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## What is Global Studies?

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**ABSTRACT** *This discussion examines global studies and whether and how it differs from the earlier wave of globalization studies. Although treatments generally regard these as equivalent, studies of globalization are anchored in social science and humanities disciplines while global studies are, in principle, conceived on a different footing. We can distinguish two accounts of global studies: an empirical account, i.e. a description of actual existing global studies, and an analytical or programmatic account, which refers to what global studies can or should be for theoretical or other reasons. The first section of this paper discusses global knowledge as a database that exists independent of studies of globalization; the second section turns to studies of globalization; the third section concerns global studies as it actually exists; the fourth section offers a programmatic account of global studies. The concluding sections address cognitive problems of global thinking, in particular the challenges of multicentric and multilevel thinking.*

**Keywords:** global knowledge, globalization, disciplines, cognition, multicentrism

Globalization emerged as a theme in the 1980s and interest in it rose steeply during the 1990s, so the globalization literature now ranges over 30 years. Most social sciences and humanities have developed their ‘global’ repertoires and profiles, as in global sociology, global history, global political economy, global economics and finance, global anthropology, global geography, global media and communication studies, global art, etc. In most cases this means upgrading previous international or comparative study programs and in some cases it includes regional studies. Over the past 15 years, centers, programs, and courses under the heading of global studies have mushroomed across the world. They combine globalization studies in diverse disciplines and build on existing international relations and development studies programs. Conferences, associations and journals that are explicitly devoted to global studies—not just to globalization—have also been growing in number.<sup>1</sup> Yet database searches with *global studies* as the keyword offer relatively few entries (527 in Google Scholar),

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while the keyword *globalization* provides many more (98,400).<sup>2</sup> Books with the phrase ‘global studies’ in their title are few and are mostly introductory textbooks or readers.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that the intellectual profile of global studies as such has barely developed. In this sense, global studies programs, conferences, and journals exist ahead of the theme, as scaffolding without a roof. Global studies as a synthesis with added value beyond studies of globalization, then, is a project in the making.

This discussion probes the theme of global studies and whether and how it differs from the earlier wave of globalization studies. We can distinguish two accounts of global studies: an empirical account, i.e. a description of actual existing global studies, and an analytical or programmatic account, which refers to what global studies can or should be for analytical or other reasons. Treatments generally regard globalization and global studies as equivalent. Arguably, the main difference is that globalization research is anchored in social science and humanities disciplines while global studies is, in principle, conceived on a different footing. The first section of this paper discusses global knowledge as a database that exists prior to and separate from studies of globalization; the second section turns to studies of globalization; the third section concerns global studies as it actually exists; the fourth section offers a programmatic account of global studies; and the concluding sections address problems of global cognition, in particular the challenges of multicentric and multilevel thinking.

### **Sociology of Global Knowledge**

Social sciences fulfill service functions; they wouldn’t exist unless they met social demand and provided interested parties with relevant data and information. This involves analytical functions and critique—discussing which types of data are relevant and which categories, concepts, and classifications matter; criticizing structures and the role and functioning of institutions; questioning epistemological premises and cultural assumptions, and so forth. The emergence of global studies, likewise, meets a social demand. By adopting a sociology-of-knowledge approach, we can develop a sociology of global knowledge and start out by identifying the social demand that global knowledge seeks to meet.

The rise of global studies reflects the growing presence of the global. Simply count how often the adjective ‘global’ appears in news headlines and reports. Global studies reflects the growing pace, scope, and intensity of global relations and effects. Global studies has been growing because of the exponential growth of global dynamics and problems; it is a response to ramifying, intensifying, and deepening processes of globalization. Global studies has been spreading because global relations and problems require a global approach, a need that is felt by social forces, international organizations, governments, and corporations the world over.

In relation to this social demand, global knowledge represents the supply. We can distinguish three levels of global knowledge. The first level is global data and information per se: the wide array of diverse and sprawling data collected by all actors and institutions that have an interest in global information of some kind, such as international institutions, governments, corporations, social movements, media, and foundations. A large amount of data are collected only to meet specific demand and are systematically organized according to limited purposes. Familiar sources of global data are the UN agencies, the World Bank, IMF, the CIA Fact Book, the Economist Intelligence Unit, regional development banks, university research centers, etc. Other organizations and corporations seek global information of a more specific type. Media and literature supply data that are impressionistic, anecdotal, and consist of *faits divers*. This level of global knowledge is constantly growing, wide in scope, and yet fragmented. The second level consists of globalization studies, which are mostly (not entirely) organized according to social science and humanities disciplines and informed by discipline legacies and theories. The third

