Globalisation: Studies in Anthropology

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1. Introduction

Although the term globalisation has been common in anthropology and neighbouring disciplines only since around 1990, it has spawned an impressive range of books, journal articles and academic conferences. In the mid-1990s, it actually seemed more difficult to find a major sociology or social anthropology conference which did *not* feature the word prominently in its programme, than to find one which did.

In spite of the flurry of interdisciplinary activity around the term globalisation, the need for new studies will not go away until the phenomena they describe disappear. Moreover, there still remains necessary work to be done on the conceptual and methodological basis of globalisation studies. As can only be expected of a research field that has grown too fast, globalisation studies have yet to be connected properly to the disciplines and intellectual traditions they have sprung from. In the case of social anthropology, there has been a tendency to emphasise the *newness* of globalisation studies. The obligatory contrast to Malinowski's fieldwork is perhaps drawn, some remarks are made about the interconnectedness of everything, the hybridity of cultural identities and the irrelevance of what we may perhaps call the 'quadruple S' (synchronous single-society study) — but rarely do we see a sustained attempt to show the

continuities between current research on globally embedded networks and mainstream 20th century anthropology.

Perhaps for the sake of argument, it can be tempting to highlight and pick on statements and positions that are as far removed from one's own as possible. This approach, perhaps underpinned by selected quotations, may offer striking and convincing contrasts between contemporary work and functionalism or structural-functionalism in Britain, and some of the dominant post-Boas schools in the USA, such as culture-and-personality and Geertzian hermeneutics. However, closer examination more often than not reveals that many of the problems grappled with today (flows, ambiguities, relativity of boundaries etc.) were by no means foreign to earlier generations of anthropologists. The contrasts are not spurious, but they need not be exaggerated.

The approach of this book does not, in other words, consist in advertising the newness of globalisation research. Rather, I will devote most of this introduction to arguing that the new empirical domains belong, in important ways, to the mainstream of anthropological research. Of course, we do not wish to argue that nothing has changed. The contemporary world is one of global embeddedness, ubiquituous rights movements and reflexive identity politics, universal capitalism and globally integrated financial markets, transnational families, biotechnology and urbanisation; in a word, it is in substantial ways different from the world in which 20th century anthropology developed. It is a trivial fact that this must be reflected in research agendas. The question which we find it pertinent to raise, concerns the implications of shifts in empirical concerns for theory and methodology. In order to begin to answer it, I now turn to an attempt to anchor studies of transnational processes to the mainstream in 20th anthropology, showing eventually at which crucial junctions the present must depart from the past.

Anthropological lineages

If the word is recent, the concerns that animate research on globalisation, or transnational flows, are not. The affinity between globalisation and early-20th

century diffusionism is sometimes remarked upon (e.g. Barnard, 2000: 168), thus placing one of the latest fads in academia firmly in a lineage few are eager to see themselves as part of. The shortcomings of classic diffusionism — speculation about a patchily known past, poor contextualisation — can nevertheless easily be overcome in studies of contemporary transnational flows, provided the methodology is sound.

A less common, but hardly less relevant parallel can be drawn to evolutionism. Since studies of globalisation always engage with some notion of modernity and some notion of its spreading out from a centre to peripheries, they seem to share fundamental assumptions with the cultural evolutionists of Victorian anthropology. The appropriation of Western modes of production and consumption, Western rights concepts and notions of personhood, appears inevitable and irreversible, though with important local contextualisations and variations. Studies of transnational flows that move in the opposite direction, which lead to the 'occidentalisation of the West', to use one of Marshall McLuhan's sphinx-like phrases, are few and far between, and it may be tempting to conclude, Fukuyama-like, that the reason is, simply, that non-Westerners cannot compete with the persuasive power and institutional strengths of Western culture in its many guises. Whether Western or not, empirical work on globalisation does little to counter claims that this body of research largely deals with the dissemination and recontextualisation of, and resistance to, modernity. This is not tantamount to admitting that globalisation is Westernisation. Anthropology's strength lies, among other things, in making the world a more complex place and revealing the nooks and crannies of seemingly straightforward, linear historical change. The original critique of unilinear evolutionism thus still holds good, and is echoed in several of the chapter in this book. The assumption that globalisation has something to do with modernity or modernities, on the other hand, is not challenged.

