

COMMENTARY

**GLOBALIZATION AND NEW ETHNOGRAPHIC LOCALITIES: ANTHROPOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON GIDDENS'S *MODERNITY AND SELF-IDENTITY***

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HERE is a warning to all professional observers of social life: the world they would claim to represent is increasingly subject to a specific form of instability that can be traced back, in part at least, to the practice of scholarly representation itself. For professional observers are themselves *socially observed*, their writings read by those written about, and this observational reciprocity has profound implications for the procedure of professional social observation.

In *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) Anthony Giddens takes further the deliberations on the nature of 'late modernity' outlined in his *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) to deal with precisely this issue. In the earlier book he presented the institutional contours of a distinctively modern social world; in his new work he fills out the picture of this world by elaborating on the character of the modern self that animates it. As the examples given in *Modernity and Self-Identity* indicate, Giddens directs his discussion to 'late modern' societies; yet the 'modernity' he presents is a global condition that implicates not only those who study 'modern' societies, i.e. sociologists, but also those who were traditionally the students of *other* societies, i.e. anthropologists. The debate in sociology about globalization is of growing theoretical and practical concern for anthropologists because it addresses the issue of the shape and character of the places they study in the contemporary world. Here my concern is to indicate how and to what extent Giddens's picture of globalized modernity is relevant to anthropologists; and I do so by focusing on one aspect of it, that of *locality*.

For Giddens, modern institutions differ fundamentally from all preceding forms of social order. There are two distinctive features to them: their global extent and the way they enter into personal experience and self-understanding:

Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. One of the distinctive features of modernity...is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other. (1991: 1)

His aim is thus 'to analyse these interconnections and to provide a conceptual vocabulary for thinking about them' (ibid.). It is crucial to appreciate this *dual* concern, because only then can the difference between the more familiar 'globalization' theories and this one be appreciated.

That we live in 'one world', an 'interdependent world', a 'global order' etc. is a common sentiment today, couched in a well-worn vocabulary. 'News' to us can be news from anywhere; the world is inexhaustible, both as an object of observation and as a source of information. This communicational, infrastructural aspect of globalism, in addition to political and economic institutions, is what tends to be the focus of theories of globalization. Until recently, anthropological concern has tended to focus almost exclusively on local contexts. It is this scale of phenomena that can be most usefully subjected to ethnographic investigation. Globalization theories are of less concern to us in themselves than for what they can tell us about the local contexts we negotiate professionally. In other words, what we tend to ask of globalization theories is first, what ethnographic implications they have and second, the extent to which they can contribute, as a supplement, to ethnographic documentation. This concern with human locality has had the salutary effect of inoculating anthropologists against one of the principal dangers of globalization theory: that whereby clichés of 'global space' and 'one world' are received in a way that contradicts the multifaceted human relationship to place.

Recent anthropological contributions to the debate about the way human beings are constitutively implicated in particular spatial environments (e.g. Ingold 1986; Moore 1986) serve to underline (whatever their specific differences) the pre-eminence of locality within anthropology. Yet it may be that the contemporary global order is such that our implicit theories of locality do require rethinking, and that a theory of globalization will only suffice when it allows both for the continued salience of locality and for its reconstitution in the context of a new ecology of local and global relations. In other words, if it is to have credibility a theory of globalization should be at the same time a theory of localization. The debate on globalization has tended to oscillate between homogenizing and heterogenizing perspectives, and this persists despite the frequent calls for this problematic to be transcended (e.g. Featherstone 1990: 2; Appadurai 1990: 295). Giddens's theory neither entails the erasure of local contexts by means of a

globalizing dynamic nor does it require the simple addition of 'global factors' on to already existing localities. Instead, he offers a theory of the localizing implications of the global order. This is because the key site of globalization in late modernity is the self.

