UNSETTLING SUBJECTIVITY ACROSS LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL IMAGINARIES: PRODUCING AN UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the complex and subtle dynamics involved in producing and representing the global-local nexus in everyday life. Its socio-historical context is the destabilization of the current globalization system – and its associated global imaginary – marked by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, continuing with the populist explosion in the mid 2010s, and climaxing in the 2020 Global Coronavirus Pandemic. But rather than mischaracterizing the current context as "deglobalization", we describe it as a contemporary intensification of what we have been calling the "Great Unsettling". This era of intensifying objective instability is linked to foundational subjective processes. In particular, we examine the production of an "unhappy consciousness" torn between the enjoyment of global digital mobility and the visceral attachment to the familiar limits of local everyday life. In doing so, we rewrite the approach to the sources of ontological security and insecurity.

Keywords: Globalization, populism, Great Unsettling, unhappy consciousness, ontological insecurity.

INTRODUCTION: GLOBALIZATION AND HUMAN CON-SCIOUSNESS

What are the impacts of globalization on the reconfiguration of subjective experience in the local contexts of everyday life during these times of global social crises? Engaging a major theme posed by the editors of this special issue, we take up the challenge of ana-lyzing the complex and subtle dynamics involved in the production and representation of glocal consciousness in everyday life. We pro-ceed with our task along the lines of three conceptual vectors that provide the analytic framework of our discussion: globalization, consciousness, ontological insecurity.
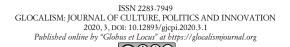
The socio-historical context of our investigation is what has been widely perceived as a series of successive social crises starting with the destabilization of the globalization system during the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, continuing with the "populist explosion" (Judis 2016) in the mid-2010s, and climaxing in the 2020 Global COVID-19 Pandemic. These crises have deeper roots than usually portrayed, and rather than mischaracterizing the current context of world-wide calamity as the "end of globalization" (Livesay 2017; O'Sullivan 2019; Farrell, Newman 2020), we describe it as an in-tensification of the "Great Unsettling" – shorthand for the intensi-fying dynamics of instability, disintegration, insecurity, dislocation, relativism, inequality, and degradation that are threatening familiar lifeworlds (Steger, James 2019). This complex matrix of instability and volatility that has been becoming more and more apparent over the past few decades. Stretching back to the middle of the twentieth century, this complex period of instability and volatility is at its most intense period at the present. But it should not be reduced to the notion of "deglobalization" *tout court* (Van Bergeijk 2019; Her-rero 2020).

Our explanation of the current era of the "Great Unsettling" is linked to various processes of globalization, especially the chang-ing speed and intensity of global change across all modes of prac-tice. These changes shape – and, in return, are reshaped by – how

we live locally. To facilitate a better understanding of the complexities involved in these glocal dynamics, we build upon our typology of globalization based on four integrative and differentiating formations: disembodied, embodied, object-related, and institution-related. This classification scheme presumes a careful definition of globalization as a complex "matrix" or "system" of multiple processes fueling the extension and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-space as understood in world-time (Steger, James 2019: 112).

There are a number of important qualifications to this definition. First, globalization is a geographically uneven and highly contingent configuration. This means, that globalization is incomplete – an unfolding set of processes not to be confused with "globality", which signifies a possible future condition of complete worldwide interdependence and integration. While humans have globalized a broad range of social relations, the world is not yet "global" as such (Steger 2020a: 2-3). Indeed, as empirical research shows, the limited intensity and extensity of globalization in particular sectors suggest that the current state of transnational integration is deeply uneven (Ghemawat 2017). This means, second, that the intensity and scope of global interconnectivity is routinely overestimated in a world where the nation-state still heavily colors social interactions. Third, globalization needs to be grasped in its unfolding historicity as a specific set of social practices rather than being fixed in its "essence" (Bayart 2007: 12, 25). This consideration is built into our definition through the proviso that globalization needs to be understood in terms of the world-time in which it occurs. Crucially, different forms of globalization both reflect and are constitutive of different historical configurations of power. Fourth, as we will elaborate below, globalization involves multiple formations and agents of enhanced global spatial mobility, extension, and interchange (Kellerman 2020). But this does not mean that more intense globalization always translates into hypermobility. At times, globalization also involves the prevention, slowing down, disruption, and disconnection of social relations and networks. Fifth,

while it is useful to make analytical distinctions between spatial scales running from the local to the global, we agree with Roland Robertson (1992) that the world of lived social relations is glocal. This means that the global is always dialectically enmeshed in the local (and vice-versa) and globalization contains homogenization tendencies that co-exist and interact with local dynamics favoring expressions of cultural diversification and hybridization. In other words, the globalization system constitutes itself not simply through the universalization of certain particular social arrangements to all parts of the world, but also through the concomitant particularization and heterogenization of the global through the imposition and diffusion of the local. Finally, as our definition indicates, the subjective aspects of globalization – ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies – are just as important as its objective dimensions reflected in globalized institutional and technological relations such as the transnational mobility of goods, capital, information, and people. We maintain that subjective global relations are always constituted in connection to objective material social relations.