The two most obvious lineages for globalisation studies, then — diffusionism and cultural evolutionism — were for most of the 20th century among the least fashionable theoretical frameworks in anthropology. To these sources of dubious merit we may add that globalisation studies have received important inspiration

from general sociological theory (e.g. Giddens, 1990; Castells, 1996), macrohistory (e.g. Wallerstein, 1974) and media studies (e.g. McLuhan, 1964). A mere consideration of these historical contexts for the field makes it easy to understand why globalisation studies have, by some prominent practitioners of the discipline, been regarded as something of a stepchild in anthropology, not to say an embarrassment. The scope as well as the substance of globalisation seems to represent everything that a good social anthropologist should be wary of: grand comparisons often underpinned by flimsy evidence, whimsical and eclectic methodologies, a fondness for sweeping generalisations and, hovering in the background, the spectre of evolutionism. Admittedly, the most blatant generalisations usually come from non-anthropologists, but guilt by association is never far away in an era when Bauman, Beck, Castells and Giddens are second only to Bourdieu in the pantheon of social theory. Quite unlike what the advocates of globalisation research claim, the trend, viewed in this perspective, seems to be anything but avant garde. Fundamental achievements of 20th century anthropology — the primacy of the local, the sophistication of field methods and the unanimous rejection of evolutionism — seem to have been momentarily forgotten by the many anthropologists keen to understand linkages and connections in the modern world.

With these sometimes fully justified objections or prejudices in mind, it is a task of paramount importance to show that globalisation studies not only matter empirically, but that there is also no necessary contradiction between 20th century anthropological methodology and studies of transnational flows. I shall now proceed to show that the continuity between classic anthropology and the anthropology of globalisation is much more pronounced than commonly assumed, both by its defenders and by its detractors. First of all, however, we need to get rid of the word itself.

Transnational flows

If the rapid ascent of the term globalisation has been something of a *succès de scandale*, making it a password in some milieux and a four-letter word in others,

the explanation is partly that it is a promiscuous and unfaithful word engaging in a bewildering variety of relationships, most of which would be better off using more accurate concepts. If economic globalisation refers to the increasing transnational character of production, marketing and transactions, and cultural globalisation refers to the increasing irrelevance of distance (Giddens: 'the world has become a single place'), then the recent widespread and often uncritical use of the word is likely to give misleading connotations. First, although there are doubtless aspects of social organisation and symbolic universes in virtually every society that conform with these notions of globalisation — statehood and citizenship, monetary economies, modern mass media and so on — their actual realisation is always local and embedded in locally constituted life-worlds and power relations. Second, the term globalisation obfuscates the concrete and bounded nature of many of the flows of exchange and communication that turn the world simultaneously into a larger and a smaller place. *Commoditisation* is often seen as a typical aspect of globalisation — politics are commoditised in identity politics; social relations are commoditised through the (IMF and World Bank-aided) global spread of the market logics, and globalisation is often seen as a function of neo-liberalism. Although it is true that the term rose to fame in the same period — the 1990s — as neo-liberalism became the hegemonic world ideology, globalisation is of course both much older, more diverse and ideologically more ambiguous than this view would allow.

