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Globalization and Governmentality: An Introduction

Richard Warren Perry and Bill Maurer

Global Positionings

In this volume, scholars from a variety of disciplines not only question the exorbitant popular hype around “globalization,” but also seek to build upon the pioneering global theorizing of the 1990s (represented by David Harvey, Saskia Sassen, Arjun Appadurai, Manuel Castells, and Anthony Giddens, among numerous others). Much of that theoretical work has focused on epistemic shifts of recent decades, shifts described in terms of a causal relation between globalization phenomena and the “postmodern condition.”

This is marked by a new economy made possible by its “informational mode of production” that has created a new global “space of flows” (Castells 1998), “an economy with the capacity to work in real time on a planetary scale” (Castells 1996, 92). This global space is distinguished by flexible production, flexible political identities, porous borders, and an accompanying general fragmentation or fluidness (an ongoing process of disaggregation or “unbundling”) of modernity’s foundational concepts—the territorial nation-state, and its national society, economy, and *raison d’état*.

“Globalization” is also a discursive topos; it is a space of debate, both popular and academic, that has emerged as the “successor to the debates on modernity and postmodernity in the understanding of sociocultural change and as the central problematic for social theory”

itself, and to question how its dynamics are imagined such that they can be presumed, by analysts and policy makers, elites and everyday folk, to be so magically causal in the first place.

What in fact emerges in these chapters are even more complicated ensembles of relations than expected and, indeed, discourses and practices of relationality itself, that structure the globalist epistemic field and the forms of scholarly inquiry that have developed around it. Although each of the directions of research on contemporary global questions that is represented in this volume surely carries along its own disciplinary baggage and blind spots, we find that placing them in dialogue with one another provides a useful juxtaposition of vantage points from which to consider contemporary global trends. To address “globalization” requires a heterogeneity of perspectives that encompasses not just different disciplinary objects of study, but also diverse knowledge practices of disciplinarity, both academic and governmental. This volume is intended to offer precisely that.

Why Global Governmentality?

Much of the existing literature on globalization (to the extent that there already exists a “globalization canon”) has been preoccupied with the status of the territorial nation-state form and the ongoing corrosive effects on it of the global economic regimes of the late twentieth century. Proliferating transnational media soberly report with each passing news cycle that global markets in capital, services, commodities, labor, natural resources, pollution rights, intellectual and other property rights, as well as human rights and similar transnational fields and flows of interest and action, are all busily eroding the sovereign territorial powers of nation-states. In the United States, the unheralded coming together of trade unionists, neocommunitarians, paleoconservatives, and environmentalists that opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement and defeated the “fast-track” authorization of trade agreements is simply one striking example of an abiding national sensibility asserted against the disintegrative effects of global market flows.

Still, what one finds in the studies presented here is that the

nation-state, its territoriality, and its sovereignty are not so much eroding as transforming into overlapping and hierarchically nested jurisdictions, interpenetrated transnational fields of interest, and graduated sovereignties (see Ong in this volume). From this angle, globalization appears as a “refiguring of the territory of government” (Rose 1996, 308), as a transformation in the spatiotemporal regimes of modern governmentality, and as proliferating strategies for the management of individuals and populations that operate in concert with, but that are not reducible to, the structures of the liberal nation-state. The nation-state form, we find, is not evaporating, but rather is transforming itself into a frame of scalar reference against which the directionality and velocity of these movements and flows become legible.

In its broadest outlines, this transformation has been variously described as a “reterritorialization” of grids of power (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), as “rezoning sovereignty” (Ong 1998), and as the “unbundling” of national territoriality and the “de-nationalizing of sovereignty” (Slaughter 1997; Sassen 1999). This widely noted trend toward “perforated,” “graduated,” “dispersed,” “distributed,” “leaking,” or postmodern sovereignties in the global “space of flows” (Macklem 1993; Mezey 1996; Ong 1998; Lipschutz 1992; Soja 1989; Castells 1998) has been accompanied by an emergence of other sorts of spatial frontiers. In terms borrowed from Benedict Anderson’s foundational work on “imagined communities,” one could describe what is taking place as a reconfiguration of the “modular” elements of the “grammar” of “nation-ness” (1991, xiv, 4). This reconfiguration has similarly implied a shift in the meaning of fundamental concepts such as state, market, civil society, family–kin networks, tribes, ethnoracial groups, nation-states, risk, space, and time. Theories and practices of governance increasingly incorporate social, cultural, and private managerial logics as new arts of governmentality emerge.