Overall, building on our previous work on globalization (Steger, James 2016, 2019), this essay takes those last two points to emphasize the significance of its subjective dimensions. We examine the dynamics of the Great Unsettling both as material-objective processes and as subjective processes that have consequences for human consciousness. Substantially reworking the Anthony Giddens' concept of "ontological insecurity" (1981), we argue that dislocating experiences brought on by the rapidity of global social change manifest themselves on the level of individual identity as an "unhappy consciousness" (Hegel 1977 [1807]). This mentality is generalized as people negotiate, on the one hand, the intensifying flexibility (and demands) of global digital mobility and, and on the other, a continuing visceral attachment to the relative fixity of local arrangements.

THE SUBJECTIVE DYNAMICS OF THE GREAT UNSETTLING

As we have emphasized in our previous research on the subject, globalization has crucial subjective dimensions that have not received the level of attention which has been paid to the objective aspects of global relations and interchange. As Robertson (1992) has pointed out, this is especially true for the study of the thickening of people's consciousness of the world as a single, interconnected place. Answering the question of what forms of subjectivity globalization engenders is just as important as scrutinizing its objective networks of power and accumulation. Our conceptual framework for analyzing subjective globalization emphasizes four interrelated ways of seeing patterns of meaning moving from the empirical standpoint to the most abstract (Steger, James 2019: 78-105).

The first level of analysis encompasses meanings in the form of ideas, images, and narratives that form the building blocks of social meaning. The second layer focuses on meanings as contested and decontested by various ideologies – that is, patterned public clusters of normatively imbued ideas, metaphors, narratives and concepts, including particular representations of power relations. Ideologies are thus neither "illusions" (Freud) nor "distortions" (Marx), but conceptual integrative maps that help people navigate the complexity of their political universe and carry claims to social truth. The third level shifts the orientation of analysis to a broader plane and focusses on social imaginaries (Taylor 2004). These deep-seated modes of understanding are patterned convocations of the social whole that provide the largely pre-reflexive parameters within which people imagine their social existence. They are expressed in conceptions of social belonging such as the "the global" or "the national". During the last three or four decades, the rising global imaginary has become articulated by competing political ideologies – globalisms – which, in turn, are now part and parcel of intensifying ideational and material networks enveloping our planet (Steger 2008; Steger 2020b). The fourth layer focuses on meanings of the global as embodied in relation to deep-seated ontologies. As

patterned ways-of-being-in-the-world, these existential categories refer to lived experiences that provide the grounding conditions of social life. For example, in relation to the category of time, the contemporary world includes variously the analogical time of customary peoples and the traditional cosmological time of religious believers, both existing simultaneously in relation to the dominance of modern linear time, and the contradictory emergence of postmodern relativist time (James 2006).

The most developed feature of our framework of subjective globalization is the conception of the rising global imaginary (Steger 2008). Providing us with the raw materials of the symbolic interpretation of our time, a global imaginary has been erupting unevenly, yet with increasing overall frequency, within and onto the dominant national imaginary. In the twentieth century, these convocations of the social whole were colored by the national, which tended to be equated with the imagined community of citizens linked to the nation-state. Today, we find that related social concepts such as "city" and "society" have become terms of ambivalence, stretched between the two contesting yet interdependent imaginaries that overlay each other in complex ways: the national and the global. This helps to explain the contemporary excitement many people feel about the rise of networked "global cities" (James 2015). With the intensification of the global imaginary, cities have come back into contention as having both local vigor and globalizing appeal beyond their national settings. This unfolding glocality of urban space – which contains both synergies and tensions – is experienced as relatively "new" in everyday consciousness and, as such, engenders unprecedented possibilities and challenges.

Contrary to the claims of some of our critics (Kamola 2014, 2019; Pfeifer 2020), we insist that global imaginaries cannot be reduced to representations that simply correspond to an observable, empirical world. The global imaginary, like the national imaginary, is much more than a set of ideologies, just as an ideology such market globalism is much more than a set of ideas. Rather, we consider imaginaries as deep-seated background understandings that are

socially produced and reproduced within the dynamic disjunctures and conjunctures of global-local change. This reproduction takes place in various concrete local settings, such as when university students earnestly apply for scholarships based on national prestige and global rankings or when shoppers passionately surf the global Internet for bargains, conscious of buying locally. Each of those practices are lived through imaginaries in tension. Even resisting the dominant terms of one imaginary or another is to embed practice within the term of those imaginaries. This way, the global imaginary is both the result of contested social struggles on the material plane and the shared ideational convocation of the social whole that inspires the articulation of concrete political and social agendas impacting the "real world". As Jean-François Bayart (2007: 28) aptly observes, we should not think of social imaginaries in abstraction from their materialities. Yes, naming them requires an act of analytical abstraction, but imaginaries are lived by all of us without (for the most part) needing to be called up self-consciously. All of this implies the existence of both synergies and tensions between the global and the national (experienced locally) on the taken-for-granted level of the imaginary that nonetheless work their way into the everyday consciousness and ideas of ordinary people around the world. In this way, the global imaginary has important consequences not only on the macro-level with respect to the shifting ideological landscape of our time, but also on the micro-level with regard to identity formation.