Partly because of its strong ideological connotations, most of the contributors to this book find it relevant to talk of their empirical material in terms of *transnational flows* rather than globalisation. Whether it is ideas or substances that flow, or both, they have origins and destinations, and the flows are instigated by people. The ideational and institutional framework of the flows may be 'placeless' or global in principle (the Internet is, and so are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the dominance of Microsoft software and the global salmon market), but their instantiation necessarily involves situated agents and delineated social contexts. This way of re-focusing of the research object is typical of anthropological reconceptualisations of grand theories, and in this case, it responds to the methodological problems associated with diffusionism and evolutionism. Instead of *assuming* the existence of global

processes, the contributors to this book follow their informants and their cultural production wherever they go. When Marianne Lien writes about the connections between Finnmark fisheries and Japanese business, it is not because that relationship is of intrinsic interest, but because this entanglement has become an important part of the local. And when Karen Fog Olwig describes the creation of place among migrants from Nevis in far-flung places in the USA and Europe, it is not necessarily because she is interested in movement as such, but because she is committed to a long-term ethnographic project dealing with Nevisians, whose social worlds cannot be physically encircled by the shores of Nevis itself. Christian Krohn-Hansen, similarly, discovered that in order to complete his ethnographic endeavour in the Dominican Republic he would have to do fieldwork in New York City. Quite clearly, the 'non-places' famously described by Augé (1995), are saturated with symbolic meanings to the people who engage with them, although their 'objective' meaning may be opaque because they mean different things to different people (see Hannerz' chapter). If we consider Appadurai's (1996) proposed fields of significance — ethnoscapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes and so on — it is also clear that they are only brought into being in so far as people invest them with content, that they are only activated through social processes.

The point may seem trivial, yet it is easily overlooked if one sees 'the global' as a kind of Hegelian world spirit looming above and beyond human lives. The global only exists to the extent that it is being created through ongoing social life.

The fact that social worlds engage with wider systems is, of course, not new; it is not even a new concern for anthropology. Notwithstanding the orthodoxies of late Victorian anthropology, post-Malinowskian anthropology has also long engaged with the relationship between local communities and the outside world. The abhorrence of large-scale systems, change, mixing and modernity ascribed, in cliché narratives of intellectual pasts, to mid-20th century anthropology, is counteracted by a no less pronounced interest in the same phenomena. There has been a continuous, if sometimes unfashionable, interest in the articulation of the local with large-scale systems, including capitalism, individualism and the

state. This is not to say that all criticism of earlier insularity is misplaced, only that it should not be exaggerated.

Methodological peers

To put it differently: Quests for symbolic power and professional identity sometimes tempt academics to caricature the positions taken by their predecessors, in order for their own contribution to shine with an exceptionally brilliant glow of originality and sophistication. Let us resist that temptation here.

Malinowski himself, the founding father of the single-sited community fieldwork and the synchronic analysis, made his reputation on a study of mobility, translocal connections and what we might today call the identity politics of the *kula* (Malinowski, 1984/1922). Moreover, Mr. Structural-Functionalism himself expressed a concern that the units studied in social anthropology were about to dissolve into larger and fuzzier systems, making them difficult to handle methodologically (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952: 193). The third 'founding father' of modern anthropology, Boas, remained sympathetic to diffusionism until his death, judging the study of diffusion as complementary to his historical particularist study of single cultures. However, of all the 20th century *Gründers,* it was especially Mauss who made historical change and cultural diffusion an integral part of his intellectual programme. In *The Gift* (Mauss, 1951/1923), Mauss explores both the historical origins of exchange regimes and their geographical distribution (especially in the Pacific region), and in the final chapter, he laments the currently weak position of exchange as total social phenomena in modern France.

This is not to deny that the single-society synchronic study was the standard form of anthropological inquiry for decades. Yet its shortcomings have been known, but were accepted as a trade-off to its advantages. Sometimes spoken of as the trade-off between depth and breadth, the contrast between time-intensive, slow and concentrated village fieldwork and the more breathless, fragmented and dispersed urban or translocal fieldwork should nevertheless not

be overstated. One of the classic *Gemeinschaft* studies of American sociology was a study of a corner gang in a US city (Whyte, 1943), and conversely, many of the classic studies of North American Indians were characterised by limited access to informants, resultant patchy knowledge of their culture and social organisation, and even the enforced dislocation of the informant group (onto reservations).

