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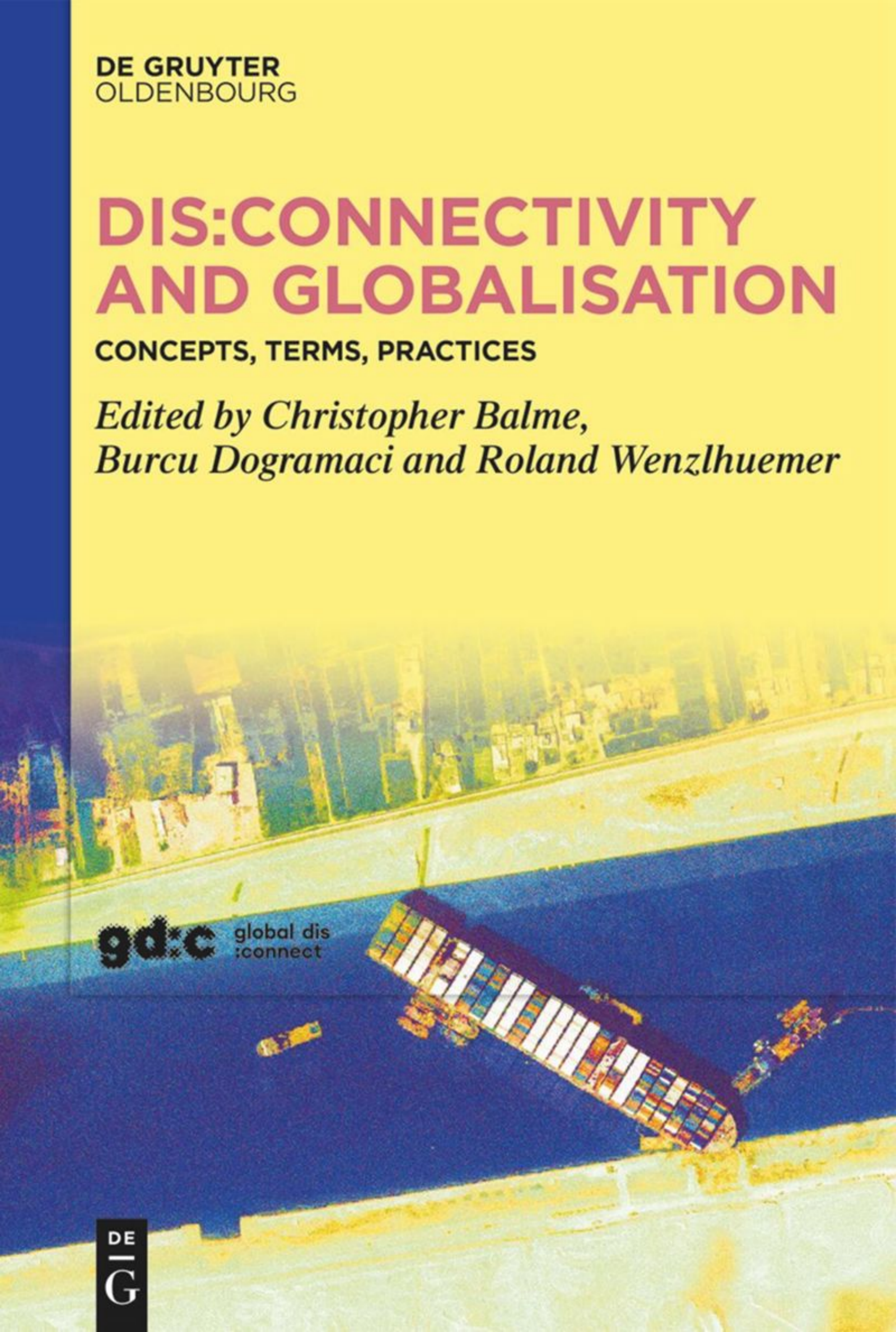
# DIS:CONNECTIVITY AND GLOBALISATION

CONCEPTS, TERMS, PRACTICES

*Edited by Christopher Balme,  
Burcu Dogramaci and Roland Wenzlhuemer*

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## **Dis:connectivity and Globalisation**



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Concepts, Terms, Practices

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Christopher Balme, Burcu Dogramaci  
and Roland Wenzlhuemer

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*Dis:connectivity and Globalisation: Concepts, Terms, Practices* is the first volume from the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect. For more information, see <https://www.globaldisconnect.org>.

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# Introduction

Christopher Balme, Burcu Dogramaci, Roland Wenzlhuemer

This volume ventures into a new field of research: global *dis:connectivity*. The concept emphasises the role of delays and detours, of interruptions and resistances, of the ‘active absence’ (Denning 1998) of connections in global contexts and explores their significance. The new concept derives from the observation that past and present globalisation dynamics cannot be adequately understood without their inherent disconnective qualities. Such qualities fundamentally broaden the prevailing perspective on global processes of interconnection and enrich our understanding – and thus ultimately the tractability – of globalisation and its historiographies.

Globalisation processes profoundly shape our lives, but the common conceptions of these processes are inadequate and often simplistic. In both academic and public discourses, globalisation is understood as increasingly dense interconnections on a global scale: people migrate, markets intertwine, information spreads worldwide at a rapid pace. Since the 1990s, catchy metaphors for this include ‘the world is shrinking’, ‘a global village’ and ‘the world is flat’ (Friedman 2005). Science uses more sophisticated-sounding, but hardly more nuanced, concepts and speaks of space-time compression or ‘time-space distantiation’ (Harvey 1989). However, many current political and social developments contradict and undermine such a one-dimensional understanding of globalisation. ‘America First’, ‘Fortress Europe’, ‘Brexit’, and, most spectacularly, the recent COVID-19 pandemic defy a simple narrative of interdependence. Newspapers and journals, commentators and academics alike talk of a reversal of previous developments, of a global trend towards isolation and disengagement, of deglobalisation.

Such a binary understanding of globalisation, which only knows two directions – forward or backward – is misleading. It encourages simplistic interpretations and ultimately perplexes science and politics when they try to understand the social significance of globalisation processes and, if necessary, to shape them. The limitations of the current understanding of globalisation derive from the exclusive focus on processes of global compression and connection. This view confirms and reinforces an implicitly assumed dichotomy between globally interconnected and unconnected actors, regions and phenomena, between connections and their absence, and between globalisation and deglobalisation. It privileges a binary understanding of globalisation processes that either obtain or do not, are to be welcomed or rejected. Ultimately, connections and their absence are thus each assigned separate spheres of applicability.

This volume argues for a more complex and, at the same time, practical understanding of globalisation. Every process of interconnectedness bears elements of

disentanglement and disconnection. When people migrate, they encounter borders, confront obstacles, face discrimination. While markets for certain products and services are integrated, others remain regionally organised or shuttered behind trade barriers. While vast amounts of information are now available quickly and almost everywhere, its utility depends on language skills, education, gender, and the social and ethnic affiliations of the actors, among other factors. While artistic production is often related to transnational movement, this movement might at times be involuntary and entail artists' exclusion from national art histories. Disentanglement, unrealised connections and exclusion are not the opposite of interconnectedness, but central, formative components of it – these complex dialectics inhere in the concept of *dis:connectivity*.

The contributions in this book mark the first comprehensive effort to make this concept accessible and to place it in the wider framework of concepts linked to globalisation. We argue for a decidedly trans- and interdisciplinary engagement with the concept of *dis:connectivity* in globalisation processes. We call for the inclusion of the arts and their alternative forms of knowledge production and transmission, knowledge that 'acquires a force of its own, one unpredictable and incipient in any space and location' (Juneja 2019, 298), as art historian Monica Juneja emphasises.

### **From globalisation to deglobalisation?**

To say that the world we share is thoroughly globalised is a truism. Already in the first half of the twentieth century, two world wars and the advent of the atomic age made the interconnectedness and interdependence of practically the entire globe painfully clear. Since then, the breath-taking increase of global trade, of the flows of capital and information, of intercontinental tourism, of the global art market, of the global division of labour and of voluntary and involuntary migration – to name but a few fields – have fundamentally changed how we live and work. The first photograph showing Earth from space appeared on the cover of Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* in autumn 1968. The image shows continents and oceans, but not state borders or national territories. This image conveys like no other before it that the inhabitants of Earth are connected, that we occupy a shared space beyond borders or political boundaries. Four years later in 1972, the Apollo 17 mission took the iconic *Blue Marble* photograph. This mission, the end of the Cold War around 1991 and the rise of the World Wide Web and mobile communication technologies since the 1990s are but a few of the more prominent scenes in the well-known story of the 'shrinking of the world'.

More recently, the global financial crisis of 2008, the aggravation of the global climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war against Ukraine remind us of the degree of global interconnection that we have built. The subprime mort-

gage crisis in the USA in 2008 permeated global capital markets along countless reciprocal ties. A regional real-estate bubble rapidly induced a global banking crisis, while the global art market seemed decoupled from the crash and continued to diversify globally, with art prices at auction remaining persistently high (Herchenröder 2018).<sup>1</sup> Human-induced climate change is inseparable from the history of industrialisation and consumerism. Rapid growth, interregional mobility and the global division of labour fuel it. Climate change pays no heed to human boundaries, national or otherwise. Likewise COVID-19. In early 2020, the virus spread around the entire planet along global mobility networks.<sup>2</sup> And the Russian invasion of Ukraine has not only brought death and suffering to millions, it has also led to a massive increase in the global arms trade and unsettled the global energy regime and food supplies (International Energy Agency 2022). All these developments would have been unthinkable without the dense, interconnected, global networks that have grown over the last 200 years. These few examples from the past two decades make the scope and depth of global connectivity and the resulting mutual dependence uniquely palpable.

These recent examples also allow us to trace a change in how we perceive and talk about globalisation and its histories. Besides highlighting interconnectedness, they all exhibit unmistakable elements of disruption and disconnection, although the latter aspects seldom feature prominently in the conceptualisation of globalisation. The global financial crisis began when the US real-estate bubble burst in 2008, when mutual trust – a primal type of connection – evaporated, and this rippled throughout the dense network of capital flows. Attempts to combat climate change have been thwarted principally by a lack of will and the ineffectuality of international cooperation that arguably also goes back to a lack of trust that everyone is going to pull together in the same direction. Despite the inherently global, even planetary, character of climate change, parochial interests and structures have largely trumped global initiatives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, international borders were closed, and tight regulations were imposed on interregional travel. Curfews and access restrictions became common. Quarantine rules massively curtailed the production and transportation sectors, which derailed global supply chains. And Russia's war against Ukraine has closed borders, prompted energy and other embargos, created new ruptures in numerous domains, including academia

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<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive overview on the globalisation of art (markets) is given in Belting, Buddensieg and Weibel 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For the connection between the spread of the virus and flight routes, see "Tracking the Spread of COVID-19 with Air Travel Data." Rand National Security Research Division, August 4, 2023, <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/cat-v.html>. Accessed 8 April 2025.

and the art world, and thereby accelerated the pre-existing political polarisation of the world.

These examples highlight the dynamics of global disruptions and disconnections. They stand *pars pro toto* for a more general diagnosis that has coalesced around the term ‘deglobalisation’. Deglobalisation has rapidly gained popularity in recent years. The World Economic Forum’s *Global Risks Report 2023* sees the world facing ‘a new era of low growth, low global investment and de-globalisation’ (World Economic Forum 2023, 6). Leading scholarly journals have published or are currently soliciting special issues on the topic (International Affairs 2021); researchers are reviewing the genesis of the term (Pryke 2022); and historians have already started to offer advice on how ‘to read the deglobalisation debate’ (Tooze 2023). The upsurge of interest in deglobalisation can be seen as evidence that there is undoubtedly an increasing awareness of the disruptive and disconnective elements of globalisation processes.

And this is not just a contemporary diagnosis. While the current ‘polycrisis’ (Whiting and Park 2023) has laid such global disruptions and disconnections utterly bare, a closer look at history reveals that they have always been part of globalisation processes. Revisiting our first examples, the two world wars and, in particular, the invention of the nuclear bomb were not only developments bearing truly global consequences – they were also highly disruptive for many forms of global connectivity. Reduced global trade, forced mass migration, strict border regimes and, ultimately, the emergence of an ideologically, politically, culturally, artistically, and militarily divided world were among the direct consequences. Other global incidents, such as the Suez Crisis or the 1973 oil crisis were also deeply disruptive. The latter, for instance, directly affected the legal status of migrant workers in Western Europe. Thus, the 1973 oil crisis and trade unions’ criticism of programmes to recruit ‘guest workers’ (*Gastarbeiter*) in the Federal Republic of Germany halted recruitment of migrant labour (Berlinghoff 2021). Even developments that are generally regarded as keystones of globalisation, such as the expansion of global transport and communication infrastructures, evince obviously disruptive aspects. Examples include the vulnerability of much global infrastructure, such as pipelines, airplanes and submarine cables, or even the differential access to it, which varies by wealth and geography.<sup>3</sup>

The term ‘deglobalisation’ has also been employed in reference to historical disruptions, in particular the interwar period and the Great Depression when com-

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the international conference *Roads to Exclusion* organised jointly by the German Historical Institute Washington and the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect in September 2022 and the recent themed issue of the *Journal of Transport History* that emerged from it (Greiner, Liebisch-Gümüş, Peters and Wenzlhuemer 2024).

mercial integration and trade sank much lower than in the 19th century and in the post-war years (Williamson 1996; Obstfeld and Taylor 1998). Ultimately, however, such historical interpretations and most current applications of the term ‘deglobalisation’ only highlight the deficiencies of our current conceptual understanding of globalisation. For instance, those who see the interwar years as a phase of deglobalisation assess globalisation primarily in terms of trade, the integration of global markets and price convergence, which are cyclical. Like a pendulum, periods of retarded integration or even deglobalisation follow periods of intense globalisation (Link 2018).

Current talk of deglobalisation often falls into a similar trap. Writing for Chatham House, Markus Kornprobst and Jon Wallace neatly define deglobalisation as ‘a movement towards a less connected world’ (Kornprobst and Wallace 2021), juxtaposing it with globalisation. As so often, deglobalisation is interpreted as the reversal of globalisation or at least as its deceleration or cessation, which, in a frame of interpretation driven by growth, virtually amounts to a reversal. Kornprobst and Wallace continue that ‘it would be wrong to say the world is definitively in a period of deglobalisation’ and that ‘[i]t is better to understand the question as one of balance between globalising and deglobalising forces’. While they acknowledge the coexistence of globalising and deglobalising processes, they still juxtapose them and ultimately reproduce a widespread binary understanding of globalisation that falls short of the complexity and incongruence of the phenomenon. Slumps, disruptions, detours, hiatuses and other forms of disconnection are and have always been integral elements of globalisation processes. They are not the opposite of globalisation and certainly do not herald its undoing. They are not harbingers of deglobalisation but, as we argue, part of all global entanglements and shape their sociocultural significance.

### **Beyond connection, integration, convergence**

The common conceptual understanding of globalisation, however, generally omits this integral relationship of connection and disconnection. It remains firmly focused on ideas like global connectivity, integration and convergence. To a certain degree, such ideas reflect our daily experiences of global interdependence. The notion that the consumption of a raccoon dog in Wuhan (Mallapaty 2023) might have led to worldwide border closures or that the tweet of a tech billionaire can throw global financial markets into turmoil is no longer bewildering. Global interdependence has long since become a fact of life. We know that distant occurrences have constant and direct impacts on our own local lives. This is what the term ‘globalisation’ – both in scholarly and more colloquial parlance – usually attempts to capture and operationalise: increasing connectivity over space and time.

The study of globalisation is awash with attempts to define the object of study – most of which paraphrase the early conceptualisations of the late 1980s and 1990s. David Harvey’s idea of ‘time-space distantiatio’ (Harvey 2010), Anthony Giddens’s claim that globalisation is ‘the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa’ (Giddens 1990, 64), or the definition by David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton that sees globalisation as ‘the quickening and intensifying over time and space of the flows of commodities, of currencies, of words, images and people’ (1999, 27–28) have been paraphrased countless times in the last three decades with little conceptual gain. The term still generally refers to increasing global connections and integration.

The push to pluralise the term and to analytically speak of ‘globalisations’ or ‘processes of globalisation’ is among the few substantial advancements of the concept (Epple 2012). Historian Jürgen Osterhammel argues that the plural ‘politically defuses’ the term and tempers the ‘drive towards holism in the contemporary discussion’ about globalisation. ‘The plural simplifies the historians’ lives by letting us preserve our attention to detail and scepticism towards generalisations without forcing us to evade the big questions’ (Osterhammel 2017, 12–13).<sup>4</sup> While this initiative to pluralise the term has mostly come from the field of history and, thus, emphasises the conditions of historical research, its principal arguments can be extended to a broader, transdisciplinary understanding of globalisation.

However, as Osterhammel continues, ‘the idea of singular (and unique) megaglobalisation would remain lurking in the background’ despite processes of integration being framed in the plural (Osterhammel 2017, 13). Thus, the terminology of globalisation studies is still replete with metaphors that emphasise ‘connections’, ‘integration’ and ‘convergence’. Each is employed in different semantic and institutional contexts, as when ‘integration’ appears in economic and political language, whereas we find ‘convergence’ frequently in legal discourse. Underpinning all three is an epistemology of connections, the observation or identification of which implies that something has been learned about a teleological progression towards ever increasing ‘connectivity’.

To some extent, this prevailing focus on increasing connectivity is a legacy of how economics understood the term ‘globalisation’. Economists were among the first to regularly employ the term to describe the increasing integration of commodity and capital markets and the global convergence of prices in the commodity and service sectors fuelled by falling transport and communication costs. Such a purely economic interpretation captures only one – admittedly important – aspect

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the authors’.

of globalisation, tracing only global commodity prices, the flow of goods and capital and, to a certain degree, the global division of labour. It has little to say about other forms of entanglements, about the global circulation of ideas and ideologies, of cultural practices, about tourism or the spread of pathogens.

Economic globalisation also seldom reflects on its own history and conceptual metaphors. Yet the market, where commodity exchange is enacted, is (or was at one time) both a concrete space and a spatial metaphor, although its precise workings eschew spatial visualisation. Its ubiquity is such that we forget that the market was once a foreign and mysterious concept that had to be 'learned', and, as Jean-Christophe Agnew has argued, in the early modern period, theatre and the market both learned from one another, eventually separating as concepts while remaining intertwined as practices (Agnew 1986). Conceptions of the market, especially a globalised one, are still suspended discursively between depicting it as the source of all evil and a panacea for all ills (the invisible hand is ever benevolent). Neoclassical economics sees in the market a domain of utility-maximising agents (from individuals to companies), Marxian economics the precondition for the rise of bourgeois social relations and ultimately global capitalism.<sup>5</sup>

Theatre history provides a good example of how the arts react to and reflect on dis:connectivities of global trade. Shakespeare's 'comedy' *The Merchant of Venice* instructed early modern audiences about the emerging globalised market predicated on shipping and its attendant risks. Shylock warns Bassanio that Antonio's business ventures are little more than 'supposition':

Yet his means are in supposition. He hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I understand moreover upon the Rialto he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath squandered abroad. (*MV*, 1.3.17–21)

Shylock's comment to Bassanio regarding Antonio's investment in goods transported by four ships from almost all corners of the then known world captures a key moment in Western thinking: it is a moment of risk management in early modern globalisation, the hubris that one can wager 'against the Gods' and still hope to turn a profit (Bernstein 1996). Shylock's disparaging comment about 'ventures he hath squandered abroad' contrasts the money-lender's more traditional business model of face-to-face transactions on the Rialto, Venice's fabled market, with the new 'invisible' and risky market of global commodities.

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<sup>5</sup> The first chapter of the Communist Manifesto states this relationship with globalisation very clearly: 'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.' (Marx and Engels 1848, chapter I).

Shakespeare's play is in one sense a *Lehrstück* (didactic exercise) about a globalised market lacking robust risk insurance. The bond Antonio commits to (a pound of his flesh as security for Shylock's loan) is an allegory of the capitalist market and draws on the same metaphorical language as David Harvey's critique of capitalism: 'Capital is the lifeblood that flows through the body politic'.<sup>6</sup> The ships lost at sea signify a minor disturbance of global trade, but mean for Antonio a life-threatening non-fulfilment of contractual obligations. The market itself is represented in two ways: as the Rialto, a place of face-to-face trading and information exchange, and as the more abstract realm of 'means in supposition', financial transactions predicated on the future. Each ship is an edge in a network consisting of nodes from the four corners of the known world, a potential connection, which in his case is severed. He breaks his bond and only narrowly escapes with his life thanks to some legal trickery by a cross-dressing woman, Portia.

Just as Shakespeare alerts his audience to the simultaneous and interwoven character of connection and disruption in early modern global trade and investment, other authors and playwrights point to similar constellations, albeit in different historical and practical contexts. The eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull in spring 2010 resulted in a seven-day shutdown of much of Europe's air traffic (Perkins 2011), with artistic aftermaths. The play commissioned by the Munich Residenztheater and written by Helmut Krausser, *Eyjafjallajökull-Tam-Tam*, revolves around 55 people in a departure lounge whom a natural event condemned to wait (Krausser 2011). The connection between disasters and literary production is not new: in 1815, the eruption of the Indonesian volcano Tambora caused a change in meteorological conditions on the other side of the globe as well (Wood 2015). The darkened sky, a summer that turned into winter, and continuous rain in Europe probably moved Mary Shelley to write her novel *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) (Feldhaus 2022). These connections between an event as a global rupture, weather conditions, climate and artistic production were less obvious at the time of these creations, but in retrospect their connective and disconnective effects become apparent.

These are just three works of fiction that exemplify that connecting and disconnecting processes are deeply interwoven. There is an interdependence between the connected and the unconnected. As more places, regions and people around the globe integrate, the corollary is that others cannot (or don't want to) participate in those integrative processes to the same degree, and they will be left behind, rel-

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<sup>6</sup> The full quote is: 'Capital is the lifeblood that flows through the body politic of all those societies we call capitalist, spreading out, sometimes as a trickle and other times as a flood, into every nook and cranny of the inhabited world' (Harvey 2010, vi).

actively speaking. Global networks are lumpy; some branches are especially dense. The denser they are, the more conspicuous the patchy and empty areas become. To adapt another beloved metaphor of globalisation research, the world is not ‘shrinking’ uniformly; it’s warping.

The assumption introduced above that, in comparison to the late nineteenth century, the diminished flows of goods and capital during the interwar years constituted a period of deglobalisation also deserves closer inspection. This period certainly saw a contraction of the global theatre business that never recovered its pre-1914 levels due to a doubling of transport costs and competition from cinema (Balme 2020; Leonhardt 2021). This is but a small part of a larger picture and sorely lacks context. The fact that the global economic crisis of the late 1920s and ’30s progressed outward from the USA to grip the entire world is a strong indication of the degree of global integration at the time. The global history of crisis-management techniques (Patel 2016), the simultaneous proliferation of international organisations (Herren 2009; Sluga and Clavin 2017) and the global dissemination of fascist thought (Hedinger 2019) are further examples. The spread of the ‘Spanish flu’ was certainly accelerated by the unprecedented movement of people, mainly troops, to and from the theatres of the First World War. The quarantine measures led to severe disruptions comparable to those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic but were briefer, although mortality was significantly higher. At the same time, the movement of millions of troops also created unprecedented opportunities for cultural contacts, as soldiers and support personnel from around the world converged on (mainly) Europe as occupying forces, hospital staff and numerous other professions found themselves in unexpected locales (Spinney 2017). Using the example of the interwar years, Jörn Leonhard flagged precisely this simultaneity of integration and disintegration: ‘Historically speaking, structural globalisation has often coincided with sectoral deglobalisation, with the two often reinforcing each other’ (Leonhard 2020, 413), which applies to processes of global integration in general. Globalisation is not a ratchet mechanism, nor is it a reversible macro process. It consists, rather, of many small, interrelated, complementary processes.

‘Deglobalisation’ is not a suitable term to capture the interplay of these processes. Any understanding of deglobalisation assumes the pre-existence of some degree of globalisation and its attendant forces. Deglobalisation is, therefore, a temporal concept on a timeline charting the expansion of forces commonly associated with globalisation and their putative reversal. Recent attempts in economics and international relations to theorise ‘reglobalisation’, which means globalisation minus its more extreme neoliberal manifestations (Bishop and Payne 2021), seem similarly unfit.

### **Global *dis:connectivity*: new approaches and connected concepts**

The actors and places of globalisation are always embedded in connecting and disconnecting circumstances simultaneously (Biedermann 2021, 25), and they must be studied in that state of tension. Connections and non-connections converge in particular places and in the experiences of historical actors, revealing their significance in their interrelations. The history of global infrastructures provides us with many instructive examples in this regard. The Suez Canal, for instance, was one such place where connecting and disconnecting phenomena converged and collided. The canal did not merely connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, inaugurating a new sea route of global significance; it also bisected ancient caravan routes, requiring travellers and camels to wait for gaps in canal traffic so they could ferry across (Huber 2010, 340). When the canal opened in 1869, it greatly facilitated and shortened the journey between Europe and Asia and rerouted much maritime traffic. Valeska Huber, who has carefully studied the significance of the Suez Canal to the history of mobility, has stated that the canal transformed the Mediterranean ‘from a lake to a lane’ (Huber 2012, 141). Other routes – in this case the long route around the Cape of Good Hope – saw less traffic and were then used primarily by freighters. As one region grew more tightly coupled with the globe, another became (relatively) decoupled. More recently, the blockage of the Suez Canal by the container ship *Ever Given* revealed how quickly large portions of global trade can come to a standstill (Troelenberg 2021).

The history of the Suez Canal exemplifies the frictions between exchange and isolation, between connectivity and disconnectivity far beyond a single epoch, or – to adapt a formulation by historian Jörn Leonhard – the ‘tension between globality and deglobalisation’ (Leonhard 2020, 413), touching on one of the most important points of an adequate conception of globalisation. The tension that derives from the simultaneity and mutual constitution of connecting and disconnecting elements crucially influences how processes of globalisation develop and are shaped, experienced and categorised. Its importance for the study of globalisation processes can hardly be overstated. From this perspective, the term *dis:connectivity* is invaluable because it captures this mutually constitutive, tense relationship between global integration, disintegration and the absence of connections whose relevance is only apparent in the context they collectively constitute. *Dis:connectivity* captures the dynamic relationship of connections and disconnections, of the local and the global, of enmeshment and friction. *Dis:connective* phenomena should not be understood and studied as the opposite of interconnectedness, but as integral components of it. The term privileges neither connecting nor disconnecting processes, but focuses instead on their turbulent interplay, which is the decisive factor in grasping the social significance of globalisation.

Our thesis is that dis:connectivity presents an alternative epistemology to the binary logic of connection/disconnection. The colon, the [:], signifies quite literally either a *passage* (through the body), or grammatically, the *separation* of clauses that are ‘independent and discontinuous, but between which there is an apposition or *similar relation of sense*’.<sup>7</sup> Both inflections indicate movement and relations, apertures and pathways rather than blockages. As a grammatical term, *apposition* means similarity or parallelism, and figuratively, suitability or aptness. In other words, there is more movement through the colon, between the ‘dis’ and the ‘connection’ than meets the eye.

The alternative epistemology suggested by the term *dis:connectivity* blurs and dismantles the binary logic of a connection-based understanding of globalisation, where the instantiation of the connection (the on-off switch) represents the new insight, the learning. Much research in globalisation studies follows this binary logic, where documenting and proving the establishment of a freeport, a trading route, the laying of a telegraph line represents (new) knowledge. Dis:connectivity transcends the binary. It allows us to examine globalisation processes, attending to dis:connective elements to better understand the effects of tension in bundles of connections.

The approach is directly related to the object of investigation: by identifying situations, contexts and developments in which dis:connectivity becomes observable and that cannot otherwise be explained, a level of empirical observation emerges that requires either new or redefined concepts. Both the study of the arts and artistic practice can help here by opening up new methodologies. Exile, flight and migration not only shaped (art) history, but are also centrally related to phenomena of dis:connectivity. Experiences of displacements situate people in new contexts in that their private and professional networks and the conditions of their work change. Artists who fled Nazi Germany and the states it occupied in the 1930s and 1940s, for example, were unable to return at first, so their works contain both contexts: their geography of origin and new relationships. This is apparent in the ‘first pictures’ by photographers and painters after arriving in the country of exile and in their reflections on their routes and passages (Dogramaci 2017; Roth 2021). While these relocations do not necessarily have to be negotiated in the work, they play a role in the analysis as they point to the narrow path between belonging and place-making, between yesterday’s experiences and those to come.

Artistic practice is, thus, an important research object in globalisation studies and dis:connectivity, as it simultaneously builds on and creates global connections

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<sup>7</sup> “Colon.” In *Oxford English Dictionary*. n.d. <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=colon>. Accessed January 17, 2025. Emphasis added.

and disconnections. Moreover, artistic practice also provides additional and fruitful methods to examine dis:connectivity. Art opens topics of discussion that are denied to or ignored by science. The arts can engage with the fluidity and volatility of dis:connective phenomena with heuristic privilege – not only with the many gaps of knowledge connected to (forced) migratory artistic experiences, when goods, personal documents and artistic works often have to be left behind. Interruptions, absences and delays leave hardly any traces in archives. The arts have already demonstrated their potential to examine fleeting, absent phenomena analytically and aesthetically (Kamper 1999; Siegmund 2006), offering productive approaches to analysing dis:connectivity as an aesthetics of omissions. This is particularly striking in the fields of postcolonial and post-migrant art and theatre. Examples include the post-migrant productions of the Berlin Gorki Theatre under the direction of Shermin Langhoff, the plays of Nuran David Calis on migration and the radical right, and the current work of artists such as Cana Bilir-Meier, Sofia Dona and Emeka Ogboh, who use artistic research to negotiate displacements, place-making (transforming public space) in migration and experiences of structural and institutional racism.<sup>8</sup> Elke Bippus describes the productivity of seeing (and not recognising seeing) as a process and result of artistic research; artistic research works with contradictions, irritations and ambivalences, and ambiguities at the borders of knowledge (Bippus 2015, 68). As one of the contributions to this volume points out, artist Francis Alÿs worked in *The Loop* with the aesthetic dimension of detours in the context of migration processes, but also refers to the paradoxical meaning of borders as ‘hard/not crossable’ or ‘soft/traversable’ – depending on a person’s passport and nationality (→ **Detours**). As the essay on ‘Blackout’ by Fabienne Liptay in this book emphasizes, the photograph *The Great White Way Goes Black* by Katharina Sieverding not only referred to the blackout in New York City during a summer night in 1977, but also shed light on the colonial histories of Broadway as a former trade route (→ **Blackout**).

Rethinking globalisation with the term *dis:connectivity*, as we propose, demands re-examining and, in some cases, radically refining the vocabulary we use to describe it and the methodology we use to analyse it. This collection of essays constitutes our proposal for a new vocabulary of concepts for globalisation research, some cases of which are not new but critical to the development of the field.

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<sup>8</sup> For the program of Gorki Theatre, see “Gorki.” n.d. <https://www.gorki.de/de>. On Nuran David Calis, see “Nuran David Calis” [nachtkritik.de](https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_seoglossary&view=glossary&catid=78&id=277&Itemid=67). n.d. [https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com\\_seoglossary&view=glossary&catid=78&id=277&Itemid=67](https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_seoglossary&view=glossary&catid=78&id=277&Itemid=67). For projects of Cana Bilir-Meier, see Cana Bilir-Meier, “Projects.” <http://www.canabilirmeier.com/> n.d., [http://www.canabilirmeier.com/?page\\_id=225](http://www.canabilirmeier.com/?page_id=225). For works of Sofia Dona, see “Sofia Dona.” n.d. <https://sofiadona.com>. On Emeka Ogboh, see “Emeka Ogboh.” n.d. <http://emekaogboh.art>.

The contours of the concept of dis:connectivity become apparent in interaction with other concepts and reveal trans- and interdisciplinary connectivity. Our selection of lemmas relates dis:connectivity to adjacent phenomena and concepts in order to show the multiple valences of dis:connectivity and to enrich new perspectives on globalisation phenomena in other disciplines, whose research and engagement with the concept we seek to encourage. Each lemma in this book is set in relation to the concept of dis:connectivity.

The breaking of once-intact bonds, whether commercial, familial or ritual, renders dis:connectivity a study of rupture, fracture and absences. But what do digressions and absence mean? What kind of knowledge can be produced by identifying breakages? What is the epistemological gain of studying detours/deviations and disruptions? How are exile, migration and flight in their spatiality and temporality connected to the concept of dis:connectivity? Delay, waiting and (temporary) standstill are fundamental components of migratory movements. How can multiple belongings also be described as a complicated relation to geographies of origin and ‘arrival’ in the destination of migration?

The selection of lemmas embraces both familiar terms defined in a new way (→ **Feminism**, → **Infrastructure**, → **Postmigration/Migration**, → **Communication Technologies**, → **Ecologies**, → **Queer**) as well as concepts that have seldom featured in glossaries of keywords (→ **Absences**, → **Blockages**, → **Detours**, → **Im/mobility**, → **Interruptions**, → **Unsettlement**) but are fundamental to understanding a dis:connective perspective on globalisation. Both groups of terms are necessary to encompass the multi-faceted nature of dis:connectivity. To give just some examples from the articles, ‘infrastructure’ is, as Tom Menger notes, a ‘basic enabler of globalisation processes’ while ‘simultaneously entrench(ing) our vulnerability to disruptions in those same systems’ (→ **Infrastructure**), and while ‘communication technologies’ are usually heralded as integral to globalisation, Heidi Tworek emphasizes that the implantation of such technologies is highly selective and can ‘also disconnect by building networks that only integrate certain places, cater to certain types of users, or facilitate certain sorts of interactions’ (→ **Communication Technologies**). Similarly, an ecological approach to globalisation foregrounds the feedback loops of resource use at a local level. However, as Corey Ross demonstrates, ‘when trade enables people to draw on resources from far away, the drawbacks are displaced and the feedback is disrupted’ (→ **Ecologies**).

The less familiar terms also highlight the ambivalences inherent in globalisation. For example, Constance DeGourcy shows in her article that ‘absences’ are central to understanding migration because absences can be seen ‘as a way of maintaining a link’ with people left behind, giving rise to what she terms ‘attachment techniques’ (→ **Absences**). Absence can turn into disappearance, when refugees, for example, ‘disappear’ on their journeys and remain forever unaccounted for.

Equally ambivalent, if not downright paradoxical, is the role played by ‘blockages’, which are, as Shane Boyle argues, ‘integral’ to international trade and capital flows by being deployed to control the flow of goods (→ **Blockages**). Also integral to a dis:connective understanding of globalisation are ‘detours’, which contain, as Burcu Dogramaci argues, not only a spatial but also a temporal dimension as they imply ‘stagnation, delay, waiting, rethinking’ (→ **Detours**). Detours lead almost ineluctably to ‘im/mobility’ (Kerilyn Schewel) and ‘waiting’ (Hanni Geiger). Both these terms are linked to migration, one of the key drivers of globalisation, but scarcely feature in analysis of it. The ‘mobility bias in migration research’ (Schewel) has prevented a differentiated examination of immobility, whether it pertains to those voluntarily or involuntarily ‘left behind’ or migrants stuck behind borders or caught up in the bureaucratically induced stasis of asylum procedures (→ **Im/mobility**). The latter form of im/mobility is usually designated a form of ‘waiting’, which Hanni Geiger shows has already generated an aesthetic dimension in photography or theatre productions that that ‘disturb the dominant narratives of migration’ (→ **Waiting**).

As the individual articles highlight, dis:connectivity can also be applied to transport, protest, knowledge production and dissemination. Concepts such as ‘unsettlement’ or ‘turbulence’, which are semantically linked, can contribute to an analysis of the imaginary of globalisation: the real or imagined feelings of disorientation and anxiety regarding distant events that appear to affect one directly. The lemmas collected in this volume show how dis:connectivity relates to both academic research and artistic work.

### Concluding remarks

Dis:connectivity is a ‘travelling concept’, as defined by Mieke Bal (Bal 2002). It is more than a purely theoretical construct; it may open new avenues for research and analysis with dis:connective phenomena, either in geographical breadth or historical depth.<sup>9</sup> Travelling concepts display adaptability to changing cultural, disciplinary and historical contexts. Dis:connectivity can outline research practice, as research also takes place under dis:connective conditions. Examples include exceptional research situations, such as the COVID-induced closures of international archives as well as restricted access to archives (as in the case of authoritarian states). However, the increasing digitisation of literature and archive holdings can also increase connectivity to the sources. Topics such as global migration and flight can result in dis:connective research practices that become major challenges for

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<sup>9</sup> Dis:connective global narratives of ‘origins’, such as the reference back to the Paleolithic and Neolithic by modernist authors like Carl Einstein and artists of Surrealism, exemplify historical depth. See Franke and Holert 2018.

researchers, be they language-related (relocating often requires traversing several states) or due to private papers and archival records (address books, passports, letters, diaries) being scattered, destroyed in transit or simply left behind. Research into the biographies of artistic works produced in exile can usually only proceed indirectly, absences are the rule, and interruptions due, for example, to a lack of linearity in exile biographies or to the fact that the works created on the routes of exile were left behind are common.

A dis:connective approach can also entail counter-intuitive observations, especially when dealing with phenomena like ‘absence’, which inheres in processes associated with globalisation. Certain people, regions and ideas can be actively absent as participants in processes of globalisation. While the four freedoms of the EU facilitate the movement of goods, services, capital and people, they also leave gaps in domestic labour markets, in medical care (i.e. brain drain) and in family structures. Absences can also manifest themselves as genuine losses. While the physical presence of refugees, which some in Western countries perceive to be threatening, may have politically destabilising effects, they coincide with virtually unfathomable absences. In seeking refuge, people die of thirst in the desert, drown at sea and are missed by their families and communities of origin. Such losses defy statistical analysis and are therefore omitted in quantitative assessments of globalisation processes.

The significance of interruptions, absences and detours for processes of globalisation is difficult to grasp and interpret with conventional scholarly methods. It requires a particular methodological approach combining methods from the humanities with those from the study and practice of art, bringing these into dialogue with each other. We hope that the concepts presented in the volume will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the dis:connective processes underlying globalisation.

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# Absences

Constance De Gourcy

International and transnational migrants have given a new dimension to the globalisation of the world: it is estimated that 281 million people (3.6% of the world's population) were living in a country other than their country of birth in 2020, 128 million more than in 1990 and more than three times as many as in 1970<sup>1</sup>. The routes they take on a global scale are now less dependent on the legacies of colonial pasts and open up a whole new range of possibilities in terms of location and relationships with the countries of origin. By changing the relationship between proximity and distance, globalisation has also transformed the ways in which people live and project themselves in the world and caused a reconsideration of the forms of presence in the countries of origin.

With the diversification of migration profiles, globalisation has also been accompanied by the production of situations of absence, rarely experienced before on this scale. These situations of absence reveal the inequalities in access to the space of mobility and the new forms of dis:connectivity (→ **Introduction**) that shape them. The health measures generated by the recent Covid 19 pandemic demonstrated this powerfully by restricting movement and confining the population, generating isolation and loneliness throughout the world, shaking up our ways of life and causing tension between the distance that protects and the proximity that exposes. These situations of absence within families reflect the geographical frontiers that separate people who share a bond of proximity, either by descent or by elective affinity, that forms the social fabric, along with the organic bond and the bond of citizenship (Paugam 2023).

It is important to distinguish the contexts of separation (historical forms) from the situations of absence (social forms) that result from them. This is because separation and absence refer to different acts and processes. This decoupling of separation and absence is justified by the identification of situations of absence that differ according to the contexts that produce them. Indeed, there is nothing in common between the mobility of Algerian workers in France up until the 1960s during the 'Trente Glorieuses' and that of mothers who went to work in the personal services sector in a country other than their own. In the first case, the mobility documented by Abdelmalek Sayad (1999) was predominantly male. These men, either mandated by the group or driven by individual motives, spent a few months in France before

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<sup>1</sup> State of migration in the world 2020. Available at: <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2020-interactive/?lang=FR> (accessed 18/12/2023).

returning to their families back home. The context of separation involving the departure of mothers who have gone to work abroad is very different.<sup>2</sup> The result is new family configurations linked to the reorganisation of roles within these families, with children being entrusted to close family members. Situations of absence in the contexts described above differ from one another because of the length of the separation, the reorganisation of roles within transnational families, the care of children left behind, the administrative and legal arrangements governing these absences and, more broadly, the economic, material and emotional resources that may circulate within family configurations.

Although the contexts of separation have multiplied in a globalised world, absence as a way of maintaining a link remains little studied in the field of migration, even though inequalities in access to mobility influence this experience, its duration and the ways in which the link is maintained. Some would say that this approach is outdated, obsolete, because communication technologies (→ **Communication Technologies**) have considerably altered the relationship between presence and absence. By promoting ‘dual presence’, the paradigm of transnationalism has not only accompanied these technological developments, it has made them a marker of the transformation of the social bond at a distance (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995). In a way, it is no longer possible to be absent when people on the move maintain links with their separated loved ones that can be described as permanent. However, while it is undeniable that long-distance exchanges attenuate the consequences of distance to a certain extent by ensuring that people far from each other maintain permanent ties, they do not put an end to absence, because the link is in the relationship of absence.<sup>3</sup>

### **Absence: a common basis for mobility**

While there are several forms of absence (absent infrastructures, absence of certain actors from history books, etc.) which have a relationship with globalisation and dis:connectivity, the one presented here is linked to international mobility and the forms of disappearance that illegal mobility entails (De Gourcy 2024). Maintaining links in the most precarious situations, marked by strong disconnections between social worlds governed by different norms and references, is only possible if the

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<sup>2</sup> Since 2021, the Philippines has had a Minister of the Department of Migrant Workers. The mandate was to regulate access to healthcare and legal aid, allow migrant workers to file complaints and monitor the actions of recruitment agencies. Sources: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/news/2023/03/dialogue-philippines-experts-committee-migrant-workers-commend-ratification-key-labour> (accessed 18/12/2023).

<sup>3</sup> This chapter is based on a book on the analysis of remote social links (De Gourcy 2024).

missing persons are included in relationships of absence, as parents, spouses, children, friends, etc. How else can the missing presence be recognised, and mobilised on its behalf, if it is not part of a close network of ties? It is only because ties exist prior to mobility that a given person can be considered absent.

In the same way, absence refers to what is instituted in the long-distance link, i.e. attachment techniques that vary according to the state of the technological conditions that produce abundant material in societies, from epistolary correspondence to messages transmitted instantaneously via digital technologies. By giving absence both visual and aural materiality, these traces document the changing norms at work in the way we refer to the distant person, disclosing the transformations of the intimate and revealing points of view that seek to adjust to distance. In this sense, the absence has a spatiality, materiality and agency (Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008) that merit attention and consideration in a globalised world.

Considering that mobile people are caught up in relationships of absence thus invites us to go beyond the individualistic approach to mobility and migration and its reduction to political-administrative categories. As Abdelmalek Sayad (1999) points out: ‘the phenomenon of migration in its entirety, emigration and immigration, cannot be thought of, described or interpreted in any other way than through the categories of State thinking’. The figures of the migrant, the asylum seeker, the exile (→ **Exile**), the expatriate and the returnee are certainly a reminder of the primacy of mobility over sedentariness, but they represent different points of view, hierarchised on a scale of political and media value. So it is important to specify that, however different they may be, these figures share an experience of absence that appears to be a common foundation.

In a context marked by the extension of borders and restrictive migration policies, the difficulties encountered in migratory journeys and the unevenly distributed possibilities of maintaining long-distance relationships have an impact on the bonds of absence. The division is between those who can move easily and maintain an open field of attention in relation to distant relatives and those whose migration is hindered or limited by restrictive and repressive migration policies (→ **Im/mobility**). The new forms of dis:connectivity on a global scale are creating situations of great vulnerability and social, legal and economic insecurity, which do not always offer the conditions required to maintain long-distance relationships with separated relatives. When mobility becomes ‘irregular’, the borders are no longer just geographical; they affect the day-to-day lives of separated families, who have to deal with the technical, legal, economic and administrative obstacles that limit their ability to stay in touch.

**Crossing Europe's borders: absence under strain**

Situations of absence now concern the various forms of encampment in the world where people spend an indeterminate amount of time, where they are born, live and die. According to Michel Agier (2011) what is new about the camp is that these places produce exiles who 'no longer have a place of arrival from which they can tell the story of their exile. This figure of the exile can no longer be fulfilled, because he or she no longer has a place, other than the place of the camp, of isolation, of impeded movement'. What happens when the relationship of absence with distant relatives is constrained by the difficulty or impossibility of maintaining it? Under these conditions, how can they maintain a relationship of absence with people they may never see again? Is it possible to speak of a relationship without absence? What relationship does this imply with the 'country of origin'? These questions open up new avenues of enquiry into the relationship with the world when the past is missing, when the relationship of absence is thwarted and/or prevented, when migration control policies separate members of the same family for long periods. This is where the limits of absence come into play, when the relationship can give way at any time to a disconnection, and the status of the absent becomes that of the disappeared. So, one of the challenges of (re)understanding these situations of absence is to make an inventory of the attachment techniques used to resist and regain a grip on the time of waiting at the heart of the complexity of contemporary migratory situations. In other words, if there is an 'art of presence' (Bayat 2013), there can also be an art of absence based on forms of resistance in the way of diverting the spatio-temporal dimensions of confinement, exclusion and separation.

Among the attachment techniques used to maintain links with people close to them are the 'pacts' that can be documented from contemporary accounts of people whose migration is illegal at Europe's borders (Kobelinski and Le Courant 2017). The people who live in these extremely constrained situations of absence are never guaranteed to reach the end of their migratory project. So, faced with the ever-present risk of disappearance or death, strategies are put in place between fellow travellers. These strategies involve establishing pacts, in particular by memorising names and telephone numbers to inform parents and relatives in the event of death. As the ultimate acts of resistance by people whose mobility is insecure, pacts offer the hope of escaping the social and political invisibility that surrounds the regime of absence through disappearance (Stimmatini and De Gourcy 2022). Such practices, which can be observed on migratory routes, appear to be tactics of resistance deployed by those who are considered undesirable by states. More broadly, they raise the question of the autonomy of exiles, who are striving in situations of extreme heteronomy to maintain links with loved ones and to have their absence recognised, an absence under tension, shaped by the constraints on their mobility. However, beyond the danger that land and sea routes pose to those who

use them in conditions of great vulnerability, these routes can be seen as ‘sites of resistance’ (Hooks 1999), the ultimate places where a subject free to move about asserts themselves, capable of resisting the established geopolitical order. Looking at them in this way allows us to anticipate the political construction of the migrant’s future by seizing every opportunity to maintain relationships even at the most critical moments.

By way of conclusion, I would like to emphasise the importance of maintaining relationships against all odds, despite unfavourable contexts; this is a fundamental issue in terms of recognising the common element in the different forms of mobility, from the most secure to the least secure, and all the more so when people on the move are exposed to risks that threaten their lives. This common element makes it possible to account for the depth of the social ties in which every human being is caught up, as well as the socialities that are formed along migratory routes. Reintegrating absence into migration and diaspora studies thus makes it possible to ‘de-migrantize’ the terms used to describe movement and mobility, and to free ourselves from the methodological nationalism that guides our approach (Scheel and Tazzioli 2022). This perspective consists of recalling that before being migrants, these mobile people are absent for their loved ones and vice versa. Failing to take note of this common feature of our mobile humanity not only means repeating the pitfall of dividing migrations according to terminologies that refer to scales of legitimacy, individualising journeys or juxtaposing forms of presence. It also means favouring an individualistic approach to mobility and migration that too often considers the individual as self-sufficient and the world of mobility as a world of access or non-access, a world without relational depth or common humanity. In the context of globalisation, which erects as many walls and barriers as it removes, absence does indeed appear to be the common foundation of mobility, generating ways of being and behaviours of attachment that transcend inequalities of access, intimacies under pressure, and contexts and modalities of separation.

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# Archive

Nic Leonhardt

‘Being past, being no more, is passionately at work in things. To this the historian trusts for his subject matter. He depends on this force, and knows things as they are at the moment of their ceasing to be.’ (Benjamin 1999, 833) The trust in ‘things’ and their historicity, the meaning and interpretation of things through historiography, are contained in Walter Benjamin’s aphorism, which highlights the intrinsic life of things – but also the indeterminacy of matter, the individual perspective, the arbitrariness of their interpretation by historians and other people who seek access to different times via the objects, be it the present, the past or the future.

Who owns History? Whose present may one day become historic/al? What is worth remembering? What will never find its way into cultural memory? Who decides what enters the archive and what does not?

This article is not intended as an all-encompassing classification of what constitutes an archive. The semantic plurality of the term and concept does not permit this in such a short space. Rather, the following is a critical reflection on the archive against the background of the sovereignty of knowledge and the double-faced nature of globalisation understood as both cultural entanglement and division. This ambivalence can also be demonstrated in the idea and institution of the archive. Archives may enable the storage of information, but cataloguing and access are not granted on an equal basis. Economic disparities between countries, as well as within individual regions and archives, result in unequal archiving opportunities. The holdings of a collection – be it an archive or a museum – may, in fact, belong to a different culture (looted art, colonial cultural artefacts), etc.

## The term – and its limits

The late Latin word *archivum*, ‘filing cabinet’, initially (and literally) suggests the simple storage of files in a piece of furniture. The ancient Greek origin of the word, ἀρχεῖον (*archeion*), understood as a ‘government building, authority, official building’ (OED), conveys the impression of a solid institution or repository that, for an unlimited period of time, stores, indexes and preserves relics and documents of the present. The supposed neutrality of the term is blurred by a glance at the localization, practice and global perspective. Archives are never just neutral storage locations; rather, they determine which stories and perspectives are preserved.

An archive is an institution and a space in which documents, records and other materials are systematically collected, stored and made accessible. It serves to preserve knowledge and history and sees itself as a link between the past, present and

future. Archives preserve documents that have cultural, historical or legal significance. They are central to the culture of remembrance and help to shape collective identities. (Lepper and Raulff 2016; UNESCO 2023).

Archives are not just about housing disparate multimedia records; they are always accompanied by a specific systematization and classification of the material. Evaluation, selection, indexing and categorization as well as cataloguing are processes that users must always be aware of when searching or working with archival materials. The founding of archives is always closely linked to the development of (national) identity, certain contemporary historical understandings of history or of a specific person whose legacy the archive houses. (Lepper and Raulff 2016).

An archive can be walked through, visited, used (physically) or experienced, retrieved, listened to, or embodied (mentally and physically). In addition to the architecturally tangible meaning of the term, the knowledge of a culture, a group or even the mental or physical memory of a person can also be referred to as an 'archive' (Taylor 2003). In cultural and media studies contexts in particular, one frequently encounters a metaphorical concept of an archive, especially in respect to the contexts of information or knowledge or the (collective or individual) remembering of structures, references, cultural habits, etc. Archives are understood as institutions of memory; as cultural or individual 'temples of remembrance'. The process of archiving is read as a cultural practice and as such is subject to political and ideological perspectives, which also make the act of archiving, including the selection and mediation of archival records, a political issue.

Archives often focus on regional historiography, local communities and their identity. They preserve materials that are important for a specific community or region and support the formation of local identity and research into local history. Archives may contribute to the globalisation of knowledge, provided, however, that users have access to the material. Local archives can be more responsive to the needs of the immediate community, while national archives often offer standardized access that can overlook local specificities. For example, knowledge of language, culture and context is essential to be able to classify archival material from an archive in a country whose language and history are unfamiliar to users/researchers.

Over the past decade, the question of the provenance of objects or documents has increasingly led to discussions about the restitution of cultural goods within the archive and museum landscape. (Stahn 2024; Tythacott and Arvanitis 2016). In particular archives (and museums) of former colonial states include materials in their holdings that actually belong to the colonized region. Dis:connectivity occurs here in post-colonial contexts when the archives are not located in the countries of origin of the collected works. The system of the archive imposes a classification

on the foreign object that can never do it justice. This realization and the need to rigorously question the provenance of objects make the power structures of the archives manifest and must be taken into consideration when working with archival material.

### **Temporality**

The criterion of 'longevity' is intrinsic to all archives. On a technical level, this initially means that materials of different mediality should be preserved in the archive over a long period of time. However, this long-term nature allows a relational approach when it comes to the temporality of archival work: The same material will be subject to different patterns of interpretation by a person from the 1950s than by a person who has access to the same source in the year 2000. This historicity of archives and their use is crucial to understanding the dynamics that the archive is inscribed with.

An archive is therefore also a 'temporal tentacle': with its focus on the different pasts, its location and administration in the present and the forward-looking maintenance and preparation of the holdings for the future. This is preceded by an awareness of the value and lasting significance of the past and present for future generations, which in turn leads back to the question posed at the beginning of this entry as to who 'owns' history and who decides what is remembered and what is not. Lack of access and fragmented knowledge are certainly the decisive parameters of the asymmetry and dis:connectivity of archives. It goes without saying that they have an impact on research, society and collective memory – locally, but also worldwide.

### **Accessibility**

Although archives are places and institutions that promise access to information, they also entail asymmetries. Supposedly accessible to everyone, admission and permission to work with archival materials can be subject to strict regulations and premises. Archives are not 'places of passage', but places of appointments and agreements that make accessibility difficult or even impossible. This may be due to physical distance, political restrictions or technical barriers, or even language barriers or illegible fonts. These markers of dis:connectivity make comprehensive historical research more difficult and promote inequalities in access to knowledge.

Like other sites and knowledge repositories for the preservation of cultural memory, archives are also exposed to political unrest, the effects of revolutions or austerity measures. Looting and closures, loss of holdings due to war damage or natural disasters can displace archives or leave deep wounds in the archive and thus in the transmission of cultural heritage (e.g. in Iran, Syria, etc. but also after

WWI and II (Lowry 2017)). Economic constraints can also hinder the acquisition or processing of archival records. A lack of archival and cataloguing expertise can lead to the loss of materials, be it because documents are not processed properly or because the material physically deteriorates due to incorrect storage. Researchers who are dependent on working with archives are regularly confronted with these problems. Within global or transnational contexts, considerable asymmetries in the quality and accessibility of archives and their holdings are apparent. In areas of conflicts, access for outsiders can be prohibited, heavily regulated or even dangerous. Surveillance measures are a natural part of archival practice there.

### **Technological change and digitization**

The mediality and materiality of archival records as well as the provision of archives are subject to radical and unstoppable technological change. More and more archival materials are genuinely digital. They require appropriate technologies for archiving. So-called ‘born digital’ documents largely follow traditional systems; however, they place different demands on preservation, indexing and provision. Like analogue source materials, they are closely tied to their medium (usually paper, canvas, tapes, film, etc.) and require specific software and digital processing. Digital availability offers new access to the archive that is not tied to a local presence. Archives are continuously being digitized and thus made accessible to a broader, non-local or national group. However, this development is accompanied by a new asymmetry, as the digitization and digital opening of archives is heavily dependent on economic premises and decisions. Even if digital archives or platforms theoretically enable ‘global’ access, it is essential to consider that not all countries or regions have the same infrastructure to either build or use these resources.

Digitization also allows previously impossible operations at the level of indexing and use: archives can be linked together (provided that their database systems are interoperable); relational databases enable searches that transcend archives, whether local or translocal; users can find objects or documents more easily through annotations and tagging – or are themselves involved in assigning keywords and descriptions; archive holdings that were previously only accessible physically in one location, are also made accessible to non-local users including users with physical disabilities. Global-historical research in particular benefits enormously from this linking of archives, newspapers and databases across national borders (e.g. Gallica, World Digital Library (WDL), Europeana, Trove).

While the greatest dangers for paper are fire and decay, digitized archives are subject to obsolescence because of the speed of technological change. With digiti-

zation, the field of activity of archivists or documenters will increasingly have to adapt to this change.

Even in the field of digitization, there is no parity or neutrality in terms of accessibility and indexing. What is digitally indexed and made accessible is what is often requested or otherwise prioritized. At the same time, personnel and financial resources determine progress in the digital archive landscape. As a matter of fact, there are considerable asymmetries in the digital processing of archival records within industrialized countries as well.

### **Archive as a ‘knowledge’ repository?**

Although archives are commonly referred to as ‘knowledge repositories’, they do not store knowledge, but rather hold various documents of different mediality, materiality, language and information. Materials are often intended for other purposes in other contexts before they become archival material due to curatorial decisions. This is particularly the case with archives of artistic and cultural material, i.e. photography, art, theatre, dance, literature, music or architecture archives. Director’s books, costume sketches, or stage design models, for example, are documents of a creative process prior to a theatre performance (Mayer, Rothenberger and Thurmann-Jajes 2024).

The cultural studies approach has also productively generated the idea of the body as an archive: Memories, body knowledge, cultural anchoring, etc. make the human body itself an archive, a ‘seat of memory’ (Baxmann 2007). Oral history, interviews and their audio recordings and transcriptions have now become equivalent ‘repositories’ for gaining access to traditional knowledge or cultural heritage (Leonhardt, Jones and Majeswka 2024; Mayer Rothenberger and Thurmann-Jajes 2024; Taylor 2003).

In terms of epistemology (→ **Epistemologies, alternative**), it can be said that the archive always provides different answers: although it can answer direct questions to a certain extent, it raises further questions. This cycle of research is also conditioned by the systematics of archives, their cataloguing principles, collection philosophies and ideologies and their contribution to the formation of canons in each specific field. Even if archives appear to be located locally or culturally, it is advisable to view them in relation to the time of their creation, their location, the political context of their establishment, the collection mandate (e.g. public or private), and in relation to the present. In this relational perspective, archives can be allies for their users, but they can also reveal a disparity – temporally, geographically, politically, ideologically, etc. This shows that the material is not, and cannot be, neutral.

The aforementioned power structures and asymmetries in the archival sector, i.e. the control or dominance over knowledge and memory, the political instrumentalization of archives, and their vulnerability during times of political and economic crises, can indeed be countered with a positive perspective: over the past two decades, there have been efforts towards the decentralization and democratization of archives. These approaches enrich the understanding and structure of archives, particularly from a relational perspective, and can contribute to transnational or transcultural connectivity. With increasing digitization, a paradox arises: on the one hand, there is the technical simplification of recording and reproducing artefacts or documents; on the other hand, digital technology enables interoperability between archives. Archival databases can be linked beyond the walls of individual archives, allowing cross-referential searches. Specialist information services or union catalogues offer the possibility of diagonal searches across different catalogues. Initiatives such as Open Access, which have been promoted in the academic publishing landscape for several years, foster free access to knowledge and attempt to dismantle barriers. It is hoped that archives will also become more inclusive in the future, not only through digital technologies but also by returning documents to their communities of origin, who have the right to preserve and manage their own cultural heritage.

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# Belonging

Basia Sliwinska

The multiple crises affecting the contemporary globalised world, such as increasingly violent narratives and far-right rhetoric, neocolonial discourses, authoritarian capitalism, human-induced climate change and the Covid-19 health emergency have one thing in common, as argued by Roland Wenzlhuemer (2022), *'they are deeply embedded in processes of globalisation, past and present'* (emphasis in original). As much as these crises share interconnected, global networks, they generate, in addition to entanglements, multiple disentanglements, the 'disruptive phenomena that *corrode* networks' (Wenzlhuemer 2022, emphasis in original). The reciprocal co-constitution of connectivity and dis:connectivity reframes trajectories of globalisation, which offers an opportunity to rethink the experiences and politics of belonging through a transnational feminist lens. Foregrounding affect, subjectivity, collectivity and embodiment, this generates new directions towards equal and reciprocal futures disrupting Eurocentric paradigms of socio-economic, political and cultural superiority that drive global structures of power that exacerbate violent and oppressive practices. Attentive approaches to belonging highlighting the significance of intersectional, and in particular gendered, encounters with the global by, for example, Marsha Meskimmon and Dorothy C. Rowe (2013) or Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) emphasise the unequal distribution of vulnerabilities and precariousness. They call for a negation of the global as a shared condition that potentially erases differences in favour of transnational and relational solidarity. The specificity of places and spaces activates care *for* and *about* situated struggles and neglected absences while paying close attention to the spaces in-between and acknowledging that belonging is not uniform and that it generates multiple and context-specific spatial politics of inclusions and exclusions.

The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines belonging as being in the right place and feeling comfortable in a situation. In the context of the largest movement of migrants and refugees since World War II in Europe and increasing and multiple forced or voluntary displacements worldwide, whether due to armed conflicts, economic reasons or climate change, I propose to pluralise the concept of belonging, drawing on Meskimmon's (2010) understanding of 'be(long)ing' as a form of cosmopolitanism. This is 'premised upon an embodied, embedded, generous and affective form of subjectivity in conversation with others in and through difference' (Meskimmon 2010, 6). Belonging signifies a spatial experience of movement and becoming. As materially specific and relational, it reimagines dislocated subjects, private spaces and citizenship as agentic beyond fixed geo-political borders. Meskimmon (2010, 6–7) defines belonging as 'making yourself at home' through

dwelling and hospitality, and connection through dialogue in ‘response-ability to our responsibilities within a world community.’ Similarly, Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2005) writes about belonging in relation to places, being here and there alongside the other. Such positioning of belonging captures the global dis:connections examined in this volume that are generated through dispersions and dislocations, interruptions and resistances, and the new beginnings they inspire. The use of the colon by the Editors is suggestive of an alternative global epistemology to disrupt the binary thinking that divorces connections from disconnections. Instead, they propose attending to the tensions and the passages that are relational.

Burcu Dogramaci (2022, 2023) reflects on the dis:connective engagement with histories of cross-border relocations, whether forced or voluntary. Tracing exile stories of objects and persons, specifically attending to the book *Eine Frau erlebt den roten Alltag* (1932) and its author, a literary scholar Lili Körber, Dogramaci (2023) explores the global dispersions (of matter and people) in the context of publication landscapes in the Weimar Republic and beyond and the book burnings under National Socialism. Elsewhere, mapping interfaces between the history of photography, migration and mobility, Dogramaci (2022) addresses dis:connectivity and mediatisation of movements to foreground a new approach to global history, ‘which focuses neither on interconnectedness nor on deglobalisation exclusively’ but instead pays attention to the tensions between entanglements and disentanglements emphasized by Wenzlhuemer (2022), but also the passages in between. These threshold spaces illuminate the complexities of dis:connectivity she uncovers through a close reading of two photographs taken in 1939 by Hans Günter Flieg before he left his home in Germany in search of a new one in Brazil to escape anti-Semitic persecution. Dogramaci (2022) flags up the non-linearity of time before, during and post exile characterised ‘by the difference and divergence of experiences and of cultural and linguistic spaces.’ Her spatio-temporal framing of dis:connectivity and emphasis on passage as a figuration that enables another possibility of becoming is critical to the contemporary understanding of belonging, its affects and matter.

Be(long)ing is a passage that captures the dis:connectivity between being, longing and belonging manifested through spatial alliances. Its imaginative positionings are articulated through artistic practices concerned with world-making. I draw below on three specific examples that intersect art, transnational feminism and transversal politics, and align with Meskimmon’s (2020, 52) proposition that artistic practice through its processes of materialisation can offer provocative insights into belonging with others in the world. This is of critical significance to the rethinking of globalisation from pluriversal and intersectional perspectives as a means to understand agency *and* subjectivity in a globalised world through multifaceted and multi-layered connections. The interface between the transnational

and belonging as a manifestation of processes of becoming that is generative of new forms of difference are articulated in the book *Transnational Belonging and Female Agency in the Arts* I co-edited with Catherine Dormor (2022, 1–15). Through a range of artistic case studies, contributors to the volume address a multitude of subject positions navigating geographies of difference against universalising politics of globalisation. The key role of the arts in imagining alternative methods of enquiry in the humanities is also prioritised by the Käte Hamburger Research Centre *Dis:connectivity in Processes of Globalisation* (global dis:connect) (gd:c 2023). Given the elusive nature of the dis-connective phenomena, they can benefit from the analytical and communicative potential of the arts. The method of dis:connectivity offers an opportunity to approach the concept of be(long)ing via the arts.

