Chapter 2

Globalization and Global Consciousness: Levels of Connectivity

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Across the contemporary world, the question of connectivity has emerged as the normal condition of being and acting as a 'person-in-the-world'. Being connected has assumed multiple meanings; most of them are positive. Who, but perhaps a few customary villagers, traditional monks, and modern eccentrics, are happy be relegated to a communications backwater? Parochialism, reclusiveness, and isolation are nouns that conflict with those desirable places where modern and postmodern relations dominate. In globalizing cities across the world, hyperconnected individuals might complain about the intense demands extracted from them by their numerous information and communication technologies, but none of them want to be disconnected. Today's condition of connectivity has both important and banal consequences. For a new generation, mediated connectivity is basic to their identity—with significant consequences for their patterns of consumption and attachments to new commodities and brands. Being an acolyte of social media like Twitter or Facebook has become a precondition for the construction of such an identity. In Hong Kong, London, New York, Paris, and Brossard, people queue outside Apple stores, willing to wait hours and days for the commercial release of new versions of the iPhone or iPad. Extremely useful for marketing purposes, such street scenes are also depressing images of a changing world of connectivity fetishism.

Indeed, since the arrival of the World Wide Web and the spread of mobile communications, mediated connectivity has been quietly normalized as central to a consolidating 'global imaginary' (Steger 2008). In conjunction with the concept (and practice) of the 'network' and 'networking', connectivity has become foundational to an era of intensifying globalization—both objectively and subjectively. While communications-based and networked forms of connectivity represent, objectively, only one aspect of globalization, subjectively these forms have assumed an unprecedented centrality. Both this phenomenal sense and practical consciousness of the importance of 'being connected' has borne back upon mainstream writing in fields as diverse as sociology and the digital humanities—and not always in helpful ways.

For example, the growing transdisciplinary field of 'Global Studies' (Steger 2013) grew up in this world where connectivity enthrals. Despite the considerable analytical attention given to patterns of connectivity (Castells, 2010), the subjective dimensions of connectivity have received little critical scrutiny (van Dijck, 2013).

Rather connectivity tends to be treated as the way of the present, with its objective patterns to be mapped in ever-greater detail. Indeed, these mapping exercises follow predominantly empirical methodologies. Because much of the global studies and communications literature considers the extensiveness and intensiveness of mediated and networked connections to be direct empirical questions—you have it or you don't; it can be measured by degree or it doesn't exist; it is stretched over this distance or that—objective connectivity has become the process that is used to measure 'globalization' in general. Thus, it has become the overriding proxy that stands in for the much more complex set of objective and subjective globalizing relations (Taylor et al., 2011). One of the first global studies writers to engage in these kinds of simplification, John Tomlinson (1999) insists that globalization is 'complex connectivity'. These kinds of equations have led to considerable confusion in mainstream social theory, including in globalization theory. Hence, we offer the following section as a necessary prelude for establishing an alternative analytical foundation.

Prelude

An important part of laying an alternative analytical foundation involves developing a definition of globalization that recognizes both the objective and subjective dimensions of the manifold processes that bring us into relation with others across the globe. The concept of 'relation' is used here more broadly than 'connectivity'. A relation can be spatially close and proximate or involve substantial absence—including through death. It can be layered across more embodied to more abstracted connections and disconnections. Social relations range from the embodied relations of friends and family-connected Diasporas to more abstract systemic relations carried by different modes of practice, both objectively and subjectively. These modes of practice include production, exchange, communication, inquiry and organization.

When used in abstract terms, 'connectivity' tends to be linked in the literature to only two of those modes, communication and exchange, in particular through mediated communication systems and financial exchange systems. This is where the emphasis is put on the delivery processes provided by ICTs or information and communication technologies. At the same time, in empirical or experiential terms, the notion of 'connectivity' tends to be stretched across all modes of practice to mean all interactivity and interchange at a distance. This ambiguity is problematic for understanding globalization. The problem is compounded by a second recently introduced ambiguity. Both corporate descriptions and personal testimonies regarding the role of social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter tend to emphasize the personal, even intimate, possibilities of connecting to others more effectively. However, social media platforms are at the same time objectively abstract and automated platforms using algorithms to codify data and channel consumptions choices (van Dijck, 2013).

It only takes a moment to realize that the objective lines of communication and exchange that carry that connection are as important as the subjective experience of global connectivity and the feelings associated with it—and that these are in tension with each other. But because both the sensory experience of connectivity and the structures of technological connection are so 'obvious', they tend to be reduced to the natural outcome of what is now simply referred to as 'the network'. The concept of 'network' has thus assumed a sophisticated but uncritical pre-eminence, with its theorists actively conflating all social relations into it (Castells, 2010; Latour 2010). This conflation of dimensions is the main culprit for the persistence of much confusion on the subject.