Amit (1999: 5) takes Hastrup to task for a seeming self-contradiction, namely that the latter had first emphasised the continued need for in-depth fieldwork (Hastrup and Hervik, 1994), and then, a few years later (Hastrup and Olwig, 1997), argued that there was no longer a one-to-one relationship between place and cultural production. However, in the context of the present book, we must stress the need to accept both views simultaneously. The fact that the field of inquiry is not a physical place can never be an excuse for not doing long-term fieldwork. Engagement with the field varies — in modern complex societies, it may be difficult to follow informants around in different contexts, and many simply do not have a lot of spare time on their hands. Yet this problem can be partly compensated for through the improved availability of other sources in complex societies; and besides, limited access to informants is probably also more widespread in traditional locality-based fieldwork than commonly assumed.

As noted above, problems concerning origins and the subsequent distribution and recontextualisation of phenomena were far from unfamiliar to early 20th century anthropologists, nor were issues relating to change and systemic interconnectedness. It can still be said that such issues tended not to be at the forefront in a discipline dominated by questions concerning cultural integration (in the USA) and social integration (in Britain). However, several of the mid-20th century anthropological traditions following, or reacting against, earlier efforts took on methodological problems closely related to the ones which are raised in studies of transnational processes.

First, urban anthropology and network studies developed sophisticated understandings of social complexity and methods for studying weakly incorporated social systems. The Chicago school of the interwar years and the

Manchester school of the early postwar years were particularly important in this regard (cf. Hannerz, 1980: chapters 2 and 4). A collective volume confidently entitled *The Craft of Social Anthropology* (Epstein, 1965), published in the twilight years of the Manchester school, describes a number methodological strategies developed in the context of African urbanisation — sociometrics, extended case method, systems analysis — which have attained acute importance in studies of unbounded (but not unregulated) flows.

Second, systems theory proper, as witnessed in the work of Bateson (1972), Rappaport (1968), human ecologists and a wide range of non-anthropologists, has for decades offered robust methods for studying the parameters that regulate certain kinds of flows. While it would be unwise to use techniques devised for measuring energy exchange in studies of people and their cultural production, some of the general methodological guidelines of systems theory, such as the need to 'follow the loops' of repetitive interaction and redundancy in information, should be useful in studies of transnationalism as well.

Third, the strains of anthropological Marxism that were concerned with political economy, placed the mutual interdependence of societies at the forefront of the agenda. Lacking the mainstream's search for cultural authenticity and social cohesion, syncretic books by Wolf (1982), Worsley (1984) and others instead emphasised flows, connections and — more so than recent studies of transnationalism — power discrepancies that needed to be understood in a global framework. Emphasising the necessity to understand higher systemic levels than those usually described by anthropologists, this line of neo-Marxism also added historical depth to the understanding of global interconnectedness. Sidney Mintz' (1985) study of sugar, to mention one outstanding example, splendidly weaves together present and past, global and local, insider's and outsider's perspectives in a coherent, powerful analysis of the role of one colonial commodity in recent world history.

Some substantial concerns

There is a strained relationship between transnational studies or globalisation studies in anthropology and cultural anthropology proper, seen as the comparative study of symbolic universes and cultural specificity. Both Sahlins (1994) and Geertz (1994) have spoken ironically about the disenchanted world of global communication, intimating that the study object proper to anthropology is, when all is said and done, bounded and local. Many younger American anthropologists who have felt straitjacketed by their peers' demand for coherence and boundedness, have ended up writing *against* culture. All of the sources of inspiration for transnational studies mentioned so far in this introduction, moreover, seem to belong to the sociological camp in anthropology. All this apparently makes it possible to bracket or even obliterate culture or symbolic meaning as a primary research focus. Studies of identity politics or the politics of culture, for example, tend to concentrate on the externalising social manipulation and appropriation of cultural symbols and identity markers, rather than exploring the life-world meanings of them. Yet the importance of actual cultural differences is not necessarily neglected in such work; one may only think of Kapferer's (1988) comparative study of the Sri Lankan and Australian nationalisms, where cultural differences play a central part. Hannerz' seminal *Cultural Complexity* (1992), moreover, pays particular attention to the production of meaning in transnational contexts. Many other examples could have been mentioned, not least from recent American anthropology.