### **To be: to exist, to occur, to take place**

‘To be’ signifies being visible, acknowledged, respected and heard. To be is to have agency and a voice; not to be marginalised and/ or excluded. In January 2023 during the Sydney Festival, the Barangaroo waterfront featured a temporary installation of Gurindji/Malngin/Mudburra artist Brenda L. Croft’s *Naabami (thou will/shall see): Barangaroo (army of me)* (2019–2022). The project, including sixty large-scale photographic portraits of contemporary First Nations women and girls photographed in Canberra and Sydney from 2019 to 2022, honours Barangaroo (c. 1750–1791), a Cammeraygal woman known for her determination and commitment to her sovereign homelands. The photographs portray leading contemporary Indigenous women, Barangaroo’s sovereign avatars, as Croft explains, who carry her spirit and guide the artist’s determination to firm her cultural knowledge. Created using the 19<sup>th</sup> century process of wet collodion and then digitally printed on metal, the photographs were anchored with sandstone blocks cast-off from local colonial buildings. Croft attends to the invisibility of women and Aboriginal peoples but also the silenced stories and the knowledges that have been erased from the cultural memory and public spaces through processes of violent settler colonisation. Her artistic practice is committed to attentive and reparative noticing, witnessing and recording, exposure of denials and recognition of absences. To be is to exist relationally with others (human and other-than-human) across differences towards reparation.

### **To long: to have a yearning desire, to crave something**

Longing complicates spatio-temporal tensions, linking yearning and distance and a desire for a connection. Affects generated by longing are embroidered by Viktoriia Tofan, a Ukrainian artist living and working in Poland. Her series *Alfabet* (2021) tells stories stitched through reinforced paper to give agency to silenced bodies, and particularly to individuals with hearing impairments. The violent gesture of

perforating the paper with a needle and a red thread reflects the struggles in articulating one's identity and longing to be understood. When Tofan arrived in Poland, she began working with the deaf community to explore notions of strangeness, foreignness, and marginalisation. While she was recording the stories of deaf Polish people discriminated against within their own culture, she noticed the complexities of learning written and spoken Polish not only for deaf Poles but also for herself as a migrant. The artist developed a new alphabet and a new phonic language to articulate issues of belonging and violence embedded in processes of assimilation and adjustment, also experienced when learning and trying to communicate in a new language. Stories of the deaf community are embroidered with care and attention in an attempt to belong beyond the differences and dichotomies of deaf/hearing, migrant/native, us/them. Tofan writes the other, longing towards spaces of equal belonging in which all voices are mutually constitutive and heard.

**To belong: to be in the right place, to be comfortable as part of a particular group**

Belonging generates effects of attachment and rootedness in a community. Such embedding in a place interlaced with its deep understanding is mobilised by an Australian, Rebecca Mayo in her project *The Plant Sensibilia Machine: Acacia longifolia* (2022–2023), a collaboration between the Plant Sensibilia Machine, Aunty Deidre Martin and the plants and lands of the Dharawal and Dhurga Language Groups, custodians of the Bundanon land. The video by Sammy Hawker records Aunty Deidre Martin, a Walbanga woman of the Yuin Nation, reading her poem *Acacia longifolia* while Mayo activates the Plant Sensibilia Machine to hold the poem on a length of cloth printed using a heat dye bath. Martin's voice interlaced with Mayo's labour and the sounds of Bundanon map the interconnected life cycles of the place with attention to the relations between plants, and specifically *Acacia longifolia*, the weather patterns and the seasons. The project motivates belonging within spaces for communal care, unravelling the modernist vision of progress orchestrated by humankind. Mayo reimagines belonging as a collective spatio-temporal concept that generates accountability, co-dependencies and co-responsibilities.

**Be(long)ing**

Thinking *with* the projects by Croft, Tofan and Mayo and the notion of belonging, invites reflection on who is to be and to become relationally in a planetary perspective that departs from the global and other categories, such as the world or the earth, which have been applied to organise modern history. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2021, 3–4) calls to us to orient ourselves to what we understand as the globe and how this becomes complicated by a new historical-philosophical entity called the

planet, or the Earth system, as proposed by Chakrabarty. He writes, ‘Ours is not just a global age; we live on the cusp of the global and what may be called “the planetary”.’ While the globe is a humanocentric construction, the planet decentres the human, encouraging us to consider various forms of life from the perspective of deep history. Chakrabarty’s conception of the planetary as related to but different from the global captures processes belonging to the deep histories of Earth and the interconnectedness of co-actors, both human and nonhuman.

Framing belonging as a ‘politics of relation’, a ‘constellation of self, other, connection, consciousness’, Carrillo Rowe (2009, 2) considers new possibilities for a collective subjectivity. Like Meskimmon (2010), her approach foregrounds becoming as a function of belonging, which acknowledges the communal conditions of our agency but also our accountability, ‘in this oscillation between here and there, that “I” and “she” and “we” are becoming’ (Carrillo Rowe 2009, 1). It is a movement of expansion and contraction across power lines which she calls ‘differential belonging’ (Carrillo Rowe 2005; 2008, 179–180). The relationality of belonging attests to the affects and materialities, and the stories that, as Carrillo Rowe notes, become us, through (dis)entanglements I may add. It is in this context that ‘Belonging is political’, constituting how we see and share the world (Carrillo Rowe 2009, 1). The sites of intimate collective connections are where alliances are forged mapping experiences of becoming to learn ourselves *in relation to* another, and not speak for them or represent them in other ways.

As the projects by Croft, Tofan, Mayo and many other artists demonstrate, art inspires alternative imaginations of spatio-temporal framings for the body (whether human or other-than-human) to explore differentiated configurations of belonging as transitory, interrelational and affective. Embracing posthumanist insights, in particular queer, ecofeminist, new materialist and Indigenous perspectives, such projects offer a profound challenge to the conventional understanding of belonging as limited to a fixed nation-state and/or birth-right. They empower us to extend such thinking towards forms of belonging that are (dis)entangled and agentic *with* others. Writing about the relations between subjectivity, participation and positionality framed through a transnational feminist lens, Meskimmon (2010, 72–73) notes, ‘We learn to belong, how to live together in difference by questioning our assumptions about ourselves and others and finding spaces, forms and figurations through which to imagine and inhabit the world in new ways.’ As a representation of a passage, belonging enables embodied, inter-subjective and situated spatial alignments that negotiate connections and disconnections and communicate across multiple differences to open ourselves *towards* others. The transitive and relational politics and ecologies it inspires create opportunities for more inclusive and capacious lived experiences of be(long)ing *in co-presence*.

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# Blackout

Fabienne Liptay

Blackouts are very literal events of disconnection. A blackout – in the most common sense of the word – is a total loss of electric power for a longer period, experienced as complete darkness when lights go out. Blackouts are landmark events of what Roland Wenzlhuemer has described as a common characteristic of global crises, namely ‘disruptive phenomena that corrode networks’ (2022, 11). As such, blackouts are indicative of a multitude of global crises relating to war, colonialism, extractivism, climate change, environmental harm, and the unequal distribution of resources.

Power outages can be caused by failures in power stations and transmission networks due to technical faults, short circuits, or physical damage, for example through climate impacts, natural disasters, or acts of war. They can also occur as an intentional measure, for example to prevent fire in case of gas leaks or floods, to protect an area from being visually identifiable during night-time air raids, or to safeguard migratory birds in urban environments. When the capacity for electricity generation is insufficient due to energy crises or poorly managed infrastructures, rolling blackouts can be scheduled to disconnect the parts of a supply area alternately.

Recently, Russia’s war against Ukraine and the destruction of its critical infrastructure has enforced large-scale blackouts on the country’s people, limiting the electricity supply to a few hours each day. Following an ongoing electricity crisis with rolling blackouts, Palestinians have been exposed to darkness and cold since Israel cut off the supply of electricity to Gaza in the first days of the war. Lebanon has suffered a nationwide power outage due to the exhaustion of the state’s fuel reserves required to run the power plants and increased military airstrikes between Hezbollah and Israel. Hurricanes, wind and ice storms have caused power outages in the United States and Canada. Frequent and severe blackouts have occurred due to technical failures and grid breakdowns in several countries in South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa, including the 2023 Pakistan blackout that ranks among the largest blackouts in history by the number of people affected.

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Referring to a failure of electricity supply, the term ‘black-out’ became common in the first half of the twentieth century. As the earliest evidence of the term’s use to describe a power outage, the *Oxford English Dictionary* mentions an article in the March 1934 issue of *The Atlantic*, dedicated to the completion of the *O.E.D.’s* Supplement, which traces all new words since the publication of the dictionary’s volumes.

Among the words ‘too recent even for the Supplement’ is ‘black-out’ that was then newly ‘used of a [. . .] failure of the electric light’ (Weekley 1934, 350). Around the same time, in the early 1930s, ‘black-out’ also came to mean a temporary loss of memory or consciousness, used to describe the inability to remember events that happened during drunkenness, intoxication, faints, or amnesia, but also more broadly in a figurative sense of memory failure.

Yet, the word ‘black-out’ originates from theatre in the early twentieth century, referring to the darkening of the stage between the scenes, while scenery changes, or during the performance (Oxford English Dictionary 2024; Merriam-Webster n.d.). The theatrical notion of ‘black-out’, somewhat obscured by the term’s more recent association with a disruption of electricity supply, is reactivated when turning off the lights becomes a spectacle in public space. This has been the case to raise awareness of energy waste and the need to take measures against global warming. Launched as a symbolic lights-out event in 2007, WWF’s Earth Hour invites people around the globe to switch off electric lights for one hour each year, on the last or penultimate Saturday in March, as a sign of a collective commitment to the planet. These globally orchestrated blackouts have been publicly showcased at iconic landmarks, including the Empire State Building in New York, the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Pyramids of Giza, and the Sydney Opera House.

In an essay that traces a series of staged blackouts in cities, Tom Holert describes the Earth Hour as ‘a highly practical, media-savvy way of displaying political initiative, ecologically as well as economically’ (2015, 3). To the reading of the blackout as a publicity performance, I would like to add that this performance is less one of scarcity than of abundance, a gesture towards energy saving by those who can afford to switch off the lights for one hour of contemplation. A strange conflation of omittance and awareness, concealment and exposure is at play here. Switching off the lights as a spectacle not only makes visible the depletion of global resources, but also obscures the infrastructural inequalities of the distribution of electrical power (Hughes 1983; Hirsh 1989; Schewe 2007). Even today, 600 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa remain without electricity, and progress on global energy access remains far behind the goals of sustainable development (IEA 2024). The staging of a blackout in highly electrified cities is, thus, inseparable from infrastructural violence and its colonial legacies operating through the electrical grid (Rogers and O’Neill 2012, 404).

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What becomes visible when the lights go out? Infrastructures, as Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey Bowker put it, are hidden from sight by definition and become

visible only upon breakdown. Within the terms of infrastructure theory, they have described such a breakdown as an instance of ‘infrastructural inversion’ that brings to the fore the ‘depths of interdependence of technical networks and standards, on the one hand, and the real work of politics and knowledge production on the other’ (Bowker and Star 2000, 34). In this context, blackouts can gain the importance of political disruption or upheaval, lending them ‘causal prominence in many areas usually attributed to heroic actors, social movements, or cultural mores’ (ibid.).

In his study of the history of blackouts in America, David E. Nye points to the heterogeneity of causes, while shifting focus from a technical account of events and a rhetoric of blame to the blackout as a ‘historically new collective experience’ (2010, 6; see also Nye 1990). Regarding the diverging public responses to the blackouts of 1965 and 1977 in New York, he describes this experience in terms of dis:connection by stating that blackouts ‘expose a community’s degree of cohesion’ at a certain historical moment since they have ‘the potential to unite people in a stronger sense of community, with neighbors and strangers working together to solve problems and forging bonds that long outlive the crisis’ but they can also ‘tear a community apart’ (ibid., 209).

From the perspective of vital materialism offered by Jane Bennett (2010), however, blackouts and power outages allow us to consider their causes and effects in more complex ways beyond human (inter)action. Understanding the electrical power grid ‘as a volatile mix of coal, sweat, electro-magnetic fields, computer programs, electron streams, profit motives, heat, lifestyles, nuclear fuel, plastic, fantasies of mastery, static, legislation, water, economic theory, wire, and wood’ (2005, 448), Bennett proposes to consider the electrical power grid as an assemblage (after Deleuze) with an agency that is distributed across the human and nonhuman divide. Giving an account of the events that led to the North American Blackout in August 2003, she speaks of a ‘vortex of disconnects’ (ibid., 499), which challenges ‘established notions of moral responsibility and political accountability’ (ibid., 446).

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Following the invitation of the editors of this volume to consider artistic practice as a means of providing an aesthetic epistemology of ‘rupture, fracture and absences’ (→ **Introduction**), I will focus on a selection of three different artworks in which blackouts figure as such moments of dis:connectivity. While they all refer to historical blackouts, the actual instances of power outage are transformed into explorations of potentiality, using the blackout as an epistemic tool to dismantle and disrupt the mechanisms of power operating through the electric grid and the production of racial knowledge, both of which were foundational to globality.

Katharina Sieverding's monumental photograph *The Great White Way Goes Black* (1977, Fig. 1) was taken spontaneously on the roof of the Fine Arts Building near Broadway during the blackout that hit New York City in the hot summer night of 13 July 1977. The photograph shows a portrait of the artist looking straight into the camera, with a white top and milky drink in her hand, red nails matching her visor cap, lit by the flash against the dark. Across the photograph, the work's title is printed in white capital letters. 'The Great White Way' is what Broadway was called prior to its electric illumination, alluding to the white bark of the birch trees that lined it. It was the Wickquasgeck trail of the Algonquin people, before it became a main trade route of the Dutch West India Company in the early seventeenth century, and was later renamed Broadway under English occupation. In Sieverding's photograph, which recalls Broadway's colonial history, it is white supremacy that is disrupted by the blackout, inviting viewers to read the scene's 'going black' in a double sense. The New York blackout of 1977, caused by lightning during a heat wave, occurred in a moment of financial crisis with high unemployment and crime rates; it caused a breakdown of the civic order, and is less remembered for the spontaneous street gatherings from which the photograph emerged than for the looting and arson that were related to conditions of social inequality (Mamet 1977; Curvin and Porter 1979; Goodman 2003).



**Fig. 1:** Katharina Sieverding, *The Great White Way Goes Black*, 1977/1997, colour photograph, acrylic, steel, 300 x 502 x 2 cm (Courtesy of the artist and Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, photo: Klaus Mettig, © 2025, ProLitteris, Zurich).

The New York blackout of 1977 is reimagined in Stan Douglas' photographic series *Scenes from the Blackout* (2017), alongside the Northeast blackout that affected New York again in 2003 (Yuill 2004), but was experienced differently, inviting neighbourly encounters and civic support. As historical models of different forms of sociality, of social unity and division, these blackouts provided the inspiration for a series of ten scenes, which stage a power outage in present-day New York. In many respects, the scenes resemble what Nye has referred to as 'snapshots', regarding each blackout as an 'arrested moment' (2010, 3) in history, in which political, economic, and environmental concerns intersect with social life. Meticulously lit and staged like film stills on a set, the photographs show scenes of both social division and solidarity, people gathering on the stairs of a public building in a convivial atmosphere (*Stranded*, 2017) or queuing with piled loot from a local shop (*Queue*, 2017, Fig. 2), a women playing solitaire in a stuck elevator while eating the groceries from her shopping bag (*Solitaire*, 2017) or a vandalized school street with a burning trash can amidst fragmented mannequins and other litter (*Loot*, 2017). Throughout his work, Douglas has been interested in moments of breakdown and the possibil-



**Fig. 2:** Stan Douglas, *Queue*, 2017, from the series *Scenes from the Blackout*, digital chromogenic print mounted on Dibond aluminium, 127 x 165.1 cm (Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York).

ities they offer to imagine different responses to crises, thereby turning historical situations of global unrest, riots and revolutions into scenarios for future potentiality (Liptay 2023). Within this context, the blackout sets the scene for an aesthetic imaginary, which charges disconnection from the electrical grid with the potential to unsettle or disrupt power structures including racialized associations of lawlessness with blackness. Imagining the blackout through a black aesthetics thus also entails an interrogation of its racialized conceptions, of what Fred Moten – in his critical reading of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* – has called the ‘fantastical generation of the concept of blackness’ (2018a, 6) that animates Enlightenment thought.

In Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla’s sculptural work *Blackout* (2017, Fig. 3), blackness extends to a state of subjugation to extraction, dispossession and structural neglect within the globalized economy. The work provided the title for a whole exhibition at the MAXXI, Rome in 2018, in which the artists engaged with the colonial governance of the Caribbean Island of Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory of the United States. The works displayed in the exhibition reimagined the island’s impoverished state and its possible futures through notions of the blackout and the absence of electricity. The central sculptural work entitled *Blackout* is made from the material relics of an exploded electromagnetic transformer that caused a power outage in Puerto Rico in 2016. Assembled from electrically charged copper,



**Fig. 3:** Allora & Calzadilla, *Blackout*, 2017, electrical transformer core coil, ceramic insulators, steel, iron, oscillator, speaker. Vocal performance *mains hum* (2017) composed by David Lang, 139 x 262 x 129 cm (Courtesy of the artists and Lisson Gallery, photo: Dave Morgan).

ceramic insulators and transformer coils, which were acquired from the Aguirre Power Plant in Salinas, the sculpture resembles the carcass of a dead animal turned on its back, the corroded body of a depraved economy burdened by the debt that is caused, among other things, by electric power. In the exhibition, the sculpture was accompanied by the vocal performance of *mains hum*, the sound attributed to the electric current of the power grid. While the composition by David Lang, conducted by Donald Nally, was based on a quote by Benjamin Franklin, who in 1747 pondered on the practical use of electricity, these words are rendered indiscernible by the humming sound that animates the scene of the blackout (Nadal-Melsió 2018). In discussing Allora & Calzadilla's work, T. J. Demos (2018; 2020) charts the aesthetic and political spaces where blackout designates 'the dispossession of all power of self-determination, of control over and belief in one's future' (2020, 62), but is also 'made to flip into positive expression' (ibid., 66), invoking postextractive futures, which he aligns with Rebecca Solnit's (2004) notion of 'hope in the dark'.

As critical imaginary rather than historical event, the blackout holds a central position within the aesthetic epistemology of dis:connectivity. It has served not only to investigate moments of historical crisis and social ruptures (Rupp 2016), but also to imagine alternative futures that might emerge from the disruption of the given order. This includes the invention of stories that do not merely tell where people were or what they were doing when the lights went out, but what possibilities of other forms of social relating arise. From this perspective, 'thinking from within the blackout' (Salamanca and Nassar 2023) has also been used as a means of deconstructing the imperial colonial grammar in which stories of global modernity have been told.

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What is at stake when blackouts are reimagined through an epistemology of black aesthetics? Through the idea of a 'new Enlightenment' that Fred Moten (2018a, 40–44; see also Moten 2017; 2018b) envisions in apposition to the antiblackness of Enlightenment thought? Reaching beyond the dualism of light and darkness, and the legacies of Enlightenment, Denise Ferreira da Silva proposes 'blacklight' as an alternative epistemic tool. Blacklight, or ultraviolet light, does not operate within the spectrum of light visible to the human eye, but makes things glow in the dark. Using blacklight as a 'black feminist device' (2017, 245), she exposes the obscuration of the racial foundations of globality. If blackout has emerged from the 'nineteenth-century scientific projects of knowledge [that] produced the notion of the racial' (Ferreira da Silva 2007, xii–xiii), then blacklight is an intervention into this notion since it not only makes visible but also blurs its very epistemic foundations.

In doing so, it also thwarts the logics of disconnectivity at work in blackouts: ‘Since it dissolves the pillars of categorial thinking, blacklight prepares the ground for a metaphysics of elements and related modalities of reading and for an imaging of the world and its existents in which reflection gives in to imagination, and thinking finally realizes the shallowness of *separability* [. . .] and attends to implicated existence, there at the deepest, darkest depths of matter that always composes and connects everything, anywhere, everywhere, immediately, and instantaneously’ (Ferreira da Silva 2017, 251).

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# Blockages

Michael Shane Boyle

The health of the capitalist world-system is typically measured by the degree to which capital flows without impediment. As blockages coursed through global supply chains in the wake of COVID-19 lockdowns, for instance, corporate executives and financial journalists repeated the doxa that unimpeded flow is a natural logistical state that must be reinstated for life to return to normal (Handfield and Linton 2022). Globalisation is frequently said to prize seamless circulation, yet international trade requires all manner of blockages to guarantee capital flows according to particular interests. While natural disasters, maritime accidents, and worker strikes count among the possible causes for blockage, governments and corporations tend more frequently to be the culprit. To limit supply and bolster prices, oil firms – to take but one example – are notorious for sabotaging production, stockpiling inventory, and rerouting tankers (Jones 2018). Likewise, border checks, tariffs, and military interventions could all be mistaken as supply chain obstacles, but they are more accurately understood as being the rubber to the road of international commerce. ‘Friction’, so Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing puts it, ‘is required to keep global power in motion’ (Tsing 2005, 7). For as much as capitalist ideology touts an ideal of freely flowing goods, the reality is more Newtonian. Simply stated, without blockages the global circulation of capital would shudder to a halt.

Nevertheless, fears of blockage abound – used to justify myriad technocratic and militaristic measures for enhancing infrastructural resilience and ensuring flow. Today, the conviction that flow is something ‘unremittingly positive’ and blockage is best avoided extends beyond the realm of commerce, saturating culture and political thought (Cresswell 2006, 25). Both the rise of globalisation and the fall of the Iron Curtain set loose the fantasy that frictionless motion is a panacea for social ills of all kinds. People, ideas, and art – everything is said to be better off if it can move without encumbrance. From *The Communist Manifesto* to more recent theories of ‘liquid modernity’, even avowed anti-capitalist critics have fostered the myth that capitalism not only aspires to seamless circulation but has even come close to ridding the world of blockage (Bauman 2012). When it comes to the planetary supply chains that are the foundation for much of what we know as globalisation, however, such assumptions could not be further from the truth.

In keeping with the concept of ‘dis:connectivity’ outlined in this volume, what follows insists that blockages should be understood not as obstacles to the flows of globalisation, but rather as vital components in them. I begin by showing how blockage operates as a fundamental principle in supply management theories of

control, before turning to several of the ways that blockages – including those that have recently disrupted the Suez Canal – have informed the building of capital’s logistical infrastructure over the past half century. While blockages play an essential role in the operations of supply chain capitalism, they also figure prominently in ongoing struggles to contest this system’s dispossessive dynamics. The final section of this essay switches perspectives to consider the privileged place of blockage in recent counterlogistical thought and struggle. Here, through focus on the resurgence of tactics like blockades and sabotage, I contend that blockages must be treated as a means rather than an end of struggle, providing the conditions for reproducing collective modes of action.

### **Blockages and logistics**

The idea that blockages are essential and not hostile to capitalism is the very epistemological cornerstone undergirding supply chain management theory today. Although blockage may be presumed to be the opposite of flow, both concepts entered logistical thought tethered together. Consider, for instance, Jay Wright Forrester’s influential *Industrial Dynamics* from 1961, in which ‘flow’ was theorized as the suture that unites the otherwise discrete domains of production and distribution. Before ‘continuous flow’ became a shibboleth of supply chain thought and ‘just-in-time’ manufacturing (Ohno 1988, 4), Forrester and his research team at MIT’s Sloan School of Management coined the term to describe the kinds of incessant adjustments and even deliberate blockages that maintaining any given flow of products requires. Flow, by this definition, is not an ideal state to be achieved but rather a heuristic for gauging how a lack of friction could generate a mismatch between procurement and demand, thus causing a disruptive bullwhip effect that cascades blockage disastrously through the ‘supply pipeline’ (Forrester 2013, 65). As tens of thousands of students enrolled on business and management degrees learn each year when playing the ‘Beer Distribution Game’ that Forrester developed to illustrate his ‘bullwhip’ model, blockages are not to be feared but controlled. Blockage, in other words, is a fundamental tool of supply chain management.

The managerial theory that blockages can be deployed strategically to control a flow of goods might seem to run at odds with infrastructural reality. There are few better illustrations of this than the highly publicized blockages that have hampered the Suez Canal in recent years, from the grounding of *Ever Given* in March 2021 to the ongoing attacks of Houthi rebels on merchant vessels in solidarity with Palestine. In the case of *Ever Given*, the week this ultra-large container ship spent blocking the primary sea-link between Asia and Europe appeared to many as evidence of capitalism’s Achilles’ heel. ‘The sorry saga underlines the frailty of world trade,’ wrote a columnist in *Wired*. ‘It took just one gust of wind to bring the whole thing to its

knees' (Christian 2021). But instead of bringing us the end of capitalism, *Ever Given* delivered a deceptive portrait of how easily global trade can be disrupted. While the short-term effects on the supply lines of manufacturers were nothing to sneeze at, the many analogies comparing the Suez Canal to a blocked artery drastically overstated the level of damage a single stopped ship could inflict on the world economy.

Logistical infrastructures, be it the Suez Canal or the planetary system of containerization, are literally engineered to accommodate blockages. The very construction of these infrastructures has been shaped through having to deal with such blockages. The six days that *Ever Given* obstructed maritime traffic and the intermittent disruptions caused by Houthi hijackings pale in comparison to the stretches of time that this trade conduit has previously been blocked. Following Israel's invasion of neighbouring territories during the Six-Day War in 1967, for instance, Egypt shuttered the canal for eight years. While the devastating effects on the global energy supply need no recounting here, less well-known is how formative this blockage was for establishing the titanic infrastructure through which planetary supply chains operate today. The extended closure forced oil tankers heading to Europe from the Arabian Peninsula to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope, adding at least three weeks to the journey. The extra time and increased fuel costs prompted carriers to order enormous new vessels, in the hopes they could offset expenses by taking advantage of economies of scale. With the canal closed, the size of tankers swelled beyond imagination, paving the way for massive container ships like *Ever Given* (Khalili 2020).

If Cold War wrangling over trade conduits like the Suez Canal catalysed the growth of maritime vessels and the landside infrastructure to accommodate them, we might do well to expect similar lessons from recent blockages. For example, industry insiders believe that *Ever Given's* grounding could lead to an overdue reckoning with the 'shipping arms race' among carriers that has plagued the sector with chronic overcapacity (Levinson 2021, 149). Likewise, the Houthi strikes in the Red Sea have reinvigorated plans for a 'land-bridge' connecting Dubai with Haifa, in which cargo from Asia would be offloaded onto trucks tasked with trekking them across the peninsula (Khalili 2024). On the other side of the world, recurring droughts that have lowered water levels in the Panama Canal have set plans for similar terrestrial solutions in motion. If a half century's worth of logistical thought and infrastructural experience can teach us anything about blockages, it is this: blockages are opportunities for enhancing capitalist control over global supply chains.

### **Blockages and Counterlogistical Struggle**

Just as supply chain capitalism learns from and uses blockages for the purpose of controlling capital flows, so too must its antagonists. This has been true throughout the history of capitalism, yet the stakes today are even higher given the extent to

which social life and capitalist production are shaped by the imperatives of circulation. In a world spun by supply chains, it should come as little surprise that tactics oriented to generating blockage have become central to repertoires of counterlogistical struggle across the planet (Clover 2016).

In recent years, the tactical form of blockading has experienced a ‘contemporary resurgence’, exemplified by the land defenders who held their ground in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux to stop construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (Chua and Bosworth 2023, 1303). Meanwhile, the tactic has also been adopted by the Far Right, deployed in 2022 by the likes of the vaccine-sceptical ‘Freedom Convoy’ in Ottawa as well as supporters of Jair Bolsonaro who set up roadblocks across Brazil after his election defeat. Such examples prove the ideological flexibility of this tactical form, something the blockade’s history confirms: as both a tactic and a term, the blockade has military origins that date back at least to seventeenth-century naval cordons.

The transideological appeal of blockades suits a political economic terrain that prioritizes logistical flows above all else, in which the circulation and distribution of goods has come to govern production itself (Clover 2022). As proof, some scholars and activists point to the workers at ports and inside logistics-oriented companies around the world leveraging their strategic position within supply chain choke-points to secure contract gains and intervene in issues beyond the workplace. Consider, for example, the dockworkers globally who, at the time of writing in 2024, are refusing to handle ships carrying materiel that could be used to support Israel’s scorched earth campaign in Gaza. In an age of supply chain capitalism, the blockade appears as a tactical form fit for many occasions.

The fact that supply chain capitalism regularly displays not just resilience to blockage but also a dependence on it should be enough to temper any belief that blockage-generating tactics like the blockade are a ‘magic bullet solution’ (Chua and Bosworth 2023, 1306). As Alberto Toscano has warned, social movements must take care to avoid making a ‘fetish out of rupture’ (Toscano 2011). Be they blockades or riots, occupations or acts of sabotage, tactics geared to blockage should not be confused with a desired political horizon. If blockage is to be of any use in contesting supply chain capitalism, it must be as a means rather than an end of counterlogistical struggle.

This aspiration for blockage as a means of struggle, useful for reproducing the conditions of collective action, has been expressed poignantly in several recent depictions of sabotage and blockading. Take, as a first example, Daniel Goldhaber’s 2023 film *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, based loosely on Andreas Malm’s polemic of the same name (Malm 2021). Whereas Malm’s book is a work of political theory, Goldhaber’s fictional film follows a motley group of activists as they sabotage an oil pipeline in West Texas. As reviewers and Goldhaber himself have noted, the

film's use of the genre conventions of a heist film allows it to eschew focus on a singular hero and instead track the formation of a collective revolutionary subject, composed of individuals with varied motivations but united by the effort required to perform an exceptional political deed (Bernes 2023). While a heist film typically concludes with the objective achieved, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* upends such closure by showing this single act of sabotage to be the start of something bigger. The film ends not with the pipeline's total destruction but the prospect that from this first attempt the struggle will expand.

For a second example, we can turn from film to dance. In 2015, on the twentieth anniversary of her father's execution by Nigeria's Abacha military regime, Zina Saro-Wiwa created the dance video *Karikpo Pipeline*. In it, a group of Ogoni dancers perform a traditional masquerade atop pipelines, wellheads, and flow stations that once belonged to Shell. Over two decades earlier, her father – the acclaimed writer Ken Saro-Wiwa – helped lead a successful campaign of civil disobedience and sabotage that shut down this extractive infrastructure, which had long been polluting Ogoni water. *Karikpo Pipeline* is not simply a document of blockage, but, as a site-specific performance, it showcases what grew from this blockage. However quixotically, Saro-Wiwa presents Ogoniland as a verdant landscape where life flourishes atop the ruins of logistical infrastructure.

*How to Blow Up a Pipeline* and *Karikpo Pipeline* give a sense of the collective lifeworlds that can sprout from blockages. In them, sabotage and blockading become opportunities for fostering conditions of further struggle. Both are, to borrow a phrase, representations of blockage as a 'generative refusal' – this being the term that the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson coined to describe struggles like those of the Wet'suwet'en blockades that swept through Canada in 2020 (Simpson 2021, 10). For Simpson, tactics that generate blockage should perform the dual function of refusing existing infrastructures of oppression for the purpose of building the conditions for new modes of living. In much the same way that capital is learning and building from blockage, so too will its antagonists.

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# Bundles of connections

Roland Wenzlhuemer

## Connections in Global History

Connections between individuals or, in a second step, between groups of individuals are the basic elements of every form of social organisation. Accordingly, they play a central role in all research that looks at social formations, group interactions, questions of belonging or many other related subjects with a present-day or a historical focus. In other words, connections between individuals, between the groups they form or between their institutions are and have always been important elements of sociological, ethnographical, anthropological and historical research or, indeed, almost all humanities and social science research. Beyond this elementary (but also very general) significance, connections deserve specific attention in scholarship that is concerned with processes of integration and entanglement across certain boundaries such as cultural differences, language barriers, spatial distances or national borders to name but a few examples. In such research, connections become the principal elements of analysis (Wenzlhuemer 2020, 5–6). And yet, most scholarship builds on an understanding of connections and connectivity that is surprisingly undertheorized and ultimately rather simple. Too simple, as I will argue. In the following, I therefore propose to conceptualize connections as actual bundles of connections: twisted, interwoven and mutually impacting on each other.

I will use the research field of global history to develop my argument and I will draw on an exemplary case from this field for illustrative purposes. However, I claim that the broader points are generalizable and apply to many disciplines and research concerned with transboundary processes as exemplified above. Connections are the basic units of analysis in global history. They are the building blocks of all forms of contact, exchange and network, and questions relating to the development of such connections as well as their meaning for historical actors are, accordingly, of great interest. They are the key elements of concepts, such as transfer (Espange and Werner 1988), connected or entangled history (Subramanyam 1997; Randeria 1999; Randeria and Conrad 2002), and contact zones (Pratt 2008). Nevertheless, global connections have hardly been explicitly conceptualised in global history. Even though the term ‘connection’ is ubiquitous in global history research, it is almost always used descriptively. There are several reasons for this conceptual gap (Wenzlhuemer 2019, 110–112), one of which is our tendency to understand connections between individuals, groups or other entities mostly as binaries. Either there is a connection or there is not.

Several factors facilitate such binary conceptions. In practice, our focus and our research questions often rest more on that which is connected than on the

connection itself. Accordingly, much of the research in globalisation studies or in global history has for a long time mainly been concerned with the search for global connections and their significance for their endpoints, and less with the quality of these connections themselves. The multi-faceted and potentially even contradictory character of many connections, thus, mostly remains in the background. And our metaphors and visualizations do not help. We speak of networks, webs or grids, and we draw them with hubs and lines that symbolize connections. Sometimes the importance of connections is weighed and lines are drawn in varying thicknesses. But the approach remains a binary one. Either two points are connected or they are not.

### **Connective bundles**

It is not overly surprising that such a binary approach to connections does not correspond with their actual role in processes of global integration or entanglement. The concept of dis:connectivity (→ **Introduction**), however, makes the conceptual short-comings of this approach all the more apparent. Dis:connectivity draws our attention to the interplay between different forms of connectivity or – ultimately – between connectivity and non-connectivity. The idea builds on the assumption that two entities – be they individuals, groups or other formations – are always connected in a variety of different ways at the very same time. Connections between them exist in the plural but, of course, not separate from each other. They are bundled together and relate to each other but the individual strands might have entirely different qualities and significances. Some strands might be dependable and capacious. Others will be ‘actively absent’ (→ **Absences**), might have been interrupted (→ **Interruptions**) or are taking unexpected detours (→ **Detours**) – this is where disconnections come in. Some strands facilitate specific forms of relation and interaction. Some work better over shorter distances. Variations can be endless and differ from context to context. But instead of single, binary connections, we are always dealing with entire bundles of connections. By a bundle I mean a whole set of connections that share the same end but are otherwise often different in character; that are twisted and interwoven like the fibres of a rope and thus interact with and depend on each other. The composition of the bundle, the way in which the individual strands are interwoven, the forms in which they impact on each other, are all extremely instructive regarding the significance of the bundle itself. Looking closer at the bundle and its strands allows us to better understand its tensions and potential contradictions and, thus, what it means for those connected through the bundle.

In the following, I will introduce a brief historical example and will try to develop it in a way that makes the bundles of global connections at play a little

more tangible. On 21 January 1886, the venerable *Times of London* published an extensive report about the current situation in Upper Burma, the northern part of present-day Myanmar. The British had annexed the region in the year before in the course of the Third Anglo-Burmese War and ever since then they faced fierce local resistance. The British government criminalized the insurgents as *dacoits* (bandits) and thought it justified to take tough action against any form of resistance. Executions were a common occurrence in Upper Burma in these days. This was a well-known and mostly unquestioned fact back in Britain. It was accepted by the British public as a necessary evil that an imperial power such as Britain had to deal with. And so the article in the *Times* reported rather matter-of-factly about ongoing executions of prisoners in Burma. Towards the end, however, the text also offered a more critical remark. It referred to a certain Reverend Colbeck, a missionary of the Church of England in Mandalay, who claimed that the local Provost-Marshall Willoughby Wallace Hooper (1837–1912) had threatened imprisoned locals with immediate execution should they not testify against others and that he took photographs at the execution of prisoners trying to capture ‘the precise moment when they are struck by the bullets.’ (Anonymous 21 January 1886, 5)

Colbeck’s protest and the report in the *Times* caused a stir in British government circles. Only four days after the publication of the article, Lord Randolph Churchill, the then Secretary of State for India, had to answer questions about these incidents in the House of Commons (Hansard 1886). In a flurry of telegrams between London, Calcutta, Rangoon and Mandalay, the government and the India Office tried to establish whether there was any substance to Colbeck’s accusations and, if so, to contain the political damage (House of Commons 1886, 7). In this context, the issue about pressing prisoners into testimonies soon faded into the background of the enquiry and the practice of photographing executions came to the fore. This can partly be explained by the larger ethical questions revolving around the issue. Photography was still a relatively young medium whose possible moral implications had not been fully discussed yet. However, besides these more general issues, another question became more and more apparent between the lines of the telegrams and the parliamentary debate. Should certain things be documented photographically at all and what would it mean if the photograph of an execution in Burma found its way back to Britain? How would such a photo – especially one of the precise moment at which the bullet entered human flesh – affect the public by bringing the fate of the delinquents emotionally much closer to the otherwise distant European observer? These concerns were not made explicit in the debate, but they clearly reverberate between the lines.

Between 22 January and 1 March 1886, the government tried to establish the exact facts of Hooper’s alleged misconduct, to do some damage control and to prepare a formal court of inquiry into the matter (House of Commons 1886, 7).

Hooper himself never denied that he had taken pictures of executions, but claimed that he had done so on only two occasions and emphasized that, in his opinion, the delinquents had not even realized that he was doing so (Anonymous 4 March 1886, 5). Eventually, the court of inquiry held at Mandalay on 19 March 1886 came to the opinion that '[t]he conduct of Colonel Hooper [. . .] has deservedly met with public condemnation. It reflects discredit on the army to which he belongs, and is damaging to the character of the British Administration in India.' Nevertheless, taking into account that Cooper 'had already suffered severely from the consequences of his actions', he got away with nothing but a public reprimand and a temporary reduction of his pay (Anonymous 8 September 1886, 3). His further career did not suffer much from this. In 1887, he published the photographic volume *Burmah. A series of one hundred photographs* (Hooper 1887). The photos of the executions were not included in the volume.

This brief episode – which is only a small extract from Hooper's photographic engagement in colonial South Asia that encompassed many other, often equally off-putting stations and aspects (Howe 2007; Twomey 2012) – is telling in many ways. It says something about the ruthlessness of British colonialism. It reveals Hooper's colonial gaze (Pratt 2008). It highlights the contemporary ambiguousness of the new medium of photography oscillating between social documentary and mere voyeurism. And it also illustrates how in this global communication process very different forms of connections were at work at the same time and between the same actors, how they formed bundles, how the strands in this bundle interacted with each other and how they, thus, created a form of dis:connectivity that the actors had to navigate.

The plurality of connections between, in this case, the metropole and the colony, between London, Great Britain and the British public on the one side and the various actors in Burma, is immediately evident. Against a colonial backdrop, we have globally moving people such as Hooper, a British missionary or all kinds of British colonial administrators; we have things that travel such as photographic equipment; and, of course, we have information that circulates around the globe, for instance in the form of newspaper articles, telegrams or – potentially – photographs. The public and the authorities learned about Hooper's questionable behaviour in a newspaper article. While we do not know this for sure and have no way of confirming it, it is reasonable to assume that Colbeck's complaint had originally reached the *Times* by postal letter, either from Colbeck directly or via a correspondent or other intermediary. Intercontinental letters were comparatively slow but could carry quite a lot of information. After Hooper's conduct at executions had become public, two other channels came into play – the telegraph and photography.

The many telegrams between London and Burma sought to gather additional information and also aimed at doing some damage control. The British government

tried to establish what had actually happened at these executions – and whether any photographs from the executions did exist that could potentially make their way to Europe. British authorities feared the twist that the publication of such photographs could give to public opinion. Photographs could create yet another form of connection. In the late nineteenth century, they still travelled slowly but could evoke feelings of closeness and intimacy over vast cultural and geographical distances (see, for example, Dewitz and Lebeck 2001, 62–90). In short, the British government was afraid of the emotional attachment to the lot of the prisoners that such photographs could potentially arouse. Accordingly, it tried to establish whether they existed and if so, how to contain their movement to Europe. Or in other words, it tried to control one global connection with the help of another (Wenzlhuemer 2017).

The connections at play here all had vastly different qualities. They were slow and fast, textual and visual, had high and low informational densities. And there is disconnection as well. Many of the global connections in the episode only gain their meaning through their relation to a missing connection in the bundle. The government sought to contain the flow of information from Burma to Britain – and specifically that of photographs that nobody had seen and that might not even have existed. The photographic connection is ‘actively absent’. It is not there but its possibility looms large in the episode.

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# Capital

Alexander Engel

The world economy, as it has developed since the late nineteenth century, is decidedly capitalist: capital is a major structuring element in global contexts and processes. This chapter argues that in terms of the spatiality of capital, rather abstract concepts were developed, which build on metaphors of capital as a liquid, moving from one place to another. This notion however, still formative today, reveals as much as it obscures: that capital can be dis:connective, taking the form of fragile interrelations between (potential) borrowers and lenders, investors and utilizers; creating obligations, expectations, control and risk; bridging and dividing at the same time, both when capital is plenty and when it is (actively) absent.

## Circulation in the body economic / economic machine

In his 1890 novel *L'Argent* (Money), Emile Zola engaged with the ambivalence of capital as a transformative power in modern societies. The main character, Aristide Saccard, launches a joint-stock company (the *Banque universelle*) at the Paris exchange for his own gain, with the feigned purpose of restoring Christianity in the Levante, by developing it through public infrastructure (→ **Infrastructure**) projects. As a result of manipulative practices and a speculative craze that engulfs all of Paris, the stocks of the *Banque universelle* soar, until finally the bubble bursts, leaving everything in ruins. Halfway through the novel, the sister of Saccard's partner, Caroline Hamelin, 'acquired the sudden conviction that money was the dungheap in which grew the humanity of tomorrow. [ . . . ] If [ . . . ] in the [Middle] East buildings [ . . . ] were springing from the soil, it was because the passion for gambling was making money rain down and rot everything in Paris. Poisonous and destructive money became the ferment of all social vegetation, served as the necessary compost for the execution of the great works which would draw the nations nearer together and pacify the earth. [ . . . ] From this force, which was the root of all evil, there also sprang everything that was good' (Zola 1894, 232–3).

Likening the way of capital to the circle of life – death, fermentation, rebirth – is an unusual metaphor in nineteenth century thinking. But capital movement was indeed primarily conceived as circular, and the idea was expressed using biological metaphors: Capital circulated, in the way that blood circulates in organisms. In *L'Argent*, Saccard himself relied on the image in feverishly explaining himself to Caroline: 'And you will behold a complete resurrection over all those depopulated plains [ . . . ] life will return as it returns to a sick body, when we stimulate the system

by injecting new blood into the exhausted veins. Yes! money will work these miracles!’ (Zola 1894, 75).

Karl Marx, less feverishly, essentially defined capitalism through capital circulation: ‘The simplest form of the circulation of commodities is  $C—M—C$ , the transformation of commodities into money, and the change of the money back again into commodities’ (Marx 1887, part II, chap. 4). The purpose of this circulation is to satisfy a need (for a commodity that is not at hand at the outset); it ends when this purpose is met. In contrast, there is *capitalist circulation* ( $M—C—M$ ), the transformation of money into commodities and then back into more money, i.e. the ever repeated, limitless circulation of money as capital, with the purpose of increasing the capital, endlessly.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, notions of capital movement shifted markedly. For a start, the field of political economy was remodelled into the science of economics. Following the role model of physics, economics adopted more abstract conceptions of ‘the economy’ and set out to uncover universal laws governing it: laws about how economic variables are related. The reverence for physics did away with biological metaphors, in favour of mechanical notions – as embodied by the MONIAC (Monetary National Income Analogue Computer), a hydraulic machine constructed by LSE student William Phillips in 1949 to simulate the British economy (Bissell 2007). Tinted water symbolizing money flowed through pipes between different tanks, depending on the settings of valves and pumping speeds that equalled different tax rates, interest rates, etc., essentially allowing the state of the economy to be computed depending on the choice of economic parameters, as predicted by macroeconomic theory.

Macroeconomics (the study of nationally aggregated demand, supply, income, savings, investment, etc.) had increasingly accompanied microeconomics (the study of company and household behaviour on markets) since the 1920s and especially the 1930s, with the publication of John Maynard Keynes’ *General Theory* in 1936. The endeavour had both a decidedly practical and an empirical side. The practical side was provided by the increased level of political intervention in and management of economies since the beginning of the Great Depression, which called for theoretical underpinnings. The empirical side consisted of efforts that were developed to measure the gross national product and other macroeconomic variables; efforts that became ultimately institutionalized in the system of national accounting (Speich Chassé 2013).

### **Connecting economies**

In national accounting, the national economy as a whole is taken as the unit of interest, yet it is clear that this unit is not a closed system, there is exchange and

interaction with other economies. Until the late nineteenth century, one aspect of that exchange stood out: foreign trade. Since in market economies every transaction of a good is accompanied by its payment, flows of goods from one country to another were mirrored by a flow of payments of equal size in the opposite direction. While foreign trade was tracked and tabulated at customs offices, payments across borders remained unobserved, and could only be seen indirectly, through an ensuing change in foreign exchange rates. If more money went from Britain to the United States than vice versa, more British pounds became changed into U.S. dollars than vice versa; dollars were then in higher, pounds in lesser demand, and the former became more valuable in relation to the latter.

In the later nineteenth century, it became clear that noticeable amounts of money that did not serve as payments for imported or exported goods were crossing borders: mostly public lending to foreign states through the financial markets for bonds, and companies investing in foreign concerns with the aim of direct and lasting control, i.e., foreign direct investment (FDI).

In other words, commodity imports and exports were increasingly joined by what became called *capital* imports and exports. In 2000/01, around twelve percent of all international investments were in less developed countries, while in 1913/14, as much as 40 to 50 percent of all capital that had crossed borders was invested in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and less developed European countries (Schularik 2006, 37–43). Great Britain (46 percent), France (21 percent), and Germany (14 percent) acted as the largest lenders. While such estimates were only made recently, the general development was already noted at the time.

From around 1900, the observation was integrated into theories of imperialism. In 1902, John A. Hobson argued that the British economy suffered from overproduction which the poor masses could not absorb, and an overabundance of capital among the elite which it could not employ in Britain itself. 'Thus we reach the conclusion that Imperialism is the endeavour of the great controllers of industry to broaden the channel for the flow of their surplus wealth by seeking foreign markets and foreign investments to take off the goods and capital they cannot sell or use at home' (Hobson 1902, 91). In 1910, Rudolf Hilferding extended the argument in neo-Marxist terms, proposing that the liberal, competitive, anti-state form of capitalism had transformed into a monopolistic finance capitalism associated with the state, especially in the global arena, with regard to colonialism and imperialism (Hilferding 1910). His arguments were taken up by other neo-Marxist writers of the 1910s such as Rosa Luxemburg, Nikolai Bukharin, and Lenin.

### Accounting for flows

At that time, the metaphoric framework had clearly shifted from capital circulating to capital overflowing; or more broadly, to capital flowing in and out of countries (Niehans 1995, chap. V). As a bibliometric analysis of the Google Books corpus illustrates, the use of terms such as ‘capital movement’, ‘capital export’, and ‘capital flow’, as well as the German variants *Kapitalexport* and *Kapitalbewegung*, only really started and vastly increased in the 1920s and 1930s. ‘Capital flow’ became the most common of these expressions by the end of the 1950s. The context in which these terms were mostly used was that of international macroeconomics (studying the interrelation and interconnection of economies at the country level) and national accounting. The League of Nations, in its third assembly in 1922, adopted a resolution that called for states to prepare reports on their foreign trade balance and balance of payments, thus also on capital flows. Such statistics were compiled annually from 1924 onwards, with the format and methods of the different national reports slowly converging. The United Nations continued this from 1947 onwards, culminating in the publication of the ‘U.N. System of National Accounts’ as a norm in 1953.

As an item in national accounting, a ‘capital flow’ is usually construed as the aggregate of money and financial assets that move between two countries in a given period. It abstracts from individual transfers, and the individuals, firms, and other entities that are interrelated by it. It even often denotes only the *balance* of the inflow and outflow of capital: not gross, but net capital flows, i.e., the amount by which one country’s capital stock has decreased and the other’s has increased over a specific period.

In national accounting, net capital flows have peculiar characteristics:

1. They connect whole countries. As an abstract notion, they do so in the minds of politicians, economists, and other experts. As an aggregate number, they serve as a shorthand for real economic actions and their consequences, which makes them operable for national economic policy makers and supranational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
2. With the national accounting mindset comes the implicit notion that capital flows can happen between any two countries. In this sense, any country is connected to any other country by an imaginary channel – to use Hobson’s term – through which capital may or may not flow, but *potentially* always does.
3. A capital flow is a *directed* connection with a specific magnitude. It connects a source country with a destination country, yet the source and destination labels are not given *ex ante*, they are a result. The magnitude of capital flows may vary, and their direction reverse. Depending on the context, such a reversal of the flow can be economically damaging for a country.

4. Economic reasons can be given as to why a capital flow occurs between two countries and in the specific direction: there are seemingly magnetic forces – abstracted ‘market forces’ – in play. Capital is attracted to the country with higher interest rates and potential for profit, and concurrently repulsed by greater risks of loss.

### **Operating the floodgates**

All aspects taken together means that for policy makers, it can be desirable to influence or even control the inflow or outflow of capital. On the one hand, they can, especially if the aim is to attract capital, enact policies to utilize ‘market forces’, by creating more attractive conditions for it. To some degree, ‘the financial markets’ – as a short-hand for the entirety of potential international lenders – gain disciplinary power over borrowing countries, by making them compete to attract investments. In certain circumstances, such policies can also be enforced from the outside, as by the structural adjustment programs in which the IMF and the World Bank condition their loans on policy reforms meant to stabilize the economy of the borrowing country and strengthen its competitiveness. This usually entails making outside investments more attractive and removing restrictions, i.e., liberalizing capital movements. On the other hand, there are policies that can be implemented which run against ‘market forces’ by establishing *capital controls*.

The 1920s, when the term ‘capital flows’ first gained wider currency, saw large yet somewhat unsteady capital flows from the United States to Europe, and especially Germany and Austria. After World War I, the need for reconstruction of the countries most involved in and impacted by the war clashed with the low availability of local investment capital. Germany also needed to pay reparations, which furthered borrowing abroad. New York City emerged as an international financial hub through which surplus capital from the thriving U.S. economy was lent to Europe. Yet with the onset of the Great Recession, capital flows reversed – first in 1929, and then in 1931, which ultimately led to a banking crisis (Ritschl 2002; Accominotti and Eichengreen 2016). To combat this crisis, Germany adopted capital controls. One such measure was the *Reichfluchtsteuer*, literally a tax on those ‘fleeing’ the country: wealthy individuals that decided to emigrate had to pay a wealth tax of 25 percent before they could even apply for the transfer of assets abroad. Initially meant to discourage the outflow of capital and highly taxable citizens, the instrument became a notorious tool in Nazi Germany to dispossess Jewish citizens who felt increasingly compelled to flee the country.

The main capital control measures introduced in 1931, however, concerned limitations on currency exchange. In the following years, this led to rigid government control and management of all foreign trade and foreign exchange in Germany –

and likewise, in Japan. Britain also introduced currency exchange controls late in 1931. Other countries such as the United States and France began considering them in earnest in the late 1930s, before they became the norm during World War II – and thereafter (Helleiner 1994). The Bretton Woods system, the global monetary order until the early 1970s, was very much constructed with capital controls as a core feature.

Should the decades from the 1930s to the 1970s be characterized as a period of deglobalisation (→ **Deglobalisation**), of undoing global connections, then? No. Capital controls and the public management of international payments and trade did not remove the interconnectedness of national economies. They just hindered the interconnectedness from playing out in the same way as before. The imaginary channels in which capital could flow between countries remained intact – as shown by the very fact that there had to be controls, for otherwise there would have been other and/or additional, substantial capital flows, conflicting with the aims of governments and central banks.

### **Conclusion**

The metaphor of capital flowing imagines single loans and investments as trickles converging into streams; streams that can swell and abate, reverse, and dry up, that can be diverted and that can become – held back by dams – potential. This entails an interpretation of globalisation as ongoing, fluctuating, and shifting at the same time. Traditional accounts of the history of economic globalisation often illustrate two waves of globalisation, in the late nineteenth and the late twentieth century, by plotting the development of average trade-to-GDP ratios: How much of all real, non-financial economic activities, of all commodity transactions extended across borders at a given point in time? Such a notion of globalisation is narrow in at least two ways. First, it draws attention only to transactions that actually transpired, not those which were intended, imagined, for any reason never realized, yet because they were imagined and intended, they were still part of global economic interaction. Second, it focusses on flows between countries, not economic interdependencies.

But while commodities ‘flowing’ across borders usually change hands for good, a sizeable part of capital movements concerns processes of borrowing, with borrowers and lenders in a semi-permanent relationship. On the one hand, capital crossing borders can point to an investment, a new connection: either a portfolio investment, a connection of expectations (of a return on the capital extended) and possibilities (by employing the borrowed capital); or an FDI, a connection of businesses in a single multinational enterprise. Yet on the other hand, capital crossing borders can also signify a divestment, the dissolution of connections for capital

to return home, or be used for other investments elsewhere. In that sense, capital flows have dis:connective qualities, and their increase or decrease does not signify degrees of globalisation or deglobalisation as much as what, in the introduction to this volume, is tentatively called *Umglobalisierung*: a shift in the *Gestalt* of globalisation.

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# Communication technologies

Heidi Tworek

Communication technologies might seem to be a quintessential foundation of global connections. Yet such technologies also disconnect by building networks (→ **Networks**) that only integrate certain places, cater to certain types of users, or facilitate certain sorts of interactions. Moreover, communications technologies do not necessarily follow the logic of waves of globalisation. I suggest, instead, that they facilitate undulations by enabling increased flows of information at the same time as other aspects of globalisation, like the movement of people or goods, decrease.

What do we mean by ‘communication’ and by ‘technologies’? These seemingly simple questions have complex answers. Scholars have offered multiple definitions and almost all emphasize the importance of context in time and space for understanding how communication operates in society and how it is defined. Communication is ‘the overarching term denoting a universe in which media are operative and which is altered by media’, according to Wolfgang Behringer (2006, 368).

Other definitions have focused on the role of communication within culture, noting that it can serve at least two very different functions. First, communication can be viewed as a form of transportation (→ **Transport**), seen as a top-down phenomenon from senders to receivers. This was the type of communication that many Germans meant when they talked about *Weltverkehr* (or ‘world traffic’, meaning the movement of goods and information) around 1900. Second, communication can be a form of common experience, consolidating community, and sustaining shared beliefs (Carey 1989). For that second definition, media may not need to exist; communication could happen in religious services, for example.

Feminist (→ **Feminism**) and post-colonial (→ **Postcolonial**) theorists stress that definitions of communication have often privileged white, male forms of information exchange, though some also emphasize the ‘centrality of media, in all its forms, to understanding the postcolonial condition’ (Llamas-Rodriguez and Saglier 2021). Meanwhile, Indigenous forms of communication including drums and smoke signalling could connect across long distances, moving far faster than goods and people, to achieve multiple goals, including to resist colonialism in places like Australia in the nineteenth century (Seifart et al. 2018; Kerkhove 2021). Still other definitions take us beyond the human, emphasizing that trees, for example, may communicate via fungi, with a popular pun calling this a ‘wood-wide web’ (for an overview of this debate, including critiques, see Immerwahr 2024). Given the multiplicity of definitions, it may make more sense to discuss communications in the plural as I do in the rest of this essay.

The idea of ‘technology’ too can be framed narrowly or broadly. A narrow view might only count ‘electric media’ like the telegraph. A broader view might include infrastructures (→ **Infrastructure**) that enable communications, such as roads or standardized time. This wider lens shifts the timeline of when communications technologies globalised from the mid-nineteenth-century world of submarine telegraphy back to at least the thirteenth-century postal relay system created by the Mongol Empire in Central Asia which influenced early European systems (Gazagnadou 2016).

Such logistical innovations could very much alter understandings of time and space, creating by 1500 a ‘Taxis Galaxy’ (referring to the Thurn and Taxis postal system in the Holy Roman Empire) that was much more important than the vaunted ‘Gutenberg Galaxy’ and that kick-started perceptual changes often more readily associated with nineteenth-century communications technologies like railways or telegraphs (Behringer 2006, 365). In some cases, like the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, dependable postal infrastructure was the most important factor for connection, not newer technologies (John 1994, 105).

Yet, these types of technological infrastructures could disconnect as much as they connected. Such infrastructures were not equally reliable nor accessible for everyone. To take an obvious example, women, unfree people, and Indigenous peoples in the United States could hardly mail letters in the same way as enfranchised white men, whether because they could not write, could not pay for the post, or were not allowed to access networks. Thinking about the deliberately disconnected means including histories of how communications technologies were used, how exclusionary (→ **Exclusion/Inclusion**) uses emerged, and how use was imagined (Müller and Tworek 2016).

Communications technologies worked to connect empires in the nineteenth century, but to disconnect colonized subjects. This continued into the twentieth century through the overlapping networks of the post, telegraphy, wireless, radio, and roads. To take examples from four different empires: Travellers relied upon the post for news in nineteenth-century French colonial Africa (Dulucq 2018). By the 1890s, many British officials saw an ‘All-Red Route’ around the world of submarine cables landing on British imperial soil as a crucial pillar of empire. German officials, in turn, both laid cables to duplicate British routes that they increasingly saw as a geopolitical instrument of competition and invested prior to and during World War I in an All-Wireless Route around the world as an alternative to cables. During and after World War II, the Portuguese Empire tried to use radio to consolidate its hold over Angola and Mozambique (Ribeiro 2022). What united all these empires and more, including the Belgians and Italians, was their reliance upon infrastructures like roads for the colonizers, often built by the colonized, but not for their use (Denning 2024).

Communications technologies could also enable connections at the exact same time as the movement of people and goods decreased. This occurred in the 1920s and 1930s with the emergence of spoken radio. During the 1920s in particular, some Europeans and Americans developed utopian visions about what radio could achieve both internationally as a peace-builder and nationally as a unifier. But those visions were undergirded by empire and by state control, which disconnected many amateur users and cut off alternative possibilities for non-imperial networks (Potter et al. 2022). As the 1930s progressed, radio became entangled in imperial competition over radio propaganda with the creation of institutions like BBC Empire. States also began to invest in methods to disconnect listeners from other broadcasters, particularly by jamming radio frequencies from competing states. At the same time, these states continued to contribute their wireless infrastructure to cooperate within the League of Nations' international epidemiological information system (Tworek 2019). These simultaneous dis:connective (→ **Introduction**) uses of communications technologies support Frederick Cooper's argument that globalisation theories fail to recognize that the 'key variables of transition did not vary together' (Cooper 2005, 97).

Globalisation, then, might not occur in 'waves', as the classic metaphor would have it. The notion of 'waves of globalisation' implies synchronous rises and falls in the movement of people, goods, and information. The maritime metaphor implies the importance of oceans and indeed, much scholarship on communications and global history has focused on submarine cables and technologies connecting across seas. Waves also imply a connection to communication through the air with wavelengths. For economists, using the term waves continued the long-standing tradition of borrowing from physics, principally nineteenth-century physics (Mirowski 1989).

But what if we need a metaphor that emphasizes disconnections as well as connections, disentanglement as well as entanglement? (McManus and Tworek 2022) I suggest we consider the notion of 'undulations'. This retains an oceanic flavour, and rightly so, when bodies of water cover over seventy percent of the planet's surface. At the same time, undulation provides a greater sense of oscillation, of simultaneous increases and decreases.

Finally, this metaphor incorporates a nod to the undulator, a technical device in physics that uses alternating magnets to push an electron into a particular curve. At certain wavelengths, the undulator produces peaks of light and at other wavelengths, it produces no light at all. The alternating magnets in the undulator point towards the simultaneous forces of connection and disconnection within any 'peak' of globalisation. The undulator can only produce light, and thus energy, through opposing magnetic forces that alternate the direction of the magnetic field. So too, communications technologies do not simply connect. Each technology, whether

radio, the internet, or something else, contains the seemingly opposing forces of connection and disconnection. In fact, they function like contrasting magnets in an undulator: both are necessary to focus a wavelength and create energy.

Just as an undulator requires multiple sets of opposing magnets, any understanding of communications technologies also needs to move beyond a focus on any one technology. Instead, the communications landscape is additive, with new opposing magnets of dis:connection created with the advent of anything from steamships to satellites. Perhaps these new additions simply make the undulations more extreme.

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# Constellation

Nikolai Brandes

In their recollections, architects from Maputo, Rome, and East Berlin, who worked in Mozambique in the first decades after independence in 1975, highlight the remarkable cosmopolitanism of the country's construction sector at that time (Brandes 2024). East German construction companies imported know-how for a prefab construction system, an American architect planned schools for the city administration of the capital, Soviet engineers founded a civil engineering magazine, Bulgarians occupied key positions in the nationalised architecture firms, and the Università La Sapienza di Roma sent staff to set up Mozambique's first architecture faculty. This was not a matter of course. After independence in 1975, which was more aptly described as a 'liberation without decolonisation' (Bragança 1985), the economically fragile country with its enormous urbanisation rate was thrown out of the global networks of the colonial era. Portuguese investors fled, South Africa, the most important trading partner, imposed embargoes, and Portuguese-Mozambican architects, who connected the country with the global networks around the avantgardist architectural group Team 10, largely left. A shortage of building materials and a devastating war in the country aggravated the situation. Despite – or because of – these blockades, however, unexpected and contradictory new networks quickly emerged.

In many ways, the integration of Mozambique's postcolonial construction sector with its hardships, specificities, and idiosyncrasies into global supply chains, professional networks, and transfers of ideas and expertise was closely intertwined with a series of what could be called 'dis:connective' movements. According to Balme, Dogramaci, and Wenzlhuemer, 'slumps, disruptions, detours, hiatuses [. . .] have always been integral elements of globalisation processes.' (→ **Introduction**) In fact, the very dynamics that slowed down, irritated, interrupted (→ **Interruptions**), or derailed the global integration of Mozambique's postcolonial manoeuvres in the field of architectural production and urban planning simultaneously opened up new rationales, forms, and levels of global interaction. This indeed suggests that dis:connective phenomena were not 'harbingers of deglobalisation but [. . .] part of all global entanglements' (→ **Introduction**).

The volatile situation described in the vignette above, with its critical reassessment of the colonial past, ideological transformations, and geopolitical realignments, is reminiscent of what curator and writer Okwui Enwezor (2003) described as the 'postcolonial constellation'. Enwezor uses this term to refer to 'a complex geopolitical configuration that defines all systems of production and relations of exchange as a consequence of globalization after imperialism' (58). The concept

of the ‘constellation’ offers way to assess the dis:connective recalibration of global embeddings. In addition to Enwezor’s exploration of the term, the concept is widely used in the humanities in general, often with different conceptual implications. Generally speaking, it ‘defines a configuration of phenomena under specific spatial and temporal circumstances’ (Sahraoui and Sauter 2018, ix). Thus, what Enwezor and other theorists have in common is their interest in the complex, unstable interplay of ‘concepts, events, ideas, or any other kind of material’ (ix) or individual or collective social actors, which permanently creates new perspectives and contexts for interpretation through the relationality of its components. In the following, I will explore the concept in more detail with a focus on postcolonial contexts. I will take the example of architecture and urban planning to elaborate some preliminary suggestions of how the concept can be used to engage with dynamics of global dis:connectivity.

Beyond its etymological origins in astronomy, where it describes the relation of individual celestial elements to each other and to the observer at a given point in time (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.), the term ‘constellation’ serves various purposes in the humanities.<sup>1</sup> Heuristically, uses of the term could be assigned to several categories: One that is informed by Walter Benjamin’s philosophy of history and certain exponents of the Frankfurt School; one that focuses on dynamics of social interaction; and one that draws on the term to describe the cultural conditions of a particular historical situation. However, many approaches to the term remain ambiguous and impede their localisation within these registers.