Thus, an adequate definition of globalization needs to recognize that connectivity is only one possible outcome of increasing extension of social relations across global space and time—even if it is experienced differently from a subjective point of view. An increasing emphasis on localization or local autonomy from the global are an equally possible outcomes of intensifying globalization, and it is not only possible but actually very likely to observe both increased connectivity and increased localization simultaneously (Robertson, 1993). It is also possible to have a globalizing communications system of intensifying connectivity that leads to uneven patterns of isolation. In political terms, for example, the Cold War constituted a global system that led to decreasing or demarcated connectivity for some states. In personal terms, it is now being recognized that globalizing social media systems work both to connect some and to isolate others—intensively in both extremes (Quartiroli, 2011). Moreover, to compound the issues that a definition needs to encompass, it is possible to have a rather thick consciousness of globalization (for example, the classical Greek and Roman consciousness of a heliocentric globe) while at the same time the objective relations of globalization remain thin and undeveloped.

Responding to this range of possibilities, we have defined globalization as the extension and intensification of social relations across world-space and world-time. We refer to 'world-space' in terms of the historically variable ways that it has been practised (objectively) and socially understood (subjectively) across changing world-time. This definition thus recognizes the importance of both objective and subjective relations, both practice and consciousness. In these terms, connectivity is understood as just one process of globalization in activity and thought/consciousness. This means that however much the condition of connectivity has entered contemporary consciousness of today's world, it is has only done so as part of a process that is much more comprehensive than mere empirical connection. This chapter thus seeks to understand the contemporary sensitivity to the condition of connectivity.

The second important part of the analytical foundation that we will use to establish our argument involves specifying different forms of consciousness. These forms relate to the usual four-fold modern distinction between data, information, knowledge and wisdom, but as we use them they relate in different ways to different ontological formations. They are not just modern notions. The first form is sensory experience, the phenomenal sense that something exists in relation to, or has an

impact on, a person. The concept of 'affect' attests to this kind of consciousness, as does 'sense data'. But 'sensory experience' is less technically conceived than those abstract expressions. It is consciousness as embodied experience—felt, but not necessarily reflected upon. The modern experience of connectivity envelops sensory experience. It is potentially everywhere, even when communications lines fail. In part, this is what gives connectivity its power.

The second form is practical consciousness. This involves knowing how to do things, knowing how to 'go on'. As writers as different as Wittgenstein and Marx have elaborated, it is basic to human engagement. The practical consciousness of connectivity is constantly self-confirming. The globalization of systems of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has delivered unprecedented practical possibilities of connection, and a generation people have assimilated the communicative techniques of the World Wide Web, the Internet and various social media platforms as practical consciousness.

The third form is reflective consciousness, the modality in which people reflect upon the first two forms. It is the stuff of ordinary philosophy and day-to-day thinking about what has been done and what is to be done. With the dominance of modern subjectivity this form involves the socially mediated production of the ego as the phenomenal, impermanent self, which knows the world experientially as it subjectively appears to it. However, as neuroscientific experiments have demonstrated, the unitary sense of self is a subjective representation. Citing these studies, German philosopher Thomas Metzinger (2010) argues that the ego can be likened to a 'tunnel that bores into reality' and thus gives apparent 'substance' to the ego by limiting what can be seen, heard, smelled and felt.

The fourth form is reflexive consciousness, reflecting on the basis of reflection, and interrogating the nature of knowing in the context of the constitutive conditions of being. While some writers have variously made reflexivity the condition of contemporary subjectivity (Beck, Giddens, and Lash, 1994), here it is treated as much more than situations where an actor recognizes processes of socialization with this recognition bearing back upon and changing such processes. The reflexive process of interrogating the conditions of existence is tenuous, recursive, and always partial. Indeed, this essay is an exercise in such reflexive interrogation.

Laying the third of the foundation stones for this essay involves putting 'connectivity' in its place ideationally. But this is no easy feat. Connectivity differs from old more ideologically contested concepts such as 'freedom' or 'equality'. Conventional ideological clusters such as liberalism present us with ideals such as 'freedom', 'liberty', and 'autonomy' as conditions for normative ideals to which we should aspire. However, for all their naturalization as life-long objectives, these ideals remain contested and debated. Liberalism's freedom is juxtaposed to the conservative claim about the importance of obligation and the authority of the state. Liberalism's core concept of 'liberty' is qualified in the social-democratic tradition by its emphasis on 'equality' (Bobbio, 1988; Freeden, 1996). And the current dominant desire for autonomy is in some political traditions still set against the constraints of reciprocity and mutuality.