The contributions to this book do not bracket or leave culture out, but claim cultural process (culture as a verb rather than a noun, in the sense of Street, 1991) as one of their main subjects. Although some dimensions of culture tend to be taken for granted in all studies of modernity — think of the glib ways in which anthropologists used to talk about 'Western culture' as a single, taken-for-granted entity, while they were at pains to present all the differentiating nuances and details of their chosen non-Western culture — there is a deep concern with the interpretation of symbolic universes and description of their substantial content throughout this book. Even if the very term trans*national* (rather than say, trans*local*) indicates that central dimensions of modernity are taken for

granted, several of the chapters (most notably, perhaps, Nustad's and Abram's) offer fine-grained cultural accounts of some aspects of contemporary bureaucratic management. Others, such as Melhuus and Howell, take great pains to elaborate symbolic meanings embedded in a cultural universe that is just as much 'their own' as 'that of others', while Lund, herself an American anthropologist of Norwegian descent living for many years in Norway, tries to make sense of a Transatlantic practice involving Norwegians and Norwegian—Americans, which initially caught her interest because it seemed so puzzling. Although none of this involves 'otherness' in the old sense, the ensuing analyses cannot be accused of not taking culture seriously, and in spite of dealing with the culture of 'home', they are in every way far removed from contrived depictions of, say, New York stockbrokers 'as if' they were a Papuan tribe.

Several of the classic staples of anthropological research are amply covered in the chapters that make up this book.

Identity and community. Four of the chapters shed new light on problems relating to these core concepts in socal anthropology, indicating both continuity with past efforts and the need for new approaches in the fast-moving contemporary world.

Olwig, who has studied Caribbean diasporas for many years, discusses the concept 'global places' in the context of research in the Caribbean and on Caribbean migration. Her chapter shows the importance of discussing spatial identities in their actual concrete settings rather than in relation to the categories and concepts that have become dominant in the global discourse about place. Whether in the small island of Nevis or in a big Western city, her informants relate to places in ambiguous and complex ways, which cannot be subsumed under categories such as 'transnationalism' or 'diaspora'. Varying emphases on family networks, Caribbean places and the spatial significance of personal experiences among her informants are shown to transcend such general concepts, probably, she remarks, because her fieldwork has concentrated on intimate, 'primary' relationships.

Christian Krohn-Hansen, in a complex argument involving the fall of the Berlin wall, the meanings of race and Caribbean history, argues that an improved anthropology of the present crucially depends on an improved anthropology of the past, making a strong case for better historical research in the discipline. This is not least because, as he puts it, in our world of global flows, the human interest in genealogies (and blood, and place, and soil, and roots) remains tremendous.

Marianne Lien, whose research concerns food and transnationalism, discusses the significance of the term marginality in her contribution. The fishing community of Båtsfjord, Northern Norway, is commonly seen as a marginal place — small, isolated, remote from every centre — and yet its marginality is shown to be negotiable. Partly it is a notion constructed by the political centre and reproduced locally as a self-fulfilling prophecy denying Båtsfjord its place in global networks; partly it is contingent on Båtsfjord's alleged lack of inclusion in wider networks of communication and exchange. Through several concomitant processes (a new airport, revival of trade with Russians of the Kola peninsula, local attempts at re-fashioning local identity, globalisation of the fish market), the community's marginality is shown to be shifting and context-dependent. However, Lien also shows that the impact of various 'globalising' processes varies because of variations in local agency, thereby making a case for ethnography in globalisation studies.

