as they import conservation projects from elsewhere. Their division of a country's landscape into rice-cultivating zones and fishing zones led to dislocation and a profound change not just of people's relationship to and reliance on nature but also of existing ecological and agricultural boundaries.

This vision of global imaginations could shed new light on issues of national and racial identities and places constructed from imagination. Eve Darian-Smith (1999) used the Channel Tunnel, which links England and France and its environs, as both site (she lived near the Tunnel in England) and symbol for exploring the relationship between British national identity and European identity. Berdahl's (1999) already mentioned *Where the World Ended* is also an ethnography of place-making in an actual borderland. She demonstrates how former East Germans, the *Ossies*, keep remaking their place and their identity as necessitated by their experience of the changing political and economic relations with former West Germany.

Whether through studies of social movements, elites, or borders, the study of global imaginations reveals how taken for granted social hierarchies of spatial scales are being actively contested and reconfigured. Most obvious in studies of the explicit politicization of the national, European or global, global imaginations provide a vital added dimension to the more widespread understanding of globalization as constituted by forces and connections.

ISSUES IN GLOBAL ETHNOGRAPHY

An ethnographic approach to globalization requires the understanding of locally, socially, and culturally specific ways in which people understand the place of their locality in the global scheme of things, and the actions they take to shape that place. These understandings and actions are deeply political, as we have seen, and the very definition of the ethnographer's topic and site is shaped by the place-making projects within which any particular site is embedded. Globalization involves the contesting of the boundaries of places and negotiations concerning which geographical scale is best suited for action. As a result, the choice of site also becomes political. What sites does the ethnographer choose to study? Where does she draw the boundaries of her site? Which events and processes at which geographical scales will shape the ethnographic narrative? These questions bear heavily on the global ethnographer.

In this section we trace some of the major challenges facing global ethnographers in light of the extension of ethnography across multiple sites and scales; the

extension of ethnography in time through the incorporation of historical analysis; and the changing subject position of the global ethnographer.

Extending in Space: Ethnography Across Sites and Scales

In his 1998 volume *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*, George Marcus argues that the study of an increasingly globalized world requires multisited ethnography or at least a multisited research imaginary. He proposes to extend fieldwork to multiple sites, extending the research site in space, in order to study localities tied to the outside world in complex and consequential ways. Multisited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of ethnography.

The extension of ethnography to multiple sites is a seemingly excellent way to meet the challenges posed by globalization to place-based studies. However, while finding connections is certainly not difficult, deciding which of them are worth pursuing seems somewhat arbitrary, a feature of multisited ethnography that Marcus acknowledges when he calls it a kind of constructivism (1998, p. 90). Marcus identifies the methods of such construction: connecting sites by following people; following objects, metaphors, plots, stories, allegories; following conflicts and biography. What ties together fieldwork locations is the ethnographer's discovery of traces and clues, her logic of association. The methodological imperative of being there is replaced by that of chasing things around, things that are identified more by the ethnographer's interests prior to entering the field than by the field itself. Marcus provides little guidance and a rather scanty list of models that would allow us to answer pressing questions such as how to identify all the relevant sites or what weight each of the sites should carry.

This dilemma is only aggravated if we recognize that ethnographic sites are always and everywhere embroiled in an intermeshing network of multiple sites of social action, operating across multiple spatial scales and levels of social structure. Historically, sociology has been largely guilty of what, after Doreen Massey (1994), we may call the confusion of the level of analysis and geographical scale with the level of abstraction. Even theorists who have made important theoretical contributions to the sociological understandings of globalization tend to equate the global with the universal, and the local with the particular (Harvey 1990, Robertson 1995, Wallerstein 1991). However, in multiscalar research sites we cannot a priori identify a dominant level of analysis. How do we identify the limits of a community we are studying when the community is constituted across a variety of spatial scales (local, national, global, transnational etc.)?

This interweaving of ethnographic sites across a range of spatial scales, and therefore units of analysis, poses serious challenges to established ethnographic practice—challenges that have barely been raised within sociology as a whole let alone among ethnographers. While we do not deny the place of constructionism in

research, sociologists are likely to find Marcus' definition of a multisited research imaginary to be wanting primarily because social relations among sites can never be reduced to the connections forged by the ethnographer's imagination and logic of association. Conceiving of ethnographic sites as internally heterogenous and connected to other places by a myriad of social relations requires that the extension of fieldwork to several sites be dictated not by the logic of the ethnographer but by the character of these social relations themselves, both within and between sites.

Among the ethnographies we have reviewed, only a small number pursue a multisited approach. The ethnographies of transnationalism discussed above provide useful examples of the multisited approach and show where it works well—when there are clearly defined patterns of connection between relatively highly concentrated sites, e.g., in the case of studying migrants. Donham's (1999) study of Marxist modernization in Ethiopia involves two sites, but these are sites that can be understood as clearly located within a well-established hierarchy of scales—the national capital, which is the center of mobilization of modernization projects, and a village where they are implemented and contested. Such situations where clearly defined relations exist between two sites or across two scales are relatively rare, however, and do not address the dilemmas of investigating the multiple sets of external connections, borders and scales within which global places are often located. Eade and his collaborators (1997) take a different approach—fixing their ethnographic site in London but using a variety of studies carried out by a large research team to explore the multiple connections of their research site to many parts of the world.