Today’s new world orders, even as they rest on sedimented configurations of spatial difference inherited from the ethnoracial and colonial/imperial systems of the past (see Kalpagam 2000, 2002; Moore 1998), are constructed of novel regimes of spatial and temporal segregation,

innovations of enclosure and exclusion. To comprehend the mutually contingent relations of state and market (as well as the very categories “state” and “market” themselves—not to mention “local” and “global” and the other constitutive binaries of globalization discourses) requires close attention to particular times and places. One ought not therefore obsess over whether the state is withering away or that it is being reempowered, or whether the market is either all-pervasive or is still in service to the nation-state. Rather, as the essays that follow show, *state* and *market* themselves are being reconfigured in novel ways (just as are the scholarly understandings of them). Indeed, one finds new regimes of translocal or transnational governmentality—“unbundled” nation-state functions being networked into “transgovernmental” world orders, in Anne-Marie Slaughter’s useful terminology (1997)—distinguishing the current moment of globalization.

Attending to Anna Tsing’s cautions about research on “the global situation” (Tsing 2000), rather than attempt to isolate the “local” and the “global” as distinct phenomenal scales, we suggest that it is necessary to question scalarity itself, those ideologies that rely on stable and stabilizing assumptions about place, region, globality as well as movement, stasis, circulation, flow. We note the “rhetorics of scale as well as contests over what will count as relevant scales” (Tsing 2000, 347). And, rather than simply assuming global epochal shifts, as the first wave of global theorizing has tended to do, we instead look for “projects of governance” (Valverde 1996, 358), for “bundles of ideas and practices as [they are] realized in particular times and places” (Tsing 2000, 347). The particular sort of projects we have in mind in this volume are global-governmental ones.

Consider briefly the example of Africa—the example routinely, all but obligatorily, cited in globalist discourse as the paradigm case of failed state-political governance, of multiethnic “pandemonium,” and so on (Moynihan 1993). At the conference from which this volume derives, James Ferguson, a leading scholar of development in Africa, considered the question of how and by whom Africa is in fact governed now. He suggested that the state regimes of African countries operate

within a larger fabric of governance composed of multinational corporations, multinational nongovernmental organizations, as well as organs of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other supranational entities. This is what some commentators have termed, more generally, the “quango-ization of the State”—where “quango” is a professional term of art, an acronym for “quasi-autonomous nongovernmental organization” (Rose 1996, 350, 354). The specific governmental rationalities at work in Africa include resource extraction, public health, and religious proselytization. The point is that this governance of Africa is not in fact anomalous in kind—it is simply a salient case of the more general pattern of overlapping and interpenetrated forms and rationalities of governance found elsewhere in the world. The Enlightenment vision of state, market, and civil society as distinct fields of action and domains of rationality—to the extent that it might ever have been accurate—is now no more adequately descriptive of Europe or Asia or the Americas than it is of Africa.

In this connection, the close attention to particular times and places that Tsing recommends need not devolve into the positivism that has burdened Anglophone social science since its contemporary disciplinary formulation after World War II. The chapters collected here attempt to strike a balance between grounded empirical research and a questioning of the theoretical presuppositions that have undergirded positivist social inquiry. More specifically, to recognize the convergence of academic theories of globalization and the discourses and practices of global elites—along with the unarticulated legitimating effects of that convergence—requires attention to the metapragmatics of “globalization.” This is to ask how accounts of global phenomena, academic, managerial, and other, are deployed to varied ends, in different contexts, and still to perceive the convergent implications of globalizing epistemics. This is to acknowledge the channeling strictures of academic as well as governmental disciplines.

The very fact that globalization commentary has remained so mired in a debate over the primacy of the nation-state or the global economy demonstrates that this writing remains within reified models inherited

from early-modern sociopolitical theory (specifically, the opposition in political theory between left and right Hegelians over the rationality of the state versus that of the market and civil society; see Fukuyama 1992). It is precisely here that we have found heuristic value in Michel Foucault's notion of "governmentality." Less a theory than an analytics, "governmentality" helps to articulate the specific dynamic rationalities intrinsic to the modern arts of government—this is the study of "actually existing, often unsystematic assemblages of technologies and rationalities" (Valverde 1996, 358) and "the imbrication of resistance and rule, the contradictions and tensions, . . . and the subterranean practices of government consequently required to stabilize rule" (O'Malley 1996, 311).

Taken together, a number of recent readings of Foucault's (1991) essay "Governmentality" (mostly Anglophone readings, and readings that are far from entirely congruent with one another) have helped to reinvigorate and to sharpen critical sociolegal responses to Foucault's supposed "expulsion of the law" (Colin Gordon in Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991; O'Malley 1994; Simon 1999). A confluence of interest between scholars of governmentalities, on the one hand, and globalizations, on the other, has resulted in a productive rethinking of the relationships among power, discipline, governance, and law.

The essays collected here are, we believe, the clearest expression to date of this confluence. As Aihwa Ong argues (in this volume), "globalization has induced governments to think up new ways of governing and valuing different categories of their subject populations," that is, to new arts and rationalities of government, or governmentalities. On the figuring of sovereignty in globalization discourse, Ong reconsiders "sovereignty as 'an effect of practices' associated with law and other forms of regulation that construct relations between the state, its population, and the market." It is in just this fashion, by attending to the effects of the practices of globalization and of global discourses, that the studies presented here distinguish themselves from the broad trend of globalization commentary. As Foucault observed in another context, "People know what they do, they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Foucault

quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 187; see also the discussion in Michaels 1987, 179).