**Table 1.** Global knowledge

Social demand	Global data supply
<i>Governments</i> Internationalization, geo-economics, geopolitics, crossborder movements, cultural flows	Comparative politics, regulatory and legal regimes, security, conflict flashpoints, crime, terrorism, human trafficking, demographics, studies of religion
<i>International institutions</i> Environment, resource use, international development, demography, migration, urbanization, international law, ICC, Interpol	Sustainability and climate studies, development data, statistics such as literacy rates, Human Development Index, migration studies, nodal cities, infrastructure
<i>Organizations</i> Professional associations, think tanks, educational institutions	Specialist knowledge networks, international conferences, e.g. physicians, epidemiologists, educators, lawyers, security analysts
<i>Media, ICT</i> Markets, investments, cooperation, events	ICT hardware and use, satellites, fiber-optic cables, regulatory regimes, media centers, flows
<i>Sports</i> International sports, Olympic Games, World cups, tournaments, sponsors, clubs	Global markets in soccer, golf, tennis, cricket, etc., global talent searches
<i>Art</i> Auction houses, museums, collectors, dealers, artists, academies	Art markets, fairs, biennales, galleries, transnational aesthetics, price trends and fluctuations
<i>NGOs, social movements, foundations</i> Trade unions, ILO, INGOs, World Council of Churches, ecumenical organizations	Labor standards, labor rights regimes, aid policies and social demand, transnational activism, World Social Forum, global reform from below, pressure points of social change, interfaith dialogue
<i>Corporations</i> Commodities, logistics, shipping, insurance Global market share, joint ventures, global brands, advertising, offshoring, outsourcing, institutional arbitrage, technology, innovation, intellectual property, piracy. Banks, hedge funds, institutional investors, credit rating agencies. World Economic Forum. Tourism, events management. Luxury market trends, fashion, cosmetics	Transportation networks, financial fluctuations, currencies, price movements, regulatory regimes, business cultures, interlocking boards, patent regimes and enforcement, stock exchanges, credit ratings. Global culture, 'cool hunters, style, beauty pageants, contests. Luxury studies, global fashion.

level is global studies as the integration of these two bodies of knowledge. In sum, the three levels of global knowledge are: global data—wide, yet fragmented; globalization studies—influenced by discipline demarcations and theories; and global studies—the integration of the above and, potentially, an approach in its own right.

Table 1 gives a sketch of global knowledge—indicative and not exhaustive. The first column lists the agency of social demand and the type of global data that are relevant, and the second indicates the knowledge production and supply that seeks to meet this demand. Each of these could be detailed according to many subsets but this overview only seeks to give an impression of the sprawl and diversity of global knowledge. What are listed are examples (being exhaustive would be impossible and serve little purpose).

**Studies of Globalization**

Scrutiny of theories of globalization in different disciplines shows glaring discrepancies. Books on and introductions to globalization written from the perspective of different disciplines differ markedly in emphasis, scope, definition and understandings of globalization, to the point that the situation resembles the tale of the blind men and the elephant. Thus, starting out from an

**Table 2.** Globalization according to social science/humanities disciplines

Disciplines	Time	Agency, domain	Keywords/themes
<i>Economics</i>	1970	MNCs, technologies, banks, international financial institutions	Global corporation, world product, global capitalism
	2000	Hedge funds, sovereign wealth funds	New economy, dotcom, sovereign debt, currencies, credit rating agencies
<i>Political science, international relations</i>	1980	'Internationalization of the state'. Crossborder social movements, INGOs. Internationalism	International order, international law, competitor states, 'postinternational politics', global civil society
<i>Geography</i>	1980	Space, place, global and nodal cities	Glocalization, local-global interactions, migration
<i>Cultural studies</i>	1970	Representations, stereotypes, advertising, aesthetics	Orientalism. McDonaldisation, 'clash of civilizations', hybridization
<i>Media studies</i>	1970	Media, ICT, internet, social media	'Global village', CNN world, Disneyfication
<i>Philosophy</i>	1950	Ethics	Global problems, global ethics
<i>Sociology</i>	1800	Modernity	Capitalism, industrialism, urbanization, nation states, etc.
<i>Political economy</i>	1500	Modern capitalism, modern world-system	'Conquest of the world market', 'long sixteenth century'
<i>History, anthropology</i>	3000 BCE	Population movements, crosscultural trade, spread of technologies, world religions	The widening scale of social cooperation. Global flows, ecumene
<i>Biology, ecology</i>	Time	Integration of ecosystems	Evolution, global ecology, Gaia

Adapted from Nederveen Pieterse, 2009a.

international relations background, Scholte (2005) defines globalization as the growth of supra-territorial relations, i.e. deviating from the Westphalian framework of territorial sovereign states; which is in stark contrast to the view taken by geographers and anthropologists, who view globalization in terms of growing global–local interactions. Economists often define globalization as the *convergence* of economic conditions across borders; thus according to Gray (1993, p. 38), globalization is 'the similarity of economic conditions and policies across national boundaries'. This seems counterfactual because much crossborder economic interaction is prompted by differences in conditions across zones (such as in wages, taxes, environmental, and labor standards). Global value chains and institutional and labor arbitrage exist precisely because of such differences, so institutional and price divergence across economies is a major variable in global dynamics. In migration studies, among others, the divergence of economic conditions across borders is a key variable. According to O'Rourke and Williamson (2002), globalization is the convergence of commodity prices across continents, which they time in the 1820s. This, however, is a measure of globality, a condition, and not of globalization, a process.