By contrast, the theme of connectivity appears to float free of such constraining qualifications. As we noted at the outset, it is associated with a global imaginary (Steger, 2008) of open networked relations as a predominantly positive form of social relations: affinity, community, accordance, association, and inclusion. This point will be crucial in later discussion. Somehow—through a multilevel process worth investigating closely—the concept of 'connectivity' missed out on the process of political philosophical dialogue that produces 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie, 1955). When the condition of connectivity is juxtaposed against other conditions, it tends to be posed in opposition to an uncomfortable set of antonyms that nobody aspires to anyway: disjuncture, separation, detachment, isolation, closure, and exclusion.

As we argue in this chapter, one way out of this reductive tendency is to analyse the theme of connectivity through an understanding of different levels of social meaning: ideas, ideologies, imaginaries and ontologies. These are only analytical distinctions, and the notion of 'levels' serves as a metaphor designed to avoid the problem of analytical conflation. Still both of these concepts are both useful and necessary for showing—among other purposes—how the theme of connectivity can be valorised and taken for granted at the same time. What follows is our elaboration upon a method that we have been developing over the last few years as part of our efforts to produce 'engaged theory' that would help us understand the many aspects involved in the contemporary rise of a global imaginary (Steger, 2008; Steger and James, 2013). We contend that the theme of connectivity should be understood in terms of each of these levels of social meaning.

Four Levels of Social Meaning

What distinguishes these four levels of lived meaning—ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies? Analytically, each level is constituted at an ever-greater generality, durability, and depth than the prior level. For example, ideas can be passing thoughts, and ideologies tend to move in and out of social contestation, but imaginaries move at a deeper level and, in different ways, frame the commonsense or 'background understandings' (Taylor, 2004) of an age. What is contested about imaginaries tends to be their ideological expressions. Most deeply, ontologies, such as how we live temporally or spatially, constitute the relatively enduring ground of our being. Whether we recognize it or not reflexively, our lives are formed in terms of ontologies of time, space and embodiment, from the way in which we move through the locales that we live to the website presentations of those locales. Those ideas that stand the test of time do so because they become embedded in ideological clusters, social imaginaries and ontological formations—that is, the ways in which we understand and live the basic conditions of our existence. It is indicative that according to an analysis of the Oxford English corpus of two billion words, all of the ten most common nouns in the English language—time, person, year, way, day, thing, man, world, life, hand—relate to the ontological categories of temporality,

spatiality, embodiment, and performativity. The first word that appears outside of this frame is 'work', and even it could be understood as part of the performance of production. Nouns like shoes and ships, cauliflower and kings, do not figure in the most-used list in the English language.

Objective and subjective processes of globalization have been changing all of these four layers—at times, even at revolutionary speed. However, the deeper the processes of change, the slower the tendency for a new pattern to take hold as dominant and encompassing. These different kinds of meaning can be defined (and linked to the arguments in this chapter about connectivity) as follows.

At the first level, ideas are thoughts, opinions, beliefs and concepts. A person can hold an idea individually and uniquely, but ideas tend to swirl around communicating segments of meaning. They gain credence and legitimacy only in relation to larger patterns of social meaning. 'Connectivity' is obviously a concept (as well as a condition). But even though it is not a particularly technical or specialist term, it is not one of those ideas that are immediate and ever-present in our thoughts. An absence of connection or active exclusion evokes deep emotions, but 'connectivity' is not a word that is commonly used in day-to-day discussion outside of ICT-speak. This relative absence gives a clue to its current weight. In conjunction with its subjective force and its place in deeper layers of social meaning—to be discussed in a moment—the concept carries an ideational weight that experts can use as an analytical term with powerful empirical and rhetorical effect.

At the second level, ideologies are patterned clusters of normatively imbued ideas and concepts, including particular representations of power relations. They are conceptual maps that help people navigate the complexity of their social universe. They carry claims to social truth as, for example, expressed in the conventional ideologies of the national imaginary: liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism, and fascism. 'Connectivity' is deeply imbued with normative assumptions, but its peculiarity becomes more obvious when analyzed at this level. Unlike normatively aspired conditions such as freedom or equality, connectivity has largely escaped the circles of contestation that accompany most ideological developments. This lack of contestation adds to its ideational weight, at least for the moment.

At the third level, imaginaries are patterned convocations of the social whole. These deep-seated modes of understanding provide largely pre-reflexive parameters within which people imagine their social existence—expressed, for example, in conceptions of 'the global', 'the national', 'the moral order of our time' (Taylor, 2004). They are the convocations that express our inter-relation to each other. Here is where connectivity, at last, finds a comfortable home. At least for scholars, it helps to name our dominant sense of inter-relation today: global connectivity.

