

Cyberculture and Globalization

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Summary

Globalization should be understood as a new economic, political, and cultural dynamic in what is now a global space. It is diagnosed based on a description of the different phases in its development, as an abstract, modern narrative reinforced by cyberculture, the information and communications technologies (ICTs) culture that emerged in the 1970s. Communications media have enabled the constraints and limits of space and time to be overcome, expanding human agency and connecting people and objects. Globalization is linked to the development of cyberculture precisely because this increases the number of different types of connections between people, products, and information all around the planet. It is constructed abstractly, as it does not pay the price of the connections and connectors that locate social relations. At the same time as it helps to create the fiction of “global globalization,” cyberculture reveals mediators that always connect objects, processes, people, and places, making a “localized globalization” visible. Rather than being merely deterritorializing, globalization produces connections and situations with the aid of connectors. Like every sociotechnical network, it is involved in the creation of new spatialities. The narrative of globalization ignores the connectors and overlooks the notion of territory, asserting the global nature of globalization when in fact it is the result of concrete mediations performed locally, produced by a specific and material network. It is important to politicize globalization. This requires “relocalization” of the global, that is, identifying specific, material situations. Having an appreciation of this dependence leads us to very concrete political attitudes. Attention is drawn to the need to give visibility to the mediators that anchor experiences, gainsaying the generic nature of globalization and allowing it to be politicized.

Keywords: cyberculture, globalization, communication, space, digital media, communication and critical studies

Subjects: Communication and Technology, Communication Theory, Communication and Social Change, Critical/Cultural Studies

Introduction

“world signifies for us the context for the possibility of access [to others]”

— Peter Sloterdijk (2004)¹

The concept of globalization refers to the general growth in the number of connections between companies, markets, and cultures in different countries around the world and the ever greater sense of spatial and temporal proximity. The sensation and experience of living in a more integrated world can be traced back to World War II and could be observed more clearly in the 1980s. Globalization has at times been confused with the spread of capitalism (Bauman, 1998; Harvey, 1989; Massey, 1997; Santos, 2017; Sassen, 1991) and is a “taken-for-granted term in much political discourse at the moment. It is a weasel word; too frequently used perhaps, and certainly too rarely analysed politically” (Massey, 1997). It is such a widely used word, a concept that is apparently so obvious, that we no longer question it.

The same is true of the concept of cyberculture. Communications media have enabled the constraints and limits of space and time to be overcome, expanding human agency and connecting people and objects. The mass media of the 20th century (such as TV, radio, and newspapers) came to constitute the global village described by McLuhan (1962, 1964), while the digital technologies of the 21st century constitute the “collective, connective intelligence” (De Kerckhove, 1997; Lévy, 1994) of cyberspace. From the second half of the 20th century these technologies shaped a cyberculture (Bell, 2001; Castells, 1996; Dery, 1996; Negroponte, 1995; Stratton, 1997) that fueled globalization as a result of the increasing demand for digital technologies, products, and services. Everything now happens instantly, in real time, everywhere on the planet, thanks to the computer networks interconnecting every single country. Our experience of the world is increasingly that of a “global citizen” who sees an integrated world from a broad, general, panoptical perspective. Access to information, consumption of symbolic goods and services, free trade and physical travel to anywhere on the planet in a matter of hours at speeds never previously achieved give us the sensation that we are experiencing a substantial deterritorialization process (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004).

The political problem of the concept of globalization is that it tends to eliminate the specificities of situations, insisting instead on a narrative used by politicians and business people to conquer territories, succeed in markets, and garner political support. Anthony Giddens (1984) shows that globalization is inherent to modernity and creates processes that he calls “disembedding.” Zygmunt Bauman (1998) shows that space is no longer a reference and that electronic communications do away with all territorial relations. However, if we follow social actions where such communications have become deeply rooted, we will not find anything that is effectively global, local, or “glocal” (Robertson & Scholte, 2006),² but territorializations based on very particular connectors, connections, and situations. Rather than thinking of globalization as a global world acting on smaller scales, we

should think of it as a larger interterritorial connection. Modern discourse on globalization creates the illusion of “global globalization” instead of pointing to territorial processes in situations involving connections. As the French sociologist Bruno Latour (2011) notes:

It is when the factory we depended on for our job closes or “delocates” that we will definitely consider it part of the territory; it is when there is the threat of the post office we relied on disappearing that we realize how important it is for us; it is when the waters on the shore eat away at the dunes where one played as a child that one starts to put the ocean in the list of beings that must be taken into consideration; it is when an unfamiliar label on a bottle with an unusual shape on a supermarket shelf catches our eye that one suddenly realizes that Australian wines can now be included in the range of wines one likes to appreciate; how can we foresee that the gas we use to keep ourselves warm depends on Mr. Putin’s being in a good mood during his loathsome relations with the Ukrainian president?³

In the following sections, we introduce the concepts of cyberculture and globalization and question them critically. The former reinforces the narrative of the latter and is described as the culture of information and communications technologies (ICTs) that emerged in the 1970s. The latter is described in terms of its various historical phases. The central argument is that rather than being understood merely as a scalar phenomenon, globalization should be viewed as a process of territorial interconnection. Cyberculture acts on two fronts: It helps to create the idea of “global globalization” and at the same time reveals mediators that always connect objects, processes, people, and places, making a “relocalized globalization” visible. Globalization should be understood as a modern narrative indicating a new economic, political, and cultural dynamic in what is now a global space. It is constructed abstractly, as it does not pay the price of the connections and connectors that locate social relations.

Globalization

Scholars say that there is nothing new about the concept of globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Massey, 1997; Santos, 2017; Sassen, 1991) and argue that the dynamics of capitalism have always been global, from the capitalism of the 15th and 16th centuries, through industrial capitalism (from the 17th to the 19th centuries) and the emergence of the first conglomerates at the end of the 19th century, to present-day capitalism.

However, the concept as we know it today is linked to the internationalization of finance and the productive system that emerged at the end of World War II and intensified in the 1980s with the neoliberal capitalism of the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the United Kingdom and United States. Today we are in the era of financial capitalism, with increasing deterritorialization (of work, companies, capital, and information). This is a movement that seeks to reduce government influence and action and to increase liberalization and social regulation by the market.

With the expansion of markets (world trade), the internationalization of industry and the financial sector (exports and the movement of capital), and the establishment of transnational regulatory bodies (World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, etc.), capitalism has become synonymous with globalization. As we understand it today, globalization represents the maturing of the capitalist system, and the problems associated with the new era of globalization are the same as those posed by the contradiction inherent to capital, which generates wealth but fails to balance the private appropriation of the means of production and capital with the socialization of wealth (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). Eighty-two percent of the world's wealth is in the hands of 1% of the population (Oxfam, 2018).

There are three main phases in the literature that help to reinforce the modern discourse of globalization. The first began with maritime exploration by the major European powers and the conquest of the New World. The second corresponded to the Industrial Revolution, the development of mass media, particularly cinema, television, and the press, and the spread of mercantilist capitalism. The third emerged with the development of a post-industrialist society, a global information culture and a new Internet-based economy in which expansion occurs primarily through the growth of large information technology (IT) companies. This phase coincides with cyberculture.

The first period, the beginning of the process now known as globalization, extended from the 15th to the 19th centuries, when European maritime exploration was at its height and new territories and markets were being conquered. The sociotechnical system during this period included the press, compass, and cannon, which were to act as connectors that would play an important role in the creation of larger markets (Ellul, 1964). While expansion appeared to correspond to the creation of a global space, what was in fact happening was a process of expansion based on larger interconnections. If we think of a flat space, without scales, we can see this process without having to jump from the micro dimension to the macro dimension. The new sociotechnical networks revealed the connectors (market-reserve policies, particular worldviews, communication technologies, and energy transformation policies), but these were soon forgotten and replaced by generalizing leaps. In this initial phase of globalization, European colonies were established in North America and, later, Africa and Asia.

The second phase, from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, corresponded to the

expansion of the industrial system, two world wars, consolidation of the European way of life, and the birth of the American “empire.” World Wars I and II were important events that signaled the arrival of a new world. Institutions such as the United Nations and the adoption in 1948 of the United Declaration of Human Rights helped to create a feeling of humanity being in one place. The polarization caused by the Cold War increased the global dimensions of this phenomenon. This was a period when industrial capitalism and mass communication systems (the printed press, telegraph, radio, television, and telephone) were developing rapidly and computers were leading to gradual changes in information media. Interconnected electrical grids and new forms of mass long-distance transport such as trains, automobiles, and planes became a reality. This process culminated in the postcolonialist, counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s, leading to a narrative of an integrated “world” and issues that concerned humanity as a whole (ecology, minorities, and pacifism). There was a growing feeling of connection, which brought with it the illusion of an abstract, generic, and global space. It was at this point that warning signals were raised about the dangers of the absorption of one culture by another. Mass media, IT networks, and transport infrastructure had made these connectors and connections more visible. But, paradoxically, their material and local mediations were increasingly forgotten in favor of larger macrostructures.