These examples illustrate the unevenness of globalization studies across and even within disciplines, and the extent to which globalization studies are organized according to disciplinary conventions. While globalization research is varied and often interdisciplinary, it is affected by the disciplines and their demarcations of domains and theoretical leanings and paradigms. In some 30 years of globalization literature, areas of consensus on globalization across disciplines have grown but controversies remain and new ones arise; overarching frameworks

emerge but the discrepancies between how social science and humanities disciplines view globalization remain distinct and in some respects glaring. There is no consensus on the definition of globalization, its effects, and its periodization (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009a).

Table 2 gives an overview of globalization studies according to social science and humanities disciplines (discussed in Nederveen Pieterse, 2009a). Glaring differences in globalization perspectives are visible at a glance. The first column lists the disciplines. The second column indicates the time according to which (the dimension of) globalization that is relevant for the discipline has started (additional periods to mark the emergence of additional themes). The disciplines are listed in the order of when they typically mark the start time of globalization, in the sequence from recent to early. The third column indicates the typical agency of globalization and/or the domain in which it unfolds, and the fourth column provides keywords for typical areas of interest and debate. Again, the overview is indicative and not exhaustive. The bottom row looks beyond social science towards ecology and biology, considering that these processes are embedded in wider species, ecological, planetary and cosmic circumstances. Let's note that some disciplines host diverse perspectives on and timelines of globalization. Thus, in sociology the periodization of globalization varies from 1980 (postwar) to 1800 (modernity) to 1500 (world market), and timeframes in history range from 1500 CE to 500 CE to 3000 BCE (Bayly, 2004; Goody, 2010; Hobson, 2004). Critical globalization studies aims to set globalization apart from the predominance of neoliberal globalization (Mittelman, 2004).

### Global Studies

Occasionally one hears that 'one should never study something with the word "studies" in it'. The idea is that 'studies' lack the structure, depth and craft of the disciplines. If we consider the wide and growing array of studies—international studies, development studies, area studies, cultural studies, gender studies, black studies, ethnic studies, world system studies, post-colonial studies, urban studies, border studies, media/communication/film studies, transnational studies, global studies, feminist studies, Native American studies, Chicano studies, and so forth—they all concern *new objects of study*, domains, approaches or subjects and sensibilities that did not exist or were not recognized at the time when the disciplines took shape, largely in the course of the nineteenth century. A discipline is a field of study (with a community of scholars, a distinctive terrain and principles or methods of research), so disciplines and studies are synonymous. The distinction runs essentially between early and latecomers, a matter of seniority. The earlycomers claim to be foundational while the latecomers claim new objects of study.

The 'studies' often exist in an uneven (sometimes fraught) relationship with the disciplines because the new domains are also studied in the disciplines (e.g. sociology of culture) and broaden and rejuvenate the disciplines, and the 'studies' often break down according to the disciplines (such as development economics, development sociology, urban anthropology). The rationale of the emergence of 'studies' is that the disciplines are inadequate in relation to the field of study which requires an interdisciplinary approach and/or that they involve agency and subjectivity which is marginalized in established academe, as in the case of women, minorities, and migrants. Unlike the disciplines, 'studies' lack a canon or there tends to be greater unevenness in what is recognized as expert knowledge, if only because of the relative newness of the field. Unlike the disciplines, the 'studies' lack a recognized place in academia, where the disciplines occupy the main arena and act as gatekeepers for newcomers. Hence 'studies' are often introduced first at young or newcomer universities, which cannot compete with the established universities in the disciplines, but can try to establish themselves and

attract faculty and students in new terrains. At American university campuses, the ‘studies’ are often housed in annexes off the main quad (just as, in American supermarkets, ‘ethnic foods’ are located in add-on aisles). The ‘studies’ have often been innovative and have introduced new theories and methodologies earlier than the disciplines precisely because they are unconstrained by the disciplinary canon; operating from the margins, they are more mobile and carry less burden. Thus, feminist studies embraced and contributed to postmodern approaches earlier than many disciplines did and introduced alternative epistemologies, such as standpoint theory. In knowledge, as in society, revolutions and paradigm shifts take place more often from the margins than from the centers (Kuhn, 1962). The most significant rationale of the studies is that they represent a more advanced level of integration of knowledge than the disciplines: they are interdisciplinary and proliferate at the same time and by the same logic that the disciplines fracture into multiple subfields.

Global studies, then, shares several features with other ‘studies’—global studies is new, interdisciplinary, uneven, and innovative. Its object of study is also researched in the disciplines, largely under the heading of globalization—a field that, arguably, has been colonized by the disciplines. Global studies, then, represents the third wave of research, because global knowledge and data exist prior to the category ‘globalization’.