And at the fourth level, ontologies are patterned ways of being in the world. They are lived and experienced across all levels of consciousness as the grounding or existential conditions of the social: time, space, embodiment, performance and

 knowing. For example, modern ontologies of linear time, territorial space, and individualized embodiment frame the way in which we walk about the modern city. It is only within a modern sense of time that the ideologies of progress or economic growth can make sense. Even if prior ontologies affect how we see things like sacred spaces and events, they tend to be reconstituted in terms of such dominant understandings. The theme of connectivity has a deep though contradictory relation to each of these categories that we will explore later.

   Across remainder of the chapter, these four levels of social meaning provide the overarching structure for our discussion. In particular, we link them to dominant frames for understanding our contemporary world: globalism and modernism. These links have consequences for how we think and act in relation to issues of connectivity as one aspect of social integration. Although we primarily concentrate on questions of social meaning, this should not be taken to imply that meaning and practice are disconnected. Table 2.1 provides a simplified picture of our overall method.

Table 2.1. Levels of the Social in Relation to Levels of Theoretical Analysis

Levels of the social	DOING	ACTING	RELATING	BEING
Levels of analysis	I. Empirical	II. Conjunctural	III. Integrational	VI. Categorical
	Increasing epistemological abstraction of the standpoint of analysis			
Objects of analysis: I Levels of social MEANING	Instances and patterns of social IDEAS	Patterns of social IDEOLOGIES	Patterns of social IMAGINARIES	Patterns of social ONTOLOGIES
Objects of analysis: II Levels of social RELATIONS	Instances and patterns of social ACTIVITY	Patterns of social PRACTICE	Patterns of social INTEGRATION and Differentiation	Categories of social BEING and Becoming
	E.g. • Institutions • Networks • Assemblages • Fields • Events	E.g. • Production • Exchange • Communication • Organization • Enquiry	E.g. (Social themes) • Accumulation/Distribution • Needs/Limits • Identity/Difference • Autonomy/Authority • Inclusion/Exclusion	E.g. • Temporality • Spatiality • Embodiment • Epistemology • Performativity
Objects of analysis: III Levels of social FORMATION	Formations of social ACTIVITY	Modes of social PRACTICE	Modes of social INTEGRATION and Differentiation	Modes of social BEING and Becoming
	E.g. Domains • Ecological • Economic • Political • Cultural	E.g. • Techno-scientism • Capitalism • Bureaucratism • Mediatism	E.g. • Face-to-face relations • Object-extended relations • Agency-extended relations • Disembodied relations	E.g. • Customary (tribal) • Traditional • Modern • Postmodern
			Increasing ontological abstraction as a dominant formation	

Valences in relation to ontological categories

• Customary (tribal)—Analogical
                    —Genealogical
                    —Mythological

• Traditional   —Cosmological
                    —Metaphorical

• Modern   —Constructivism

• Postmodern   —Relativism

Having defined ideas, ideologies, imaginaries and ontologies, the body of our discussion now turns to elaborating what how the meaning of a globally connected world can be understood through ideas, ideologies, imaginaries and ontologies.

Ideas

Like other major social phenomena, ideas about connectivity are associated with patterns of meaning related to and about forms of material practice. The relationship between those practices and meanings is extraordinarily complicated and mutually constitutive. Contemporary ideas about connectivity come to us framed by two counter-images within the dominant global imaginary. On the one hand there is space-ship earth, Gaia, and the image of planet earth as a single interconnected system. According to one dominant approach that draws on the interconnectivity theme, a butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazon Basic and a storm develops on the other side of the globe. Accordingly, the projection of planet earth is as a vulnerable globe suspended in space. On the other hand, and in contention with the first set, there is a counter-idea of the global so powerful that it has a single reference point— the market. There is no more powerful global metaphor today than 'the market'. Markets— capitalist markets to be precise—have been so naturalized as an active globalizing force that they are now treated in the singular, with different markets in different localities understood as nodes in a network of financial and commodity exchange. At one level, this is increasingly true—hence the power of the claim—but there are still many places in the world where capitalism is only an intrusive layer of what otherwise still functions as a traditional or customary market. Because of the power of the idea of a flat earth, the term 'market' no longer needs the adjective 'global' in front of it to carry the meaning of global connectivity. However, to understand the power of these ideas we need to move to the level of ideology analysis.

