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Unsettling Master Categories: Notes on Studying the Global in C. W. Mills' Footsteps

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Abstract C. W. Mills' sociology arises out of the problematizing of established "truths." The aim becomes a sociology that unsettles—not a sociology of unsettlement but a sociology that is itself unsettling. In this short essay I focus on themes that capture one way (mine) of executing C. W. Mills' challenge to us, academic sociologists. The substantive focus is on what is needed to develop critical globalization studies. The accepted narratives and explanations of globalization have produced the global as a master category that obscures as much as it reveals. We need to generate new questions for research to recover what has been excluded by dominant narratives. And we need to develop conceptual architectures that allow us to detect what we might think of as countergeographies of globalization. Here I focus particularly on types of spaces where we can find resistance to global power and as yet unrecognized forms of participation by actors typically represented as powerless, or victims, or as uninvolved with global conditions. The overall project is a critical remapping of the analytic and political terrain of the global.

Keywords Master categories · Unsettlement · Blinding clarity · Complexity of powerlessness · Denationalization · Autobiography

Master categories have the power of illuminating a complex issue with great efficiency. But they do so with a clarity that is blinding. They thereby also keep us from seeing other presences in the landscape. They produce a vast penumbra around that center of light. It is in that penumbra that I have gone digging over and over again, across a variety of subjects and over twenty years. A master category is one way of structuring a discursive space, with its own power logics and exclusions. We need to problematize these categories. Yet problematizing can itself engender new master categories. So it is a task that is continuous.

This essay is based on a talk given as part of the New School's Sociological Imaginaries series honoring C. W. Mills (Spring 2006) and asking several of us to explore our development as social scientists in somewhat autobiographical terms. I thank the students who organized the series, most especially Sebastian Guzman, Nicole De Pontes, Fanon Howell and Ritchie Savage.

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I read C. W. Mills' sociology as including such a continuous problematizing. The aim becomes a sociology that unsettles—not a sociology of unsettlement but a sociology that is itself unsettling. In this short essay I will focus on subjects that capture one way (mine) of executing C. W. Mills' challenge to us, academic sociologists.

The focus is on two of the many key features needed to develop critical globalization studies. One of these is the need to destabilize the accepted narratives and explanations of globalization. These have produced the global as a master category that obscures as much as it reveals. The aim is to generate new questions for research, questions excluded by dominant narratives. A second feature is the need to develop conceptual architectures that allow us to detect what we might think of as countergeographies of globalization. By these I mean conditions, processes, and actors riding or using the mainstream infrastructure produced largely by and for the global corporate economy, but for other aims, ranging from emancipatory struggles to organized crime. There are multiple instances of these countergeographies. In this chapter I am particularly interested in types of spaces where we can find resistance to global power and as yet unrecognized forms of participation by actors typically represented as powerless, or victims, or uninvolved with global conditions. Such new narratives and conceptual architectures can help us critically remap the analytic terrain of the global.

These two necessary features for critical globalization studies stem in part from a basic assumption in my own 20 years of research, to wit, that the global is partly endogenous to the national rather than a formation that stands necessarily outside and in opposition to the national. Endogeneity can be the result of an originally national condition that becomes reconstructed as global; for example, the fact that what we call global capital is in part an amalgamation of what often were national capitals. Global capital can then be seen as comprising not only new forms of capital but also denationalized national capital. Or endogeneity can result from the partial endogenizing of global dynamics and entities into national institutional orders—for example, the fact that global electronic financial markets are partly embedded in, and dependent on, a network of national financial centers.

Such an approach has theoretical, empirical, and political implications for developing critical globalization studies. The global is not simply defined as that which is outside and in contestation to the national, nor is the global only that which is part of a space of flows that cuts across borders. There are, in my view, components of globalization that we keep coding in national terms, and there are global actors whom we think of as local because they do not move across borders and lack the characteristics of what have become dominant representations of the global. If we understand the global as indeed partly endogenous to or endogenized into the national, we expand the range of actors who are conceivably global. We can then include even those who are immobile, resource-poor, and not able to travel global circuits.

An Autobiographical Moment[1]

A first comment is that in retrospective I can see that I begin my inquiry always at a particular point in a theme's conceptual field: a point of thick and dense intersections of

[1] Elsewhere I develop the autobiographical aspects in some depth. For the interaction of politics and scholarship see A. Sica and S. Turner (eds.) 2006 *The Disobedient Generation* (University of Chicago Press); for a more scholarly focus, see M. DeFlem (ed) 2007 *Sociologists in a Global Age* (Ashgate). For one of the best sets of in-depth interviews with several contemporary sociologists, including myself, see N.Gane, 2004. *The Future of Social Theory.* London: Continuum

different forms of knowledge. These particular kinds of intersections unsettle common understandings of a theme or of a question. In the three major projects that comprise my 20 years of research I have started with a thesis that posits the unexpected and the counterintuitive as a way to cut through established "truths." This is my way of going digging in the shadow of master categories.