(1) In the humanities, the concept is arguably most commonly associated with the writings of Benjamin and, later, Adorno (Adorno 1966, Kaufmann 2000). It has been applied in disciplines such as visual arts, history, philosophy, and literature to understand ‘the relation of the individual objects to each other and to the viewer’ which ‘can be grasped only instantaneously and only from a specific viewer’s standpoint’ (Sahraoui and Sauter, x). Thus, constellations are understood here not just as an empirical matter, but also as a method of representing and ‘reading’ social and cultural phenomena. Especially the representation and analysis of history can be thought of in constellations. In this sense, history does not appear as a linear string of events but as an arrangement of moments past and present that constantly opens up new perspectives. In his text *On the concept of history*, Benjamin outlines the idea of a ‘historicist’ history, which presents itself as a linear, causally linked

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<sup>1</sup> However, several seminal texts that contributed decisively to the popularity of the term ‘constellation’ in the humanities and expanded its possible applications in different disciplines do without an actual definition of the term.

narrative which makes the given circumstances of the present look inevitable. He contrasts this with a historiography in which historical events acquire their actual meaning when they are linked to the present. To this end, he argues for the study of the ‘constellation’ (*Konstellation*) into which one’s ‘own era entered, along with a very specific earlier one’ (Benjamin 2003, 397).

Looking at the decolonisation of Lusophone Africa, Branwen Jones (2019) demonstrates the potential of reading history as a constellation by analysing references to historical experiences of colonial oppression and anti-colonial resistance under the often-disenchanting conditions of the postcolonial present. According to a linear understanding of history, she argues, the current conditions of post-imperial capitalism might suggest that past experiences with the discourses and practices of anti-colonial liberation movements in Mozambique and other former Portuguese colonies could only be interpreted as a tragedy with no further significance for the present. However, these experiences take on a different meaning when read as a constellation. Jones argues for ‘anticolonial accounts of anticolonialism which can bring the past, colonial and anticolonial, into critical constellation with the present’ (612). In practical terms, this would allow a rediscovery of supposedly insignificant experiences of anti-colonial resistance during the colonial era, activating them for current political action and claims for the future – thereby letting obscured episodes of the past become historically operational (611).

(2) A more sociological or anthropological understanding of constellations uses the term to analyse the interplay of individuals and their interactions in, and impact on, societal contexts. The term ‘constellation’ is often used here following Max Weber, who interested a broad current of sociology in analysing social life both in its individually shaped constellations and in its emergence from preceding cultural conditions (Gostmann 2016, 9). In German-speaking academia in particular, several unrelated sociological approaches have been established under the homonymous collective term of *Konstellationsanalyse* (1) or constellation research (Heidegren 2023), which address these questions.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) developed her concept of ‘constellations of coresistance’ against the background of her own experiences with the development of resistant Indigenous networks in Canada. She uses it to refer to the normative project of building relationships between different oppressed communities, which she depicts as an essential component of political mobilisation. For her, relationships that arise in these constellations have greater transformative political power than, for example, confrontational demands for recognition and rights vis-à-vis the state. ‘Constellations’, Simpson emphasizes, ‘exist only in the context of relationships; otherwise, they are just individual stars’ (215). Thus, Simpson suggests seeing ‘the constellation as an organizing value in resurgent movement building’ that helps ‘create

or hold Indigenous presence that in some way was disruptive to settler colonialism' (216). On the far-reaching effects of such a practice on a global level, Simpson writes: 'When these constellations work in international relationship to other constellations, the fabric of the night sky changes; movements are built, particularly if constellations of coresistance create mechanisms for communication, strategic movement, accountability to each other, and shared decisionmaking practices' (217–218).

(3) The use of the concept of constellation to characterise specific historical situations can be found in exemplary form in the work of Jürgen Habermas. In his essays on the 'post-national constellation' (Habermas 2001), Habermas dispenses with a conceptual definition of 'constellations' *per se*. Instead, he uses the term to critically introduce the then emerging research on globalisation to the German public.<sup>2</sup> For Habermas, the post-national constellation essentially describes a challenge to democracy because, from the 1970s onwards, the solution to problems that arise within a national framework could no longer adequately be solved within this framework due to the intensified globalisation of the economy and politics. Habermas argues for new forms of transnational civic solidarity and highlights 'the artificial conditions in which national consciousness arose', which, according to him, oppose the idea that 'solidarity among strangers can only be generated within the confines of a nation' (Habermas 2001, 102).

Enwezor (2003), whose essay on the 'postcolonial constellation' does not mention Habermas (but mirrors the author's title), deals with the problems of a global capitalist art market.<sup>3</sup> He focuses on how globalisation in the field of art has on the one hand made ideas of a polyphonic, hybrid modernity possible, but on the other hand continues to be structured around unequal geopolitical frameworks. At the turn of the millennium, Enwezor observes the persistence of a Western, academic understanding of modernity (including ideas of a linear history, a dichotomy of centre and margin, and obscure civilisational claims), which despite the compressing economic and political effects of globalisation have not been abolished.

In the field of architectural research, the concept of constellation has only found fragmentary resonance. While some authors refer to Benjamin's terminology to develop their readings of the built environment (Lipton 2016; Gupta 2021), others use the term to focus on transnational learning processes of professional architects (Faulconbridge 2010). However, both approaches might be productive for analysing architectural production under dis:connective conditions in the 'majority

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<sup>2</sup> Today, the text is surprising both because of its detachment from the earlier conceptual groundwork at Habermas' workplace in Frankfurt and because of its limited resonance in current historical globalisation research.

<sup>3</sup> Around 2000, a whole range of topics were placed in relation to globalisation under the catchword of constellation. See, for example, Seyla Benhabib's (1999) reflections on feminism.

world' (Alam 2008). Against the backdrop of Mozambique's dis:connective globalisation, the concept of the 'postcolonial constellation', to use Enwezor's words, can be used to gain new perspectives on various levels. The decoupling from Portugal, its NATO allies, and South Africa and the abrupt end of investment in Mozambican real estate suddenly called the linear narrative of a continuous 'modernisation' of Mozambican architecture into question. The present was no longer the present of a white colonial middle class whose reality had inevitably resulted from colonial modernisation driven by growth and venture capital. Rather, the challenges posed by the precarious living conditions of the majority and the increasing awareness of environmental pollution and resource scarcity shed an unexpected new light on colonial urbanism, identifying it as a problem for environmental protection as early as in the 1980s. Equally giving contours to Benjamin's idea of the constellation, regional experiences with resource-efficient construction methods that had long been neglected became points of reference for more sustainable construction in the future (Forjaz 2023). This knowledge in turn became fundamental in the realisation of construction projects with new international partners. When realising their projects in Mozambique, architects from the GDR regularly sought contact with craftsmen who were trained in traditional building techniques (Brandes 2024).

The idea of building constellations as relationships with other resistance movements as emphasised by Simpson (2017), has a long tradition in the global history of Mozambican anti-colonialism. In the professional environment of postcolonial architectural production and its close ties to state structures, however, 'constellations of resistance' can only be found to a limited extent. Still, building relationships of solidarity was a key motivation for actors from Mozambique's construction industry, even though this endeavour was often characterised by disadvantageous contracts and other disappointing experiences. While intergovernmental agreements in the construction industry with Bulgaria or the GDR in all but a name (if at all) proclaimed international solidarity, new relationships were established at the same time, for example with ecological research centres in Scandinavia or Black American architects who themselves faced limited work opportunities in their country.

And finally, the situation in Maputo underlines how the architecture industry was forced to defend itself against a dichotomous perception of architectural practices as 'modern' or 'traditional', especially in the course of an increasing integration into closer and nominally more equal economic and political international relationships after liberation. *Between Adobe and Stainless Steel* (Forjaz 2023), the manifesto of the country's leading architect of the 1980s, aims to interrupt such understandings of architecture and exemplifies what Enwezor is aiming for with his idea of a post-colonial constellation, namely the criticism of a narrative of modernisation that has been perpetuated in the art and culture industry and that sets Western experience as the norm.

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# Deglobalisation

Walden Bello

## Deglobalisation: a conceptual, political, and personal history

On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic ‘Battle of Genoa’ of 20–21 July 2001, the Italian sociologist Paolo Gerbaudo recalled that among the people trapped with him at the media centre that was raided by the *carabinieri*, was,

... Walden Bello, a Filipino economist and environmentalist whose theory of de-globalization was becoming influential at the time. Since the 1990s — a decade which had seen the NAFTA agreement, European economic integration, and trade liberalization under the aegis of the World Trade Organization — there had been much debate on the Left on how to approach the global era. For some, economic globalization and its superseding of nation-states was an irreversible tendency. Yes, its nefarious effects had to be attacked — but its progressive aspects should be reclaimed, pursuing global justice and global democracy as a higher form of universalism.

Bello’s approach was more blunt. True to its popular name, the anti-globalization movement had to fight for outright “de-globalization,” an overall reduction in planetary economic interconnectedness and a re-localization of economic processes. For Bello... de-globalization would mean taking away power from transnational corporations and re-empowering local communities and citizens. It would prioritize equity and environmental sustainability over growth.

Looking back, he wrote, ‘At the time of the Genoa protests, any talk of a break from globalization appeared to many as an unrealistic if not outright dystopian prospect. However, twenty years later, this is precisely the course that history is taking.’ (Gerbaudo 2021)

## Deglobalisation: the evolution of an idea

In 2009, *The Economist*, one of the loudest cheerleaders of globalisation, cited me – in a disapproving context – as having coined the term ‘deglobalization’ (The Economist 2009). I pleaded guilty. Deglobalisation was never meant as a neutral term. It was conceived in political struggle. If globalisation was what we were opposing, then we had to counter it with the strongest idea possible: deglobalisation. When we advanced it, deglobalisation was a vision, a strategy, not a description of an empirical reality or process, as it is used now to describe current trends away from globalised production and global supply chains or ‘reshoring’, though we foresaw these.

This did not mean it was simply a slogan. It was a programme, the main points of which were refocusing the economy back on production for the domestic market rather than for export markets, resubordinating the market to society, reassert-

ing cooperation over competition, replacing the pursuit of narrow efficiency with that of social effectiveness, and allowing for a diversity of ways of organising and economy rather than fitting all economies into one mould, the neoliberal template. It was also an idea that sprang from a rich intellectual tradition, associated with the Hungarian thinker Karl Polanyi.

In his classic book *The Great Transformation* that came out in 1944 (Polanyi 2001), Polanyi wrote that the unregulated market championed by neoliberals emerged from a process of ‘disembedding’ the market from the broader social system, so market relations came to drive the whole system. But he also argued that this disembedding was the first phase of a ‘double movement’. When the disembedded market began to run out of control, creating tremendous social crises, society reasserted its supremacy over the market. The second phase occurred after the Great Depression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the shape of strong state intervention to ‘re-embed’ the market in society.

Inspired by Polanyi’s double movement, the deglobalisation paradigm called for a second re-embedding of the market in society after the crisis unleashed by the unfettered market under neoliberalism. ‘Something fundamentally similar is necessary today, with the current crisis of neoliberalism,’ I wrote. ‘Unlike classical socialism, deglobalization does not call for the abolition of the market and its replacement by central planning. What it does call for is the “re-embedding” of market relations in society, meaning that social relations must reflect the subordination of market efficiency to the higher values of community, solidarity, and equality. The market’s role in exchange and the allocation of resources is important, but this must not only be balanced but subordinated to the maintenance and enhancement of social solidarity. Acting to balance and guide the market must not only be the state but also civil society, and in place of the invisible hand as the agent of the common good must come the visible hand of democratic choice. In place of the economics of narrow efficiency, we propose what we might call “effective economics”.’ (Haski 2011).

### **Stockholm, December 2003**

Deglobalisation was the theme of my acceptance speech when in 2003, I was named the recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize. The reason for the award, according to the official citation, was ‘[f]or his outstanding efforts in educating civil society about the effects of corporate globalization, and how alternatives to it can be implemented.’ Addressing the audience at the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm on 8 December 2003, I said,

... [A]bove all, we must change the rules of the global economy, for it is the logic of global capitalism that is the source of the disruption of society and of the environment. The challenge is that even as we deconstruct the old, we dare to imagine and win over people to our visions and programmes for the new.

Contrary to the claims of the ideologues of the establishment, the principles that would serve as the pillars of a new global order are present. The primordial principle is that instead of the economy, the market, driving society, the market must be – to use the image of the great Hungarian Social Democrat Karl Polanyi – “reembedded” in society and governed by the overarching values of community, solidarity, justice, and equity. At the international level, the global economy must be deglobalized or rid of the distorting, disfiguring logic of corporate profitability and truly internationalized, meaning that participation in the international economy must serve to strengthen and develop rather than disintegrate and destroy local and national economies.

The perspective and principles are there; the challenge is how each society can articulate these principles and programmes in unique ways that respond to their values, their rhythms, their personality as societies. Call it post-modern, but central to our movement is the conviction that, in contrast to the belief common to both neoliberalism and bureaucratic socialism, there is no one shoe that will fit all. It is no longer a question of an alternative but of alternatives.

But there is an urgency to the task of articulating credible and viable alternatives to the global community, for the dying spasms of old orders have always presented not just great opportunity but great risk.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the revolutionary thinker Rosa Luxemburg made her famous comment about the possibility that the future might belong to “barbarism.”

Barbarism in the form of fascism nearly triumphed in the 1930’s and 1940’s.

Today, corporate-driven globalization is creating so much of the same instability, resentment, and crisis that are the breeding grounds of fascist, fanatical, and authoritarian populist movements.

Globalization not only has lost its promise but it is embittering many. The forces representing human solidarity and community have no choice but to step in quickly to convince the disenchanted masses that, indeed, as the banner of World Social Forum in Porto Alegre proclaims, “Another world is possible.” For the alternative is, as in the 1930’s, to see the vacuum filled by terrorists, demagogues of the religious and secular Right, and the purveyors of irrationality and nihilism.

The future, dear friends, is in the balance. (Bello 2003)

### **The many lives of deglobalisation**

In its later iterations after my Stockholm speech, deglobalisation was translated from principles into a concrete programme that came to include, among others, activist trade and industrial policies, land and income redistribution, de-emphasis on economic growth in favour of improvement in equity and environment-enhancing policies, and the creation of a ‘mixed economy’ that included community cooperatives, private enterprises, and state enterprises.

Some called what we were proposing a non-capitalist economy. We did not object. More critical commentators said we were anti-capitalist. We did not deny it.

After 2010, things became more complicated in terms of the public's reception of the deglobalisation paradigm. The situation in France, for instance, was interesting. Arnaud Montebourg, a member of the Socialist Party ran for president under the banner of *demandialisation*, with one account noting that 'the utopia of demandialisation is all the more appealing as Montebourg points out that it's not a rich-man's dream of keeping the poor at bay, crediting Walden Bello, the Princeton-educated Filipino writer, politician, and a man of the South for the concept' (Haski 2011). Montebourg was later appointed minister of reindustrialisation in the government of President Francois Hollande, though, as far as I know, he never got to seriously implement a programme of deglobalisation.

On the other hand, the French far right led by Marine Le Pen of the National Front embraced deglobalisation, but it cleverly mixed valid working-class anxieties about globalisation with anti-European Union and anti-immigrant sentiments. As one account noted, Le Pen 'carries the idea [of] globalization further, as she advocates an exit by France from the euro and erection of barriers at France's borders. Her plan, a one-country-versus-all approach, makes no economic sense, but carries strong nationalistic and emotional appeal' (Haski 2011).

What was happening was that themes we had articulated, among them the subordination of trade to the social good, the expansion of social protection, and the re-embedding of the market in society were being articulated within an ideological framework that privileged the dominant social group and marginalised large numbers of people on the basis of their race, ethnicity, nationality, or culture. Deglobalisation was being hijacked to provide legitimacy to anti-migrant politics. The right was appealing to community, but its concept of community was very different from that of the progressive tradition. As I later pointed out,

For the right, community is determined by race, ethnicity, and blood. It is narrow in terms of who is included in it rather than expansive. For us, community is principally a matter of shared values that transcend differences in blood, gender, race, class, and culture. Community tends towards continual expansion and incorporation of people that share the same values. . . Central to this interpretation of community is the assumption that all people are entitled to the full range of political, civil, economic, social, and human rights, including the right to join a desired community. This does not mean that there are no procedural rules governing the acquisition of citizenship or migration. It does mean that though that these rules and regulations are guided by a fundamental openness towards accepting those who wish to join a community. (Bello 2019, 9)

One cannot overemphasize the role that neoliberalism and globalisation have played in spawning movements of the radical right. The worsening living standards and great inequalities created by neoliberal policies created disillusionment among

people who felt the liberal democracy had been captured by the rich and triggered distrust in centre-right and centre-left parties that promoted those policies. After being supporters of the neoliberal policies that had promoted globalisation, the far right opportunistically latched onto deglobalisation to capture citizens that had lost their trust in the moderate parties identified with them.

Perhaps, there is no better account of the way anti-globalisation and deglobalisation migrated from the left to the right than that of former President Barack Obama, who represented the dominant, neoliberal, ‘Third Way’ wing of the Democratic Party, along with the Clintons. In a speech in Johannesburg in July 2017, Obama remarked that the ‘politics of fear and resentment’ stemmed from a process of globalisation that ‘upended the agricultural and manufacturing sectors in many countries. . . greatly reduced the demand for certain workers. . . helped weaken unions and labor’s bargaining power. . . [and] made it easier for capital to avoid tax laws and the regulations of nation states.’ He further noted that ‘challenges to globalization first came from the left but then came more forcefully from the right, as you started seeing populist movements . . . [that] tapped the unease that was felt by many people that lived outside the urban cores; fears that economic security was slipping away, that their social status and privileges were eroding; that their cultural identities were being threatened by outsiders, somebody that didn’t look like them or sound like them or pray as they did.’ These resentful, discontented masses are the base of fascist parties. Obama was practically admitting that neoliberal policies that he was one of the major advocates of in the United States had backfired.

### **Aborted deglobalisation plans for Myanmar**

Deglobalisation was a theoretical paradigm, and the sceptics would always ask us, where can we see deglobalisation being put into practice? I had been looking for an opportunity to translate deglobalisation from theory into reality, and it seems like my prayers were answered when Pietje Vervest of the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute and Paung Ku and other progressive NGOs in Myanmar invited me to come up with an alternative development plan for Myanmar in 2017. The opportunity had opened up with the National League for Democracy’s (NLD) decisive win in the national elections of 2015.

The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and other members of the development establishment had already come in like gangbusters once the Thein Sein transition government said it was open for business in 2011. Not surprisingly, they had proceeded to set Myanmar on an export-oriented path meant to integrate it into the regional and international supply chains of global capitalism. But many in Myanmar’s civil society and the NLD were not convinced this was the way to go, having seen the crisis of agriculture, environmental problems, and growing inequalities

this paradigm had spawned in other Southeast Asian countries. They were eager for an alternative path, and that is what I was asked to provide.

After several visits to Myanmar in 2017 and 2018, where I encountered a bustling and hopeful civil society in Yangon, Mandalay, and Dawei, a detailed development strategy was ready that challenged frontally the outward orientation pushed by the development establishment and promoted instead an inward-focused, domestic market-focused, agriculture-led strategy where industry, trade, and energy provision developed principally through synergy with the needs of the agricultural sector. The goal was to bring about equitably shared prosperity, with mutually enhancing and balanced development between the city and the countryside, among states, among social groups, and among the ethnic communities of Myanmar. And in contrast to the development from above approach of the World Bank, the alternative strategy would be implemented via a participatory democratic process of development from below, with people's organisations, communities, and civil society taking the lead (Bello 2018).

Noteworthy among our proposals were two: the adoption of agroecology and making Myanmar's poppy producers in the ethnic minority states part of a legal pharmaceutical industry. Smallholder agriculture, we pointed out, is particularly suited to agroecology – an approach that makes use of natural ecosystems and relies on local knowledge to plant diverse crops that raise the sustainability of the farming system as a whole by reducing the ecological stresses induced by chemical-intensive monoculture. As for poppy producers, they could be weaned away from being participants in the illegal narcotics trade and become legitimate sources of supply for poppy-based medicinal drugs such as morphine and codeine.

Unfortunately, the national debate on alternative strategies of development was aborted by the military coup of February 2021. But the freezing of debate is likely to be temporary, for the people of Myanmar, I am confident, will eventually get rid of an oppressive military regime that has overreached and, as of the middle of 2023, had already lost control of half of the country. Deglobalisation may yet come to Myanmar.

### **Revisiting deglobalisation**

While the foundational concepts of deglobalisation met with approval in progressive circles, concrete policies stemming from the paradigm were seen by some as needing more substantive articulation. Key issues that needed to be addressed more fully were whether deglobalisation favoured 'delinking' from the international economy, whether it was a 'development alternative' or an 'alternative to development', whether it favoured 'decoupling' or 'degrowth' as the way forward in addressing climate change, what its relationship was to the food sovereignty paradigm, what its stand was on feminist economics, how it related to structural

changes in the economy like advances in artificial intelligence, and what its relationship was to *Buen Vivir* and other paradigms influenced by indigenous perspectives (→ **Epistemologies, alternative**).

In a very productive dialogue with other alternative paradigms that have been advanced over the last two decades, it was clarified that deglobalisation did not mean delinking from the international economy; was more of an alternative to development than a development alternative; favoured degrowth over decoupling; was enriched by the perspectives of food sovereignty and agroecology; and sought to integrate the insights of feminist economics, in particular, the value of reproductive work and the centrality of work related to care in the post-growth economy. Also, like emancipatory Marxism, deglobalisation recognized both the massive threat posed to workers by advances in artificial intelligence and the liberating potential of the latter in terms of releasing people from the burden of work in order to concentrate on fulfilling their potential as creative beings (For an extended discussion of the relationship of deglobalisation to these perspectives, see Bello 2019 and Bello 2022).

Deglobalisation also has much in common with the perspectives and values undergirding *Buen Vivir*. Indeed, the shared perspectives among all the alternatives to development are striking. However, rather than subsuming all the discourses under one overarching discourse, it is probably more productive for each of them to be articulated and developed separately, with their complementarities being pointed out along with their differences. A paradigm serves as a conceptual and ethical filter that surfaces realities that might not appear or receive a similar emphasis in other paradigms. The insights each paradigm now delivers might be lost under a homogenising conceptual framework.

It must also be pointed out that the sails of deglobalisation received fresh wind from new analytical concepts such as, for instance, the idea of dis:connectivity that this volume deals with. The 2008 global financial crisis stalled globalisation, but it did not prevent China from proclaiming the advent of a new phase of globalisation called 'connectivity', with China leading it. 'Connectivity' was mainly an infrastructural process, with road and rail connections linking Asia and Europe, and connecting countries at the continental level in Africa and Latin America. It was a breath-taking vision, but it was laid low by three developments. One was the coronavirus, which travelled swiftly by air and other transportation, leading countries to restrict entry into their territories. Second was geopolitics; as the 'New Cold War' heated up, the US and the EU pushed their corporations to 'reshore' their global supply chains from China. The third factor was civil society scepticism about connectivity being a positive force. The idea of dis:connectivity seeks to bring these developments together analytically.

## Conclusion

Deglobalisation is over 20 years old. This period has seen both its vindication and the rise of challenges to it. Globalisation is now in crisis, for many of the reasons that the deglobalisation paradigm articulated. At the same time, politically deglobalisation has been appropriated by the far right, which has been much better at using it to mobilise people than the left. A big question then is how progressive forces can reclaim it as a vision and programme.

Another key concern was how deglobalisation could be put into practice. Myanmar under the government of Aung Sang Suu Kyi offered an opportunity to do this, but after an initial plan was drafted in cooperation with civil society organisations there, the military coup of 2021 led to its being shelved. Pushing it as an alternative, however, remains a possibility once the junta is overthrown.

Over the last two decades, we have seen other alternative approaches emerge, among them ecofeminism, food sovereignty, degrowth, emancipatory Marxism, Buen Vivir, and the analytical concept of dis:connectivity. The dialogue between deglobalisation and these perspectives has been rich, but it has barely begun.

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# Detours

Burcu Dogramaci

The term ‘detours’ refers to unintentional, often undesirable routes, which means a longer and usually arduous journey to the destination. In most cases, detours mean delays and a greater investment of time and energy. Detours are therefore usually unexpected and unwelcome alternatives to direct routes. The concept of ‘detours’ thus offers new ambitious perspectives and alternatives to mobile terms such as ‘flows’, ‘routes’ and ‘circulations’, which are closely linked to globalisation and migration. These traditional terms convey the transfer or mobility of people, capital, goods, things or ideas as linear, direct and purposeful. ‘Detours’, however, sets a different tone: it emphasises that stagnation, delay, waiting, rethinking, the unplanned, the errant and the surprising are elementary for the definition and theorisation of globalisation processes. At the same time, the term, which includes meandering, zigzagging or digressing, opens up a temporal dimension as well as a spatial one, which understands globalisation not (only) as a dynamic process of interdependence fuelled by technical progress – transport, communication. The logic of ‘detours’ counters the metaphor of growth with delay, circumstance, the convoluted and unexpected. On the potential inherent in the concept of detour, and especially the zig-zag movement, Petra Löffler writes:

Hither and thither – walking in zigzag creates room as it suddenly turns and twists and scatters its vectors. It bypasses territories and unfolds in ambience. The zigzag is allied with coincidence and is as familiar with failure as it is with epiphany. (Löffler 2017, 138–143; my translation)

A panorama of possible questions and hypotheses now unfolds, providing new stimuli for research on globalisation processes: How can detours either enable or prevent worldwide entanglements, since coincidences and obstacles may or may not lead to unusual, sometimes less-travelled, pathways? How does the acceptance of such diversions as a defining paradigm of globalisation processes change the understanding of migration, flight and exile? What role did/do the arts play in giving detours a new shape, in helping them to gain visibility within the horizon of a globalisation understood as dynamic and immediate? How can we dissolve the binary conception of migration as movement (and progress) and settlement as stagnation in favour of a more hybrid and interconnected understanding of permanence-in-evanescence? Is it possible to readjust the relationship between space and time via the notion of ‘detour’?

Routes of flights and exile are rarely straightforward; the passages and travel routes are shaped by imponderables, insurmountable obstacles and periods of waiting, as novels such as *Hôtel Baalbek* (1971) by Fred Wander or *Flotsam* (1941, German: *Liebe Deinen Nächsten*) by Erich Maria Remarque (Wander 2007; Remarque 2017) show for émigrés fleeing National Socialism. Waiting (→ **Waiting**) at border fences, in camps, in hiding, for a means of transport is a fundamental part of an escape. In March 1941, the ship *Capitaine Paul-Lemerle* brought numerous refugees with the help of the Emergency Rescue Committee from the ‘waiting room’ of Marseille to Martinique, where the passengers had to stay in a former camp for leprosy patients before continuing their journey. The voyage, characterised by detours and waiting, is not only recorded in the images of photographer Germaine Krull, but also in the book *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) by ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, both of whom were on board the *Capitaine Paul-Lemerle*. The writer Anna Seghers was also among the passengers and wrote the first drafts of her novel *Transit* (1942) during the crossing. Her book was about people waiting in Marseille who were trying to escape from the National Socialist troops and trying to obtain visas, affidavits and ship tickets (Seghers 2018).

Even today, little has changed in the fact that refugee movements often take detours and are primarily aimed at overcoming national borders. These detours take place over sea and land, along mountains and through forests, as Agnieszka Holland shows in her film *Green Border* (2023): people are repeatedly sent back into the swampy forests on the border between Belarus and Poland by border guards and are trapped in limbo in this dangerous restricted area. They are disconnected from both their country of origin and the destinations of their flight. New approaches in historical studies emphasise interruptions (→ **Interruptions**), detours and absences (→ **Absences**) as key aspects of a dis:connective global history, which for a long time was primarily perceived as a history of entanglements and interrelationships. The concept of dis:connectivity assumes that non-connections are always inherent to connections and that connectivity and non-connectivity are closely intertwined and embedded in globalisation processes.

Nation-state borders (→ **Transborder**) are a means of ‘mobility control’ or ‘mobility regime’ (on both terms, see Karakayali 2008, 80, 87), which channel, enable, or prevent immigration. At least in Europe, the Schengen Agreement has led to a shift from nation-state borders to the EU’s external borders, which have become institutions of defence against refugees – Nevad Kermani therefore speaks

of the ‘European border regime’ (Kermani 2016, 24–31). For some years the focus in Europe has been on states such as Greece and Italy and their islands which are considered as fragile ‘doors’ for migrants and refugees at Europe’s external borders (see Kingsley 2016). In the works of contemporary artist Francis Alÿs, topographical and political border areas in Europe, the USA, the Middle East, and beyond are constantly negotiated.

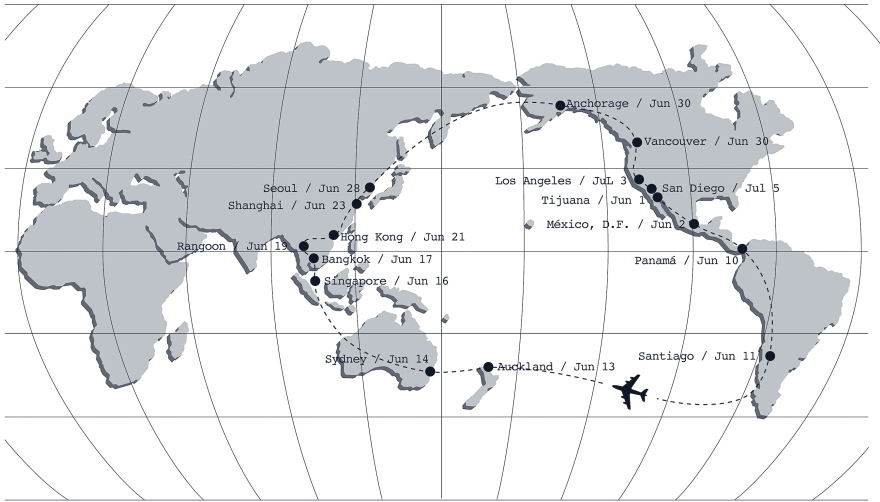
Alÿs teases out various methods to free people from their passivity and to provide them with agency, which might be temporary, partly imaginative, or even formulated as utopian. What Alÿs consistently explores is a break from the conditions and pressures of everyday life, from political regimes and their apparatuses of regulation and control. Practices of joint endeavour, physical effort or confrontation with obstacles are adopted as possibilities that can help us to reflect differently on the relationship between national borders and people. Alÿs often uses different artistic techniques in parallel in his works – performance and action, drawing and photography or video.<sup>1</sup> In 1997, Alÿs tried out an unusual form of border crossing between Mexico and the USA.

His project *The Loop* (Fig. 1) from 1997, for the exhibition *inSITE* in San Diego and Tijuana, sought to overcome the demarcation line between two neighbouring states – one that has taken centre stage again in political propaganda 20 years later under President Donald Trump and during his election campaigns. San Diego and Tijuana are neighbouring cities that lie on the territories of the USA and Mexico respectively. Alÿs started his border crossing in Tijuana and ended in San Diego, but he did not take the direct route. Instead, he embarked on a five-week journey that took him through Mexico City, Panama City, Santiago, Auckland, Sydney, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Seoul, Anchorage, Vancouver and Los Angeles. He thus undertook an elaborate, circular journey, ultimately arriving only a few hundred yards away from his starting point (see Ferguson 2007, 70). However, this short distance is a big step politically, as it meant that he had crossed the sensitive divide between the two countries without crossing the border directly, namely from Mexico to the USA. This direction is significant, as the crossing of the border by Mexicans has been closely monitored and penalised, and not just since Donald Trump’s first presidency.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For a procession project in New York City, see Francis Alÿs. *The Modern Procession*, Public Art Fund exhibition, 2004.

2 For a history of the US and Mexican Border, see Johnson and Graybill 2010; see also Ganster and Lorey 2015.

*The Loop / El Loop*

**Fig. 1:** Francis Alÿs, *The Loop, Tijuana-San Diego*, 1997. Graphic documentation of an action. In order to go from Tijuana to San Diego without crossing the Mexico/United States border, I followed a perpendicular route away from the fence and circumnavigated the globe, heading 67° South East, North East and South East again until I reached my departure point. The project remained free and clear of all critical implications beyond the physical displacement of the artist (Image courtesy of the artist).

With *The Loop*, Alÿs touched on various fields: while crossing the border between Mexico and the USA would presumably have been unproblematic for him as a native Belgian, his action highlighted the difficulties that others might face in trying to cross the border. At the same time, the elaborate journey is a reference to the routes of historical and contemporary refugees, which are characterised by obstacles, detours and odysseys.<sup>3</sup> Alÿs' detour is not based on immediate necessity, but points to others' struggles. The detour thus evolves into an artistic practice on and with the border.

Alÿs' work underlines how political borders lead to artistic actions. It also becomes clear that imagination and artistic production can transform border spaces so that they become spaces of possibility. Mireille Rosello and Stephen F. Wolfe describe this potential of the artistic as the 'imaginative power of the border as a productive space' and ask 'how art represents, explores and negotiates border experience' (Rosello and Wolfe 2017, 7).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the flight route of the artist Hugo Steiner-Prag in the 1930s and '40s via Sweden to the USA or that of the writer Ellen Auerbach via Palestine and Great Britain to the USA.

Criticism could of course also be directed at Alÿs' *The Loop*, because he, unlike those who do not have visas, passports or financial resources, is free to decide how to cross the border. At the same time, however, the playfulness and poetics of his border passage as a series of detours refers to the hardships of others. And yet, unlike Alÿs, who as an artist can imagine a detour to overcome the starting point and destination of his journey, all that remains for many refugees is the certainty of a journey into the unknown. In *Liquid Times* (2007), Zygmunt Bauman describes the fate of many displaced people in refugee camps and asylum centres as an eternal state of suspension:

Once a refugee, forever a refugee. Roads back to the lost (or rather no longer existing) home paradise have been all but cut, and all exits from the purgatory of the camp lead to hell. [. . .] And yet they do, time and again, whenever the powers-that-be decide that the exiles are no longer refugees, since ostensibly 'it is safe to return' to that homeland that has long ceased to be their homeland and has nothing that could be offered or that is desired. (Bauman 2007, 38–39).

In Bauman's description, the detour is therefore not only the imponderable route between the country of origin and the country of destination of the migration. Being on a detour can encompass the entire life of a refugee.

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# Dislocation

Zoya Masoud

From a medical point of view, '[a] dislocation happens when extreme force is put on a ligament, causing the ends of 2 bones to come apart' (Johns Hopkins Medicine 2019).<sup>1</sup> After such an incident, two bones are out of place, potentially causing the patient much pain until they meet at the joint again. From a linguistic point of view, the prefix 'dis-' means 'do the opposite of', 'deprived of (a specified quality, rank, or object)', 'exclude or expel from', 'opposite of, absence of', or simply 'not' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The term consequently refers to the absence of location, the opposite of location or being deprived of being located and the not located. Etymologically, it is derived from the Latin word 'locus', referring to a specific place within a 'topographical structure' that has been 'pushed "out of place"'. (Marchart 2018, 94; 2021, 107). These insights from different disciplines indicate a state of exception, which sounds as if it should and could be repaired by putting it into a location within the structure of topography. The anomaly of being out of location connotes a deviation from a set of 'common rules' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Consequently, the concept reveals two aspects. First, only when taking it as given that everything has a location does the dislocated appear to be different and abnormal, dislocatory to a regular sequence of events, which were supposed, whenever it happens to result in the same outcomes. Secondly, this regularity is to be observed only in comparison with the irregular.

This line of thought derives from post-foundational and post-structural thinking, which perceives regularity (e.g., the social) as founded on absolute reason, although the latter is simply impossible or absent. The absence of absolute reason(s) or the last-instance constitutes regularity (the social) (Landau, Pohl and Roskamm 2021, 9). In these schools of thought, the 'world' or 'reality' is understood as unstable and unsolid, which is 'always receding, always emerging from a fundamental void or absence of grounds' (ibid, 22). The goal of post-foundationalism is not to blow up all grounds. On the contrary, it places grounds under focus to study their instability and spot their cracks; it is preoccupied with the rest of the alleged whole. This theorizing has the potential to investigate how the foundations are continuously newly inscribed and (re-)formed to understand what hinders them from being complete.

This contribution ventures into the main theoretical features of dislocation. It proposes dislocation as a lens to examine the presence of absent last-instance

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Nikolai Roskamm for providing feedback on this manuscript.

and to approach global dis:connectivity. Especially that the latter underscores the importance of ‘the active absence of connections in global contexts’, as discussed in the introduction to this volume (→ **Introduction**). This is relevant in this particular moment of time that Achille Mbembe features on the one hand as ‘a time of planetary entanglement’ to describe the contemporary world. This is marked globally by massive efforts for efficiency through advanced technologies resulting in unprecedented acceleration and ‘intensification of connections’, ‘fast capitalism’, and ‘soft-power warfare’ (Mbembe 2019, 93). On the other hand, Mbembe points out that each entanglement is contaminated with ‘contraction, containment, and enclosure’ (ibid, 96). Roland Wenzlhuemer argues further that connective and disconnective aspects ‘reciprocally constitute each other’ (Wenzlhuemer 2022, 13). The dislocatory lens offers an approach to study global dynamics, revealing both the proliferation of connections and their inherent disconnects. It provides a nuanced understanding of the field of global dis:connectivity to explore the anxieties around structural tensions and to open up a horizon of possibilities for studying regularity, its shortcomings and its potential. By emphasizing the conditions of the exclusive nature of any foundation, the dislocatory lens seeks to grasp the constitutive character of disruptions, disconnections and irregularity in constituting each continuity, connection and regularity.

Ernesto Laclau calls such regularity simply a ‘system of meaning’, be it structure, topography, identity, discourse, society or ‘space’ (Laclau 2010, 41). According to Laclau, each system of meaning engenders stability by comparing and stressing the differences with a ‘constitutive outside’, which is ‘radically’ different from it and cannot be integrated within it (Marchart 2014, 164). Due to this irreducible character, the constitutive outside prevents the discourse from being a ‘complete totalization’: To have an inside and contrast it to an outside, the totality is characterized by being a closed terrain with the boundaries to shut out the excess of meaning from the outside. However, these attempts at domesticating the infinitude of meanings from outside are only partial, as the process of fixation of all meanings in a system is consequently impossible: 1) The system will never be whole by itself, as it needs the outside with which it contrasts its inside radically. 2) The system is infiltrated, traversed, penetrated, (Roskamm 2017, 179; Marchart 2019, 107; Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 127) and permeated by the outside. Because the system’s foundation is located outside it, the structure has limited capacity to control the infinite flow of meanings from the outside over time. Laclau defines this ‘constitutive ambivalence’ as dislocation, which infiltrates the inside.

Michel Foucault describes how every discourse claims homogeneity within its elements. This homogeneity is presented by comparing objects of the discourse to the unintegrable and irreducible ‘Other’ in the discourse itself. He names the discourse here a ‘Same’ (Foucault 1971, 23–72ff.) and the irreducible outside an

‘Other’. Thus, every ‘Same’ is dependent on an ‘Other’. By contrasting the latter, every ‘Same’ identifies itself.<sup>2</sup> If ‘such an “Other” is absent, it must be invented.’

Jacques Derrida provides critical insights into how the Same contrasts itself with the Other and how dislocation infiltrates. He coins the term ‘ontology’ – an amalgamation of two words: ontology and topology – to describe the process of establishing certainties within a system of meaning. This process involves ‘linking indissociably the ontological value of present-being to its situation.’ While ontology is concerned with what exists, the topos seeks to attribute its elements to determinate meanings. Any stability is necessarily localized and dependent on the present determination of locality (Derrida 2006, 102–3).

Derrida analyses a character from literature, the ghost of Hamlet’s father, to introduce the spectre, a dislocated figure pushed out of its place, which haunts, paying unpredictable visits. For the ghost, ‘there are only displacements’ (Derrida 2006, 169–170). Its subject is unidentifiable; it cannot be seen, localized, or fixed in any form, hovering between hallucination and perception. As it oscillates between life and death, presence and absence, it makes essentialities vacillate (Davis 2005). The spectre owns a body of absence and possesses a ‘paradoxical incorporation’; it is anxious, ‘impatient and nostalgic for a redemption’. Its ambition is to become a spirit, which it will never become, as it will never die (Derrida 2006, 5). It is condemned to be a ‘deferred spirit’ and will unpredictably delay the pre-supposed chain of sequences or rupture the imposed ‘linearity of consecutive historical development’ (Roskamm 2017, 333–34). Its dislocation represents discontinuity to this linearity and dis:connectivity to the connection. This dislocated figure – the ghost – is an event, thus temporal, unforeseeable, unholdable, unexpected, and usually, its visits are inconvenient.

Laclau’s antagonism theory and its considerations on sedimentation and original institution are significant here. Sedimentation represents the totality’s attempts to gain objectivity through repetitive chains of sequences, creating a sense of predictability and naturalizing repetition in social practices. For instance, we all assume that the church bells will ring every Sunday or that the Mosque will call to prayer five times a day, though there is no biological or natural necessity to repeat and perform these events. The routinization conceals the moment of laying the first layer of sedimentation or the ‘moment of the original institution’ (Laclau 2010, 34). Grounding a system of meaning leaves room for only one foundation to be laid without any other alternatives (Landau, Pohl and Roskamm 2021, 20) and marks a ‘moment of exclusions’, denying the validity of any alternatives except for their

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2 Allan McGill recalls Kojève’s exegesis of Hegel: ‘every “master” needs a “slave”’. (McGill 1985, 192; Kojève 1980).

claimed certainty (Marchart 2007, 139–42). In a nutshell, each positivity is based on negation, and all objectivities could have been different. This concludes what contingency means. In the moment of the original institution, the structure localizes (or tries to and necessarily fails to holistically localize) other potential foundations in the domain of the Other and the dislocated.

Sedimentation and original institution do not oppose each other. Rather, the latter witnessed the violence of laying the first layer of the former. Any ground achieves the excluding of its alternatives by integrating struggle over the power resources used to fix and localise meaning in a certain hierarchy (Marchart 2021, 105). Though that moment of the original institution has fallen into oblivion, it always has the potential to be reactivated and thus unpredictably happens again as a dislocation. Because the systemization of meaning rejects all Others, they cannot be integrated into the horizon of expectation. Being unanticipated makes them threatening (Marchart 2018, 94). Nevertheless, this threat is constitutive for the system and emerges simultaneously when the sedimentation starts. Antagonism, according to Laclau, is not only the elements that are separated on two sides, but rather the borders and elements together constitute the antagonism. The latter only exists through difference. Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau approached this term as the ‘identical something’ that binds the chain as a shared orientation toward ‘what is not’: its negative, threatening exterior (Marchart 2021, 105). Thus, according to Derrida, the ghost is as ‘archaic as the archaism that it has always dislodged’ (Derrida 2006, 103), namely as the totality itself. Dislocation is negated by the structure and contaminates all foundations with contingency.

Striving to lay a foundation is a defence mechanism of the structure to control the uncontrollable future and project objectivity by predicting what will happen next. In this context, the dislocated spectre sounds frightening, an unpredictable, unholdable ghost, which distorts (if not destroys) the image of objective structure. The system of meaning tries to blind all fears inside it with the Other (Derrida 2006, 218) and faces all dislocatory events with much irritation and anxiety. Precisely this act of being frightened by a ghost conjures the spectre and makes the ghost present in its absence. But this fear is nothing but fear of one’s own sedimentation process and repression of all other alternatives to one’s own version of structuring since the moment of the original institution. The ghost of dislocation haunts each structure and threatens its grounds with an abyss: One’s own fears, according to Derrida, of becoming the ghost of oneself and for oneself. Sedimentation features a ‘make-one-self-fear’ when being frightened of oneself (Derrida 2006, 199). Fear of the moment of reactivation comes from the inability to predict dislocation, as the event of the impossible. Thus, the ‘outside inhabits the inside’ (Roskamm 2017, 181).

If we understand dis:connectivity as challenging features of temporal succession (Dogramaci 2022, 39), dislocation will be a figure of the past and a figure of the

future carrying the promise of change (Roskamm 2017, 339–352). Still, it is undetermined what exactly this change is. Ghosts do no more than disavow the undeniable itself (Derrida 2006, 123). The dislocatory moment of reactivation does not mean returning to the original institution, but rather rediscovering it when new antagonisms and contingency take over to constitute a new structure with a new objectivity. Only then does the fragility of the sedimented structure become apparent (Marchart 2018, 93). When the Arabic Spring erupted in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, its dislocatory moments exposed the vulnerabilities of seemingly stable longstanding regimes in those countries. However, the outcomes varied: Tunisia and Egypt underwent a relatively peaceful shift towards democratic elections, while other countries were drawn to war. The Bahraini government effectively quelled the uprising, while the Syrian regime endured 14 years of armed conflicts before dramatically falling. These events initially held the promise of change, but ultimately resulted in diverse consequences, giving rise to different discourses than those they initially disrupted and dislocated (or at least aimed to disrupt and dislocate).

A prominent example of such a system of meaning is the concept of a nation state, which is as young as the 19th century. Then, many of these states had to be drawn on maps to indicate their boundaries. However, in the 21st century, we take it as given that whether you like it or not, where your passport is issued determines what you are (on the questions of ‘where are you from?’ and ‘what are you?’ see Appiah 2019, xi). The French nation excludes all Germans from being French, all Russians are not South Africans, and all Georgians are not Turks. This structure of the nation state presents itself as the only legitimate way to maintain security and distribute resources in specific territories; it is, we have often been told, the unquestionable source of identification. One can illustrate this by means of the COVID-19 lockdown policies, which showed how the structure of nation states was taken advantage of to deliver vaccination and block (or at least limit) trans-border movements. It was as if keeping people in different territories was natural to manage the crisis. The moment of the original institution (sometime in the 19th century) was absorbed and transformed into the alleged objectivity of the structure. However, the pandemic lockdown was only an extreme case of closing borders. Closed borders in the face of immigrants have been the structural ‘solution’ (Mbembe 2019, 98) to maintain security and preserve the claimed objective concept of state. Nevertheless, the state (inside, Same) will never exist without the refugees (the constitutive outside, Other, the dislocation). Nikolai Roskamm argued that ‘welcoming culture’ (*Willkommenskultur* in German) is a term in which many ghosts find themselves at home, which is less about the humanistic activity of civil society but instead has something of a constitutive character to it (Roskamm 2017, 349).

In contrast to the medical term, dislocation does not describe a pathology of the space. Rather, it accompanies each grounding, allowing it to exist while preventing it from being a complete totality. This paradoxical condition of each system of meaning is featured with contingency and conflict, which are the propellants of any discourse. As identical repetition is impossible, each iteration is condemned to aberration, according to Laclau. This means that events of dislocation happen daily, but they are noticeable only when they are intensified or when the system dismantles itself. The absent foundation of objectivity can be perceived only retrospectively, when it is on the brink of an abyss and collapse.

Each discourse exists only through its dislocation and adopts new articulations to control the flow of temporality. When the system fails to hegemonize this flow, the moment of the political or reactivation manifests itself, and a new discourse emerges. Dislocation is, in that sense, not only a theoretical reflection and concept but also offers a category for analysis within dis:connectivity to examine the contingent, historical, and power-based moments or events of globalisation. It is an attempt to practice ‘radicalized, unfinishable and infinite critique’ (Roskamm 2017, 335), in which we do not chase the spectres away but rather sort out, critique, ‘keep close by, and allow to come back’ (Derrida 2006, 109). To explore through the lens of dislocation means, and here I borrow Roskamm’s parlance, to ‘gain access to the absent present bodies of knowledge’ (Roskamm 2017, 333). Dis:connectivity provides a novel counter-stance to the dichotomy of connection/disconnection, while the dislocation lens stresses the constitutive and irreducible nature of that eliminated from the narrative: Each regularity depends on its excluded irregular. The latter is the condition of the former that affords its possibility, which is the one that makes its totality impossible.

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# Distance

Sabrina Moura

The concept of distance typically refers to any measurement that expresses the space between two points, indicating their relative closeness or separation. These intervals can vary in length, often contrasting with the idea of proximity. In everyday language, distance can also imply separations that go beyond mere physicality, drawing attention to its comprehension in subjective terms. Thereby, within the humanities, the exploration of distance extends far beyond its measured connotations, enabling relative interpretations that encompass its diverse philosophical, social, and existential dimensions (Bullough 1957; Kasprisin 1984; Foehl 2011)

In this essay, distance is explored in relation to dis:connectivity, understood here as a concept that ‘privileges neither connective nor disconnective processes, but focuses instead on their turbulent interplay’ (Wenzlhuemer 2023, 18). Hence, distance is not juxtaposed here with its apparent antonym, *proximity*, but rather seen as part of it, echoing the notion expressed in this volume that ‘every process of interconnectedness bears elements of disentanglement and disconnection’, and vice-versa (→ **Introduction**).

Recent experiences of social distance have compelled us to focus on its physical dimension, where the dis:connections it engenders seem most intensely felt. Never have we been as affected by it as in the early 2020s, when lockdowns became necessary due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This moment heightened awareness of the consequences of distance in interpersonal relationships, while also leading to tentative forms of closeness through virtual activities such as socializing, education, and work.

In 1976 and 1977, Roland Barthes examined more positive aspects of social distance in his lecture series at the Collège de France, published under the title *How to Live Together (Comment Vivre Ensemble, 2002)*. Through literary inquiry, Barthes elaborated on the ideal distance that would allow for the harmonious coexistence of individuals in a society (Barthes 2002, 28; Bostad 2018, 169). Drawing from the lives of monks, whose routine unfolds in seclusion while they still belong to the collective institution of the monastery, he introduces the concept of ‘idiorrhythmy’ (Barthes 2002, 36). This concept allows for the recognition that, even in distance, each person’s rhythms can align with those of the community, nurturing alternative modes of belonging. However, Barthes acknowledges a need for balance, as too much proximity could erode a sense of personal identity, while an excess of separation could foster loneliness and isolation.

Reflecting on experiences that extend beyond individuals to encompass entire communities leads us to transcend Barthes’ utopian views of distance, particularly when separations are triggered by acts of enforcement rather than being chosen voluntarily.

Diasporic communities, historically marked by the coerced dispersal of people from their homeland, offer valuable insights into this perspective. One example is the enduring sense of belonging through distance that has become the *leitmotif* for numerous Black artists and intellectuals who have delved into the ruptures caused by the Atlantic slave trade. Through image-making and storytelling, they subvert the trauma of the Middle Passage, embracing the idea of returning to Africa as a way to cope with the physical and emotional disconnections experienced in diasporic scattering (Hassan and Finley 2008).

As early as the 1850s, individuals like the African-American photographer Augustus Washington left the United States for a new life on the African continent. His destination was Liberia, an independent nation, founded in the first half of the 19th century, which was seen as a beacon of hope for freed black Americans. In Washington's (1854, 186) words, Liberia was a land of the free, a place where one could start anew among equals.

As argued by Brent Hayes Edwards (2001, 47), the return to the African continent, as experienced by Washington, served as a means for reweaving the separations caused by forced distancing. It allowed the exploration of the long-lasting yearning for a symbolic 'comeback' to Africa, as the territory of ancestral origins. Stuart Hall (1990), on the other hand, associates such an urge for return with a sense of belonging to an imagined community that one cannot physically inhabit. However, while acknowledging this impossibility, Hall doesn't neglect the significance of such belonging for African diasporas, nor does he deny the connections to ancestry that enable them to redefine such distances in the present. Africa, he says, 'is the name of the missing term, the great aporia, which lies at the center of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked' (Hall 1990, 224). As a counterpoint to the return to the motherland, the author draws a circular route from the Americas towards Africa, and back again. Here, distances become threads of memory that weave a whole community together.

The act of symbolically embracing distances through circular return, as proposed by Stuart Hall, finds resonance in artworks like *Sea Island* (1991)<sup>1</sup> and *Slave Coast* (1993)<sup>2</sup> by American artist Carrie Mae Weems. In these photographic series, Weems portrays continuous journeys between the coastal islands of the southern United States and the fortresses of West Africa, such as Elmina Castle (Ghana) and the Maison des Esclaves (Senegal), where enslaved individuals were forcibly taken from the continent. By doing so, the artist shifts away from the disconnections associated with the cartographies of Atlantic slavery, advancing representations of proximity in diasporic imagery.

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<sup>1</sup> For a reproduction of a work from the *Sea Island* Series (1991), see the collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum, <https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/40737/>

<sup>2</sup> For a reproduction of a work from the *Slave Coast* Series (1993), see the collection of Yale University Art Gallery, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/79257>

This approach has been fruitful not only in the visual arts but across various mediums. In literature, for example, *En attendant le bonheur* (*Heremakhonon*) — the first novel by writer Maryse Condé ([1976] 1988) — embodies the narrative of ancestral memory, aiming to bridge both emotional and tangible distances in the life of its protagonist, Véronica Mercier. In this novel, Mercier is a Guadeloupean teacher living in Paris in the 1970s who embarks on her first trip to Africa in search of the past experiences of her ancestors. ‘What did we do here before? [. . .] How were we supposed to live? Eat, sleep, look after the children. . .? Who will tell me?’, Mercier asks herself. And, without hesitation, she continues: ‘No one. Because no one really knows [. . .] This is why I’m here. To try to see what was there before’ (Condé [1976] 1988, 143).

When the possibility of returning is not on the horizon for those who were forcibly distanced from their homeland, or when there are no communal discourses to symbolically elaborate on such a past, the experience of distance takes on a different complexion. To further explore this aspect, we can turn to the histories of individuals who, as subjects of scientific inquiry, crossed the Atlantic in a different direction to that of enslaved Africans — namely, from the Americas to Europe.

It is well documented that, from the 16th century onwards, explorers of the so-called New World took human beings away to Europe as evidence of scientific discovery and colonial power. Ethnographer Christian Feest (2022, 1) notes that in the 1820s, at least seven Indigenes from Brazil were living in Europe. Some resided on the premises of noble families while others were publicly exhibited in England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. One notable example is that of a Krenak man named Joaquim Kuêk, who was brought from Brazil to Germany in 1818, along with the ethnographic collections gathered by naturalist Maximilian Alexander Wied-Neuwied (Feest 2022, 5).

Around this same period, another case stands out. Two Indigenous children were taken from the Amazon to Munich following the completion of a Brazilian expedition led by Bavarian scientists Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, between 1817 and 1820. These children, named Isabella Miranha and Johann Juri, after their Christian baptism, survived the crossing of the Atlantic and arrived in Munich, in December 1820, only to succumb to severe illnesses some months later. Their deaths prompted Queen Caroline of Baden to commission, in 1824, a posthumous tribute in the form of funerary relief by the bronze caster Johann Baptist Stiglmaier (Fig. 1)<sup>3</sup>. The piece depicts Juri and Miranha lying down in a serene pose, while an old man in the upper right corner blows strongly over their bodies. According to historian Maria de Fátima Costa (2019, 15), the gravestone was inscribed as follows: ‘Taken from their homeland, they found care and love in the

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<sup>3</sup> This bronze plaque is part of the collections of the Münchner Stadtmuseum, and it was part of the exhibition “Travelling back: Reframing a 19th-century Expedition from Munich to Brazil”, presented at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte (Munich), from February to April 2024.

distant place of the world, however, the relentless and hostile wind of the north took them away.’ Distance, in this case, proved to be irreversible and deadly.

This history was reimagined by writer Micheliny Verunschik in the novel *O Som do Rugido da Onça* (The Sound of the Jaguar’s Roar, 2021). Through fiction, the book examines the experience of isolation felt by Isabella Miranha in distant Munich. Verunschik invites readers to explore vulnerable moments such as how Isabella — renamed by the writer as Iñe-ê — must have felt, as a young adolescent, when her first period arrived, and she was not able to participate in the communal rites of passage of her Miranha relatives. ‘To the blood flow, Iñe-ê reacts with fear. The place where a girl menstruates becomes sacred, and there, in that dark and cold room, she will not perform the ritual of blood, nor will she have her mother or grandmother to teach her what needs to be learned’, writes Verunschik (2021, 82).

Echoing Saidiya Hartman’s (2008, 11) methodology of ‘critical fabulation’, Verunschik recurs to imagination to bridge the gaps within archives, where ‘arrangements of power obscure the very object we seek to recover’ (Hartman 2008, 11). The author dares to build a *récit* from the void of silence, illuminating what was overshadowed by the histories and monuments that, for almost two centuries, paid tribute to Spix and Martius. By doing so, she encourages us to consider absence as an invitation to resignify the disconnectivities that make up these ‘impossible stories’ (Hartman 2008, 10) (→ **Absences**).

Verunschik’s work engages in dialogue with artistic practices such as the performance *Urban Bodies* (2023), directed by choreographer Yolanda Gutierrez (Fig. 2). In this piece, movements and body expressions are deployed by dancers to revive the presence of Juri and Miranha in contemporary Munich. Through Gutierrez’s work, moments of joy and playfulness are afforded to the children, as if they could once again, or for the first time, inhabit childhood moments that were forbidden by their abduction<sup>4</sup>.

What appears particularly relevant here is that neither the silences nor the absences or separations hinder philosophy, art, or literature from challenging the ruptures they entail. Through critical thought and creative work, such ruptures are reinterpreted and subverted, allowing the emergence of perspectives that surpass distance as an expression of fragmentation. By transcending binary oppositions, such as near versus far, presence versus absence, distance versus proximity, we are prompted to explore the interplay between these elements and acknowledge their potential to coexist or even complement each other.

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<sup>4</sup> For more references on Yolanda Gutiérrez work, see the artist’s website, [https://www.yolanda-gutierrez.de/files/detail\\_tableE.php?seite=4&folge=54&id=103](https://www.yolanda-gutierrez.de/files/detail_tableE.php?seite=4&folge=54&id=103), and the photos of her performance by Felix Ehlers published at Static #2.2 (2023): 138–139, <https://static.ub.uni-muenchen.de/index.php/static/issue/view/7/6>.



**Fig. 1:** Johann Baptist Stiglmaier. Funerary relief of Juri and Miranha (around 1824). Bronze, 40 cm x 48 cm, Munich City Museum, Applied Arts Collection.



**Fig. 2:** Yolanda Gutierrez. *Urban Bodies: Munich* (2023). Photo: Felix Ehlers.

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# Ecologies

Corey Ross

Ecology is commonly understood as a science of interconnections. In essence, it seeks to understand the multiple, overlapping interactions between living organisms and the wider biophysical environment. Although its emergence as a discipline is relatively recent, the attempt to understand such connections has probably been around as long as *homo sapiens* has been. The term ‘ecology’ was coined in 1866 by the zoologist and naturalist Ernst Haeckel, who defined it as ‘the entire science of the relationship of the organism to the surrounding environment, to which we can add all “conditions of existence” in a broader sense’ (Haeckel 1866, 286). It took another two decades before the label caught on in scientific discourse, but it was soon institutionalized with the founding of the British Ecological Society in 1913 and the Ecological Society of America two years later. By the mid-twentieth century, ecology was a firmly established discipline comprising several overlapping fields of interest (population dynamics, food webs, energy flows). Since the 1970s and -80s, it has moved towards an emphasis on the inherent mutability and dynamism of ecosystems in place of older notions of ecological ‘balance’. As a field of study, ecology has long been (and remains) characterized by a broad assortment of guiding concepts and analytical methods. What binds it together is an elemental interest in ‘the processes influencing the distribution and abundance of organisms, the interactions among organisms, and the interactions between organisms and the transformation and flux of energy and matter’.<sup>1</sup>

In popular usage, ‘ecology’ (like globalization) is often used to express the idea that everything is ultimately interconnected. As the California conservationist John Muir famously remarked in 1911: ‘When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe’ (Muir 1911, 211). But this is not what ecology is actually about. Rather, it studies the different types of connectivity *and* disconnectivity between things, for these differences are what make the biophysical world work. Some ecological interactions are strong, others are weak, and some things scarcely interact at all. At a spatial level, some interactions are immediate, while others operate through cascading flows of energy, nutrients, or chemical signals. Temporally, some connections are fleeting, others long-lasting, and their strength can change over time due to any number of factors. As a recent article in the journal *Nature* puts it, ‘the dynamics of ecosystems include a bewildering

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<sup>1</sup> To quote the definition of ecology by the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies: <https://www.caryinstitute.org/news-insights/2-minute-science/definition-ecology>.

number of weak to strong biotic interactions' (Gellner and McCann 2016). Connection, disconnection and change are integral parts of the ecological puzzle.

These differential connections become yet more bewildering when we consider 'ecologies' in the plural sense of the term (Rademacher et al. 2023). Whereas 'ecology' usually implies the body of (Western-descended) scientific knowledge about the functioning of environmental systems, 'ecologies' tends to be deployed by scholars in the environmental humanities and social sciences to refer to the many different ways of experiencing, knowing, and narrating the relationships between the human world and the rest of nature. Instead of dealing with species distribution or energy flows, 'ecologies' are rooted in cultural values, ideas, historical self-understanding, and socio-political dynamics. At one level, the pluralization of the term arose as part of the broader social critique of reductionist Western science as a form of epistemological domination historically rooted in imperial modes of thought, unequal power relations, and universal claims of validity. At another level, the pluralized term also reflects the wider transformation of ecology from a distinct strand of natural science into a socio-political concept, even a kind of world-view.

Ever since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, ecological science has served to inform new ways of thinking about the world and new political movements that challenge what they see as abuses of the environment (and much else). Much to the annoyance of some of its professional practitioners, ecology soon became 'political'. Writing in 1964, the American ecologist Paul Sears called it the 'subversive' science because many of its principles – holism, interdependency, feedback loops – challenged conventional ideas and practices that underpinned the existing social and political order (Sears 1964). Over the following years, ecological concepts were adopted and adapted to support not only environmental agendas per se, but also broader demands for social and economic justice. Eco-Marxists have argued that the exploitation of people and nature are flip-sides of the same coin of capitalist profit-seeking, which simultaneously alienates people from each other and from the natural world. Ecofeminist thinkers have contended that patriarchal authority over women and the anthropocentric subjugation of nature share the same elemental ethic of domination. More recently, the philosophy of 'Deep Ecology' has argued that both human and non-human life have intrinsic value and that humans have no right to interfere with it beyond satisfying their vital needs (Ghazoul 2020, 117–29). Ecology thus retains its subversive potential today, though in recent years the terminology has become so unmoored from its scientific origins as to be applied almost anywhere, from 'business ecologies' to 'digital ecosystems' to 'ecologies of innovation'.

The common denominator of all these different 'ecologies' is an emphasis on interaction and interdependence from the local to the global scale. Yet the very pluralization of the term points to the many disjunctures and contradictions that

are involved – between different places, between different groups or assemblages of organisms, between disparate ecosystem models or ways of understanding the environment. Consequently, when we look at globalization and its history through an ecological lens, what we see is a complex web of dis:connections.

By way of illustration, let us begin with a favourite topic of globalization studies: trade (→ **Capital**). As the historian William Cronon remarked over thirty years ago, ‘Among the many human actions that produce environmental change, few are more important than trade. When people exchange things in their immediate vicinity for things that can only be obtained elsewhere, they impose a new set of meanings on the local landscape and connect it to a wider world’ (Cronon 1992, 37). Over the past few centuries, the unprecedented growth of global trade has connected distant landscapes with each other more tightly than ever before: mining sites with industrial centres, cotton fields with mill-towns, oilfields with sprawling suburbs. The spread of modern communications and market signals created an ever-denser web of commodity networks that converted more and more natural resources into goods exchanged on global markets: animals into meat, ore deposits into metals, trees into timber.

Translated into the language of ecology, the swelling currents of global trade represent a vast intercontinental flow of energy, nutrients, and fertility between different parts of the world (McNeill 2019). Yet this ecological *Wandel durch Handel* has always cut two ways: integrating some things invariably weakens other connections. Even as global trade spatially links producers and consumers, it also generates potent distancing effects. By detaching places of production from places of consumption, it externalizes the environmental costs of resource exploitation (deforestation, erosion, pollution) and renders them invisible to those who enjoy the benefits. When communities rely mainly on local resources, the feedback loop is immediate. By contrast, when trade enables people to draw on resources from far away, the drawbacks are displaced and the feedback is disrupted. Historically, these distancing effects have had far-reaching ecological implications: a greater tendency to disregard the environmental consequences of consumption; a lifting of the restrictions that local resource constraints previously posed on population growth, cultural expectations and economic behaviour; and a propensity to specialize in producing particular goods for comparative market advantage rather than fashioning landscapes to meet a variety of local needs. In these and other ways, the commodification of nature has involved more than just new socio-ecological linkages between different places. It has also entailed the dissolution or rearrangement of older connections that bound ecosystems together and people with them (Ross 2024; Moore 2015; Hornborg et al. 2007).