In keeping with this special issue's thematic focus on everyday consciousness, we now turn our analytic spotlight on some ways that globalizing processes impact on senses of the self and formations of identity. Potentially, our transdisciplinary exploration – one of the four methodological pillars of the emerging field of Global Studies (Steger, Wahlrab 2017) – also opens the door to more psychologically oriented research into the lived impacts of global mobilities (Melluish 2014; Sutcliffe 2017).

PRODUCING AN UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS

The growing disjuncture between people's everyday experiences of intensifying global interconnectivity in virtual reality and their existence in the slower moving spheres of embodied, object-related, and institutional globalization produces what G.W.F. Hegel (1977 [1807]: 126) called an "unhappy consciousness". Characterized by Hegel as "the consciousness of self as a dual natured, merely contradictory being", this celebrated concept appeared first in the master-slave section of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's 1807 masterpiece famously chronicles the journey of dualistic human consciousness toward its telos of rational unity and absolute knowledge. For the German idealist philosopher, the unhappy consciousness is the synthesis of the master's "stoicism"– an attitude of mental superiority based on edifying universalistic ideas that are nonetheless barren of substance because they are cut off from the real world – and the slave's "skepticism" – a this-worldly particularistic perspective of radical doubt linked to the bondsman's unstable and insecure conditions of existence. Although the unhappy consciousness represents the fusion of the dualism of master and slave into one single consciousness and thus advances beyond the historical stage of master-slave relations in antiquity, the two elements of stoicism and skepticism are not yet unified.

As Hegel (1977 [1807]: 126), puts it, "the Unhappy Consciousness itself is the gazing of one's self-consciousness into another and itself is both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature. But it is not as yet explicitly aware that this is its essential nature, or that it is the unity of both". At this stage of their spiritual development, humans experience their self as divided, alienated, and inwardly disrupted. As Peter Singer (2001: 84) explains, "the unhappy consciousness aspires to be independent of the material world, to resemble God and be eternal and purely spiritual; yet at the same time it recognizes that it is a part of the material world, that its physical desires and its pains and pleasures are real and inescapable. As a result, the unhappy consciousness is divided against itself".

Although Hegel associates the unhappy consciousness primarily with experiences of religious life, specifically medieval Catholicism, the concept has subsequently been applied to more secular contexts. For example, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard interpreted Hegel's unhappy consciousness as a situation in which the essence of a self-conscious individual is no longer present to her, but in some manner outside her, such that the individual manifests a dichotomy of temporal alienation. Such a situation develops when a person lives in the past, or in the future, without being reconciled to their present self, their present essence (Allen 2013). Critical theorists of the Frankfurt School of Social Research, such as Herbert Marcuse (1991 [1964]), popularized the concept by linking it to their critique of consumerism and the culture industry in the context of advanced twentieth-century capitalism. Reversing the original meaning, they condemned the "happy consciousness", because it was considered to be a hollow and vapid state of mind. Hostile to ethical reflection, it was seen as draining the liberating and critical potential of autonomous individuals. In other words, Frankfurt School thinkers associated conformism and loss of individuality with the happy consciousness. Only true nonconformists, with an understanding of the constraints of freedom, and therefore endowed with an "unhappy consciousness", could affect rational progress. For this reason, critical theorists called for resistance against the alienating power of the happy consciousness – not as an occasional act but as an ethical imperative that applied especially under the modern conditions of "one-dimensionality" (Bronner 2017: 79-82).
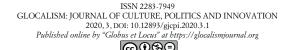
Lifted out if its Hegelian teleology, the notion of the "unhappy consciousness" is wonderfully provocative when generalized to the production of everyday consciousness in the context of the disjunctive movements of globalization during the Great Unsettling. While our elaboration of Hegel's concept is very distant in time and reference from the transitional "life of the mind" of intellectuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, our initiating point here that a process that was once limited to intellectuals grappling with the

"unfolding of Spirit" has been generalized to become a base condition of contemporary subjectivity.
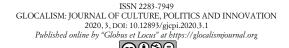
To be sure, dislocating experiences brought on by the rapidity of global social change have been documented many times before. However, the ways in which this has been theorized has not always been analytically helpful. For example, Zygmunt Bauman (2004) argued that many people living under postmodern conditions of "liquid modernity" lose a sense of familiarity with their local environment, spawning intense feelings of alienation, marginalization, and ephemerality. Here, problematically, the metaphor of liquidity carries an overwhelming interpretative weight. Alternatively, Anthony Giddens wrote of the disembedding of ontological security that occurs within what he calls "the wasteland of everyday life" (1981: 13). However, in this case, the concept of "ontological security" gets tangled in an implicit argument that with the passing of tradition, everyday life is emptied of everything except routine and spectacle – in other words, everyday life loses its old routinized sense of security as it comes to rely more and more on new routines and trust in abstract systems.