The third and current phase of globalization started in the 1990s. Driven by the Internet, the set of computer networks connecting practically every country in the world, a digital revolution began. We are now in the middle of the Third Industrial Revolution (Bell, 1974; Toffler, 1980) and the development of the information society (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998). Access to information, companies, different ways of working, education, and leisure is now ubiquitous, and the global discourse is underpinned by the discourse of physical and informational mobility. This period has witnessed the expansion and increasing interconnection of markets, the establishment of major blocs such as NAFTA, the European Union, and Mercosur, and the conquest of space. Worldwide commercial aviation is now a reality, and information technology, robotics, the Internet, chemical synthesis, biotechnology, and nuclear energy are all firmly established. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 represented a watershed for this view of a finally global, unified world. The pillars of a new world order—the consolidation of economic liberalism and the information revolution—were now in place. Cyberculture had arrived!

The new sociotechnical network continues to show us the connectors (forms of access, local machines, differentiated structures, particularized relations), but at the same time the global discourse, the discourse of a totalizing world, is maintained. We undoubtedly depend on more and more things, but that is a characteristic of the growth in mediations rather than the ad hoc creation of a global world. All territorial expansion must be seen from the perspective of concrete mediators, situated connectors and connections.⁴ Commentators, activists, and academics rightly point out the advantages and disadvantages of cultural and economic globalization, but we

must understand that this process cannot be defined in terms of one place in preference to all others (the globe, the global, the generic). The current globalization discourse is a modern one. It insists on purification procedures to leap from the particular to the generic without paying for the connections (Latour, 1993).

In these three historical phases, a discourse of “global globalization” has become established. However, it is precisely the positive and negative consequences identified by critics that show that rather than a global process, there are only concrete situations created by clearly located connectors. In this sense, the “globalizing” discourse is abstract as it overlooks the mediations, connectors, and connections that locate the social relations. Criticism of globalization shows that it is precisely the inequality and advantages (in time and space) and the discrepancies in the speed with which these connections act geopolitically that attest to the absence of global action.

Cyberculture

The second half of the 20th century was marked by major technological changes with the emergence of new ICTs based on microelectronics and computer networks. These transformations gave rise to cyberculture, which revolved around computer-mediated communications, or “cyberspace.” Various schools of theory, including cultural studies, the sociology of communication, semiotics, semiology, post-structuralist theory, political economics, and critical theory, have attempted to respond to the challenge posed by these changes. Regardless of the theoretical perspective, an understanding of cyberculture is essential to understand the globalization process, as it is the basis of the third phase of globalization, the postindustrial information society, and will bring the discussion on global space and real time to the center of the debate.

Cyberculture emerged in the 1970s with the arrival of microcomputers. The development of mainframes from the 1940s to the 1960s was marked by military and institutional use of information and was to lay the foundations for the development of cyberculture. However, cyberculture only became firmly established with the popularization of personal computers (PCs) and the growth of global computer networks, the Internet. We can now truly talk about a computer and communications “culture.” As Bell et al. (2004) show, globalization is directly linked to cyberculture. For them, “the role of the internet and related global ICTs is paramount in this conception of globalization for facilitating the emergence of the informational economy and the network society” (2004, p. 100). This new infrastructure connecting digital communications machines increases the number of ways in which the world is read, data is processed, and algorithmic agencies act in various spheres of social life. It is clearly part of the evolution of communication media toward the automated

treatment of information, generalized connection, and instantaneous information exchange. It is thus a large apparatus (Agamben, 2009) that forms social reality and shapes our actions in space and time.