Sarah Lund presents an intriguing ethnographic case in her chapter: the physical transfer of Norwegian-inspired buildings from the US Midwest to a site in Western Norway, as a form of commemoration. Migration from Norway to the Midwest was massive in the 19th century, and these acts of reciprocity are interpreted as a way of creating a Transatlantic locality. More pertinently, the chapter indicates the importance of historical depth in studies of transnational flows. Without an understanding of family ties, Scandinavian Lutheranism in the Midwest and the cultural importance of community, both in Norway and among Scandinavian-Americans, this expensive and labour-intensive movement would have been difficult to understand.

Institutional and informal politics. The subdiscipline of political anthropology used the relationship between the normative, institutional level and the level of

strategic action virtually as its constitutive tension. In Abram's and Nustad's chapters, we see the tension being played out in the context of auditing, in Western Europe and South Africa, respectively.

Knut Nustad begins his chapter by presenting a useful distinction between a global system and reflexive awareness of globality, detailingthe latter as a tension between globalism (as a form of neo-liberalism) and globality (the cultural notion that we now live in an unbounded world). Attempting to 'cut globalisation down to size', he argues, using the IMF audit system as his main example, that although 'global actors' may exist, their reach through 'long networks' varies and is always confronted with resistance. There is no local/global duality — this would have presupposed an empirically incorrect dependence on the nation-state as the paradigm of social organisation — and what must be studied instead is how 'global actors' achieve their size through associating other actors and objects.

Abram's chapter discusses methodological issues associated with studying bureaucracies. She identifies two main approaches: one place-based and one policy-based; and two main kinds of data: informants' statements and actions, and documents. By presenting three very different examples from her own research on planning and bureacracy (two from Buckinghamshire, England and one from the Oslo region, Norway), she reveals how methodological choices affect the production of knowledge. She also shows that paradoxically, it is often necessary to set aside constructs such as local and global when one is studying these phenomena, since the appropriate methodological level — whether one studies interaction or documents — is that of the network.

Kinship and gender. Both Howell and Melhuus, who have formerly worked in South-East Asia and Latin America, respectively, engage with these classic issues in new empirical settings. Melhuus raises some important questions regarding the flow of fertilised human eggs and human sperm — an activity rarely included in globalisation studies, but clearly relevant for any discussion about boundaries, flows and transnationalism. Using Norwegian legislative practices as her main case, she shows ways in which the transnational circulation of bodily substances involves power discrepancies and tensions between boundedness and openness

which closely resemble similar dimensions in economic, political and cultural flows. The obstacles confronted in attempts to re-define human substances as commodities moreover serve as a reminder that there are implicit rules regulating flows. Some things and ideas travel, while others don't.

Howell's chapter on the dissemination of children's rights is an original contribution to a classic issue in anthropology and global politics, namely the tension between universal pretentions and local realities. Exploring the history, development and attempted implementation of children's rights, she compares what can loosely be called 'new-style colonialism' (the more complex and less clear-cut globalising processes led by UN agencies and NGOs) with classic colonialism, showing the former to be informed by many of the same basic value orientations as the latter. Like Krohn-Hansen, she shows the importance of historical depth in globalisation studies — in this case adoption practices, notions of childhood, rights discourses and other relevant, historically contingent aspects of children's rights, connecting this historical perspective to a reading of both documents and social practices (like Abram). When Howell and Melhuus both write about international conventions and legislation, regulating the adoption of children and the flow of reproductive material, respectively, their work moreover stands in a long anthropological tradition of relating cultural norms to the ongoing negotiations and 'hybrid actions' of social life.