Gidden's conception sets up, first, an under-explained transformation in the form of routines from traditional to modern society; second, by focusing on the psychological establishment of ontological security in early childhood it gives an impression (like most psychoanalytic theory) that it is a transhistorical process; and, third, it seems to reduce everyday life to empty new routines. In our approach, everyday life is layered in complex practices of meaning production from ideas and ideologies through to imaginaries and ontologies, of which routine is but a small part. The ontological security of people in everyday life is unsettled not so much by the emptying of traditional social life into modern routine, but by intensifying disjunctures, contestations and tensions understood at the level of social imaginaries – in the present, between national and global imaginaries – as well as by disjunctures, understood at the level of ontological formations: changing ways of living basic categories of existence such as embodiment, time, and space.

We will come back to this concept of "ontological security" throughout the article because, like Bauman's conception of contemporary life becoming a daily rehearsal of transience and ephemerality, it can be recuperated as part of a different analytical framework that puts a stronger emphasis on disjuncture and contradiction between simultaneously existing forms. Closer to our own analysis, the social psychologist Kenneth Gergen (2002) characterizes persons deeply enmeshed in global digital technologies as "absent present" to explain how they may be physically present in one specific locality but psychologically lodged in virtual global space. In our terms, this is an expression of basic ontological tensions of our times, crossing coterminous categories of temporality and embodiment.

In these terms, the concept of the "unhappy consciousness" signifies – as one of its many lines of tension – the uneasy coexistence in a person of the condition where absenting oneself from the local (although he or she remains physically present in the local) is tied to becoming present in the virtual global (although one is physically absent in the global). This powerful absence-presence dialectic drives the current production of individual selves torn between their emerging attachment to the pleasures (and pain) of digital mobility and their continuing affection for (and discomfort in) the political and cultural security of familiar local and national life-worlds. This ontological contradiction in the way we live contemporary spatiality can be repeated across other ontological categories, including time and knowing. Thus, our analysis goes deeper than the necessary, but limited, assessment of the role of the global political economy in producing in people heightened sentiments of dislocation, anxiety, alienation, anomie, and anger (Standing 2016). Connecting the macro-level to the micro-level, our framework makes for a better understanding of how, precisely, the objective disjunctive dynamics among the major tectonic plates of globalization work their way into the subjective sphere of globalization, layered in ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies.

On the pre-reflexive level of the social imaginary, for example, the mounting tension between the rising global imaginary buoyed by accelerating global digital mobilities and the resurgent national imaginary clinging to the now-disjunctive experience of the familiar local becomes manifest in specific everyday manifestations of the unhappy consciousness. Consider, for example the digital American shopper surfing the web for inexpensive Chinese-made tools needed for the purposes of home renovation in her small Midwestern town while taking a hardline attitude against cheap Chinese steel exports flooding the domestic market and thus hurting the "American economy". Other examples include American anti-immigration activists making online bookings for their vacation at the Mexican Riviera Maya; Austrian industrial workers proud of the Formula 1 successes of their country's Red Bull Racing Team rushing to buy a new Korea-assembled SUV; and German neo-Nazis mourning the loss of *Heimat*, spending hours in front of their computer-screens, rather than their local pub, to beef up their worldwide digital presence.

National populist leaders like Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, or Victor Órban, in particular, have benefitted from the disjunctive production of the unhappy consciousness during the current intensification of the Great Unsettling. Experts in utilizing the ideological echo chamber of the global social media, they accuse footloose "cosmopolitans" of cheating the toiling masses while, in effect, dismissing for themselves the parochial lifestyles that they attribute to those toiling masses (Sunstein 2017; Jamieson, Cappella 2010). Fattening their Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube platforms with transnationally produced "alternative facts", the populist captains of our "fake news" era successfully globalize their antiglobalist slogans, each communicating with and learning from each other in a global context. For example, the indicted Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu adopted Trump's anti-impeachment mantra of "witch hunt" for his own campaign's rallying cry of "witch hunt". Hence, national populism is not just a backlash against globalization, but also an expression of it. The global appeal of the new nationalism attests

to the role of the unhappy consciousness as a significant factor in the political power dynamics of our troubled times.

ELABORATING THE UNHAPPY CONSCIOUS IN TERMS OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF GLOBALIZATION

To sharpen our understanding of the complex and contingent dynamics involved in the contemporary production of everyday consciousness, we propose a larger analytical framework in the form of a typology that helps us disaggregate the current globalization system into four major integrative and differentiating formations of global spatial relations (Steger, James 2019). It is important to remember here that processes that bring people together with identified communities (such as nations or ethnic groups) are also the basis on which we differentiate ourselves from others.