In this volume, then, we worry less over the question of what globalization is than we focus on the metapragmatics of what doing “globalization” does. Rather than setting out either to bless globalization or to condemn it, our project is to explore the forms and practices and effects of governmentality that are integral to global modernity’s architecture of flows and freedoms. We ask what are the rationalities of government implicit within the globalist project of reconfiguring scale and mobilizing space, time, and difference.

The essays in this volume seek both to look behind the magic acts for the governmental rationalities/technologies that make “globalization” possible and to recognize that, by framing questions the way they have been framed, global theorizing has never not been under the spell of the globalization mythos. It is our view that, as Diane Nelson has suggested referring to commodity fetishism, “Playing detective and getting down to how the fetish ‘really’ works completely misses the magic act” (1999, 77). To focus on the forms, as it were, of globalization—looking for the real behind the global hype or the global hope—misses the crucial question of why the global should assume such forms in the first place. We do not seek simply to demythologize Bourdieu’s “myth of globalization,” or to “unmask” globalization, or to “de-dupe” those “blinded” by its wonders. We also seek to understand these wonders and their effects.

The implicit and explicit emphasis on governmentality gives the essays collected here their analytic punch. If the tactics and strategies of governance characterizing new world orders operate on a market model, could assessments of those tactics and strategies hold state and market separate as analytic categories? Or do critical analysts of globalization need a new conceptual repertoire? This volume argues the latter, and these essays provide good examples of how to develop that perspective. They interrogate the terms and the metaphysics implicit and explicit in globalization theorizing: the market, the nation-state, sovereignty,

space, time, movement, capital, and labor. Regarded from one angle, they argue that the nation-state and its sovereignty ought not be considered prefabricated forms into which history and geography are poured; rather, they are being reconfigured, rearticulated, reinvented, rerationalized in distinctive ways (Ong, Perry, Calavita and Suárez-Navaz, Coutin, Merry).

Viewed from another angle, these essays argue that the market, the economy, the domain of private interest in civil society are likewise not a transparent field of free rational choice and action, but complicated constellations of practice and knowledge whose effects are never known in advance (Roberts, Maurer, Coombe, Perry, Coutin, Leonard).

To understand these reconfigurations of state and market entails exploring cosmological dimensions of space, time, and risk, the new media of governance in disjunctive jurisdictions (Maurer, Perry, Sanchez). The reformulation proposed in these essays calls for a new look at some old problems in globalization theory, such as international migration and labor flows (Coutin, Leonard), as well as the imaging of the nation (Merry, Calavita and Suárez-Navaz).

Ultimately, the focus on governmentalities carries the debate beyond the now-belabored stumbling point of the “effects of globalization” on the state, and beyond the historical quandaries of distinguishing contemporary global economies from earlier ones. Governmentality helps us bring to view the constellations of knowledge and techniques that mediate between individual subjects and the imagined monoliths of the modern state and the market. It is this focus on forms of knowledge and intervention that helps us to see that neither the state nor the economy could be a unified, homogeneous entity. Rather, governmentality enables us to disaggregate both state and economy in ways that can contribute considerable analytic purchase to contemporary globalization debates.

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Globalization under Construction

Governmentality, Law, and Identity

**Richard Warren Perry and
Bill Maurer, Editors**

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Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Globalization and Governmentality: An Introduction <i>Richard Warren Perry and Bill Maurer</i>	ix
1. Global Strategic Vision: Managing the World <i>Susan Roberts</i>	1
2. Zones of New Sovereignty in Southeast Asia <i>Aihwa Ong</i>	39
3. International Political Economy as a Cultural Practice: The Metaphysics of Capital Mobility <i>Bill Maurer</i>	71
4. Spanish Immigration Law and the Construction of Difference: Citizens and "Illegals" on Europe's Southern Border <i>Kitty Calavita and Liliana Suárez-Navaz</i>	99
5. South Asian Workers in the Gulf: Jockeying for Places <i>Karen Leonard</i>	129
6. Illegality, Borderlands, and the Space of Nonexistence <i>Susan Bibler Coutin</i>	171
7. Christian Conversion and "Racial" Labor Capacities: Constructing Racialized Identities in Hawai'i <i>Sally Engle Merry</i>	203

8. Sex and Space in the Global City <i>Lisa Sanchez</i>	239
9. Works in Progress: Traditional Knowledge, Biological Diversity, and Intellectual Property in a Neoliberal Era <i>Rosemary J. Coombe</i>	273
10. Rebooting the World Picture: Flying Windows of Globalization in the End Times <i>Richard Warren Perry</i>	315
Contributors	357
Index	361