Much the same principle applies to the global circulation of organisms over the last half millennium. More than fifty years ago, Alfred Crosby’s *Columbian Exchange*

drew attention to the imperial reordering of global ecology through the transfer of species between what he called the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ worlds (Crosby 1972 and 1986). Although Crosby focused mainly on the movement of germs, cultivars and animals from Europe to the Americas (and the previously unrecognized role they played in abetting European conquest), there was also a significant counter-flow of organisms (e.g. potatoes, tomatoes, maize) in the other direction. Over the following centuries, this process of biotic transfer encompassed many other parts of the world and an ever-longer roster of species: cattle, sheep, trout, salmon, coffee, cocoa, latex-producing plants, cotton, the list is nearly endless. Of course, not all of these transfers were deliberate: cholera, plague, Rinderpest, and coffee rust fungus were just a few of the unintended travellers that moved along the circuits of global trade. The overall result of such biological rearrangements was the growth of ‘hybrid’ or ‘recombinant’ ecosystems around the world (Rotherham 2017; McNeeley 2001).

By the late twentieth century, this process of anthropogenic bio-mixing had progressed so far as to suggest a new era of natural history: the so-called ‘Homocene’.<sup>2</sup> As global trade and travel facilitated the movement of species between previously separate landmasses and water bodies, it diminished the differences between the ecosystems in which they had evolved. But here, too, the counterpoint of biological convergence was the disentanglement of other interrelationships. Wherever exotic species displaced indigenous organisms, they severed existing ecological linkages and routinely separated local people from resources on which they had long relied. Biotic transfers – as well as attempts to manage ‘alien’ or ‘invasive’ species – have thus tended to generate new socio-economic clefs, especially whenever they have been undertaken by states, investors, or large landowners with little regard for other groups (Crowley et al. 2017; McNeeley 2001).

The contradictions of mixing organisms around the globe are even more evident when it comes to the unintentional movement of species. As we became all too aware in 2020, the globalization of pathogens and disease pools has historically gone hand in hand with efforts to sever the links of contagion through quarantine, migration restrictions, and biological controls. Quarantine measures are a prime example of global dis:connections, indeed on multiple levels. While they applied in principle to everyone, in practice they often singled out particular social or racial groups for special scrutiny or lengthy confinement. Although they were frequently based on global isolation models, they varied greatly in their design and effect according to local social and environmental circumstances. Whereas their main purpose was to safeguard global movement, they did so by regulating, channelling,

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<sup>2</sup> The term was apparently introduced by the ecologist Gordon Orians in the 1980s (Rosenzweig 2001).

and slowing down the mobility of people and other living things around the world (Bashford 2016).

Perhaps nowhere are the ecological contradictions of globalization more apparent than in the history of nature preservation and resource conservation. In many respects, the spread of national parks, forest reserves, and wildlife sanctuaries has been a quintessential story of global interconnectedness over the past two centuries. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, ‘scientific’ forestry systems that were initially developed in Germany and France were adapted and applied throughout Europe, North America, colonial Asia and Africa; after the Second World War, this ‘empire of forestry’ went truly worldwide under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (Vandergeest and Peluso 2006). The worldwide spread of wildlife reserves since the 1890s exhibited a similar historical trajectory, based as it was on an increasingly global set of anxieties, norms and practices that spanned oceans and political boundaries. The epitome of such conservationist cosmopolitics was the proliferation of national parks, which nowadays number over 6,500 in more than 100 countries (according to the IUCN’s definition of a national park). Ever since the United States applied the label to Yellowstone in 1872, national parks have been, in the words of a recent account, ‘more adequately understood as “transnational parks”: globalized localities that owe their establishment to transnational processes of learning, pressure, support and exchange’ (Gissibl et al. 2012, 2).

On the one hand, then, the rise of modern conservation is a history of global frameworks of knowledge, the circulation of standardized practices, and the application of normative models. Yet on the other hand, it is also a history of exclusion, separation, and isolation. For one thing, the creation of reserved areas frequently involved the removal of people living there, and it nearly always entailed new restrictions on entry or use. The enforced absence of indigenous residents rarely went unopposed and in many areas remains a source of conflict today. Furthermore, from Yellowstone to East Africa to the forests of India, the exclusion of people from ecosystems of which they had long been a part inevitably dissolved previous ecological relationships, sometimes with unintended results.<sup>3</sup> Most fundamentally, the globalization of modern conservation zones was in many respects an attempt to limit or reverse some of the effects of globalization itself: namely, the destruction of ‘nature’ and the overexploitation of resources caused by the expansion of global trade and industry. National parks in particular have a decidedly ambivalent status as manifestations of globalization. Even as tourists stream in from around

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<sup>3</sup> In parts of East Africa, for instance, park managers who initially suppressed traditional burning practices later reintroduced them to reverse the spread of tsetse-bearing bush in favour of grasses grazed by large herbivores.

the world to behold their beauty, they essentially serve to disconnect certain spaces from their surroundings, literally to create sequestered islands of ‘nature’ or ‘sustainability’ outside of which the forces of global trade and commodification could proceed apace.

In sum, both ecology (in the singular sense) and ecologies (in the plural) are as much about disruption and difference as about interlinkages and convergence. Resorting to binaries is of little help in understanding the natural world, and is even less useful for grasping humanity’s role within it. To think ‘ecologically’ is to focus not solely on interconnections but rather on the interactions between things, which involve differentiated, dynamic forms and degrees of connectedness. In this respect (and many others), we have much to gain by incorporating ecology into our understanding of globalization processes.

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# Epistemologies, alternative

Christopher Balme

The term ‘alternative epistemologies’ generally refers to approaches to knowledge and understanding that diverge from or challenge mainstream or traditional, meaning Western, epistemological perspectives. While it’s difficult to pinpoint a specific origin for the term, it gained prominence in academic discourse, particularly in fields like philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, where scholars began to explore epistemological frameworks that depart from dominant Western paradigms. Within globalisation studies, the term stands for direct challenges to the dissemination of Western ways of thinking transported mainly by the imposition of European educational institutions. The formulation of ‘alternatives’ to these assumed ‘universal’ truths and ways of thinking are dis:connective in the sense that they pose challenges to such assumptions. This article will trace the evolution of the concept from its beginnings in Marxism and Feminism before focusing on the ‘global university’ as the site where alternative epistemologies are mainly contested, especially around calls to ‘decolonise the curriculum’. It will conclude with a brief discussion of indigenous epistemologies using the example of Māori language and culture in New Zealand universities.

The word ‘epistemology’ only enters philosophical language in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, initially as a translation of Fichte’s concept of *Wissenschaftslehre*. Until then the study of knowledge or the way knowledge is constituted and validated was either not considered a discrete branch of philosophy or it was folded into moral philosophy. While the term itself is a relatively recent coinage, the field is as ‘old as any in philosophy itself’ (Steup and Neta 2024). It covers questions of reason, justification, and more broadly the conditions of cognition. It is also the foundation of scientific and scholarly research.

Today ‘knowledge’, its formation and canonization, is one of the most central branches of interdisciplinary research intersecting with sociology, history of science, and with philosophy proper. The centrality of ‘knowledge’ as a subject of interdisciplinary research has been decisively influenced by the work of Michel Foucault whose concept of ‘episteme’ foregrounded the highly constructed and mutable nature of knowledge formations over time. In the more narrowly scientific fields, Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) concept of ‘paradigm shifts’ in scientific research also contributed to an acknowledgement of the relative nature of scientific knowledge formation and how it undergoes periodic realignments.

### Marxism, Feminism and Negritude

If we take the article entitled 'Alternative epistemologies' by the Afro-Caribbean philosopher, Charles W. Mills (1988), as a point of departure, the first stage of discussion defined the key terms and frames of reference. Mills draws on three lines of thought which all posit the need for alternative epistemologies, albeit not always explicitly evoking the term. They are Marxism, Feminism (→ **Feminism**), and Black nationalism, mainly in the negritude tradition. These three approaches share the insight that 'the processes of cognizing validated by the dominant perspective are being characterized as somehow inadequate' (Mills 1988, 238).

According to Mills, all three critical traditions formulate a fundamental critique of established epistemological problems to the extent that they even reject the very framework of the discussion. They reject the 'paradigmatic cognizer, that familiar Cartesian figure, the abstract, disembodied, individual knower' and argue that certain issues are only problems 'because of the privileged universalization of the experience and outlook of a very limited (particularistic) sector of humanity – largely white, male, and propertied' (1988, 237–38).

Attempts to formulate alternatives to this totalizing construct can be grouped around three main arguments: 'the oppression subordinate groups suffer, their potentially universal character, their differential experience' (Mills 1988, 243). Mills identifies in the appearance/reality dichotomy formulated in Marx's *Capital* in connection with commodity fetishism an initial and highly influential social theory of an alternative epistemology. Feminist philosophy (Code 1981; Harding 1986; Haraway 1988) draws on this basic Marxist insight but replaces class with gendered experience that emphasizes forms of knowing inaccessible to the hegemonic male subject. Similarly, black subjects have access to forms of experience not available to white working-class male or female subjects. Mills also invokes Leopold Senghor's argument that emotion is central to African experience, 'which he virtually erects into a function of knowledge and attributes to the African as a cardinal principle of his racial disposition' (Mills 1988, 240). All three subordinate groups are linked by the experience of oppression, yet these experiences are not entirely commensurate with one another: 'It is not so much a question of simple oppression, then, but rather of an oppression so structured that epistemically enlightening experiences result from it' (246).

### Postcolonial theories

While Mills may well be credited with coining the term 'alternative epistemologies', his frame of reference in the article remains philosophical and academic. Indeed, it is only around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the term becomes reinvigorated and expanded beyond the confines of philosophy seminars and journals. The expansion begins with dissemination of postcolonial (→ **Postcolonial**) theory in the 1990s, the

reception of Latin American thinkers such as Enrique Dussel, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and Walter Dignolo, and more recently with an interest in once ignored or repressed indigenous thought traditions.

Postcolonial theory provides the broad framework for discussing the ways in which colonialism has shaped and repressed non-Western knowledge systems by emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives and the decolonization of knowledge. Most famously, Edward Said's argument in *Orientalism* (1978), heavily influenced by Foucault, had an epistemological dimension, namely that orientalism as a 'style of thought' was a way of producing authoritative knowledge about the realm defined as the 'Orient'.

Although he does not explicitly invoke the term 'alternative epistemologies', Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty articulates in *Provincializing Europe* (2000) the ambivalence of European epistemology and its globalizing effects in the Global South: 'European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought – which is now everybody's heritage and which affect us all – may be renewed from and for the margins' (2000, 16). Chakrabarty foregrounds a critique of Western education imposed through colonialism – via school and later university. It is here that the term intersects with the concept of globalisation in both affirmative and critical contexts. Broadly speaking, the concept of alternative epistemologies includes both the connective and dis:connective aspects of globalisation. On the one hand, the term 'epistemology' in its Western tradition is discussed throughout the academy. On the other, its putative universality makes it the subject of critique and resistance in different cultural contexts.

Latin American thinkers such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Walter Dignolo emphasize the dis:connective aspects of these processes which reach back to the early period of colonization. They argue for the necessity to formulate alternative epistemologies for the Global South in terms that resonate directly with dis:connective perspectives on globalisation. In his books *Epistemologies of the South* (2014) and *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018), de Sousa Santos defines the term 'epistemologies of the South' as concerning 'the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance of all those social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression, and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy' (2018, 1). In this focus on oppression, he remains within the coordinates defined thirty years earlier by Mills, but, in contrast to the latter, provides examples of actual alternatives. His concept of a 'sociology of absences' explores realms of subaltern experience that lie beyond the established traditions and dichotomies of the Global North with the aim of 'turning absent subjects into present subjects as

the foremost condition for identifying and validating knowledges that may reinvent social emancipation and liberation' (2018, 4). This is a multi-sided and -sited undertaking which seeks to revalidate suppressed knowledges and their means of transmission. This may be through orality, embodied experience or redefining what is meant by authorship in collective contexts. He also points to concrete examples of local/indigenous concepts being integrated into mainstream institutional contexts. Examples given include *ubuntu* in South Africa 'co-being in coexisting ("I am because you are")' (2018, 5), which played a key role in the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in constitutional jurisprudence in the country. In the Latin American context, he cites the inclusion of concepts from indigenous languages such as *sumak kawsay* from Quechua, or the Inca deity *Pachamama* in the laws of Ecuador and Bolivia. The latter, he argues, represents 'a non-Cartesian, non-Baconian conception of nature', nature and human beings are accorded the same legal status (2018, 5). These examples demonstrate that the movement to formulate concepts that contest or co-exist with European notions of knowledge is a global one although the examples are local.

### **The global university and its discontents**

The site where alternative epistemologies are most vigorously discussed and contested is the university where widespread calls to 'decolonize the curriculum' have gained considerable traction in recent years. This discussion ranges from pragmatic attempts to revise reading lists to much more fundamental calls for a 'decolonial' epistemology (→ **Postcolonial**), forming 'the rallying cry for those trying to undo the racist legacies of the past' (Mbembe 2015, 8). In his paper, 'Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive' (2015), Achille Mbembe formulates a wide-ranging critique of South African universities in particular but some of his arguments can be extended more generally to what could be broadly called the neo-liberal university which sees in tertiary education a wealth-generator. The latter is a critique that applies to large sections of tertiary education across the globe, especially in the anglophone world. I shall focus here on those parts of his argument that pertain more narrowly to 'decolonizing the curriculum' and the colonial epistemological heritage.

Mbembe's critique is more comprehensible if we understand how global the institution of the university actually is. In their book *The University and the Global Knowledge Society* (2020), sociologists David Frank and John W. Meyer argue that the university is an institutional success story of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which increased exponentially and spread in largely isomorphic fashion across the globe including countries that were never colonized such as Japan. This isomorphism is based on a set of shared institutional beliefs, namely that the truths and facts produced at universities are universal and agreed upon wherever universities exist.

How can we, if at all, reconcile the ‘universalizing’ nature of the isomorphic university with calls which, in most cases, prioritize the local and would seem to question fundamentally the ‘cosmological’ foundations of the university as a place of unitary truth production and reproduction?

### **Mātauranga Māori/ Māori knowledge**

There certainly exist examples of localized, alternative epistemologies being integrated into the university. All universities in New Zealand, for example, now host a traditional Māori *marae*, or meeting place, which is not just used for ceremonial purposes but is also a place of learning and a venue for conferences (the ceremonial *hui* is now used almost synonymously as a word for conference). This has no doubt been assisted by the fact that Māori language and culture are relatively unified, notwithstanding the importance of tribal affiliations. The first university-based *marae* was established at the University of Auckland in 1983 after considerable debate and controversy. It was followed by Victoria University in Wellington in 1986. Now most, if not all, New Zealand universities have integrated *marae* into their architecture and systems of teaching and research. All New Zealand universities sustain large Māori Studies departments which are supported by a vibrant network of Māori-language educational institutions from kindergarten to secondary school. Māori scholars have also formulated fundamental critiques which resonate beyond New Zealand. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s much cited book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), has impacted on thinking among indigenous scholars. Smith became one of the founding directors of Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga, New Zealand’s Māori Centre of Research Excellence which brings together Māori researchers from a wide range disciplines and institutions. However, proposed changes to the school curriculum designed to ensure parity for mātauranga Māori with other bodies of knowledge sparked a controversy that began at Auckland University but eventually involved international voices such as Richard Dawkins and wider debates on merit versus identity politics in science (Abbot et al. 2023).

The importance of alternative epistemologies in the area of the performing arts was demonstrated by the reform of the New Zealand Drama School, the country’s national theatre academy. In the early 1990s, it was radically refashioned to absorb and accommodate Māori performance culture (Balme 2021). It is now better known by its Māori name, Toi Whakaari, and the curriculum is heavily influenced by Māori customs and protocol. The refashioning of this national conservatory as a bicultural training institution demonstrates how theatre training can be successfully decolonized. Although somewhat controversial at the time, it is now accepted practice.

## Conclusion

From the brief account of a selection of voices cited above, the search for alternative epistemologies has been a guiding thread in a global discussion that emerges in the early 1970s in the triple context of Marxism, Feminism, and Black Consciousness and then spreads to the Global South, transported mainly by postcolonial theory and the ‘decolonial turn’ formulated by Latin American scholars. All attempts to critique existing epistemological assumptions operate mainly from a subaltern position vis-à-vis Western tradition. Today the discussion has left the confines of academic journals and is taking institutional form in some countries, where alternative concepts have found their way into jurisprudence and education.

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# Exclusion/Inclusion

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In 2017, political and business leaders convened at the Bloomberg Global Business Forum in New York to deliberate on the world economy and its global challenges. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton, one of the speakers, acknowledged that ‘a lot of people felt left out, left behind, alienated politically, socially, and economically’ (VOA 2017). In the same year, historian Jeremy Adelman criticized global historians for rendering the immobile (→ **Im/mobility**) invisible, asserting that they had ‘privileged motion over place, histoires qui bougent (stories that move) over tales of those who got left behind’ (Adelman 2017). This prompts the question: who exactly are these ‘left behind’ groups that appear to be sidelined by both globalisation and the historians researching it? And how do we make sense of their relationship to processes of globalisation?

In this essay, for the first time, we are considering these questions through the lens of a well-established model from sociology and historical poverty research (*historische Armutsforschung*): social exclusion and inclusion. In doing so, we focus on the exclusion of individuals from globalisation processes due to poverty, thereby aligning with the premise that the concept of exclusion/inclusion has, since the 1990s, become an alternative lens for poverty research (Kronauer 1998). With homelessness and ‘non-migration’, we have chosen examples from the Global South and the Global North that lie outside the usual intersections of global history and social inequality research (typically Global Labour History and the history of development aid), and thus broaden the scope of the debate.

Aligning the concept of *dis:connectivity* with the history of social inequality can yield valuable insights. Dis:connectivity challenges a simplistic view of global interconnections by highlighting asymmetries, interruptions (→ **Interruptions**), borders (→ **Transborder**), and delays inherent in globalisation processes. In line with this endeavour, we emphasize social inequality and poverty as another crucial aspect. Instead of viewing these phenomena as the ‘shadows’, so to speak, i.e. as the regions and groups untouched by globalisation and its expected positive outcomes, we emphasize that they are indeed ‘central, formative components of interconnectiveness’ (→ **Introduction**). Not solely because global capitalist expansion can cause or exacerbate inequality, but also because those affected by impoverishment often have more intricate relationships with global processes and thus cannot be properly understood as merely ‘left behind’ or completely excluded. Therefore, in this essay, we advocate for a non-binary understanding of exclusion and inclusion to elucidate the relationships between impoverished groups and globalisation pro-

cesses, thus supporting the move beyond the dichotomy of connectedness and disconnectedness.

### **Revisiting social exclusion/inclusion in global contexts**

Today, many people, including individuals who belong to the middle classes of affluent countries, feel they are being left behind, as evidenced by their engagement with anti-global movements and rhetoric. At the same time, there are people who are genuinely cut off from the presumed benefits of globalisation such as the consumption of global goods, international mobility, or the ability to build political and cultural networks across borders. Living at the socioeconomic margins of societies not only in the Global South but also in the Global North, they constitute the so-called underclasses. People who may fit this category include the unemployed and the homeless, the inhabitants of underserved neighbourhoods and impoverished villages, as well as underprivileged people who entertain the idea of migrating abroad to find safety and better living conditions but lack the means to do so. There seem to be two biases concerning these groups. Firstly, in academic discussions, there is an implication that their exclusion from globalisation places them beyond the thematic scope of Global History, as hinted by Adelman. Secondly, in political discourses like the Bloomberg Global Business Forum, there is a prevalent bias assuming that globalisation is inherently positive – a belief that those who reject it simply do not benefit from it. We seek to challenge both assumptions.

Firstly, we need to clarify what ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’, terms that have become commonplace in political language, actually mean. In historical poverty research, the sociological notion of ‘social exclusion’ underscores how the lack of economic resources profoundly impacts the societal status of those affected. It is used to analyse multiple, simultaneous or sequential forms of social deprivation such as being marginalized from the job market, the housing market, the education sector or culture and consumption (Bohn and Hahn 2006; Raphael 2008). Naturally, socioeconomic factors play a key role in poverty research, but other factors such as age, dis/ability, health, gender, sexuality, ‘race’, ethnicity, nationality, and legal status can also significantly contribute to social exclusion. ‘Inclusion’, on the other hand, refers to public and political agendas that try to overcome exclusion.

When analysing phenomena of social exclusion/inclusion, social scientists and historians usually applied a national framework focusing on excluded groups within a specific country. However, sociologist Rudolf Stichweh has suggested also applying the concept of exclusion/inclusion to the ‘world society’ (*Weltgesellschaft*). While exclusion ‘always occurs locally or regionally’ (Stichweh 2016, 59), it extends to the global society which he defines as the ensemble of ‘globalized, inclusion-based functional systems’ (Stichweh 2016, 60). For example, if individu-

als are unemployed in a particular country and thus excluded from the functional system of the economy, they are also excluded from its globalised version: the global economy and its transnational labour market. Stichweh hence raises awareness for the crucial question of how social inequality is embedded within different realms of globalisation. In his theory, however, a strange distance remains between the somewhat abstract ‘world society’ and the individuals whose experiences of marginalization are rooted in local contexts.

As we argue in the following, based on our two examples, there are instances where it is worth delving into empirical cases to unveil more complex relationships between globalisation processes and individuals or groups deemed to be left behind. At the same time, we think that there is valuable insight to be gained from sociological discussions that have challenged rather than just applied the concept of social exclusion and inclusion, criticizing the oversimplified nature of this binary distinction. This leads to more intricate narratives along the lines of dis:connectivity, instead of straightforward stories of certain individuals being shut out.

### **Left behind? Homelessness and non-migration**

Let us begin with the example of homelessness, often regarded as an extreme manifestation of social exclusion. Homelessness is a global phenomenon, but those affected typically do not actively participate in processes of globalisation. They do not enjoy expensive vacations around the globe, do not work in international companies, and usually seldom use the services of firms that operate globally such as Amazon or Uber. While similar things could be said about other groups affected by poverty, individuals without a permanent residence often have daily routines that are vastly different from those of the majority of society. These routines are not necessarily local and immobile, though. Throughout history, homeless individuals have crossed borders to leverage different countries’ advantages. However, the scope of their movements generally remains limited.

Still, there are good reasons to link research on homelessness with research on globalisation. To begin with, we must follow sociologist Robert Castel’s urge to move beyond merely employing ‘social exclusion’ as a diagnostic tool and delve into its root causes. By historicizing homelessness, we may understand that in many instances at least some of its causes stem from effects associated with globalisation. For instance, economic globalisation played a role in causing homelessness in Osaka, Japan, during the 1990s and in Metropolitan Manila, Philippines, in the early 2000s. In the case of Osaka, this had much to do with the transformation of the local day-labour market and informal work sector. In Manila, many of those living on the streets were former residents of squatter settlements who were displaced, especially due to global investments and gentrification (Aoki 2003, 2008).

Immigration can result in homelessness, too – even in welfare states: A 2012 survey on migration and homelessness in the United Kingdom mentions that although the majority of refugees and asylum seekers are provided with accommodation by the government, some decline the assigned housing due to the absence of choice in location selection, consequently opting to live on the streets (Fitzpatrick, Johnsen and Bramley 2012, 35).

Not only the causes of homelessness, but also everyday life on the streets and in shelters are sometimes linked to global processes. As Hideo Aoki describes for the case of Manila: ‘Globalization has resulted in the expansion of the service economy, which has increased the life chances of the street homeless. [. . .] Because of the increase in business facilities, convenience stores, family restaurants [. . .] life resources (such as scrap) on which the street homeless survive have increased. The opportunity for the street homeless to beg money has increased’ (Aoki 2008, 73). In this instance, homeless individuals have experienced at least some indirect benefits from globalisation. However, there are also global influences that have a more ambivalent impact on the daily lives of homeless people. One example is the emergence of street newspapers, which originated in New York in the 1980s and spread to Western Europe via London in the 1990s, eventually being distributed worldwide. Initially, the New York publication ‘Street News’ featured articles written by homeless individuals themselves, focusing on topics relevant to their daily lives and advocating for socio-political change. This bottom-up approach shifted in its London counterpart, ‘The Big Issue’. Under the editorship of John Bird, the slogan ‘Let’s do business for the underclass’ (Bird 1997) stood for commercialization and a new form of private charity, which degraded the homeless to mere recipients of aid. Once a platform for the voices of the homeless, street magazines now became professional outlets mainly curated by journalists, with socio-political demands taking a backseat. Homeless individuals were relegated to a small section within the publication, often depicted rather than given any real power to communicate. Their role was limited to selling the newspapers for pocket money (Bono 1999). The original grassroots approach from the U.S. faded into the background during the fragmented globalisation process of street magazines. While homeless individuals were included in a global network of charitable practices, they did not gain the power to freely address local and global audiences. Street magazines did not contribute to their inclusion into mainstream society, nor did they inspire a global movement.

Our second example comes from the history of migration, and global South-North migration in particular. In the 1980s, migration researchers, who typically focused on those who migrate, started showing interest in individuals who do not move and their reasons for this. From the perspective of inclusion/exclusion, the explanation seems clear: economic constraints can hinder migration (as can

reasons like fear or societal constraints that affect demographic groups such as women, children, and the elderly or disabled). Indeed, migration scholars speak of ‘involuntary immobility’ to emphasize that more people desire to migrate than actually do, particularly among marginalized households facing financial limitations (e.g. Carling 2002; Cohen 2002). In the words of anthropologist Nicholas van Hear, ‘international migration is not typically for the poorest of the poor’ (Van Hear 2014, 111). This results in countless ‘unfulfilled dreams about migration’ (Carling 2002, 6).

The implicit assumption that individuals with limited financial resources would naturally desire to migrate to wealthier countries but are hindered by circumstances has faced criticism. There are ‘different ways of staying put’ (Mata-Codesal 2015) and for some people immobility is desirable – even if they are impoverished. Sociologist Kerilyn Schewel (→ **Im/mobility**) introduced the notion of ‘acquiescent immobility’ to denote people who lack the means to migrate but also do not want to migrate in the first place: ‘Yet even though push factors are significant for many of the world’s poor and even though migration often brings substantial income gains, many people who migration theories assume should desire to migrate may not, in fact, wish to do so’ (Schewel 2019, 336). The reasons are various, including psychological factors and risk aversion but also people’s attachment to their local and social environments. Therefore, not having the resources to engage in global migration is not always perceived as negative or indeed exclusionary by everyone impacted by it.

However, ‘acquiescent immobility’ should not be immediately associated with disconnectedness. This is especially pertinent when broadening our perspective from individuals to families. In many countries in Africa, Asia, and South America, it is common for some family members to migrate while others remain behind and receive remittances from their relatives abroad. As Schewel points out, ‘mobility and immobility are often part of the same household livelihood strategy’ (Schewel 2019, 337). For instance, historian Linda Reeder demonstrated that women in rural Sicily whose husbands migrated to the United States in the 1900s ‘invested their own dreams in the decision to send a family member overseas. Mass male migration did not leave rural women behind; instead, it provided the resources to carve out new economic, social, and political spaces in their rural world’ (Reeder 2003, 57). And in the late 1990s, to cite a different example, Maya immigrants in the United States sent money back to their relatives in Guatemala, which altered the local social fabric. Previously dependent on working for farmers of Hispanic origin, with only few economic possibilities and facing racism and discrimination, Maya families with remittances gained a degree of independence and improved living standards with many Hispanic Guatemalans expressing their resentment that the Maya had become ‘lazier’ and ‘less respectful’ (Taylor, Moran-Taylor and Rodman

Ruiz 2006, 50–51). Poor but voluntary stay-at-homes like the Sicilian women or the Maya families are not simply excluded from migration and globalisation. Rather, the integration of their relatives into migration movements and the ensuing transnational finance flows allow them to stay at home and benefit from improved living conditions.

It is important to exercise caution, though, when considering remittances as a solution for social inclusion. Some migration scholars rightly caution against viewing remittances as a superior form of development aid ‘from below’, as this perspective can obscure the responsibility of states in providing welfare (de Haas 2012, 19). Despite the undeniable influence of international organizations like the United Nations and the International Labour Organization in promoting social agendas and development cooperation among states worldwide, a global institution to regulate individual legal entitlements and social benefits across borders is lacking (Leisering 2008). This absence underscores the continued significance of nation states in addressing social exclusion within processes of globalisation. At the same time, paradoxically, it is nation states that perpetuate global inequality and the North–South divide through their sheer existence and their maintaining of separate national social and welfare systems (Stichweh 2016, 195).

## **Conclusion**

With homeless individuals and those unable to afford South–North migration, we have highlighted two groups emblematic of social exclusion rooted in poverty. Through these examples, we argue for the integration of the history of poverty and social inequality with research on global connections in two distinct ways. Firstly, it is crucial to examine how globalisation dynamics can directly contribute to or worsen poverty and social exclusion. Secondly, despite their passive role in global interactions, the latter’s effect may still permeate these groups’ lives and daily experience. Homeless individuals sometimes indirectly benefit from emerging globalised consumer societies, while many households in the Global South receive remittances from relatives working in the Global North. This underscores the significance of considering such marginalized and seemingly cut-off groups within the broader discourse on dis:connectivity.

Furthermore, our examples underline the blurred nature of the distinction between exclusion and inclusion, revealing the existence of different hybrid forms. Individuals can often find themselves experiencing a form of ‘inclusion within exclusion’ (Stichweh 2016, 63), as in the case of remittances. Conversely, attempts to foster social inclusion can reproduce exclusion, as shown by the example of street magazines. While we believe it is beneficial to integrate research on globalisation with studies on poverty and marginalized groups in both the Global North and

South, we also caution against simply expanding a binary model of exclusion/inclusion to the ‘world society’ or any subsets of it. Instead, we should learn from critical sociological discussions, stressing, first the importance of historicizing exclusion and questioning its underlying causes; and second, the need to move beyond the dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion. A non-binary understanding of exclusion and inclusion provides us with the analytical capacity to integrate the study of social inequality and poverty within the dialectical interplay of global interconnectedness and disconnection.

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# Exile

Doerte Bischoff

If migration is the overarching term for changes of location that fundamentally shape life courses and realities, exile can be understood as a special form of migration characterized by violent and involuntary dislocation. Autobiographical accounts as well as general descriptions and theoretical reflections on exile emphasize disconnection as its central characteristic. In his seminal essay on exile, Edward Said describes it as ‘a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past’ (Said 2000, 177). In this essay, the metaphor of cutting is also supplemented by images of breakage and fragmentation (‘broken lives’) as well as of tearing or ripping: exile ‘has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography’ (Said 2000, 174). As becomes apparent in these citations, the description of discontinuity simultaneously produces images that evoke continuity, belonging and wholeness. While performatively demonstrating this logic of mutual affiliation of exile and home, Said’s essay also analyses it critically: the longing for a retrieval of what has been lost, the idea of return that has often been said to define the situation of exile, tends to imitate the very act of claiming homogeneity and wholeness which resulted in the production of exiles in the first place.

In his autobiographical narrative *Speak, Memory*, Vladimir Nabokov observes that Russian exiles who had fled to Western Europe following the October Revolution tended to stick together, to avoid contact with the people of their host countries and to understand themselves as custodians of the culture of their country of origin. Looking back to this time, he writes, one notices with surprise many of these supposedly ‘free belles-lettrists abroad aping fettered thought at home by decreeing that to be a representative of a group or an epoch was more important than to be an individual writer’ (Nabokov 1967, 283–284). Art and writing for them was secondary and subordinated to moral or political positioning, resulting in a conservative notion of literature which did not encourage creativity. Instead of affirming nationalist ideas and modelling the role of an exile writer as a representative of the country that has excluded him or her, Nabokov pleads for an integration of the experience of breakage and disconnectivity into the process of art. The exchange of letters he had as a young exile with his first love who he left behind appears as a way to connect himself to the lost world. Equating the loss of his country with the loss of his love (Nabokov 1967, 245), writing these letters is depicted as a way of transforming ‘home’ into a place of writing which, unlike the far away real place which cannot be possessed or controlled, stays in connection with the exile’s life and agency. At the same time, it reveals its own nature as a projection, an artificial

and potentially artistic imagination. The claim to represent a lost homeland is thus contrasted and superseded by a commitment to breakage and disconnection as the condition of exile writing. This corresponds to the self-reflexive considerations of another exile writer: for Salman Rushdie, the distant position of the exile results in a fragmentary vision which cannot be completed or healed. If the expatriate writer tries to reflect and reclaim the lost world – and he does so with an unusual energy of longing – ‘he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost’ (Rushdie 1992, 11). For him, this approach to the past resembles archaeology: the broken pots of antiquity can only be reconstructed provisionally, but remain ‘exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects’ (Rushdie 1992, 12).

Remarkably, a similar image of a broken mirror appears in the writing of Anna Seghers, a German exile writer, when she elaborates a notion of realism that corresponds with the experience of a time of transition, exile and loss (Seghers 1973, 288). Seghers, who was herself in Parisian exile in 1939, engaged in the debate on possible models and appropriate forms of contemporary literature which was held by intellectuals who had been widely dispersed by exile by exchanging letters with the literary critic Georg Lukács who then was exiled in Moscow. In the exchange, not only are diverging concepts of literature negotiated, but especially in Seghers’ letters the specific condition of writing in a time of war, persecution and exile also becomes part of these reflections. By insisting on the value of fragments of reality and broken mirrors for contemporary realist art, she advocates a connection between exile and avantgarde practices which is rejected by fellow socialist intellectuals like Lukács. By including remarks on her own situation and everyday aspects of the historic catastrophe of which she is part, a neutral positioning of the exiled critic and writer is shown as ultimately impossible and confronted with a sense of positionality, vulnerability and limitation. Realism, the attempt to present the world as it is, in this context entails abandoning the idea of homogeneity and wholeness. As Nabokov observed and as can be seen in the writings of many exiles during the period of National Socialism, a strong tendency to affirm notions of substantial entities or origins is characteristic of exiles. At the same time, their specific situation tends to engender a sense of the constructed nature of ‘the world’, its being dependent on a dynamic plurality of images and narratives. After the shock of not having a place in the world any more, the realisation dawns on the exile that it is not the world that carries him/her, but that s/he carries the world (De Cesare 2021, 186).

To differentiate between the two possible reactions to exile and to understand their interconnectedness, it is helpful to turn to Svetlana Boym’s works on nostalgia which also focus on the condition of exile. She distinguishes between two different nostalgic attitudes: while restorative nostalgia, the longing for an unchanged home

and heritage, evokes unity and thinks of a lost world as a retrievable substance, reflective nostalgia ‘dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity’ (Boym 2001, XVIII). The latter sides with Rushdie’s ‘imaginary homelands’ and has a predilection for irony, montage and polyphony. In fact, here, Rushdie’s phrasing resonates that those ‘who have been forced by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties, have perhaps had modernism forced upon’ them (Rushdie 1992, 12). The ‘we’ that Rushdie evokes does not coincide with the idea of national exile communities representing a country and a specific culture as expatriates. Rather, it refers to a heterogeneous group of fateful companions across national affiliations, shared languages and even historical constellations. The ‘world’s community of displaced writers’ (Rushdie 1992, 15) explicitly comprises authors from different times and places, thus offering a new kind of affiliation which defies national ties and frameworks.

The appeal to a globalised perspective on exile can be found in many examples of exile literature even if they lament the loss of a habitual world and language sphere. In his essay ‘The writer in exile’ from 1943, Lion Feuchtwanger not only explicitly relates the specific miseries of his own exile, the most painful of which was having been separated from ‘the lively stream of the mother tongue’ (Feuchtwanger 1984, 535, my translation). He also frames his considerations by referring to writers in exile who hold a recognized place in world literature: Ovid, Li-Tai-Pe, Dante, Heinrich Heine, Victor Hugo (Feuchtwanger 1984, 533). In a similar vein, two poems by Bertolt Brecht, written during his exile in Denmark, connect his own situation as a displaced writer with others who shared a similar fate and can now provide him with a perspective of community beyond the national one that has been disconnected and denied. Homer had no home and Dante had to leave his, the first verses of ‘The emigration of the poets’ (Brecht 1967, 495) remind the reader. Others like Li-Po or Lukrez follow until the poem ends with a reference to Heine and Brecht (explicitly) who himself took flight under the Danish thatched roof (Brecht 1967). In another poem by Brecht, written three years later, the names of the banned poets from the first one reappear with several others who are all now given voices to address the newly arrived (Brecht 1967, 663–664). They come with advice, consolation and warnings, establishing a situation – here presented as a dreamlike encounter – of mutual recognition and comfort. Brecht’s poems construct a tradition of exile literature into which they inscribe themselves (Benteler 2015).

In her reflections on exile, Dubravka Ugrešić, born in Yugoslavia, remembers that the official multiculturalism propagated as a social glue in the former multi-ethnic state was subject to a reality check when during the civil war refugees from Yugoslavia found themselves in camps in foreign countries together with other

unfortunate fugitives, including those from the Global South, whom they rejected. Like Said, Nabokov or Boym, she also observes that exile can favour the development of ostracism and a regressive utopia, but by critically observing or experiencing this, another view of the world can emerge. When she is in her chosen homes in New York, Berlin, London or Amsterdam, Ugrešić writes, she truly feels surrounded by ‘brothers’, people from different parts of the world who have stranded in western cities, living at the margins, trying to survive: ‘I recognize the gleam in their eyes, I know my “race” of exiles, nomads, emigrants.’ (Ugrešić 2002, 149) Coherence and belonging are articulated by using a citation: the word ‘race’ is put into quotation marks, implying its detachment from a specific context and a transplantation into her own text in which it is still marked as a foreign body. The notion of a ‘race of exiles’ connects two terms which usually signify something completely incompatible: while race ties belonging to biological categories and an essential nature of community, exile is associated with the social and political circumstances of human life. Their combination subverts the idea of essence and points to the social and political effects of its rhetoric: exile is produced by ethnonationalist and racist discourse and the practices it legitimates. Self-reflexive exile then implies a rejection of the assumptions and consequences of these ideas. The exile, as Ugrešić depicts him/her, fiercely tears off all labels and refuses to be classified as a representative of the country whose passport s/he holds, s/he does not want to be a member of any ‘family’ (Ugrešić 2002, 145) – another potentially essentialist metaphor for belonging which is deconstructed in this essay. The detached perspective of exile appears particularly suited to this activity of deconstruction. Instead of the usual association of writers with a particular country (of origin), Ugrešić finds the term ‘transnational’ more appropriate for her self-description (Ugrešić 2002, 141). In the context of her observations and arguments, transnationalism, however, does not refer to a more encompassing sphere beyond the nation state and the idea of nationally rooted and framed cultures; it instead implies a reflexive turn towards these notions and their impact upon human lives and cultural production. Transnationalism, thus conceived, does not abandon or transcend the national, but focuses on the complex interdependencies between the local and the global (→ **Local-global-glocal**), between connectedness and discontinuity, without resorting to universalist concepts.

As exile experiences have often been an incentive for the discovery and reflection of transnational or transcultural dynamics (→ **Transcultural/Transculturalism**), recent exile studies have accentuated their interrelatedness (Bischoff and Komfort-Hein 2019, 3, 22). A similar logic has recently been discovered between cosmopolitanism and exile. While a traditional appeal to cosmopolitanism was based on a notion of the world as an inhabitable space (mostly) for an elite who could afford to travel and advocated an idea of intellectual border crossings and

explorations, concepts of a ‘new cosmopolitanism’ imply the irreducible diversity and multiplicity of perspectives on ‘the world’ (Köhler 2006; Narloch 2022). Confronting exclusion, impassable borders and the violent effects of claims to homogeneity and control, exile can sensitize us to what is lost in globalisation when it is primarily understood as a process of ever-expanding access and appropriation. By not extrapolating an individual sense of belonging or a nationally specific (or Eurocentric) idea of culture onto a global totality, alternative modes of referring to ‘the world’ can be brought to the fore. The cosmopolitan who masters a bifocal way of seeing, bringing together the global and the local without merging or identifying them, as Ilija Trojanow describes it in his book on flight and exile (Trojanow 2017, 111), can preserve fundamental aspects of the exile experience: the imaginative quality of visions of belonging, its irreducible plurality and its dynamic character.

If displacement and movement force the refugee to reassess habits and convictions, they also, because of being in motion, challenge the truths people hold at the place of arrival. For Trojanow, estrangement is not just an existential condition, but can also be regarded as a technique that restores agency and autonomy to the exile who is otherwise extremely subjected to heteronomy (Trojanow 2017, 96). Similarly, Vilém Flusser writes about the exile experience as a challenge for creativity: the reaction to violent disconnection does not have to be a desperate wish for restitution, but can also result in an ongoing need to rid oneself of ‘roots’ which hinder movement and change. Flusser goes as far as to describe this act of freedom as a violent attack against one’s own ‘vegetative’ heritage, meaning everything that pretends to be natural and inescapable (Flusser 2007, 107). Repeating the act of cutting off can thus be a way to cope with forced separation and to transform it into a self-determined creative activity. However, the agency that Flusser, Trojanow and others envision does not imply the idea of a sovereign individual, but rather considers sub-jection and dis:connection, which accompany exile, as integral aspects of identity constitution. Here, a tendency can be discerned to draw on exile to sketch out alternative concepts of identity and cohabitation, not only on an individual level, but also in view of living together in a world endangered by political conflict, the depletion of resources and climate change.

Reflections on exile often stress the ultimate singularity and the hardships of its experience which should not be levelled by indiscriminate universalizing or metaphorizing. At the same time, it obviously invites critical thinking about categories of belonging, place-making (Dogramaci 2022) and the potential role of art and literature in conceptualizing modes of referring to the world as a shared space. To the extent that exile confronts the unavailability of a lost home and redirects energies to possible worlds without claiming to possess or control them, it is perceived as a phenomenon that helps to reassess globalism. For Svetlana Boym, nostalgia as a feeling that springs from an exile experience ‘is a feature of global culture’, but one

which challenges the features traditionally associated with globalism, especially progress (Boym 2001, XVII). If reflective nostalgia reminds us of the fatal effects of essentializing and totalizing ideas of home and explores modes of playfully distancing oneself from their traditions, it can also open the way for new conceptualizations of the global. Exile has also been associated with the global in different contexts. On the one hand, people's flight to almost all countries of the world, e.g. in response to expulsion and persecution by fascism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen as a dispersion into globality which challenges the discursive binary of national home and exile (Bischoff 2019). Moreover, the ubiquitous and massive event of forced migration since the last century also compels us to adopt a global perspective on the phenomenon of exile as such. This is also suggested by the explicit interweaving of exile literature which, as could be seen, is reflected as part of a transnational and transhistorical corpus of texts. Finally, global exile has also been described as a condition resulting from the vanishing of distinctions and local cultures as an effect of globalisation processes (Ambrosioni 2000). When Vladimir Vertlib, himself an Austrian author of Russian origin, speaks of the 'global aspects of exile', all these perspectives obviously play a role. For him, exile, which is a central theme of his own literary and essayistic works, is a crucial experience of our time. He, like many others, considers drawing attention to the global dimensions of exile to be one of the crucial challenges of contemporary art and literature (Vertlib 2008, 60).

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# Feminism

Katy Deepwell

Locally and globally, feminism argues that patriarchy operates as a logic, a phallogocentric system of thought, as well as a gender order that is 'naturalised' in everyday life, reinforcing and reproducing divisions between men and women. The aim of feminist politics is to trouble, challenge and change these binaries already constructed by gender (Butler 1990; Ziarek 2016), to delink and disrupt how patriarchal thought (within both the Enlightenment and Colonialism) reproduces a persistent asymmetrical gendered order between men and women across master/slave, oppressor/oppressed, predator/survivor, presence/absence. Against patriarchy, feminisms engage in a multiplicity of complex strategies and tactics to envisage life differently for women (Jaggar 1983; Gunew and Yeatman 1993; Evans 2000; van der Tuin 2009). 'Feminism', a singular, is the plural umbrella term through which women connect to overcome the social, cultural and economic disconnections which they experience as women (hooks 2000; Lugones 2003; Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019). Significant inequalities between women within and across different configurations of class, race and ethnicity both divide as well as unite women politically. Feminism's vision of political action today (for the 99%) is primarily trans-national, challenging the gendered economic configurations and political divisions found across contemporary trading partners and alliances like the European Union, GATT, NAFTA, BRIC or Asia-Pacific Trade Agreements (Spivak 2003; Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019).

Creating solidarity, fostering coalitions and alliances as a political practice is no longer expressed in terms of a universal sisterhood (Morgan 1970) or the notion that 'one woman' represents all women. The strategic necessity of organising as women has not changed because systematic discrimination against women still exists. Anti-essentialist feminist critique since the 1980s has made clear the absolute distinction between women (real beings) and Woman (idealised metaphors) prevalent in culture (Collins 1990; Benhabib and Cornell 1991; Schor and Weed 1994; Witt 1995). Connecting people, and not women-alone, remains the only mechanism to overcome divisions secured through fear, hate and xenophobia, to break down barriers established by race, nation, religions and/or ethnicities, and cross the borders and boundaries established by custom, traditions, knowledge constructions, beliefs and hierarchies or generational groupings (Anzaldúa 1987; Mohanty 2003; Sudbury and Rey 2009). Feminist alliances aim to create solidarity between our partial and situated knowledges (Haraway 1988; Shohat 1998), but also new situations where acknowledging cultural and political differences between people results in co-operation and not life-threatening conflict or war or insurmountable

communication problems, including the silencing or shaming of ‘Others’. Feminist visions of change challenge dominant (male) power structures which maintain the *status quo*. Feminisms’ critique asks who benefits from shifts in the current global order, when the movement of tectonic plates between pre-dominantly masculinist systems of power, authoritarianism and control continues to bring only negative changes to the daily lives of millions of women around the world. This is why, given the inequality, discrimination and conflict in the world, feminism remains a resource for overcoming states of disconnection, manifesting hope in connection.

Feminism is a global travelling concept (Bal 2002; Cerwonka 2008): first, under the banner that women’s rights are human rights (the UN position, see Adami 2022), and second, in the movement of women since the 1970s away from second-class citizenship towards greater civil rights and social recognition in nation-states (the ‘post-Westphalian’ contract, Fraser 2013). These tendencies can no longer be divided between a First World and a Rest of the World; or a Global North versus a Global South; or democratic vs. authoritarian regimes, because women’s impoverishment and lack of access to resources exist globally, albeit differentially. The civil, political, social or cultural rights of women remain dependent on where they live or are from, and women have divergent ideas about where concepts of class, race, caste and ethnicity operate in a gendered politics, including in indigenous communities. Inequality does not change because someone becomes stateless, undocumented or is regarded as a persecuted minority; the visibility of people in these situations highlights instead the fragility of civil equality for the majority of citizens.

UN agendas for ‘women and development’ have emphasised ‘women’s’ role in family, health and social cohesion and education, but offer far less in its sustainability goals about women’s role in culture, environment, or peace-keeping and conflict resolution, other than monitoring the situation. Bringing more women into the waged labour market is not an answer when care, health and education systems are inadequate. Gaps and contradictions remain for women in decision-making on the global issues and resolutions made by the United Nations itself. This is why women trans-nationally continue to protest restrictions (e.g. ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ in Iran); organise rallies against judicial indifference regarding violence against women (e.g. in India and Argentina); hold International Women’s Day Strikes and Marches; and come together over protests against changes to abortion laws (e.g. in Poland and USA). The battleground for feminism (in the Enlightenment tradition) was fought over women’s right to be recognised as human (not animal) – as in artist Barbara Kruger’s ‘I won’t play nature to your culture’ – to be a legally-recognised person with self-determination and independence of thought; to own both property and their own person; to have citizenship and a vote (Wollstonecraft 1792; de Beauvoir 1949). Framed differently, these battles continue over women’s position in universal human rights (as freedom of expression and freedom from insecurity

and fear) and for recognition of their voice in society and culture (especially access to social justice).

Feminist writing on many subjects has revealed a man-made world, acts of everyday sexism, misogyny as normalised, absences as the result of phallogocentric systems of belief and many models of knowledge which prioritise male interests and points of view and minoritise alternative perspectives. Patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, harassment, discrimination, or even feminicide, have been used to try to describe how ideas about the sexes reinforce men's greater ownership of power or resources and extend control over women's sexuality, freedom of movement and finances. Gendered distinctions about family, nation and community are used by both Right and Left, democratic and authoritarian regimes in propaganda and cultural representations. Advanced capitalism, Imperialism/colonialism, feudal and subsistence economies all reproduce and maintain diverse but consistently gender-segregated systems for work and leisure (Mies 1986; Federici 2004). Analyses of the gender order within labour markets, capital accumulation, trade routes and the commodification of every aspect of daily life tend to reveal globalisation as solely about markets and trade routes, while lists of progressive policy interventions, activist campaigns and local initiatives identify how globalisation is a political struggle for change from below. Women's presence in Arjun Appadurai's five 'scapes' is consistently under-rated (Appadurai 1990). The gendered operation of the system of economies, of geo-politics, of war, of culture is a problem for everyone – especially the primary illusion in war that only men fight while women suffer. Feminism questions the reinforcement or maintenance of norms that reproduce gender segregation in labour markets and war as an answer to conflict over resources.

Feminist visions for change have been characterised as rooted in the everyday, in pleasure, joy, repair and reparation, in care for others, for habitus and for the environment, even as they acknowledge the pain, distress, violence, unhappiness, brutality, dispossession and loss that are all around us. It is not women's 'fate' or 'destiny' to be confined to the 'private' sphere of home and family, to do most of the domestic work, reproduction, nursing and caring roles, and it is often not a 'choice'. In the competitive individualism of capitalism, neo-liberal feminism claims the path to success is escaping this 'fate' by becoming better paid and greater consumers of goods and services. However, feminism's slogan, the 'personal is political', cannot be reduced to individual will or market power, because all political action requires collective struggle. Neo-conservatives argue feminism is the enemy because it does not reinforce traditional family models or old-fashioned moralities of modesty and silence imposed on women. Someone – not necessarily female – must still clean where we live, wash the socks, collect and cook the food, and offer care for a larger group of people (than one). Socialist feminists argue that society should re-evaluate 'housework' and how we offer care to others, moving it away from individualised domestic

labour as ‘women’s work’, and linked to a re-evaluation of underpaid carers, cleaners and keyworkers who do this as waged work (Verges 2021). Social democratic feminisms insist that a more equal distribution (‘equality’ at all levels of representation) must address larger goals of world peace, an end to poverty, greater social justice for all, and the end to persecution of all minorities. Yet, the exchange of women between men has not ended: women’s position remains defined through their relational place in a family – mother, wife, grandmother, daughter – and women are still valued by their sexual availability or unavailability. For many women ‘home’ is not a safe place and this is not just when ‘home’ is as fragile as a tent in a refugee camp.

Feminist visions challenging ‘home’ as a place in nationalism range from the idea that ‘women have no country’,<sup>1</sup> to pointing out the essentialised role that the figure of Woman offers to different kinds of nationalisms (Yuval-Davis 1997). Feminism(s) is not a power grab for women to rule the world (even as irony!), feminism instead asks everyone to think differently about life and what is meaningful within it. The reproduction of the degraded idea of existence in a brutal bare life (neither poetic or political nor considered in relation to gender) (Agamben 1998) – the existence of today’s modern slaves – is not part of feminisms’ vision for the future. Women are still judged according to their use value to others, including their ability to generate money by/with the sale of their bodies, not just their labour. Power and desire still crystallise around concepts of the ‘male gaze’ on female (or hyper-feminine) bodies as objects to be looked at, and women are still valued more as consumers than innovative producers, even in popular culture. Feminist artworks have ‘riffed’ on the dispossession, alienation and loss of women in the social, economic, political and cultural gender order on many topics including the history of colonialism/capitalism and post-Socialism/Communism. Women are not just the trophies of beauty for wealthy elites or defined by their purchasing power, they are major producers in global economies, in world agriculture, subsistence farming and in the world’s crafts. The rising figures for infant and maternal mortality indicate the lack of value society really gives to women’s role as mothers of future generations. The education and rearing of children are a communal enterprise that fosters connections between people, resources, methods and practices – building and maintaining culture has many similarities. Giving birth to a child (or even a great work of art!) is not a single act, it involves learning and years of care and work, as does the creation, fostering and maintaining of any culture. And still, from the art market to global trade in artefacts and craft production, we are confronted

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf said this in *Three Guineas* (1938). By contrast, the important statue of Edith Cavell (1865–1915, a nurse in the First World War) in St Martin’s Place, London (1920) by George Frampton carries her words ‘Patriotism is not Enough, I must have no Bitterness or Hatred for Anyone’ which were added in 1924.

with the idea that women are a minority of artists and cultural producers and the ridiculous presumption that when women are both mothers and artists, this is somehow a contradiction or confusion of roles.

There are plenty of artworks by women that point to how gender operates, often with feminist playfulness in role reversal or employing other forms of humour, irony and critique. Identification and recognition are critical terms in art criticism, but their purpose is not to bolster identity-based politics or to create a universal 'feminine'. Feminism in curating, criticism and art history has revised existing categories in genealogy, genre and subject and invented its own, questioning the dominance of the 'male gaze', redefining social spaces, challenging the obsession with certain media or innovation as constituting history. Feminist art is not produced in a single medium, style or genre (not even in textiles!) nor is it only to be found in collaborative models or activist self-organisation in networks (e.g. Lippard 1984; Deepwell 2020).<sup>2</sup> Women artists have been part of most contemporary art tendencies: conceptual art, fluxus, minimalism, abstraction and many posts (including the postcolonial and postmodern) – as well as forming their own feminist trans-national avant-garde (Schor 2016). Feminism's re-evaluation of women artists has moved them away from modernism's negative positioning of them as automatically minor/marginal artists into major figures whose works now determine the key themes and concepts that define contemporary art.

Feminism, as a politics and poetics, introduced new subjects into art<sup>3</sup>, offering different accounts of women's subjectivity, sexuality and modes of being/becoming on many issues. The category of 'the body' is not a feminist invention, because feminists ask 'whose body' is represented and what view of the personal as political does a work represent. Renewed celebrations of drag, gender-bending or camp expressions (in style, personality or dress) do not change this situation, except where they highlight discrimination (e.g. the works of South-African artist Zanele Muholi). To overcome disconnection, feminist poetics and politics find value in everyone's lives, in their fullness, diversity and plenitude and life as full of a sensory rich, multi-layered, and diverse set of experiences in the cycles of birth, growth, change and death. Arguing that these gendered norms have been dismantled by gender-neutral language defies the overwhelming evidence that they continue to be used and redeployed daily.

Feminisms continue to point to difficult questions about the persistent uneven distribution of recognition in institutions and ongoing contradictions between

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<sup>2</sup> See KT press' Feminist-Art-Observatory which lists over 500 books, anthologies and exhibition catalogues on feminist art and women artists from around the world since 1970.

<sup>3</sup> See Katy Deepwell's Feminist-Art-Topics project of 30 topics and 1000 works at <https://www.kt-press.co.uk/feminist-art-works-topic-intro.asp>.

the hypervisibility/under-representation, excess/invisibility in representations of women's bodies and women's lives. Would renewed attention to the percentage of women working in different aspects of the waged-labour economy, to women's migration patterns globally, or the rise of women as capable multi-taskers in middle management in highly administered cultures or global technology firms tell us more about women's positioning in a dis:connected model of globalisation? Is it only a question of identifying for feminism emergent trends in women's art production and mapping their antagonism towards certain cultural dominants in geo-political agendas (as Jameson (1992) proposes about world cinema)?

Feminisms' fascination with crossing borders and disciplines, with overcoming sex-role defined limits, with transnational connections mirrors the reality of so many people's lives in today's diasporic and globalised conditions: a polyglot existence, with work in one country, family members in another, with alienation from one form of cultural life (tradition) to newly established bonds to another (emergent cultures). To connect means remembering other histories in spite of globalisation's production of amnesia, as the memories of events, people, ways of life, communities, landscapes, industries and ways of working dissolve and 'all that is solid melts into air' (Berman 1998). This washing out/evacuation of all memories and histories is capitalism's primary tool of disconnection and allied to how propaganda in politics remakes every new epoch, designed to make its own power the dominant ideology. Do we really want to join the new 'group think', to participate in falsifications of history and the recycling of old myths instead of searching for new ways to discuss issues from climate change to the threat of permanent war? Reconnection through history is not about bringing back the obscure, the curious or folkloric, it is about remembering the past in relation to present struggles and this is how feminism(s) re-vision a future which is less extractionist and exploitative capitalist in its possibilities for all. There exist many alternative feminist perspectives from cosmopolitanism or critical regionalism, even reifying a planetary perspective (Gilroy 2000; Spivak 2003; Meskimmon 2020 and 2023) or finding kinship with the Chthulucene (Haraway 2016) that might lead us to when, where and how women fit into the dis:connections within globalisation.

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# Im/mobility

Kerilyn Schewel

Migration is a deeply contentious subject, often dominated by narratives of displacement. These narratives focus on the forced movement of populations due to conflict, poverty, climate change, or some combination thereof – push factors that have led over 108 million people worldwide to be forcibly displaced, mostly within their own countries (UNHCR 2022). While displacement is a pressing humanitarian issue, its dramatic and urgent nature often overshadows the larger, more gradual processes of internal and international migration that are reshaping societies around the world. Over 280 million people currently reside in countries different from where they were born (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou 2022), and a far larger, though uncounted, number move between villages, towns, and cities within their own countries.

It is easy to forget that mobility comes naturally to human beings. ‘Ours is a migratory species’, the author Mohsin Hamid reminds us (Hamid 2019). And yet patterns of population movements have evolved dramatically through the ages. In fact, the very definition of ‘migration’ as a change in residence across an administrative boundary presumes a modern state apparatus and ‘rooted’ lives registered to residences (Malkki 1992; de Haas, Castles and Miller 2019). Highly mobile ways of life – whether the traditional movements of pastoral peoples in the Sahel or the distinctly modern movements of van-dwelling itinerants cycling through seasonal warehouse work in the United States – do not fit easily within this definition. Nor do they fit easily within the modern world. So, indeed, human mobility is not new, but modernity has introduced new modes of mobility and immobility to the human experience.

This essay considers the nature of mobility and immobility in the modern world in three parts. The first defines ‘modernity’, the second critiques prevailing social theories on migration and modernization, and the third argues that to fully grasp the nature of migration in modernity, it is essential to consider various forms of immobility. Throughout the essay, I aim to show how mobility and immobility have different relationships to the dis:connectivity engendered by globalisation and the modern transformation.

## Modernity

Modernity means many things, hardly agreed upon by scholars, but two dimensions of the term should be distinguished: the structural conditions and the existential experience. Regarding the former, scholars as early as Marx have sought to define the ‘institutional core’ of modernity: a set of structural conditions that distinguish modern societies from their predecessors – conditions that include industrializa-

tion, bureaucratization, mass education, and rapid transportation (→ **Transport**) and communication technology (→ **Communication Technologies**) (Marx and Engels 1848, 473–83; Berman 1983; Giddens and Pierson 1998; Eisenstadt 2000; de Haas et al. 2020). From this perspective, modernity does not have a clear starting date. Rather, it begins when a particular constellation of these structural conditions emerges within a society, fostering the development of an industrialized nation-state. Its end remains unclear, as societies, their institutional configurations, and economic systems continue to evolve in our global age.

Conversely, modernity also refers to a more ephemeral but no less powerful existential reality: the collective experience of life under the structural conditions described above. Sociologist Robert Bellah wrote that the modern should be seen not ‘as a form of political or economic system, but as a spiritual phenomenon or a kind of mentality’ (Bellah 1991, 66). The philosopher Marshall Berman describes well the ‘mentality’ modernity demands:

Modern men and women must learn to yearn for change: not merely to be open to changes in their personal and social lives, but positively to demand them, actively to seek them out and carry them through. They must learn not to long nostalgically for the ‘fixed, fast-frozen relationships’ of the real or fantasized past, but to *delight in mobility*, to thrive on renewal, to look forward to future developments in their conditions of life and their relations with their fellow men. (Berman 1983, emphasis added)

Post-modern scholarship rightly resists any singular story about the ‘modern’ experience, yet it also recognizes that no society remains untouched by humanity’s fraught pursuit of ‘modernization’. All must find a way through the maelstrom of modernity (Berman 1983), embracing or resisting the personal, social, and societal transformation it demands. And for better and for worse, the individual or collective embrace of modernity often requires ‘delighting in mobility’, accepting a disconnection from our pasts in pursuit of a different, a better future.

### **Migration and modernization**

The structural shifts of modernity correlate with distinctive migration patterns, most notably with a global urban transition. In 1800, some 15–20% of people lived in cities. This figure rose to 34% by 1960 and surpassed 50% by 2007, with some projections suggesting 68% of the global population will reside in urban areas by 2050 (UNPD n.d.). Transformations in international migration trends may be seen as an integral part of this global urban transition. International migration is increasingly directed towards global cities in wealthier countries, contrasting with earlier forms of frontier or settler migration and the Transatlantic slave trade of previous centuries (Czaikas and de Haas 2014).

Beyond this urban transition, a rich body of empirical research is uncovering clear patterns in the relationship between migration and different indicators of development at the country-level (Skeldon 1990; Clemens 2020; de Haas 2010). In the simplest terms, a country's pursuit of 'development' tends to accelerate a sedentarization of traditional forms of mobility, an urbanization of internal mobility, and a diversification of international migration (of which the rise of international *labour* migration is one of the most striking forms) (Skeldon 1990; Schewel and Asmamaw 2021).

Despite clearer patterns in the big-picture relationships between migration and development, existing social theories struggle to fully explain these dynamics. In fact, dominant theories present inescapably normative and essentially opposite views about the nature of this relationship.

Consider early modernization theory, the rigid and paternalistic parent of what we call 'development' today. Modernization became a dominant paradigm in the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s, when the international development agenda took off and development interventions were crafted and justified by theories about how societies become 'modern'. Modernization theories focused primarily on economic growth and industrialization, and they embraced the free movement of goods, capital (→ **Capital**), ideas, and importantly *people* as countries moved from largely agricultural economies to industrial and service-based economies. In fact, for modernization theorists, the reallocation of people (more often termed 'labour') from rural, agricultural areas to urban, industrial sectors is *required* for economic growth. The urbanization of labour, goods, and capital is a taken-for-granted dimension of the development process, played out over and over again in economic history (Todaro 1969), and thus considered fundamental to 'balanced growth'. The same logic applies to the global economy. The free movement of people along wage and population gradients – within or across national boundaries – would lead to converging wage levels. This is the basic tenet of neoclassical migration theory and continues to animate economic research on migration trends today. It is a hopeful vision driven by faith in the market and people's ability to respond rationally to opportunities for material betterment.

In the 1970s and 1980s, critiques of modernization began to gain influence. Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory is one particularly persuasive example. Wallerstein suggested that rather than leading to balanced growth, modernization processes were fuelling global inequalities to serve the needs of core capitalist centres (Wallerstein 1979). The integration of peripheral (i.e., poorer, rural, agrarian) regions into the global capitalist system undermines peasant livelihoods and uproots peasants from their rural ways of life. From this perspective, the movement of labour and capital to the city is not a rational response of free agents,

but a coerced displacement that serves the needs of the capitalist system more than everyday people.

The penetration of capitalism into poorer areas only furthers dependency or, as the German sociologist Andre Frank famously put it, the ‘development of under-development’. As the Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal similarly argued in his theory of cumulative causation, economies of scale tend to deepen poverty in the periphery and accelerate the growth of core areas, furthering inequalities and driving out-migration from the periphery to the core (Myrdal 1957; Massey 1990). This dynamic occurs both within countries (rural-urban) and across countries (poor-rich countries). From this perspective, migration is driven by the livelihood *displacement* and deepening inequalities that come from ‘development’.

Critical development theories helped disenchant the myth of modernization for many development practitioners and led to more people-centred development approaches in subsequent decades. Yet, these critical perspectives also left a lasting imprint of migration as a problem, or at least a symptom of greater problems, that at times does a disservice to migrants themselves. We are still left with two very different and dissatisfying portraits of ‘the migrant’. The first is a rational utility-maximizer predictably following wage and population gradients to better their economic prospects. The second is a passive pawn, as geographer Hein de Haas put it, ‘pushed around the globe by the macro-forces of global capitalism’ (de Haas 2021). The former celebrates migration; the latter laments it as a sign of social stress. Neither perspective alone does justice to the reality of migration and its driving forces, nor the multifaceted human beings choosing to move or to stay as their societies and environments change.