"Embodied globalization" refers to the physical mobility of human bodies across the world. It is the oldest formation of globalization and endures in the contemporary movements of refugees, migrants, workers, travelers, entrepreneurs, digital nomads, and tourists. It is this form of globalization that sets up the strongest visceral concerns about insiders and outsiders. "Object-related globalization" covers the global mobility of physical objects, in particular commercial goods, traded commodities, and tangible exchange tokens such as coins and notes. But it also includes industrial refuse such as greenhouse gas emissions and various transboundary entities such as plastics, pesticides, nuclear waste, and viruses (e.g., HIV, SARS, N1H1, COVID-19). Here, too, the insider/outsider negotiation is important, but not to the same degree. "Institution-related globalization" refers to global spatial mobility conducted through the "agents" of empires, states, institutions, TNCs, INGOs, churches, sports clubs, and so on. Like the other three formations, it has a long history running from the empires of antiquity to contemporary global supply-chains. "Disembodied globalization" pertains to global interchange of intangible things

and processes including the exchange and communication of ideas, words, images, meanings, knowledge, sounds, electronic texts, software programs and novel cyber-assets such as blockchain-encoded cryptocurrencies. Since the digital revolution in the 1990s, many of these movements have occurred as electronic transactions in cyberspace. With this kind of global interchange, the objective question of national insiders and outsiders largely dissipates. At the same time, insecurity "returns" through a subjective disjuncture between the form of those objective processes and our understandings of them as we receive abstracted images and content describing those processes.

At the level of institutionally related globalization this occurs, for example, to the extent that the flow of ideas, meanings and capital are seen to be captured or distorted by institutionalized ("nationally based") globalizers such as Google and Facebook or "black hatted" foreign powers such as the "Russian" and "Chinese" hackers. At the level of embodied globalization this occurs as the new media bring images of refugees and immigrants coming across borders. Over recent decades we have come to see these images of refugees more as abstracted signifiers of threat (or pain) than as people just like us – they are bodies in orange life-vests washed up on the shore of the Mediterranean, groups crossing the Rio Grande; and hordes hanging off *La Bestia*, a network of trains, as they wind their way to the US-Mexico border. By comparison, fifty years ago in the 1970s and 1980s we saw the close-up faces of people in distress where the emphasis of the images was relational: one photo from 1979 (US National Archives) shows a close-up of a family with three small children on the deck of USS Wabash, AOR-5 in the South China Sea. According to the archived caption, they are now "safe" after "twenty-eight boat people were picked up from their wooden boat by a whaleboat from the oiler". Another shot in 1982 shows the expectant faces of Vietnamese refugees aboard the guided missile cruiser USS FOX (CG-33). Another from 1984 depicts Master at Arms First Class Jose Morillo wearing white gloves and holding a baby, "one of 35 Vietnamese refugees rescued by the amphibious

command ship USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC 19) 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam". These connections were still mediated, of course, but the tension between persons far away and those who would be close to us did not cause the same generalized embodied insecurity. In summary, embodied globalization remains a continuing dimension of local-global life, but it is now lived through an unsettling disjuncture with the disembodied world of circulating images shared by millions via social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

While all of these four principal globalization formations operate within different historical conjunctures, their dynamics can be enduring, emergent, residual, and dominant at different times and places. In other words, we can picture these macro-configurations of globalization as perpetually moving and changing tectonic plates possessing both an underlying structure ("formation") and visible morphology or shape ("form"). Bonded by substantial synergies and convergences, they are also driven apart by significant tensions and divergences (Appadurai 1990). As we have argued, it is the intensification of major disjunctures in the globalization system in our era of the Great Unsettling that play a crucial role in the reconfiguration of subjective experience and identity formation in everyday local contexts of social life.

In both subjective and objective terms, the increasing dominance of disembodied relations is unsettling the foundations of both modern and traditional personhood. The rapidity of exogenous movement of globalization's disjunctures – as part of the broader and disproportionate growth of its disembodied formation at the expense of the other configurations – means that people around the world find themselves increasingly creating their everyday lives in and through a digitally extended layer of meaning and interchange. In other words, the possibility of relations at a distance (including through disembodied globalization) occurs in the embodied experience of everyday life rather than as an occasional "intrusion" as it might have been even a couple of generations ago. This is central to the experience of glocalization. As a result of this

advancing process of cyberspatiation, the local is accentuated even as the experience dislocates and disembeds the local as manifested in embodied places. It means that people, unevenly and contradictorily, come to romanticize the security of familiar local reference points (in terms of language, ethnicity, food, sports, music, buildings, institutions, and so on) while at the same time moving in and out of subjectivities alienated from the newly perceived sluggishness of the local and its imperviousness to the apparently unlimited possibilities of digital plasticity.
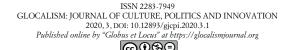
People thus sentimentalize the local while spending increasing time in the malleable arena of global cyberspace. For example, in 2018, the average American spent more than six hours a day online, which equates to more than 100 days a year (Salim 2019). Although it is true that Internet use and information flows on social media is primarily domestic (Ghemawat 2017: 40), we must bear in mind that the proliferating digital tools and software programs are highly globalized phenomena that are themselves the bearers of a plethora of global meanings and symbols. Facebook, for example, is the most widely used social network in most countries – with its 290 million users in India easily outnumbering its 190 million American users (Statista 2020). Google has a 95 per cent share of mobile search traffic worldwide and more that 35 per cent of clicks for American business ads on Google come from outside the United States (99 Firms 2020). CNN, the symbol of American cultural imperialism, has turned into CNN Digital Worldwide – a global operation that delivers mobile web, video, and messaging content across multiple mobile platforms such as Google AMP, Amazon Alexa, and Facebook Watch. It streams in dozens of languages and has thus become linguistically "de-Americanized" (Bayart 2007: 226-7). Similarly, the English language online programs of the Qatari Al Jazeera media network have become a big hit with many British and American "domestic" viewers.