Place. In his chapter, Hannerz turns the notion of multisited fieldwork inside-out by showing that a single site in a complex society may be conceptualised as a multiple one. Since 'spaces' require agency and human interpretation in order to become 'places', it is clear that each 'space' may exist as various 'places' in so far as many agents invest it with different meanings. Hannerz presents a variety of research projects engaged in by his colleagues in Stockholm to indicate the generality of this 'multivocality of places', also pointing out that it requires great ethnographic sensitivity and thoroughness to comprehend the multidimensionality of an apparently single site. This point is also made forcefully in Lien's chapter.

Although Miller and Slater's chapter can be read largely as a strong defence of ethnographic work as an indispensable tool for understanding the contemporary

world, it is also a valuable contribution to the understanding of place. The Internet is often seen as the virtual and global place *par excellence*, but as Miller and Slater show, it is both imbued with local meanings everywhere in the world and connected to pre-existing practices. Indeed, they argue, the 'dot com crisis' in 2000—2001 was partly caused by a failure to understand the embeddedness of Internet use in everyday off-line life.

In the Epilogue, Keith Hart moves in the opposite direction from what we usually do regarding scale and place, by asking what it would be like to study *world society* rather than transnational processes — in other words moving upwards rather than downwards in scale. Taking his cue from Immanuel Kant (among the classics) and Manuel Castells (among the contemporaries), Hart argues that global embeddedness is increasingly a fundamental characteristic of the sites we study, and that world history is therefore now a crucial discipline for anthropology. Hart also argues the case of a more relaxed attitude to methodological issues: long-term single-sited fieldwork is in many cases, and for different reasons, no longer feasible. In its place, he offers existential engagement. Given the fact that anthropologists have always used themselves as their most important 'tools of measurement' in their research, this requirement makes immediate sense, and yet it feels as if Hart has violated a taboo.

An implicit theme in all the chapters is continuity and community. During the last decades, strongly marked by critiques of the allegedly static and conservatives views of culture and society dominating early- to mid-20th century anthropology, the general ability to describe and analyse movement, mixing and discontinuity has increased considerably. Change is no longer seen as a theoretical and methodological problem, but as an inherent property of social life. Some social theorists (e.g. Urry, 2000) have even proposed a sociology based on movement rather than society as the fundamental concept; and in anthropology, Strathern (e.g. 1991) has been among the foremost in arguing that the search for wholeness and integration is ultimately fruitless (cf. also Ardener, 1985, on the end of modernism in social anthropology, and Amit and Rapport, 2002, for a recent discussion). In this situation, it is not facetious to argue that the conceptual and methodological apparatuses required to handle change and

disruption are developing at a healthy pace, but that there is at the same time a risk that the classic skills of anthropologists in describing continuity and community are being weakened. In the context of transnational flows, it is true that continuity and community can no longer be taken for granted, as axiomatic points of departure. This does not mean that they cannot be identified, but that they need to be accounted for. If we are to believe the most sweeping statements about the disembedding and deterritorialising effects of globalisation, then it may seem nothing short of miraculous that long-term multiplex relationships continue to exist, that traditional social practices and cultural notions remain doxic, and that social communities based on generalised reciprocity and shared cultural values continue to be reproduced. Conversely, as Appadurai (1996: 179ff.) points out, localities were never *sui generis* and always required sustained hard work to continue to exist. While no serious student of the social should be surprised by this, it is true that social and cultural continuity now need to be described in more accurate terms than before, and also display greater variation than often assumed. For example, communities need not be localised in order to offer comparable ontological security, normative control and social constraints on individuals, as the proverbial village did. Since the community is no longer necessarily a spatial entity, however, its existence has to be demonstrated. Most of the chapters of this book indicate, sometimes in striking ways, the resilience and continued importance of *Gemeinschaft*-like social arrangements based on trust, social commitments and shared interpretations. The methodology required to produce knowledge about these communities, however, is more complex and in some ways more demanding (though, admittedly, in other ways less demanding) than the classic single-site synchronic fieldwork.