Each of the three books that came out of these projects addresses a particular established "truth." Thus in my first book, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (Cambridge University Press 1988), my thesis is that foreign investment in less developed countries can actually raise the likelihood of emigration; this went against established notions that such investment would retain potential emigrants. In my second book *The Global City* (Princeton University Press 1991; 2nd ed 2001) my thesis was that the global economy far from being placeless, has and needs very specific territorial insertions, and that this need is sharpest in the case of highly globalized and electronic sectors such as finance; this went against established notions at the time that the global economy transcended territory and its associated regulatory umbrellas.

In the third book, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press 2006), my thesis is that the foundational transformations afoot today take place largely inside core and thick national environments; this allows me to explain that some of the changes inside liberal states, most evident in the USA but also increasingly in other countries, are not distortions or anomalies, but are the result of these foundational transformations inside the state apparatus. I show how this foundational transformation hence consists not only of globalizing dynamics but also of denationalizing dynamics: we are seeing the formation of multiple often highly specialized assemblages of bits of territory, authority and rights that were once ensconced in national framings. Today these assemblages traverse global and national settings, thereby denationalizing what was historically constructed as national.

The Subnational: A Site for Globalization

One starting point for me, then, has been to keep on asking the question: What is it we are trying to name with the term *globalization*? In my reading of the evidence, it is actually two distinct sets of dynamics. One of these involves the formation of explicitly global institutions and processes, such as the World Trade Organization, global financial markets, the new cosmopolitanism, and the war crimes tribunals. The practices and organizational forms through which these dynamics operate are constitutive of what is typically thought of as global scales.

But there is a second set of processes that does not necessarily scale at the global level as such, yet, I argue, is part of globalization. These processes take place deep inside territories and institutional domains that have largely been constructed in national terms in much, though by no means all, of the world. What makes these processes part of globalization even though localized in national, indeed subnational, settings is that they involve transboundary networks and formations connecting or articulating multiple local or "national" processes and actors. Among these processes I include cross-border networks of activists engaged in specific localized struggles with an explicit or implicit global agenda, as is the case with many human rights and environmental organizations; particular aspects of the work of states (e.g., certain monetary and fiscal policies critical to the constitution of global markets that are hence being implemented in a growing number of countries); the use of international human rights instruments in national courts; and

noncosmopolitan forms of global politics and imaginaries that remain deeply attached or focused on localized issues and struggles, yet are part of global lateral networks containing multiple other such localized efforts.

A focus on such subnationally based processes and dynamics of globalization requires methodologies and theorizations that engage not only global scalings but also subnational scalings as components of global processes, thereby destabilizing older hierarchies of scale and conceptions of nested scalings. Studying global processes and conditions that get constituted subnationally has some advantages over studies of globally scaled dynamics—but it also poses specific challenges. It does make possible the use of longstanding research techniques, from quantitative to qualitative, in the study of globalization. It also gives us a bridge for using the wealth of national and subnational data sets as well as specialized scholarships such as area studies. Both types of studies, however, need to be situated in conceptual architectures that are not quite those held by the researchers who generated these research techniques and data sets, as their efforts mostly had little to do with globalization. (For an examination of these issues see Sassen 2007).

One central task we face is to decode particular aspects of what is still represented or experienced as "national" that may in fact have shifted away from what had historically been considered or constituted as national. In many ways this effort is illustrated by the research and theorization logic developed in global-city studies. But although today we have come around to recognize and code a variety of components in global cities as part of the global, there are many domains where this work has not been done.

Three instances serve to illustrate some of the conceptual, methodological, and empirical issues in this type of study. One of these instances concerns the role of place in many of the circuits constitutive of economic and political globalization. A focus on places allows us to unbundle globalization in terms of the multiple specialized cross-border circuits on which different types of places are located. I would include here the emergence of forms of globality centered on localized struggles and actors that are part of cross-border networks; this is a form of global politics that runs not through global institutions but through local ones and constitutes a horizontal, rather than hierarchical, space of globality. Global cities are subnational places where multiple global circuits intersect and thereby these cities are positioned on various structured cross-border geographies, each typically with distinct scopes and constituted in terms of distinct practices and actors. For instance, at least some of the circuits connecting Sao Paulo to global dynamics are different from those of Frankfurt, Johannesburg, or Mumbai. Further, distinct sets of overlapping circuits contribute to the constitution of distinctly structured cross-border geographies. We are, for instance, seeing the intensifying of older hegemonic geographies, such as the increased transactions among New York, Miami, Mexico City, and Sao Paulo, as well as newly constituted geographies (e.g., the articulation of Shanghai with a rapidly growing number of cross-border circuits). This type of analysis produces a different picture about globalization from one centered on global markets, international trade, or the pertinent supranational institutions.