Our analysis also allows us to understand the tension between the national and global at a deeper level. Historically, nation-states were formed across the nineteenth century into the twentieth as

abstracted communities of citizens (Anderson 2006). Strangers who would never meet were bound together in demarcated territories, institutionalized under the sovereignty of a state. This process itself was based on a contradictory process. While objectively national citizens would never find themselves in the embodied presence of more than a fraction of their compatriots, subjectively the ideologies of the nation contradictorily emphasized the particularized importance of "every-body" to the whole of the nation. At its subjective extreme, nationalism focused on blood and soil, even as state territory became an abstracted space with lines on maps demarcating its borders. In other words, the nation-state was formed, and continues, as a contradictorily disembodied community-polity – framed by institutional extension, and yet interpellating its citizens through ideologies of embodiment and place. For a time, the contradictions here between the embodied and disembodied, placed and displaced, the local and global, were largely reconciled in terms of a mediating category, the "community of the nation". However, with the intensification of globalization and the stretching/condensing of glocal time-space, these contradictions (the very same ones that were part of the formation of nations) were stretched, sometimes to their subjective breaking points. This is where the national populists stepped in to accentuate and draw upon the everyday ontological insecurity associated with unsettling globalization.

A few examples must suffice to show the subjective side of this transition. It can be described as the shift from the classically modern form of national leaders "speaking to and for" the nation to current national populist leaders and their electoral base "standing in for" the nation. When Winston Churchill in his 1940 *We Shall Fight Them on the Beaches* speech uses the term "we", he meant all British people, that is, everybody. He was, in effect, using the pronoun "we" to reconcile the contradiction between the embodied subjectivity of the nation and its objective abstraction. Eighty years later, Chancellor Angela Merkel's engaged in a similar discursive maneuver when she used the coronavirus crisis to draw "the

elderly" into the arms of the nation: "I too am particularly burdened by what people have to endure living in care facilities, senior and disabled facilities [...]. We'll never forget these people and the temporary isolation in which they have to live [...]. They are Germany just like us, their children and grandchildren and we are fighting the battle against the virus for them as well" (Merkel 2020).

However, there are some political leaders who have over the past few years gone a step further. Boris Johnson's (2020) New Deal address serves as an example for this changing way of synthesizing the national imaginary. He included, yet moved beyond, the familiar national refrains of reaching out to "all" but then he explicitly recognized "that the nation is not always inclusive of all". It is a qualitative shift in gear to admit a national failing that goes to core of its contradictory formation: "one of the most extraordinary features of the UK – in so many ways the greatest place on earth – [is] that we tolerate such yawning gaps between the best and the rest".

Coming from a very different angle, Donald Trump's (2020a) National Republican Convention speech had something of the same hybrid quality, carrying the usual concept of "we", but stretching it uncomfortably in relation to the embodied expression of love and kinship. Keep in mind that his 30-year-old speechwriter, Stephen Miller, had a significant hand in the tenor of most of this carefully scripted speech:
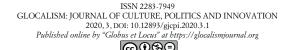
We are one national family and we will always protect, love, and care for each other [...]. We will rekindle new faith in our values, new pride in our history, and a new spirit of unity that can only be realized through love for our great country [...]. In recent months, our nation and the entire planet has been struck by a new and powerful invisible enemy. Like those brave Americans before us, we are meeting this challenge [...]. And yet, despite all of our greatness as a nation, everything we have achieved is now in danger. This is the most important election in the history of our country [...]. To me, one of the most beautiful buildings anywhere in the world is not a building [the White House], it is a home, as far as I am concerned. It's not even a house, it is a home. It's a wonderful place with an incredible history. But it is all because of you. Together, we will write the next chapter of the great American story [...]. We want our sons and daughters to

know the truth. America is the greatest and most exceptional nation in the history of the world. Our country wasn't built by Cancel Culture, speech codes, and crushing conformity. We are not a nation of timid spirits. We are a nation of fierce, proud, and independent American patriots [...]. They loved their families, they loved their country, and they loved their God [and then he finished his one-hour speech with the passage] I love you all. God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you very much.

An awkward stretching of the embodied/abstraction contradiction is particularly evident here in Trump's implying that the White House is the nation's home, but more so in the probably unscripted "I love you all" refrain – now also known as ILYA, incidentally, first expressed in mid- to late-twentieth century by rock stars and actors during mass concerts and mediated gatherings.