Since the turn of the century, migration scholarship has moved away from big picture theories about development and modernization, turning instead to the elaboration of more sophisticated micro-level frameworks that illuminate the aspirations, capabilities, networks, and norms that shape migration decision-making and behaviour (de Haas 2021; Müller-Funk, Üstübcici and Belloni 2023; Carling and Collins 2018). What this more grounded research reveals is a complex coexistence of agency and constraints, of volition and limited choice, of opportunity and injustice shaping new patterns of mobility and immobility under a global capitalist system. Rather than clarify the contours of ‘voluntary’ and ‘involuntary’ migration, it muddled them (Erdal and Oeppen 2018; Schewel 2021). Further, it reveals a puzzling reality that is not easily unexplained by the optimistic neoclassical or pessimistic historical structuralist theories: widespread *immobility*—people do not want to move or cannot move despite societal changes that seem to demand it.

### The challenge of the immobile

The geographer Doreen Massey originally argued that different individuals and social groups have distinct relationships to mobility in the modern world: ‘some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it’ (Massey 1994, 149). As I have argued elsewhere, a mobility bias in migration research prevents us from seeing how the same may be said of the immobile: some are ‘in charge’ of their immobility, while others feel imprisoned by it (Schewel 2019).

Those who feel imprisoned by their immobility are those who aspire to migrate—who believe a better life is elsewhere – yet lack the ability to leave. As Jorgen Carling has forcefully argued, ‘involuntary immobility’ may be more common than migration, challenging the characterization of our global age as an age of mass migration (Carling 2002). Widespread involuntarily immobility reveals the injustices of the modern world, not least of which are the ‘regimes of mobility’ that privilege the movement of the ‘high-skilled’ while constraining the movement of the ‘low-skilled’ or asylum seekers (Fitzgerald 2019; Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013). Only by seeing those who feel imprisoned by their immobility can we appreciate the degree to which social and economic mobility relies upon spatial mobility, and how modern societies fail those who fail to move.

But not all of those who remain in place are involuntarily so. If the modern mentality demands that we ‘yearn for change’ and ‘delight in mobility’, as Berman suggests, how should we think about those who dare to be content where they are or refuse to move – those who *delight in immobility*? In my own scholarship, I have been drawn to understanding the ‘voluntarily’ or ‘acquiescently’ immobile – those who do not aspire to migrate. In essence, these are those who resist the disconnections modernity demands from the people and places that nurtured them.

It is not only the elite or wealthy who have the privilege of aspiring to stay. Aspirations to stay are surprisingly common among groups who outsiders might assume have much to gain from migration: the poor, the less educated, those living in rural communities (Debra, Ruysen and Schewel 2023; Schewel and Fransen 2022). The reluctance or refusal to migrate is sometimes attributed to ‘cognitive constraints’ that prohibit fully ‘rational’ decisions. It is more commonly explained in terms of various attachments: territorial attachments to a specific locality, whether it be a town, region, or country; social attachments to family and local community; economic attachments to location-specific assets or investments that are difficult to move, such as a house or local business; cultural attachments, like a sense of identity and belonging that is intimately tied to a place; or psychological attachments, like the ‘intimacy the mind makes with the place it awakens in’, as the philosopher poet Wendell Berry puts it (Berry 1968). Beyond these place attachments, there are also instances of place *commitment*, the proactive choice to stay in a place due to a

sense of duty or purpose, even if it means sacrificing personal advantages or other attachments. Even at the expense of self- or societal ‘development’.

Voluntary immobility has challenged the aims and assumptions of modernization since its earliest beginnings. One of the first depictions of voluntary immobility in modern literature is seen through the characters Philemon and Baucis in Goethe’s *Faust*. This seminal work from the early 1800s narrates the story of Dr. Faust, who, despite his vast intellectual achievements, remains dissatisfied with his life and enters into a pact with Mephistopheles, a devil, for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. Philemon and Baucis appear later in the play, after Faust’s ventures into love, drugs, and politics leave him seeking greater fulfilment by becoming a protagonist of modernization and development.

In his role as Developer, Faust meets Philemon and Baucis, an elderly couple residing in a quaint, picturesque seaside cottage. They lead a modest, contented life, deeply rooted in tradition and simplicity – starkly contrasting with Faust’s relentless ambition. Coveting their land for its scenic and strategic importance, Faust offers them money and farmland elsewhere, but they steadfastly refuse to leave. His frustration with their resistance culminates in a command to Mephistopheles to forcibly evict and resettle them. Mephistopheles and three men, under the cover of night, murder the couple and burn their home. Faust expresses shock and remorse upon learning of their deaths, yet his command was, as Berman notes in his commentary on the play, ‘a characteristically modern style of evil: indirect, impersonal, mediated by complex organizations and institutional roles’ (Berman 1983). Berman’s interpretation of *Faust* emphasizes the tragedy of development – of the devastation and ruin that are built in the process and promise of modernization. Of Philomena and Baucis he writes, ‘They are the first embodiments in literature of a category of people that is going to be very large in modern history: people who are in the way – in the way of history, of progress, of development; people who are classified, and disposed of, as obsolete.’ (Berman 1983, 67).

Many like Philemon and Baucis remain in the world, and their presence challenges commonly-held ideas about human nature and what should constitute ‘progress’. They may be found in communities who face severe climate and environmental risks yet refuse relocation programs (Farbotko et al. 2020). They may be found in communities across rural and urban America, puzzling government workers who lament that poor people are not moving to better-paid work like they used to (Semuels 2017; see also Preece 2018). They thwart researchers surveying migration intentions who find that a respondent has never really considered the idea of leaving and thus never developed an ‘intention’ one way or another. Rather than see these immobile populations as ‘in the way’, ‘backwards’, or ‘obsolete’, perhaps they have something to teach us.

While migration continues to be a visible and potent manifestation of modernity's dynamics, the steadfastness of those who choose or are forced to remain immobile provides an equally significant counter-expression. This volume challenges a linear, connection-based understanding of globalisation, illustrating how different forms of disconnection are inherent to the globalisation process. This chapter similarly questions narratives of globalisation and modernity that prioritize movement, flux, and placelessness.

As new forms of human mobility emerge in the modern world, so too do new forms of immobility – each offering unique insights into the ‘modern condition’. A focus on involuntary immobility, for instance, reveals the manifold injustices that determine who has access to and control over their mobility. The involuntarily immobile highlight the contradictions of a modern world that presumes spatial mobility is necessary for social and economic advancement, yet constructs migration regimes to constrain the mobility of the world's poorest. However, the stories of Philemon and Baucis, and the millions like them who remain attached or committed to place, remind us that not all immobility is involuntary, nor do people always aspire to ‘social and economic mobility’ as defined by our development frameworks. In this light, voluntary immobility can be a powerful act of resistance. Its widespread prevalence around the world demands that we expand and enrich our theoretical frameworks and craft policies that honour and support the diverse needs and aspirations of all individuals, regardless of whether they move or stay.

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# Infrastructure

Tom Menger

Any consideration of infrastructure in relation to dis:connectivity should start with a definition of the term itself. However, as it was put recently, 'It may ultimately be futile to try and define infrastructures'. Its vagueness of definition explains its very popularity, as it affords multiple qualities and can be applied to different, and a still expanding number of, fields (Burchardt and Laak 2023, 2–3). Nevertheless, what is clear is that 'connection' and 'movement' are generally at the centre of conceptions of infrastructure. According to Dirk van Laak, infrastructure is meant to 'enable and direct the distribution of dynamic elements in space' (Laak 2004, 11). Brian Larkin holds that 'Infrastructures are built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space' (Larkin 2013, 328). Accordingly, the focus in infrastructural research has been on how infrastructures increase connectivity. Historically, the term has also been imbricated in the rhetoric of 'opening up' spaces (through infrastructure), which equally emphasised connection and was linked to the bourgeois-liberal utopia of letting everything circulate for the benefit of individuals and the whole (Burchardt and Laak 2023, 4). Connection is also inherent in conceptions of infrastructure as 'networks' (→ **Networks**) or 'large technical systems', which see infrastructures themselves already as a set of connected material or immaterial elements (Neuman 2006, 3–6; Hughes 1987).

The analytical connection between infrastructure and connectivity has been even stronger when it comes to scholarship on globalisation processes. In fact, infrastructure is generally seen as the basic enabler of such processes. Infrastructure constantly crosses borders (→ **Transborder**), and it has proven a highly successful export product, often across political-ideological divisions. Infrastructures of communication (→ **Communication Technologies**) and transport (→ **Transport**) have integrated and connected territories, often also as 'hidden integration', and have standardised regions and countries on similar technical systems and procedures (Laak 2018, 281; Brendel 2019; Misa and Schot 2005). More concretely, the acceleration of globalisation processes in the second half of the nineteenth century has widely been attributed to the enormous expansion of infrastructures such as railways, the telegraph, ports and shipping lines. Similarly, the globalising push of the 1990s–2000s rested particularly on the growth of telecommunication infrastructure, mainly the world wide web (Osterhammel 2014; Wenzlhuemer 2012).

What does it mean to bring infrastructure, so intrinsically bound up with notions of (increasing) connectivity, into contact with the concept of global dis:connectivity and its insistence that connections and disconnections are not binary opposites, but rather co-constitutive of all globalisation processes? First, it should

be highlighted here that disruptions (→ **Interruptions**), frictions and marginalisations in the global connections produced by infrastructure have in many cases not gone unnoticed by scholars. Van Laak noted generally on infrastructures that while they might have emancipated humans in many aspects, they have simultaneously entrenched our vulnerability to disruptions in those same systems. AbdouMalig Simone, renowned for his postcolonial redefinition of infrastructure, has equally pointed out that ‘Any transverse from “point A” to “point B” will be vulnerable to interruptions, deviations, and momentary conjunctions—among bodies and things—that cannot be put into words. But these in-between moments will exert an affect, and people will learn from them. This, too, will be an aspect of infrastructure’ (Simone 2012). More specifically, case studies on individual infrastructures of globalisation have also regularly noted the manifold disruptive or even plainly disconnecting effects of these, as the examples below will demonstrate.

Rarely, however, have these insights been taken to problematise the relationship of infrastructure and global connectivity at large. In relation to infrastructure, therefore, the concept of global dis:connectivity should be an incentive not only to note the many frictions and countervailing forces inherent in and produced by supposedly globally connective infrastructures, but predominantly to reinforce our focus on these effects and forces, to think them through analytically, place them in explicit connection with common conceptions of globalisation processes, and, last but not least, to highlight the ‘simultaneity’ of both connective and disconnective aspects of infrastructure. Below, a number of themes in infrastructure research are presented which, rudimentarily, show what a globally dis:connective approach to infrastructures can look like.

Where such approaches have probably progressed furthest is, first, in the now sprawling literature on how Western infrastructures have been adopted and hybridised in non-Western contexts – literature that, like the concept of dis:connectivity, problematises global connectivity or ‘diffusion’ [for a research agenda, see (Arnold 2005)]. Secondly, research on ‘infrastructural violence’ [for an overview, see (Rodgers and O’Neill 2012)] also offers a solid base for the new approach. It is now widely recognised that infrastructures are always exclusionary (→ **Exclusion/Inclusion**) to an extent, and their benefits unequally distributed or even unattainable for many. A particularly egregious example of this is provided by Hannah C. Appel’s study of the infrastructures erected by American oil companies in Equatorial Guinea. On the one hand, these certainly produce global connections: they enable the transport of oil from the Gulf of Guinea all the way to the United States, bring with them the influx of an expatriate workforce, and themselves represent the import (and further global spread) of certain infrastructural models, not least because the Government obliges the foreign oil companies to build new, high-rise, shiny office buildings they actually do not need. On the other hand, the people of

the country are not only excluded from the benefits of this oil wealth, they are also physically excluded from many of its infrastructures: the working and living spaces of the oil companies' staff are built as strictly-guarded enclaves where Equatoguineans are not allowed to live and to which their access as workers is tightly controlled. The enclaves offer electricity and running water (facilities from which most locals are excluded) and they are often said to look like Houston suburbs – in a way, another instance of globalisation, but one clearly built on the exclusion of everything and everyone local (Appel 2012).

As this case shows, generally a look not only at the users, but also the builders and operators of global infrastructures tends to bring to the fore many, often more hidden, dis:connections. In a particularly illustrative example, Jonathan Hyslop has portrayed the crews that manned the Southampton to Durban (South Africa) Union Castle (UC) shipping lines. While such lines might lead one to expect globally expansive connections and diverse ship crews, this was a rather different case. Due to the prevailing racism and immigration restrictions in South Africa, the UC workforce consisted nearly exclusively of whites. Most were drawn from a rather narrow area around Southampton; many even lived in the same neighbourhood. Every few months they would journey to South Africa, but they would always return to Southampton, to which they had very strong ties. Hyslop rightly speaks here of 'paradoxes of localism within globalism' (Hyslop 2017).

Another field where infrastructure research and global dis:connectivity fuse together acutely is in the conceptualisation of borders as infrastructure (Dijstelbloem 2021). While it might be obvious in the consideration of such objects as border walls that they do not serve primarily to facilitate seamless connectivity [for instance, (Pfordte 2023)], most research has gone beyond the obvious here and shown the complex working of borders as mechanisms of selection, where mobility is restricted for some and facilitated for others (Dijstelbloem 2021, 27; Huber 2013; Mau 2021). Here, we see reflected the insistence of the dis:connectivity concept on the co-existence of connection and disconnection.

It would be odd not to also consider global dis:connectivity together with the manifold forms of destruction of infrastructure. On the one hand, this is a natural process. All infrastructure is subject to daily wear and tear of its natural environment: climatic factors, erosion, parasites etc. In an interesting intersection of infrastructural history with colonial and environmental (→ **Ecologies**) history, Martin Kalb has, for instance, explored how the influences of seawater, sand and molluscs constantly threatened the pier in Swakopmund in colonial Namibia (Kalb 2020). While these represent the seemingly small natural factors that break down infrastructure, big natural disasters just as often destroy infrastructures: floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc. These factors point to the potential of thinking about

the agency of nature and drawing on the environmental humanities to enrich our thoughts on global dis:connectivity.

Just like nature, humans also frequently break down what other humans have built, and thus continuously impact the connectivity established by these infrastructures. Sometimes, this destruction derives from small acts. For instance, the cutting of telegraph cables was a recurring act of resistance against colonial penetration (of which infrastructures were, not rarely, both a conduit and a symbol) (Topik and Wells 2012, 663). At other times, human destruction of globally-connecting infrastructure was not so small an act but, for example, part of wide-ranging military strategies in globe-spanning wars. Again, such occurrences of infrastructural destruction, whether natural or man-made, are already relatively prominent in research, but should also be thought of as a factor in the interplay of connection and disconnection of globalising processes.

Nevertheless, while infrastructures are vulnerable, research has found that they are oftentimes also quite durable. When destroyed, they are often quickly rebuilt or restored, frequently in the same spot [(Laak 2018, 283); for an example, see (Vries 2022)]. The globalising effects of specific infrastructures can therefore be, in many cases, long-lasting and relatively stable. In recent years, the repair and maintenance work that is central to the operation of so many infrastructures has also increasingly moved to the centre of scholarly attention (Henke and Sims 2020) – combining this strand of research with a dis:connective perspective could also prove fertile. Generally, when thinking about infrastructure from the perspective of dis:connections, it is important to keep this frequent durability of infrastructure in mind.

Less obvious than destruction, another mode of bringing ‘dis:connective’ aspects into view more explicitly would be to focus on the secondary effects of transport infrastructures. Infrastructures have certainly established new global connections (one need only think about the Suez Canal), enormously strengthened existing ones, and linked formerly peripheral regions to global networks. But connecting certain places does not only mean that other places will remain unconnected. More importantly, the establishment of these infrastructures oftentimes also leads to the marginalisation or demise of other formerly important routes and nodes. While this is a development that has been noticed many times in studies of transport arteries, it rarely has been given much further thought or theoretisation. And yet, this seems to be a recurring, possibly even inevitable aspect in the history of infrastructures. Many of the new global connections established for the purpose of resource extraction by nineteenth-century colonial powers cut through or marginalised previously existing transregional connectivities – whether these were links to food resources or cattle pastures, now cut by colonial railroads, canals or the like, or centuries-old trade routes marginalised by trade diversion (Diogo and

Laak 2016, 150; Huber 2013). Sometimes these colonial routes were in turn superseded a few decades later: the multiple small ports of the sail era, for instance, lost significance at the end of the nineteenth century to a few megaports that allowed refuelling of the new coal-fired ships (Hyslop 2017, 175). Thinking from a dis:connective angle is once again an incentive here not only to focus more systematically on such developments, but also to integrate them further in our understandings of infrastructure and globalisation processes.

The infrastructures of global connectivity also offer an opportunity to consider the whole gamut of dis:connections that are ‘less obvious’ interruptions, such as detours (→ **Detours**), delays, or absences (→ **Absences**). Concerning the latter, invisibility would, for instance, be an important absence when it comes to infrastructure research. It has famously been claimed of infrastructures that they are invisible until they stop working (Star 1999). This describes the fact that infrastructures often underlie basic processes of humans’ daily life, and people have thus stopped noticing them. While this has meanwhile been shown to be inapplicable to manifold infrastructures, some global ones certainly share this characteristic. It was only when certain supply chains stopped working during the Covid-19 pandemic or when the Suez Canal was blocked by the run-around container ship *Ever Given* (2021) that most people really became aware of some of the essential infrastructures underwriting globalisation. These cases in a way sum up what this contribution has tried to state in relation to infrastructure and global dis:connectivity: infrastructures can undeniably have important and relatively durable globalising effects, but we should problematise their association with ever-increasing connectivity and be much more attentive to their simultaneously connecting and disconnecting aspects.

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# Interruptions

Roland Wenzlhuemer

The concept of dis:connectivity emphasizes the mutually dependent, tense relationship between global interconnectedness, disconnectedness or lack of connection, which only become relevant in relation to one another. The term privileges neither connective nor disconnective processes, but focuses on their changing interplay. It identifies this as a decisive factor in understanding the sociocultural impact of globalisation. This represents a new approach in globalisation research, which calls into question many of the previous basic assumptions of this field and, therefore, needs to be mapped out afresh. To this end, three forms of dis:connectivity, which are of central importance in historical and contemporary globalisation processes, can be taken as a starting point: interruptions, absences (→ **Absences**) and detours (→ **Detours**). While these three should be considered as non-exclusive and, depending on the research perspective, many other forms of dis:connectivity will be discernible, this trio carves first paths into a new research field.

This contribution specifically looks at the role of interruptions in processes of globalisation and, thus, their place within the concept of dis:connectivity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines interruption as '[a] breaking in upon some action, process, or condition (esp. speech or discourse), so as to cause it (usually temporarily) to cease; hindrance of the course or continuance of something; a breach of continuity in time; a stoppage' (Oxford English Dictionary 2024). While the OED's specific mention of speech and discourse as typical contexts of interruption might seem overly narrow as practically every activity or process can be interrupted, this focus on processes of communication and exchange is, of course, particularly pertinent for the context at hand. Within the framework of globalisation processes, interruptions mostly occur as interruptions in global communication or mobility, e.g. in the form of interrupted train or flight services, blockages of important trade routes such as the Suez Canal, severed submarine communication cables or the enforcement of border controls or even border closures for reasons of disease control. These are just a few randomly chosen examples of, to quote the OED, 'stoppages' that we all witnessed in the past few years. Hence, in the context of dis:connectivity, interruption refers to all those aspects of global interdependence and exchange processes that do not unfold at the expected speed and intensity anymore, that break off unexpectedly or are even reversed.

What all the above examples have in common is their temporariness, a key quality of interruptions that the OED also emphasises. There is a before and an after the interruption. There was a time when transport infrastructures, trade routes or communication lines had not been interrupted. And in all likelihood,

services will resume at some point in the future. Within the framework of globalisation, interruptions refer to the temporary loss of connection – usually with the prospect of its reestablishment. Therefore, the key characteristic of an interruption is the difference to the situation before and (presumably) after. They gain their significance precisely from the fact that a corresponding connection once existed (and presumably will exist again). They have an *ex negativo* effect and derive their formative power from the contrast to the before and after. Interruptions evoke both the experience of loss and the expectation of resumption.<sup>1</sup>

As the examples above already suggest, interruptions are frequent and formative aspects of globalisation processes on practically all levels of entanglement and for a multitude of different reasons. Technical reasons, for instance. Infrastructures (→ **Infrastructure**) age, lose capacity or break. In the nineteenth century, submarine telegraph cables snapped under their own weight, were severed by ships' anchors or roasted with too high electrical voltage by incompetent engineers. Ships can sink or run aground. Sometimes they do so in inconvenient places and clog important international waterways. The 2021 accident of the container ship *Ever Given* in the Suez Canal is a recent and particularly instructive case in point. Pipelines can leak, trains can be derailed and airplanes can crash. And if this happens too often, public trust in this infrastructure and the frequent checks it undergoes decreases as well. Hence, technical failure in global infrastructure is a frequent reason for interrupted global connections. Other reasons are political and/or ideological. Armed conflicts make trade and migration routes unsafe and physically destroy infrastructure. Wars and ideological enmities bring embargos, trade restrictions, or even violent blockages (→ **Blockages**) of international trade routes as we can see in the Red Sea at the time of writing in early 2024. And in less violently charged situations, boycotts, and strikes can also be means to highlight and safeguard the interests of certain groups or communities. Other reasons can be subsumed under social or governmental factors, for instance when governments impose disease control and/or quarantine measures. Or when state or other authorities deal out punishments in the form of imprisonment, house arrest, exile (→ **Exile**) or other travel restrictions. All these measures have a direct impact on mobility and communication and lead to interrupted connections. Then there are – and increasingly so – environmental factors, often in the form of disasters of various sizes. Volcanos erupt and ash clouds impact global airplane traffic. Floods, mudslides or earthquakes damage infrastructure. Snow and ice paralyze airports and railway stations. Or on a less disastrous scale, rivers and canals silt up or shipworms damage submarine cables.

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<sup>1</sup> In practice, an interruption might turn out to be permanent and become a disruption. Still, its key characteristic is that of contrast, in this case to the situation before the inter-/disruption.

Often such environmental factors cannot be analytically separated from technical failures as they bring about infrastructural breakdowns. On a more individual and less grand level, there might be personal reasons for interruptions. People might be indisposed or temporarily lack the money to travel or invest globally. They might lose interest in an international pen pal or lack the time and means to constantly write home when they are away. While these examples might seem small or even insignificant in comparison to infrastructural breakdowns or environmental disasters, they can still lead to interrupted global connections of great significance in certain settings.

These are just some of the sets of reasons and factors that can bring about interruptions in global connections. In all these situations, the actors share experiences of a time before the interruption and will have certain expectations regarding the time after the interruption. Their evaluation and navigation of the current situation occur in relation to both these experiences and expectations, as the following example from the realm of nineteenth-century communication history seeks to demonstrate (→ **Communication Technologies**). The telegraph played a key role in the burst of globalisation that took place at the time. The technology converted short messages into electric impulses and transmitted them along cables and wires with unprecedented speed over great distances. Around the mid-century, the technology had become mature enough to enable transoceanic telegraphic connections between continents. By the turn of the century, a global telegraph network had grown that allowed, as contemporaries put it, ‘communication at the speed of thought’ and greatly contributed to the ‘shrinking of the world’. In most studies of telegraphy in global history, the technology is held to be an archetypal connector (Wenzlhuemer 2013).

However, this is just one aspect of the narrative. Unstable and frequently disrupted connections were commonplace even on the most crucial trunk lines, causing frustration among a clientele that had swiftly grown accustomed to the convenience of telegraphy. A letter to the editor published in the *Times of London* (Anonymous 1870) unequivocally illustrates how the understanding and repercussions of interrupted connectivity were shaped by prior experiences and expectations. In this letter, the author recounts the challenges faced when attempting to send a telegraph from London to Calcutta in the evening. Commencing with the statement, ‘I had occasion to telegraph to Calcutta between 9 and 10 in the evening’, the author deems this need as entirely ordinary and self-explanatory, requiring no further elucidation or justification. By 1870, the ability to communicate telegraphically with distant locations had become a matter of course for a specific type of actor. However, the first complications were not long in coming.

Expressing uncertainty about which offices would be open at that late hour, the author deemed it prudent to head to the main branch of the General Post Office.

Upon arrival, a sign directed him to the telegraph agency in Cornhill, which operated from 8 p.m. to midnight. At this subsequent location, the author observes the dire understaffing of the agency and the agent's apparent bewilderment at the desire to send a telegram to Calcutta: "Calcutta!" he said, and looked very much as if I had asked to telegraph to Fernando Po. [. . .] Now, Sir, Calcutta is not an unknown place. I thought it was the capital of British India, and that it was in close and constant communication with the City of London.'

This passage speaks volumes. From the protagonist's point of view, it was only reasonable to expect 'close and constant communication' between Calcutta and London. While we do not know for sure, it seems safe to assume that previous experience – either his personal experience or a more general knowledge of telegraphic communication – has given rise to this expectation.

Indeed, the global telegraph network of the time exhibited a specific structure that reinforced such perceptions. Beyond the Mediterranean and European coastal areas, initial efforts to lay subsea cables in the 1850s and 1860s focused on a transatlantic connection and a cable to India. The first major overland projects, such as the 'Siemens Line' (Bühlmann 1999), extended from Europe towards South Asia, influenced by the imperial interests of European powers, especially the British Empire. This gave rise to a robust east-west axis in the global communication network, linking Europe (particularly Great Britain) at the centre with North America in the west, traversing the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean to reach India in the east. This axis extended further eastward to Oceania by the 1870s (Wenzlhuemer 2013, 105–123). For this reason, it is understandable that a London businessman in 1870 might anticipate easy and routine communication with Calcutta and be astonished to discover potential complications.

As the letter in the *Times* continues, the distressed author was directed by the telegraph agent to the office of the Falmouth, Gibraltar, and Malta Telegraph Company on Broad Street. It was there that he discovered the cable to India was currently inactive. '[The clerk] informed me that the Falmouth line was broken between Lisbon and Gibraltar; that it would consequently take five or six days to telegraph to Calcutta, and that his company advised the public for the present to send their messages through Persia by the Indo-European Company, whose office was in Telegraph-street.' Only upon reaching the telegraph agency on Telegraph Street did the author successfully transmit his telegram to Calcutta.

The protagonist expressed little understanding for the situation in his letter: 'I confess I thought it odd that in the centre of the heart of the British Empire a man should thus be sent from pillar to post, according to the hours of the night, in order to find the right end of the electric wire which is now the very nerve of the social body.' The idea of sending a telegram to British India in the late evening did not register as a concern for him. He took global connectivity for granted, even though

obstacles and interruptions naturally remained. In this specific instance, the outcomes were not notably severe. Despite the clerk's initial astonishment at the first office and a technical malfunction at the second, the author successfully sent his message using an alternate route. The telegram ultimately made its way to India overland because the undersea cable was out of service.

Although not particularly dramatic in the example provided, outages and interruptions were frequent incidents during the 1870s and 1880s, often leading to more significant consequences, as indicated by numerous mentions in the annual reports of telegraph companies. In 1881, the undersea connection between Great Britain and India was entirely nonfunctional for over a month in July and August. Four years later, the cable experienced downtime from June to October (Administration Report 1874, 1883, 1890). The Administration Report of the Indo-European Telegraph Department for the fiscal year 1882–83 highlighted that '[t]he Suez route was either partially interrupted or defective in one or more of its cable sections for nearly the entire official year' (Administration Report 1883, para. 31). Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, disruptions to undersea-cable connectivity were a regular occurrence, and overland lines to India were not significantly more reliable (Bektas 2000, 692).

This little episode and the more general evidence from official reports highlight that even the telegraph – probably the most iconic global communication technology of the nineteenth century and a global connector *par excellence* – was frequently ridden with breakdowns and interruptions that irritated customers and at times could have much more severe consequences. The example also shows that previous experience and the expectations derived from it are decisive factors that shape the specific character of interruptions and their *ex negativo* relation with processes of globalisation and, in a more conceptual way, with the idea of dis:connectivity.

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# Invisibilities

Arnab Dey

National and global markets as well as globally integrated operations require central places where the *work of globalization* gets done. (Sassen 1998, xii; emphasis added)

## Globalisation, labour, and the silences of modern history

Globalisation has a storied historical provenance. As a process of connections, indeed connectivity, it predates formalization in academic discourse and naming, especially via the Global Studies paradigm in the 1990s. Human contact through trade, religious exchange, drives of exploration and conquest, maritime routes, pathogen transfer, confessional and pilgrimage sites, and colonization and empires foundationally shaped our understanding of the intertwined pre-modern and modern worlds long before terms such as ‘globalism’, ‘globalisation’ or ‘globality’ entered our disciplinary vocabulary.<sup>1</sup>

My task in this essay is not to enter into the full analytic range and depth of these historical frameworks and lived pasts. Instead, I trace the invisible, unremarked, and forgotten corollaries of our received understanding of globalisation as a notable, tangible presence and phenomenon in our lives. In doing so, I make a heuristic distinction between the *temporal* universality of globalisation as a ‘process’ and the *spatiality* of making-the-global that are always tied to specific places, works, and bodies. To that end, this essay will analytically distinguish between what the sociologist Manfred Steger calls ‘disembodied globalization’ (an ‘idea’) (Steger 2023) versus the ‘embodied absence’ that inheres in such place-based histories of the global (a ‘silence’). These theoretical concerns will be explored by looking at the forgotten histories of industrial ailments, especially occupational health and disease in British and contemporary India. These disabilities remained a constant presence in the lives and livelihoods of the hundreds and thousands of workers that made the British Empire a veritable industrial powerhouse in this period. It is also a presence that closely followed the career and making of our modern, global energy regimes—and yet one that remains largely forgotten in the annals of globalisation studies and globality. This essay foregrounds this ‘absent-present’ (→ **Absences**) in the history of industrialization as a way to rethink the role of silences, disjunctures, and absences *alongside* connectivity, presence, and networks in globalisation and Global Studies. To that end, my use of the ‘absent-present’ is a conceptual rethink-

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent work on the role of disease in reframing our understanding of globalisation, see Harper 2021.

ing of the very logic of globalisation—one that obscures and renders imperceptible its inner workings while keeping the mandate of market integration visible and in the running. The ‘absent-present’ is at the very heart of globalisation’s disconnections and dis:connectivity: not a binary by any means, but an integral, if oxymoronic component of its worldwide entanglements, past and present.

### Globalisation and embodied absence

Steger proffers four distinct, albeit interlinked social forms through which the dynamics of globalisation have been visible through the ages. He calls the first, ‘embodied globalization’, manifested in and through the movement and mobility of peoples through the world. Steger terms the second form ‘disembodied globalization’, or the worldwide networks of inanimate ideas, data points, and information technologies (→ **Communication Technologies**). ‘Objectified globalization’ or the interconnectedness and transfer of things and objects forms his third form, while ‘institutional globalization’, corresponding to the worldwide diffusion and mobility of social and political formations and entities, rounds off Steger fourth form of globalisation (Steger 2023).

While these four, admittedly analytic subsets of the praxis of globalisation are worth noting, this essay argues that connections, praxis, and networks do not exhaust the conditions and processes that undergird the *work-making* of globalisation, and especially as it relates to the formerly colonized world. For much of the burden of this work—and what made globality possible in the first place—was borne by lives and landscapes outside the gaze of recognition, epistemology, or even history. As Raj Patel and Jason Moore put it:

The rise of capitalism gave us the idea not only that society was relatively independent of the web of life but also that most women, Indigenous Peoples, slaves, and colonized peoples everywhere were not fully human and thus not full members of society. These were people who were not—or were only barely—human. They were part of Nature, treated as social outcasts—they were *cheapened*. (Patel and Moore 2017, 24)

As many humanists have commented, these correlated economic, ideological, and social foundations of early capitalism (→ **Capital**)—another synonym for the birth of our globalising world—hid an insidious logic of devaluation at their heart: that certain bodies, certain places, and certain social formations were less worthy, less valuable, and less necessary to recognize and account for in the story of global power and networks (→ **Networks**) of exchange.<sup>2</sup> For they were allegedly neither

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<sup>2</sup> For a classic instance of this insidious logic, see Locke [1660] 1960, and especially the chapter ‘On Property’ (Locke [1660] 1960: 285–302).

fully human, nor fully ‘modern’ enough to participate in the weighty task of global power-and-history making. Forever condemned to be in the ‘waiting room of history’ (Chakrabarty 2000), these places, peoples, and landscapes were only to provide the largely unseen, and rarely acknowledged labours of that globalising world, never its intellectual producers. In drawing their largely invisible manual work—and their epidemiological burdens—back into the circuit of globalisation history and theory, this essay utilizes the concept of ‘embodied absence’ to make its case. As the editors of this volume persuasively suggest, ‘as more places, regions and people around the globe integrate, the corollary is that others cannot (or don’t want to) participate in those integrative processes to the same degree, and they will be left behind, relatively speaking’ (→ **Introduction**).<sup>3</sup> Let us turn to a slice of the industrial history of British India, and especially to worker diseases and ailments in the coal mining sector to examine this story of personified erasure. After all, coal, and imperial mining were indelibly linked, and continue to be linked to the making of globalisation and power.

As far as the Indian coalfields and colliery labour are concerned, commentators have long argued that an unholy nexus of managerial apathy, medical oversight, and politics of profit drove a near total refusal to acknowledge the presence of occupational hazards in this industry. In their study of coal mine workers in the Raniganj district of West Bengal, for instance, Debasree Dhar and Dhiraj K. Nite argue that the period between 1946 and 1971 saw protracted and reluctant acknowledgment by the post-independent Indian State and colliery management regarding the existence and compensability of silicosis, pneumoconiosis, and fibrosis. Despite advancements in medical technology, scientific knowhow, and legislative provisions, Dhar and Nite suggest that coal companies regularly ‘under-reported’, ‘contrived to invisibilise’, or ‘erased’ cases of these disease cases among afflicted workers (Dhar and Nite 2022).

To reiterate, such willing misrecognition of the dangers of the workplace, or refusal to acknowledge their presence was not a post-independent phenomenon in India. Soon after the landmark Johannesburg International Conference on Silicosis on 13–27 August 1930, the International Labour Organization (hereafter ILO) sent several correspondences to the Government of India (hereafter GOI) seeking cooperation and collaboration in research on the subject. In a terse letter dated 28 April 1932, the Deputy Secretary to the GOI reminded the Director of the ILO

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<sup>3</sup> Andre Gunder Frank’s well-known hypothesis of ‘dependency theory’ is instructive in this instance. As he famously argued: ‘We must conclude, in short, that underdevelopment is not due to the survival of archaic institutions and the existence of capital shortage in regions that have remained isolated from the stream of world history. On the contrary, underdevelopment was and still is generated by the very same historical process which also generated economic development: the development of capitalism itself.’ (Frank 1989); in this regard, also see Parthasarathi 2011.

that medical researchers in the country had to concentrate on matters of urgent and special interest, and that silicosis was not one of them (ILO 1932). Requests for collaboration on the topic were therefore summarily refused. Importantly, this Conference raised several questions around silicosis that ILO member states were asked to reflect on. Chief among them was the issue of size frequency of silica dust and its correlation with radiographic appearance, morbid anatomy, and symptomatology of silicosis and silicosis with tuberculosis among workers. The importance of general and localized ventilation in dusty industries, periodic medical examination of workers, and the desirability of studying the relationship between length of employment, dust size and exposure, and aetiology of silicosis progression were also stressed in the Johannesburg meeting. Indeed, this Conference categorically recommended that ‘silicosis complicated or not by tuberculosis constitutes an occupational disease which may involve reduction of working capacity’ (ILO 1932, 15). Given the GOI’s deliberations on occupational hazards as indicated above, its refusal to entertain the question of silicosis in coal mines appears at first glance to be a puzzling anomaly. Indeed, for close to a decade before this exchange between the ILO and the GOI, the condition of coal miners had repeatedly come up for discussion and legislative regulation in India. Poor wages, concerns around women’s and children’s work underground, fires, accidents, coal dust explosions, epidemic diseases (especially cholera, hookworm, and malaria) in and around the mines, and the general condition of colliery workers in the subcontinent were constant talking points during this period and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Despite being consumed by these concerns about coal and coal workers, however, a theme, to wit trope, that repeatedly stood out in governmental and non-governmental discussions was the idea of Indian ‘exceptionalism’. In other words, the GOI, the Indian Mining Federation, and the provincial governments were often at pains to put on record that the on-ground (and below-ground) situation in Indian coal mines—and the psycho-social and ethnic characteristics and customs of Indian miners—were different and unique from their European counterparts, and that attempts to adopt or enforce uniform

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<sup>4</sup> Instituted primarily to investigate the dangers and explosibility of coal dust in Indian mines, the Coal Dust Committee headed by Mr. R. R. Simpson, the Chief Inspector of Mines in India in its Report of 1924 noted that the natural ash content—a factor connected to coal’s flammability—was significantly high in India. The Committee also noted that out of the 35 collieries in the Raniganj and Jharia coalfields surveyed, only 17 were equipped with some form of ventilation; see *First Report of the Coal Dust Committee* (Simla: Government of India Press, 1924). Though the *Annual Reports of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* would continue to draw attention to concerns of fire-damp accidents, suffocations, explosions, and deaths due to epidemic diseases in the Indian coalfields, it would take almost two decades and more before analytic correlations between dust and silicosis (and silicosis with tuberculosis, and pneumoconiosis) were drawn. For an analysis into this question with a specific focus on the Raniganj colliery, see Dhar and Nite 2022.

regulatory measures on wages, hours of work, and sanitation were both socially unwise and economically disastrous. Consider, for instance, that in response to a question raised in the House of Commons on 9 April 1924 regarding the desirability of a public investigation on the condition of men and women in the mines of India, deaths due to coal dust explosions, inadequacy of wages, and general health and safety conditions of workers underground, the government of Bihar and Orissa sent in their furious rejection on the need for any further inquiries into these questions (Department of Industries and Labour 1925). In a confidential letter dated 29 July 1924, Mr. J. R. Dain, Esq., Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa bemoaned to the GOI there was no *prima facie* evidence in the coal mines in his province to sanction further public investigations that would only have far-reaching consequences in increasing costs. (Department of Industries and Labour 1925, 29). For the Secretary, a large amount of legislation, founded for the most part on Western experience, had recently been forced upon mine owners, and had materially increased the premia and expenditure of the employers. Mr. A. Marr, Secretary to the Government of Bengal was even more caustic in his assessment of the House of Commons question. In a long letter dated 20 August 1924, the Secretary asserted to the GOI that there was no ‘proof’ that colliery labour in Bengal were being ‘exploited’ and that it would be most ‘iniquitous’ to put further burdens and restrictions upon the industry than had already been cast by the amending mines legislation of 1923 (Department of Industries and Labour 1925, 34).<sup>5</sup> He also critiqued the value of an all-encompassing survey of coal labour wages across India that flattened distinctions of local customs, ‘type’ of worker, and cost of living in that area. For Mr. Marr, the aboriginal miner of Bengal was vastly different from those in the Punjab or Burma, much less than those in the Bengal jute industries or the cotton textile mills of Bombay. As the Secretary put it:

The aboriginal does not work for a big weekly wage: he works till he makes what he *thinks* enough for his weekly needs. Having earned it, he goes home, to return with a view to earning the same amount next week. He works to suit himself, not to suit the mine manager. . . Mining wages are piece-work wages; and when we reckon up actual wages, we must at the same time keep in mind the possible earnings of a miner producing a reasonable output in a week of reasonable duration. The possible wage must be the standard more than the actual earnings

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<sup>5</sup> For context, the Indian Workmen’s Compensation Act (hereafter IWCA) had just come into force in 1924, making mine owners liable for payment of compensation for work-related accidents. Though followed mostly in the breach as has been remarked, and then including only three occupational diseases, the IWCA nonetheless introduced an element of workplace insurances that employers paid a premium for.

because of the *particular type of persons* with whom we have to deal. (Department of Industries and Labour 1925, 38–39; italics added)<sup>6</sup>

For Mr. Marr, therefore, the question of wages was much more than a fiscal calculation; it devolved into understanding the nature and quantum of work in the coal mines, the system of calculating earnings, and the localized variations of ethnic labour employed. To him, the possibility of government intervention into fixing wages was unthinkable, if not ‘new. . .and revolutionary’ in India (Department of Industries and Labour 1925, 41). Along these lines, consider also, for instance, that when the ILO sent out a questionnaire to member states regarding ‘regulating hours of work in coal mines’ to be included as a draft convention in their forthcoming XVth session in Geneva between 28 May and 18 June 1931, the Indian Mining Federation (hereafter IMF) was categorical that the country be kept out of binding stipulations on the matter. In their letter dated 6 February 1931, the IMF deposed to the GOI that the conditions of work in the Indian coal industry were ‘entirely different from those. . .in the European countries’ (Department of Industries and Labour 1932). Indeed, the Federation went to the extent of suggesting that the subcontinent ‘did not have a mining labour as such. . .the bulk of the labourers working in the coal mines pursuing agriculture as their principal occupation and depending on work in the mines as a more or less subsidiary occupation,’ (Department of Industries and Labour 1932, Letter No. LN. 3/27). The IMF used this ‘observation’ to contend that since Indian mine labour did not entirely sever ties to their village homes and homesteads, strict regulation of working hours as commonplace for their Western counterparts was uncalled for. Given this context, it was not entirely surprising that the GOI wanted to sidestep and bury the issue of silicosis as an urgent matter of industrial action during this period.

### **‘Slow violence’ and globalisation’s absent-present**

Why are these histories of occupational disease and labour ailment so rarely told and begrudgingly acknowledged in global energy histories? Why are they so infrequently visible, if at all, in discourses of globalisation’s reach and supposed emancipatory potential? Why are concerns of worker disability, compensation, and embodied ill-health—all direct consequences of globalisation’s demands and consumer desires—rarely part of our daily reckoning and realization?

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<sup>6</sup> The fetishizing of ‘aboriginal’ exceptionalism, native ‘habits,’ and local ‘customs’ by colonial British and European factory managers, planters and plantation officials, and other industrial overseers to explain incidents of workplace accidents and disease environments in India remains a familiar theme in the study of this history; see Nite 2019, Simeon 1995 and 1996, and Dey 2018.

In this concluding segment, I reflect on some conceptual categories through which a tentative assessment of these questions can be made. In doing so, I also show how these histories of labour health and occupation disease—subsets of a vast repertoire of globalisation's forgotten legacies—provide a compelling case to foreground the processes of disconnections, absences, and silences in reorienting our understanding of global history and its afterlives.

Part of the reason why labour ailments and occupational hazards rarely feature in the industrial history of India or are privileged in discourses of the social significance of globalisation is because they were silently borne by those very same 'dispensable' millions in this task of a rapidly industrializing world. Unlike the paradigmatic diseases such as cholera, plague, or malaria, these industrial ailments rarely caused mass epidemics, and therefore fewer public panics as far as the colonial State or post-independent government was concerned. These diseases, and their aftereffects, were embodied in the lives and limbs of those who toiled in the vast and expansive industrial architecture of the emerging globalising world, debilitating or killing hundreds and thousands of men, women, and children in their wake. Their effects were immediate and generational, although seldom visible to the untrained eye, commoner or physician. To that end, occupational hazards—and their harmful legacy—belong to what Rob Nixon has termed the 'slow violence' of our globalising past and present. Such violence, as Nixon argues, is attritional and halting; it is non-spectacular:

The insidious workings of slow violence derive largely from the unequal attention given to spectacular and unspectacular time. In an age that venerates instant spectacle, slow violence is deficient in the recognizable special effects that fill movie theatres and boost ratings on TV. . . attritional catastrophes that overflow clear boundaries in time and space are marked above all by displacements—temporal, geographical, rhetorical, and technological displacements that simplify violence and underestimate, in advance and in retrospect, the human and environmental costs. Such displacements smooth the way for *amnesia*, as places are rendered irretrievable to those who once inhabited them, places that ordinarily pass unmourned in the corporate media. (Nixon 2011, 6–7)

Nixon's emphasis on the 'un-mournability' of places, peoples, and landscapes that face slow violence, and its aftermath—and the amnesia it produces thereof—brings us back to the cost-benefit logics that underpin much of globalisation's history. It takes us back to Locke's assessment of 'value' and 'value-lessness' of certain populations and environments (→ **Ecologies**), and to Moore and Patel's conceptualization of 'cheapness'. It is this exceptionalism, dispensability, and non-spectacularity of occupational diseases—among a plethora of similar embodied histories within globalisation—that renders their assessment unremarkable and invisible in standardized histories of global political economy, global energy regimes, and global labour more generally. Industrial epidemiology remains the absent-present in this story

of global capital—and globalisation more generally. While the end-producer—the mine worker, the glass maker, the textile and mill hands, or the jute labourer to name just a few—bore the full weight of these occupational hazards and ailments, there was but a passing reference to the problem for almost the entirety of the period under review, and beyond. Though the provenance and extent of industrial disease was certainly not unknown across the imperial and metropolitan divide, it was made nearly imperceptible in the records of public health management and aetiological consciousness in British and post-independent India. Recovering that history calls for a slow, protracted negotiation between two conjoined parts of globalisation's understanding—the received *epistemology* of globalisation, with its processes, pasts, and modalities alongside the induced *agnotology* of globalisation, with its ignorance, silences, and disjunctures, whether inadvertent, willed, or constructed.<sup>7</sup>

An orientation and sensitivity towards these disruptive, displaced, indeed disconnected antecedents of the globalisation paradigm that has long privileged linkage, exchanges, and connectedness is urgently called for. Lest our amnesia for the non-spectacular, the non-perceptible, and the non-connected take hold of our historical and everyday consciousness, this essay, and this volume, asks us to pay attention to these embodied absences in the making of our modern world.

'Invisibilities', as used in this essay, therefore, does not just refer to that which is non-visible or absent in processes of globalisation; instead, it refers to the logics, presumptions, and epistemologies that obscured and sidelined those processes in the first place. It is a strategic act, and a necessary, even insidious correlative and co-component of globalisation's integrative ambitions—a 'willed' disjuncture alongside its networks and convergences. As the editors of this collection write: 'dis:connective phenomena should not be understood and studied as the opposite of interconnectedness, but as integral components of it. The term privileges neither connecting nor disconnecting processes, but focuses instead on their turbulent interplay, which is the decisive factor in grasping the social significance of globalisation' (→ **Introduction**).

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<sup>7</sup> 'Agnotology' is the study of historical ignorance-making; for an excellent study, see Proctor and Schiebinger 2008. They write: 'we need to think about the conscious, unconscious, and structural *production* of ignorance, its diverse causes and conformations, whether brought about by neglect, forgetfulness, myopia, extinction, secrecy, or *suppression*,' (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008, 3; emphasis added). An attention to the disjunctive and absent processes of globalisation history, this essay suggests, keeps the structural production of its unknowable pasts continually in tension with its more privileged forms of knowing.

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# Islands

Sujit Sivasundaram

Ruminations on islands have been central to the theorisation of connectivity, for islands were key locales where people on the move, objects and commodities in transit, and forces of capital or imperialism converged. If so, as recent more dis-connective work highlights, islands were also places of isolation, exile, and imprisonment. Accordingly, the island is now becoming more spectral and not an easily-defined or isolated entity of explanation. It is starting to fluctuate not only between connection and disconnection, but in symmetry, on the one hand, as an identifiable thing and, on the other hand, as an elusive and heterodox space. Indeed, is 'island' a noun or could it be a verb or even a state of consciousness or characteristic? What in other words is the relation between these terms which appear in scholarly literatures: 'island', 'islanding' and 'islandness'?

This line of interrogation represents where the global history of islands now stands. It is no longer viable to take the word 'island' to indicate a self-evident natural entity, a piece of land bordered on all sides by the sea. Perhaps this analytical fuzziness is in keeping with the climate emergency which unfolds around us: for island populations are departing to safer havens as never before; and island shores are being rocked by storms, currents, and sea-levels in unprecedented fashion. In as much as the physical terrain of islands is changing in an accelerated pattern, the concept 'island' itself is fluctuating in scholarly discourse. 'To island' (Teaiwa 2007) or to undertake 'islanding', is to try to carve out or partition, as I explained it once, a territory from its adjoining mainland, or from the sea that surrounds it, for purposes of governmental, ideological, intellectual and raced and gendered control and meaning-making (Sivasundaram 2013). To write of 'islandness', meanwhile, is to isolate a state of being on islands, an experiential consciousness which rests on exceptionality or boundedness (Schorch and Heidemann, forthcoming). This latter point is a recent addition to the conceptual cluster. This 'islandness' can become joined with longings of purity, utopia, naturalism, romanticism, geopolitical unity, and various other philosophies, which particularise the space of being, which is the territory which is characterised by 'islandness'.

The recovery of the 'island' as a vantage point from which to do global history arose in the first instance out of an enthusiastic embrace of connection as a mode of doing widescale historical writing (for instance, on the British Empire, see Hamilton and McAleer 2021; on particular island societies, such as Singapore, see, for instance, Frost and Balasingamchow 2009; or on Caribbean histories, see Mulich 2020). Islands were seen as engines of modernity. They were bases from which wider programmes of settlement, imperialism, capitalism (→ **Capital**), migration

(→ **Postmigration/Migration**) and labour could unfold. Caribbean islands were sites of acclimatisation for early modern Iberian regimes as much as central nodes for the plantation complex with its attendant enslavement which followed; the island of Singapore was established as a colonial base for the transit of trade between different ends of Asia, but given its strategic location, it was also a site of settlement among Southeast Asian peoples prior to this British port-making; Mauritius was the headquarters of the French Indian ocean, but it was also the first site to which South Asian indentured labourers were sent by the British. All of this indicates the vitality of islands as locales at the intersection of networks (→ **Networks**) of merchants, imperialists, and people on the move (→ **Im/mobility**) under different structures of privilege and coercion.

Islands were also sites of the imagination and were crucial locations for travel writing, literary production, art, and object hunting. For this reason, a lot of interest in island societies among historians benefitted from conversations with literary scholars and cultural theorists (see, for instance Edmond and Smith 2003; DeLoughrey 2007; Gupta 2010) Also of relevance in explaining the origins of recent attention to island histories is the interface between environmental history (→ **Ecologies**) and global history (see, for instance, Cushman 2013; Beattie et al. 2023). For island societies were and are biodiverse, which partly explains their tragic situation in our contemporary climate crisis-ridden era. If so, they were crucial for botanists and foresters, meteorologists, and stargazers; simultaneously, it was argued that romantic and enlightened understandings of nature thrived in island contexts. Conservation may have been born in islands (Grove 1996). Another route to explain the burgeoning interest in islands as worthy candidates for historical study lies at the crossroads of anthropology and global history: for islands had long been sites at the centre of the ethnological technique. They presented allegedly isolated people, whose cultures and forms of life could be studied and theorised as functional wholes by budding anthropologists. This means that anthropologically-minded historians took to island states relatively well, as they continue to do, as subjects of study (Salmond 2010; Anderson et al. 2016).

In this last pathway of anthropological presumption, the problem of theorising islands through connection alone surfaces to view. Are islands more isolated than connected societies? This sort of query has very quickly become an urgent aspect of theory for island historians. Indeed, some writers have turned their attention to how the insular and the universal, the cosmopolitan and the parochial, the connected and the disconnected, act together and in concert in island contexts in highly illuminating ways. It is because intellectuals, communities, politicians, and governors, vacillate between the possibilities and realities of these polar prospects that much of island life comes to be. Additionally, as I have argued, the sites of dense connection, at the beach of islands, can be places not only of meeting and

encounter; but also where times of arrival or styles of arrival can generate inequality (Sivasundaram 2017). The density of island spaces means that it is possible to see the world's dynamics of power, hierarchy, and classification in sharper relief. Such a perspective picks up on pioneering work on island societies, which saw the beach as a violent line of transit; or which cast islands as replicas of ships or as prisons of a kind (Denning 1980; Anderson 2022). There is in other words a spatial heterodoxy about the status of the island. Though it seems simple, a land bordered on all sides by sea, the 'island' sits in a sequence of spatial relations: to the mainland, to the sea and to the Earth itself. It is because of that sequence that the 'island' takes on the garb of definitional simplicity, but that is a deceptive conceptual camouflage. In addition to the prison, the 'island' also draws in other sites with which it merges and co-exists, such as spaces of quarantine, contested sovereignty, exile (→ **Exile**) and so on. It can be paradisaical as much as hellish in thought, policy, and experience. For all these reasons, the 'island' is spectral rather than easily drawn up on a map.

If so, I should illustrate this broader fluctuation. Take the substance of ambergris. It is still a luxury in our world, selling for around a thousand dollars a pound. It originates from sperm whales, who excrete it, and the mass of ambergris arises from a blockage in the intestines of the creature. One possible theory is that this lump emerges because of the enormous consumption of squid, which sperm whales find hard to digest (Kemp 2012). Regardless, through the *longue duree*, humans have been fascinated by the substance, using it, for instance, as a perfume, an aphrodisiac, a medicine, and for candle-making. Among many navigators and writers of the Indian ocean's islands, ambergris was one way to interrogate the geography of these waters. Arab navigational cultures spread word of ambergris, for instance to China. Take the account penned by Al Mas'udi, who was born in Baghdad in 890 CE and died in Egypt, from where he wrote, in 956 CE. He wrote that some of the best ambergris is found in the islands of 'Zabaj', which is today's Indonesia. He described the ambergris from this region:

It is round, pale blue, and sometimes the size of an ostrich egg or smaller. Some pieces are swallowed by whales, of which we have already spoken. When the sea is rough, the whale vomits pieces of ambergris, sometimes the size of a piece of mountain, sometimes of the smaller size we have mentioned. Swallowing the ambergris kills the whale, and its corpse floats on the water. (Al Mas'udi 2007, 89–91)

Stretching his geography further still, he described the Laccadive and Maldive islands: 'Ambergris is found in these islands as well, thrown up on the shore by the sea; the lumps are the size of the largest rocks.' He noted a tale about the origin of ambergris told him by these islanders: 'ambergris grows in the depths of this sea', where it is 'formed like black and white mushrooms, truffles or other plants of the same type' (Al Mas'udi 2007).

In Chinese contexts, ambergris is described, for instance, in the text, *Yu-yang Tsa-tsu*, dating to around 860CE, and as coming from the coast of Africa (Wheatley 1959). It was often mentioned in the literature of the Song era with the name *lung-hsien hsiang*, meaning dragon's spittle, a term which appears from the mid-ninth century, indicating the idea that ambergris originated from dragons in the ocean (Yamada 1955). By the fourteenth century, the story evolved to include an island. The traveller Wang Dayuan described the island as uncultivable. When the weather was fine enough to chase the clouds away due to 'strong wind and high waves', 'people can see a group of dragons come on the shore to gamble and go away, leaving spittle on the island' (Yamada 1955, 10–11). By the early fifteenth century, the island was said to be off the western coast of Sumatra, and is mentioned in the context of the epic Zheng He expeditions. By the time of the arrival of early modern Europeans, the tale was that ambergris arose from 'the shore or the foot of an inaccessible precipice in an unknown island, and sea waves break it off in small pieces' (Yamada 1955, 18).

An ocean-facing land producing ambergris appeared in the compilation which over the long term became the *The Thousand and One Nights* and which drew inspiration from various tales, including from Persia and India. The fictional sailor Sinbad on his sixth voyage resolved to 'tempt his fortune' and travelled through the provinces of 'Persia and the Indies and arrived at a seaport.' He got on to a ship and set out on a long journey. A rapid current carried the ship along to an 'inaccessible mountain, where [the ship] struck and went to pieces' (Anonymous n.d.). This mountain was covered in wrecks, 'with a vast number of human bones' and many riches. 'Here is also a sort of fountain of pitch or bitumen, that runs into the sea, which the fish swallow, and evacuate soon afterward, turned into ambergris; and this the waves throw upon the beach in great quantities.' Sinbad survived all his companions and made a raft on which he placed 'chests of rubies, emeralds, ambergris, rock crystal and bales of rich stuff' (Anonymous n.d.). He eventually found himself on the island of 'Serendib', now taken as Sri Lanka, where he met the king who admired his booty, including the ambergris.

How might the concepts of 'island', 'islanding' and 'islandness' be applied here? On the one hand, there is a confluence of tales around a substance that is mysterious and yet deeply alluring to humans: these tales arise from east and west and from many directions, Asian, African and European. They get repeated and recycled over generations and centuries and between cultures. Yet despite the obvious connections that the tales illustrate, there are distinct traditions of island imagination, and narration more broadly, in each of them. Meanwhile, the island itself is never stable, it is a mutable space of thought and cartography which still nevertheless can be made to correspond to empirical maps, for instance of Southeast Asia or South Asia. The articulation of the imagined source of ambergris as an island draws on crucial moments in the history of exploration and empire. But such an

ambergris island is never only physical. Simultaneously, since these tales sit within watery geographies, the frontier of knowledge keeps moving, under the sea, into whale vomit, into inaccessible precipices. The place of the merging of water and land is a specific material context, which never allows stable meaning-making. This material context generates the possibility of human leaps of imagination, but is also the stage of both convergence and divergence, the known and the unknown, the connected and the disconnected. But programmes of trade and ideology seek to generate more precision in this haze of narrations, by fixing islands, or 'islanding', and by casting 'islandness', so that islands are, for example, places of refuge from danger as for Sinbad.

Islands have always appeared and disappeared in the long history of our planet. So the current concerns, for instance in Kiribati or the Maldives, about rising sea levels are not new. Yet it is clearly the case that the island's transience and transformation is a fault-line in the climate emergency and also in human senses and engagements with the global and the planetary. The 'island', the geographical entity which the schoolchild can easily identify, ends up in such a view as one of the most revealing spatialities and heterodoxies for historicist as well as futurist dreaming. It is a site and cluster of terms to focus on theorising what this volume refers to as dis:connection. Its relevance to debates about globality is likely to increase rather than decrease in the years ahead.

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# Local-global-glocal

Siddharth Pandey

Few terms come close to ‘global’ when we seek to understand our hyperconnected modern-day reality. From lifestyle to entertainment, education to technology, media to activism, the word global is ceaselessly whipped up to signify our *zeitgeist* and its endless tendencies, trajectories and tribulations. But since its popularization from the middle of the last century onward, ideas purveyed by the global – whether in terms of ‘globality,’ ‘globalism’ or ‘globalisation’ – have also had to increasingly reckon with an alternate emphasis on ‘local’ by way of critique. No matter what the reach or extent of the global, the argument goes, it is only via local iterations and in local contexts that the former can be experienced and made sense of. Tellingly then, a third term aims to bridge the oppositional dynamic implied by global’s expansiveness and local’s limitations: ‘glocal’.

And yet, notwithstanding its coinage, glocal’s hybrid appeal does not automatically dilute the deployment of global and local, given their diverse degrees of meaning-making and idiosyncratic interpretations. Resultantly, the hyphenated portmanteau ‘local-global-glocal’ playfully captures the inherent fluidity of the three intersecting concepts, while further underlining the paradox of dis:connectivity implicit in its evocation. Put another way, local- global-glocal by its very nature invites us to consider our contemporary condition in terms of inspirations, influences, adaptations, appropriations, collaborations and contradictions.

The widescale circulation of the term ‘global’ can be traced to the regeneration of the post-World War II economy, and especially to the liberalization of the last few decades of the twentieth century. But as Manfred B. Steger cautions, it would be erroneous to read the phenomenon’s significance purely from an economic standpoint, given that ‘globalization contains important *cultural* and *ideological* aspects in the form of politically charged meanings, stories, and symbols that define, describe, and analyse that very process’ (2013, 15, emphasis in original). He further argues that the processes entailing the germination and spread of the ‘global’ generally comprise four characteristics: (a) ‘a *creation* of new social networks and *multiplication* of existing connections that cut across traditional political, economic, cultural, and geographical boundaries’; (b) the ‘*expansion* and the *stretching* of social relations, activities, and connections’; (c) ‘an *intensification* and *acceleration* of social exchanges and activities’; and finally (d) an involvement of the ‘the subjective plane of human consciousness’ (33–34, emphasis in original). This in-built elasticity of features also renders a straightforward use of the term ‘global’ difficult and susceptible to criticism.

Global's material-affective changeableness that Steger alludes to finds resonance in Arjun Appadurai's 'global cultural flows' that are at the heart of globalisation (Appadurai 1990, 6). Appadurai identifies five dimensions of such flows, viz. the flow of people ('ethnoscapes'), the flow of technology ('technoscapes'), the flow of money and businesses ('financescapes'), the flow of cultural industries ('mediascapes'), and finally, the flow of ideas, imagination and their numerous permutations and combinations ('ideoscapes') (6–10). Other critics like Thomas Friedman (2005) specifically stress the role of technoscapes in levelling contemporary interconnectedness, which ushers in new networks of production and collaboration via offshore manufacturing and outsourcing. Simultaneously, such interconnectedness dilutes America's dominance as *the* global leader of science and technology.

But Joseph E. Stiglitz reminds us that the world is not necessarily becoming 'flatter' (as Friedman would have it). Rather, 'other forces are making it less flat', and the very technologies that Friedman praises as 'levelers have also given rise to new opportunities for monopolization.' In Stiglitz's assessment, what has enabled global cities like Bangalore to become high-tech success stories is 'that companies like Infosys have removed themselves from what is going on nearby', especially rural realities (2005). Far from heralding a vision of homogenized change then, global forces themselves work with an intrinsic unevenness, even if the public face of the digital and technological revolution seemingly wears an egalitarian patina. Thus, in the wake of global's characteristic dis:connectivity, the instabilities and ruptures influencing the immediate and nearby prompt scholars from a host of disciplines to perceive the local in complex and generative ways.

On the one hand, critics like Anja Mihir acknowledge that local leaders 'often adhere to patriarchal and traditional practices and are either ignorant of, or refuse, global standards' (2022, 18). Others, such as Peter J.M. Nas, uphold that the local is already imbricated in the processes of global, so that 'the local is not necessarily the passive, dominated receiver of worldwide influences, but it is busy selecting, reorganizing and reprocessing them in a creative way' (1998, 184). Finbarr Livesay even goes on to assert that the era of globalisation is now paving way for an age of localisation, given the rise in additive manufacturing, higher national wages, the detriment posed by global shipping costs, and the intensification of regulatory policies owing to nationalism.

At a more experiential level, the local is understood in terms of in-depth knowledge, everyday tasks and intimate relationships. The nature writer Robert Macfarlane, for example, rescues the term 'parochial', so often synonymized with local, from its negative connotations, by revisiting the root-word 'parish'. In direct contrast to the pejorative insularity and sectarianism that now define the notion of parochialism, 'parish' once used to signify a perspective-generating aperture 'through which the world could be seen', since we 'learn by scrutiny of the close-

at-hand' (2015, 62–64). The anthropologist Tim Ingold likewise values the knowledge accumulated through local attunement, anchoring it within the 'capabilities' or 'skills' of 'action and perception of the whole organic being situated in a richly structured environment' (2000, 5). Such skilful acts are inescapably embodied and operate with a sense of rhythmic adjustment to one's immediate surroundings. This adjustment is also echoed in Appadurai's emphasis on intimacy. As he puts it, 'however mobile the values and meanings of the [globalized] world in which we live, human life still proceeds through the practices of intimacy' (Appadurai 1997, 116). Moreover, these practices escape homogenization for they are, by definition, stamped with an indeterminable 'mystery' (116). Thus, while considering the intertwining of the global and local, the deterministic tendencies of the former are invariably filtered through the affective affinities of the latter.

We consequently approach the amalgamation of the two terms in the form of 'glocalism' that Mihir defines as 'a process of norm diffusion from the local to the global and from the global to the local' (2022, 15). Originally deriving from the Japanese agricultural principle of 'dochakuka', which refers to the adaptation of farming techniques to local conditions, 'glocal' as a term came into popular usage only during the final decade of the last millennium. Its earliest theoretical proponent Roland Robertson uses it in order to assess the ways in which the 'tendencies of homogenization and heterogenization [became] features of life across much of the late twentieth-century world', both being 'mutually implicative' (Robertson 1995, 27). Interestingly, Mihir maintains that 'glocalism is by no means sufficiently explained, neither academically nor in practice, to serve as a theory or as an ideology' (2022, 16). This inbuilt conceptual volatility once again leads us to the hybrid phrase 'local-global-glocal,' wherein a certain kind of 'dis:connect' haunts the three constitutive terms, attesting to their meandering, metamorphosing and incomplete proclivities.