### *Selves*

Modern selves are unlike their forebears because they are part of a different sort of institutional framework. On the one hand, a global theatre arises through technological developments in communications; a new infrastructure integrates formerly discrete spaces. But this infrastructural fact alone does not account for the distinctively *modern* disposition. Infrastructural globalization, by itself, does not necessarily entail a corresponding local interest in, or awareness of, wider matters. Thus the post-war 'internationalization of capital' did not induce a commensurate subjective awareness on the part of those affected by it; this was, rather, something that political activists had to achieve. What is missing, in other words, is a theory of the local *take-up* of global phenomena, both intra-locally and inter-locally, that is, one which can account for differences in the social/cultural reception of global information both *within* and *between* places.

Globalization suggests a universal openness to the world, even though only some phenomena are actually globally circulated. If some ideas and practices are globally exposed, they are not uniformly influential across the globe. At some point the question arises of the differential sensitivity of local spaces to global influences. This is a question likely to arise sooner rather than later for anthropologists, whose subjects may be globally encompassed but who are not self-evidently 'modern' in Giddens's sense. What Giddens provides is a theory of globalization that implicates all modern local contexts, but unevenly so. This is because the linkage between global and local is grounded in a theorized connection between infrastructural and personal features of modernity, the world and the self. Hence Giddens's full theory of globalization is directed to those 'late modern' social contexts in which a self with a particular, reflexive disposition to social institutions and global influences is to be found.

### *Reflexivities*

'Modernity' and 'reflexivity' are terms that are rarely far apart in Giddens's recent work. The latter term, moreover, is a key constituent of the former. But reflexivity is used recurrently by Giddens in two distinct, if related, senses that

should be explicitly distinguished if the limits of modernity are to be appreciated. Reflexivity applies both to the self and to institutions in Giddens's modernity. This metaphor, etymologically suggestive of a 'turning back' of something (a lightbeam, for example), is familiar from discussions of the difference between humans and animals (Man's 'reflexive capacity') and from schools of psychoanalysis that stress the reflexive presence of Man to himself. Thus, in the reflected image of the Lacanian mirror-stage of development, what comes back is an image of oneself: the mirror presents us to ourselves as visually whole as though we were another—or as we are for another. This sense of reflexivity would seem to underpin Giddens's approach to the self. The modern self is *reflexively* organized because it can take itself as an object, indeed 'creates' itself in terms of the representations and objectifications of it.

But institutions also 'reflect'. This is the process by which knowledge gained from the study of society is turned back on to that society. Here is, in essence, a model of information flow: from the world to the academic (and perhaps governmental) institutions that study and monitor it, and then back to that world either through its pointed application or through the demand arising from the appetite of late modern selves for self-knowledge and self-understanding. Thus throughout Giddens talks about reflexivity in two different, if related, ways, viz. *interpersonal* reflexivity and *institutional* reflexivity (though he fails to make the distinction between them sufficiently clear). The latter process of institutional reflexivity is, as it were, psychologically 'anchored' by the former, and by the model of the self on which it is based. It is important to stress this distinction, for this is where the limits of the theory's usefulness for anthropologists become apparent.

### *Relevance to Anthropology*

If the increasingly global character of information flows makes the whole world in a sense 'modern', the fact remains that the distribution of the reflexive modern selves Giddens describes is ethnographically uneven. Aside from cultural diversity itself, different rates of literacy, education and communicational integration mean that the conditions for this sort of reflexivity to operate exist to a much lesser degree in many anthropological field locations.

The counterpoint of 'late modernity' for Giddens is 'tradition' (or the 'traditional order', the 'pre-modern' etc.). This is a stable general category only for the sociologist, and one that anthropologists would not on the whole entertain. Many anthropologists might claim that there is hardly a 'traditional society' left now, and indeed Giddens, with his stress on the global reach of information flows, would probably not argue for the present-day existence of the 'traditional' society, which he would instead locate back in time. But following on from the distinction

made above, 'traditional' (i.e. non-'late modern') selves would seem to exist for him as traditional selves *in a global order*—that is, in a hybrid situation. To understand why the potential of universal access to globally circulating knowledge of 'abstract systems' translates into an actual situation of limited, circumscribed and specifically directed movements, means looking at how class and other structures act to shape them. Only when we consider specifically situated individuals and the constraints to which they are subject, do we go beyond the abstract notion of access to a global network and get a sense of the limited availability of knowledge to them.