Ideologies

Ideologies are patterns of ideas. One or two statements of contention do not an ideology make. It takes lots of ideas and the voices of many people to make an ideology. These patterns are formed through such processes as the power of repetition, the status of the speaker or source of the idea, and the 'given' sense that some ideas are right or wrong. In the area of globalization, four clusters of ideas are conceptually thick enough to warrant the status of mature ideologies: market globalisms, justice globalisms, imperial globalisms, and religious globalisms. Connectivity has become central to them all, and thus relatively uncontested between the different ideological constellations.

Market globalisms constitute the dominant set of ideologies in the early twenty-first century. Market globalism is built around a number of interrelated central claims: that globalization is about the liberalization and worldwide interconnection

of markets (neoliberalism); that it is powered by neutral techno-economic forces; that the process is inexorable; that the process is leaderless and anonymous; and that everyone will be better off in the long run (Steger, 2009).

Justice globalism, by comparison, can be defined by its emphasis on equity, rights, diversity, and a more demanding sense of sustainability. It suggests that the currently dominant processes of globalization are powered by corporate interests; that the process can take different pathways; that the democracy carried by global processes tends to be thin and procedural; and that 'globalization-from-above' or 'corporate globalization' is associated with increasing inequities within and between nation-states, greater environmental destruction and a marginalization of the poor. (Steger, Goodman and Wilson, 2013). In relation to the theme of connectivity, justice globalism is akin to market globalism, its main competitor. Both ideologies draw upon a generalizing, deep-seated imaginary of global connectedness. For a time, one line of justice globalism was associated with an anti-connectivity movement as part of its back-to-the-country sensibility, but this has changed fundamentally over the past few decades. Just inclusion in the opportunities of global networks and positive connectivity in networks of global exchange have become central to the concerns of almost everybody on the political Left.

The third constellation includes various permutations of religious globalisms, which are often codified by the forces of the political Right (Wilson and Steger, 2013). Its most spectacular strain today is jihadist Islamism. Based on the populist evocation of an exceptional spiritual and political crisis, jihadist Islamists bemoan the contemporary age of jahiliyya (ignorance and pagan idolatry) and call for a renewed universalism of a global umma or a reworked meaning of a globally connected Islamic community. In the Christian version the City of Man is sinful and requires a renewed orientation to the City of God expanded globally. The so-called '10/40 Window' describes the zone between the 10th and 40th latitudes where Pentecostal Christianity needs to connect to those lost souls of other religions in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Different groups such as World Vision and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization developed profiles of unconnected peoples (Pocock, van Rheenen, and McConnell, 2005).

A fourth variant, imperial globalism, has been weakening over the last few years as a result of the Obama administration's renewed multilateralism and the fracturing of the Washington Consensus in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis. Developing out of market globalism and still retaining some of its central features, imperial globalism still operates as a powerful background force. Its central claim is that despite the coming 'Asian Century', global peace depends upon the global economic connectivity and military care of an informal, US-led, Western empire. This position continues to be taken for granted within many governing groups and elite US circles. Half a century ago, ideological conservatives and some liberals would have been arguing for isolationism, but it is now largely taken for granted that acting in the world is necessary. The emerging critiques of US-intervention have no parallel in the ideological debates over isolationism in the interwar years. Indeed, a cavalcade of journalists and politicians rush in whenever hints of isolationism are expressed.

For all their complexity as ideologies, and despite the obvious tensions between them and the differences across different settings, these four globalisms are part of a complex, roughly woven, patterned ideational fabric that increasingly presumes the global to be a defining condition of the present. This is the case even as we remain entangled in the national. The people who accept their central claims of these ideological clusters—whether from the political Right or Left—internalize the apparent inevitability and relative virtue of global interconnectivity and mobility across global time and space. However one might seek to understand global history, and whatever reversals we might face in the future, the consciousness of intensifying social connectivity has come to define the nature of our times. Even though proponents of justice globalism strenuously insist that 'another world is possible', they hardly question that growing global interdependence remains a central part of most, if not all, alternative futures. Indeed, one unmistaken sign of a maturing ideological constellation is that it comes to be represented in discourse as 'post-ideological'.

Our key proposition here is that, as the core concepts of political ideologies are patterned and configured by elite codifiers, they become conceptually thick enough to form relatively coherent and persistent articulations of the underlying social imaginary. Just as the formation of nations is associated with the ideologies of the national imaginary, processes of globalization are associated with 'globalisms' that expressing the global imaginary. These global ideologies both influence and make sense of globalizing practices. Appreciation and projection of connectivity cut across all these ideological differences.