If we examine actual global studies as it is researched and taught at universities across the world, it mostly consists of an uneven agglomeration of globalization and international studies, in which disciplines predominate mainly according to how the program has come about and which group of faculty initiates and hosts the global studies program. For instance, at Göteborg University in Sweden, global studies emerged from peace and development studies and hence emphasizes civil society actors and development perspectives; at Bielefeld University the lead foci of global studies are migration and global systems (in the tradition of Niklas Luhmann’s systems sociology); Freiburg University combines global sociology, development studies, and regional studies; at Warwick University international relations and regional studies shape global studies; at LSE, global governance plays a key role; at Sussex University, international relations and global political economy are at the forefront. At Moscow State University’s Faculty of Global Studies, besides sociology and geopolitics, philosophy, environmental studies, and sciences combine under the heading of ‘globalistics’. The Global Studies Faculty at Tokyo’s Sophia University hosts a mix of globalization and international studies; Hitotsubashi University’s global studies department ranges from anthropology to economics. Global studies specializations at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology include ideology, culture, and urban studies. Rutgers University’s Division of Global Affairs combines international affairs and development studies; at Yale University, global studies builds on international relations. At Minnesota University, global sociology, geography, and development studies are at the forefront; at University of California Santa Barbara, the foci of global studies are culture, global political economy, and governance; at UC Irvine the focus is global political economy; at UC Riverside, world-system studies lead.<sup>4</sup>

Thus global studies programs usually cluster and refurbish existing international and transnational studies to partake of the momentum and appeal of the ‘global’ heading. Reflecting the newness of global studies, they are a pragmatic local improvisation rather than an analytically or theoretically honed project. Accounts of global studies invariably mention that it is interdisciplinary. Juergensmeyer (2011) adds that global studies is transnational, both contemporary and historical, and tends to be postcolonial and critical. This sprawl enables diversity, but its ad hoc character suggests that global studies is yet to be defined analytically and programmatically. To the extent that globalization research is presentist, Eurocentric, and stuck in disciplinary

grooves, global studies is apt to reproduce these features, except for the disciplinary moorings. An analytical and programmatic account of global studies may point to further directions.

### Global Studies: A Programmatic Perspective

Accounts of global studies invariably treat it as equivalent to studies of globalization (e.g. Robertson, 2012; Roudometov, 2012), which is realistic in that what is taught in global studies programs is not different from studies of globalization—with the proviso that studies of globalization are influenced by disciplinary moorings, not entirely, but significantly enough to warrant caution. A programmatic perspective on global studies hinges on its added value *beyond* studies of globalization and international studies.

Global studies are different from studies of globalization; they differ just as *global sociology* differs from *sociology of globalization* and *global history* differs from *history of globalization*. In each of these cases, ‘global’ refers to perspectives and conceptualizations that incorporate a larger database and a wider angle of vision. Most sociology is national in scope (implicit in ‘society’) and global sociology (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007) refers to a broader set of premises and questions. Most history has been national, regional, or civilizational, and global history represents a more comprehensive and advanced perspective (Hopkins, 2002; Mazlish, 2006), as do evolutionary and Big History (Spier, 2010).

In part this is an empirical point, a matter of a wider database. Thus, the study of global social movements (e.g. Cohen and Rai, 1999) obviously covers a wider terrain (and a different object of research) than social movement studies. And, in part, the global turn involves conceptual and theoretical considerations. The study of *global social movements* involves different objects and perspectives than the study of globalization *and* social movements (Hamel et al., 2001). Global studies, then, differ from studies of globalization just as economic sociology differs from sociology of economics. (Sociology of economics applies standard sociological approaches to economics while economic sociology incorporates specifics of the economic field to develop a more refined sociological approach.) Another component is going beyond the international to the global level. Thus *international finance* (the interaction of finance in different nations) differs from *global finance* (the study of financial interactions that are not merely between nations but involve transnational entities and dynamics). Let us review the different components of global studies by comparison to studies of globalization.

The main difference is that studies of globalization are driven by social science and humanities disciplines, while global studies are interdisciplinary. Since globalization is multidimensional, global studies should be interdisciplinary (Redden, 2008; Shrivastava, 2008). By combining diverse disciplinary angles, global studies is kaleidoscopic and offers a panoramic view. The disciplinary perspectives on globalization—economics, sociology, anthropology, geography, cultural studies, political economy, politics of globalization, etc.—are driven by specific social demands and by each discipline’s theoretical legacies. Global studies aspires to be more comprehensive than studies of globalization: the whole is more than the sum of the parts. By combining diverse perspectives, new problematics and understandings arise; by pooling disciplinary knowledge domains, new knowledge platforms take shape, so global studies has the potential to be more comprehensive and sophisticated than studies of globalization.