What *is* new?

In the foregoing I have relinquished intellectual one-upmanship and instead emphasised continuity between the methods and objectives of classic modernist anthropology and studies of transnational processes. Many of the same general problems are addressed, and the research methodology presented in this book

does not represent a revolutionary departure from that of Malinowski or Evans-Pritchard. Yet it cannot, and should not, be denied that studies of transnational processes, be it Internet users in Trinidad, the sense of community among Caribbean migrants to North America or the flow of sperm and eggs across state borders, require a somewhat different conceptual apparatus and methodological toolbox than the kind of research typical of the discipline half a century ago. Some of this is well known. For example, much has been written about the need to see culture as a process rather than a thing, the inherent complexity and variation of cultural phenomena, and the problem of boundaries (for some of the most influentialstatements, see Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Hannerz, 1992; Strathern, 1991). The battle to escape the straitjacket of a reified concept of culture, along with its concomitant reified ideas of identity, seems to have been won for now, and besides, the processual notion of culture is not the exclusive property of globalisation studies (see e.g. Barth, 1989). The following points, elaborated at greater length in the chapters that follow, are neither more nor less than some regulative ideas that distinguish studies of transnational processes from — dare I use the term — traditional modernist anthropology.

First, studies of transnational processes rely on a greater diversity of materials than classic ethnography. Although participant observation is usually indispensable, written sources — often produced in the society in question (cf. Archetti, 1994) — can never be ignored. In a complex urban environment, questionnaire surveys and formal interviews also tend to be applied more frequently than in a local community. Studies of the Internet, to mention an example of growing interest, will always involve online research. The importance of historical material in this kind of research, moreover, in fact makes it necessary for very many anthropologists to become better historians — if for other reasons than imagined by Evans-Pritchard (1962).

A second and related point is the tendency, in transnational research, to develop a different, less multiplex kind of relationship to most informants than that which is feasible in a physical locality. Although this does not necessarily lead to a trade-off between 'depth' and 'breadth', it is clearly less easy to share the lives of informants for extended periods when the field is multilocal or even non-local,

than when one 'pitches one's tent in a savage village'. Even when the number of informants is limited, as in Hannerz' recent research on foreign correspondents (Hannerz, 1996; forthcoming), this kind of informant is far less available than the villager of the classic monograph.

Thirdly, research on transnational processes often involves multi-sited fieldwork, but as noted above, it may also involve multi-levelled single-site fieldwork, and this could moreover mean different things, such as studying the same setting from the perspective of different social groups participating in it, or studying a site at several levels of abstraction from ongoing social process.

Fourthly and finally, in order for the transnational flows to be fully understood, they must not only be contextualised historically and systemically, but they must also be explicitly articulated with processes at the macro level. Thus the critique of the likes of Wolf and Worsley, that anthropology needed a better grasp of the large-scale processes in order to make sense of the small-scale ones, meets massive resonance among students of transnational processes, which is evident in all the chapters of this book.

Like the study of identity politics, the study of transnational processes or globalisation is interdisciplinary, engaging academics from sociology, human geography, political science, cultural studies and many other disciplines. What anthropology has to bring to globalisation studies is the recognition that social and cultural worlds, which are constituted from diverse materials of various origins, are always expressed through meaningful relationships. Through its ethnographic depth, anthropology also has the authority and the ability to collapse a number of counterproductive dichotomies: the local and the global, the virtual and the real, the place-bound and the 'non-place', the universal and the particular. In real-life settings, such contrasts evaporate.

What this book has to offer to the craft of social anthropology amounts to cutting globalisation research down to size by reintegrating it into the methodological mainstream of anthropology. If the research presented in this book should prove uninteresting and bad, at least the verdict should not be made on the basis of weak methodology and poor empirical material. Seeing the anthropology of

transnational processes as 'not really anthropology' should, hopefully, be a little bit more difficult after this book.

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