A second of these instances, partly connected to the first, is the role of the new interactive technologies in repositioning the local, thereby inviting us to a critical examination of how we conceptualize the local. Through these new technologies a financial services firm becomes a microenvironment with continuous global span. But so do resource-poor organizations or households; they can also become microenvironments with global span, as might be the case with activist organizations. These microenvironments can be oriented to other such microenvironments located far away, thereby destabilizing the notion of context which is often imbricated in that of the local and the notion that physical

proximity is one of the attributes or markers of the local. A critical reconceptualization of the local along these lines entails an at least partial rejection of the notion that local scales are inevitably part of nested hierarchies of scale running from the local to the regional, the national, and the international. New kinds of political subjects and struggles are emerging across a variety of terrains. A single city can have hundreds of terrains for political action. All of this begins to bring texture, and structuration, to the notion of the multitude. I care about the *making* of these specific, diverse, political architectures within the multitude. I want to capture this negotiation, the constituting of a global multitude of sorts but one that is deeply localized (and may have nothing to do with cosmopolitanism!). There's a kind of global politics in the making which has, as a critical component, multitudes that might be global even though they are not mobile. (Sassen 2006: chs 6 and 7).

A third instance concerns a specific set of interactions between global dynamics and particular components of national states. The crucial conditionality here is the partial embeddedness of the global in the national, of which the global city is perhaps emblematic. My main argument here is that insofar as specific structurations of the global inhabit what has historically been constructed and institutionalized as national territory, they engender a variety of negotiations with the national. One set of outcomes evident today is what I describe as incipient, highly specialized, and partial denationalizations of specific components of national states, notably particular components of the work of ministries of finance, central banks, and regulatory agencies in key sectors such as finance and telecommunications.

In all three instances the question of scaling takes on very specific contents in that these are practices and dynamics that, I argue, pertain to the constituting of the global yet are taking place at what has been historically constructed as the scale of the national. With few exceptions, most prominent among which is a growing scholarship in geography, the social sciences have not had critical distance (i.e., historicized) the scale of the national. The consequence has been a tendency to take it as a fixed scale, reifying it and, more generally, to neutralize the question of scaling, or at best to reduce scaling to a hierarchy of size. Associated with this tendency is also the often uncritical assumption that these scales are mutually exclusive, most pertinently for my argument here, that the scale of the national is mutually exclusive with that of the global.

Finally, the three instances described above go against those assumptions and propositions that are now often described as methodological nationalism. But they do so in a very distinct way. Crucial to the critique of methodological nationalism as developed by Ulrich Beck is the need for transnationalism because the nation as container category is inadequate given the proliferation of transboundary dynamics and formations. What I am focusing on here is a different aspect, although it is yet another reason for supporting the critique of methodological nationalism: the fact of multiple and specific structurations of the global inside what has historically been constructed as national.

Avoiding Master Categories

A major methodological, theoretical and political implication of the type of analysis I am proposing is that it is insufficient to focus on the nation-state and the global system as two distinct entities. The transformations afoot criss-cross this binary, and enter the national and even the state apparatus itself.

To historicize both the national and the global as constructed conditions, I have taken three transhistorical components present in almost all societies and examined how they became assembled into different historical formations. These three components are territory,

authority, and rights (TAR). Each can assume specific contents, shapes, and interdependencies across diverse historical formations. The choice of these three rests partly on their foundational character and partly on the contingency of my fields of knowledge. One could, and I hope someone will, choose additional components or replace one or another of these. (This is fully developed in Sassen (2006))

Territory, authority, and rights are complex institutionalizations arising from specific processes, struggles, and competing interests. They are not simply attributes. They are interdependent, even as they maintain their specificity. Each can, thus, be identified. Specificity is partly conditioned by levels of formalization and institutionalization. Across time and space, territory, authority, and rights have been assembled into distinct formations within which they have had variable levels of performance. Further, the types of instruments and capabilities through which each gets constituted vary, as do the sites where each is in turn embedded—private or public, law or custom, metropolitan or colonial, national or supranational, and so on.