One has only to look at the expressions of contemporary identity building in India (this author's country of origin) to witness such see-sawing in practice. Since 2014, when the Narendra Modi government came to power, it has ceaselessly emphasised its position as both a global leader and a local benefactor by harping on about two catchphrases: 'Vishwaguru' (Hindi for 'World Leader' or 'World Teacher') and 'Vocal for Local'. While the first refers to the government's aim and belief of becoming a global economic superpower (even as it literally intends to make India a leader in the field of education), the second encourages the manufacture and production of goods and services by local investors and businessmen in order to enhance income and employment. But as many critics have pointed out, these positions have been accompanied by a deep-rooted penchant for authoritarian politics, an unclear understanding of ground-level realities, an overwhelming agenda of right-wing populism, and an inability to actually address the continuing discrepan-

cies in resource distribution and social upliftment (Abbas 2020; Mannathukkaren 2023). In other words, the panacea of glocalism as a form of self-assertion is itself marred by ruptures, gaps and disjointedness.

Moving from political reality to the realm of personal selfhood, dis:connectivity in the glocal era acquires an even greater intensity as it develops a distinctly embodied expression. As the Indian social commentator Santosh Desai puts it, the effect of living in a hyperconnected yet disjointed world is profoundly emotional, one that is ‘vexed by paradoxes’ (2021). He writes that in the era of glocalism,

The individual realises herself more fully, while losing herself in many new collectives. We are highly networked and deeply lonely. Getting what we want is much easier, knowing what we want is becoming a problem. Choices free us while crippling us with anxiety. We can escape everything but ourselves. We are at the centre of our own universe but it has been created for us by the market. We can act in ever diverse ways but are divided along increasingly narrower lines. The more liberal our markets get, the more illiberal our minds (2021).

As a cultural historian and visual archivist of the Western Himalayas, much of my work has focused on making sense of such connections and disjunctions in the domain of modern-day mountain cultures. My core field site, the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, serves as a remarkable case in point, as it diversely testifies to the successes and challenges of local-global-glocal. These successes and challenges usually generate around the potent idea of ‘belonging’ (→ **Belonging**), especially because ‘life-worlds’ in the Himalayas have for long been defined and perceived in terms of their remoteness, regionalism and ‘local’ identities (Toffin and Pfaff-Czarnecka 2014, 2). In these mountains, the ‘force of belonging stems from the well-established modalities of interaction. . . and from shared values that are considered perennial. But they are [also] challenged by globalizing forces’ (3), rendering highland realms vulnerable to uneven and often negative repercussions.

While one could trace the onset of globalising forces in the Western Himalayas to ancient times, particularly to the period in which the Silk Routes were active, the widescale impact of the global in the modern times actively began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the British started establishing a number of ‘hill stations’ across the mountain belt. These hill stations first sprang up as convalescent spaces for white expatriates and then morphed into retreats and political centres for half a year away from the proverbial ‘heat and dust’ of the plains. It was here that the British idiosyncratically practiced European ideas of home-making, including architectural, urban and social practices, such as promenading for leisure on the Mall flanked by Victorian cottages and neo-Tudor public structures. The most prominent of these stations was Simla (now ‘Shimla’), that was christened as the ‘Summer Capital’ of the British Raj in 1864 and informally came to be known as India’s ‘Little

England' ('Chhota Vilayat' in vernacular) right until Independence in 1947: a fascinating instantiation of the global and the local coming together.

But as scholars have shown at length, for all their use of European templates and technology, these hill stations from the very beginning also developed a pronounced local culture, given that their labour force was invariably Indian and always greater in number than the white holidaymakers (Kanwar 1990, Kennedy 1996). Compellingly, the majority of residential spaces built for the British in Simla involved construction methodologies deriving from local Himalayan practices, even as from the outside they came to bear an 'English', 'Scottish' or 'Swiss' look. The result was a never-before-seen 'glocal' architecture that still serves as an excellent example of sustainable design innovation, strongly in synchronization with the natural environment (Pandey 2014).

Postcolonial historians of the Western Himalayas argue that despite the large-scale use of natural resources in the region, the overall effect of colonization in the Western Himalayas (as compared to the plains) was 'non-cataclysmic' (Alam 2008, 307), because the 'forces released by colonial intervention. . . did not immediately throw overboard the basic premises that structured [the area]' (Singh 1998, 234). This was not because of any benevolent vision of colonialism; rather, the largely uncontaminated nature of local life stemmed from the specificities of geography and ecology that significantly challenged the spread of changes, allowing local practices of dwelling to persist for a long time.

Interestingly, after Independence, these hill stations were sympathetically and enthusiastically adapted into the fold of the new Indian ethos by the common citizenry, escalating the process of glocalization (Pandey 2014; Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2015; Miles-Watson 2020). The following decades also witnessed their transformation as popular tourist spots and locations for film shootings, increasing the appeal of Simla and the like at both national and international levels. Even so, notions of remoteness and smallness continued to define their identity well until the 1980s, when the first waves of ill-conceived modernization began impacting these regions. Haphazard construction and unsystematic development projects became the order of the day, which more than anything else punctured the delicate balance between ecology and dwelling, rupturing the localism of these places in highly damaging ways.

Writing about the forces of globalisation in fragile mountain environments, N.S. Jodha observes that they 'encourage intense and indiscriminate resource use, and lead to overexploitation of niche opportunities and resources with little concern for environmental consequences' (2000, 296). Such overexploitation has been ceaselessly exacerbated across the Himalayas, generating concomitant issues of waste disposal, deforestation and loosening of soil, not to mention the marring of natural beauty. Thus, even though Himachal Pradesh has routinely been lauded

as a state courting enviable success in the areas of health, education and other public services (Drèze and Sen 2013), its vision of material urban development has been heavily criticised (Panwar 2022). The latest model of the West-inspired ICT driven 'Smart Cities' project inaugurated by the Government of India in 2015 has likewise failed to address (let alone solve) the growing crisis of congestion and environmental degradation. The issue here is not so much the transnational inspiration for change but rather the inability of local governance and administration to adequately allocate funds and implement sustainable ideas in a genuinely decentralized fashion conducive to mountain ecology (Kaur 2022; Bhandari 2023).

The glocal present of the Western Himalayas is hence a fundamentally fractured one, where new-age development is frequently lamented in paradoxical terms as 'planned destruction' (Parashar 2023). More than any other descriptor, this phrase comes closest to capturing the tensions and contradictions in the context of highland dis:connectivity, for local environmental specificities ceaselessly find themselves at odds with a professedly global vision of urban regeneration. The outside and the inside continue to revolve in an uneasy relationship, and the dis:connections embodied by 'local-global-glocal' only seem to become starker.

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# Memory

Gerald Siegmund

The ascent of memory during the 1990s as a key concept in the humanities was initially seen as a reaction to the upcoming millennium and the dawning of a new era. Scholars stepped back to retrieve what cultures had lost or threatened to lose before entering the new millennium with all its unforeseeable political, social, and technological challenges. Cultural memory was seen as fighting a rearguard action against the future. Furthermore, the idea of an epochal shift was supported by the fact that the last of the surviving victims and eyewitnesses of the catastrophes, wars and genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were about to die. To secure their knowledge, the shift towards testimonies, individual recollections of experiences, that is a shift towards memory seemed inevitable (Nünning 2013, 180). Thus, memory was conceptualized as an act to construct the identity of a specific group or nation. It spawned monuments, symbols and memorial events to commemorate events in the past that the group still considered important to its current self-image.

However, in contrast to the identity model in a globalised world with its uncontrollable flow of information and migration, the concept of memory changes. Rather than forming a 'new' collective body, more recent artistic practices act as a 'counter-memory' (Foucault 1980, 160) to official or group-specific commemorative practices. According to Foucault, counter-memories resist the search for origins and 'transform history into a totally different form of time' (160). These artistic practices enact research into the fissures and cracks, the gaps and holes that re-member losses and deaths, a stop gap, a dis:connection between past, present and future. These processes are ongoing and puncture the present with loss, absences and the *longue durée* of the dead. The notion of memory and the act of remembering as an ethical act are based on the forgetting of those lives left behind. Those who are remembered are those who do not count and whose lives cannot be mourned in the sense proposed by Judith Butler (2006).

## Types of Memory

As early as 1925, French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs pointed out that individual memory only ever exists within the horizon of a collective memory that gives it meaning. Individual memory is made possible by a socially constructed frame of perception (Halbwachs 1992). In 1988, Egyptologist Jan Assmann took up Halbwachs' concept of a collective memory and expanded on its implications. His canonical definition reads: 'By the concept of cultural memory we come to understand for each society and epoch their peculiar collection of texts to be re-used,

images and rites they cultivate and by means of which they stabilise and communicate their self-image. It is a knowledge preferably of the past (but not exclusively) that is collectively shared and on which the group bases the consciousness of its unity and specificity.' (Assmann 1988, 15; my translation) Assmann enlarged the notion of collective memory by distinguishing between everyday 'communicative memory' and abstract 'cultural memory'. Communicative memory spans the lifetime of three generations or one hundred years. It depends on oral communication, the living tradition of passing on knowledge by storytelling and rituals that are still considered relevant to families or communities. After the last living exponents of these traditions have passed away, the continuity of memory and, by extension, the identity of the community, threatens to be ruptured. This is where cultural memory sets in. Cultural memory tries to remember the past by collecting documents, erecting monuments, and establishing institutionalised communication that is removed from the practices of everyday life. The past has to be reconstructed, which also marks the entry point for the writing of history or historiography.

Whereas history takes its cue from the fragmentation of the 'unity of individual and collective memory' (Osborne 2013, 191) and the need to, consequently, construct a collective meaning of the past on the basis of exterior sources, memory insists on the particular that makes history available as experience. As philosopher Peter Osborne expands, history has been severed from individual experience and individual subjects to construct what is independent of subjectivity. It relies on the utopian 'unity of the human' (194). Memory gives space for individual or group experiences to 'draw attention to the legitimate existence of such communities and their histories' (192). Classical cultural memory studies aim at creating or safeguarding group identities based on communal experiences and value systems. Remembering the German genocide of the Herero and Nama people in Namibia between 1904 and 1908, tribes of Herero people annually gather near the site of the 1923 funeral wake for the last Herero chieftain that fought in the war. Theatre scholar Pedzisai Maedza analyses the commemorations as a 'mnemonic device for genocide memory' (2023, 219) and 'a creative memory bridge for contemporary Herero generations' (217) Maedza continues: 'Through performance, Red Day Events form and reaffirm the Herero people as a nation.' (225)

### **Transnational and global memory**

In his seminal text *Les lieux de mémoire* (1989), Pierre Nora claimed that the dissolution of experienced or lived *milieux de mémoire* in modern globalised societies leads to the establishment of ever more spaces of memory that act as replacements for the lack of interpersonal and intergenerational communication of value in local communities. Memory spaces, i.e. official memorials or cenotaphs, are symptoms

of a loss. They provide anchors for a society that has consigned itself to oblivion due to societal and economic processes of acceleration. In this sense, traditional memory studies defined landscapes such as battlefields as sites of memory, i.e. as static phenomena, in which historical events that are crucial for the identity and self-image of a nation or a group are remembered through monuments or commemorative plaques.

In recent memory studies, this static model has been contested. Memories go on journeys; they travel (Erlil 2011). In a world that is determined as much by mass media and digital networks as by migration, cultural and national borders lose their relevance. ‘The form in which we think of the past’, Andreas Huyssen writes, ‘is increasingly a memory without borders. Modernity has brought with it a very real compression of time and space’ (Huyssen 2003, 4). In our conception of reality the horizon has shifted ‘beyond the local, the national, and even the international’ (4).

In contrast to this, Aleida Assmann emphasises in her concept of ‘global memory’ (2010) the necessity of national cultures of memory in order to observe and evaluate global movements with greater sophistication. It is only against the backdrop of national traumas, absences, and memories that processes of globalisation and migration and their effect on local memory cultures can be adequately analysed and understood.

As early as in 2008, Assmann introduced a differentiation in connection with Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*. Besides official identity-shaping commemorative sites, Assmann claimed, there exist spaces where ‘history was experienced and remembered’. In her specification, Assmann aims at the inclusion of a range of different and often conflicting histories and memories that are connected to these spaces while also being determined by them. Assmann simply calls these locations *Orte*, i.e. places or sites. While spaces are shaped, transformed, appropriated or planned, places have already experienced action. In them ‘history becomes a sediment in the *longue durée* of its ruptures and heterogeneous layers’ (2008, 17). Spaces are geared towards the future due to their formative potential. Places, on the other hand, are defined by their ‘past perspectives’ (17) and as locations of memory become part of history again. Spaces as Places ‘lead to a splintering of homogeneous narratives and a multiplication of experiences, memories, and perspectives’ (18).

The concept of performativity is only a recent addition to the field of memory studies. Max Silverman presents ideas on the performative production of memory, i.e. of memory as an event, in his concept of ‘palimpsest memory’ (2016). Memory as a palimpsest performatively creates itself in an act of exchange that is an intersectional combination and overlap of heterogeneous memories of people from different cultural and national backgrounds, which in turn becomes represented by artistic means.

Amanda Lagerkvist reminds us of the body in the field of Memory Studies in her ‘sociophenomenological’ approach, one that, deriving from Media Sociology, is not initially geared towards works of art or performances (2016). Nonetheless her ideas provide impulses for related questions. For Lagerkvist, memory always manifests itself in a transmedial way via bodies. Memory ‘is seen as transmedial and forged across bodies, artifacts, and different forms of media and mediation’ (175; on the medialisation of memory, see also Erll 2009). Since discussions of commemoration and memory are inevitably framed by political and social processes and power relations, ‘memorative discourses [. . .] provide the foundations for global human rights regimes’ (2016, 5), as Stef Craps, Lucy Bonds and Pieter Vermeulen summarise their attempt to understand memory as a transcultural phenomenon.

### **Memory dis:connect**

Taking both the shift towards a transnational memory and its practices of multi-directional remembering and the performative construction of memory within diverse media formats into account, artistic practices come into play. Performances and theatre and dance productions rely on embodied knowledge, techniques of the body and physical tools to remember movement and to reproduce and change action as ‘restored behaviour’ (Schechner 1985, 36–37). In this sense, the notion of memory has been widely discussed in dance studies. To counter the traditional notion of dance and performance as ephemeral phenomena, artists and scholars alike investigated possibilities to reproduce movement of historical performances in reenactments (Franko 2017). Reenactments tested the relation to a supposed ‘original’ performance and laid claims to the transformative dimension of mnemonic practices. Reenactments also played a role in the discipline of history where the restaging of historical battles, for instance, by means of embodied performances offered possibilities not only to keep history alive, but to produce additional information about the event (Schneider 2011).

Memory in the context of a dis:connection opens up a time in between, a ‘meantime’, as Rebecca Schneider puts it in her analysis of *Hamlet*, that suspends the linear construction of time of past, present and future in favour of a syncopation of time, a rhythm that gives and produces time by creating a ‘form’ (Schneider 2011, 88). What is remembered is that which is no longer present, what is absent in a phenomenological sense, removed from the senses and only accessible to consciousness as remembering. But what is remembered can no longer be subsumed under a coherent narrative. Counter-memory and artistic practices are connected by their search for and giving of form.

Thus, memory and performative acts of commemoration can be seen not only as moments of identity formation, but rather as instances of disruption, dissolution,

of disconnection of an otherwise seemingly frictionless flow of commodities and human beings, the fulfilling of a preestablished protocol of behaviour, remembering, and of how to make and frame art.

In his project *Necropolis*, the Belarussian-Israeli-Belgian choreographer Arkadi Zaides documents the graves of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees that are scattered across the landscape of Europe. In several of his projects, Zaides is concerned with borders and the policing of borders that interrupt the movement of people, that control passageways to refuse their entry into Europe. For various reasons, their flight cost them their lives, and as a note in the programme indicates, 'Europe has only allowed entry as corpses'. In collaboration with an international human rights organisation *UNITED for Intercultural Action* in Amsterdam that since 1993 lists the names of those who died at Europe's border, Zaides' team uses the list and finds the graves of these victims and documents them on a map (Stalpeart et al. 2021). In the actual performance, excerpts of this ongoing research and commemorative visits to the graves are presented. The visits to the graves are documented by mobile phone cameras that are directed in front of the visitors. Their bodies, therefore, are absent from the images. Only their steps and their breath can be heard. The subjective camera wavers as the visitors approach the graves, only to capture another absence (→ **Absences**): the absence of the body itself framed by a grave and, in some cases, even the absence of a tomb stone, or a plaque that would remember their names.

The concept of memory is radicalised with view to the notion of trauma. In his piece *Séancers*, Afro-American/Ghanaian performer Jaamil Olawale Kosoko remembers his family members who have fallen victim to racist violence. The absent bodies of the deceased are remembered in their absence through the actions in the performative setting of the stage: pictures, objects and props, light and sound that create an uncanny atmosphere. Even when one speaks of 'traumatised bodies', the experience of traumatic events is absent as 'unclaimed experience' (Caruth 1996) and unavailable to the subject. Although the trauma is 'known', especially in cases of intergenerational or structural trauma such as racism, the trauma cannot be emotionally worked through, since the power of the event or the experience of lasting racist discrimination prevents the trauma from actually being experienced (Craps 2013). The theatrical event thus attempts, as in the case of Kosoko, to retro-actively catch up with the experience in order to work through it emotionally. The theme of memory in the context of theatre, dance, and performance thus itself becomes a detour (→ **Detours**). The performance marks a moment of cessation in the course of time and things by enabling us to return to an already abandoned place and an already past time. As in Zaides' project, it chooses a familiar path and thereby becomes a kind of return, a going back in time and space in order to avoid the omission of the victims in the here and now, in the present of the performance.

On the one hand, the performances interrupt both the aesthetic and the political representation of globalised processes and their bodies by making use of strategies of absence and detour. On the other hand, they forge a new connection between past, present and future, history and memory, bodies, their existing and possible states across national borders by retrieving loss in the very performances themselves, thereby creating, prospectively, a space for mourning or even healing.

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# Networks

Christoph Streb

The term ‘network’ goes back to a material object, the net or web. As a scholarly category in the natural and social sciences, but increasingly also in the humanities, networks are generally understood to refer to flexible, polycentric, and relational structures consisting of edges and nodes. The history of globalisation does not automatically require networks, and network histories deal with many other topics than globalisation. Yet the two have become a typical conceptual pair (Holton 2008). In the 1990s, only a few studies touching on globalisation had network in their title (e.g., Subrahmanyam 1996). Now, many titles every year mention the term (e.g., Jäger 2020).

Despite its ubiquity, the term ‘network’ is now sometimes listed among the problematic concepts in global history. Widely heard complaints have been raised against the ‘overuse of the idea of the network’ (Bell 2013; Gänger and Osterhammel 2024.). Given this tension, the time seems ripe for a critical reflection from a new vantage point. Examining how an approach focused on dis:connectivity (III) allows global networks to be studied from a fresh angle requires two preliminary reflections: (I) how the term ‘network’ has typically been used in histories of globalisation, and, more broadly even, (II) which general connotations the network metaphor (because it is a metaphor) has acquired over the last two centuries (Ahnert et al. 2020).

## I

It is important to stress that histories of globalisation use network in quite different ways, not only with regard to strikingly different topics, but also in different terminological operations. On a first level, the term designates a specific *object*. The most important example is the history of technical infrastructures such as the railway (→ **Transport**) or the telegraph (→ **Communication Technologies**), for which network has been the accepted notion since the nineteenth century (Wenzlhuemer 2012; Van Laak 2018). Another example is the history of international organisations that brought together delegations from different countries or regions of the globe in polycentric structures explicitly called ‘networks’ already around 1900 (Herren 2009). These fields of research have received much renewed attention with the scholarly interest in globalisation in recent decades and there can be little doubt that network is an indispensable category for any scholar engaged in them.

In other studies on the history of globalisation, scholars follow *methods* of network research in the strict sense. For example, social network analysis (SNA) is a quantitative method from the social sciences that has become a massive interdis-

ciplinary digital humanities phenomenon. It analyses and often visualises the relations between a larger number of persons, texts, or institutions, mostly based on an on/off rationale. Applications in globalisation research are various and concern the history of elites, businesses, science, or, again, internationalism (Grandjean and Van Leeuwen 2019). Another network method used in histories of globalisation is actor-network theory (ANT). This approach from science studies is based on the inductive and detailed description of actor-networks, which are typically considered to include both human and non-human actors (Latour 2005). The aim of this approach is a better understanding of complex settings of innovation and transformation shaped by heterogeneous agents. In histories of globalisation, ANT has been used in research that ascribed an important role to materiality, science, or the environment (Gerstenberger and Glasman 2016).

The most widespread way to deal with networks in histories of globalisation, however, is to use network as a *metaphor*. It is the network metaphor (rather than the network object or network method) that is responsible for the magic rise of the term in global history, and it is also the metaphor that can be problematic. Focusing on all sorts of global networks, understood in an inclusive way, was of crucial importance to criticize and overcome methodological nationalism in the 1990s and 2000s. The term helped to identify all sorts of often loose and flexible structures that transcended the national container, in line with a whole series of movement-related or relational terms that arose in transnational history, such as ‘circulation’, ‘flow’, ‘contact’, or ‘connection’ (Gänger 2017). The network metaphor also possesses a specific capacity to transcend the distinction between small and large spaces, linking concrete empirical phenomena to the logic of globalisation. The network metaphor embedded local activities in structural patterns that could integrate very large spaces. Networks seem to be glocal (→ **Local-global-glocal**) by definition and lead towards global microhistories. This is why the metaphor has been of capital importance for a history of globalisation aspiring to be more than a history of the entire world or a comparative history of its large civilizations (Bayly 2004).

## II

What is the problem with such a metaphorical use of ‘network’? Unlike technical terms, metaphors bring scholarship into contact with everyday language. It is obvious that the network metaphor rose to prominence in scholarly descriptions of globalisation at a historical moment, the 1990s and 2000s, when the term came to be used with increasing frequency outside the academic world as well (Castells 1996). Complaints about connectivity jargon brought forward by historians in recent years hinted at its embeddedness in the globalisation euphoria of the post-cold war era (Gänger and Osterhammel 2020; Brewer 2021). Given the absence of

a clear distinction between an academic concept of network and its much broader use in everyday language, it is all the more important to understand better how the term ‘network’ was part of a longer history of globalism and connectivity thinking (Kuchenbuch 2023).

A first problematic aspect of the network metaphor is its historical relation to the civilising mission of European imperialism. Since the nineteenth century, ‘network’ has been employed to describe new technical infrastructures (→ **Infra-structure**) such as the telegraph or railways, which enabled the circulation of goods and information on a national, but also an imperial, or global level (Musso 2003). This nineteenth-century idea of networks, however, was not only descriptive, but also prescriptive: the construction of infrastructures was understood as an expression of a natural historical movement towards an ever-connecting world, led by European engineers and administrators (Gießmann 2014). This scenario, however, typically downplayed the violence and the hierarchies of Empire and assigned networks to the positive side of the imperial project. To this day, historians who study ‘empire and globalisation’ (Magee and Thompson 2010; Curless et al. 2016) struggle with this normative burden, and their emphatic histories of global networks have sometimes produced strangely optimistic histories of Empire. Big histories of the ‘human web’ (McNeill and McNeill 2003) hardly escape the same tendency of downplaying domination and exclusion.

A second burden of the network metaphor concerns its anthropological implications. Writing about past global networks often presents historical actors in a certain way by emphasising flexibility, creativity, and opportunity. This is no coincidence. The activity of forging social networks became an anthropological leitmotif above all from the 1970s onwards. The networking self defined in this period was considered to be mobile, creative, and always ready to connect (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999; August 2021). When historians use the term ‘network’, they often identify individuals in the past that more or less fit this image of the networking self. This has enabled them to tell the stories of the forgotten (anti-)heroes of globalisation, of go-betweens, brokers, and global lives (Schaffer et al. 2009; Ogborn 2008). At the same time, their perspective had a tendency to over-emphasize the opportunity and adventure that globalisation represented to individuals. Sometimes historians have used the network metaphor to imagine that globalisation brought increasing freedom for all when actually there was little, and often even less freedom for most.

### III

In short, the term ‘network’ has been a vehicle of linear and unconsciously euphemistic interpretations of globalisation – not in the humanities primarily, but also there. Reflections about global dis:connections (→ **Introduction**) can be a useful

strategy to handle this problem while maintaining the significant advantages of a metaphorical use of the term ‘network’ in histories of globalisation. When absences (→ **Absences**), detours (→ **Detours**), and interruptions (→ **Interruptions**) are taken into account, problematic normative connotations can be avoided. An approach that takes dis:connections seriously, as I understand it, opposes a radical relational to a teleological and normative outlook on networks of globalisation; it brings conflicts and inequality back in; and it emphasises how ordinary people in the past were themselves exposed to the contradictions that were inherent in processes of globalisation (see Wenzlhuemer et al. 2023).

Networks of globalisation, analysed in this way, can no longer be understood as well-organised structures resulting from a natural evolutionary process towards greater integration. Instead, global networks could very well change their orientation, fade away or disappear completely rather than leading to ever greater integration. Different types of networks did not operate in a uniform manner, but rather interacted with each other in different ways, producing overlaps, tensions and fractions. The interwar period, to cite an example that has become almost canonical, has often been considered as a period when global trade networks established in the late nineteenth century disappeared, thus a period of deglobalisation (→ **Deglobalisation**). At the same time, new networks of international organisations were established, indicating a period of globalisation. Arguments about the bigger picture of globalisation certainly remain possible. But the narrative must be open and careful to avoid evolutionary stage models.

A dis:connective approach to networks can also be useful to push the metaphor against its own nature and to try to include hierarchies and power. Recent research, for example, has emphasised the structural inequalities that have always shaped networks of globalisation. Junctions in global networks presented themselves as obstacles to some, while they were practically invisible to others. Some had it in their power to decide with whom they did or did not want to connect, while their contacts were imposed on others against their will. An airport transit zone could be a node for some, while it was a dead end for others (Liebisch-Gümüş 2023). A dis:connective approach, accordingly, acknowledges and indeed highlights a truism about networks: that usually some are in and others are out. More, it tries to locate the hierarchies in the networks themselves and studies how they operated in a world of networks that is everything but flat and egalitarian.

This emphasis on dis:connectivity should also allow scholars to take the often paradoxical interpretations of the historical actors more seriously rather than reading them in an anachronistic way as networking individuals. Both the discontinuous and the often unequalitarian nature of networks *was* experienced by historical actors and informed their own interpretations of globalisation. Migration, to cite another obvious example, was an experience of disconnection as well as of connection, and it

was the interplay of the two that defined the experience of migrants. Taking contemporary interpretations into account not only as sources but also as theoretical inspirations, rather than telling people retrospectively how global they actually should have been, provides less heroic or adventurous accounts of networks of globalisations, but more insights into ordinary experiences and their ambivalence.

#### IV

Metaphors are powerful instruments of research in the humanities, and it is difficult to do without them. When related to strong experiences in the present, however, they may have a problematic tendency to make themselves seem indispensable and indeed natural. This is certainly the case when it comes to ‘network’ (Schlechtriemen 2014; Friedrich 2015). A dis:connective approach is able to address some of the problems that come with the overuse of the metaphor of the network in histories of globalisation. Yet it remains difficult to strip it entirely of its problematic connotations. Hence the importance of being able to take a step back and consider one’s terminological options. In addition to sharpening one’s tools, dealing with problematic metaphors probably benefits from a more playful approach that helps to open up the debate for potential terminological alternatives.

Imagine there is no such thing as networks. Sometimes it can be more appropriate or more precise to use categories such as ‘organisation’, ‘friendship’, ‘commerce’, or another related term instead. And why not occasionally take inspiration from the historical terminology used at different historical moments and in different languages? Sometimes, it might even be necessary not only to switch between neighbouring terminological alternatives, but also between entire metaphorical paradigms. Thinking globalisation in terms of ‘conquest’ is very different than thinking it in ‘networks’. Or think of other categories such as ‘civilisation’, ‘capitalism’, ‘cosmopolis’, or ‘Gaia’. While such paradigms may overlap, they have different assets and downsides and tend to accentuate different gains and focus on different problems. In addition to refining one’s technical apparatus, thus, it is useful to keep in mind that ‘network’ is never the only terminological option.

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# Postcolonial

Matthias Leanza

The postcolonial world has emerged from the ruins of empires. Ruins, those dis-connective objects par excellence, simultaneously separate us from and connect us to an era that is no longer ours. They maintain structures that are incomplete and decayed, having lost most of their original functionality. In ruins, the past survives as a remnant (Parry 2019).

As remnants of a fallen age, ruins remind those who gaze upon them of the frailty of human constructions, however solid they may have appeared at the time. From the Habsburgs to Napoleon and the governors of the British Empire, empire builders were haunted by the fear that they might share the fate of Rome, whose ruins stand as silent testimony to the collapse of a civilisation that once deemed itself eternal (Hell 2009; Hell 2019). Even when rulers did not claim to be the rightful heirs of Rome under the principle of *translatio imperii* (unlike those of the Holy Roman Empire and Moscow, who did), the Roman example still loomed large, serving as both an inspiration and a cautionary tale (Kumar 2012; Brendon 2008).

This also holds true for the European colonial empires, whose justifying narratives and governance structures clearly echoed Rome's legacy (Seed 1995, 179–93; Pagden 1995, 11–28; Burbank and Cooper 2010, 287–330). When, in 1884, Bismarck explained before the Reichstag's Budget Committee his decision to place the Bay of Angra Pequena on the southwest African coast under German state protection, he invoked Cicero by quoting the famous phrase *civis romanus sum* ("I am a Roman citizen"), which was supposed to guarantee safe passage for any Roman citizen within the realm (Andreas 1924, 474). Bismarck argued by analogy that, likewise, any German citizen travelling the world must be protected from infringements of their rights.<sup>1</sup> However, unlike the Roman example, Bismarck wanted private companies operating overseas to bear the costs of their colonial ventures, thereby preventing the establishment of state-led colonies (Wehler 1969). But it soon became apparent that the companies responsible for managing Germany's territories in Africa and the Pacific would fail to establish viable administrations. In response, the German Reich assumed direct control of its so-called protectorates and appointed governors, who effectively acted as proconsuls on behalf of the Kaiser, wielding executive powers over imperial provinces (Kilian 2024). World War I abruptly

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<sup>1</sup> British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston made a similar analogy in 1850 regarding the protection of a British subject, David Pacifico (known as Don Pacifico), whose property was damaged during an anti-Semitic riot in Athens. When the Greek authorities refused to compensate him, the British responded by launching a naval blockade of Greece's principal ports (Whitten 1986).

ended Germany's aspirations as a maritime power and led to the dismantling of its land-based empire in Europe, reducing the country to its national heartlands. In conjunction, the collapse of neighbouring continental empires paved the way for the formation of national states across Central and Eastern Europe (Gerwarth 2017; Mazower 2012, 116–88). However, it was only the decolonisation following World War II that, beyond the collapse of individual empires, fundamentally called imperial rule itself into question (Mishra 2012; Jansen and Osterhammel 2017; Thomas 2024). Empire, as a framework for global order, lost its political legitimacy, which does not necessarily mean that it also disappeared as a political reality.

A dis:connective approach to the rise of the postcolonial world from the ruins of global empires – one of the most consequential events in modern history that affected virtually all of humanity – must avoid four interrelated fallacies. In the remainder of this essay, I will outline these fallacies before concluding with a brief discussion on the broader implications of this perspective. First, a dis:connective approach must resist the temptation to narrate the story from its presumed conclusion. Rather than assuming a linear progression from colonial empire to postcolonial nation-state, scholars working within this framework need to focus on historical contingency and detours. The perspective of dis:connectivity requires us to explore how the connections forged by colonialism were contested during decolonisation and, as a result, either dissolved or reconfigured through a dynamic, open-ended process. For the transition from connection to disconnection is never simple or without alternatives. It involves conflicts and complications that lead to detours, as well as surprising twists and turns that require careful investigation. Thus, the worldwide proliferation of the nation-state in response to the crisis of empire as a framework for global order was not the only conceivable outcome of the process known as decolonisation. Alternative paths toward a postimperial world existed, centred not on national sovereignty but on federal integration and reform (Burbank and Cooper 2023; Leanza 2024). The French Union (1946–1958), which extended French citizenship and parliamentary representation to France's African colonies, provides a compelling example of such an attempt to reconfigure imperial connections along federal lines, rather than simply dissolving them (Cooper 2014). Even though this and other efforts at federal transformation ultimately failed – examples include the West Indies Federation (1958–1962), the Central African Federation (1953–1963), the Union of African States (1958–1963) in West Africa, the United Arab Republic (including Syria, 1958–1961), and the Federation of Malaysia with Singapore (1963–1965) – the independent nation-state by no means went unchallenged.

Secondly, decolonisation was not a blind process governed alone by anonymous forces, whether geopolitical or economic. Rather, the actors involved were continuously engaged in reflecting upon the events as they unfolded. This is not to deny the existence of latent structures and dynamics of which individuals were unaware;

however, the dissolution and reconfiguration of global connections during decolonisation were, to a certain degree, contingent upon observers attributing meaning and relevance (see also Baecker 2013). Contemporaries justified their actions and interpreted those of others, narrated stories of the recent past and envisioned future scenarios, while also developing general theories to explain larger, tectonic shifts. The social sciences participated in this collective sense-making process, helping to reimagine a world after empire (Cooper 2004). For instance, in 1960 – the year seventeen African states declared independence – Harvard political scientist Rupert Emerson published his voluminous study *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples*. In this work, Emerson (1960, 354–9) describes the global spread of the nation-state as an unintended consequence of European expansion, while emphasising the inherent limitations and challenges of postcolonial nation-building, particularly in plural societies with no uncontested majority population such as in Nigeria. Karl W. Deutsch (1969), a trained lawyer and political scientist who worked on the committee that helped draft the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1945, also repeatedly addressed the question of how humanity can arrive at a new global order. Arguing that the high hopes for transforming colonial empires into federated entities were unfounded, he concluded that ‘[i]f we are to have peace in the world, . . . we will have to seek it for the next 10 or 20 years by methods other than federation.’ (124) Although nation-states had often been depicted ‘as being particularly intolerant’, while federations were believed ‘to be less conducive to prejudice’, (116) this did not change the fact that ‘the nation-state is still the most powerful instrument in the world for getting things done.’ (125) In this vein, social scientists like Emerson and Deutsch helped envision a world in which the liberal nation-state was to become the fundamental unit of political organisation.

Thirdly, while a dis:connective approach underscores the crucial importance of culture and the spread of ideas in understanding institutional change, it must be careful to avoid the fallacy of diffusionism. Rather than depicting a unilateral, linear export of cultural schemes from one site to another, we should trace dynamic interactions across geographical regions and institutional domains, paying special attention to the labour of translation (Latour 1987, 132–44). The adoption of the nation-state model by communities previously under colonial rule was more than a mere emulation of the Western example, as suggested by modernisation theory and, in a less schematic form, by more recent scholarship (Parsons 1971; Meyer et al. 1997; Wimmer and Feinstein 2010). Instead of merely imitating a model established elsewhere, anticolonial nationalism reconfigured and rejuvenated the modern nation-state. For example, it linked the principle of self-determination to an expansive notion of political and economic nondomination in the international sphere (Getachew 2019; Gerits 2023). In tracing the worldwide proliferation of

the nation-state, we must therefore move beyond a diffusionist understanding of global circulation and focus on the creative, unpredictable process of translation. Through the translation of political models and legal norms across regions, a varied global landscape has emerged – one that is anything but flat.

The fourth and final fallacy I term unidirectionality. The breakup of colonial empires during decolonisation has left us with the persistent impression that colonialism was a one-way relationship, exclusively affecting colonised communities while leaving metropolitan societies largely untouched. After all, it is ‘they’, not ‘we’ in the West, who bear the label of postcolonial, along with the burden it entails (Randeria 1999; Chakrabarty 2000). As colonial empires fractured into independent nation-states, rather than transforming into cross-regional federations, a divided historical awareness became further entrenched. This division has led to a highly uneven visibility of the colonial past across different world regions, as maintaining a broad and inclusive memory would have required considerable effort. Countering this lingering misapprehension, a dis:connective approach reveals the bi- and even multidirectional nature of colonialism, impacting all parties involved (Rothberg 2009). However, it is not sufficient to simply call for a broader historical awareness. We must also tackle the analytical challenge of identifying the causal mechanisms that explain how overseas expansion created lasting effects in the metropolises thousands of miles away.<sup>2</sup>

Two mechanisms that scholars frequently invoke in this field are othering and transfer. While othering pertains to the ways in which notions of the colonised as ‘alien’ and ‘inferior’ helped mould the national identities of the colonisers (Said 2003; orig. 1978), in transfer processes, the colonies served not as projection screens but as testing grounds for military, administrative, and scientific innovations that the metropolises could subsequently adopt (Go 2023). In my research on the German colonial empire, I have identified another mechanism – namely, the mechanism of challenge and response (Leanza 2024, drawing on Toynbee 1947). In this context, the term refers to the institutional reforms by which the metropolises responded to the challenges of colonial governance. This included the expansion and creation of federal agencies, the introduction of new taxes and adjustments to citizenship law, and the involvement of parliament in colonial policy to generate political legitimacy for the costly maintenance of the overseas empire. In this way, the colonies left a lasting imprint on the political system of their metropole – an influence that persisted well into the postcolonial period.

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<sup>2</sup> On causal mechanisms, defined in opposition to covering laws, see Machamer et al. 2000 and Gorski 2013. For the renewed interest in causality and comparison in historical sociology, see also Hoover and Mayrl 2024.

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in Europe's colonial past, which is fraught with analytical, political, and moral complexities. At a time when ethnonationalism is again on the rise in Europe, reflecting on the subtle – and sometimes not so subtle – aftereffects of colonialism seems more necessary than ever. However, as Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2021) cautions, reflecting on this topic alone will not suffice. 'It is not', she explained following German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the 2021 opening ceremony of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, 'that Europe has denied its colonial history – that would be too crude. It is instead that Europe has developed a way of telling the story of its colonial history that ultimately seeks to erase that history.' Countering this colonial erasure requires an alternative narrative, one that acknowledges the interconnectedness of our postcolonial world. At the same time, it must also be a narrative of disconnectedness so as to explain how the multidirectional character of the colonial relationship has been mistaken as unidirectional. The concept of dis:connectivity enables us to hold these two ideas in tension without resolving their relationship in either direction.

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# Postmigration/Migration

Anne Ring Petersen

‘Migration’ is an umbrella term that spans multiple forms of human mobility. It is often used as a general term referring to the movement of people away from their usual residence, either within a nation-state or across a national border, i.e. international migration. Sometimes, migration is referred to in a broad sense which includes both ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ movements, but the term can also be used about population movements that are considered to be essentially voluntary. For cross-border or internal movements where the element of compulsion predominates over choice (for instance, due to persecution, war, conflict, violence or disaster), UNHCR recommends using the term ‘displacement’ rather than ‘migration’, especially when designating cross-border movements with a refugee character (‘Migration’, in UNHCR 2021).

In migration studies, human mobility is generally understood to be inextricably linked to globalisation. Studies such as *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Haas, Castles, and Miller 2020) argue that migration has become globalised in the sense that more and more countries are significantly affected by international migration, and long-distance migration between major regions of the world has grown considerably. As a result, immigration countries tend to receive migrants and displaced people from an increasingly diverse range of countries, so that they have entrants from a broad array of economic, social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Haas, Castles, and Miller 2020, 9), leading to what Stephen Vertovec has termed ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007). This development is key to understanding ‘postmigration’ (of which, more below).

Whatever form migration takes, it involves processes of connection and disconnection. Friction and alienation are as integral to the act and experience of migration as enmeshment and hybridisation. Visible borders as well as invisible boundaries are crossed under different kinds of pressure, constriction and inequality. Attachments to the environment and community left behind are severed; yet, acts of migration also open possibilities of forging new connections and a new sense of belonging to the place of resettlement. Oftentimes, the prospect of reconnecting with the place and community of origin can also be upheld in migration. Even when return is not an option, digital technologies may provide opportunities for long-distance communication and virtual presence. Thus, migration supports the observation in the introduction to this volume that ‘dis:connective phenomena should not be understood and studied as the opposite of interconnectedness, but as integral components of it’ (→ **Introduction**).

With an estimated 281 million international migrants (IOM 2023) and 108.4 million refugees (UNHCR 2023), it is no surprise that artists from across the world have engaged with the ‘global’ topics and challenges of migration and displacement. Important examples include Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum’s video work *Measures of Distance* (1988), created when the Lebanese Civil War prevented the artist from returning from London to her family in Beirut. Letters written by Hatoum’s mother in Arabic text are superimposed over images of her mother in the shower. The images are accompanied by taped conversations in Arabic between the two women and the artist’s own voice reading the letters in English. In *Measures of Distance*, dis:connectivity is discernible on multiple levels: material (image/audio), linguistic (Arabic/English), geographical (Beirut/London) and socio-cultural (Middle-Eastern/European, private/public, everyday life/artistic practice).<sup>1</sup> A more recent example is Chinese artist Ai Weiwei’s documentary *Human Flow* (2017).<sup>2</sup> Captured in refugee camps in twenty-three countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, France, Greece, Germany, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Mexico and Turkey, this montage elucidates the staggering scale of forced displacement and bears witness to its profoundly human impact on individuals and their search for safety, shelter, justice and an unknown future. Ai’s visceral global montage is a powerful reminder that contemporary migration is not synonymous with the unhindered mass movement of people or peaceful ‘human flow’, but increasingly about its blockages and disruptions: the fortification of borders, uncertain (im)mobility and indefinite detention which force many displaced people to spend years and, in some cases, decades detained in one of the world’s numerous refugee camps.

Flight, exile and migration always involve dis:connectivity, but artists often experience this particularly acutely. Because artists are so dependent on professional networks it has taken years if not decades to build, migratory and displaced artists often live precarious lives. On the one hand, migration enables them to extend their network and reach; on the other, they risk severing the ties to the networks they have previously depended on for career opportunities and their livelihood. Displaced artists often struggle to overcome barriers in the arts industries they seek to access. Not only do they lack ‘local knowledge’ (and networks), they are also affected by the general marginalisation of people with a so-called migration

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1 Mona Hatoum’s video work is on YouTube. See: [https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&sca\\_esv=573190987&sxsrf=AM9HkKm6oR54hqPyjf3GBXpGIYN8ERHmng:1697206260222&q=Mona+Hatoum+%2B+Measures+of+Distance&tbm=vid&source=lnms&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj\\_3ICMvOBAXW2RvEDHbB4AuEQ0pQJegQIDBAB&biw=1134&bih=715&dpr=1.33#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:ace08992,vid:eKGPefM-Uf8,st:0](https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&sca_esv=573190987&sxsrf=AM9HkKm6oR54hqPyjf3GBXpGIYN8ERHmng:1697206260222&q=Mona+Hatoum+%2B+Measures+of+Distance&tbm=vid&source=lnms&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj_3ICMvOBAXW2RvEDHbB4AuEQ0pQJegQIDBAB&biw=1134&bih=715&dpr=1.33#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:ace08992,vid:eKGPefM-Uf8,st:0). Accessed 27 February 2024.

2 For the trailer for *Human Flow* and further information, see the film’s official website <http://www.humanflow.com/>. Accessed 27 February 2024.

background (including descendants of immigrants). As we shall see, such experiences of marginalisation can also fuel self-empowering forms of critique.

An important focal point in migration studies is ‘migrant settlement’ and questions of what is commonly termed ‘integration’ in political and media discourses. In Europe, for instance, integration is the dominant term in the discourses on migrant settlement and social adjustment. Although the EU definition states that integration is a two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents, policymakers often use the term to imply assimilation rather than a mutual process of adaptation (Council of the European Union 2004, 17; Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore 2018, 181). Accordingly, Naika Foroutan and Frank Kalter suggest that the common understanding of ‘integration’ as a one-way process and primarily the responsibility of the ‘newcomers’ needs to be updated with a postmigrant perspective (Foroutan and Kalter 2022).

‘Postmigration’ is about the ways in which past and present migrations have changed and are continuing to change societies. The concept belongs to – and challenges – the ever-growing cluster of concepts used to study the interaction and coexistence of different ethnic groups, including terms such as integration, multiculturalism, interculturalism, cultural diversity and super-diversity. In the words of Erol Yildiz, postmigration concerns ‘the re-telling and reinterpretation of the phenomenon “migration” and its consequences’ in societies with a history of post-colonial and so-called guest-worker immigration, as seen in many European countries (Yildiz 2013, 177). It should be stressed that the prefix ‘post’ does not designate an ‘afterwards’, as if the historical processes of migration had ended. The prefix implies, rather, a change of perspective on the overall narrative of the nation-state and its historical foundation and evolution. The ‘post’ in postmigration is thus akin to the ‘post’ in postcolonialism (Alkin and Geuer 2022). They are both critical terms, and the discourse on postmigration draws on the preceding discourse on postcolonialism, but it cannot be subsumed under it. As Yildiz contends, postmigration transforms the specific critical implications of postcolonialism into a ‘positive’ epistemology that brings to light differently situated perspectives and other possibilities (Yildiz 2022, 81, 93).

The term ‘postmigrant’ (*postmigrantisch*) was first developed into a critical term around 2004–2006, when it was employed in the cultural scene in Berlin, most notably in the performing arts where postmigrant theatre became a battle cry against the marginalisation of actors and cultural producers with minority ethnic backgrounds. They used the term as a tool for self-empowerment and for gaining control over how to identify and position oneself instead of being labelled by others (Stewart 2021; Sharifi 2011). In the late 2000s, the term was adopted by scholars in the humanities and social sciences in Germany who developed it into a theoretical concept of ‘postmigration’ (*das Postmigrantische*) which offered a critical perspec-

tive on what Naika Foroutan and others have theorised as ‘postmigrant society’ (*die postmigrantische Gesellschaft*) (Foroutan 2019a, 2019b; Espahangizi 2021; Schramm, Moslund, and Petersen 2019). In academia as well as the arts and culture sector, postmigrant perspectives have been harnessed to open up broad societal questions of equality and difference in new ways.<sup>3</sup> The focal point of postmigration studies is processes and conflicts internal to the receiving nation-states, especially the growth of diversity and the often conflictual renegotiation of identity, culture, history, community, belonging, privileges, barriers and racism/discrimination which migration-induced demographic change necessitate. However, postmigrant perspectives are fundamentally transnational and transcultural, as they highlight the fact that migrants usually maintain some kind of attachment to and contact with their country and culture of origin which is also passed on to their descendants.

Three different conceptualisations have informed the discourses on postmigration, in addition to the initial discourse on postmigrant theatre and postmigrant subjectivities. The first conceptualisation pivots on the notion of a ‘postmigrant generation’ of descendants of migrants and is closely related to the initial usage. The two other usages of the term postmigrant are interconnected, yet distinct. In the early 2010s, the term ‘postmigrant society’ was put into circulation as a descriptor for a plural democratic society. Concurrently, it became more and more common to use the adjective ‘postmigrant’ to refer to an analytical perspective. Thus, the second and third conceptualisations reflect a significant methodological shift away from singling out a social group and particular subjectivities to widening the analytical perspective to transformations throughout society (Petersen 2024, 44–45).

Although postmigration studies has now established itself as an academic sub-field of migration studies in German-speaking countries, scholars of art history, museology and curatorial studies have been slow to adopt a postmigrant analytical perspective. In my understanding, a postmigrant methodology for cultural analysis examines long-contested issues of migration and culture in new ways by subjecting them to a postmigrant perspective that seeks – in the words of Regina Römhild – ‘to “*demigrantise*” migration research while “*migrantising*” research into culture and society’ (Römhild 2017, 70). In order to do so, it establishes a critical frame for understanding by adopting the theoretical framework of postmigrant thought, and by harnessing relevant analytical concepts from postcolonial studies, migration studies and the broader field of political, social and cultural theory, along with concepts used to study artistic practices, such as aesthetics, representation, performance, gaze, curating, institution, participation and public/public art. Where the migratory has been reduced to a negative marker of otherness and marginal-

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3 For a definition of the ‘arts and culture sector’, see Essig 2015.

ity, a postmigrant methodology intervenes to question such stigmatising practices and discourses. In short, postmigrant thought prompts scholars to develop fresh approaches to enduring problems.

The term ‘postmigrant’ has three dimensions: empirical, analytical and normative. Empirically, it relates to the condition of postmigrancy, that is, to the fact of increasing societal heterogeneity. Analytically, it relates to the ways in which the term can be operationalised in different areas of study. As to postmigration’s normative dimension, it is primarily associated with ‘a normative-political idea of how we want to live together in societies marked by increasing heterogeneity’ (Foroutan 2016, 248). However, art also harbours a normative dimension, especially public art and monuments as one of the most visible forms of historical storytelling and providers of collective keys to how societies understand their past, present and future. Recent years have seen new approaches to dis:connectivity in public art. A rush to topple statues from colonial times, to symbolically de-link from or ‘cancel’ a heritage of violence, racism, exploitation and injustice has coincided with powerful demands to have new monuments erected. Here the aim is not destruction but re-memorialisation: to recuperate what has been omitted in the past and to reconnect with what has been excluded or erased from public memory. Thus, art has a key role to play in plural democratic societies thanks to its capacity for memory management and democratic correction.

As Monica Juneja has observed, art can produce ‘undisciplined’ knowledge characterised by ‘dynamics of dis-identification with disciplinary orthodoxies’. This capacity enables art to critically renegotiate inherited values and norms and to give ‘the unthinkable a voice and the forgotten a shape’ (Juneja 2019, 312–13). Art that grapples with postmigration may thus provide us with blueprints for the future, putting forward ideas of equality, multiple belonging and how to live together in diversity. An example is *Grundgesetz* (*Basic law*) created by the theatre director and singer Marta Górnicka in collaboration with the Maxim Gorki Theatre, a hub of ‘postmigrant theatre’. Premiering in front of thousands of citizens assembled at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on 3 October 2018 to celebrate the Day of German Unity, this chorus production had fifty professional and non-professional actors of different ages, genders and backgrounds subject the German Basic Law to a stress test. *Grundgesetz* asked on whose behalf the Constitution speaks and tested the limits of the legal text in the political context of German society (Décaillot 2021).<sup>4</sup> The multi-voiced performance uncovered the tension between the ideal of a unitary polit-

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<sup>4</sup> For the Maxim Gorki Theatre’s trailer for *Grundgesetz*, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI-nj129F804>. Further information is given on the Theatre’s website, see: <https://www.gorki.de/de/grundgesetz>. Both websites accessed 27 February 2024.

ical community and its internal divisions, autonomy and co-dependence, thereby conjuring up a compelling vision of dis:connectivity as integral to postmigrant societies. *Grundgesetz* also showed that no matter whether a postmigrant perspective is analytically/diagnostically inflected or normative (or in this case, a combination), a postmigrant approach possesses a heightened sensitivity to conflict. This distinguishes it from concepts such as ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism’ that can be more easily misused politically and commercially to propagate notions of vibrant multi-culture and frictionless cohabitation.

This conflict sensitivity becomes most explicit when the postmigrant lens is applied to racialisation and racism as fundamental sources of friction and discrimination in postmigrant societies (Espahangizi et al. 2016). Here, art can serve as a critical instrument of dismantling ethnic stereotypes and racist imagery, as seen in the exhibition-based project *Edewa* (2012) by the Black feminist artist and scholar Natasha A. Kelly and a group of students at Berlin’s Humboldt University.<sup>5</sup> The name is an acronym which twists the name of the German supermarket chain Edeka, which has a colonial past, as it was founded formally as a purchasing cooperative of grocers named ‘Einkaufsgenossenschaft der Kolonialwarenhändler im Halleschen Torbezirk zu Berlin’ (literally: ‘Purchasing Cooperative of Colonial Goods Merchants in the Hallesches Tor District in Berlin’). ‘Edewa’ instead stands for *Einkaufsgenossenschaft antirassistischen Widerstandes* (‘Purchasing Cooperative of the Anti-Racist Resistance’). The project launched a critique of the racist perceptions and exoticising imagery disseminated through the advertising images, product names and packing of what was historically known as ‘colonial goods’ such as coffee and cocoa. Due to the mass distribution of goods, this heritage of stereotypes has become deeply entrenched in consumer and everyday culture (Chametzky 2021, 163–66). By offering alternative packaging and presentation, *Edewa* challenged racism and sexism and spotlighted how histories of colonialism continue to contribute to shaping today’s postmigrant societies.

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# Queer

Katrin Köppert

While Thailand's parliament passed a bill on same-sex marriage in March 2024, same-sex sexual acts have been punishable by death in certain cases in Uganda since May 2023 and the Russian judiciary has imposed a ban on the LGBTQIA+ movement in Russia for extremism. In 2022, Namibia celebrated the sixth Lesbian Festival for more queer visibility, while Zanele Muholi, in their first comprehensive solo exhibition in Germany, showed photographs that deal with anti-queer violence in South Africa despite the country having one of the most advanced constitutions (1996) with regard to LGBTQIA+ rights. A DIY Testosterone workshop took place at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig in March 2024 to problematize pathologizing structures of hormone administration to trans\*people, whereas in the USA there have never been as many bills to restrict trans\* rights as in 2023.

The list goes on. From a global perspective, queer life and love currently take place in the contradiction of never having been so visible or legally equal and never having been so endangered by the pushback of authoritarian, right-wing and conservative forces. The simultaneity of queer emancipation and the existential threat to queer bodies represents a paradox. It is a symptom of the shift in global power relations.

In a global context, the simultaneity of self-determination and endangerment can be seen as a consequence of colonial history. Same-sex love, trans\* and non-binary people, lesbian sex and gay parents are occasionally rejected as white Eurocentric concepts in the course of decolonization and in reference to an authentic African culture. In the case of Russia, this rejection is based less on the desire to decolonize than on the aspiration to promote its own colonialism with anti-American resentment – since, after all, queer is seen as the hallmark of a movement driven from the USA. Queerness is also discredited because it is portrayed in the context of right-wing movements in the USA, but also in Germany, France etc. as the incarnation of a left-wing avant-garde, powerful elite and pro-migration politics. At the same time, the rainbow flag becomes a right-wing meme when, for example, it is a matter of demonstrating civilizational progressiveness to allegedly homophobic Arab countries.

Queerness is – one may say – caught in the crossfire of the states of the global majority emancipating themselves from the West, the East opposing the West in the seemingly revived Cold War, and right-wing actors in the Global North who feel threatened by the provincialization of Eurocentric policies. 'Queer' becomes unrecognizable in the process. Various myths circulate freely, just as disconnected from the history of the social movement as they are from its theoretical underpinnings.

Instead of an instrument for analysing heteronormativity or intersectionally interwoven gender politics and a deconstructive critique of power, queer is now only a matter of identity politics – either to be appropriated for racist and anti-Muslim reasons, or to be declared the enemy of national cohesion. The images that are created, the bans that are issued, the criticisms that are circulated in the public sphere do not react to ‘queer as an identity’; instead they create the very narrow identitarian understanding of ‘queer’ against which they defend themselves or on the basis of which they make policy.

Such a reduction to identity politics is in turn countered by the neoliberal-fuelled and – since digitalization at the latest – claimed dissolution of gender markers. From a transhumanist perspective, we are post-gender, and sexuality and reproduction are no longer just a question of gender, but of technological possibilities of intimacy, physical surrogates or hormone production.

Queer therefore appears to be a projection space for different, sometimes opposing interests and a hub of global tensions. What is disconnected with queer as a concept, theorem and social movement converges in queer. Thereby, queer theory itself works with paradoxes and contradictions and cannot be reduced to the common denominator of a universally valid definition. One of the reasons for this is the performative approach, which makes an essentialist idea of gender and sexuality impossible solely due to the temporal dimension of a constant repetition. In the course of my examination of the concept of dis:connectivity, I would therefore like to focus on time and temporality using the medium of film and series, which operates with time and repetition.

The contradictions mentioned briefly cannot only be understood spatially, but are a phenomenon of time and temporality. They arise not only in the spatial tension between expansion and encapsulation, but also in the temporal tension between progress and regression. For example, in order to ‘keep discourse spaces open in a liberal society’ (Herrmann 2024) imagined in the future, prohibition policies reminiscent of past times are used. This is what happened when the Bavarian Council of Ministers passed a ban on gender language on 19 March 2024. The ban, which responds to the conspiracy theory that the present has been infiltrated by a gender ideology in a similar way to the McCarthy era, can be seen as a resistance to a theory mobilized by the right.

In the same breath as such an idea of a liberal society based on the past logic of prohibition, we are experiencing a transhumanist approach that transcends gender identities and is closely linked to the future-oriented time economies of neoliberal interests.

The clash between the politics of prohibition pointing to the past and the fantasies of feasibility looking to the future expresses the question of disconnectedness on a temporal level. At the same time, both forms of the present are two sides

of the same coin of a neoliberal-capitalist, patriarchal and nationalist policy. Past and future are interlinked in this respect, and yet do not map onto each other, are disconnected. This convergence of temporal disconnectedness results in a form of dis:connectivity.

In our present, in which the disparity of politics pointing to the past and the transhumanistically inflated hyper-future combine, many seem to be out of step, are overwhelmed by the signals and no longer feel part of the chronology. This is also reflected in contemporary queer film and TV productions. They react to the disparity, but form at the same time a queer theory, i.e. 1) a critique of the divergence, which only confirms the norm and comes together in heteronational ideas; and 2) an assertion of a different effectiveness of this temporal dis:connectivity. I would therefore like to look at two productions with the aim of asking how dis:connectivity is dealt with from a queer perspective. This means that, based on the two examples, I would like to discuss queer-theoretical formulations of dis:connectivity as a temporal phenomenon, in terms of a critique of the functionality of contradictions for right-wing national, patriarchal and neoliberal politics. I call these queer-theoretical formulations ‘strange temporality’, quoting Elizabeth Freeman (2010).

In my opinion, the film *Blue Jean* (UK 2022, 97 min, Georgia Oakley) speaks to this strange temporality that I am trying to outline. The movie takes the viewer on a journey through time that is not a journey at all. The travel to the 1980s, and specifically the time when Margaret Thatcher passed a series of laws known as Section 28, which banned the ‘promotion of homosexuality’ by local authorities, is a confrontation with the present. The attempt to shut down a school play in Texas in 2023 on the grounds that the content was too vulgar as a pretext to prevent the transgender and non-binary actors appearing on stage (Goodman 2023) is a salute from the past. In this past, Thatcher enacted Section 28 because children were being taught in schools ‘an inalienable right to be gay’ instead of ‘traditional moral values’. (Thatcher 1987) To suppress such a ‘right’, bans were issued and censorship measures developed. Just like today. In 2023, I read the headline ‘Book expelled from US school libraries because it shows a kiss’ (Spiegel Online 2023) where it was reported that a young woman told a school board in Texas that she had become addicted to porn because she could not tolerate the depiction of a kiss in a comic book when she was 13. However, the article continued to state that this woman works for a far-right publishing house whose stated aim is to protect children from ‘sexual obscenities’, which, in view of the publisher’s website and the visual dominance of heteronormative familiarity, means protection from LGBTIQ+ people.

The miniseries *Fellow Travelers* (USA 2023, 8 episodes, Ron Nyswaner) is not only a journey through time based on the viewer’s experience, it also traverses a total of four decades intradiegetically. It links the traumatic incisions of the McCarthy era and the AIDS crisis for Western queer post-war history. Above all, the past

of McCarthyism, made accessible in the series due to current censorship measures, reverberates into the present. The fictional narrative, in which Roy Cohn is accused of being gay himself, is particularly revealing for the present. The background to the accusation made in the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings that McCarthy's chief legal adviser Roy Cohn had exerted pressure on the army to give G. David Schine preferential treatment is, according to the series, a liaison between Cohn and Schine. This fictionalization makes it possible to understand the extent to which anti-queer measures are also instrumentalized today in order to divert attention from oneself. Without expressing that incorporated homophobia is the motor of censoring policies, the series seems to reveal that then as now, queerness and gender are merely phantasms of authoritarian movements and thus vehicles for shifting fears of losing power (Butler 2024).

The fact that the devastating past of a Britain that suffered under Margaret Thatcher is the vanishing point of *Blue Jean* speaks to the present, in which gender-equitable politics, queer love and non-binary existence are once again experiencing proudly expressed restrictions and reprisals (ntv 2023). *Fellow Travelers* is also characterized by a melancholy prolonged into the present in the face of queer-hostile and racist violence and persecution. *Blue Jean* and *Fellow Travelers* show the extent to which what feels wrong today was not right back then.

Interestingly, film and series do not judge the past, but paradoxically empathize with the moment in which there is nothing right in the wrong, in a way that stirs up longing. In this paradox lies what I see as fruitful for a queer critique of temporal dis:connectivity in the sense of strange temporality.

With its bluish, washed-out images of post-industrial dreariness, the long shots of Rosy McEwen playing, the costume and sound design that revels in the 1980s, *Blue Jean* also seems to me to form a place of longing for a queer feeling that is backward in the sense of Heather Love's now 18-year-old book, and yet seductive (Love 2007). As Love argues in *Feeling Backward*, the loss of queer as depicted in the film due to the self-censorship of the protagonist, who as a sports teacher of pubescent girls tries to stay in the closet due to the passing of Section 28, is not rejected as an intolerable state per se, but is kept open for the possibility of lesbian desire and queer politics.

*Fellow Travelers* also oscillates between the lie in which the protagonists Hawk Fuller and Skippy Laughlin are forced to settle and the very diverse space of desire that this lie also creates to a certain extent. The sexual act, which is present throughout the series but never repeats itself, takes on a further role, is a plot-driving moment, but also a complex, sometimes convoluted space for negotiating power relations (Romano 2023). The characters appear correspondingly ambiguous, the identity concepts correspondingly queer.

The paranoia staged in *Blue Jean* with fearful glances out of the window, seeing all the neighbours as spies, but also the apparent naivety of thinking that not everything is political, as well as the refusal to show public solidarity with a student at the moment of her forced outing suggests – as in *Fellow Travelers* using the example of Hawk – an only slightly courageous political subject or refers to the entanglements in power relations. Nevertheless, the melancholy of the character (which grows into tragedy when her friend Vivian breaks up with her out of disappointment in the face of Jean's supposed inability to act), hinted at by the title *Blue Jean*, creates a space that makes queer understandable as something that does not follow a singular instruction of political subjectivity. In the end, we learn how essential it is for those in the closet to create the (economic) freedom to (financially) support queer, left-wing politics. And Hawk, who lives the lie of the heteronormative family all his life in *Fellow Travelers*, is also the one who, at the end of the series, uses his rather modest means of political diplomacy compared to Skippy's fearless activism to support the fight against the state-induced neglect of people with AIDS in a decisive way.

I also understand the everyday-ness of intimacy and lust in a time full of repression as this queer feeling that works with fear without being less intense in the sense of queer desire and/or politics. On the contrary, it almost seems to me that the scene in *Blue Jean* where Jean has to break off sex with Vivian because she feels oppressed by social fears in private is a key scene for both productions. Jean sneaks out of bed, goes to the kitchen to make herself something to eat and reads Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). The book, often criticized for its backward-looking approach, becomes the refuge of a desire that turns to the gravity and complexity of queer history as a history of loss and – as Love claims in *Feeling Backward* in her examination of the novel – is all the more urgent as a contribution to the present. That is how I feel about the movie and the series. They show a possibility for queer politics in a time of its impossibility. In conclusion, I would like to summarize that this is particularly related to a specific way of dealing with the past and is at the centre of a queer theory of temporal dis:connectivity, I would like to suggest here.

What seems to characterize the film and series is that they are connected to the horrors of the past without limiting the past to the narrative of the impossibility of queer life. According to Judith Butler, this represents a mode of responsibility whose ethics are based on being connected to a past that implies moments of ambiguity due to its performativity. For the shaping of the present, this reference to the past means an opening towards a state of ambiguity (Butler 2023, 119–36). Following queer theories of time, I would like to refer to this as a strange temporality of dis:connectivity. Here I refer to the concept of temporal drag developed by Elizabeth Freeman following Judith Butler (Freeman 2010). The queer historiography

developed by Heather Love based on Walter Benjamin's Angel of History is also instructive for my argument (Love 2007). The decisive factor here is a reassessment of the significance of the past from the perspective of temporality, which did not yet play a prominent role in Butler's early work (Freeman 2010, 62–3), but which emerges more clearly in the readings of Freeman and Love.