The main rationale of global studies as a field is that ‘the global’ comes into its own. The global as a field of inquiry leads and the disciplines follow and fold into this lead. Global studies seeks to address the dynamics of the Gestalt of the global. Placing the global in the



lead and at the center of attention implies a fundamental shift of perspective. In other approaches the global is at the margins; what leads are the disciplines and their legacies. Since the disciplines took shape in the nineteenth century, national preoccupations are at the forefront. Thus, history has long been national history, a history of statesmen and battles; regional history and next, history of civilizations appeared much later, in the work of Burckhardt, Toynbee, Sorokin, and the Annales school. For most of its career sociology has served national preoccupations, with ‘society’ standing in for the nation/state as the framework of analysis (Wallerstein, 2001). When the global leads it is the other way round: nations, regions, cities, localities become peripheral to or building blocs of unfolding global dynamics. Thus, global studies refers to a recentering of social sciences—from the national and the regional to the global. Part of this transition took shape in Marx’s work on the world market, in studies of imperialism and decolonization, in dependency and world-system studies. Decentering the state and going beyond methodological nationalism is common to all global approaches.

The nineteenth century was avowedly ‘national’ in scope—the nation-state was the dominant formation and was the political form of nineteenth-century globalization (Harris, 1990; Robertson, 1992). Accordingly, ‘national knowledge’ of various kinds was relevant and strategic, including the national market, national economy, national firms, national history, politics and culture, and the stereotypes that nations held of each other. Note the treatises on ‘national character’ that played a part during the interwar years and after the Second World War (such as Ruth Benedict’s work on Japan), and that now seem increasingly quaint.

Several frameworks have transcended the nation—such as work on trade routes, religions, ethnic groups, language, migration, conquests, empires, imperialism, slavery, and ‘race’. ‘Race’ transcended the nation and served to rationalize slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. The high tide of race thinking and ‘race science’ ranges from the 1840s to the 1940s (its career lasted longer in settings such as the United States). Class and the ‘social question’ likewise pointed beyond national horizons. The twentieth century added new elements to these repertoires which gradually inched to the foreground—such as ideology and the bipolar conflict of the Cold War; the gradients of development and the hierarchy of ‘advanced’ and ‘developing’ countries; regionalism as a new political architecture of globalization (as in the European Union); and cultural difference, identity politics, and multiculturalism.

If from a national perspective, migration flows are marginal phenomena that may help or hinder national projects, from a global viewpoint they are central to shaping the global; hence the significance of diaspora studies. If from a national perspective, multinational (and later transnational) corporations are sideshows, from a global point of view they are forces that drive global value chains. If from a national viewpoint, international law and international treaties and covenants are add-ons to national sovereignty and legislation, from a global viewpoint the strengthening of international law is central to the re/making of world order. ‘World order’ in itself is a markedly different category than ‘international order’. This logic can be extended to virtually any domain, such as social movements, NGOs, or art.

Comparative and macro approaches such as world-system studies represent intermediate stages between national and global perspectives. The network approach is another intermediary, as set out by Michael Mann, who redefines societies as densities in social networks (1986); Castells’ network society (1996); peer-to-peer networks and the Internet (Benkler, 2006; Lovink, 2012); and communication studies. Migration, diaspora, and border studies are at the margins of national approaches. Transnationalism refers to a perspective developed in international

migration studies (Vertovec, 1999) as well as to a domain that overlaps with the global (Khagram and Levitt, 2008).

In many spheres, national knowledge gradually stretched and folded into international and transnational domains, as in art, architecture, music, and fashion. Thus, while modern art holds national connotations it is mostly a transnational phenomenon, as a stroll through any modern art museum shows. More clearly still, the postmodern—in architecture, art, style, and philosophy—is typically postnational in character. Major art fairs, biennales, and auctions have become global markers. In film and video, international festivals (such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Amsterdam) have likewise become markers. In art, interest has gradually shifted from court and classical art to national art (and local and folk art). Next are modern and contemporary art, which are transnational in character. A recent category is *global art*. Of ‘art on a global scale’, Hans Belting (2009, p. 40) notes:

rather than representing a new context, it indicates the loss of context or focus, and includes its own contradiction by implying the counter movement of regionalism and tribalization, whether national, cultural or religious. . . In short, new art today is global much the same way as the World Wide Web is global. The Internet is global in the sense that it is used everywhere, but this does not mean that it is universal in content or message. It is an infrastructure whose techniques offer a navigation system.

It is a truism that the twenty-first century is in many ways more explicitly, more avowedly ‘global’ than the preceding century, which is notable in virtually any sphere—in economics, finance, advertising, media, and so forth, but less so in politics, and only partly so in culture and social movements. The global isn’t new in any of these domains, and in some areas goes back for thousands of years, but its salience is new. Global awareness is more widespread than before, including awareness of global problems and risks such as climate change, epidemic threats such as HIV/AIDS and bird flu, crime, terrorism, marine piracy, multinational corporations, and economic and financial fluctuations. While this constitutes the demand side of global knowledge, global studies represent the supply side.