A further criticism would be that this general model, in its linkage of the global level and the self, actually leaves out crucial levels of social and institutional mediation of such processes, those levels that make for the effective articulation in the first place. This becomes apparent as soon as we think of academic institutions in Britain. What is surely most remarkable about much of the academic world is how sealed-off it manages to be. The whole justification for the ESRC shake-up of British social science now taking place is that the knowledge produced is *not* returning to society where it could be used. Anthropology would seem to be a conspicuous example of such detachment, notwithstanding the trend within the discipline towards applied work. To account for the absence of exactly the sort of information movement that Giddens's picture of late modernity would lead us to expect requires an understanding of academic institutions *per se*, the prevailing general ethos of 'academic freedom' and the dispositions toward *application* of particular disciplines. The situation of anthropology is a special one because of the traditional 'split-focus' of the discipline between the sphere of its subjects and the sphere of its sponsors, which are often one and the same in sociology.

### *Unstable Localities*

The main argument of Giddens's new book is that *all* local contexts are 'open' to global influences. One obvious form of articulation between these two levels is that arising from the internationalization of capital. Commodities produced for global markets are consumed locally and are often distinctively customized in the process (see e.g. Friedman 1990). But globalization more generally has to do with the new lines of social determination that transcend spatial localities—what has been characterized as the 'deterritorialization' (Appadurai 1991: 192) of social spaces. This has already received a good deal of attention from anthropologists and some have proposed not just that 'the field' be reconstituted to include wider, non-local influences but that it be re-imagined altogether as a multi-located entity (Marcus 1986: 171-3; Marcus and Fischer 1986: 91-2) or 'ethnoscape' (Appadurai 1990, 1991). But it is to a different, if related, feature of contemporary localities

that Giddens's work—especially the notion of institutional reflexivity—draws attention. This is the status of localities with respect to those professionally devoted to observing them, or conversely put, the place of the academy in the world. Academic 'objectivity' is brought into question. This refers *not* to objectivity as a *quality of observation*, whereby a positioned subject generates knowledge that can be validated by other subjects. Rather, the facet of objectivity referred to is that which involves the assumed distance between object and academic observer. For it is this object-distance that is undermined by the new linkages globalization represents. The quarantined space of the academy that social scientists once believed themselves to inhabit, and which at the same time conferred on their objects a certain insulation from that inquiry, is now brought into serious doubt. For Giddens offers a theory of globalism according to which detached observation and its textual products in effect occupy *the same space* as that which was originally observed.

This is a phenomenon with which anthropologists are now becoming increasingly familiar. There are many examples of how texts written for the discipline have been made present to, or even appropriated by, their ethnographic subjects. These cannot, however, be accounted for simply in terms of the reflexive orientations of modern selves. Instead, a broader view that can account for the historical conditions of anthropological practice itself is required. The sort of societies studied, the sort of societies that studied them, the institutional placements of anthropologists, the social, institutional and political claims to the knowledge they produce—all these factors must be taken into account.

There are perhaps four categories of feedback of anthropological knowledge worth distinguishing. The first is where earlier ethnographies provide a record of local life and native custom. In the absence of other written sources, such ethnographic accounts can become historical documents and put to subsequent use, to settle land-claims, for example. Larcom (1982) provides the example of how the 1934 ethnography *Malekula: A Vanishing People in the New Hebrides*, by the Cambridge-educated anthropologist A. B. Deacon, was used in precisely this way in a Vanuatu courtroom in the 1980s. Another, more recent, example is the controversy over whether the work of Walter Arndt supports or undermines an Aboriginal land-claim in present-day Australia (see Brunton 1992; Keen 1992). But this use of ethnography as a record of how things were—traditional ways—would also extend to those anthropological works used in native school curricula. An example of this might be Norman Whitten's (1976) *Sacha Runa*, used for Quichua native curricula in Ecuadorian schools (in Spanish, but about to be translated into Quichua).