Using these three foundational components as analytic pathways into the two distinct formations that concern me in the larger project—the national and the global—helps avoid the endogeneity trap that so affects the globalization literature. Scholars have generally looked at these two complex formations in toto, and compared them to establish their differences. This is not where I start. Rather than comparing what are posited as two wholes—the national and the global—I disaggregate each into these three foundational components (territory, authority, and rights). They are my starting point. I dislodge them from their particular historically constructed encasements—in this case, the national and the global—and examine their constitution and institutional location in these different historical formations, and their possible shifting across institutional domains. I develop some of this empirically in the next section, but a quick example would be the shift of what were once components of public authority into a growing array of forms of private authority. One thesis that arises out of this type of analysis is that particular national capabilities are dislodged from their national institutional encasement and become constitutive of, rather than being destroyed or sidelined by globalization.[2]

This type of approach produces an analytics that can be used by others to examine different countries today in the context of globalization or different types of assemblages across time and space.[3]

In the modern state, TAR evolve into what we now can recognize as a centripetal scaling where one scale, the national, aggregates most of what there is to be had in terms of TAR. Though never absolutely, each of the three components is constituted overwhelmingly as a national domain and, further, exclusively so. Where in the past most territories were subject

[2] In the larger project (2006: chs 1, 8 and 9) there are lengthy discussions of questions of method and interpretation. I propose a distinction between capabilities (for example, the rule of law) and the organizing logics (the national, the global) within which they are located. Thus capabilities are multivalent: they can switch organizing logics, with the latter shaping their valence.

[3] I use the concept assemblage in its most descriptive sense. However, several scholars have developed theoretical constructs around this term. Most significant for the purposes of this book is the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari (1987 p.504–5) A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). There are many more elaborations around the concept assemblage, including not surprisingly, among architects and urbanists (vide the journal *Assemblages*). While I find many of these elaborations extremely important and illuminating, and while some of the assemblages I identify may evince some of these features, my usage is profoundly untheoretical compared to that of the above-cited authors. I simply want the dictionary term. I locate my theorization elsewhere, not on this term.

to multiple systems of rule, the national sovereign gains exclusive authority over a given territory and at the same time this territory is constructed as coterminous with that authority, in principle ensuring a similar dynamic in other nation-states. This in turn gives the sovereign the possibility of functioning as the exclusive grantor of rights. Territory is perhaps the most critical capability for the formation of the nation-state, while today we see ascend a variety of assemblages for which it is not; thus for the global regulators authority is more critical than territory.

Globalization can be seen as destabilizing the particular scalar assemblage that is the nation-state. What scholars have noticed is the fact that the nation-state has lost some of its exclusive territorial authority to new global institutions. What they have failed to examine in depth is the specific, often specialized rearrangements inside the highly formalized and institutionalized national state apparatus aimed at instituting the authority of global institutions. This shift is not simply a question of policymaking—it is about making a novel type of institutional space inside the state. In overlooking such rearrangements it is also easy to overlook the extent to which critical components of the global are structured inside the national producing what I refer to as a partial, and often highly specialized, denationalizing of what historically was constructed as national.

Thus today particular elements of TAR are becoming reassembled into novel global configurations. Therewith, their mutual interactions and interdependencies are altered as are their institutional encasements. These shifts take place both within the nation-state, for example, shifts from public to private, and between the nation-state and the inter- and supra-national and global levels. What was bundled up and experienced as a unitary condition (the national assemblage of TAR) now increasingly reveals itself to be a set of distinct elements, with variable capacities for becoming denationalized. For instance, we might say that particular components of authority and of rights are evincing a greater capacity to partial denationalization than territory; geographic boundaries have changed far less (except in cases such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union) than authority (i.e., the greater power of global regulators over national economies) and rights (the further institutionalizing of the international human rights regime). It points to possibly sharp divergence between the organizing logics of the earlier international and current global phases; these are often seen as analogous to the current global phase, but I argue this understanding may be based on a confusion of analytical levels. In earlier periods, including Bretton Woods, that imperial logic was geared toward building national states, typically through imperial geographies (2006: ch 4). In today's phase, it is geared toward setting up global systems inside national states and national economies, and in that sense, at least partly denationalizing what had historically been constructed as national. This denationalizing can take multiple concrete forms: to mention two critical ones, global cities and specific policies and institutions within the state itself.

Recovering Place and Work Process in Global Capitalism

Global capitalism is not inevitable: it needs to be produced, designed, serviced. It entails broad complex systemic, interactions and the formation of new factions of capital. There is a strong tendency in mainstream writing to see the global economy as a function of the existence of TNCs. Although this is clearly a crucial factor, it is a fact that much global economic activity is not encompassed by the organizational form of the transnational corporation. Nor is much of this activity encompassed by the power of such firms, a power often invoked to explain the fact of economic globalization.

Simply invoking power and telecommunications as explanations for the emergence of a global economy is not enough. Once we examine how this power is produced and why telecommunications matter, we bring into the analysis a variety of work processes and places that fall outside the organizational form of the TNC. These work processes and places are critical for the production of that power and for the design and implementation of the global transactions of these firms. The spatial and organizational forms assumed by globalization and the actual work of running transnational operations have made cities one type of strategic place in the global economy. In my new book (2006) I add the work of national states as one critical factor in the "making" of the global corporate economy, a subject I return to later.