Imaginaries

The concept of 'globalization' reflects a generalized recognition that global processes inform social life, but it is much more than that. Just as globalization affects most of everyday life—from the way in which we borrow money and source basic commodities to the way we use digital modalities to keep in touch with friends and family via social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace—our consciousness of the global runs deep. In this sense, then, the various ideologies associated with globalization have come to coalesce around a new sense of a global social whole. A global social imaginary has formed with profound and generalizing impact. This imaginary, for example, 'compels' many city leaders to feel that their city needs be a 'global city'. It engenders the current competition between cities for comparative global status. Why else would cities take the various league tables and prizes so seriously?

In the last decades, a number of prominent social thinkers have grappled with the notion that an imaginary is more than an ideologically contested representation of social integration and differentiation (Lefort, 1986; Castoriadis, 1991; Appadurai, 1996; Taylor, 2004). Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) conception of the habitus is also relevant here, defined as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (p. 53).

However, the concept of the habitus is too explicitly normatively driven and locality-specific to be the same as what we are trying to get at. The concept of the 'social imaginary' in our use has a stronger sense of the social whole or the general 'given' social order. What is important to take from Bourdieu is a sense of how patterns of practice and ideas can be seen to be objectively outside of the particular practices and ideas of persons, even as those patterns were generated subjectively by persons acting in and through the habitus.

Charles Taylor (2004) provides a complementary way forward to defining the social imaginary. For him it is the 'ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (p. 23). These imaginations set the common-sense background of lived social experience. In Taylor's exposition, the modern social imaginary has been built by three dynamics. The first is the separating out of the economy as a distinct domain, treated as an objectified reality, something that we have criticized for being assumed to be the natural state of things. The second is the simultaneous emergence of the public sphere as the place of increasingly mediated interchange, (counter-posed) to the intimate or private sphere in which ordinary life is affirmed. The third is the sovereignty of the people, treated as a new collective agency even as it is made up of individuals who see self-affirmation in the other spheres. These are three historical developments, among others, that are relevant to what might be called a modern ontological formation (of which more later), but in our approach such dynamics are no more than factorial considerations.

Our definition of the social imaginary builds upon both writers towards an alternative approach, namely, that an imaginary constitutes a patterned convocation of the lived social whole. The notion of 'convocation' is important here. It names the 'calling together'—the gathering of an assemblage of meanings, ideas, sensibilities. It does not involved the self-consciously defense or the active decontesting activity associated with ideological projection. The concept of 'the social whole' points to the way in which certain apparently simple terms such as 'our society', 'we', 'the city', and 'the market' carry taken-for-granted and interconnected meanings. This concept allows us to define the imaginary as broader than the dominant sense of community. A social whole, in other words, is not necessarily co-extensive with a projection of community relations or the ways that a people imagine their social existence. Nor does it need to be named as such. It can encompass a time, for example, when there exists only an inchoate sense of global community. There is today paradoxically a pre-reflexive sense that at one level 'we' as individuals, peoples, urban communities and nations have a common global fate. Put in different terms, the medium and the message—the practice of connectivity on a global scale and the content of messages of global interconnection and naturalized power—have become increasingly bound up with each other.

As recently as a generation ago, notions of the social whole—including 'the market'—were stretched across relations between nation-states and would, therefore, have been seen as co-extensive with the nation-state. Hence, the widespread use of

the now anachronistic term 'international relations'. The concept of the 'international' lingers on as a powerful reference, but we now gloss over the base terms of the concept: 'inter' and 'national'. A generation ago when sociologists and political scientists analyzed 'society', they tended to assume the boundaries of the nation—in the relevant literature this is referred to as 'methodological nationalism' (James, 1996; Beck, 2003). In other words, the social whole reflected a national imaginary that tended to be equated with the community of the nation-state. Now we find either that such concepts as 'city' and 'society' have become terms of ambivalence because they have become stretched between two contesting yet interdependent imaginaries: the national and the global. This helps to explain the contemporary excitement about networked connected cities. With the emerging dominance of the global, cities have come back into contention as having both local vigor and globalizing connecting beyond their national settings. This is experienced as newness.

Novelty is perhaps most obviously expressed in the proliferation of the prefix 'neo' that has attached itself to nearly all major 'isms' of our time: neoliberalism, neoconservatism, neo-Marxism, neofascism, and so on (Steger 2008). Despite continuities there is something new about political ideologies: a new global imaginary is on the rise. It erupts with increasing frequency within and onto the familiar framework of the national, spewing its fiery lava across all geographical scales. Stoked, among other things, by technological change and scientific innovation, this global imaginary destabilizes the grand political ideologies codified by social elites in an earlier period. Debates over questions of connectivity, sustainability, and the resilience of the urbanizing planet are at the centre of this firestorm. It is not that these terms are to be questioned, but rather that they are present during debates about basic existence.