The value of the second category lies in the ideological message provided, rather than in any specific data on 'tradition' they contain. Examples of such authoritative interpretations readily come to mind for Japan. First, there is the conspicuous status in Japan itself of Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946). According to recent surveys, one-third of Japanese people would seem to have actually read it (Befu and Manabe 1990: 126); many will have read

it (or excerpts from it) at school. Another, more recent example would be the appropriation by the Japanese government of Chie Nakane's *Japanese Society* (1973) as an official sociology of Japan to be distributed as gifts by Japanese embassies abroad (Mouer and Sugimoto 1983: 287).

These are instances of the state deployment of anthropological knowledge, but such scholarly objectifications of 'society' or 'culture' may also be taken up against the state by different constituencies within national societies. Examples range from such Pacific countries as New Zealand and Hawaii to Latin American countries, where indigenous peoples find themselves minorities in larger settler states. The Maoris, in particular, would seem to have actively developed their cultural identity by making use of earlier European accounts of their history and religion (see Hanson 1989). Moreover, the contributors to a recent volume on cultural identity in the Pacific present evidence of how Western objectifications of ethnicity and culture have been ubiquitously implanted in the region (Linnekin and Poyer 1990). Thus Australian 'aboriginality' is an ethnic construct of White settlers (Tonkinson 1990), as is Indianness in the Latin American context (Maybury-Lewis 1991). But these inherited, imposed categorizations are taken up by those subjected to them and used against mainstream national society and the nation state.

A similar process has occurred with other categories bearing different ranges of inclusiveness. Thus it has been argued that the Western regional classification of the Pacific area into Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia—something that anthropology has helped to institutionalize—might be in the process of becoming domesticated as a local system to be used in the establishment of pan-national regional identities for political mobilization; something manifested, for example, in a Vanuatuan prime minister's rhetorical reference to 'Melanesian socialism' (see Howard 1990: 277; Linnekin 1990: 166-7). But perhaps the most conspicuous construct recently taken on by indigenous peoples, whether in the Pacific (Linnekin and Poyer 1990: 12) or in Latin America (Diskin 1991: 157), is that of the 'Fourth World'.<sup>1</sup>

Yet another category comprises those texts that, on account of the controversy they raise, find their way back to the ethnographic site itself. Thus Nancy Scheper-Hughes's account, in *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* (1979), of depopulated County Kerry villages caused a local furore and something of a national debate when it was picked up by Irish journalists; even eventually making its way back to the villagers themselves.<sup>2</sup> This led another anthropologist of Ireland to ask whether 'people as a community [have] any claim to "cultural privacy"' and even to suggest that in future researchers should send drafts of their

1. Christian (1989: 90) provides an example of a similar process from a non-'tribal' context. His ethnography of a Spanish village was used to promote Cantabrian regionalism in post-Franco Spain.

2. See Ellen (1984: 135) for a comparable account of the impact in Mexico in the 1960s of the Spanish translation of Oscar Lewis's *The Children of Sanchez* (orig. 1961).

studies to the community studied for ethnographic checking, with disputed points and the local people's alternative interpretations published as an appendix to the resulting book (Kane 1982: 3; for a similar suggestion, see Parkin 1982: xiii-xiv).