In a related expression, Trump also stretched the contradiction to breaking point in a way that makes himself rather than the community of the nation as the collating locus of the imaginary. This new narcissistic nationalism parallels his famous "I love ..." declarations, for example, the 2016 "I love Hispanics" tweet, retweeted in 2020. Here we are referring to what might be called his "I know them all" moments, with variations on that phrase becoming a key trope in his unscripted speeches. "I know them all", "I know all of them", is now regularly used to refer to different constituencies of erstwhile strangers – the smartest guys on Wall Street (18 June 2015); the hedge-fund guys (27 November 2017); all Trump's potential democratic presidential challengers (18 July 2019); all the world's leaders (12 September 2019); the Medal of Honor winners (7 November 2019); the members of Congress (19 March 2020); the biggest people in Wall Street, the rich ones, the poor ones (25 June 2020). This set of moments began to include projection of the national imaginary with his reference to Irish Americans, "We have so many people from Ireland in this country – I know so many of them, I feel I know all of them" (27 June 2017). At first this "knowing" had a residual ring of truth to it. It was an unspecified metaphorical knowing[1].

However, gradually the "as if" quality of "I feel I know so many of them" dropped away, and the narcissist who knows all has placed himself at the centre of the nation. The "we" here is still the (modern) national whole, but the basis of the interconnection has become his (postmodern) relativized knowing. More recently, for example, he said, "We have a tremendous Greek population. Over three million people as I understand it. That's fantastic. I really feel I know most of them. I think I know all of them, come to think of it" (8 January 2020). At his 2020 Nevada election rally speech in Minden, the full force of his narcissistic nationalism takes over, overlaying continuing refrains of the classical national synthesis of the embodied/abstracted contradiction that we have been exploring. Trump, in his own knowing, projects himself as providing the way to move beyond the growing unhappy consciousness. Talking of the Border Patrol agents on the US-Mexican border – those who work as agents of the state to keep out embodied global threats potentially crossing in the United States – Trump (2020b) declared to know them all:

They're incredible people [the Border Patrol agents}, more than half of whom happen to be Hispanic-Americans. Did you know that? I know all of them, Jose, how are you doing? Juan, how are you doing? Everyone, I – like every six times and say, hello, Jim, how are you? These extraordinary patriots deserve our admiration, gratitude, and respect [...]. That's a tough job. My administration achieved the most secure border in American history [...]. We are one movement, one people, one family, and one glorious nation under God.

Here, the US President, in effect, offers himself as the counter to the source of the unhappy conscious, an external threat that is now inside the homeland. We use the phrase "in effect" here because Trump (2020b) is not reflexive about this process. He just knows that he offers the way to the future, whereas "the Biden shutdown will permanently destroy the lives and dreams of tens of millions of Americans, inflict totally lasting harm on our children and lead countless deaths from suicide".

In short, Trump offers morally charged ontological security. When Anthony Giddens describes the broader process, he writes of the stripping away of moral meaning: "in the 'everyday life' of capitalist urbanism large tracts of activity are denuded of moral meaning; they become matters of habit or of 'dull economic compulsion'. In such circumstances the level of what Laing calls 'ontological security' in the routines of daily life is low" (Giddens 1981: 11). Here, we are suggesting something substantially different. Everyday life is replete with tensions over moral meaning brought on by disjunctures in the very imaginaries and ontologies through which that meaning is produced.

How else could a political leader like Donald Trump or Victor Órban hold the attention of so many of their compatriots? These leaders might very well soon be on a path of losing power, but they have learned the dialectic of security and insecurity. As Órban (2020) noted during his 2020 *State of the Nation* speech:

Enemies all around us. This meant political quarantine, economic isolation, debilitated national defense, cultural solitude and spiritual loneliness. So, we hunkered down and set our sights on survival. We knew we had to wait: wait until the enemy state formations weakened, and the key was duly given to us. This is what happened. Legend has it that one hundred years ago, Apponyi also said that although the Hungary's grave had been dug, we Hungarians would be there at the funerals of our gravediggers [...]. People would think that I was shamelessly blowing my own trumpet. But this is not about me. It's not even about the Government, but the performance of Hungary as a whole. And so, I have chosen to tell the unusual truth [...]. The facts show that the past ten years were the most successful decade in the past one hundred years of Hungarian history.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In this article, we explored the impacts of globalization on the production of subjective experience within local contexts of social

life during this time of an intensifying Great Unsettling. A key task of current and future research on the everchanging morphology of the global-local nexus should be to describe and analyze the enduring significance of reconfigured globalization dynamics as applied to their objective and subjective dimensions. After all, the impact of the 2020 global COVID-19 crisis has further accentuated the disjuncture between disembodied globalization and the other three formations. Not only have most national borders been closed to migrants and travelers other than citizens returning home, but physical mobility has been curtailed even within the nation-state. For example, Australian states have closed their internal borders, making it impossible for a Victorian grandfather to visit his granddaughter in Western Australia. The various member states in the European Union have implemented similar measures that reduced internal business and leisure travel in the summer of 2020 by almost 80 percent. Even those countries that allowed embodied inflows often required visitors to self-quarantine for up to two weeks.