Development studies is problem-oriented (responsive to social demand) and policy-oriented (don’t just criticize, propose alternatives). Global studies is problem-centered as it is driven by social demand for addressing pressing global issues and risks. A policy-oriented strain also runs through global studies: shaping or managing (not a fortunate term) globalization is a recurrent theme. This includes work on alternative macroeconomic policies (such as Stiglitz, 2006), on global futures and reforms (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000) and the global public goods approach (Kaul et al., 2003; Pomerantz, 2008).

A potential keynote of global studies is concern with dynamics that are difficult or impossible to map or understand *other than* through global studies. This would be a stronger claim than meeting the demand for addressing new global tropes. Cases in point are studies of risk and complexity (Beck, 1999; Urry, 2003). Examples of complex interplay include, in global political economy, the Pacific economies and formations such as ‘Chamerica’; in global finance, the vast ecosystem of central banks, investment banks, hedge funds, sovereign wealth funds, trading floors, brokerages, stock and commodities exchanges; with regard to climate change and ecology, the intersections of economic growth, consumerism (rising in emerging societies), technologies of sustainability (renewable resources, energy efficiency, recycling), and regulation (Pansters, 2008); and with regard to global reform, the interplay of institutions and actors at multiple levels of negotiation. Engaging these complex intersections requires savvy and flexible tools.

### **Multicentrism**

From the challenges of accelerated globalization and from global studies as interdisciplinary synthesis other features follow, notably that global studies should be multicentric. If the object of study is global, the study too should be global in its premises and assumptions. In the global South, ‘globalization’ is often viewed as a North American preoccupation, so there is a need to ‘globalize global studies’ (Riggs, 2004).

Global studies follows the critiques of Eurocentrism and Orientalism, the decolonization of imagination (Nederveen Pieterse and Parekh, 1995), the ‘deconstruction of the West’, and the various problematizations of modernity. Global studies should be multicentric in viewing global concerns not just from New York, London, Paris, or Tokyo but also from the viewpoint of New Delhi, São Paulo, Beijing, or Nairobi. Global studies, then, refers to viewing global issues from diverse, multicentric perspectives and redefining international affairs accordingly. To the extent that it meets this standard, global studies is appropriate to a multipolar world and more relevant to contemporary dynamics than disciplinary approaches.

Ethnocentrism has been the species’ historical norm. Over time, the unit of social cooperation has changed and expanded—the clan, the tribe, the empire, faith, nation, language, civilization, race, and so forth—but the principle of groupthink has not. Provincialisms have characterized most of the species’ existence; until fairly recently, local, national perspectives have held the foreground, and the international sphere too has been understood in parochial terms—in categories such as the empire, the church, the white man’s burden, the civilizing mission, domino theory, American exceptionalism, and so forth. Globalization as growing interconnect-edness, then, inevitably also means a clash of ethnocentrism. Huntington’s narrative of a ‘clash of civilizations’ is a case in point. Samman’s ‘clash of modernities’ (2011) offers an alternative angle. Taking globalization seriously in cognitive terms means understanding the human condition in global terms. This isn’t new—witness the long legacy of cosmopolitan thinking from the Stoics, Muslim thinkers, and Renaissance humanists to Kant—but the scope and intensity of global awareness are new.

However, such cognitive retooling is easier said than done for, after two hundred years of western hegemony, most perspectives and data are west-centric. The predominance of western institutions, publishers, journals, libraries, citation indexes, associations, conferences, media, and measurements is such that in many spheres, ‘international’ often means ‘transatlantic’. In language, the predominance of English poses problems of translation. In economics, the Washington consensus has been a glaring case of American bias. The same applies to indexes such as the Competitiveness Index and the Economic Freedom Index. Most business schools are located in the west. In psychology, most data on the human mind and behavior are derived from research on American undergraduate psychology students, a minuscule outlier subset of humanity: ‘in the top international journals in six fields of psychology from 2003 to 2007, 68 percent of subjects came from the United States and a whopping 96 percent from Western, industrialized countries’. Its predilection for selecting ‘people from Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic societies—WEIRD, for short’ earns psychology the status of ‘weird science’ (Keating, 2011). In political science, ‘liberal democracy’ and ‘civil society’ carry western overtones (Parekh, 1993). In political philosophy, liberalism occupies a large conceptual space. In sociology, nineteenth-century legacies include not just state-centric thinking (Wallerstein, 2001) but also macro concepts such as ‘modernity’ and ‘capitalism’, which reflect a specific phase of evolution and global hegemony; extrapolated in categories such as ‘global capitalism’ and the ‘world-system’, they pose problems of unreflexive aggregation.

Meanwhile, even as polycentrism is an essential correction on Eurocentrism, it also multiplies centrism; multiplying centers—Sinocentrism, Indocentrism, Afrocentrism, etc.—doesn't overcome centrism. What about regions and peoples within the radius of these centers? What about Adivasis and Dalits in India, minorities in China, Copts in Egypt, indigenes in Latin America? Domestic and regional hierarchies pose problems such as 'internal colonialism' and regional hegemony. The aim of cognitive and epistemological decentralization reaches further. Therefore multicentrism, as a corrective of west-centrism, must be supplemented by multilevel thinking as a further corrective.

