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## Global Studies: Have Catechism, Will Travel

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**ABSTRACT** *This second response to comments on my article ‘What is Global studies?’ (Globalizations 10, 4, 2013) notes that the comments feature research agendas. These provide scaffolding for global studies but not of course a complete building. Among themes that need further attention are political economy and finance, the dimension of time and history, and the dynamics of twenty-first century globalization and the role of emerging economies.*

**Keywords:** global studies, globalization, paradigms, agendas

The Roman Catholic mass celebrates the mysteries in steady motions: the incense, the reading of scripture, the choir, the bread, the wine, the prayer, the dismissal. The performance is unchanging, or changes are tangential to the steady reiteration of the liturgy, adjusted to the calendar of worship. Its repetitiousness is comforting, aesthetically pleasing, and establishes a steady anchor in a world that is adrift. Submission, kneeling, partaking of the bread, the wine, the blessing provide relief from anxiety. The mysteries don’t come closer but their repeat celebration is soothing nonetheless.

The mass and similar rituals resemble many aspects of social life, as anthropologists and sociologists have observed; the ritual character of many social occasions is profound and comforting. In some respects, it resembles the performance of social science in its paradigm phase, with a shift of emphasis from celebration to explanation. Lectures, seminars, books, and articles reiterate the main stations of the arduous journey of understanding, genuflect before master concepts, refer to major authors, and hint at profound mysteries while exhibiting different insights, sometimes minor, in relation to the structure of understanding. This is what Thomas Kuhn (1962) describes as science in its paradigm phase, which combines reaffirmation of the shared matrix of understanding with puzzle solving at the margins. The celebrants and the audience are in thrall, or are supposed to be somewhat in thrall, with the anticipated cumulative value added as well as with the repeat performance of the consensus.

At this stage of the conversation, global studies (GS) has arrived at its liturgical phase. At this stage all three commenters (who have probably read the previous round of debate) produce lists, or research agendas. The lists serve different objectives but nevertheless overlap. They are repeat performances. I can't find a reference in Steger's case, but for Juergensmeyer it is 2011 and the list is part of the literature of GS Consortium meetings; in Axford's case, the list is on the closing pages of his book *Theories of globalization* (2013, pp. 188–90). The lists come at the end of preliminary discourses; they may be viewed as peak performances, the most important of the celebrant's offerings. A shorthand overview of the lists is as follows, simply following the order in which the authors present their points (Table 1). I also partake of and seek to contribute to the liturgy and my GS to-do list overlaps with the list of colleagues, so I add my list in an additional column.

Faced with these lists, the options are (i) to be in awe of the catechism, which is the initiation to the paradigm and the mysteries it reveals and yet conceals; (ii) to examine the differences between the lists, which is the puzzle solving and boundary policing that is essential to paradigm maintenance and repair; and (iii) to peek behind the scenes at what the catechism stands for and to sneak up on the mysteries themselves, which is the liturgy dissemble phase when paradigm breaking sets in. There is ritual charm to each of these responses, and I'll try my hand at each; it looks like (iii) is the most interesting, but may be a bit early since GS has only just entered the paradigm cycle. However, before we enter the ceremony, we pass through the purgatory of confusion, the disarray of the everyday and the intellectual cacophony that is a necessary preliminary before we can enter the pleasing aesthetics and redemptive promise of the ceremony. The preliminaries include Monty Python sketches of burlesque. (You said this bird is alive. No, I did not. Well, not really.)

Manfred Steger doesn't see evidence for a distinction between studies of globalization and GS because globalization research is interdisciplinary already. From the title on, 'it's about globalization, after all', it seems the aim is to close the argument, though it is probably more interesting to open it and to problematize the global. According to Steger, 'globalization is the master concept at the heart of global studies'. Maybe so, but what is it? Should we unbundle globalization, as in the distinction between globalization, globalism, and globality, reiterated by Axford? According to Steger there is no distinction between studies of globalization and GS, and existing GS are in good shape. His 'own programmatic understanding of the growing field of global

**Table 1.** Globalization/global studies agendas

Steger	Juergensmeyer	Axford	JNP
Globalization	Transnational, trans-regional	Inclusive knowledge community	Global is central (not disciplines)
Transdisciplinary	Interdisciplinary, problem-oriented	Definitional precision	Interdisciplinary
Spatiotemporal	Contemporary and historical	Order is negotiated and contingent	Multidimensional, kaleidoscopic
Critical	Critical and multicultural Globally responsible	Reflexivity Interdisciplinary Multidimensional Dialectics of borders and networks	Problem-centered Multicentric Multilevel Complexity studies Thinking plural

studies—as it actually exists in most universities’ (of course, if it describes what exists it is descriptive, not programmatic) consists of ‘four framings’ that ‘underpin actually existing global studies’: globalization, transdisciplinary, spatiotemporal, and critical.

Most points raised by Steger are addressed by Mark Juergensmeyer: globalization is a subject, GS is a field; GS addresses more than globalization; GS is an emerging field. Juergensmeyer shares the ‘five characteristics of global studies that the scholars agreed on’ in the 2008 GS Consortium meeting. For GSC members it is a catechism that sums up their approach in GS graduate teaching and research while for newcomers to the Consortium they may serve as ‘guidelines’: the subject matter of GS is transnational/trans-regional; the approach is interdisciplinary and problem-oriented; globalization is both contemporary and historical; the approach is critical and multicultural; and globally responsible.