The mass media (press, radio, and television) played an important role in society from the 15th to the 20th centuries (Briggs & Burke, 2002). They expanded the world by allowing new ways of integrating and connecting, heightening the sensation of shrinking space and time. The ease with which information could be produced and disseminated brought people, communities, and companies closer together and paved the way for the third stage of globalization. These phenomena of farther-reaching connections are the essential characteristic of mediatization processes. Rather than fitting into space and time, every medium, from the written word to the Internet, produces them. Space and time are a result of the relationship between humans and their sociotechnical networks in general, and media in particular. Media are not, as McLuhan (1964) mistakenly believed, “extensions of man” because they in fact constitute him. The idea of a previously divided, now global world is a consequence of the historical use of the active lenses (the media) through which we see the world, the connectors and their connections that produce and are the product of our situated relations. Hence, the globalization narrative is a slow construction process involving the successive actions of sociotechnical networks, from the first communication tools through mass media to present-day digital media, or cyberculture.⁵

The development of the first computers—calculating machines used by the military, government, and major corporations—was fundamental in shaping and consolidating thinking about the information society. However, it was in the 1970s, when the personal computer and Internet first appeared, that a “digital culture” of multiple expressions emerged. The invention of the personal computer represented not only a change of hardware (the machines and peripherals), but also a change of software (the interface and information architecture). Interactive programs that took advantage of a GUI (graphical user interface) with mouse, windows, and icons were created to make computers and the associated devices easier to use. The relationship between user and computer became more intuitive, unlike the more abstract, complex text commands used in the first systems, which could only be operated by a specialist, usually an engineer or mathematician.⁶

It was this PC revolution, or guerrilla war (Breton, 1990), that gave birth to cyberculture. This period coincided with a time of struggles with global dimensions connecting ecologists, women, African Americans, sexual minorities, and other processes associated with postcolonialism, counterculture, and a period of awareness and acceptance of a narrative on globalization in its third phase, as we saw. McLuhan’s (1962, 1964) theory of media ecology and T. Roszak’s (1986) discussion of counterculture at the time were fundamental in providing a glimpse of the social reach of the emerging cyberculture and its consequences for the spatial dimension.

A milestone in the civil development of the Internet was the appearance of Usenet and BBSs (bulletin board systems),⁷ which gave rise to what were known as “virtual communities” (Rheingold, 1993), showing the potential of personal computing to influence society, communities, and politics by bringing together people who were geographically separated. There was much criticism at the time precisely because it was believed that the local dimension would disappear as face-to-face relationships gave way to computer-mediated relationships. However, too much emphasis was placed on this “no sense of place” (Meyrowitz, 1985). Cyberculture in fact expanded locally, materially anchored in local particularities, but the illusion of the global prevailed with the idea of “cyberspace.”

The second phase of the growth of cyberculture corresponded to the 1980s and 1990s (Benedikt, 1992; Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998; Gibson, 1984; Gray, 2001; Heim, 1993; Rheingold, 1993) and the civil expansion of the Internet. Cyberspace was a global space, a cultural, symbolic, material artifact embodied by some of the most important communications infrastructure of the late 20th century. Following the invention of the World Wide Web in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee, cyberspace became more present and visible and, therefore, global and socially relevant (construction of subjectivity, communities, body, games, simulated worlds) (Haraway, 1991; Laurel, 1993; Turkle, 1995). Cyberculture was the culture of cyberspace. But this was far from being a “virtual,” “abstract,” “imaginary” space if we paid the price of the connections (access points, access conditions, access experience, interfaces, devices, etc.). It was not a separate, global world but a connecting structure that integrated various aspects of daily life.

This period saw the consolidation of a plural environment of media and relations characterized by a growth in the number of connections and increased processing of, access to, and distribution of information in real time. Central to the ideas discussed at this time were conceptual proposals that sought to understand the new spatiotemporal configuration of contemporary society. The bits substituted the atoms (Negroponte, 1995) in a collective planetary intelligence (Lévy, 1994) synonymous with the new network society (Castells, 1996). For others this deterritorialization was sustained by a hyperreal, alienating world of forgetting, isolation, and technical rationality (Baudrillard, 2001; Postman, 1993; Virilio, 1995). For better or for worse, the emerging cyberculture was a global sociotechnical network ever more present in the daily lives of people, companies, and institutions. It was globalization itself, global space, real time, the generalized deterritorialization of culture.