The iconic representation of economic globalization is perhaps the massive trend towards the spatial dispersal of economic activities at the metropolitan, national and global level. This is indeed taking place, but it represents only half of what is happening. Alongside this well-documented spatial dispersal of economic activities, new forms of territorial centralization of top-level management and control operations have appeared. Centralized control and management over a geographically dispersed array of economic operations does not come about inevitably as part of a "world system." It requires the production of a vast range of highly specialized services, telecommunications infrastructure, and industrial services. These are crucial for the valorization of what are today leading components of capital. A focus on place and production adds to the common focus on the power of large corporations over governments and economies, a range of activities and organizational arrangements necessary for the implementation and maintenance of a global network of factories, service operations and markets; these are all processes only partly encompassed by the organizational form of the transnational corporation.

Elsewhere (2001) I have shown that when the geographic dispersal of factories, offices and service outlets through cross-border investment takes place as part of integrated corporate systems, there is also a growth in central functions; we can see a parallel trend with financial firms and markets. One way of saying it is that the more globalized firms become, the more their central functions grow—in importance, in complexity, in number of transactions. National and global markets as well as globally integrated operations require central places where the work of globalization gets done. Further, information industries require a vast physical infrastructure containing strategic nodes with hyperconcentrations of facilities. Finally, even the most advanced information industries have a work process—that is, a complex of workers, machines and buildings that are more place-bound than the imagery of information outputs suggests.

We can make this more concrete by considering some of the staggering figures involved in this worldwide dispersal and imagining what it entails in terms of coordination and management for parent headquarters. For instance, take the fact that by 2004 there were about one million foreign affiliates of firms worldwide, most of them (still) belonging to firms from North America and Western Europe.[4] There has been a greater growth in foreign sales through affiliates than through direct exports: the foreign sales through affiliates were US$ 11 trillion by the end of the decade and US$ 8 trillion through worldwide exports of goods and services. This has of course also fed the intra-firm share of so-called free cross-border trade. The transnationality index of the largest transnational firms shows that many

[4] Affiliates are but one form of operating overseas and hence their number under-represents the dispersal of a firm's operations. There are today multiple forms, ranging from new temporary partnerships to older types of subcontracting and contracting.

of these have over half of their assets, sales and workforces outside their home countries.[5] Together these types of evidence provide a fairly comprehensive picture of this combination of dispersal and the growth of central functions.

This type of globalization of a firm's operations brings with it a massive task of coordination and management. Much of this has been going on for a long time but has accelerated over the decades and reached new thresholds in terms of numbers of firms involved and scope of the dispersal. Further, this dispersal does not proceed under a single organizational form—rather, behind these general figures lie many different organizational forms, hierarchies of control, degrees of autonomy. For instance, the globally integrated network of financial centers is one form of this combination of dispersal and the growing complexity of central management and coordination.

Of importance to the analysis here is the dynamic that connects the dispersal of economic activities with the ongoing weight and often growth of central functions—a dynamic I have conceptualized as the global city production function. By central functions I do not only mean top level headquarters; I am referring to all the top level financial, legal, accounting, managerial, executive, planning functions necessary to run a corporate organization operating in more than one country, and increasingly in several countries. These central functions are partly embedded in headquarters, but also in good part and increasingly so in what has been called the corporate services complex, that is, the network of financial, legal, accounting, advertising firms that handle the complexities of operating in more than one national legal system, national accounting system, advertising culture, etc. and do so under conditions of rapid innovations in all these fields. Such services have become so specialized and complex that headquarters increasingly buy them from specialized firms rather than producing them in-house. These agglomerations of firms producing central functions for the management and coordination of global economic systems, are disproportionately concentrated in the network of global cities, with the highly developed countries at the top of this system.

Introducing cities in the analysis of global capitalism allows us to reconceptualize processes of economic globalization as concrete economic complexes situated in specific places. This constrasts with the more typical tendency to see place as neutralized by the capacity for global communications and control. In my reading both are happening, but far too much emphasis has gone to the neutralization of place and distance. The geography of global capital is lumpy. Further, a focus on cities decomposes the nation state into a variety of sub-national components, some profoundly articulated with the global economy and others not. It signals the declining significance of the national economy as a unitary category—pace all the specifics and variability across the world—in the global economy and makes transparent the existence of multiple fractions of capital, some benefitting from

[5] This index is an average based on ratios of the share that foreign sales, assets and employment represent in a firm's total of each. The last time it was used was in 1997. Thus these numbers are dated. But they do signal a trend. The average transnationality index for the EU in 1997 was 56.7% compared to 38.5% for the US (but 79.2 for Canada).Most of the US and EU TNCs in the top 100 list for 1997 had very high levels of foreign assets as a percentage of total assets: for instance, 51% for IBM, 55% for Volkswagen Group; 91% for Nestle, 96% for Asea Brown Boveri, 62% for Elf Aquitaine, 91% for Bayer, 79% for Hoechst, 77% for Philips Electronics, 43% for Siemens, 45% for Renault, 98% for Seagram, 67% for Rhone-Poulenc, 59% for BMW, 69% for Ferruzi/Montedison, 97% for Thomson, 85% for Michelin, 71% for Ericson, 58% for Exxon, 85% for Unilever, 55% for MacDonald, 68% for Coca-Cola, and so on. The share of foreign in total employment was often even higher.