Another example of such ethnographic involution occurred when Ella Wiswell revisited Suye Mura, the rural Japanese municipality where she and her husband, John Embree, had carried out fieldwork some fifty years earlier, and which had been made famous by Embree's monograph *Suye Mura: A Japanese Village* (1939). Wiswell found that the young villagers were less concerned to reminisce with her about how things had been, than to use her visit to promote their municipality as a tourist destination—'Japan's anthropological village'. To this end, the local tourism committee decided to put on show the chair in which Embree had sat when writing up his notes (Wiswell 1988; see Tobin 1992: 28-9).

The key factor in this logistical revolution is the state institutionalization of societies—both of those societies anthropologists have traditionally studied and those from which they come. Home states sponsor anthropology and to a significant extent expect to apply its results. This may range from development projects to far less acceptable instances of the application of home state power overseas, such as when anthropologists were used in US counter-insurgency operations in Thailand (Wakin 1992), or indeed in the study of Japanese Americans in the US in the 1940s (Starn 1986). Other states mediate and control access to the 'fields' within their borders and may even demand a copy of the results. As considerations of international relations entail strategies of image management, states may well increasingly assert control over such international movements of knowledge as ethnography. In the post-colonial state system in which ethnography is carried out today, international relations necessarily becomes an increasingly important dimension of anthropology.

All these examples testify to the closure of a gap—an insulated space—in which anthropologists could once publish in peace. At a time of great concern among anthropologists for popularizing their findings and applying their research, these examples serve to remind us of the inadvertent applications that have always existed potentially, but that have been made more likely by the closure of interlocal gaps that globalization represents.

It is not only such older anthropological monographs as Deacon's that will be put to political purposes in newly independent states. The same purpose awaits present-day ethnography, with the difference that this political purpose is now contemporaneous with the ethnographic research process itself rather than subsequent to it. For indigenous peoples have their own research agendas, and if outside scholars figure in these, it is as technical facilitators of what is essentially a *self*-documentation. As some of the examples above show, anthropology is ceasing to be something *done* to people by professional outsiders and becoming a *local* practice professionally mediated. If this is a new departure, due to the traditional subject of anthropology now being also its sponsor (putting to one side *internal* distinctions), in another sense it is a continuation of the project of documenting human diversity before it disappears. It is in this connection that



globalization as enhanced international *contact* has long been decried as destructive—to the ‘optimal diversity’ of culture, in Lévi-Strauss’ words (1985: xiv)—and the practice of anthropology justified. This traditional sentiment with regard to disciplinary purpose has been expressed with even greater force by those who see a greater potential today for anthropologists to promote forms of self-documentation on the part of those they study (e.g. Bernard and Salinas Pedraza 1989). New technology can make oral languages literate and preserve the culture by preserving the language that bears it, thereby contributing to its transmission to subsequent generations. But if anthropologists thus act as instruments of the cultural survival of their subjects, they also in this way enable their subjects to document themselves.

The critique within anthropology of both method and basic categories, however, has had a profound effect. Today less and less anthropology is characterized by a ‘salvage’ orientation to other cultures (Clifford 1986: 112-13). The trend towards research on less distant societies is one factor here. As societies closer to home—and even at home—come within the anthropological purview, the documentary imperative recedes. Change may still be conspicuous, thereby generating endangered traditions, but the relationship of change to culture is redefined. The problematic shifts from the unit of ‘culture’ (or ‘society’), and its comparison with other ‘cultures’ or ‘societies’, to the diversity it contains (or even conceals). This diversity is twofold: the contemporary distribution of perspectives according to social position; and the distribution of perspectives over time, according to which culture is a historically variable construct. Hence the calls to replace ‘culture’ as the disciplinary unit in favour of a ‘culture-history’ (Fox 1991). This new theoretical perspective, moreover, affects even those traditionally ‘other’ cultures themselves. Despite the trend towards an instrumental, salvage-oriented anthropology noted above, if ‘culture’ is looked at in the Amazon or Polynesia today, it is more likely to be seen as subsumed by history rather than the other way around. Any salvaging of what was will tend to be secondary to the consideration of what it has been overlaid with.