The third period, from 1990 to 2000, witnessed the consolidation of a more collaborative Internet. This was the decade of blogs, microblogs, and the first social networking sites. The term *Web 2.0*, which was coined to refer to this phase, was used by Tim O'Reilly (2007) to highlight the potential of the web for conversational and written communication. The debate about free culture (Lessig, 2004), free software (Stallman, 2010), network neutrality (Wu, 2010), and the semantic Web (Berners-Lee

et al., 2001) gained worldwide proportions. New mobile technologies such as cell phones became available, and the possibilities for geolocation of information increased with locative media. The first smart mobs appeared (Rheingold, 2003). This was the convergence culture, the transmedia, crossmedia culture (Jenkins, 2006), the culture of global activism (Castells, 2012) and Wikipedia. The sensation of greater interconnection continued to increase with the cybercultural revolution, which became firmly established with the transition to Web 2.0 companies such as Google, Yahoo!, and Amazon. The idea of a separation between the real (physical space) and the virtual (cyberspace) became less meaningful.

Cyberculture studies stress the relationship between globalization and issues of gender, race, and subalternity precisely because of the universal nature of these political struggles, even if they are always located and are characterized by fundamental differences in each place. Studies on race and gender began in the 1990s and became more widespread in the 21st century. We would point to several recent studies on race (Langmia, 2016; Nakamura & Chow-White, 2012) and to studies on gender, body, and cyberfeminism dating back to the 1990s (Bruckmann, 1996; Gajjala, 2013; Haraway, 1991; O’Riordan & Phillips, 2007; Rosanne Stone, 1992).

Game studies point to a transnational perspective and suggest that games served as a bridge to the popularization of microcomputers and the global network culture. Game culture is seen as cybertext (Aarseth, 1997), a business (Castronova, 2005), a way to play with identity in multiplayer online games (Corneliussen & Walker-Rettberg, 2009), a world in itself (Juul, 2003). However, even in a planetary culture of online gameplaying, the situated perspective must be maintained. Experience as presence (Gumbrecht, 2004) is based on specific connectors and an intense, localized physical relationship.

The current phase, from the beginning of the 21st century onward, saw the maturing of the network society. For some, the first decade of the 21st century was the “post-PC” era or “the end of cyberspace” (Thomas, 2006), with the consolidation of the mobile Internet (mainly with the appearance of the iPhone and iPad), the Internet of Things, Big Data, wearables, and smart cities. The era of global information leaks started with WikiLeaks (Assange, 2012) and the hacking of servers and databases in different parts of the world by activists. Online social networks that are available all around the world (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) began to appear. New services based on analysis of large volumes of a wide range of data became increasingly common. These include database journalism, e-government and e-democracy, and services provided by new companies such as Airbnb and Uber. The current phase of cyberculture is one of global interconnection with widespread data surveillance and systems based on sentient technologies, machine learning, and artificial intelligence (Manovich, 2013).

One of the most important questions in the era of globalization is how to deal with the right to privacy, for which cyberculture represents a serious challenge. The right to

privacy is the right of the individual to control the circulation of their personal information, to be left alone, and to have their data protected. The concept refers to the preservation of the integrity of the body and limitation of access to certain territories, data, or any kind of personal information. In their seminal article, "The Right to Privacy," Brandeis and Warren (1890) pointed to technological threats. From the formation of public opinion through journalism in the early 20th century (Tarde, 1969) to the current debate over social networks such as Facebook, the issue of privacy has always been directly linked to the tension between public and private space. The new digital media have brought this issue to the fore, as all our actions leave digital trails that are processed by global companies. Various authors have focused on this issue in discussions of topics such as traceability (Lupton, 2015; Van Dijck, 2014), the contingencies of social life (Lutz & Strathoff, 2014; Parker, 1974), and how to ensure privacy in social networks (Solove, 2008).

This new phase appears to reflect the new "spatial focus" in cyberculture studies. Cyberculture is now the cyberculture of objects, bodies, and cities rather than the cyberculture of "cyberspace." The debate in previous decades on dematerialization and deterritorialization, as in the studies by J. Meyrowitz (1985) and M. Augé (1995) on the loss of sense of place, for example, has taken another direction. Researchers in the fields of communications, sociology, geography, urbanism, and architecture (Dourish et al., 2007; Graham & Marvin, 1996; Massey, 1997; Nyíri, 2005; Urry, 2007) have begun to take an interest in this new spatial focus. As Sloterdijk (2011) explains, "once one has gained an idea of terrestrial as the basic process of the Modern Age, it can be made clear why a third globalization, triggered by the rapid images in the networks, is currently leading to a general space crisis" (p. 66).