economic corporate globalization and others not. And even if to a large extent the unitary character of the national economy was never a full operational reality and always more of a construction in political discourse, it has become even less so in the last fifteen years. Finally, this urban moment of global capital can be captured in great detail through empirical research.

A focus on the *work* behind command functions, on the actual *production process* in the finance and services complex, and on global market*places* has the effect of incorporating the material facilities underlying globalization and the whole infrastructure of jobs typically not marked as belonging to the corporate sector of the economy. An economic configuration very different from that suggested by the concept information economy emerges. We recover the material conditions, production sites, and place-boundedness that are also part of globalization and the information economy.

Looking at cities as production sites for the leading service industries of our time, allows us to recover the infrastructure of activities, firms and jobs, that is necessary to run the advanced corporate economy. The focus shifts to the *practice* of global control: the work of producing and reproducing the organization and management of a global production system and a global marketplace for finance, both under conditions of economic concentration. This allows me to focus on the infrastructure of jobs involved in this production, including low-wage, unskilled manual jobs typically not thought of as being part of advanced globalized sectors. In this regard it allows me to detect the presence and formation of social forces that find in the global city one moment, a strategic one, of their dynamics.

Global cities are, then, specific types of territorial insertions for global capital. Both as single cities and through their multiple inter-city networks we can conceive of global cities as a particular assembling of bits of territory, authority and rights that begins to function as a denationalized space deep inside national territorial and institutional settings.

Beyond the Global-National Binary

A key yet much overlooked feature of the current period is the multiplication of a broad range of partial, often highly specialized, global assemblages of bits of territory, authority and rights once firmly ensconced in national institutional frames.[6] These assemblages cut across the binary of national versus global. They inhabit national institutional and territorial settings, and they span the globe in what are largely trans-local geographies connecting multiple subnational spaces.

These assemblages include at one end private, often very narrow, frameworks such as the lex constructionis—a private "law" developed by the major engineering companies in the world to establish a common mode of dealing with the strengthening of environmental standards in a growing number of countries, in most of which these firms are building. At the other end of the range they include far more complex (and experimental) entities, such as the first ever global public court, the International Criminal Court, which is not part of the established supranational system and has universal jurisdiction among signatory countries. Beyond the fact of the diversity of these assemblages, there is the increasingly weighty fact of their numbers—over 125 according to the best recent count. The proliferation of these systems does not represent the end of national states, but it does begin to disassemble bits and pieces of the national.

[6] This is clearly an analysis that emerges from European history, with all the limitations that entails. Critical here is Gayatri Spivak's thinking about the diverse positions that can structure an "author's" stance.

If you see through the eye of the national state, these assemblages look like inchoate geographies. But they are actually the bits of a new reality in the making.

Using this lens to look at some current, often minor and barely visible, developments opens up some interesting vistas. For instance, Hizbollah in Lebanon can be seen as having shaped a very specific assemblage of territory, authority, and rights, that cannot be easily reduced to any of the familiar containers—nation-state, internal minority-controlled region, such as the Kurdish region in Iraq, or a separatist area such as the Basque region in Spain. Similarly, the emerging roles of major gangs in cities such as Sao Paulo contribute to produce and/or strengthen types of territorial fractures that the project of building a nation-state sought to eliminate or dilute. Besides their local criminal activities, they now often run segments of global drug and arms dealing networks; and, importantly, they are also increasingly taking over "government" functions: "policing," providing social services and welfare assistance, jobs, and new elements of rights and authority in the areas they control.

We also see these novel mixes of territory, authority and rights in far less visible or noticed settings. For instance, when Mexico's (former) President Fox met with undocumented Mexican immigrants during his visit to the US this past May, his actions amounted to the making of a new informal jurisdiction. His actions did not fit into existing legal forms that give sovereign states specific types of extraterritorial authority. Nonetheless, his actions were not seen as particularly objectionable; indeed, they were hardly noticed. Yet these were, after all, unauthorized immigrants subject to deportation if detected, in a country that is now spending almost 2 billion dollars a year to secure border control. But no INS or other police came to arrest the undocumented thus exposed, and the media barely reacted, even though it was taking place at a time when Congress was debating whether to criminalize illegal immigrants. Or when President Chavez of Venezuela, seen as an "enemy" of sorts by the US government, is somehow enabled (through the state-owned oil enterprise) to bring oil to the poor in a few major cities in the US. All of these are minor acts, but they were not somehow acceptable or customary even a short time ago. They can be seen as producing novel types of mostly informal jurisdictions.