The need to pursue actors through space and time in order to explore place-making projects seems likely to increase our use of interviews, history, tracing networks, and so on and to decrease our time spent simply being on site. The classic model of extended stays in a site extends to multisited ethnography quite poorly—for the reasons we have discussed and also for the purely practical reasons of time and other resources (see V. Smith 2001 for a revealing discussion of the demands of the "work of ethnography" in the "ethnography of work"). Becoming part of a site remains a critical part of ethnography—the issue of gaining entry—but the very nature of that membership changes for the ethnographer as it changes for those around her or him. Place becomes a launching pad outward into networks, backward into history and ultimately into the politics of place itself.

Extending in Time: From Context to History

Social relations change, and with them, the sites in which they are embedded. Marcus' multisited ethnography, however, ignores the dynamic process by which sites are transformed by their external connections. Furthermore, multisited ethnography does not allow us a sufficient amount of critical attention to political efforts to naturalize the local community because it provides no space from which to notice that such construction occurs. It takes places for granted and leaves no room for accounting for the production and transformation of sites. In short, in

multisited ethnography, history remains an afterthought rather than a factor that has implications for what can be seen as a site (Gille 2001).

Because we focus on dynamic social relations rather than static sites and see localities as politically and historically constructed, our approach to global ethnography requires the historicization of the locality and of local and extralocal social relations. Social relations are, by definition, dynamic, and as such they affect how the issues we study manifest themselves at a particular time. In sociology, historical analysis has too often implied unilinear development, as spatial variation is translated into temporal variation or stages in social change (see Dove's 1996 critique of world systems analysis). In the literature on globalization, this unilinearity expresses itself in a model of a (non-Western) local simply reacting to the (Western) global—while the global remains apparently unaffected by the local-global relation (e.g., Miller 1995).

Wonderful correctives to this view of history and local-global relations are Marshall Sahlins's (2000) upsetting ethnographies, about who encompasses whom in the process of development, and the work of the Comaroffs (1992). Their practice of historical ethnography defies the imposition of the microsociology/macrosociology dichotomy on the local/global one. "Even macrohistorical processes—the building of states, the making of revolutions, the extension of global capitalism—have their feet on the ground. Being rooted in the meaningful practices of people, great and small, they are in short, suitable cases for anthropological treatment" (1992, p. 33) Furthermore, this ethnographic history treats the agents of such events (missionaries, settlers, etc.) as a complex collectivity with its own history and practices with which they attribute meaning to their participation in one or another of these macrohistorical events. Mary Des Chene finds that this historical ethnography is still too bound to a particular locality. As she argues, "spatial contiguity is not essential to every kind of historical anthropological research" and "the field may not be a place at all, but a period of time or a series of events, the study of which will take a researcher to many places" (1997, p. 71).

Both Des Chene and the Comaroffs accept archival research as part of historical ethnography. However, both redefine its role in a novel way—the former treating the archives themselves as a site, while the latter treat it as a source of textual traces of a field of arguments, which the ethnographer can reconstruct without having to accept archives as objective documentary record. While much of comparative-historical sociology has relied on historical documents, letters, diaries, official record, etc., this approach requires that sociologists reevaluate archival research. Ethnographic research can be a powerful entrance into such reinterpretation of archival materials, often aided by analyses of social memory. Contemporary stories regarding historical events can be measured against the archival record to reveal how historical events are reconstructed and contested as part of contemporary culture. While ethnographic interpretation can be aided by historical materials, the detailed knowledge of the contemporary site can cast new light on archival materials and the intended and unintended consequences of historical actions.

Of course, history can be incorporated more directly into ethnographic research, albeit over a more limited time span. Donham's (1999) study of Marxism

in Ethiopia provides a fascinating example of a historical ethnography-only in this case incorporating revisits to sites of earlier fieldwork.[9] While such revisits to the site of an earlier ethnography are very demanding of individual ethnographers, one way to introduce a historical component to ethnographic research is to revisit the sites (or similar sites) studied by other ethnographers. Burawoy (2000b) argues that while revisits typically seek to debunk the original study, they may be better deployed to analyze historical change—using the earlier ethnography as historical data, as occurred through good fortune to Burawoy himself through his research on a Chicago factory previously studied by Donald Roy.

Transformations of Ethnographers: How Do Relations with Those We Study Change?