Elizabeth Freeman derives the term 'temporal drag' from Butler's theory of performativity in *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990), but makes it clear that, unlike Butler, it is not the innovation in the repetition alone that is of interest for a queer critique of power, but the anachronism (Freeman 2010, 63) – that is, the memory of the violence of history and what we thought we had overcome that bursts into the present. While Butler in *Gender Trouble* is oriented towards a change in the future with regard to the difference that occurs in repetition, Freeman is interested in the transgressive potential of this past, 'the interesting threat that the genuine pastness of the past – its opacity and illegibility [. . .] – sometimes make to the political present' (Freeman 2010).

The connection to a past that is characterized by a form of disconnectedness, because it sometimes remains incomprehensible from the perspective of the present or – because it has supposedly been overcome – is no longer legible, is the potential of a memory that folds itself into the present as a factor of social changeability. Freeman's example at this point is not to reject the history of lesbian feminists, which has become incomprehensible from a queer perspective, as an anachronism, but to affirm its unrealized future, its performative openness. Heather Love makes a similar argument in *Feeling Backwards*. She, too, is concerned not with rejecting the past, which mostly meant a history of loss with regard to queer worlds of experience, but rather with keeping it open as a possibility for queer politics.

It is important to emphasize that Freeman speaks of the potential and Love of the possibility and not the guarantee of a solution necessarily resulting from the history of loss and violence. Thus, as with Benjamin's Angel of History, it is a matter of refusing to turn the losses of the past into the material of progress (Love 2007, 148). In this sense, memory is not understood as an imperative that must necessarily be followed in the future, but rather as a commandment whose enforceability remains fragile, risky and open (Butler 2013, 128). It is therefore important for the argument of a strange temporality of dis:connectivity to recognize the reference to anachronism for a critique of progressive thinking (Butler 2013, 112, 119). This also means that the violence of the past inserts itself into the present (Butler 2013, 127) without unfolding in it as self-identical with the past. The leeway created by this performative disconnectedness of touching temporalities is – without guarantee – an offer for queer connections in the present.

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# Rights (human, animal, environmental)

Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko

The concept of rights as certain entitlements with the associated capacity to make claims in case of their violation (as in constitutional rights, fundamental rights, or human rights) is regarded as a great achievement of modernity, separating our contemporary, developed societies from ancient times. The concept of rights, especially that of international human rights is also often regarded as intrinsically implicated in globalisation either by being part of globalisation processes or by being a tool that can cure at least some of the ills of globalisation (see various contributions in Brysk 2002; Coicaud, Doyle, and Gardner 2003). And while critical voices are present in these debates (for an overview, see Evans and Kirkup 2010), the concept of globalisation and the concept of rights underpinning these discussions omit to consider the integral relationship between connection and disconnection not only in the global condition, but also in the idea of rights. Just like the idea of globalisation, the idea of rights in contemporary scholarship is mostly construed in oppositional terms: either it is expanding and includes more people into its circle or, when inadequately implemented or conceptualized, rights are regarded as excluding some or failing to fully protect them. In this sense, the discourse of rights mostly functions to support the binary understanding of globalisation. The historical development of the idea of rights demonstrates that both processes – exclusion and inclusion – are interdependent and inseparable. The concept of rights is inconceivable without a simultaneous exclusion and inclusion, without an enactment of an ‘active absence’ of certain connections. In this regard, the concept of rights mirrors the concept of globalisation.

The concept of rights presupposes the concept of a human being as an individual. The term ‘individual’ deriving from the Latin *‘in-dividuum’* literally means ‘something indivisible, undividable’ (Lewis and Short 1879, 936). An individual human person to be conceptualized as an indivisible entity requires a rupture which operates as a border around this individual. This border in the form of a rupture or interruption not only artificially extracts this individual from the multiplicity of his or her real connections with the world and the community but also makes invisible many ruptures running through the individual. Ancient Greek and Roman history as well as subsequent medieval and early modern debates that are often considered in the historical explorations of the emergence of rights illustrate well how the concept of the individual and with it the concept of rights emerge as a multitude of interruptions, inclusions and exclusions which co-constitute each other.

The ancient Greek tradition does not have a word which could be translated as ‘rights’ in the sense announced at the beginning of this entry. However, the concept or the idea of rights gradually emerges and complexifies already in ancient Greek

city-states. As highlighted, for instance, by Barta (Barta 2014), the idea of rights in its emerging sense might also have been present in earlier civilizations but this aspect will not be dealt with in this contribution due to space constraints. Initially, for the idea of rights to find its subject – the individual – a rupture from the community occurs: from a clan, a family or from other collective bodies that structured the life of humans in ancient times. In ancient Greece, this rupture is signified and reinforced by such developments as the distinction between intentional and unintentional causing of death in Draco's reforms (Barta 2014, 116), the introduction of the *graphè hybreos* (Requena 2020) or the emergence and politico-legal significance of such concepts as *eunomia* and *isonomia* (Meier 1977). However, like all ruptures, this emergence of an individual as an indivisible single separate entity at the same time leads to a fusion, in the Greek case in the form of a constitution of a new community, a different community that suited the purposes of the Greek polis, which later supplied a foundation for the contemporary European state.

At the same time as the individual holder of rights is constituted as an indivisible entity separate from the community, the expansion and articulation of these rights introduces interruptions within the individual. The debates for and against slavery from ancient Greece to modern times are the most illustrative example. All philosophical justifications of the maintenance of slavery from Aristotle to Kant are developed despite recognition of more and more rights to human beings as individuals. In these justifications, the rupture, which can take many forms, such as reason/emotion, soul/body, or homo noumenon/homo phenomenon, runs within the human being dividing this in-dividual into parts and attributing rights to only one part while depriving the other part of rights (Yahyaoui Krivenko 2023, 49–68). Simultaneously, some human beings such as slaves are associated mostly or exclusively with this other, non-deserving part – emotion, body, homo phenomenon – and are thus either deprived of rights or attributed fewer rights.

Natural rights as inalienable rights that any human being possesses by virtue of being human (Frankel Paul, Miller, and Paul 2005, i) might appear as dissolving all ruptures, all exclusions into a unified vision of humans as worthy of dignity and respect as one single global human family. Any serious engagement with natural rights theories will, however, immediately reveal the continuity of the 'active absence' of some connections in the form of ruptures and interruptions in the natural rights tradition. This tradition is too long and complex to be summarized in a few words as its origins are usually traced back to the Stoics (around 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), continue to be developed and debated in Roman and Medieval times, flourish in modern times and remain actively discussed today (Frankel Paul, Miller, and Paul 2005; Tuck 1979). This continuity can be illustrated here with one particularly telling example. To arrive at the modern meaning of rights as subjective rights (individual claims or entitlements) the idea of the in-dividual in the sense discussed

above is necessary but insufficient. In the gradual articulation of natural rights, this idea of the individual is joined with another set of concepts which denote the capacity of the individual to freely dispose of his or her being and destiny as well as the primacy of this capacity over others' decision-making powers. This view of rights is reflected in the following statement by Grotius:

Civilians call a *faculty* that Right, which every man has to his own; but we shall hereafter, taking it in its strict and proper sense, call it a *right*. This right comprehends the *power* (*potestas*), that we have over ourselves, which is called *liberty* (*libertas*), and the power; that we have over others, as that of a father over his children, and of a master over his slaves. It likewise comprehends *property* (*dominium*), which is either complete or imperfect; of the latter kind is the use or possession of any thing without the property, or power of alienating it, or pledges detained by the creditors till payment be made. There is a third signification, which implies the power of demanding what is due, to which the obligation upon the party indebted, to discharge *what is owing*, corresponds. (Grotius 1901, I.IV, emphasis added)

In this definition, rights are equated with power or the capacity to do something. This capacity to do something, while not entirely overlapping with it, has strong connections to the idea of property as the mastery of a free subject over an inanimate object. Although the term 'property' is expressly mentioned only in relation to one of the aspects comprehended by the term 'right', we can discern it in the overall idea of rights, which in the introductory phrase equates rights with what a man has as 'his own'. Even in the relationship to oneself (the first aspect of rights) there is a subject/object relationship similar to the property relation between a man and himself or 'the power . . . over ourselves'. This power is at the same time denoted as liberty. Therefore, liberty is simply a form of power and control over ourselves, thus implying a rupture within ourselves similar to the rupture implied in most standard justifications of slavery of the time.

This view of rights as property, as the mastery of a free subject over an inanimate object, which continues to be part of the contemporary articulation of rights (Rothbard 2016, 113–120) exemplifies one of the original interruptions which enabled the emergence of the in-dividual as the subject of rights, namely the rupture from the natural world, including animals. As mentioned, the subject of human rights, the in-dividual had to be separated from the broader environment whether constituted by human communities or the natural world. In the Western tradition, this separation occurred in such a way as to situate animals and the environment as inanimate objects over which the human subject of rights has power and the capacity to act in a way maximizing the rights of the individual just like economic profit is maximized in the extraction of natural resources, farming or other economic activities using animals or nature. This is best reflected in the centuries-long debates on humans as beings endowed with reason to separate them from animals

which are apparently deprived of that reason and therefore not deserving of the same treatment as humans (for a reflection on these debates, see Potestà 2009).

More recently, the extension of the language of rights to protect the environment, animals or even artificial intelligence raises the question of whether we might be at the threshold of a new discourse on rights that overcomes the inclusion/exclusion dynamic. More broadly, this raises the question of whether rights without ruptures and interruptions are possible and whether these developments with regard to rights discourse might prefigure a true globalisation without any dis:connect. The existing discourses on animal rights are not very promising in this regard because they mostly rely on historical Western arguments for human rights and simply extend them to animals. For example, by postulating the moral worth of sentient animals who can feel pain (Singer 2004) or by comparing some animals to infants as bearers of life and thus deserving of rights (Regan 1983, 283). Scholars simply displace the rupture that initially encompassed only the adult, wealthy, able-bodied white man to include some animals with some similarities to human beings, just as women or disabled people were gradually included in the circle, without overcoming the function of rupture as an ‘active absence’ of connections and thus conserving the exclusion/inclusion dynamic as such. The discourse on the rights of nature and earth jurisprudence, from which it emerged, (Burdon 2011; Kauffman and Martin 2021) is more interesting in this regard. Instead of centring on the human being or any specific being at all, it focuses on the interdependency of our existence on earth. Moreover, earth jurisprudence and the movement of the rights of nature is not limited to the Western European philosophical and cultural tradition but incorporates insights from indigenous traditions across the globe (→ **Epistemologies, alternative**). In this sense, it indeed appears to neutralize one of the foundational interruptions of the concept of rights, namely that between human beings and the natural world around them. However, caution is advised. The primacy accorded to nature and ‘the natural’ by earth jurisprudence, oftentimes reactivates the centuries-old Ancient Greek *physis/nomos* debate (Heinimann 1945) and thus conceals the potential of creating a new rupture between ‘natural’ and ‘non-natural’. Every time the distinction between natural and non-natural comes to the surface, it also raises the question of who decides about the line separating nature from non-nature. By utilizing the language of rights and using the existing legislative and court structures, the movement of the rights of nature continues to rely on a system built on ruptures and interruptions discussed in this entry, thus potentially reinforcing them since who else but ultimately an individual will bring claims to courts, enact, and implement laws? Perhaps the solution lies in the continuous primary attention to interdependency as in the expression ‘dis:connect’ that is also inaugurated by earth jurisprudence.

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# Secrecy

Callie Wilkinson

For people with Internet access, discovering what is going on in the world around us has seemingly never been easier. Using handheld devices, users can instantaneously transmit images, videos, and messages to global audiences, making it possible for us to witness events unfolding in distant places, involving people that we will likely never meet. Seated before computers or with phones in our hands, we have at our fingertips a wealth of information relating to nearly every country under the sun. Much of this information, like the hundreds of thousands of sensitive records and communications published by WikiLeaks, was never intended for public consumption. According to one assessment written at the dawn of the twenty-first century, ‘thanks to the revolution in information technology, the spread of democratic institutions, and the rise of the global media, keeping secrets has become harder than ever before’ (Finel and Lord 2000, 2). Yet, this apparently inexhaustible supply of open information is dwarfed by the millions of pages of classified documents produced each year, a ‘classified universe’ that is expanding at an unprecedented rate (Galison 2004, 229). This has led commentators to the paradoxical conclusion that we are living both in an age of transparency, and one of augmented secrecy.

The interplay between secrecy and transparency is a good example of processes of global dis:connection at work. The advent of the World Wide Web is usually identified as a major breakthrough in traditional narratives of globalisation; however, the very innovations that have created the conditions for increased connectivity, particularly file-sharing via electronic platforms, are precisely those driving renewed commitments to state secrecy. In the so-called Information Age, billions of dollars are spent on security classifications each year, while national security disclosures are punished with ever greater frequency and severity in courts of law (Aldrich and Moran 2019, 292). These intertwined processes, of secrecy and transparency, connectivity and disconnectivity, confound linear narratives of globalisation. As the speed and volume of global communications increase, so too does the desire to prevent certain kinds of information from circulating. New forms of online communication are accompanied by new forms of surveillance and control. For example, the development of new digital platforms for user-generated content in the early 2000s caused military authorities to introduce new rules prohibiting military personnel from blogging, commenting online, or accessing popular social media sites. Yet, many of these regulations have since been moderated or revoked as the military itself has tried to instrumentalise social media to improve its public image (Merrin 2019, 112–15). Thus, the history of state secrecy does not follow a

linear trajectory, from openness to closure or vice versa; instead, secrecy and transparency, like connection and disconnection, exist in dynamic tension.

In addition to challenging linear models of global connectivity, the study of state secrecy also complicates common assumptions about who is being disconnected. Recent histories of globalisation have emphasized the unevenness with which information circulates, contrary to the frictionless movement implied by the metaphor of 'information flows'. Unequal access to information, in this view, corresponds to inequalities along the lines of gender, race, and class, as well as the global inequalities of wealth and privilege that distinguish Western Europe and North America from the rest of the world. This view is reflected, for example, in the concept of 'digital divide': the exclusion of particular groups or geographies from the benefits of digital technology (Heeks 2022, 689–90). State secrecy, however, can affect even those whom we are accustomed to considering as plugged in. For example, using recently declassified records, historians of the Cold War have revealed how the American government was engaging in risky nuclear alert operations that were purposefully discernible to Soviet and North Vietnamese intelligence agencies but concealed from American citizens (Sagan and Suri 2003, 179–81). Writing in the early 2000s, William Arkin (2005, 12) noted that American military operations in the Middle East were visible to regional military leaders, and that their classified status applied only to the American public. Thus, although the conventional wisdom around military secrecy is that it is designed to shield sensitive information from enemy eyes, it is just as often the domestic public who are kept deliberately uninformed (Masco 2010, 450). The history of secrecy, in other words, highlights how dis:connections in global information networks can be deliberate as well as incidental, and are often political and ideological as well as infrastructural.

To be sure, there are many kinds of secrets, not all of which are pernicious. According to philosopher Sissela Bok's (1982, 5) definition, secrecy is nothing more than intentional concealment. No doubt we all have secrets of our own, information which, though trivial in the grand scheme of things, we would rather not broadcast to the world. As noted by sociologist Georg Simmel (1906, 466) (whose work has been foundational to secrecy studies), secrecy is the prerequisite for individuality, without which there could be no inner life. On a day-to-day basis, social interaction would quickly become unbearable under conditions of complete transparency. There are, likewise, good reasons why lawyers, doctors, and journalists adhere to conventions of professional secrecy; they could not fulfil their essential functions otherwise. These kinds of secrets, however, are unlikely to have global implications. In the security sector, by contrast, the stakes are incomparably higher. Secrecy, in this context, can make it difficult for democratic citizens to understand what is being done in their name, thus impeding their ability to hold their own governments to account (Masco 2010, 450). At the international level, secrecy undermines

systems of global governance, making it difficult to enforce human rights protections or international agreements regulating the use of weapons of mass destruction. These are matters of life and death, with the potential to alter the world order.

State secrets of this type are as old as the state itself, but the ideas and practices surrounding them have changed dramatically. For much of human history, secrets were seen as an acceptable technique of governance. Under an absolutist regime, in which monarch and state were conceptually indivisible, a ruler possessed (at least in theory) an unquestionable prerogative to keep his own counsel. In this world, secret treaties were a matter of course, because the general population had no say in matters of war or peace. To distinguish from modern conceptualizations of state secrecy, theorist Eva Horn (2011, 111) labels this the logic of ‘*arcanum*’; ‘these arcana’, she observes, ‘are less a body of dark secrets than a prudent code of conduct for princes who are neither particularly godless nor amoral.’ Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political theorists, among them Botero, Bodin, Ammirato, and Clapmarius, elaborated various techniques of deceit and dissimulation premised on this logic.

Changing theories of sovereignty produced, in turn, changing conceptualizations of state secrecy. Where sovereignty resides with the people, government must be open to be legitimate. In the eighteenth century, as modern ideals of transparency and accountability crystallized, the concept of state secrets likewise began to accrue many of the negative connotations that it still possesses today. Democratization thus engendered a new relationship to the secret, ‘the logic of *secretum*’, according to which, Horn (2011, 112) writes, ‘the political secret is always accompanied by distrust, speculation, and a will to know more.’ Arguments based on *raison d’état* continued to feature prominently in public discourse, just as they do today, but now had to compete with new convictions about the dangers of secrecy, and the promise of transparency. Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham, for example, were convinced that greater openness would produce a more just international system.

Just as official secrecy was beginning to acquire something of a moral stigma however, it was also becoming more necessary than ever before. Developments in travel (→ **Transport**; → **Im/mobility**) and communications (→ **Communication Technologies**) in the nineteenth century meant that information could travel farther, faster; in this context, critical intelligence could more easily make its way into enemy hands before its strategic usefulness had expired. In an increasingly connected world, governments found it necessary to introduce an altogether new form of disconnection: a legal regime of secrecy.

Britain was the first country to introduce official secrets legislation and provides a good illustration of this historical process at work. The expansion of the press at the end of the eighteenth century required a rethinking of how military

secrecy, in particular, should be defined and policed. Holding correspondence with or giving intelligence to the enemy had long been an offense punishable by death, but the new phenomenon of soldiers writing letters to the newspapers did not neatly fit either of these categories. The General Orders of Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, issued in 1810, are usually cited as the first instance in which the military offence of ‘injurious disclosures’ was formally identified and addressed. Wellington was incensed that British officers were writing indiscreet letters to the press, since French and Spanish military authorities were easily able to subscribe to these newspapers and thus profit by this intelligence. Wellington appealed to the gentlemanly discretion of his officers, and merely advised them to be careful rather than forbidding them from writing; however, as a truly global mass media began to develop in the nineteenth century, more stringent measures began to be implemented. During the Crimean War (1853–6), improvements in transport and communications meant that tactical information circulated rapidly between Britain, Russia, and the front, causing military authorities to formally prohibit military personnel from writing to the press (Wilkinson 2009, 4). Soldiers continued to write their anonymous letters, however, and so, too, did government officials. As the century wore on, selling state secrets to the newspapers developed into a lucrative business, one that poorly paid clerks were not averse to profiting from. This problem prompted the introduction of the Official Secrets Acts of 1889 and 1911 (Moran 2012, 31). These acts provided the model for the development of state secrets legislation across the empire, including Australia, Canada, and India (Nasu 2015, 369). In the United States, this classification system expanded dramatically in the aftermath of the Second World War, when, against the backdrop of the Cold War, a new national security state took shape overseen by novel government institutions like the CIA and the NSA (Masco 2010, 442).

The long-term effects of these classification systems are difficult to assess precisely because we do not know for certain what has been concealed from us. While there are certain secrets whose existence we can infer even if their substance remains obscure (what David E. Pozen dubbed ‘shallow’ secrets), more troubling are the ‘deep secrets’, the unknown unknowns, about which we cannot even begin to speculate (Pozen 2010, 274). As formerly classified documents gradually filter into public archives, historians and political scientists have tried to identify patterns in what was hidden, why, and with what consequences. Perhaps the most well-known such project is the History Lab at Columbia, which harnessed machine learning techniques to process a vast corpus of declassified documents. For historian and project leader Matthew Connelly, the need for this kind of work is urgent. By better understanding how state secrecy operated in the past, Connelly (2023, 11) argues, historians can help to develop new policies that will increase accountability, information security, and public confidence.

For analysts interested in understanding contemporary cultures of secrecy, different approaches are needed. State secrets, though elusive, do still leave traces for those who know where to look, because these secrets are not so easy to keep as one might suppose. For one thing, keeping state secrets means relying on officials to abide by certain codes; as more and more tasks are outsourced to private contractors, the circle of trust is broken, with the result that large-scale document dumps are becoming a routine part of the media landscape. Moreover, though secrets are traditionally conceptualized as absences (→ **Absences**), they often take material forms, occupy space, and produce tell-tale signs. As Trevor Paglen (2010, 760) illustrated using the example of stealth fighter jets, ‘because there are no such things as invisible factories, airplanes made out of unearthly ghost-matter, or workers who “don’t exist,” logics of secrecy are contradicted by their material implementations.’ The fact that secrecy is a process, requiring human labour and material infrastructure, is what makes secrecy studies possible. Secrets take work, and they are always in danger of being betrayed. As William Walters (2021, 10) notes, modern scholars of secrecy ‘engage secrecy not in terms of binaries or static boundaries but rather dynamic social processes in which concealment, leaking, covering-up, exposing . . . are treated as uncertain practices and effects to be followed over time.’

One of the key insights emanating from this interdisciplinary field is thus that secrecy and transparency should not be conceived in binary terms. Just as connection and disconnection represent different aspects of the same globalizing processes, secrecy and transparency should be conceived as mutually constitutive rather than opposing forces. Transparency might seem like the antithesis of secrecy, but in practice disclosure can be a tool to confuse and distract, to protect some secrets by revealing others. For example, as press historian Sam Lebovic (2016, 187) has pointed out, there is a long tradition of government figures using leaks for partisan purposes, including to manipulate public opinion. Conversely, secrecy is often invested with negative connotations but can be a prerequisite for greater transparency; think, for example, of whistleblower protections, or the imperative for journalists to protect their sources. Transparency is therefore not inherently good, nor is secrecy inherently bad; both are tools that are used tactically in political struggles.

In a related fashion, theorists have tried to temper popular optimism in the transformative potential of transparency. This optimism, Richard Fenster (2015, 152) argues, is premised upon an overly simplistic ‘cybernetic’ or ‘information model’ according to which information merely needs to be made public to produce an impact. Just because information is technically accessible, does not mean that it will be understood or acted upon. Using the example of Abu Ghraib, Lisa Stampnitzky (2020, 519) demonstrates that evidence of torture was publicized via major news outlets long before the scandal broke; this leads her to distinguish between

the mere publicization of information (what she calls ‘exposure’), and ‘revelation’, or, the ‘collective recognition that there has been a significant change in what is publicly known.’ Transparency, in other words, is not an end in and of itself, but instead provides the conditions in which informed debate can potentially (though not necessarily) take place.

As this suggests, one of the major preoccupations of secrecy studies is with secrets that are not in fact secret at all but are still absent from public discussion. Anthropologist Michael Taussig (1999, 5) influentially coined the term ‘public secret’ to describe ‘that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated’. Public secrets or open secrets have become a major preoccupation within secrecy studies, because they raise difficult questions about our own responsibilities as democratic subjects. As theorist Clare Birchall (Birchall 2011, 19) phrased it, with reference to the war on terror, ‘what lines of responsibility are there in the instance of a public which has access to information about governmental kidnapping, indefinite detention and prisoner abuse but which chooses to continue *as if* such information were secret?’ For Jodi Dean (2018), the fixation with secrets can be, not just an unhelpful distraction, but also an excuse for not mobilizing in pursuit of structural change. The bottom line is that, while secrecy is a problem in democratic society, so too is passivity and inattention.

Studying secrecy, in short, involves thinking about all kinds of absences and interruptions (→ **Interruptions**). Most obviously, classification regimes can impede the free flow of information, making it difficult to know what governments are doing, or to hold them to account. These measures were first introduced in response to improved transport and communication technologies and a context of intensifying transnational exchanges in the nineteenth century. As newly declassified documents make their way into the public domain, historians are developing a clearer understanding of how state secrecy shaped (and obscured) global entanglements in the twentieth century. Yet, while national security secrets might be absent from the official record (at least for the moment), scholars have reminded us that they manifest themselves in other ways. After all, military operations that are secret from the point of view of the domestic public are usually far from secret to the populations targeted by them. Moreover, while some human rights violations might occur in secret, still more are taking place in full view. Thanks to social media, we are inundated daily with images of human death and suffering. This brings us to a more troubling kind of absence: an absence of attention or even, perhaps, of compassion. Knowing about wars unfolding in distant places is not the same as caring about them, and this, perhaps, is the more important form of global disconnection.

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# Sound

Eckehard Pistrick

## **Sonic dis:connectivities**

There is the assumption that sounds flow around the world, connecting people globally, enabling communication, and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Sounds in this idealized vision seem to be the medium of connectivity. Although Appadurai (1996) in his list of global flows does not refer directly to sound, we could think of ‘soundscapes’ as an addendum to ‘ideoscapes’ and ‘ethnoscapes’, contributing to the shrinking of the world. This seems particularly evident if we understand sound as a commodity, e.g. as hybrid ‘world music’, streamed through global platforms and available simultaneously at different places at the same time. But sound is much more than the increasing glocalization and commodification of once space-, time- and community-bound musical traditions, leading into new hybrid aesthetics and forms of ‘musical cosmopolitanism’ (Stokes 2007).

Sounds relate in many ways to globalisation and deglobalisation processes. Sound (as well as musicians and their musical instruments) as a substantial cultural element has travelled across the globe with colonial, ideological and commercial agendas, producing different sorts of cultural hybridity. But sound, including diverse forms of self-chosen and imposed silences, unsoundings, mutings, and noises, has also strengthened forms of disintegration and of racial, ethnic, and gendered exclusions. Sound in itself may signify inequalities, oppression and exclusions. Sound may irritate, or disturb, it may be indicative and reflective about injustice, violence (O’Connell and Castelo-Branco 2010; Velasco-Pufleau and Atlani-Duault 2020) and disconnectivities in a world of increasing inequalities.

Sound’s very nature as a floating medium, as an immaterial ephemeral element often taking an ‘in-between’ position between cultures, is, in this sense, a privileged medium that allows for a reading of history as simultaneously connected and disconnected. Sound continuously mobilizes and fosters, disconnects and subverts human relationships.

Ethnomusicology as a discipline is not only an ear-witness to the state of the world through documentation, aesthetically guided reflection or through attempts to point at the socio-cultural and ecological transformation of the world through a form of sonic journalism (Cusack 2016). The discipline resonates with the idea to amplify voices of marginalized, disadvantaged communities, of those who are unheard in the noisiness of our world. Those researchers who follow this agenda consider ethnomusicology as a corrective to global music markets, to forms of cultural exploitation, providing at least an academic lobby for those who remain unheard, and for indigenous voices and forms of knowledge. Ethnomusicologists

engage in attempts to ‘improve’ the world as a phonosphere shared by humans, animals and ecosystems, they dedicate themselves to balancing out these sounds and/or to ‘improve’ the sonic soundscape in urban settings (e.g. in the case of the World Soundscape Project established in the early 1970s).

More recent but equally important research links this shared phonosphere to issues of citizenship, cosmopolitanism and migration (Stokes 2023). There is also the attempt to think of sound as a resource for alternative artistic reflection (through work with archival material and revitalization of musical practices). Much of this reflection examines the potentiality of sound, its capacity to change or question realities and to address the inequalities in this world. There is more and more evidence that sounds possess an important agency in ‘how particular subjects and bodies, individuals and collectivities creatively negotiate systems of domination, gaining momentum and guidance through listening and being heard, sounding and unsounding particular acoustics of assembly and resistance’ (LaBelle 2018, 4). In this interpretation, every act of sounding out has the potential to subvert, to speak back to the systems and power relations which rule this world.

The career of Diana Herr (alias Deena), a German student who accidentally became a star of Ugandan popular music, is a story of connectivity through sound. As a 22-year-old student and social worker in East Africa, she attended concerts of local pop music in the Luganda language and soon attempted to cover these songs. Although she did not speak Luganda at the time, she soon became successfully connected to the local music industry. With her single ‘Mumulete’ (2015) she had a viral hit in the whole of East Africa as the first white woman to sing in Luganda. Despite her success in getting connected to the local culture and in successfully appropriating local music aesthetics, the whole story is also one of disconnectedness. Despite a positively connoted ‘cultural appropriation’ with inverse exoticism, her appearance also attracted criticism from African audiences and music journalists who contested the authenticity of her songs ‘being White on the outside, Black on the inside’ (Luggya 2015). Also the fact that friends and music arrangers had to translate her texts into Luganda is telling about her partial disconnectedness to local culture, leaving her ‘voiceless’, despite having a voice to sing.

### **Soundings as processes**

The key to understanding sound differently, and as being invested with agency, is to speak of soundings as dynamic processes bound to social processes, political framings and/or specific aesthetic choices. Sounding out as an action is always a choice, bound to implicit and explicit social motivations. It may be a tactical or strategic choice related to the impulse to connect or to disconnect in social situations.

Sound also relates to absencing and presencing processes – audibilities and inaudibilities, which in turn relate to the visibilities and invisibilities in this world. The processuality of becoming heard, of acquiring a voice in the musical as well as in the metaphorical sense is what is most interesting here. Under which conditions do we perceive a sound, a voice or a word as welcome and under which conditions is its perception rejected?

The contemplation of the gradual disappearance of sounds due to the loss of musical knowledge, musical instruments and vocal traditions has been a constant source of self-legitimization for the discipline of ethnomusicology. Less attention has been given to research dedicated to processes under which sounds emerge and come into being with a certain functionality or social significance. Similarly, the disappearance and fading out of sounds has received relatively little attention in scholarly research. I would like to argue that focusing on how sounds emerge and disappear is of crucial importance to our understanding of the relationship of sound with power relations.

On the level of perception, the very act of listening is crucial to how we understand the phonosphere around us. We are constantly mis-hearing and over-hearing sonic events around us. There is a constant filtering, based on cultural assumptions, personal acculturations and listening conventions. Noise, for example, is often considered as undesirable. Attali (1985) therefore sees a potential to rehabilitate noise as a transgressive agent, working against the idea of ‘proper music’ as a structured attempt ‘to make people forget, make them believe, silence them’ (Attali 1985, 19). Silence should also be reconceptualized in this sense. In the established view, silence is predominantly seen as a ‘currency of power’ (Achino-Loeb 2005), as a powerless state of being deprived of voice or sound, as a form of speechlessness. Instead, silence is often a medium of communication, even of resistance to dominant discourses.

Another challenge is the colonial legacy and the resultant need to decolonize listening or at least invent new modes of listening, incorporating indigenous forms of ‘aurality’, reflecting the politics of the voice (Ochoa Gautier 2014).

If we discuss sound in relation to the field of dis:connection, we witness the important role of sound in dynamics of exclusion (→ **Exclusion/Inclusion**), of ‘muting’ voices, of creating atmospheres of fear, speechlessness and sonic suspension. One example of storing or collecting these undesired sounds of exclusion is the Manus recording project, a self-organized community platform that aims to revalidate seemingly insignificant sonic everyday events, in order to provide dignity and a voice to refugees on Manus Island (→ **Islands**), held in detention by Australian authorities (Manus Recording Project 2024). As an oral history project, documenting people’s experience of immigration detention, sound (ten-minute audio recordings) offers here a powerful way to respond to official discourses and

shows that connectedness through mobile communication persists even in situations of physical isolation.

Another example is the current revalidation of music once considered ‘subculture’ or ‘underground’, which therefore remained largely inaudible. The *Gastarbeiter* songs of the Turkish guest workers in Germany from the 1960s and 1970s, which mixed vulgar colloquial German with Turkish expressions and commented on exploitation and disintegration, have experienced an astonishing success in a post-migrant society. The ‘Deutschlandlieder – Almanya Türküleri’ Tour in 2021–2022, which brought on stage singers such as the 85-year-old Metin Türköz, one of the main protagonists of the songs of exile (*gurbet türküleri*) at the time, and second-generation musicians such as rapper Eko Fresh was a huge success (*Deutschlandlieder* 2024). In the same way, the two-volume edition ‘Songs of *Gastarbeiter*’ on TRIKONT label, researched and remixed by DJ Imran Ayata and Bülent Kullukcu, re-framed sonic memories once restricted to intimate private settings and kept in private tape collections.

The unheard becomes heard, the inaudible becomes audible due to changed political circumstances, due to a heightened sensitivity towards what is sounding, which contributes to the embracing of diversity in the public sphere. But what is the impulse behind the agenda to make the inaudible audible? Who is entitled to do so? What kind of intervening force is needed?

Ideally, this step from inaudibility to audibility should be taken by those who perform and who own these sounds. They should reconsider the potentialities of their recordings, the agency, the multiple options to re-listen, to re-evaluate soundings. In many cases, these initiatives to excavate sounds in the sense of a sonic archaeology come from sound art or artistic research projects, which question sonic events, their taken-for-granted social embeddedness, revealing their often multi-semantic character. One telling example is the ‘Evasive Choir’ project, realized in 2021 by interdisciplinary Bulgarian artist Antoni Rayzhekov. In thirty half-open tin cans with speakers, he explores the silences, rhetorical pauses and breaths of famous Bulgarian politicians, resulting in a ‘chorus of the muffled’. While there is a certain phonosphere which connects the sound installation, the voices, however, remain disconnected, bound to their can, leading a disconnected self-referential inner monologue. Rayzhekov is explicit in his description of the processuality of sounds which emerge and disappear: ‘We encounter the voice before, between, and beyond language in order to discover the depths of the unspoken, the silenced, the not-to-be-spoken, or that which is impossible to be voiced out’ (Rayzhekov 2021).

### Sounding mobilities

The field of migration studies is a particularly fertile ground for the study of the interrelation between sound, connectivities and disconnectivities. If we want to look at or estimate the real effect of disconnectivities and policies of silencing, we can refer to the biographies of migrated musicians (see Le Menestrel 2020; Pistrick 2020). We enter here a field of human experience, characterized by creative deprivation, powerlessness, being stuck in waiting, converging with an imposed silence. The biography provides a looking-glass through which we can see how mobility also impacts the social status and recognition of a musician in Diasporic settings.

As my own long-term fieldwork with individual artists in German reception centres has shown, mobility often results in a creative impasse. Ibrahima, one of the musicians I have followed for almost five years, for example, was well integrated into the local music business in Burkina Faso, with excellent media connections and with a constant flow of revenue through the Burkina Agency of Music rights (SACEM Burkina Faso). Fleeing in 2009 from the death menaces of the IS to Germany, he suddenly found himself in the position of a dis-integrated, low-qualified worker in Germany and in the position of being a musician without an audience. The disconnectivity in this case is a deeply corporeal one. It implies, at least for the first year in Germany, a sort of voicelessness and a non-creative state of mind, because one is under constant pressure to proceed with one's asylum claim, learn the language and earn a living.

The musicians experience the disconnectivity on two levels. On the emotional level, 'networks of care and support and affection are sometimes significantly dispersed' (Morley 2017, 140). On the level of creativity, disconnectivity means that access to music production and dissemination is blocked permanently. Disconnectivity, especially for creative migrants, is therefore often perceived as an imposed and deeply violent state, which may lead to the loss of social, entrepreneurial, or professional networks, the loss of artistic freedom and even to a 'cultural trauma'.

Only after a seemingly never-ending transitional period, did Ibrahima gain access to performance venues of the Diaspora community in which he became integrated as a guest musician. But also in this case disconnectivity and connectivity interrelate. The singer remains, despite his loss of social status and his lowered social status in Germany, connected to networks of music production and dissemination back in his home country. He produced, for example, a commissioned election song for the candidate of the opposition which was played during election campaigns all over the country. Key in this context was the mobile phone (→ **Communication Technologies**) as a space-shrinking technology and an effective creative tool, enabling self-empowerment, self-realization and a degree of connectedness. At the

same time, the mobile itself can be understood as a ‘capsular’ ‘technology with a tendency to reinforce the narrowing of social bonds’ (Morley 2017, 12).

Ultimately, musicians are actively seeking (new) audiences beyond the Diasporic networks, virtual networks and imagined ones. This quest has an interesting ambiguous dimension in terms of dwelling and of (re)attachment to places. On the one hand, migrant musicians try to produce their music in spaces between the real and the imagined, in a space of ‘in-betweenness’ with multiple affective, spatial and symbolic attachments where a new creativity and new sounds emerge. On the other hand, through musicking itself (including the act of (co)listening and amateur music practices), they nourish a continuous longing to find ‘one’s space’ in a physical, social and metaphorical sense, which may include modalities of belonging virtually. These spaces of belonging may be ephemeral and vanishing but they are considered as a productive way of temporal-bound dwelling resulting in the construction of a creative space of one’s own. They allow musicians to re-assert their own belonging and to creatively (re)orient themselves in a new environment.

### Conclusion

Sound is still an underestimated medium in social science research which allows for the transition between connectedness and disconnectedness. It helps to maintain ties to memories, and embodied experiences of the past, and as a medium allows us to dwell, to reorient oneself and to find a shelter in new, potentially hostile places. If we re-direct our sense of hearing away from sonic objects and instead turn our ears to the unheard, and unsounding, we might discover that socially speaking, it is increasingly important what happens before and after any sounding event. It matters how soundings are embedded into silences and non amplified framings and how these frames influence how sounds are perceived.

Thinking through sound means thinking connectivities and disconnectivities through the senses, and through embodied performative experiences. It also points to the importance and value of aesthetics in the smooth transition from connectedness to disconnectedness, as it is especially the ‘way’, the ‘style’, the ‘timbre’, a certain intonation, through which the sounding becomes meaningful and (mis) understood.

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# Transborder

Marta Smolińska

A bridge – as philosophers have written – is something that connects two banks, but also indicates their separateness. This ambivalence is particularly evident in cities on border rivers, such as Frankfurt (Oder) and Ślubice, which are situated on the Oder and thus on the German-Polish border. The two cities are both a common organism and two separate parts. This state of dis:connectivity was diagnosed there by the artist and activist Michael Kurzwelly, who established Ślubfurt – a town straddling the border – in 1999. This border city is a phenomenon in which transbordering processes can be observed, related to the permeability of the border and its complex, processual condition. This text is therefore both an analysis of the theoretical potential of the term ‘transborder’ and a case study of the city of Ślubfurt as an optimal example of the term ‘transborder’ in practice.

‘Ślubfurt is the first city worldwide being located halfly [sic] in Poland and halfly in Germany. The city has been created in 1999. Since 2000 it is registered in the European City Index (ECI).’ (Kurzwelly n.d.). Kurzwelly is aware that: ‘Divided cities are the wounds of history. The large ones cause suffering in the consciousness of the world, like the once-divided Berlin and the divided Jerusalem; the small ones only worry their neighbours.’ (Jajeśniak-Quast and Stokłosa 2000: 9). It is with and for these neighbours that the artist launched the initiative to found ‘Ślubfurt’.

The experience of sharing/separating (both the German *teilen* and the Polish *dzielić* can mean both ‘to separate, divide’ and ‘to share’) goes perfectly to the heart of transborder processes. The words *teilen/dzielić* designate the primary categories of dis:connectivity as well. For two nations *share* the same geography, climate, and vegetation in these border regions. At the same time, the border *divides* these two nations into separate and different political, linguistic, and cultural spaces, which have separate, different approaches to the past, the present, and the future. All these phenomena intensify the dynamics evident in the border regions, and transborder processes become the subject of art.

Border art is thus a sensitive seismograph of the socio-political situation in the border zone, one which measures critical borderscaping processes and the processual ontology of the border, automatically becoming not merely an adequate but a fascinating, revealing field of border studies. The concept of borderscape and borderscaping, which underlines processuality, are naturally crucial to interdisciplinary analyses of works connected with dis:connectivity in the border zone. According to Schimanski and Wolfe, ‘[t]his neologism, inspired by Arjun Appadurai’s theory of “scapes” (1990), denotes a net of signs and versions of the border stretching out from its concrete site and insinuating itself into a multiplicity of

fields and locations, involving in effect everything taking part in the bordering process.’ (Schimanski and Wolfe 2017, 7).

Ślubfurt as a fictitious town and processual border art phenomenon has its own parliament, language (‘Ślubfurtisch’), municipal coat of arms, newspaper, and even founding charter, drawn up by students at the European University Viadrina. In the city’s official history, in the section tellingly entitled *Erased Border* (German: *Ausradierte Grenze*, Polish: *Wymazana granica*), we can read about the ideas that united progressive-minded citizens of Ślubice and Frankfurt/Oder, who see a great opportunity in uniting the two cities: ‘This means that Ślubfurt is the first town anywhere in the world to be growing out of the future into the present, so to speak, and hence also to be changing its view of the past.’<sup>1</sup> The transborder strategies, however, are not only about cultural and artistic exchange, but also economic issues and migration policy (→ **Capital**, → **Postmigration/Migration**). In this context, the border appears as a membrane that is permeable from both sides to those who have the requisite documents.

Kurzweily defines Ślubfurt both as a construct of reality and as ‘the utopia on the Oder’. (Kurzweily 2019, n.p.). He sees the river as the city’s backbone, as what binds it together rather than what divides it. For Jouni Häkli, it functions as a boundary object that activates transnational communication and acts as a medium by which the divisive function of the border can be overcome (Häkli 2011, 24). Tim Wiese of Deutschlandfunk Kultur, who interviewed Kurzweily in November 2019 (Kurzweily 2019, n.p.), believes that this fantasy town has brought a great deal of civil engagement to the border region. In this context, the Oder bridge in Ślubfurt takes on particular significance, because it no longer plays the role of national border, but is a key artery of communication and interaction between the two halves of this fictitious, idealistic city. It is more a phantom border than a barrier, because a remarkable microclimate flourishes in the space between the cultures there. As an artist and curator, Kurzweily holds the firm conviction that art is the best medium for initiating borderscaping processes and producing multidimensional border effects on the Oder border.

In Ślubfurt, the Oder is seen not as a river border, but rather as a boundary object that binds the borderscape together across national divides and supports socio-cultural communication between diverse actors. The border itself is thus deliberately blurred.

For 2020, Kurzweily planned a revitalization of Ślubfurt, recording his vision in a revitalization plan. He paid most attention to the Oder as a border river and

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations and information about Ślubfurt come from the website: <https://nowa-amerika.eu/slubfurt-3/>. Accessed 11 February 2024.

to the bridge over the Oder as a phenomenon of dis:connectivity: the bridge on the map was very wide, culverting a large area of the river's surface within the town. He envisaged a new quarter, designated 'Neue Siedlung' in the revitalization plan. Ślubfurt town hall was to be situated on this widened bridge, alongside other buildings and green spaces. In his vision, Kurzwelly, the subversive cartographer, thus bound the two banks of the Oder even closer together, and created yet more shared spaces than there are today. The extended surface of the Oder bridge would replace the existing narrow bridge and activate the Oder as a boundary object more intensively: as a stage for transnational, transborder communication and for German-Polish exchange.

However, Ślubfurt – as befits an ideal example of transborder processes – is not just about interaction between Poles and Germans. In the Bridge Plaza (German: *Brückenplatz*, Polish: *Plac Mostowy*), Kurzwelly runs a welcoming place where everyone can find refuge and asylum. On the Ślubfurt website, we read: 'Since 2016 the "Bridge Plaza" has become a new home for many new Ślubfurt residents.' Transborder processes develop here as simple and basic interactions of refugees with Ślubfurt residents and other newcomers.

In the context of the transborder meaning of the bridge, the very location and name of this asylum seem non-coincidental and take on metaphorical significance. Ślubfurt is thus becoming a special place not only because of the activation of transborder processes between Germany and Poland, but also because of the presence of refugees from Africa and Asia. Migrants bring their own border experiences, but also the experience of Otherness. The Bridge Plaza hosts concerts, theatrical performances, communal cooking, and people who find themselves in Ślubfurt with refugee status can also open their service points and workshops there. The market, the café and the intercultural garden are important elements. It is also simply a place to meet, be together, share experiences, celebrate dis:connectivity and make connections. Migration and flight thus cause a substantial change to self-awareness and the experience of alienness.

It is this place that Kurzwelly describes as 'the agora of Ślubfurt', as well as a laboratory for artists who analyse, initiate and interpret transborder and borderscaping processes. The existence of this asylum dynamises the German-Polish borderscape and enriches it with migration-related aspects. The transbordering processes initiated by Kurzwelly are therefore not only about integrating the inhabitants of Ślubfurt itself with each other, but also about supporting refugees who choose this utopia on the Oder as their place of residence after leaving their country. Ślubfurt thus becomes a dynamic and processual transborder and trans-cultural phenomenon (→ **Transcultural/Transculturation**), which focuses, as if through a lens, the processes associated with border areas in times of migration:

‘What emerges in the encounter between two (or perhaps many) cultures will always contain elements of both (or many) cultures, but also amounts, at least in part, to something distinct, for it possesses some new attribute proper only to itself.’ (Ortiz 2002, 260). Regardless of whether we call this phenomenon the transcultural or transculturation, Fernando Ortiz argues that both of the observed cultures engage in the cultural exchange with equal weight:

‘Every [. . .] transculturation is a process in which something is always given in return for what one receives, a system of give and take. It is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, nor even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent.’ (Malinowski 1995, lviii).

And this is the precise nature of Kurzwelly’s work: at odds with both cultures – Polish and German, although it must be noted that both are deeply embedded in globalism and are already hybrids on their own: ‘[. . .] cultures are not pure, authentic and locally bounded; rather they are syncretic and hybridized products of interactions across space.’ (Barker 2011, 443). Słubfurt is becoming such a hybrid, within which important historical dates make their mark: 2004 – Poland’s accession to the European Union, 2007 – Poland joining the Schengen area, or 2015 as the time of Europe’s biggest migration crisis. As transculturalism theorists emphasise:

‘Unlike the static quality inherent to categories like the multicultural and intercultural, the notion of the transcultural suggests a dynamic vision of culture that cannot be grasped as a closed circle or some flat and monolithic surface, but must be seen as the field on which a continuous process of negotiation and transaction unfolds.’ (Deja 2015, 91).

To further strengthen this dynamic, Kurzwelly has established a multi-year project entitled the *Transbordering Laboratory*, which is a network of individuals and non-governmental organisations to link borderland areas of national states as cross-border regional entities *In Between*. The idea behind the project was described as follows:

‘Transbordering Laboratory is a research on and between European cities that are divided by borders. We aim to address the idea of forming new realities in such cities and areas. Hard borders became an issue again with the rise of nationalism and the pandemic, especially for citizens in the border territories.’ (Kosovel, Kurzwelly, and Rander 2022). The authors point out that many border cities began intensive transbordering processes in the 1990s, celebrating both their connection and disconnection. To support these processes, artists and activists are invited to contribute to the development of Europe with its common transborder regions. It is in such places that the fact that the border simultaneously divides and is shared by neighbouring cities becomes most apparent.

Within Kurzweily's project there is a strong emphasis on the role of artists and activists who make transborder processes more visible by analysing their dynamics. In addition, collaboration, learning from similar cities like Słubfurt and awareness of current socio-political contexts are key. These cities of similar status are Cieszyn-Tesin, Haparanda-Tornio, Kerkrade-Herzogenrath, Komarno-Komarom, Nicosia, Nova Gorica-Gorizia, Ruse-Giurgiu and Valga-Valka. This network of cities wants to overcome the concept of the nation state and playfully look for and try out forms other than the dialectic of *us* and *them*. During the conferences held in each of these cities, strategies are to be developed to help achieve these goals. The *Transbordering Laboratory* is thus a project that works on the phenomenon of dis-connectivity, attempting to bring together that which is separated by an inter-state border into one community and one organism. Each of these cities has its own specificities; each can both learn something from Słubfurt and identify new solutions for this utopia on the Oder.

Analysing the dynamics of transbordering, one must take into account the multiplicity shift and complexity shift recently diagnosed by Christian Wille in critical border studies. (Wille 2021) These are evidence that the field now not only focuses on processuality but also understands and implements concepts such as borderscapes, borderwork, and bordertextures. Wille stresses that while within the framework of the processual shift the border is defined as social production, and the relevant methodological principles in this case are decentralization and processualization, in the context of the multiplicity shift the border is construed as a multiple process, and the appropriate methods are multidimensionalization and multilocalization. (Wille 2021, 115) The complexity shift, in turn, uses a definition of the border as a complex formation, for which the optimal methodologies are texturing and relationing. Broadly speaking, the main thrust of these critical revisions of the potential of border studies is to accentuate more strongly the diversity of border-related social practices engaged in by a multitude of heterogeneous actors, agencies, and institutions initiating dis:connectivities. (Wille 2021, 110)

The German-Polish border in Słubfurt is thus a discursive landscape of competing meanings. Transbordering is primarily about shaping the border not on the ground, but in people's mindscapes. It permits the establishment of a powerful connection between processes of social and political transformation, conceptual change, and local experience. I would therefore call Kurzweily an agent of dis:connectivity, who has for years tirelessly not only observed transborder processes, but has himself fuelled them and created the conditions for their intensive development. He works in both the local and the global field, enabling migrants in Słubfurt to integrate with the people there and with others who have just arrived from Africa or Asia. The multi-year nature of this project, which has been further expanded to include the *Transbordering Laboratory* since 2022, contributes to the

creation of a phenomenon unparalleled anywhere else on this scale, in which – like through a lens – issues related to transcultural borderscaping processes, emblematic of the entire contemporary world, come into focus. This new borderland and transbordering community is unceasingly dis:connected.

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# Transcultural/Transculturation

Monica Juneja

The concept of transculturation designates the processes of transformation that unfold through extended contacts and relationships between cultures. The term and its cognates transculture/transcultural/transculturality are an explicit critique of the notion of culture, as it emerged in the humanities and the social sciences in tandem with the idea of the modern nation. The nationally framed understanding of culture continues to rest on the postulate that lifeworlds of identifiable groups are ethnically bound, internally cohesive, and linguistically homogeneous spheres.

Coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, the concept of transculturation undermines the stable nexus posited to exist between culture and the territorial container of the nation-state by drawing our attention to the processuality of cultural formations (Ortiz 1995; see also Juneja 2023, 23–33). Even as its genealogy goes back to Ortiz's writings of the 1940s on the history of Cuba, the notion of transculturation has only now matured to bring forth a distinct theoretical paradigm. Both an episteme and a toolbox, this new ontology of culture forms the kernel of a theory of transculturation that is distinct for its process-oriented dynamism and its concreteness. While transculturation pre-supposes for a large part spatial mobility, it is neither synonymous with nor reducible to it. Rather, its focus on developments through which forms emerge within circuits of exchange make it a field constituted relationally. The ostensible 'cultural' that a theory of transculturation takes as its object is not only fundamentally made through modes of transculturation in the first place, but continuously remade through all subsequent phases of its existence. Processual and continually morphing, such an ontology of culture is also concrete in that it is formed from the ground up, precisely through its interaction between units that are constituted through these very processes. Such a theory endeavours to develop a precise terminological apparatus to describe the many kinds of interaction that constitute its core, rather than subsuming them all under blanket concepts, for instance 'hybridity' or 'flow' or 'circulation'. In this sense, the transcultural can show the way to refine the global by infusing it with greater precision, by allowing scholarship to closely study the dynamics of connection and interruption, of cosmopolitan exchange and antagonism, interaction and refusal, as well as to analyse the morphologies of friction, rejection, or resistance. A transcultural perspective anticipates the issues highlighted by the concept of global dis:connect that has drawn our attention to unrealized or interrupted connections as inseparable from the processes of entanglement, as indeed 'central formative components of it'. Responding to the call for a 'decidedly trans- and interdisciplinary engagement with the concept of disconnectivity' (→ **Introduction**), a theory of transculturation

can contribute to developing a much-needed repertoire of terms and concepts to make sense of disruptions or hiatuses. A close analysis of the processes that unfold under the blanket description provided by the latter terms can produce concrete understandings of the multiple possibilities inherent within constellations that are constituted by an interplay of seemingly contrary movements.

Ortiz's investigation of nation-building processes in Cuba draws our attention to an ever-present tension familiar to us today: the coming into being of a national community was, on the one hand, a product of a transcultural dynamic that followed from migration, multilingualism, and ethnic plurality, all of which were constitutive of the identities of that community. On the other hand, Ortiz confronts these processes with such attempts to stabilize their unruliness by seeking recourse to representations of an integrated cultural unit, cast as the bounded space of the nation and the ideological basis for all fixed identities. The invention of a past considered uncontaminated by cultural contact is analysed by him in terms that point to the workings of power within groups that cut across the coloniser-colonised divide, a perspective that avoids the trap of thinking in binaries that has characterised nationalist positions as well as much of postcolonial and, more recently, decolonial analysis. Equally important, such a tension urges an investigation of the paradoxes and frictions inherent within nation-building processes, which encompass practices of memory-making, or heritage formation, or the challenges of post-migration (→ **Postmigration/Migration**). All of these are subject to contrary pulls between transculturally formed identities of individuals and groups that make up the so-called imagined community and attempts by nations to manufacture a particular version of history by privileging certain strands of culture as authentically national, while marginalizing others.

The above analysis signalled to the predicament of many anti-colonial national movements across the globe. In other words, the nation offered the ground on which a politics of emancipation could be staged, while at the same time it was active in the production of notions such as separate, pure cultures, the authentic native, and bounded identities, all to serve as artifices of power. Viewed in this light, the explanatory potential of the transcultural as an analytical tool exceeds that of the 'transnational', frequently used in global studies to transcend the boundaries of individual nation-states, without, however, disrupting the nexus between the entities 'nation' and 'culture' by unpacking the former and delineating its internal faultlines. Furthermore, viewed from a transcultural perspective, the relationship between the national and the global is more complex and contradictory than conventionally viewed in much of global history. This is owing to the nation's role in resisting the violence of conquest and colonisation, on the one hand, combined, on the other, with its need to stabilise its self-representation through a play of power, dispossession, and everyday violence. The latter, in turn, is sustained by ideologies

and technologies of power, imbricated in global/transcultural attachments. In the domain of art history, a transcultural perspective refuses the choice of the nation as a unit of investigation and characterising principle of the enterprise of art making, even while acknowledging its potential as an imagined realm for artistic positions, a life-giving force in the face of colonialism and neo-colonialism. When adopted as an automatic gesture to frame surveys and units of art historical investigations, the analytical category of the nation is bound to lapse into the ethnographic reflexes that underpin such a choice. And yet, the category of the nation can equally function as a point of critical interrogation, built around questions rather than answers. It can as well serve as an opportunity to redraw the matrix of references within which concepts of culture might be recast.<sup>1</sup>

The writing of global histories today has moved beyond the macro-level analyses that had characterised approaches of the early phases of the paradigm. More recently, studies of the global have engaged in a productive cross-fertilization with micro-historical perspectives, to develop methods with which to negotiate multiple scales (see Trivellato 2011; Epple 2012, 37–47; Berg 2013, 1–13). In addition we witness a positional shift within investigations that now take as their starting point and primary focus regions that were once regarded a periphery of Euro-America, enabling the field to overcome the limitations of both a national framework as well as the provincialism of a single, sealed ‘area’. Methodological impulses from a theory of transculturation can contribute to further refining the procedures of global history, as they address, in particular, the challenge of finding explanatory paradigms for dealing with processes which, following mobility and encounter, are formed through a tension between cultural difference and historical connectivity. Such processes might appear paradoxical in that they combine accommodation, partial absorption, refusal, or engagement on different levels with cultural difference, without however producing synchronicity. The agenda to look for cultural commensurability across distances has frequently led to exclusion or repression of aspects of distinctiveness or the non-commensurable. What are the analytical tools that would help us come to grips with the tension between the commensurable and the incommensurable? And what constitutes the ‘commensurable’? Is it a category that depends on the intellectual and philosophical positions of modern scholarship? The importance attached to the inclusion of artistic practice within the concept of global dis:connect is motivated by a similar concern, that is, to recuperate absent or refused communications that do not always leave a trace in official archives. The project to analyse dis:connection as an ‘aesthetics of omissions’ (→ **Introduction**), or to study the contrary dynamics of forced displacement and fresh place-mak-

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1 These reflections have been fleshed out in detail and using empirical case studies in Juneja 2023.

ing that marks experiences of forced migration, can in turn provide a synergetic impulse to new directions within transcultural studies that investigate enmity as relational and quintessentially ambivalent (Becke, Jaspert, and Kurtz 2024).

The following example from the study of global modernism with a focus on its trajectories in South Asia can serve to illustrate the question of unrealized connections in the face of cultural difference. Following prolific research, recent art historical scholarship has effectively redrawn the map of aesthetic modernism to tell that story, no longer as a single chronicle of diffusion from a centre to absorptive peripheries, but as an expression of a connected, multivalent and, at the same time, uneven modernity. Scholars of South Asia have uncovered copious amounts of material to throw light on artistic experiments that unfolded at several sites across the Indian subcontinent, at the same time drawing our attention to stories of contact between individual actors across the boundaries of the colonial world. Prominent among these was the Austrian scholar, Stella Kramrisch, who in the 1920s became an important scholarly voice and cultural mediator in the Indian art world. In the years she spent in India, she introduced the students and faculty at the universities of Calcutta and Santiniketan to modern European art together with the language of formalist art criticism in a move to free Indian objects from the colonial domains of ethnology or antiquarian studies, and instead to dignify them as ‘art’. The same approach informed her writings in German where she sought to demonstrate to a European readership that Indian art was neither reducible to ‘ornament’, nor to be studied as a source of unspoilt forms that promised a new beginning for Western modernism.<sup>2</sup> It was in this context that Kramrisch was instrumental in curating an important exhibition in Calcutta, today known as the Bauhaus exhibition. In recent years, this show has been singled out as a foundational moment in the history of artistic modernism, and designated as a harbinger of a ‘cosmopolitan avant-garde’ (Bittner and Rhomberg 2013; see also Mitter 2007)<sup>3</sup>—a valorisation that, however, calls for a closer, critical look. The exhibition, which opened in December 1922 in the rooms of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in the heart of colonial Calcutta, brought some 250 works of expressionist and abstract art from Weimar to Calcutta. Alongside of these, a cross-section of Indian artists from Calcutta featured in the event. Their work was informed by varying interpretations of what it meant to be ‘modern’; yet it did not reveal an overt resemblance to or even affinities with the formal language and pictorial concerns of Bauhaus modernism. What united the two was a shared rejection of academic naturalism, introduced to India via colonial art schools. The art world in Calcutta at the time was divided between those

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2 For a more detailed account, see Juneja 2023, 162–71. See also Ziebritzki 2021.

3 Mitter takes the exhibition as the starting point for his account of an Indian avant-garde.

who painted in this ‘Western’ idiom and those who – from a nationalist position – rejected it in favour of a more nativist return to pre-modern styles. The two groups of works – by German artists of the Bauhaus and Indian modernists – could thus be brought together by a curatorial hand, even though their motivating impulses differed and their understanding of modernist form remained pictorially dissimilar. At the Indian Society of Oriental Art, the two sets of works were displayed in adjacent but separate rooms, so there is little evidence of any form of encounter. If anything, the event of 1922 made visible the deep faultlines within the Calcutta art world, highlighting the retraction into ‘Indianness’ as one claim to modernity. The Calcutta Bauhaus exhibition of 1922 furnishes an example of how certain global processes, while propelled by the humanist-cum-vanguard spirit of individual actors – in this case, Kramrisch and the polymath scholar Rabindranath Tagore – falter in the face of contingencies of local practice and divisions within the sites where they unfold. As a result, the intended aims of individual initiatives prove to be at best only partially realisable. This in turn raises questions about the criteria scholarship deploys to judge the long-term effects of such processes. Our evaluation – in this case the valorisation of the show as a global ‘cosmopolitan’ undertaking – often tends to rest, at least in part, on specific intellectual predilections and philosophical convictions of our times. Examples such as this show the way to unpacking the morphology of transculturation, and to make place for failed connections, so that we can speak more precisely across disparate contexts (Juneja 2023, 163–167). Studying dis:connectivity in turn promises to carry these questions further by transcending the scope of early globalisation studies that were often ideologically invested in the search for models of syncretic phenomena.

Negotiating the tension or the shifting relationships between the culturally commensurable and the non-assimilable can also help to recuperate those concepts belonging to disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, which have undergone erasure or flattening due to the diffusion of modern disciplinary taxonomies across the globe, now treated as universal. To take an example from art history: concepts such as ‘vision’, ‘materiality’, ‘originals’ and ‘copies’, or even the concept of ‘art’ – are all used ubiquitously today in art historical discourse that takes place mainly in English or another European language. Do they, however, stand for a shared history and universe of meaning across the globe? Methods of transculturation enable us to look at concepts as migrant notions without, however, remaining trapped in a binary of assimilation versus epistemic violence; the latter is often held to be inflicted by imposing ‘Western’ analytical frames on ‘non-Western’ cultures. It can instead be argued that when concepts migrate – as many did from the Western world to Asian contexts – they disconnect, at least partially, from their original moorings, while taking root in new cultural settings. In such a process, conceptual categories absorb other subterranean notions, or become entangled with

different practices and understandings. Studying these dynamics requires, first, taking a close look at the negotiation between different linguistic sources; secondly, it necessitates extending the formation of a concept beyond purely lexical definitions – in particular for art history – to investigate the interaction between text and visual practice that is crucial to meaning-making and the production of a society's conceptual knowledge. The transcultural trajectories of the term 'art', for instance, bring to light once more a dynamic of absorption, accommodation, fragmentation, and friction, which can serve as a lens through which to make sense of conflicts that erupt, increasingly on a global scale, around images and objects and cannot be contained within a discourse of secular enlightenment versus religious fundamentalism (Flood 2002, 641–659; Mahmood 2009, 836–862; Juneja 2018, 161–189).

A cross-fertilization of a global history of dis:connections with a theory of transculturation can induce a salutary reflection of the underlying epistemic foundations of our disciplines, once we query the understanding of culture they transport. Such a reflection would in turn point the way to non-hierarchical, critical, and capacious disciplines. By privileging an approach that historicizes differences and locates these in a field of forces, transculturation offers a potential tool for unravelling connections, differences, and frictions that govern the relationships of regions across the globe.

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# Transimperial

Daniel Hedinger

Long before the term ‘transimperial’ came into use, postcolonial (→ **Postcolonial**) studies, new imperial history, and global history already gave fascinating insights into the omnipresence and ‘everydayness’ of the human experience of empires. However, the majority of more recent historical work on empires has made use of one particular approach. Many studies have adopted the idea, postulated by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, of bringing the colonizer and the colonized, the centre and the periphery ‘into one analytic field’. (Cooper and Stoler 1997, 15) This has provided us with thrilling insights, but it has also had an unintended side effect: The research has tended to focus on intra-imperial processes and single nation-empires. As transnational and global history have deconstructed the nation and pointed to its fluid boundaries, the colonies have often served as an analytical means of doing so. However, the history of empires beyond the nation, in turn, has remained remarkably neglected for quite a long time as similar approaches were not used systematically to transcend the (nation-)empires’ boundaries. The paradoxical effect has been that empires have often ended up being nationalized. And this is the point at which transimperial history (TIH) intervenes. Simply put, transimperial history aims to bring different empires together in one analytical field by connecting metropolises or colonies belonging to distinct empires.

Transimperial histories, therefore, emphasize connections that go beyond national, colonial, and imperial boundaries, exploring areas that do not neatly align with nation-empire borders. (Potter and Saha 2015, 24) By bringing different empires together, this approach also highlights shared histories that were previously disconnected. Therefore, all possible forms of connectivity have always been central to TIH. Or in other words, without connections, interaction, and mobility (→ **Im/mobility**), there is no transimperiality. It is precisely for this reason that it is valuable to systematically relate the concept of dis:connectivity to TIH. This endeavour will help us complement, enrich, and, simultaneously, critically evaluate our notions of imperial connections, which drive TIH. The following thus explores, firstly, how TIH can benefit from the methodological approach of dis:connectivity. It then turns the tables and asks how the concept of dis:connectivity could profit from the perspective of TIH with its focus on shared imperial histories.