Emphasizing this multiplication of partial assemblages contrasts with much of the globalization literature. It has tended to assume the binary of state vs national state, and to focus on the powerful global institutions that have played a critical role in implementing the global corporate economy and gotten states to implement the associated policies. In contrast, my emphasis here opens up the analysis to a far broader range of components, including powerless actors, in what we describe as globalization, and it repositions the powerful global regulators, such as IMF and WTO, as bridging events for an epochal transformation, rather than as the transformation itself. The actual dynamics getting shaped are far deeper and more radical than such entities as the WTO or the IMF, no matter how powerful they are as foot soldiers. These institutions should rather be conceived of as powerful capabilities for the making of a new order—they are instruments, not the new order itself. Similarly, I argue (2006: ch 4) that the Bretton Woods system was a powerful capability that facilitated some of the new global formations that emerge in the 1980s but was not itself the beginning of the new order as is often asserted.

I see in this proliferation of partial assemblages a tendency toward a disaggregating and, in some cases, global redeployment, of constitutive rules once solidly lodged in the nation-state project, one with strong unitary tendencies (2006: chs 4, 5 and 6). Since these novel assemblages are partial and often highly specialized, they tend to be centered in particular utilities and purposes (chap 5, 8 and 9). The normative character of this landscape is, in my reading, multivalent—it ranges from some very good utilities and purposes to some very

bad ones, depending on one's normative stance. Their emergence and proliferation bring several significant consequences even though this is a partial, not an all-encompassing development. They are potentially profoundly unsettling of what are still the prevalent institutional arrangements (nation-states and the supranational system) for governing questions of war and peace, for establishing what are and what are not legitimate claims, for enforcing the rule of law. A different matter is whether these established arrangements are effective at it, and whether justice is secured. The point here is that their decomposition would partly undo established ways of handling complex national and international matters. The emergent landscape I am describing promotes a multiplication of diverse spatio-temporal framings and diverse normative (mini)orders where once the dominant logic was toward producing (grand)unitary national spatial, temporal, and normative framings (chaps 8 and 9).

The National State: One Site for the Global

This proliferation of specialized orders extends even inside the state apparatus. I argue that we can no longer speak of "the" state, and hence of "the" national state versus "the" global order. There is a novel type of segmentation inside the state apparatus, with a growing and increasingly privatized executive branch of government aligned with specific global actors, notwithstanding nationalist speeches, and a hollowing out of the legislature whose effectiveness is at risk of becoming confined to fewer and more domestic matters (2006: ch 4). A second critical divergence is between the increasing alignment of the executive with global logics and the confinement of the legislature to domestic matters.[7]

Much has been said since 2001 about the growing democratic deficit at the heart of our liberal democracy. Among the leading causes usually mentioned are the Patriot Act, particularly how it has been used by the Bush-Cheney administration to strengthen executive power, and, secondly, our deeply flawed electoral system. Both are indeed critical factors feeding our democratic deficit.

But they are not the full story and they tend to present the growth of executive power as anomalous. In my research (see 2006: ch 4) I find what amounts to a third trend, one that has received far less attention or been obscured by the declaration of a national security emergency. It is the fact that the development of a global corporate economy has further strengthened the executive branch and weakened the legislature. This process preceded the current administration and cuts across both parties. It began in the 1980s, when the current phase of globalization took off, and has continued since.

The fact that economic globalization might be contributing to the growth of executive power and the hollowing out of Congress is not even considered when you frame matters in terms of national emergencies. Neither can this frame accommodate the fact that this process began 20 years ago and, to some extent, goes beyond party politics.

Nor has the globalization literature focused on this growing power imbalance at the heart of our liberal state. One reason for this blind spot is the tendency to consider the state as a whole, and to argue that either not much has changed for *the* state or that *the* state has

[7] An issue here is the relationship between this executive branch alignment with global logics, on the one hand, and, on the other, the proliferation of various nationalisms. I address this in 2006, ch. 6 and ch 9. Helpful here is Craig Calhoun's proposition that nationalism is a process articulated with modernity; this makes room for the coexistence of globalization and nationalization.

become much weaker. A more nuanced argument in the literature emphasizes state adaptation to the new conditions represented by economic globalization; but even here the focus is not on the redistribution of power inside the state.

That economic globalization should have gone hand in hand with a sharp increase in executive power goes against three strongly held beliefs—that global markets need small government to thrive, that economic globalization weakens the state, and that strong (including global) markets feed democracy.