If there never was in fact a position beyond local connections, current cyberculture would appear to point to hyperlocalization, making it easier to understand globalization as connection. Although there is still a global perspective, what we see is confirmation of the illusion of globalization as a transcendent position, or a parallel reality based on the opposition between global and local. At the same time as it produces the sensation and fictitious experience of a global world, digital culture provides the very cure for this reverie. Although cyberculture creates processes that increase the number of connections and things on which we depend, this globalization is produced locally, always in a particular location, as it depends on concrete connectors and connections. Sensors and actuators coupled to objects and bodies, traces of relationships in localized digital networks, data mining and recommendation systems based on local profiling, are concrete examples that show the process of connection and territorialization rather than a global leap. Various aspects of the penetration of ICTs in different spheres of contemporary social life prevent us thinking of globalization as truly global.

As mentioned earlier, although cyberculture, with its networks and technologies providing worldwide connections, reinforces the idea of a global world, it also makes the digital connection processes visible, showing that everything does not in fact happen in a global world but requires individual, situated interconnections. If we think about globalization and cyberculture in this way, we will be able to place them in a suitable context and politicize them in an exercise in which the mediators are visualized.

Politicizing Globalization

The modern narrative of globalization does not consider location as it does not pay the price of mediations. If we follow social actions (how we access information, the infrastructure of connections, the available technologies, forms of sociability, etc.) all we see are connectors and connections in very concrete situations, not an overarching action in a single homogeneous space and (real) time. **If we flatten space topologically, the way it in fact is presented, we will no longer see local and global but merely mediations, allowing another discourse about “globalization.” The term now means a localized connection rather than the overcoming of the particular by a macro context. To understand globalization, we must search for connectors and avoid generalizing leaps. As Latour points out:**

whenever anyone speaks of a “system”, a “global feature”, a “structure”, a “society”, an “empire”, a “world economy”, an “organization”, the first ANT reflex should be to ask: “In which building? In which bureau? Through which corridor is it accessible? Which colleagues has it been read to? How has it been compiled?” Inquirers, if they accept to follow this clue, will be surprised at the number of sites and the number of conduits that pop up as soon as those queries are being raised. The social landscape begins to change rather quickly.

(Latour, 2005, p. 183)

Globalization is linked to the development of cyberculture precisely because this increases the number of different types of connections between people, products, and information all around the planet. Rather than being merely deterritorializing, globalization produces connections and situations with the aid of connectors. Like every sociotechnical network, globalization is involved in the creation of new spatialities. The modern narrative of globalization ignores the connectors and overlooks the notion of territory, asserting the global nature of globalization when in fact it is the result of concrete mediations performed locally. The concept of territory used here should be understood as one that explains what links us politically. Territory is a set of things to which we are tied. They may be nearby or far away—the

scale matters little. Territorialization is always the connection of differentiated spaces and times, ways of creating “worlds.” As Latour (2011, p. 211) observes, the term *territory* refers more to a list of things than to an identifiable location.

As we saw, cyberculture accelerates the connections (things, people, processes) and increases our dependence, leading to the third phase of globalization. Our territory has thus become larger (that is what globalization is) but this does not mean a space that is now global, as the modern discourse would have it. We must therefore recognize globalization not as the shift in scale from the small to the large, from the local to the global, from the micro to the macro, but as the expansion and deepening of interrelationships by means of connectors and connections. Once we have done this, we can escape from the illusion of the macro and micro, acknowledge our dependences, and consequently politicize the commercial, social, cultural, and technical issues that are now arising. Globalization in its current form is the continuation of a historical territorializing process. This increased interconnection undoubtedly recalls various problems related to borders (cultural, political, geographic, subjective, etc.) that are particular to each period. Globalization is not the globe where things are but the ties of dependence between things in a flat topology. It is the expansion of situated connections.

The modern global narrative of globalization is a generalist discourse that serves as an ideological instrument for politicians, businessmen, and activists, a discourse that makes big leaps and denies the agency of different actors (international institutions, banks, businessmen, etc.) to assert the up-to-date, irreversible nature of the phenomenon. These leaps without paying for the connections, connectors, and situations create a political discourse with a semblance of evidence. However, this discourse is in fact merely imaginary juggling to lend credence to the concept of the global and take advantage of concrete situations in which banks, companies, and government institutions “really” act. These institutions are not in the global world but always in some “place” and take advantage of a discourse that promotes “a transcending global” to exercise their influence locally (by means of ever more visible mediators: advertising, media companies, regulations, algorithms, etc.). As Massey notes, “this rhetoric of globalisation, in other words, is not a simple description of how the world is, it is an image in which the world is actively being made” (Massey, 1997, p. 10).