This unhappiness is redoubled by conjunctural factors accentuating upheaval – sometimes looking bad, sometimes rebounding. In all of this the dominance of disembodied relations has been confirmed. After catastrophic losses of nearly 35 percent in the early phase of the pandemic, most stock markets around the world have recovered surprisingly quickly. For example, the S&P 500, which is the benchmark index for stock funds at the heart of many retirement accounts, managed to top its closing record in mid-August – only six months after its pre-COVID-19 record set on February 19. Reflecting the massive shift of social relations of all kinds from embodied face-to-face mode to screen events conducted in cyberspace, the technology-heavy Nasdaq index did even better. Aided by gigantic government-aid packages and central banks infusing the markets with cheap money at nearly zero interest rates, the profits of Big Tech soared at a time when the global number of people infected with coronavirus cases passed the 25 million mark. Indeed, the combined net worth of the five big-tech oriented giants –Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, and Alphabet (Google's parent

company) – had skyrocketed to an astonishing record of $7.6 trillion by August 2020 (Choe, Veiga, Rugaber 2020: B5). Yet, financial markets around the world have remained extremely volatile even though Main Street has been struggling with multiple small-business closures and record unemployment caused by multiple mandatory lockdowns. By the end of September 2020, 200,000 Americans had lost their lives to the virus.

Perhaps most relevant to the production of the unhappy consciousness in our moment of the Great Unsettling is the normalization of new spatial practices in response to the rapid spread of COVID-19. As restrictions are imposed that reduce the mobility of human bodies even in their immediate environments, the local becomes the area under assault with the flow of everyday consciousness. As parks are closed and local art events are cancelled, people are forced to either drastically reduce their ties to the local or experience it in digitally mediated form. Under extreme conditions of enforced lockdowns, the tactile experience of the local shrinks to the size of one's house or apartment plus the nearby supermarket. Conversely, COVID-19 related restrictions enhance the stature and appeal of disembodied movement through the plasticity of cyberspace. Indeed, even before the advent of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, human bodies had become the new frontier of digital incursion thanks to the 5G enabled "Internet of Things" that included cutting-edge "wearable technology" and interface mechanisms that may be worn, embedded in fabric or accessories, or tattooed directly onto the skin. These dynamics of the disembodied cannibalizing the embodied received an unexpected boost with the outbreak of COVID-19.

Indeed, "social distancing" has become a ubiquitous global term and government-mandated practice while instances of "distant socializing" via such digital platforms have exploded. Zoom, for example, accommodated in June 2020 over 300 million daily meeting participants and the number of corporate users surged to about 300,000, which represents an increase of over 350 per cent since December 2019. In that month alone, Zoom reported 71

million app installs and identified more than 100,000 schools around the world as users of their services (DMR Business Statistics 2020). In fact, scores of colleges and universities across the globe – like the massive California State University system that enrolls nearly 500,000 students – decided to offer all or more than 90 percent of their Fall 2020 course offerings in online mode only. While under such conditions of enhanced cyberspatiation the label "international students" is not yet disappearing, it means less and less as the borderless landscapes virtual reality serve as the shared gathering places for disembodied learners and teachers scattered across the local-global nexus.

As a result of social distancing mandates and stay-at-home measures connected to the 2020 GCP, people have been spending record time in cyberspace. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Snapchat, in particular, have experienced double-digit increases in the first two quarters of 2020. In April 2020, for example, British adults spent longer than four hours online each day – more than a quarter of their waking life (Cuthbertson 2020). The trajectory is clear: the longer the time people spend under COVID-19 generated social conditions, the more they look to digital media sites of all kinds to generate disembodied connections to supplement the constricted experience of the physical. There is little doubt that extended time spent online produces new patterns of everyday consciousness, many of which are detrimental to mental health (Turkle 2016, 2017). Recent studies have established a link between prolonged social media use and an increased risk of mental health issues such as internalizing problems – social withdrawal, difficulty coping with anxiety or depression, or directing feelings inward – and externalizing problem – aggression, acting out, and violence, especially among young adults (Samson 2020). Thus, it appears that the disjunctive globalization dynamics described in this article are likely to have a lasting impact on the reconfiguration of subjective experience in the local contexts of everyday life.

At the same time, however, it would be wrong to assert that these intensifying trends toward cyberspatiation have only negative psychological and social impacts. In many ways, the availability of virtual forms of communication might have saved our world from even greater disruption and calamity in this *annus horribilis* of COVID-19. Once we move beyond the current crisis – with two highly effective vaccines ready for action in 2021 – we might find new pathways out of the present incarnation of the unhappy consciousness.

NOTES

[1] There is one earlier occasion when a U.S. president talked of "knowing them all". President Lyndon B. Johnson (1965) said the following at a press conference on his administration's war with Vietnam: "Let me also add now a personal note. I do not find it easy to send the flower of our youth, our finest young men, into battle. I have spoken to you today of the divisions and the forces and the battalions and the units, but I know them all, everyone. I have seen them in a thousand streets, of a hundred towns, in every State in this Union – working and laughing and building and filled with hope and life. I think I know, too, how their mothers weep and how their families' sorrow". But here the metaphoric meaning of "knowing" is clear.

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