### **Multilevel Thinking**

Globalization implies a double movement: the global includes but does not override the local; hence global–local interplay as a recurrent motif in global research and the importance of categories such as *glocalization*. A multilevel approach follows from the interdisciplinary character of global studies, for disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, geography, and history function at multiple social scales. A multilevel approach holds two meanings: viewing global relations at multiple scales of interaction—macro, meso, and micro—and viewing them across the spectrum of class and status, from the world's poorest to its richest. This ranges from indigenous peoples (as in anthropology) to hedge fund managers (as in global finance) and from pygmies to PIMCO. Both sets of actors are transnationally organized, in the Indigenous Peoples Working Group and the UN and in circuits of global finance such as the World Economic Forum and the Bank of International Settlements. And both are profoundly local, from locally grounded indigenous ways to hedge funds dealing in minuscule margins of inside information (Mallaby, 2010).

Global studies, then, straddles the range from the macro to the micro (as in ethnography), as well as the meso level in-between (as in regional studies). It encompasses 'globalization from above' as well as 'globalization from below'—on the part of those who do the legwork of globalization, seafarers and dockworkers, poor migrants, social movements, and grassroots initiatives—and 'globalization from the middle', on the part of cadres who staff international institutions and transnational NGOs, who see to the logistics of global value chains, and who staff and manage not just giant transnational corporations, but also small and medium-size enterprises.

Multicentric and multilevel thinking go against the grain of much human cognition through history. Multilevel thinking is a challenge because most thinking has been from the viewpoint of privileged strata. Both approaches, multicentric and multilevel, represent vexing problems generally and major challenges for global studies. Whether and how global studies meets these challenges is a key test of whether it fulfills its potential to be a major field and approach in its own right. Philosophy was the queen of the sciences during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; economics has been the leading social science through much of the twentieth century—clearly in response to major social and political demand, but arguably on dubious grounds and with dubious consequences. Global studies has the potential to be the leading field of study in the twenty-first century—if it meets the rapidly growing demand for global understanding and manages to establish new standards of cognition.

The panoramic view comes with temptations of its own. This problem is familiar from fields such as geopolitics, international relations, macroeconomics, development studies, and comparative studies. Comparison across space and time is impossible without meta-concepts. Global thinking often privileges macro perspectives, emphasizing structure rather than

agency, as in modernization theory and world-system theory. A structural strain is inherent in global approaches, for thinking global is near impossible without thinking in terms of large-scale structures, broad abstractions, and all-encompassing concepts, which can easily turn into a structuralist strain. Global thinking is steeped in the problem of aggregation and global studies shares the problems of macro thinking that are inherent in all global approaches.

The ‘dismal science’, the dominant discipline through most of the twentieth century, is ridden with conceptual shortcuts and reductionist models. Chicago economics, monetarism, rational choice, public choice, and mathematical models used in quantitative investment, no matter their smarts, fail because of aggregation and generalization. New institutional economics seeks to disaggregate generalizing models. Global studies is prone to the simplistic assumptions, reductionist reasoning, and sweeping generalizations that have beset all structuralist and comparative approaches. This cognitive minefield breaks down in several crisscrossing strands (pardon a shorthand list):

- The problem of generalization, or holding that which is (partly) true at a macro level as equally valid at meso and micro levels, which is often a problem of misrepresenting or extrapolating the unit of analysis.
- The problem of aggregation, as in the use of lumping concepts such as ‘Asians’, ‘Latinos’, ‘Americans’, ‘Muslims’, which may be valid at a narrow and thin level of discourse but pose problems when applied at finer scales of interaction (for instance in intercultural marketing, business cultures, and management).
- The related problem of essentialism and homogenization, for each category, down to the level of ‘community’ (fractured in terms of class, age, gender), breaks down further.
- The problem of the politics of representation, or who speaks for whom and how.
- The fallacy of models, which Borges referred to as mistaking the map for the territory, as in the macroeconomic models carried from country to country by IMF and World Bank officials, the criteria applied by credit rating agencies, and the mathematical models used by quantitative investors and traders, which pose the problem of the ‘black swan’ or freak events that squash models (Taleb, 2007).
- The problem of reification, which is a common error in relation to ‘globalization’, and of objectification when concepts begin to lead a life of their own, which also applies to ‘the global’.
- The objectification of models fosters systems thinking, as in the *esprit de système* that permeates Marxism and world-system theory (Nederveen Pieterse, 1989).
- The problem of linear thinking and forward extrapolation, as in demography, early future studies, and early studies of climate change.
- The view from above—the 30,000-mile perspective on worldly concerns—held by the world’s jet set. The air miles take on global concerns merges the predicaments of elite perspectives and generalization. Imperialism studies have been beset by top-down perspectives that attribute undue influence to metropolitan centers. A common criticism of world-system theory is underestimating the role of local class struggles in shaping outcomes with major or system-wide ramifications.