In fact, economic globalization has had its own autonomous effect, separate from questions of national security and abuses of executive privilege, in sharpening executive power and in weakening the legislature. It has brought about transformations inside the state, which, though partial and highly specialized, are foundational in their capacity to produce a democratic deficit. Reducing this deficit will take more than having an administration that does not abuse its executive power and that would eliminate the Patriot Act—though this would certainly make a difference.

These trends are also taking place in other countries, though perhaps more mildly than in the United States given a later opening to globalization and a more balanced power distribution between the executive and legislative branches. These power redistributions are becoming part of the normal operations of the state. They are not a state of exception. This pattern repeats itself across the world as a state becomes articulated with the global economy—which opens up a whole new agenda for research, one that emphasizes the importance of detailed knowledge about each particular state in order to understand globalization.

In the larger research project on which this is based (2006: ch 4) I identify at least the following five trends in the global economy feeding executive power:

1) Certain parts of the administration (the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, the office of the Trade Representative, and so on) have played a critical role in building a global corporate economy. They have become stronger over the last two decades because of globalization, thereby feeding the power of the administration and weakening legislatures as deregulation and privatization hollow out their oversight functions.
2) Inter-governmental networks centered largely in the executive branch have grown well beyond concerns with global security and criminality. The participation by the state in the implementation of a global economic system has engendered a whole range of new types of cross-border collaborations among specialized government agencies focused on the globalization of capital markets, international standards of all sorts, and the new trade order.
3) The major global regulators, notably the IMF and WTO, as well as many lesser known ones, only negotiate with the executive branch. As the global corporate economy and the supranational system have and continue to expand, executive power grows, and the role of Congress diminishes.
4) A critical component of economic deregulation beginning in the 1980s is the marketizing and privatizing of what were once public functions. The privatizing of prisons and the outsourcing of particular welfare functions to private providers are probably the most familiar cases. Today we can add the outsourcing of soldiering to private contractors even in war theaters, as is the case in Iraq. This type of privatization and marketization has reduced the oversight role of Congress but added to the role of the executive through the setting up of specialized commissions, e.g. the extent to which the executive branch is handling contractors in the Iraq war, with little oversight by Congress.

5) I find a growing alignment of the executive branch of government with global corporate logics in a range of very particular domains—not all negative, by the way. The case of the Dubai Ports World corporation, which was meant to acquire control over a range of U.S. port operations, was strongly supported by President Bush. This indicated a sense of a global economy that becomes, inevitably, partly denationalized. More recently, and not as positive, is Bush's insistence in not attaching environmental and labor standards in the new set of free trade agreements under discussion now, in order not to hamper free trade no matter its costs to the national economy. Yet another example is Bush's willingness to allow long-haul Mexican trucks access to U.S. highways with minimum public notice and safety guidelines, again privileging free trade over national safety considerations.

A weak and domesticated legislature weakens the political capacity of citizens to demand accountability from an increasingly powerful and privatized executive, since the legislature gives citizens stronger standing in these matters than the executive. Further, the privatizing of the executive partly has brought with it an eroding of the privacy rights of citizens—a historic shift of the private–public division at the heart of the liberal state, even if always an imperfect division.[8]

By Way of Conclusion

The global has become a master category that both illuminates some aspects of the condition and veils others. In this essay I focused on one particular aspect of what remains veiled: the fact that the global is in good part structured inside the national. Many formal political instances of the global do not need to run through the supranational or international treaty system—they can remain ensconced in national state institutions. Nor do many global economic and civic conditions need to run through the new types of global domains that have emerged since the 1980s, such as electronic financial markets or global civil society. These transformations include particular and specific components of a broad range of entities, such as the work of national legislatures and judiciaries, the worldwide operations of national firms and markets, political projects of nonstate actors, translocal processes that connect poor households across borders, diasporic networks, and changes in the relationship between citizens and the state. They reorient particular components of institutions and specific practices, both public and private, toward global logics and away from historically shaped national logics (where national logics include international operations, thus to be differentiated from current global ones).

One way of capturing these diverse instances of the global is through a notion that one set of processes that is part of the global transformation is the denationalizing of what historically and culturally has been constructed as national. Here I argued that understanding the epochal transformation we call globalization must include studying these processes of denationalization. This transformation is taking place inside the national to a far larger extent than is usually recognized. It is here that the most complex meanings of the global are being constituted, and the national is also often one of the key enablers and enactors of the emergent global scale. A good part of globalization consists of an enormous

[8] This is a complicated issue that I do not address here, but see (2006: ch 6). One question is whether there is a necessary relationship between an increasingly privatized executive branch and the erosion of citizens privacy rights.

variety of micro-processes that take place inside the national and in so doing begin to denationalize bits and pieces of policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains. Sometimes these processes of denationalization allow, enable or force the construction of globally scaled dynamics and institutions; at other times, they continue to inhabit the realm of what is still largely national.

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