In summary, then, we have suggested that ideologies of globalization are part of an extended family that translate a generalized global imaginary into competing political programs and agendas where questions of connectivity have escaped mainstream scrutiny. Political impact of this sensibility has been redoubled by the spectacular rise of communications technologies. This has profound consequences for how debates about social life are conducted. For example, it also has consequences for how people think about cities. The term 'global cities' partakes of this consolidating imaginary, based on the idea that global cities are those that channel the connecting flows of capital, commodities and communications.

But it goes further. When Jeb Brugman (2009), for example, proclaims the existence of an urban revolution that has already transformed the planet into a single City (with a capital 'C'), a single converging connected urban system. He has taken the urban connectivity of this global imaginary to extend everywhere. His analysis breaks down on almost every level. Obviously there is uneven connectivity and separation with continuing non-hinterland rural zones and many places on the planet that are not comprehensively incorporated into a so-called 'flat earth' (Friedman 2005). Obviously, new and intense competition has developed between globalizing cities, competition which means that the notion of a single urban system cannot be

conflated with a utopia of globalizing social interrelations. Globalization and urbanization have not become the same process, even if the orbits of cities have become increasingly globalized (Spencer 2014). Still, the problems with Brugmann's analysis point to the emerging dominance of a global imaginary. This explains why for him and others the connected urban complex thus becomes the globe. What is accurate in his analysis is that the dual forces of urbanization and globalization are changing the planet. But to understand this compounding change we need a very different kind of methodology that can: a) recognize dominant patterns of change and continuity; b) distinguish different and contradictory layers of connection and disconnection; and c) explain why contemporary approaches to urban life all tend to emphasize the virtues of connectivity.

It is understandable given the force of the global imaginary that writers are now saying that the interconnected urban system is the world or that the world is flat, but how does that allow for the development of a more sustainable and complex social imaginary? As Brendan Gleeson puts it (2010, p. 9), 'The imaginaries that [should stand] the test of time are, logically, those that do not refuse history or nature—ideas such as human solidarity, our dependence on nature, the possibility of failure and the frailty of human endeavor' (2010, p. 9).

Ontological Formations

Going deeper than the global imaginary is the long-term and continuing ontological dominance of modern ways of life. Thus both the ideologies and objective realities of global interconnection are currently tied to the ideologies and objective realities of both the Left and the Right. The modern Left enunciates modern progressiveness, connectivity and justice. The modern Right proclaims the necessity of progress, connectivity and economic growth. The concept of 'modernization' thus thuds to earth with an ideological and imaginary weight that links progress, connectivity, development, and modernity as intertwined necessities.

Why is connectivity so readily seen as both necessary and virtuous? To understand this, moving to the final layer of our investigation of the dimensions of social meaning, we must grapple with ontological categories such as time and space. As begun to be discussed earlier, we use the concept of 'ontologies' here as a short-hand term referring to the most basic framing categories of social existence: temporality, spatiality, corporeality, epistemology and so on. These are categories of being-in-the-world. They are historically constituted in the structures of human interrelations. If questions of ontology are fundamentally about matters of being, then everything involving 'being human' is ontological. Still, we are using the concept more precisely to refer to categories of human existence such as 'space' and 'time' that on the one hand are always talked about, and, on the other, are rarely interrogated, analyzed, or historically contextualized except by philosophers and social theorists.

In this context, let us note that we employ the concepts of the customary, the traditional, the modern and the postmodern as provisionally useful designations to

refer to fundamentally different ontological formations (James 2006). These are different ways of life, with the term 'ways of life' meaning something much deeper than lifestyle choices. Customary ways of life, including tribalism, are defined by the dominance of particular socially specific modalities of space, time, embodiment, knowing and performance that can be characterized by analogical, genealogical and mythological practices and subjectivities. This, for example, would include notions of genealogical placement and kinship, the importance of mythological time connecting past and present, and the centrality of relations of embodied reciprocity between persons who spend most of their time in each other's presence.

Traditional ways of life can be characterized as carrying forward prior ontological forms from customary relations, but reconstitutes them in terms of universalizing cosmologies and political-metaphorical relations. An example here is the institution of the Christian Church. It carries forward older customary meanings and rituals—times of feasting, orientations to the sacred, and so on. At the same time, it meets the modern world ambiguously. Christian denominations may have modernized their practices of organization and become enmeshed in a modern monetary economy, but the various lineages of the Church, and most manifestly its Pentecostal variations, remain deeply bound up with a traditional cosmology of meaning and ritual, including the traditional notion of dominion over nature. Traditionally, Christians were one in God. Now with the dominance of modern ontologies, Christians seek connection to God.