The cognitive constraints of global thinking are intertwined with institutional matrices, so they pose a twin problem of *institutional and cognitive bias*. International financial institutions and credit rating agencies are based in the United States; American companies own the CRAs. Emerging markets and the global South make up close to 40% of global GDP but are

underrepresented in international institutions (with a 6% vote quota in the IMF). Many commodities exchanges are based in metropolitan centers. Accounting standards and legal systems diverge. Indexes of globalization reflect American or western bias. In development policy, 'good governance' refers to western policy preferences. Aid donors are largely based in the west, which affects the agendas of international and local NGOs. Human rights discourse carries western baggage. Western media echo and amplify these biases.

I have been guilty of some of these fallacies. Thus, arguing that 'race' is a discourse that experienced its heyday from the 1840s to the 1940s (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992) is valid at a general level but is not necessarily true locally, for instance in the US and South Africa. Making this case is as sensitive an issue as 'post-race' discourse. Global studies, then, should distinguish levels and spheres of discourse and articulate this distinction. Global reflection and local resonance should go together, as in 'act global think local'. This follows from the general challenge of the desegregation of channels and publics: Danish cartoons are also seen in Riyadh, and migrants across the world take the opportunity for multi-circuit identification (Nederveen Pieterse, 2007).

Macro approaches need to be balanced by meso and micro approaches, merging the global and the local. Anthropology (e.g. Inda and Rosaldo, 2008; Tsing, 2005) and geography (Massey, 1993) deal explicitly with global-local relations and seek to address these problems; so do (much) history, art history, sociology, and cultural studies (Wilson and Dissanayake, 1996). Diversity is a recognized problematic in development studies (Oxfam, 1996). Global ethnography seeks to address this as a methodology (Burawoy et al., 2000). Glocalization seeks to address this conceptually (Robertson, 1995). Human rights thinking can be decentered by starting out from diverse understandings in different cultures (Santos, 1999). But in other spheres of global thinking and research, distant from anthropology and geography, this sensibility is patchy and uneven. The issue, then, is not that there is no scholarship that addresses these problems, because there is plenty. The issue is that many of these problems are not *generally* acknowledged and *general* analytical provisions and theoretical refinements that address these problems are few and uneven. Santos's distinction between 'globalized localism' and 'localized globalism' (2006) may be relevant, but it is difficult to remember which is which. Robertson's 'particularization of universalism' and 'universalization of particularism' (1992) is meaningful at an abstract level, but turns on a play of binaries.

Resources that global studies can bring to the problems of macro thinking are critical reflexivity and awareness of complexity; interdisciplinary synthesis, including anthropology and geography and methodologies such as global ethnography; and thinking plurally—for instance, in terms of modernities and capitalisms (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009b)—as part of the analytical disaggregation and retooling that global studies requires.

By way of conclusion, let me review some key points. The development of global studies signals a step beyond 1990s globalization studies—though what this step entails is not entirely clear, even to its proponents. Global studies takes on board global knowledge and data that may be left out of studies of globalization because they fall outside disciplinary boxes, so global studies is a double synthesis, of diverse global knowledge and of globalization studies. Summing up, global studies is interdisciplinary, combines diverse databases, and seeks to provide kaleidoscopic and panoramic perspectives on global conditions and cognitions. However, much of this is potential rather than accomplished, and this discussion is as much a critique of (existing) global studies as a plea for (potential) global studies. The difference between studies of globalization and global studies should not be overdrawn. There are analytical differences, but they exist more as potential than as reality. The issue isn't belaboring the difference between globalization studies and global studies, which is partly semantic; the

issue is advancing the understanding of globalization, no matter the heading. To the extent that profiling the difference between globalization studies and global studies contributes to this, it may be worth the effort.

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### Notes

- 1 Conferences include the Global Studies Association (based in the UK and North America), the Global Studies Consortium, and the annual Global Studies conference (disclosure: I am on the board of the GSA North America, have attended meetings of the Global Studies Consortium, and initiated and organize the annual Global Studies conference).
- 2 All formats, per January 2012. A Melvyl database search gives 759 entries for global studies and 63,681 for globalization. Google Trends shows the relationship between globalization and global studies over time, with global studies emerging and remaining at a constant low level since 2004 (<http://www.google.com/trends/?q=global+studies,+globalization&ctab=0&geo=all&date=all&sort=0>).
- 3 For example, Campbell et al. (2011); McCarthy (2012); O'Byrne and Hensby (2011).
- 4 Other universities with global studies programs are Aarhus, Roskilde, Leipzig, Wrocław, Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Arizona State, North Carolina Chapel Hill, Wisconsin Madison and Milwaukee, Shanghai, Sikkim, and so forth, and among those with programs at an incipient stage is Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Many of these are part of the Global Studies Consortium, a cooperation of some 50 institutions that offer graduate degrees in global studies ([www.globalstudiesconsortium.org](http://www.globalstudiesconsortium.org)). An authoritative account of the global studies field is provided in Juergensmeyer (2012).

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