The extension of the ethnographic site in space and time sharpens one's sensibilities to the political consequences of defining a site or sites. The subject position of the ethnographer in global ethnography is fraught with difficulties. What might be the implications of the methodological dilemmas discussed above for the political position of the ethnographer? Does the classical problematic of gaining entry and maintaining trustworthiness change in this new type of ethnography, in which the field is composed of multiple sites and the social relations in which the sites are enmeshed? Marcus provides an interesting evaluation of the shifting assumed identities of the observer. He claims that doing ethnography in multiple sites amounts to activism, rather than just to mere ethnography. Using the example of Emily Martin's (1994) *Flexible Bodies*, he argues that in a kind of ethnography in which one is a medical student in one site, an AIDS volunteer in another, and a corporate trainee in the third, the ethnographer will find herself sometimes working with the subjects she observes, sometimes against them. These conflicts, according to Marcus, are resolved "not by refuge in being a detached anthropological scholar, but in being a sort of ethnographer-activist" (p. 98). This circumstantial activist figure appears to be superior to the "traditional self-defined activist role claimed by left-liberal scholars" (p. 98) perhaps because it actively participates in and negotiates among different sets of subjects (Gupta & Ferguson 1997).

However, this mobile activism can be expected when the sites are linked only by the connections forged in the researcher's imagination. In Martin's case, for example, the link is a metaphoric one—that is, she follows the metaphor of the immune system through various locales, but the sets of subjects she connects are not necessarily in a concrete conflict with each other (though they may have

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[9]Donham spent time in Addis Adaba, the Ethiopian capital, and Maale, an area in Southern Ethiopia. With major visits in 1974–75, as the revolution began, and in 1983–84, after the revolutionary state had consolidated itself, Donham spent a total of three years in Ethiopia, spread across twenty-five. Partly through good luck, arriving in Maale just before the revolution, and partly through dedicated and time-consuming fieldwork, Donham is able to give concrete form to the historical transformation of not only Ethiopian society but to the meaning of Marxism and modernity itself within Ethiopia.

differing perspectives on the particular issue) and may not even know of each other. In this case, maintaining the position of an AIDS activist is relatively easy, as long as the targets of AIDS activism do not know about the commitments and presence of the ethnographer in the other locations. But how could one maintain any meaningful sense of activism when the sites are in actual conflict with each other, when one is visibly affiliated with certain of the parties in conflict and when consequently opposing parties are more likely to consider the ethnographer a spy for their opponents? Gille (2000, 2001) found herself in such a situation. She went into the field expecting to conduct her research on the politics of location of a waste incinerator in an open and reciprocal manner. In contrast, she found the conflict around the incinerator had become so bitter that she had to revise many of her expectations regarding her position as an ethnographer–relatively mundane matters as where to live, compensating interviewees, discussing local affairs, and so on were deeply politicized.

Even if not located in such a precarious political spot, the ethnographer who is following connections through a network will almost inevitably find herself also making connections. For to be in a network is also to practice networking— such is the mode of existence in decentralized networks. The ethnographer, as someone with many connections across multiple cliques, is also likely to become a potentially valuable resource for others within the network—as well as a potentially dangerous figure who knows too much.

The relation between ethnographer and subjects is also transformed when the ethnographer is much more accessible to many of their subjects, even when they return to their computer in the university. The relation of the anthropologist who returns from the far off village, and of the sociologist who returns from the inner city, to people in their sites is very different from the relationship that exists between activists in transnational social movements and the researcher who studies them (see Bickham et al. 2001 for a discussion of similar issues in a program designed to create dialogue between academics and activists).

We are left then with a vision of the global ethnographer extending herself in time and space to attempt to uncover the multilevel social processes at work in her site. But these extensions take a toll—they must be negotiated and relationships must be managed that are often contradictory or even directly conflictual. There is no easy answer to the dilemmas of power in global ethnography—if anything, it is less clear for whom the ethnographer should speak under these conditions than it has seemed in the past.

CONCLUSION

Our travels toward global ethnography have taken us across many terrains and connections—the changing relationship between society and space, the importance of locating the site in relation to place-making projects, the varying ways in which ethnographers have sliced into the study of globalization, and the dilemmas of undertaking ethnography under these conditions. We have argued for a global

ethnography that still locates itself firmly in places but which conceives of those places as themselves globalized with multiple external connections, porous and contested boundaries, and social relations that are constructed across multiple spatial scales. The place-bound site becomes a platform from which a variety of place-making projects can be investigated. These projects provide a way in to the investigation of heterarchical social structures and deeply intertwined scales of social life. We have suggested that global ethnographers have investigated such sites as homes to particular place-making projects, leading to the experience of globalizations as either global forces, connections, or imaginations. Which of these experiences prevails in a given ethnographic project has much to do with the topic being studied and the social location of those social actors being studied. Finally we have argued that while ethnography may be particularly well suited to uncovering global processes in their multiple and overlapping contexts, significant challenges exist for the would-be global ethnographer. The extension of the site in time and space poses practical and conceptual problems for ethnographers but also political ones. Grounding globalization through ethnography will present challenges and dilemmas but also rich rewards.

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