Barrie Axford observes a criticism of globalization: ‘commentary can slide in and out of normative, polemical and empirical-analytical modes, without too much thought about the tensions that reside, or can reside, when blurring the boundaries between them’. The notion of ‘globally responsible’ scholarship is contentious for who decides what is responsible and the terminology of ‘educating for global leadership’ is reminiscent of the American lexicon of ‘leadership’, which carries cultural bias. Axford queries, ‘How all this translates into pedagogy without becoming an inflated civics class, or a primer on global citizenship, I am not sure.’ Axford takes up the question of the definition of globalization and distinguishes three dimensions of globalization, a process; globalism, an ideology; and globality, a condition. I would add globalization as discourse (global babble) and globalization as project. Globalization as project is the step beyond ideology; it is implementing an ideology, seeking to shape globalization. There are as many globalization projects as there are conscious actors, ranging from TNCs, international and regional institutions, governments, to international NGOs and social movements.

The theme of globalization has now well arrived at the introduction, textbook, encyclopedia, and handbook stage and has become a fixture in the social science landscape. The proliferation of GS centers and programs is part of this momentum and so is this conversation. To establish itself firmly in academe, GS needs a catechism, a shared matrix of definition, periodization, methodology, and approach. The previous round of conversation questioned the difference between studies of globalization and global studies, dismissing the claim of GS to a more inclusive status, or the need for an improved GS. This round moves forward; globalization won’t do because it is also studied in the discipline, so if GS it is, what kind of GS? This is where the agendas come in. A common ground in the agendas, and the outline of a catechism, are the global or transnational as subject matter, the multi-dimensional character of globalization, and interdisciplinary and critical approaches (reflexive, multicultural). The wording and emphasis differ (multicultural, multicentric) but the overlap is considerable.

Axford poses the problem of ‘telling a story without a center’. I opt for telling stories from the point of view of multiple centers (in the Toynbee tradition, or Lieberman’s parallel and connected histories). Thus, comparative studies are essential to GS. To make up for the problem of centers (and centrism, a very real problem as soon as one travels outside the radius of the capital cities), I advocate doing so alongside a multilevel approach that covers the range from the world’s poorest to the richest, ‘from pygmies to PIMCO’, and that makes inequality, class, and status a central methodological concern at micro, meso, and macro levels. This sensibility is implied in several accounts (under headings such as emancipation, a critical approach) but in my view it should be explicit.

Axford worries whether taking GS to a further level would make it more abstract. I think it is rather the other way round. It is macro theories of the 1990s with their abstract generalizing assumptions (such as world-system analysis or Harvey's 'organizing logics of capitalism') that provide unexamined shortcuts and fictional knowledge (Nederveen Pieterse, forthcoming). While the multicentric approach means comparative studies, the multilevel perspective means asking questions about inequality at every scale, and both avenues take GS into thick description, alongside historical depth.

Let me briefly address two points that in my view should receive further discussion: interdisciplinarity and time. Interdisciplinarity is in vogue; when it is mentioned, it is mentioned approvingly, like sustainability and democracy—everybody wants it; the haggling is over how rather than what. What drives this is social demand; social problems and 'global issues' are multidimensional, entangled, complex, and the disciplines, per se, are not up to the task. Situated outside the disciplines, the 'studies' take an eclectic approach to disciplinary toolkits and may thus be in a relatively better position to meet social demand. Yet, for all the talk about interdisciplinarity, in GS as in many other fields, there remains a hiatus between, in particular, economics and political economy, and sociocultural approaches. I share affinity with cultural sociology and anthropological approaches (I am an anthropologist originally), yet I note that the treatment of economics is often schematic, formulaic, and lacks detail and finesse. There remains a gap between the kind of globalization discussed in economics and international political economy (Gilpin, Schwartz, Gereffi, Dicken) and in sociology, cultural sociology, and anthropology. And conversely, in economics and IPE, cultural dimensions are often absent or shallow. Some approaches, such as economic sociology and anthropology (Knorr-Cetina, Tsing, Ong, Roy), cultural economy (Amin & Thrift, 2004), economic geography (unless it is doctrinaire), development economics (Rodrik, Studwell, Chang), and comparative business studies (Redding, Whitley), straddle this hiatus. This hiatus also exists in political life: economic citizenship isn't nearly as well developed as political citizenship; and in an age of financialization, financial citizenship isn't developed either.

A dimension that requires greater attentiveness and finesse is time. Globalization primarily evokes thinking in spatial categories—in terms of boundaries, borders, networks, nodes, cities, states, regions, local–global relations, glocalization, etc.—but since it is a process, it is also temporal. Here I want to bring up two points: global history and the 1990s.

Initiators of global history, in contrast to world history, such as Bruce Mazlish (1993) define it as 'history in the age of globalization', which they take to be, as do many conventional accounts, the postwar and recent period (the common view in the 1990s). Thus, the irony is that global historians adopt a presentist view of globalization. Other 'global historians' opt for the 'modern' cutoff, the sixteenth century (Bayly, Hopkins). I disagree with both views: the presentist view is unhistorical and the sixteenth-century cutoff is Eurocentric; and opt for a long timeline of globalization (Nederveen Pieterse, 2012).

The second problem is the 1990s—a major conjuncture of dislocations (the end of Fordism, informatization, and the digital turn, the opening up of the Soviet bloc, China and India; cf. Axford, 2013, pp. 17–18; Rosenberg, 2000). Introductions and textbooks on globalization mostly have a 1990s' feel and sensibility. They refer to 1990s' themes and cite books written in the 1990s or, if they were written later, still exhibit a 1990s' outlook—a world, in brief, in which neoliberal globalization and American hegemony are defining parameters and criticizing the IMF and World Bank is a major agenda item. Fundamentally underrepresented in these accounts are the emerging economies and their significance as drivers of the world economy in the twenty-first century, the rise of South–South relations and momentous shifts in global

problematics (Nederveen Pieterse, 2011). GS may now have a catechism, but it hasn't arrived in the twenty-first century yet.

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