### Dis:connectivity in transimperial history

If the keyword most closely associated with global history is ‘connections’ (Conrad 2016, 64), the same could be said about transimperial history. Therefore, the emphasis on connections alone is not enough to explain the uniqueness of the approach. It has thus been suggested that two additional Cs be introduced into the equation: competition and cooperation.<sup>1</sup> These two have long been integral to empire studies. However, in order to revitalize empire studies methodologically, transimperial history examines colonial competition, cooperation, and connectivity not as separate phenomena but as linked processes. The point is not to isolate cooperation or competition analytically but to shed light on how they reinforced each other and how connectivity plays into this. Additionally, TIH cannot provide a universal theory of connectivity between imperial formations. Nor does it aim to make broad statements detached from specific historical settings about the nature and interplay of cooperation and competition among empires. Instead, the systematic adoption of the approach allows us to identify the extent, density, and diversity of connections between empires at a particular moment in time.

Empires were always connected to other empires, whether on the level of knowledge production, material connections, or through politics of comparison. However, more than proof of connectivity is needed to make a convincing transimperial history. And despite the importance of connections, there has always been one danger: the risk of overemphasizing connectivity. In TIH, a variety of related terms – such as flows, networks (→ **Networks**), entanglements, links, and exchanges – have been utilized to convey the idea of everything being connected (Kamissek and Kreienbaum 2016). One may thus wonder if, as in global history, TIH has also been complicit in overemphasizing connectedness. Although not always the case, there have been instances where it is challenging to deny this claim. One notable example is the focus on travelling actors and their transimperial mobility. Criticism has been directed at how sometimes such narratives have been used to ‘create images of “faceless globetrotters” brought back to life to elucidate global connections’ (Shapiro 2021, 574).

Transimperial history’s bias against all things entangled meant that it neglected most things that interfered with or interrupted (→ **Interruptions**) colonial connections. As a result, discussions of disconnections were rare in transimperial history. There have been a few exceptions: Already in 2005, David Lambert and Alan Lester argued that ‘tracing trans-imperial networks [...] goes beyond comparison

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<sup>1</sup> Hedinger and Heé 2018. What follows is partly taken from this contribution. It was supplemented with new considerations made while writing a book-length introduction to the topic (Hedinger, Heé, and Mizutani forthcoming).

and looks for actual historical connections and disconnections between different sites of empire' (Lambert and Lester 2006, 30). More recently, there has been a call to balance the 'recent overdose' of connectivity by considering interruption, disconnection, and boundaries within a transimperial approach (Hedinger and Heé 2018, 445). However, apart from such programmatic and general statements, there seems to be little empirical focus on disconnections in TIH to date. Nonetheless, with the current crisis of globalisation, there is a growing interest in systematically including the notion of disconnection in TIH. Maritime history and the transimperial Pacific are some areas where these discussions are now emerging (Heé 2024).

If we agree that transimperial history mainly focuses on the interconnected histories of empires while neglecting interruptions or the limitations of those connections, it is evident that TIH could benefit greatly from turning to the concept of dis:connectivity. The questions then are: Which aspects of the concept could be incorporated into TIH research practices? And in what way would TIH benefit from this? First of all, the notion of dis:connectivity offers a whole set of instruments to understand different forms of interruptions. By discussing detours (→ **Detours**), delays, obstruction, resistance, etc., a myriad of topics can be addressed from a transimperial perspective. For disconnections, too, it is not about developing a general theory of how this phenomenon works under colonial conditions, but rather about looking at concrete imperial settings. Furthermore, the consideration of different forms of disconnection gives us the methodological instruments to reflect systematically on a phenomenon not yet addressed in TIH. Rather than solely celebrating connections, the focus would thus shift to processes that interrupt, restrict, and control transimperial flows. Dis:connectivity highlights the interplay between connections and disconnections. Hence, by generating new knowledge on different forms of transimperial interruptions, we could then finally turn to discussing such interplays.

Transimperial disconnections can manifest in various ways. They may concern spaces, actors, and/or chronologies. For example, in the case of spaces, the concept is relevant when examining regions like the Mediterranean. Horden and Purcell's well-known historical work, *The Corrupting Sea*, which led to a surge in Mediterranean scholarship from the early 2000s onwards, stressed the idea of Mediterranean connectedness (Horden and Purcell 2000). However, it has faced criticism for 'an overemphasis on connectivity' (Rommel and Viscomi 2022, 15). The notion of dis:connectivity has the potential to reveal unexplored or previously overlooked aspects by encouraging us to look beyond contact zones and exchanges. Exploring stories depicting the transimperial nature of the Mediterranean and, simultaneously, the disruptions it experienced across different periods and areas could offer new insights into the region's history.

If we turn to transimperial actors, anti-colonial activists come to mind. In this context, transimperial history could pay more attention to power imbalances that restricted interaction and connection among colonial subjects. One might, for example, discuss how regimes attempted to disrupt connections, often through violent means, establishing and enforcing new boundaries. On the other hand, anti-colonial activists from Africa, India, the Near East, and the Caribbean formed global solidarities in their fight against colonialism. However, despite sharing a belief system and worldview, they were also often disconnected by territory, language, and culture (Gani 2022, 56). As such examples show, it may be more productive to ‘disaggregate the elements of global connection and disconnection’ rather than sticking to a binary understanding of both processes (Tworek 2023, 13). And this is precisely what the concept of dis:connectivity advocates.

It also becomes apparent how connections and disconnections are mutually constitutive and interwoven if we discuss transimperial periodizations. One challenging topic here is the global interwar period and the links between late 19th-century colonialism and the two world wars. By applying the concept of dis:connectivity, the complex interplay of deglobalisation and globalisation processes in the interwar world can then be addressed in a more sophisticated way. For instance, fascism can be understood as an anti-globalisation movement that gained traction globally during the 1930s. All over the world, the rise of fascist movements was often fuelled by disrupting economic connections, a phenomenon fascist regimes later even intensified through their *Großraum* and autarky politics. However, the shared history of the Axis powers also reveals their efforts to create global political connections. On a global scale, fascist radicalization was often driven by transimperial connections and competition rather than transnational ones (Hedinger 2017; Hedinger 2021). And in this context, it is important to note that the increase in interactions between fascist intermediaries in Europe and Asia did not always result in greater connectivity. Instead, ongoing competition, which produced interruptions and sustained distances between Asian and European fascist brokers, was also crucial for and characteristic of global fascism. These are only a few of the issues that may be addressed by combining a transimperial perspective with the concept of dis:connectivity.

### **Dis:connectivity beyond the global**

However, the concept of dis:connectivity can also profit from a transimperial perspective. The notion of dis:connectivity is intimately linked to ‘the global’. In TIH, on the other hand, not all connections need to be played out on a global scale, as numerous imperial formations and interactions occurred below and beyond the global level. Besides, not all transimperial exchanges had global aims or conse-

quences (Barth and Cvetkovski 2015). A transimperial perspective may thus instead highlight a wide range of different spatial configurations, which then can be discussed beyond the mere question of global dis:connectivity. This can include imperial hubs, nodes, or regions that were all geographically rather limited in scale. Attention then turns to micro-regional frameworks, which were, at the same time, part and parcel of broader imperial settings. (See here and below Mulich 2020)

One example of a transimperial microregion can be found in the Caribbean islands. There, specific forms of transimperial dis:connectivities become visible: enslaved people and sailors, magistrates and merchants alike all lived in a world of border-crossings and transimperial connectivity but were, at the same time, separated by race and colonial hierarchies. Discussing microregions' dis:connections from a transimperial perspective may open new questions, topics, and narratives. Global microhistory has, without doubt, for quite a while, addressed the question of how the local is connected to the global. However, the nodes between the local and global diverge from the nodes between the microregion and the transimperial. Thus, connections, spaces, and scales may look very different from a transimperial perspective. Therefore, TIH could usefully rethink the nature and scale of dis:connection by playing the *jeux d'échelles* in new ways. The outcome may be histories that are 'more than imperial, but less than global' (Potter and Saha 2015).

Furthermore, global history has earned the reputation of telling its cosmopolitan narrative as a kind of naturalized success story, thereby glossing over issues such as war, violence, oppression, and exploitation. (For a broader discussion, see Drayton and Motadel 2018) Such objections are not always justified: Given the crisis of globalisation processes lately, global historians have also thought more about disconnections (Wenzlhuemer et al. 2023). However, although the global is, generally speaking, positively connoted, the imperial is certainly not. Empires are inherently built upon their inhabitants' legal, social, or racial inequalities. In many ways, TIH is thus more attuned to power imbalances and social, racial, and economic hierarchies than global history was and is. Applying a transimperial perspective may further help to provide grassroots perspectives, amplify Indigenous voices, and give more attention to subaltern actors. THI can address the interrupting qualities of such asymmetric power relations. In this sense, it is crucial to ask what empires do to dis:connections. In short, what transimperial history may cover less in a geographical sense than global history, it makes up for by becoming analytically sharper.

Writing history requires drawing boundaries. Transimperial history is no exception to this. Just as in every other subfield, these boundaries concern the choice of spaces, temporalities, and actors. Transimperial history is closely related to imperial and global history. However, it is distinct from the focus on nation-empires, which is still the most common approach in imperial studies, and from the

planetary scope of some global histories. Transimperial history instead systematically combines the premises of transnational and global history with the critical political potential of postcolonial studies and new imperial history. At its best, transimperial histories can thus draw the boundaries in terms of space, temporality, and actors in a very different way. By so doing, it redefines these boundaries and sets new parameters. Concerning conventional chronologies, the approach may, for example, help overcome the division between the so-called (European) modern and early modern periods. In this sense, transimperial history is not just a subdiscipline or a complementary feature but an approach and method in its own right.

Today, we are witnessing a crisis of democratic liberalism, as well as the return of imperial wars of conquest. This newly perceived fragility of the global has fundamentally altered our notions of processes of globalisation, global connectivity, and geopolitical world orders. Given such crises, studying the history of nation-empires in isolation is no longer a real option. Neither is it appropriate to write the twisted history of empires by focusing solely on a few Western examples, such as the British or the French. In this context, transimperial history, first and foremost, challenges the privileged link between nations and their empires, thereby complicating any depiction of imperial history as one nation's special path to one empire. At the same time, by focusing on spaces in between empires, transimperial history challenges not only nationalized but also the remaining Eurocentric perspectives in historiography.

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# Transport

Andreas Greiner, Mario Peters

Transportation, that is getting something or somebody somewhere, is the key mover of human life and society. Since its inception humanity has conceived a plethora of technologies to facilitate this task: the wheel, the shoe, the basket, pack animal breeding, the ship, and so on. Beginning in the early 1800s, the era of mechanized movement set off a marvellous distribution of mass transportation: we have come a long way from the 40 kilometres of railroad tracks between Stockton and Darlington, opened in 1825, to over one million kilometres of global railroad networks today. Carl Benz, in 1886, could hardly have dreamed of our estimated 1.4 billion cars. The first international commercial airplane carried one passenger from London to Paris on 25 August 1919. Today, there are four billion air travellers per annum (World Bank, n.d.; International Union of Railways, n.d.; Foster, Cromer, and Purdy 2024).

This figure-laden ‘techno-tale’ of ever-increasing global transportation and thus interconnectivity is well-known but also misrepresentative. First of all, it tends to conceal that transportation has not only worked *for* people but also *against* them, most cruelly in the Atlantic slave trade or Nazi deportation. But even if we leave this darkest side of transportation aside, the master narrative of global integration is still misrepresentative. It ignores the contradictions inherent in transport and mobility: transportation systems do indeed accelerate, but they also immobilize (→ **Im/mobility**); they connect, but they separate at the same time.

Such contradictions are encapsulated in the concept of dis:connectivity, which entails the simultaneity of connections and disconnections. Rejecting popular but simplistic assumptions of a binary between the two, dis:connectivity helps us to shift our focus to delay, interruption, and resistance and to regard disentanglement and exclusion as formative elements of interconnectedness: these aspects have deeply informed the development of global transportation and the making of global connections since the nineteenth century. The concept of dis:connectivity also proposes to explore tensions and the complex dialectics of globalisation. Acceleration-cum-standstill and connection-cum-disruption, the two contradictions outlined above, are characteristic of many processes of globalisation in the past two centuries. Focusing on passenger transportation, we will explore both aspects in some detail on the following pages.

### Acceleration and standstill

It is obvious that steam, automobility, and aviation have drastically reduced long-distance journeys from weeks to days and hours. A primacy of speed had dominated discourses on transport since the first half of the nineteenth century and upper-class passengers, in particular on trans-oceanic journeys, demanded ever-faster trips (Faugier 2017). The first passenger steamships crossed the North Atlantic in less than twenty days in the 1830s. One hundred years later, the fastest passenger liners required only four days. In 1939, the first commercial airplanes to carry passengers from the United States to Western Europe took 27 hours.

The primacy of speed also came to dominate the post-World War II boom period with its highways, high-speed trains, and jet aircraft. However, it has been tailing off more recently in light of financial and environmental crises: the supersonic jet Concorde needed three and a half hours to cross the North Atlantic, but it was decommissioned in 2003. According to Peter Lyth, the cost prohibitive operation of Concorde, which has still no successor to date, exemplifies the limits of unconditional speeding-up and marks an endpoint to the quest for ever-greater speed (Lyth 2020).

This quest had always been merely academic: standstill is part and parcel of transportation. Large-scale breakdowns caused by a volcanic eruption, Brexit, COVID-19, or a container ship stuck in the Suez Canal are the fissures in transport systems that make worldwide headlines. But breakdowns happen every day and practices of repair, maintenance, and tinkering are crucial elements of our transportation systems (Graham and Thrift 2007; Pooley 2013). Congestion is the everyday experience of commuters around the world. The European air space was closed for one week following the eruptions of Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland in April 2010. Compare that to the less newsworthy six full days lost on average to traffic congestion by London road users in 2023 or the 89 hours in Mumbai. In Lagos, commuters are said to spend an average of 30 hours per week in traffic (Tomtom 2023; Obi 2018). Waiting (→ **Waiting**) in a traffic jam, at traffic lights, in line at the ticket booth, at an airport gate, for the train, and so on is thus the ‘often-inevitable and frequent experience woven through the fabric of the mobile everyday,’ as David Bissell (2007, 277) calls it.

Yet not all users have to wait for the same amount of time. The extent to which they can speed up depends on the chosen means of transport, its capabilities, the physical environment through which it is supposed to move, and the users’ readiness to pay more than others (e.g. for a direct flight, priority boarding, or an express lane). Neither the experience of acceleration nor that of standstill are thus universal. Andrey Vozyanov (2015, 70) reminds us that while it was traumatic for air travellers, ‘the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in 2010 was hardly noticeable to those who could never afford a flight.’

### Connection and disruption

Exclusion (→ **Exclusion/Inclusion**) is equally as important to the history of transportation as inclusion. Both processes frequently went hand in hand with regard to both places and people: what a focus on dis:connection puts at centre-stage are the many processes of making and unmaking connections in the process of integration. There is a cliché that new technologies possess the power to annihilate time and space. However, rather than erasing them, transport lanes do in fact create and alter spatial relations (Schivelbusch 1986).<sup>1</sup> The cosmopolitan coast, for instance, is distinguished from the hinterland because it has access to sea transport. Railroad expansion in the United States was thought of as a powerful tool of territorial integration. By the turn of the twentieth century, the same language of opening-up permeated the infrastructure (→ **Infrastructure**) projects developed by European empires to interconnect the imperial sphere and extract their colonies' resources.

Still, connectivity, that is access to a network, is not a streamlined process but a bumpy road. Take aviation: aircraft before World War II could only fly for comparatively short distances and had to make many scheduled intermediary stops to refuel and stay overnight. This put peripheral places at the centre of global maps, as Ruth Oldenziel details for the Pacific islands of Guam and Midway: both had first become important stopping places for steamships restocking coal. They lost their importance when ships began to run on fuel, only to resurface a few years later again as refuelling places for aircraft. When airplanes became able to fly for longer distances after the mid-1940s, intermediate stops were given up and both islands, as well as many other places which had been connected for a brief moment of time, fell into oblivion (Oldenziel 2011).

Centres and fringes of transport networks align with broader cleavages within and between societies. The availability of public transport systems across a cityscape, for instance, reflects the distribution of wealth as much as the question of who should be granted facilitated access to city centres. On a global scale, the availability of both individual and public transport systems confirms this observation. A brief look at a map tracking commercial flights is indicative: while North America and Europe are plastered with aircraft in this very moment, the African sky is almost empty. Accessibility and usage of modes of transport is likewise highly uneven. Inequalities permeate many historical and contemporary day-to-day transactions. They are based on categorization along the lines of income, class, age, gender, race, nationality, or physical ability.

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<sup>1</sup> For this debate, see also Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World. The Telegraph and Globalization* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

In the U.S. South, a colour line prevailed until the 1960s across all aspects of social life, including buses, trains, and airports. Racial segregation, governed by the so-called Jim Crow laws, was introduced for transportation in some areas as early as the 1880s and officially sanctioned in 1896 when the Supreme Court confirmed Louisiana's separate train cars. With transportation being a prism of U.S. racial segregation, the entirety of the Jim Crow society later came down to the question of 'mobility justice' (Sheller 2018): it was a case of civil disobedience in public transport that fuelled the civil rights movement in 1955 when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in a Montgomery bus. Following her arrest, Black Montgomery citizens created their own alternative infrastructure system. They boycotted the city's buses for more than a year but remained mobile during that time through self-organized carpools (Bay 2021).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed transport discrimination, but uneven mobilities persist and are inscribed in the built environment. Seemingly neutral infrastructure systems carry in themselves – intentionally or not – practices of exclusion (Winner 1980).<sup>2</sup> Infrastructure planning forcefully demobilizes or cuts off certain groups and their preferred modes of mobility in order to facilitate the movement of others. A case in point is the expansion of automobility since the 1920s which caused the elimination of traditional street uses and forced non-motorized forms of movement aside. Ironically, the oversupply of cars and the resulting congestion simultaneously belied the ideal of uninterrupted motor traffic flow. We have outlined these two contradictions inherent in global transportation systems – connection-cum-disruption and acceleration-cum-standstill – in the previous sections. In the remainder of this contribution, we will focus on one particular case, the development of automobility in the city of Rio de Janeiro, to demonstrate that these two contradictions also persist on a local level.

### **Dis:connected mobility in Rio de Janeiro**

Beginning in the early 1900s, the city's elite imported the first cars from Europe. Rio's car ownership rose from twelve cars in 1905 to a little under 10,000 cars in 1926 (Miller 2018, 104). Car enthusiasts worked towards broader car ownership and the popularization of car culture in Brazil, using automobile magazines and newspapers to disseminate the idea that cars were engines of modernization and progress (Wolfe 2010). In stark contrast to this notion, however, stood the reality of traffic flows in Rio. Congestion shattered dreams of traffic flow early in the twentieth century. Then, auto enthusiasts not only blamed pedestrians when traffic got

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<sup>2</sup> For an objection to Winner's argument, see Bernward Joerges: "Do Politics Have Artefacts?" *Social Studies of Science* 29, no. 3 (1999), 411–431.

clogged, they also complained that they had to share street space with horse-drawn vehicles and streetcars (Revista de Automoveis 1912). However, drivers soon had to learn that automobility's own spatial expansion did much to worsen the problem. In November 1949, the city saw its worst traffic jam yet, with up to 10,000 cars lined up over a three-mile stretch, unable to move for the better part of the working day (Miller 2018, 271–72). Getting stuck in traffic jams became a daily routine for commuters. There were far fewer competing users on Rio's downtown streets than in earlier decades, but with about 140,000 cars by the 1960s, there were now simply too many.

The growing demand for parking only aggravated an already bad situation. In the search for space to store their cars, motorists parked on narrow streets, public squares, and sidewalks. As Shawn William Miller notes, the city council, like so many other municipal administrations in Brazil and elsewhere at the time, 'concluded that the only solution was to build more space for the car – more lanes for driving and more lots for parking' (Miller 2018, 271). Consequently, the car's massive occupation of space even when not in motion further minimized the potential for alternative forms of street use and transportation. For centuries, Rio's streets had been a place of play, sociality, and commerce; they had been urban commons where all sorts of people engaged in all sorts of activities. When the automobile arrived in ever larger numbers, it erased many of these former functions, transforming streets into a space that, according to Miller, served 'the linear function of mechanical movement' (Miller 2018, 4).

Not only was the impact of the automobile on people's daily lives disruptive; in many instances it was disastrous. As early as 1913, Rio's newspapers published daily reports on fatal accidents with authors lashing out at incautious drivers who were 'ceaselessly killing defenseless city residents, especially children' (*O Paiz* 1913). Faced with widespread opposition, the proponents of motorization fought back, seeking to radically change the public discourse on traffic-related issues. On a quest for an exclusive right to street use, they looked to other countries, particularly the United States, where Los Angeles and other cities had made 'jaywalking', that is walking in traffic, a crime (Norton 2008). Brazilian car-lobbyists, supported by auto-related U.S. businesses, blamed 'reckless pedestrians' for most accidents (*Correio da Manhã* 1929). By the 1930s, more and more people accepted the idea that deaths caused by motor vehicles were an inevitable price of modernity (Miller 2018).

The car conquered urban spaces, especially the downtown areas. Discursive strategies, and, perhaps more importantly, the automobile's potential for destruction, did much to secure the greatest share of the street for drivers. Today, there are over 300,000 cars circulating in the city and Rio's drivers endure an annual average of 78 hours of congestion. Awareness for the problematic dominance of cars has recently grown within the city council. In 2012, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was

launched, using express lanes on the major thoroughfares, and reducing commute times by 65 percent (Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro 2023). Much of the historic district is now also accessible by light rail and Rio's beachfront avenues are closed to motor traffic on Sundays and public holidays, allowing citizens to reclaim the streets and make them pop-up urban commons, much as they used to be before the car.

This development is emblematic. Many cities around the world have dealt with similar boom phases of individual motorization since the 1990s, especially those with rising middle classes in Asia, Latin America, Africa, or former Soviet republics. But despite 1.4 billion cars plying the roads worldwide today, nowhere has the car become fully hegemonic. At least since the 2010s, cities around the globe have invested heavily in BRT and metro systems to tackle the problem of congestion. Walking is arguably still the most common form of movement and urban bicycle culture has persisted since the 1900s. Different modes of transportation thus always exist in parallel; they coincide and coalesce (Mom 2015).

Transportation via water, rail, road, and air has indeed tremendously expanded over the last two centuries, on both local and global scales. The concept of dis:connectivity reminds us that delay, malfunction, and disruption have as much been part of the story as faster travel and increasing connectedness. Wherever new transportation networks connected specific places and people, they left other places and people unconnected or even cut off existing connections. Those affected sought ways to subvert exclusion and they resisted the limitation of alternative forms of movement. Recent scholarship has begun to explore these complex dynamics of transportation, but much remains to be done. Studying them within the framework of dis:connectivity enables scholars to pursue a dialectical take on transportation and provide a corrective to narratives of ever-increasing global connectivity.

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# Turbulence

Christopher Balme

The term ‘turbulence’ has entered the humanities via different routes. It derives from the Latin word for a crowd (*turba*) or uncontrolled movements of people when it can mean a mob. It lies at the heart of a semantic field linking terms such as ‘dis-turbance’ and ‘per-turbation’ which can reference external disruption and interruption (→ **Interruptions**) on the one hand, and an internal state of agitation on the other. From there scientists adapted it as way of describing the movement of fluids, particularly waves, and air currents. The defining feature of turbulence in fluid mechanics was that ‘the motion at any point influences the motion at other distant points’.<sup>1</sup> Despite its adoption in science, engineering and meteorology, the term is often applied in both its nominal and adjectival forms to human subjects but remains in this context somewhat untheorized. Its contours and especially relevance for globalisation research can be assembled by viewing the different applications of the term. In this article, I shall focus on those uses which pertain directly or potentially to globalisation.<sup>2</sup> Its application to a dis:connective approach to globalisation lies in the special quality of turbulence to produce ripple effects which require connection to generate energy whose effects, however, produce disruption of these very same points of contact.

## Turbulence and world politics

Writing on the eve of the so-called new era of globalisation, political scientist James Rosenau (1990) proposed a comprehensive theory of turbulence in the field of world politics. In Rosenau’s understanding, turbulence refers to a situation of intensified, accelerated change. It describes more than the day-to-day fluctuations of political and economic life but rather ‘parametric change’: ‘Only when the basic parameters of world politics, those boundary constraints that shape and confine the fluctuations of its variables, are engulfed by high complexity and high dynamism is turbulence considered to have set in’ (1990, 10). These parameters are operative at a global, national and subnational level and comprise in each case structural, relational and orientational functions. For example, the ‘greater complexity of the structural parameter has come about through the replacement of the state system with a dual

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1 “turbulent, adj.”. OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed-com.emedi-uni.uni-muenchen.de/view/Entry/207572> (accessed March 16, 2023).

2 I will exclude for this reason the ‘turbulence theory’ proposed by Steven Gross to account for disruptions and transformation in institutional management in the educational sphere (2019).

system in which a multi-centric world coexists with the state-centric world' (100). The *structural* increase in complexity is a key factor that generates turbulence as actors in world politics – states, corporations, ethnic groups, NGOs – are required to continuously toggle between a multi-centric and state-centric orientation. At a *relational* level, a fragmentation of power and authority which were predicated mainly on military power and traditional elites has led again to an increase in complexity when negotiating these relationships. The *orientational* level refers to the involvement of citizens in political affairs. Due mainly to improved education, this intensified involvement has seen a rapid increase and accompanying diffusion of 'cathetic' energy so that individuals are less passive and less focused on national goals and may instead be engaged in different issue-driven ways: 'it may well be that the greater complexity and dynamism of individuals constitute the single most important source of the turbulence that marks our time' (1990, 103). Examples given are the anti-Vietnam war protests, opposition to and the disinvestment campaign directed at Apartheid South Africa, and the success of Solidarity in Poland.

Underpinning Rosenau's descriptive model with its three parameters is a historical explanation revolving around postindustrial society with rapid developments in agriculture, communication (→ **Communication Technologies**), microelectronics and genetics. Together these innovations have led to an increase in interactivity and interdependence. These constitute, however, a double-edged sword, creating boons and banes for the world: 'Increased interdependence can lead to the spread of misery or to the sharing of artistic experiences, to the intensification of prejudice or to the integration of perspectives' (1990, 105). Writing at the end of the Cold War, Rosenau's examples are historical, even dated, yet, one could argue, their paradigmatic explanatory force remains valid, if we substitute AIDS with Covid, atmospheric pollution with climate change, and home-made videotapes with Facebook as a means of publicizing and spreading protest.<sup>3</sup> Other factors such as the drug trade, 'Third World' debt, unbalanced exchange rates, and terrorism remain largely unchanged. More recent examples of *orientational* turbulence as theorized by Rosenau would include the Occupy Wall Street movements that emerged in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008 as well as the Arab Spring uprisings of 2010–11. According to Rosenau's model, we are still living in an age of turbulence, in fact the factors he identifies and their complex interaction have even intensified. Today we would need to factor in the algorithmic multiplication of conspiracy theories and

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<sup>3</sup> Rosenau references a 1987 article by Jim Mann: "Tape Recording: The Modern Medium of Dissent," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1987, sec. 5, p. 2. He also notes that the Chinese government used the same television technologies to surveil the protestors and control the representation of their massacres at Tiananmen Square. (105).

fake news on social media to describe the kinds of turbulence that are currently convulsing politics, especially in liberal democracies.

### Early modern uprisings and contemporary polycrises

More recently, two historians, Lyndal Roper and Patricia Clavin, one working in the early modern, the other the modern, period, have both suggested, almost simultaneously, the term ‘turbulence’ to describe the polycrises of the present as well as major ‘global’ disturbances of the past. In her project on the German Peasants’ War of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Lyndal Roper uses the term ‘turbulence’, not just as a translation of the German *Aufbruch*, the emic word of the time, but as a way of understanding the spiralling waves of unrest that, in terms of specific uprisings was highly localized, but in their ripple-like effects extended as far as Northern Italy in the South and Alsace in the West.<sup>4</sup> Roper asks whether one can learn from concepts of turbulence familiar in the natural sciences (fluid mechanics, meteorology, aeronautics) to better grasp the extreme ructions that marked the uprisings against the established order.

The definition from fluid mechanics cited above – the motion at any point influences the motion at other distant points – corresponds to Roper’s attempt to understand the European-wide impact of peasant uprisings in central Germany. Roper studies how individuals and groups scarcely moved outside a twenty-kilometre radius (she retraced their movements by bicycle), yet their actions had effects well beyond their immediate surroundings: ‘The greatest convulsion in western Europe before the French Revolution’ (Roper 2021: 52). Roper argues for the importance of human emotions to understand the motivations behind the peasants’ willingness to join the uprising. Yet the idea of emotional contagion, convincing though it is on the local level where groups could interact face to face, does not explain why the uprising spread so far. The diffusion of pamphlets and other texts clearly played a central role, and so did anger, on both sides of the conflict, as Roper demonstrates. However, the rapid spread of the uprising clearly followed other laws that are still little understood.

Patricia Clavin, an historian of international and transnational history, applies the term in the context of the current ‘shocks’ that seem to be proliferating. Writing for the magazine *Finance and Development*, published by the International Monetary Fund, Clavin argues that turbulence can be seen as a series of interconnected disturbances or shocks:

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<sup>4</sup> Roper, Lyndal. 2022. “The German Peasants’ War of 1524-6: Turbulence.” Symposium for Alexander von Humboldt Research Award Winners, Bamberg, 14 October. See also <https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/major-research-fellowships/german-peasants-war>.

It is better to anticipate the problem before us as one of managing turbulence rather than to see each shock as separate. This encourages us to avoid the dichotomy between stability and change, to confront their different chronologies, and to recognize the relationship between different types of shocks. (Clavin 2022)

‘Turbulence’ is not just a synonym for ‘shock’ nor is it specific to our own times but in its iterative force ‘can push individuals, institutions, and states to their limits.’ Drawing on the lessons of 20<sup>th</sup>-century history Clavin sees also the transformative power of turbulence in the fact that ‘it simultaneously fosters creative, pluralistic, and dynamic advocacy that leads to new modes of cooperation, often in history’s darkest hours.’ (Clavin 2022)

Today we speak of financial shock waves and turbulence in the financial markets, which can be explained by the ‘interconnectedness’ of digital connectivity. However, financial crises of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were affected by the dynamics that seemed to follow also emotional prerogatives, mainly fear. Bank runs are motivated by fear and can create a contagion that spreads faster than a Corona virus. But the violence and anger that it generates have a similar potential to create turbulence that spreads independent of advanced digital technology.

### **Turbulence and Covid-19**

The Covid-19 pandemic is an example of turbulence in several senses of the term. First, like any pandemic it is an infection that spreads rapidly from person to person and in this sense quite literally embodies viral contagion. The turbulence engendered by the virus played out at different levels as countries closed borders and leaders imitated one another in the range of protective measures they employed. The mimetic quality of the largely similar responses set in motion a rapid ripple-like effect as countries implemented lockdowns one after another. This turbulence demonstrated the highly dis:connective quality of globalisation: connections were severed as they were perceived to be the main conduit for the spread of the virus. Initially transcontinental air travel, airports and trains were all deemed to be dangerous, then any form of social gathering including many work places. From a turbulence-theoretical perspective, the isomorphic nature of the responses and the speed with which they were implemented documented the dynamics of turbulence on a global scale.

The concept of turbulence lends itself well to a dis:connective approach to globalisation processes. Turbulence demonstrates that strong forces both connect and disrupt at the same time. It is this simultaneity of connection and disruption that makes turbulence a productive concept, even though the transfer of meteorological terms or the laws of fluid mechanics to social phenomena is by no means easy or

even achievable. The element of unforeseen consequences is also constitutive of turbulence as the ripple effects generate quite different impacts in distant locales even though the point of origin of the initial disturbance was the same. To understand and analyse turbulence it requires – to borrow a term from theatre phenomenologist Bert States – ‘binocular vision’ (1985, 8), which means holding disparate, even contradictory ‘modes of seeing’ in a kind of equilibrium. For States this means seeing performance with a semiotic and a phenomenological gaze to explain what happens on stage beyond mere signification: atmosphere, presence, the materiality of bodies and objects, to name only some of the aspects of performance that cannot be reduced to codes and signs. For globalisation studies binocular vision means seeing the action and the reaction, the connections and the disruptions at the same time. A binocular vision studies the disruptions caused by the connections. For example, the brain gain so often touted by advocates of migration creates brain drain in the countries of origin. These absences need to be brought into focus. Indeed, the phenomenon of migration, as it is currently discussed and legislated in the main target countries for migrants, demonstrates how the dynamics of turbulence produce largely isomorphic political reactions and legislative outcomes despite the highly disparate motivations of individuals and groups of migrants and refugees.

Australian media and performance artist Jill Scott has proposed rethinking turbulence beyond its equation with ‘a negative condition’ because ‘indispensable ideas have arisen from this state of emotion’ such as the suffragette movement or Occupy Wall Street, both of which led to disruption of social norms and ‘business as usual’ (2016, 7). Scott tries to combine ‘turbulence’ with ‘reconstruction’ as a conceptual pairing that can contribute to a re-evaluation of a ‘less dualistic’ relationship between art and science, especially in relation to re-envisioning sustainable, ecologically balanced futures. In this reading, turbulence becomes both a synonym for an aesthetics of disruption and a potential bridging concept for new ways to rethink art, design and media.

In the context of globalisation, however, the concept of turbulence is most productive when applied to the dynamics of mass movements and ideas that generate enough ‘kinetic’ energy to produce significant ripple-like effects. Applications of the term tend to oscillate between a synonym for unrest or upheaval where it is close in meaning to ‘unsettlement’ (→ **Unsettlement**) and the characteristic of inexplicable influence and connection between distant points. How particular movements, and not others, can spread so rapidly is not just a question of media dissemination, but it is also that; rather affective mechanisms are at work – during the Peasant’s War and the Arab Spring – which remain poorly understood but which produce in their wave-like movement significant impulses on a potentially global scale.

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# Unsettlement

Christopher Balme

In a landmark essay published in 1995, Michael Geyer and Charles Bright outlined approaches that have become familiar in the field of global history as a reorientation of the discipline away from the European universalism of world history and towards new perspectives, especially histories of mobility and mobilisation, travel and communication. The tensions underlying globalisation result from:

world-wide processes of unsettlement (the mobilization of peoples, things, ideas, and images and their diffusion in space and time) and out of the often desperate efforts both locally (by communities of various kinds) and globally (by regimes of varying composition and reach) to bring them under control or, as it were, to settle them. (1995, 1053)

The term ‘unsettlement’ is not theorized or even expanded by the authors, nevertheless it provides a productive way to think about dis:connections in processes of globalisation past and present. Indeed, the essay draws numerous parallels between the nineteenth and the late twentieth centuries. In reference to people and communities, it points to dislocation, uprooting, and the dissemination of new ideas in culturally foreign locales.

According to the OED, the word ‘unsettlement’ is a seventeenth-century coinage which already recognizes its two main meanings: an act or process of unsettling and a state or condition of being unsettled, the latter often the result of the former. Unsettlement produces a state of disquiet on the individual as well as the collective level; it can also lead to massive dislocation (→ **Dislocation**) of peoples and resources.

But how can a term such as ‘unsettlement’ become a useful way to think about globalisation? For Geyer and Bright it refers to a whole raft of processes that start in the nineteenth and continue into the twentieth century. At the centre is the ‘mobilization of peoples’ which encompassed entrepreneurial colonialism of the kind that led to over 20 million Europeans leaving their homelands and ‘settling’ in colonies, thereby uprooting and often destroying the indigenous peoples. Offloading excess population, Europe shifted its many peoples across the globe. In this formulation, ‘Europe’ is an active agent, intentionally moving impoverished, or politically dissident populations, although the motivations for migration and ultimately settlement were manifold and multi-causal. This mobilization of peoples includes the final waves of plantation slavery and the transportation of indentured labourers, mainly from South Asia, but also Chinese and Japanese emigration around South Asia and the Pacific rim, and Russians colonizing Siberia.

The dynamics of unsettlement were driven by different factors ranging from ‘the movement of protest and upheaval that unsettled Europe in 1848–49’ (Clarke 2023, 341) to famine (Scandinavia, Ireland, Southern Italy) to the need for labour in post-slavery plantations and for railway construction (USA, East and South Africa), goldrushes, and simple greed, the oldest of human vices.

Unsettlement in the countries of origin leads to settlement by settlers with its connotations of stability and security. One group’s settlement usually means the uprooting and unsettlement of resident populations in the destination countries. Geyer and Bright’s phrase – ‘The efforts of both local rulers and global regimes (empires) to “settle” them’ – has a euphemistic ring to it. Settle can have a double meaning: as an intransitive verb, it signifies literally to find a (new) place of abode for the new arrivals (to settle in a place), but as a transitive verb it means to placate and to calm (down). The two meanings are interlinked where the transitive process of ‘settling’ leads to resistance and upheaval and usually force, the ‘putting down’ of insurrections so common in late-nineteenth century imperial/colonial disputes, whereby the euphemistic ‘putting down’ conceals varying degrees of violence ranging from police raids to massacres to mass ‘resettlement’. Many of the disturbing political problems of the present result from the unsettlement of the past.

Unsettlement also refers to ‘things, ideas, and images’. Their mobilization sometimes accompanied the ‘settlers’, for example, via the religious beliefs and cultural practices they brought with them. Sometimes it came in the form of the voluntary importation of ideologies and ideas, for example nationalism, the ‘modular’ ideology par excellence that could be adapted to different climes and cultures as the influential scholars of nationalism Benedict Anderson (1991) and Ernest Gellner (1995) both emphasize. In the twentieth century, socialism and communism followed, often introduced into the colonies and postcolonies by students after studying in the European metropole. Unsettlement refers to the effects of these ideologies as they travelled and took root in different cultural and religious contexts. Such effects range from stabilization and integration into the ‘community of nations’ on the one hand, to genocidal application on the other; where in the case of Pol Pot’s Cambodia, the word ‘unsettlement’ runs the danger of irresponsible understatement.

The term ‘unsettlement’ is finding application in more and more contexts. As a theoretical concept, like the phenomena it describes, unsettlement cannot be easily demarcated and delineated. It can, however, be grasped heuristically through its applications.

The discourse where unsettlement has been most widely applied, albeit implicitly rather than explicitly, is in the discussion around ‘settler colonialism’, as already alluded to above. While the connection between colonialism and settlement has long been acknowledged by historians working on material from anti-

quity to the present, the focus on unsettlement and displacement is a more recent development. In its most extreme form, settler colonialism is discussed in terms of genocide of indigenous peoples, where the term ‘unsettlement’ is a euphemism at best. Patrick Wolfe (2006, 387) sees settler colonialism as ‘inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal’. Eliminatory means here conscious strategies to break down native society and integrate it into colonial structures which may include European notions of land title, bans on indigenous languages as well as ‘biocultural assimilations’ through intermarriage, residential schooling and in extreme cases forced adoption of children such as the policies pursued by the Australian government well into the 1960s where the tens of thousands of affected people have become known as the Stolen Generation.

Although ‘settler colonialism’ as a term emerged in the context of postcolonial studies, historians and activists alike eventually realized that it could be applied to many contexts outside the usual parameters of British empire colonialism and decolonization. It could be applied to the colonization of the whole American continent and not just North America. Even if restricted to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, examples abound ranging from Japanese settlement projects in Korea and Manchuria to Germans in Nazi-occupied Poland and Namibia to Portuguese colonies in Africa (Elkins and Pedersen 2006). As an analytical term ‘settler colonialism’ has become somewhat problematic as it has migrated from scholarly journals to placards in mass demonstrations supporting, for example, Palestinian rights.

The Anglosphere is probably the most successful example of long-term, ‘sustainable’ settler colonialism, overshadowing its rivals, as James Belich (2009) argues. Anglophone ‘settlerism’, as he terms it, is a special case, which cannot be explained by economic imperatives alone. Indeed, in its oscillation between explosive ‘hyper-colonialism’ on the one hand, and periods of deflation on the other, unsettlement is integral to the whole project: ‘explosive colonization was driven as much by dreams as by reason’ (2009, 288). This approach is less interested in the push factors at work in the old world than in the impact in the new lands, although ‘settlerism’ undoubtedly had unsettling effects in the communities of origin that were often depleted of young men and women as well as the capital they took with them. ‘Settler’ initially implied ‘men of capital’ as opposed to mere ‘emigrants’ (Belich 2009, 150) although the demographic continually expanded in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Settlerism and its displacement of indigenous peoples is today more than a ‘tragic tale’ (Belich 2009, 180). As we saw above, postcolonial scholarship oscillates between ‘elimination’ and ‘genocide’ in its choice of vocabulary to characterize the relationship. The relationship is more complex. The presumption of the late nineteenth-century ‘salvage paradigm’ that indigenous populations were doomed to disappear within a generation or two has proven largely false. Displacement is a

synonym of unsettlement and certainly defines the minimum term for the relationship between indigenes and settlers but the decisive shift in the nineteenth century is linked to what Belich terms ‘explosive colonization’, when settlers didn’t just trickle but poured in: ‘Explosive colonization changed the nature of the problem facing indigenous peoples from a scale that they could often handle to a scale that they could not. It was decisive in indigenous histories as well as settler histories.’ (2009, 182)

‘Settler postcolonialism’, i.e. the often highly conflictual relationships between indigenous peoples and the descendants of settlers, has been the subject of numerous plays, films and novels. Australian theatre historian, Joanne Tompkins, has examined plays from a variety of settler societies (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada) to explore ‘the anxiety of historical unsettlement’ which applies as much to the settler as the indigenous subject (2007, 71). Tompkins discovers ambivalences in the settler subject position which has been brought about mainly by a ‘whitewashing’ of history in regard to the dispossession of indigenous peoples:

The unsettlement of history can disturb the surface of apparently settled nations, individuals, and texts to reveal gaps in representation, inadequacies of national identities, cultural misunderstandings within a nation, the return of long-forgotten ambivalences, and personal dislocation. (2007, 81)

Tompkins argues that in the theatre at least the unsettling ambivalences of settler postcolonialism can also be seen in terms of the ‘dynamic potential’ of performance to continually re-evaluate the effects of colonialism.

Processes of unsettlement do not just apply to the conflictual relationship between settlers and indigenous peoples. They can also be observed during decolonization when settlers relocated voluntarily or involuntarily back to their ‘mother country’ or other places, which in some cases had ramifications for the new/old host countries. One of many such reversed ‘settlements’ was in the Maghreb, especially Algeria, where French *colons* had established colonies already in the nineteenth century (the affinity between the ‘settler’ and its French equivalent the *colon*, the colonist and colonialist is already evident in the word). Post-independence Algeria saw the ‘repatriation’ of over one million French-speaking *pieds noirs* and some Algerian Muslim ‘collaborators’ back to France in 1962. This number is dwarfed by the ethnic cleansing (Snyder 2010, 332) or forced ‘resettlement’ (*Zwangsumsiedlung*) of around thirteen million German-speaking inhabitants of eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. Approximately 1.5 million of these were ‘new settlers’ who the German authorities had settled during the invasion of Poland and the Soviet Union. Although historians tend to discuss the examples as entirely separate, they are in fact linked, at least implicitly, by the waves of unsettlement that they

brought with them, including the founding of terrorist organisations such as the OAS in France, when disgruntled and radicalized ex-settlers and military personnel turned against the French government.

Unsettlement finds application outside the discursive and contested boundaries defined by the term ‘settler colonialism’. We find it in peace and development studies as well as holocaust studies. In peace and development studies, the term ‘formalized political unsettlement’ is used to describe ongoing conflicts which await permanent resolution on the part of the conflict parties. Such situations are so numerous that the somewhat oxymoronic term has been coined to characterize situations at the end of a peace process, from which, however, no written agreement results.<sup>1</sup> Formalized political unsettlement does not strive for full legal resolution which is often impossible to achieve. It proposes instead peace processes, which ‘institutionalize forms of disagreement’ rather than resolution, ‘maximising the use of creative non-solutions, and practices of disrelation’ (Pospisil 2019). Instead of resolution, we find containment; in place of permanent peace, a long-lasting ‘temporary’ and ‘exceptional state’ is agreed upon. Underpinning such oxymorons is the recognition that ideals of a political state of perpetual peace proposed by the ‘liberal world order’ are often scarcely achievable in conflict situations, especially ones with deep historical roots. A concept such as ‘formalized political unsettlement’ reflects dis:connectivity on the level of belated recognition that the promises of neoliberal, post-1990 globalisation cannot deliver on at least one of its claims, namely that an interconnected world would be a more peaceable one as Thomas Friedman argued (2006).<sup>2</sup> This is also the thesis of a previous book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999): ‘I argued that to the extent that countries tied their economies and futures to global integration and trade, it would act as a restraint to going to war with their neighbours’ (2006, 586). The updated version, the Dell Theory, stipulates that the existence of global supply chains will prevent conflict.

A more specific application of ‘unsettlement’ is the term ‘empathetic unsettlement’ coined by Dominic LaCapra (2001) in the context of Holocaust Studies. Here it refers to the capacity to empathize with the traumatic suffering of others, despite their often-unsettling otherness, although the incommensurability of trauma makes it almost impossible to identify with the suffering described (Bashir and

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1 Some of these conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian situation have deep historical roots that make resolution appear impossible. Others are the result of politically and militarily organized ‘frozen conflicts’ which are designed to make unsettlement a permanent state in order to achieve maximum political destabilization.

2 Friedman’s arguments for globalisation and peace can be found in chapter 16, “The Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention”, another term for ‘Wandel durch Handel’ ((democratic) change through trade).

Goldberg 2020). Unsettlement in this case refers to the individual rather than collective responses despite its applicability across cultures and genres (the individual witness as well as the dispassionate historian). Its application in the context of globalisation lends itself in as much as the situations of trauma it describes appear to be proliferating.

From the upheaval caused by mass migration and colonialism in the nineteenth century to the seeming insoluble ‘frozen conflicts’ of the present, the term unsettlement captures the turbulences and disquiet caused by processes of globalisation. It demonstrates that global processes bring with them massive dislocations, redistribution of resources and even destruction of populations.

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# Waiting

Hanni Geiger

While some people move freely, others experience waiting in a painful way. In the photo series *I Was Younger Yesterday* (2020), artist Thana Farooq reflects on the lives of Lyla, Rahmin, Hafsa, Chaman and Ammar, who experienced much waiting during their migrations (Farooq n.d.). Images of people in cramped living spaces alternate with images of the outdoors (Fig. 1, 2). Glowing golden autumn leaves, a group of trees in winter and white spring flowers suggest the cyclical change of the seasons, while the people remain immobile in dark rooms, enveloped in a tense atmosphere. The interplay of light and shadow transforms the people into the motionless things that surround them, such as opened food packages or frozen balloons, and at the same time lends the scene a dramatic expression. While the earth continues to rotate, people have mutated into still lives with a deceptive sense of tranquility.



**Fig. 1:** Thana Farooq, *I was Younger Yesterday*, 2020, photographs (© Thana Farooq).



**Fig. 2:** Thana Faroq, *I was Younger Yesterday*, 2020, photographs (© Thana Faroq).

Faroq visualises waiting in art as a disruption of global connection processes marked by mobility. With a focus on migration movements, she highlights that people fleeing to a potentially new homeland encounter physical and legal obstacles. She particularly emphasises that delays and chronic waiting not only characterise migration routes, but also occur after borders have been crossed (→ **Transborder**). As she shows, waiting for asylum, in government offices, for letters and phone calls or removal is less a relaxed standstill than an uneasy immobility between the countries of origin and arrival. By depicting the frozen, but inwardly restless figures against the backdrop of time passing naturally, Faroq emphasises the temporal aspect of exile and the affective consequences of chronic and tension-charged waiting on the individuals. As such, she illustrates waiting as an existential state of transition between the former and new life that is marked by an unpredictable duration and uncertainty about the future. With artistic means, Faroq refers to the relation and simultaneity of connections and non-connections on a physical, social and emotional level and allows us to understand waiting as an expression of global dis:connections.

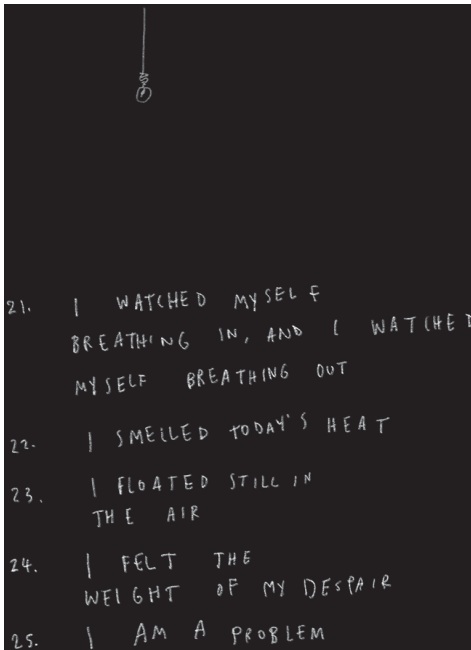
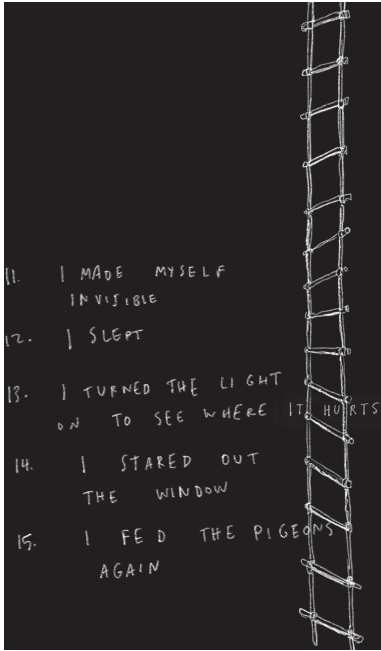
Faroq's work leads to the central topic of this contribution which discusses the relationship between the concept of waiting and dis:connectivity. To do this, I use photographs and films by contemporary artists who critically reflect waiting through the lens of migration. So far little attention has been paid to the analysis

of the aesthetic dimension of waiting.<sup>1</sup> Art-historical, historical and anthropological explorations of spaces, architectures, borders and gatherings of people during migration (Khosravi 2021a; Dogramaci 2023; Puff 2023) offer the groundwork for a visual approach to waiting in relation to dis:connections. Art can materialize and aestheticize the invisible and elusive phenomenon. Since waiting always touches the physical senses and emotions (Khosravi 2021b), this visual approach enables both a sensory and ultimately intellectual understanding of waiting. Postmigrant theatre (→ **Postmigration/Migration**) has proven its ability to visually reflect on the absent or processual phenomenon by building on and staging individual experiences (Balme 2023). Taking artistic and migrant perspectives into account in the research on waiting can help to extend academic approaches and challenge dominant (state) narratives. By building on this, the questions to be asked in the following are: How does art focused on migration and fed by individual experiences reflect waiting in relation to dis:connective globalisation processes? What insights into migration, society and globalisation can we gain from analysing artworks that aestheticise, comment on and sensually convey the personal experience of waiting affected by connections and non-connections and their complex interdependencies? In the following, I will analyse the form and content of the chosen works and point to waiting as a transitional state between origin and destination that is marked by physical, spatial, social, legal, temporal and emotional connections and non-connections. Common stereotypes of migration will be questioned and counteracted by an understanding of globalisation that builds on the simultaneity and interaction of entanglements and disentanglements.

Speaking of stereotypes, the depiction of waiting migrants reflected in Faroq's photo series *I Was Younger Yesterday* has already shown that artistic techniques, media and the staging of the motifs can bring physical interruptions during exile and flight to the fore (→ **Interruptions**). The images of delayed movements challenge the stereotypical anticipation of migration spread by the media. Liquid metaphors for migration, such as 'flood', 'wave' and 'tsunami', which suggest constant movement, but also size and danger, become obsolete (Dogramaci 2022, 37–47). Thana Faroq's work thus brings different images into being which question the potent idea of a threatening 'undifferentiated mass' on the move (Rotter 2016, 86). The artist does not anonymise refugees and migrants but reveals their names in her work and asks them intimately about the physical and affective power of waiting in their living spaces. Instead of portraying a faceless or homogenous migration, aes-

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<sup>1</sup> The exhibition catalogue *Die Kunst des Wartens* is dedicated to the artistic representation of waiting in everyday life. Although waiting in the context of migration is also highlighted, the uncommented compilation of texts and artworks does not allow any deeper insights into the relationship between waiting and globalisation. See Kölle/Peppel, *Die Kunst des Wartens*.



**Fig. 3 and Fig. 4:** Thana Farooq, *I was Younger Yesterday*, 2020, photographs (© Thana Farooq).

theticised waiting focuses on the individual and their particular waiting situation. The artist not only makes dis:connectivities visible and palpable, but also creates new images that disturb the dominant narratives of migration.

Disrupted connections between the country of origin and the destination cannot be entirely understood without reference to power asymmetries. During or after their flight, migrants are often hindered from participating in their new environment due to state regulations. With their personal fates always in view, the intimate sentences written on a chalkboard by those waiting, such as ‘I made myself invisible’ and ‘I floated still in the air’, can be read as a personal limbo (Fig. 3, 4). Waiting for recognition of refugee status or a residence permit, or the threat of deportation creates an unpredictably long and uncertain terrain, where what is hoped for may or may not occur (Bandak and Janeja 2018, 16). As Cathrine Brun points out, such waiting can be perceived as a ‘protracted displacement’ or a ‘permanent impermanence’ (Brun 2015, 19). Characterised by doubt, ambivalence, or disorientation (Pikulik 1997; Hage 2003), this condition relates to the anthropological concept of liminality that characterizes the middle stage of a rite of passage, when participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the rite is complete (Turner 1967, 93–97). Faroq’s work communicates the experience of waiting as a spatial, social, and emotional transit that both connects and disconnects the homeland, previous identities and familiar systems with the new surroundings and their orders. The protagonists feel that they have physically arrived but are unnoticed, feeling forgotten or invisible, and ultimately considered as socially non-existent. The sentence ‘I am a problem’ intensifies the feeling of a connection to the destination being severed or missing. Practices of inclusion and exclusion that are controlled by laws and other statal instruments of order become evident in this portrayed waiting. According to Pierre Bourdieu, waiting is an experience of power and dominance (2000, 227ff.) and as such ultimately an experience of restricted participation in globalisation processes. While some people integrate, others will be left out.

Waiting as a transitional state of (non-)connections to the destination must be reflected in relation to the migrants’ agencies. In the series, Faroq lets us share in apparent idleness (Fig. 5). Feeding pigeons, sleeping, watching television, opening letters or feeling the ‘weight of despair’ can be read as desperate attempts to escape the imposed waiting. Faroq poetically depicts the state of being stuck in migration as discussed in research as a physical and mental incapacity to act (Hage 2003; Wyss 2019). But being trapped, with future notifications and the change of one’s predicament always in view, means less the opposite of activity than more an inter-

mediate state that is accompanied by maximum tension (Hage 2003). Faroq places the visualised pseudo-activities in the centre of the picture and auratises them with artistic means. Depicted from the migrants' point of view, the state of being stuck reveals waiting as a mental state of deliberate and concentrated seeing. According to its etymological origin, the Latin terms *videre*, *spectare* or *prospicere* describe a waiting that means attentive looking (Deutsches Wörterbuch 1922; Pikulik 1997, 18). The senses are characterised by a sharpened perception of inner and outer worlds (Coen 2015), as with '[...] a feeling that we have in our hearts in the meantime'. (Masetti 2017; my translation). Faroq introduces the heightened perception of those trapped in migration as an action of revealing state-controlled waiting and counteracting imposed passivity. Thus, she sensitizes the viewer to a waiting that overcomes the active-passive binary of flight and exile (→ **Exile**). This is consistent with social and migration studies that have recognised the danger of biased stereotypical (self-)attributions of passivity in research, and instead argue for strengthening migrants' individual and collective opportunities through action (Brun 2015; Rotter 2016; Bandak and Janeja 2018; Tsagarousianou 2023).

The transitory existence between home and country of arrival in waiting creates a different perspective of time (Glökler 2016, 99), which can be labelled as dis:connective. In the film accompanying the installation *Partenza* (2016),



Fig. 5: Thana Faroq, *I was Younger Yesterday*, 2020, photographs (© Thana Faroq).

the artist Renata Poljak explores her great-grandmother's painful experience of her husband's and other male inhabitants' labour migration from the Croatian island of Brač to Argentina around 1900 (Poljak 2017). In one scene of the initially black-and-white film, female figures stand on a tan pebble beach, turning their eyes towards the vast body of water (Fig. 6). The sharpened perception in waiting directs their gaze into their inner world as well as their immediate surroundings (Coen 2015, 176–182), and the sea and the boundless horizon turn into a space for reflection. Guided by longing, the women's gaze focuses on the distance and the potential return of the migrants' ships. This confirms the fundamentally future-oriented temporal structure of waiting toward a 'not-yet', but at the same time points to the relevance of a 'no-longer-there' (Bellebaum 2014, 231; Glöckler 2016, 97). Waiting for news from those with whom connections have been severed by migration involves a connection with memories, just as looking back on experiences together is coloured by missing those who have left and hoping for a reunion in the future. This observation is in line with psychological findings that ascribe to longing a simultaneous reference to the past, the present and the impending, without which reflection and direction is not possible (Felchner 2022). The locally coloured title makes this clear: borrowed from Italian, *Partenza* in the Istrian and Dalmatian dialects does not primarily stand for departure and the rupture of bonds, but for the longing for the absent and a mental (and prospective physical) re-connection with them from a present perspective (Poljak 2017, 33). What was, what is and what will be are not isolated categories and do not follow a sequence, but rather condense and presuppose each other in waiting. Time appears multi-layered, relational and in varying intensities. The simultaneous connections and non-connections between spaces in waiting are thus necessarily accompanied by temporal dis:connections.

Personally, and locally shaped experiences of waiting can help reveal a female and subversive side of migration that research has tended to ignore. Poljak visualises the vulnerable groups, who rarely set off on life-threatening journeys, but whose power in waiting is constitutive of migration.<sup>2</sup> In the final scene of the film, one of the women dives into a now-colourful underwater world with floating garments that recall the numerous lives lost in contemporary migrations across the Mediterranean (Fig. 7). With this, Poljak refers not only to an understanding of migration as a global, ubiquitous and timeless phenomenon. She visualises migration as experienced in specific micro-sites such as the Adriatic island Brač, which

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<sup>2</sup> Female migration has been on the rise since the 1970s, but it is perceived as economically insignificant compared to male migration and has been underexamined in research. The same applies to the experiences of family members, mostly women, who remained behind in the context of migration, which is only slowly attracting academic interest (Ullah, 2017, 1–15).



**Fig. 6:** Renata Poljak, *Partenza*, 2016, film (screenshot), 11 minutes, HD (© Renata Poljak).

produce a nuanced understanding of waiting women. She provides the protagonist with the role of a self-empowered mediator who, based on local and personal experience, brings the complexity of global interdependencies and their interruptions closer to the individual observer. The woman's dive into the sea represents a proactive rejection of the traditional portrayal of women as abandoned and desperate waiting figures, which has been a common theme in literature and art. The artist deconstructs the myth of the legendary figure of Penelope, who in classical paintings waits passively for Odysseus to return (although in the meantime she defends Ithaca and her son). Poljak uses art to develop an activist's toolkit against rigid images of migration. As an empowered 'remained-behind' and no longer 'left-behind'<sup>3</sup>, she recodes the historically feminised category of powerless waiting (Barthes 1984, 27f.) and challenges gender binaries, including the categories of those who stay and those who go and their opposing forces and dependencies (Cortes 2016, 8–9).

Art materialises and visualises the less visible and processual experiences of displacement and the changing living conditions it entails. The viewers are sensitised to emotionally charged interruptions and absences (→ **Absences**) in the physical, spatial, social and temporal connections during their flight to the land of destination. Through the lens of migration, contemporary art finds the means – motifs, media and techniques – to sensually (in)form waiting in relation to the complex interdependencies of connections and non-connections between countries, orders and identities. Aesthetically narrated from a personal and lived perspective, the pieces shape our affective and cognitive understanding of a waiting in relation to

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<sup>3</sup> Ullah argues in favour of renaming female waiting women 'remained behinds' instead of 'left behinds' to undermine migration narratives of female passivity and dependency (Ullah, 2017, 4).



**Fig. 7:** Renata Poljak, *Partenza*, 2016, film (screenshot), 11 minutes, HD (© Renata Poljak).

dis:connectivity. Waiting appears to be a tension-charged threshold that simultaneously connects and disconnects notions of movement and standstill, coming and going, inclusion and exclusion, activity and passivity, as ascribed to flight and exile. Conceptualised as a status of liminality, waiting resists and subverts dominant biases and binaries of global phenomena such as migration. Art offers alternative knowledge to discourses on globalisation and displacement.

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**Nikolai Brandes** is a postdoc at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect at LMU Munich. In his doctoral thesis at FU Berlin, he focused on late colonial housing cooperatives in Mozambique. He was a postdoc at the Danish National Museum and a fellow at the German Historical Institute in Rome. His research interests include the African middle class, the work of GDR architects abroad, and the history of architectural education in Africa.

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**Katy Deepwell** is an art critic, based in London. She is the founder and editor of KT press (1998–present) and *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal* (1998–2017). She was Professor of Contemporary Art, Theory and Criticism at Middlesex University (2013–Feb 2025). She is a fellow at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect. Her research interests reflected in her writing are feminism and contemporary art, transnational and transgenerational comparisons, globalisation and feminist theory.

**Arnab Dey** is Associate Professor of History at the State University of New York at Binghamton, New York, and a visiting affiliate at Cornell University. He was a fellow at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect. His research lies at the intersection of labour, environmental, and medical history. He was most recently an invited member at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

**Burcu Dogramaci** is Professor of Art History and co-director of the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect at LMU Munich. She was PI of the ERC Consolidator project “Relocating Modernism: Global Metropolises, Modern Art and Exile (METROMOD)” (2017–2023, <https://metromod.net>). Her research areas are exile, migration and flight, modern and contemporary art, photography and architecture, history of art history, and live art. She is co-editor of the *International Yearbook Exilforschung* and *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*.

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**Katrin Köppert** is currently a substitute professor for media theories at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and junior professor for art history/popular cultures at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig. She co-directs the VW-funded project “Digital Blackface. Racialized Affect Patterns of the Digital” and the DFG research network “Gender, Media and Affect”. Her research focuses on art and media theories of computation, digital colonialism, visual cultures of the Anthropocenes, queer art and aesthetics.

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**Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş** is a postdoc at the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam, specializing in German and Turkish history in a global context, with a focus on migration and mobility. Her current project deals with air routes and airports as key sites in the history of refugees and migration control.

**Fabienne Liptay** is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Zurich and director of the project “Exhibiting Film: Challenges of Format”, which received an excellence grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation. She was a fellow at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect in 2022. Her research focuses on the aesthetics and theory of the moving image, film exhibition, and the relationship between film, photography, performance and contemporary art.

**Zoya Masoud** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Forum Transregionale Studien e.V. She completed her PhD at the Technical University of Berlin with a dissertation titled *Dislocated. Heritage Construction through Experience of Loss in Aleppo*. Her research engages with a critical inquiry of identity, architecture, heritage, commemoration, violence, and knowledge production.

**Tom Menger** is a postdoctoral researcher at LMU Munich. He holds a master’s in history from the University of Amsterdam and a PhD from the University of Cologne. He is a historian of empire from a transimperial perspective, with a focus on nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial violence and imperial infrastructures.

**Sabrina Moura** is an Affiliated Professor at the Arts Department of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), Brazil, and the Research and Development Manager at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, UAE. From 2023 to 2024, she was a fellow at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, where she developed the exhibition *Travelling Back: Reframing a Munich Expedition to Brazil in the 19th Century*, presented at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte. Her research focuses on global art histories and the intersections between archives and artistic practices.

**Siddharth Pandey** is an interdisciplinary academic and creative practitioner hailing from Shimla Himalayas, India. He was a fellow of the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect at LMU Munich from 2022 to 2023. His research focuses on global mountain histories, fantasy literature, travel writing, and material, visual and popular culture of South Asia.

**Mario Peters** is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington DC. His research centres around the intersection of inter-American history, mobility studies, and urban history. In his current book project, he examines the history of pan-American transportation infrastructure from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

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**Ekaterina Yahyaoui Krivenko** is an Associate Professor of Human Rights at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, School of Law, University of Galway. Her work combines critical historical and theoretical perspectives with empirical analyses of human rights' operation. She is the coordinator of the EU funded "EMMELO" project investigating European Men, Masculinities, and Extremist Leadership Online (2025–2028).