Indeed, the current discourse always combines globalization and mobility, which are taken to mean the free flow of information in a global economy. However, this mobility is in fact situated. It is determined by particular circumstances and does not exist “globally.” Mobility is not a neutral capacity for transportation, but power (“motility”) (Kellerman, 2006). This will depend on the available connections, connectors, and situations, which will vary greatly depending on whether we are talking about Brazil, South Korea, Scandinavia, or most African countries. As informational mobility is in fact only made possible by concrete negotiations and

mediation in situations involving servers, computers, communications lines, and specific applications, failure to pay the price of these connections is to treat the word as a “fetish” that fills the coffers of mobile telephone and technology companies. Added to this are the contradictions of the process: those who are more mobile very often tend to close borders and prevent the mobility of “others,” precisely because they know that globalization only exists in a situated context.

Appadurai (1996) notes that globalization is not a new phenomenon. He is interested in what has been happening in everyday life since the 1980s and focuses on the particularities of social changes. For him, such changes require new theoretical efforts and new political positions. He calls this period the “Global Now” and points to a cross-societal dimension of this process. Appadurai understands the local dimension as a complex set of experiences made possible by globalization. As he explains, “The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center–periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries)” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32).

The idea of mobility is linked to spaces crossed by “landscape’s dimensions” (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ideoscapes). These dimensions emphasize personal, informational, financial, technological, and ideological mobilities, stressing connections and the importance of locality. As Appadurai (1996, p. 178) explains:

I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts. This phenomenological quality, which expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality, and reproducibility, is the main predicate of locality as a category (or subject) that I seek to explore.

Cyberculture plays an important role since the electronic media have a fundamental influence in the constitution of these new social forms. The global flow of information is produced by new electronic media and has important consequences at the social level (identity, subjectivity, social imaginary). Appadurai (1996) pays particular attention to what he calls disjunctures between spatial and virtual neighborhoods produced by electronic media (TV, cinema, Internet). Cyberculture (he does not use this term) creates a clear division between these two types of community. As he points out:

What is new is the disjuncture between these processes and the mass-mediated discourses and practices (including those of economic liberalization, multiculturalism, human rights, and refugee claims) that now surround the nation-state. This disjuncture, like every other one, points to something conjunctural. (p. 199)

Here we have another example of how scales are not very productive. Visualization of connectors and connections situates the flows and networks. We do not need to talk about the general or particular, but rather about maps of flows, the network interconnections that articulate different locations and temporalities. Without using these terms, and pointing to scales, Appadurai asserts that place is never separated from the global.

It is just a matter of following the network, the practices, the instruments, the mediations, the documents, that is, the connectors and connections, to see the “situated” and the illusion of the global. Cyberculture induces a sensation of globalization if we do not pay attention to the mediators. Global experience is always local, as even at the World Economic Forum, where “globalization” is discussed, “global talks are at best tiny topics inside well-heated hotel rooms in Davos. The global is part of local histories” (Latour, 2009, pp. 141, 142). The narrative of a “global globalization” is that illusion, a denying of the agency of mediators. Cyberculture can help to visualize these connections, but these are forgotten and instead replaced by generalizations disconnected from the concrete mediations of which they are composed. This discourse is clearly of interest to those who, intentionally or otherwise, stand to gain something from these generalizations. Globalization only makes sense if it is defined by its situated connections and connectors.

Conclusion

It is important to understand that the situated place and the global only appear entangled. Without a situated point, there can be no view of the global. We are always watching the outside through mediations (local histories, fiction, academic literature, the map on the table, the screen before our eyes, the window on a bus or train, or any other means of transport). The ICTs of cyberculture expand and, at the same time, sustain our view. They offer viewing lenses that produce what is observed. To understand the extent of the connections in globalization is to pay the price of the connections made by these mediators as we cannot make big leaps: rather, we must go from one place to another, through connectors, step by step, as we weave the network.

