

Globalization / Localization

Handout

When local firms, associations or organizations use knowledge and technology / artefacts which are brought in from outside, this usage contains choices. Since knowledge and technology contain social choices, local interests are affected. Globalization is the most risky economic and political trend of our times. Does a local firm/administration/association know that it pursues the interests of stakeholding communities, and when is the import of knowledge and technology in the interest of global forces ?

Briefs for discussion:

Globalization and Local Politics in India

Recent years have seen an increase in ethnic violence between Hindus and Muslims, as well as smaller minorities in India. The national government was formed by a nationalist Hindu party (BJP) for several years. These facts are unprecedented in India's 60 years since independence in 1945. Two different interpretations of the Hindu nationalism in Bombay are presented to consider the relation between local and global spheres. Both interpretations, by Jonathan Friedman and by Arjun Appadurai, have in common that they do not oppose or support globalization as such. In the globalization debate they are in the neutral camp between hyperglobalizers and anti-globalizers. Both see globalization as a risky phenomenon, which has to be consciously shaped by political means. Friedman's views figure prominently in the journal *Theory, Culture & Society*, and Appadurai's in the journal *Public Culture*. Besides Appadurai played a central role in the World Bank's *Culture and Public Action* (2004). In these journals one can find many other country cases (Ruanda, Jugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia) presented in these two interpretations. What the two interpretations oppose is summarized in the following table (see the two 4-page texts for details):

Appadurai	Friedman
<p>Globalization weakens nation-states, political forms and social identities, threatening democracy and social peace. Countries can break up and smaller social units appear.</p>	<p>Globalization is predominantly an opportunity to change local political forms. It is the unpacking of global events, products and frameworks into the local.</p>
<p>Global forces are best seen as imploding into localities, deforming their normative climate, recasting their politics, and representing their contingent characters and plots as larger narratives of betrayal and loyalty.</p>	<p>All countries are marked by ambivalent relations between state and ethnic groups, and by ambivalence between elites and the people. Globalization affects these ambivalences but not their importance.</p>
<p>The speed and intensity of circulating material and ideological elements create a new order of uncertainty in social life. Globalization increases the perception of insecurity, and when seized upon, this can motivate violence against ethnic groups.</p>	<p>Globalization causes global / local exchanges to form various patterns, <u>endo-social</u>: self-centred, outside blocked, new roots, knowledge origin rigid, content questioned and remains unstable, <u>sub-types</u>: relative import from outside acceptable without autonomy loss; <u>exo-social</u>: other-centred, outside is source of power, passage to local fixed, knowledge diminishes local content, These patterns are at the heart of local social identity and history.</p>
<p>In Bombay, India, between Dec. 1992 and March 1993, a Muslim temple was destroyed, massive outbreaks of violence followed and a major bomb explosion took place. The Hindu nationalist "Shiva Sena" turned Bombay into a living simulacrum of a sacred Hindu public space rather than a poly-ethnic, commercial, secular world. Hindu identity turned predatory when issues of endangered ethno-national identity are successfully downloaded into the crowded, necessarily mixed spaces of everyday work and life.</p>	<p>It is the articulation of cultural fragmentation, class polarization and immigration which is volatile.</p> <p>Appadurai's nostalgia for previously fixed categories is naive, his hope for modern openness masks only his neo-liberal inclination to weaken the state.</p>

The objective of this discussion is to clarify how the knowledge used by the team is biased or limited by the uncertainty over adaptation to the context, and the importance of the origin of knowledge. The example from Bombay is useful to explain the interpretations one can give to this uncertainty.

You might prefer to express your views on the global / local exchange in your terms. Or you could use some of the elements in the above table to distinguish your views from Appadurai's and Friedman's. If you have the time, you might read the two 4-page texts first and then refer to these arguments to

Appadurai	Friedman
The attachment to a nation involves libidinal feelings more than more procedural civic attachment.	Appadurai conflates matter out of place and matter mixed up, the great difference between occupied space and the body itself.
It is difficult to be sure whether the shift in the role of the body in ethnic violence is a qualitatively new feature either of modernity or of the most recent decades of globalization or simply an intensification of earlier tendencies.	Ethnic violence is over control of space and has no connection to ethnic content of the body itself. The result is a boundary shift and the zones of ambivalence create violence between differential identities competing for space. The social other can exaggerate identity. Doubts over purity of categories mixed up by globalization is a different event. Social fragmentation can be economic or cultural and can oppose globalization winners to losers.
The terror of purification and the vivisectionist tendencies that engage in situations of mass violence also blur the lines between ethnicity and politics. The most horrible forms of ethnocidal violence are mechanisms for producing persons out of what are otherwise diffuse, large scale labels that have effects but no locations.	Large urban areas have welfare decline, downward mobile nationals and immigrants, privatization of the state, warfare and banditry. It is the articulation of social and cultural fragmentation, class polarization and immigration that is a volatile mixture. The emergence of conflict is here a question of particular thresholds, a variable that is specific to each particular locality.

<p>There are surely other ethnocidal imaginaries in which the forces of global capital, the relative power of states, varying histories of race and class and differences in the status of mass mediation, produce different kinds of uncertainty and different scenarios for ethnocide.</p>	<p>Verticalization, or class polarization, is a vector of the global system and its effects all forms of fragmentation. Social forms of integration/assimilation/enclavization depend on the way in which groupness is practiced and constructed. Practices are specific and in this sense can be understood as cultural, but they are also historically specific and thus historically variable.</p>
<p>In ethnocidal violence, what is sought is just that somatic stabilization that globalization - in a variety of ways - inherently makes impossible.</p>	<p>Appadurai has played a central role in this obsession with closure. Linked to globalization on one side and to its consequences, the transgression of national borders on the other, as well as the transcendence of the nation-state, whose demise is immanent, after a period of violent resistance, thus freeing us all to live in a new transnational world. All of this is highly reductionist in the worst materialist sense.</p>