Many anthropologists hitherto have laboured under a specific burden of documentation. The social and cultural diversity they professionally encountered was deemed historically perishable, hence the importance of documenting while it still existed. This was a world whose diversity was conceived in terms of the fixity of an ‘ethnographic atlas’. Far fewer anthropologists are now subject to responsibilities of this order; for many, historical change itself is just as worthy of documentation. Yet this new theoretical appreciation of ethnographic subjects as historically dynamic or ‘emergent’ does not necessarily relieve such anthropological works from subsequent application by others. The unification of formerly discrete local spaces means that anthropological practice cannot be insulated from politics, nor knowledge from power. Yet this new, critical orientation to culture causes problems precisely because of the politicization indicated above. If ‘culture’ is treated as a culture claim, and what is deemed timeless is historically located and even depicted as ‘invented’, then this must undermine the interests of

those, such as indigenous organizations or local tourism interests (see e.g. MacCannell 1984), who are politically or economically dependent on the wider acceptance of such claims.

'Culture' has never been so politicized—serving as it does today as a major principle of group entitlement in many national polities—at the same time as it has never been so criticized by those professionally charged to study it. If an earlier cultural relativism succeeded in making 'culture' as hard as 'nature'—that is, as a given in the world—then the contemporary orthodoxy of social constructionism makes it malleable (as indeed it does with 'nature' too) and therefore potentially contestable. This trend within the discipline is likely to diminish the usefulness of anthropologists for cultural politicians and ethnic nationalists of indigenous organizations. But, of course, the members of indigenous organizations are not the only cultural politicians involved; their very use of culture, after all, is a response to cultural politicians of a different magnitude—those of the encompassing nation state who have appropriated their traditional land in the name of a national culture. Thus, what the new 'closure' that is globalization entails is a radical intensification of the issues of academic responsibility.

For anthropologists, the chief consequence of this new situation should not be the disablement of inquiry but its reconstitution. Lévi-Strauss has recently stressed (in Eribon and Lévi-Strauss 1991: 154) that the historical link between anthropology as a discipline and the colonialism that destroyed traditional cultures imposes a particular obligation on anthropologists to help those they have traditionally studied to 're-establish links with their past'. Here I have tried to address this issue of responsibility by specifying the nature of the global context in which anthropological practice takes place today. By virtue of the intellectual support such theories of globalization provide, the question of responsibility must now be posed much more acutely. As the place of study we call the 'field' potentially becomes more and more observation-reactive, so should the anthropologist respond with a greater sensitivity to those captured in ethnographic observations. Thus the end of the anthropological object means, in one sense, the end of the distinctive split-focus of the discipline, whereby subjects and readers existed in different worlds—and this situation demands a new orientation on the part of its practitioners. So if Giddens's account of reflexive modern selves seems culture-bound and not usefully applicable to the broader range of cultural contexts, his description of the emerging ecology of professional social observations does implicate anthropologists and their practice more directly. We must learn, in other words, that henceforth we move in new ethnographic localities, and that we in turn share our own locality—the academy—with others.

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*Contexts and Levels* consists of a collection of papers commenting on the theories of Professor Louis Dumont concerning the problems of hierarchy and hierarchical opposition. These theories arose through his work on the nature of Indian society, and its subsequent comparison with Western society. The papers are based on those delivered to a conference held in Oxford in March 1983, and are by both French and English anthropologists. Most of them approach the question through the ethnography; the areas covered include the Solomons, New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal and Africa. Two other papers look at the linguistic notion of markedness and the philosophical notion of context, and general theoretical issues are discussed in one further contribution. The volume should appeal to all those interested in anthropological issues of hierarchy, ideology and ethnographic analysis.

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vii, 209 pp., Index. Price £12.95 (\$30.00) paperback, inclusive of postage and packing.

ISBN 1-870047-15-X (paper)

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