ICTs allow us to see these paths and prevent an abstract, totalizing discourse like the modern narrative of globalization. When we look at a map in Google, for example, even though the movement is frictionless (with beautiful digital images), we know that we do not inhabit these spaces and that instead of moving we are in fact just accessing different datasets that connect one layer to another, giving the impression that we are crossing from the global to the local and vice versa. This crossing is constructed in the apparatus and does not prove that the micro and macro really exist. If we pay the price of the journeys, or the connection artifacts, we can understand the connectors and their reach.

Globalization as an abstraction of the mediation process is a gross simplification of the dynamics of the production of situations and connections. The more connectors there are, the greater the sensation that globalization is advancing. If we forget the connectors, it is “global globalization.” If we think about these mediators, it is “localized globalization” of territorial connections. Cyberculture created the narrative of globalization in its third phase but now also treats us to the spectacle of visible connections. If at the beginning it helped to sustain the fiction of a “global globalization,” now it appears to show us that mediations are produced as part of the process of the constitution of territories as connections. The materiality of the new technologies highlights the connectors—hardware, software, physical interfaces, and algorithmic agencies—and connections—the body, house, car, apartment block, office block, and street—in specific places.

Although it may indeed seem meaningless to call this process of “expansion of territorial connection” globalization, “globalization” is precisely the name of this modern, abstract narrative. The very name conveys the idea of “generalization,” of leaps, of transcendence, of purification of processes, of a reduction in the number of mediators. If this is in fact globalization, then “globalization” as such has never existed. However, as an interconnection space, it has always constituted the human species. As Sloterdijk (1999) points out, “globalization” as an outward movement of the “spheres” has always existed, not as a place above all others, never as transcendence, but as connection and rupture. As Raschke (2013, p. 14) notes in connection with Sloterdijk’s view: “Globalization is the ‘history’ of this profound human discontent born of freedom to exceed the limits of the innate spherological binary and to encounter the ‘externality’, the *Jenseits*.”

It is important to politicize globalization. This requires “relocalization” of the global, that is, identifying specific, material situations. Having an appreciation of this dependence leads us to very concrete political attitudes. Globalization is produced by a specific and material network.

Cyberculture technologies are now, more than ever before, laying bare the interconnections apparatus in a flat topography. Avoiding the narrative of “global globalization” and adopting instead the idea of situated interconnections (the various

locations where this globalization is “assembled”) is easier with current cyberculture technologies.

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Notes

1. Raschke (2013, p. 12).
2. The term was first used in 1980 to refer to the processes by which products were adapted to local markets. In 1997 the sociologist Roland Robertson and Jan Aart Scholte (2006) used the term to indicate the simultaneous existence of the “global” and the “local” in some cultures. The term, however, embraces two dimensions. Here these two scales do not exist as connections but always occur in a flat topology.
3. “*C’est quand l’usine dont on dépendait pour son emploi ferme ou se ‘délocalise’ qu’on va la compter à coup sûr dans le territoire; c’est quand le bureau de poste sur lequel on comptait menace de disparaître que l’on s’aperçoit qu’on y tient; c’est quand les eaux du rivage mangent les dunes où l’on jouait enfant que l’on se met à ranger l’océan dans la liste des êtres à prendre en compte; c’est quand une étiquette inconnue sur une bouteille de forme inhabituelle vient frapper l’œil dans une gondole de supermarché que l’on mesure soudain que les vignobles australiens font désormais partie de la gamme des vins qu’on aime à goûter; comment prévoir d’avance que le gaz par lequel on se chauffe dépend de la bonne humeur de M. Poutine dans ses relations détestables avec le président ukrainien?*” (Author’s translation).
4. By “situated” we mean “happening in a particular location, in a particular context and creating, as a result, a specific situation.”
5. For an overview of globalization and media, see Lechner and Boli (2015), part VIII—Globalization and Media.
6. Theoreticians such as Vannevar Bush, Joseph Licklider, Douglas Engelbart, and Ivan Sutherland insisted on the power of digital technologies to change the way society produces and distributes information, examples of this being the development of the first hypertext and systems that improved the user–computer relationship or interface, making it more “symbiotic.”
7. Usenet was set up in 1980 as a worldwide discussion network with a range of newsgroups. The network used the UUCP (Unix to Unix Copy) protocol and was the precursor to present-day forums and discussion groups. BBSs are network computer systems accessed by dial-up connections that can be used to set up specific interest groups in a shared communications environment.

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