A brief discussion of the themes of time and space will help bring to the surface this largely taken-for-granted connection between ontological categories, globalization and the concept of connectivity. Let us start with the ontological category of spatiality. Focusing on spatiality is crucial, since globalization is obviously a spatial process and issues of sustainability are taken to refer to places from the local to the global. Localities are nothing if not spatial configurations. The academic observation that to globalize means to compress time and space bringing enhance connectivity has long been part of public discourse. However, to be more historically specific, contemporary globalization is predominantly lived through a modern conception of spatiality linked to an abstracted geometry of compressed territories and sovereignties.

Modern space tends to subsume rather than replace traditional cosmological senses of spatiality held together by God or some other generalized Supreme Being. In other words, different formations are layered in dominance rather experiencing a simple epochal shift from an older form of temporality. Modern spaces overlay older forms with networks of interchange and movement. This accords with our presentation of contemporary globalization as generating new hybrid modernities anchored in changing conceptions of time and space. For example, those ideological prophets who espouse a Jihadist or Pentecostal variant of religious globalism tend to be stretched between a modern territorial sense of space and a neo-traditional sense of a universalizing umma or Christendom, respectively. In their neo-traditional layer of understanding, the social whole exists in, prior to, and beyond, modern global space.

It means that, for those who believe, the cities of Jerusalem, Rome or Mecca lie at the various centres of different connecting spaces that integrate other urban and rural places around the world in a singular cosmology.

At the same time, particularly in fast-moving urban settings, we also find instances of ambiguous modern spatialities sliding into postmodern sensibilities that relate to contemporary globalization. Take, for example, airline-advertising maps that are post-territorial (postmodern) to the extent that they show multiple abstract vectors of travel—lines that connect multiple city-nodes and travel across empty space. These are maps without reference to the conventional mapping expressions of land and sea, nation-state and continental boundaries. To such a backdrop and with no global outline, an advertisement for KLM airlines assures potential customers that, 'You could fly from anywhere in the world to any destination'. Our contention here is that one comfortably knows how to read those maps despite the limited points of orientation, and one also knows that they signify global connectivity before reading the fine print—'anywhere in the world'. This is basis of the so-called 'network society'. As Sophie Bouteligier (2012) has argued, globalization both gives rise to networked urban organizations and exposes the weaknesses of such organizations. Networked connectivity may be one of the key considerations that global organizations treat as the basis of their organizational strength, but it also becomes their weakness as they fail to understand that effective political integration (as opposed to just connectivity) has to be based on more than a website projection and a few high-profile meetings in different cities around the world.

The modern category of temporality is also important to the contemporary global imaginary, even if the notion of 'time' does not seem to be contained in the concept of globalization. More than that, it is crucial to underpinning the modern idea of connectivity—relative instantaneity. Modern time is the demarcated, linear, and empty time of the calendar and clock. It is the time of change, progress and development. We all become connected on a single time-line of history. This ontological sense that time moves 'forward' one-second-per-second is a modern convention rather than being intrinsically natural. It is neither scientifically verifiable (except as tautology), nor continuous with older cosmological senses of time. Modern time is abstracted from nature. It is sustained by a particular mode of modern analytical enquiry—the Newtonian treatment of time as unitary, linear and uniform. This 'scientific' time reached one of its defining moments in 1974 when the second came to be measured in atomic vibrations, allowing the post-sensory, post-practically conscious concept of 'nanoseconds'—one-billionth of a second.

The manifold sense of moving forward, maintaining temporal precision and achieving communications instantaneity has been globalized as the regulative framework for electronic transactions in the global marketplace. It drives the billions of transactions on Wall Street just as much as it imposes a non-regressive discipline on the millions of bidders on eBay, at a local real estate auction or waiting at a red traffic light. This then becomes a crucial point: a modern sense of time, like the market, has been globalized and now overlays older ontologies of temporality

without erasing them. It is the dominant time of contemporary social life, and it lives in contradiction with older forms of time.

Modernism carries forward prior forms of being including time and space, but tends fundamentally to reconstitute them. It remakes them in terms of technical-abstracted modes of being. Thus even religious time becomes understood and practiced not primarily in terms of cosmological integration but through linear time-lines that connects the ritualized details of the past and present, as well as events made by us with an eye toward a 'better' future. Indeed, one of the key dynamics of modernity is the continuous transformation of present time by cultural and political designs for the future. This dynamic, linked to the scientific idea of the arrow of time moving inexorably second-by-second, means that change and interconnectivity become seen as related in processes in the task of making the future. Being left behind or isolated and unconnected (all temporal-spatial metaphors) become 'obviously' bad conditions to be avoided. This dynamic makes it hard to sustain good development, which sometimes entails keeping things the same or slowing down the connectivity imperative.

A further point is that ideologies tend to draw upon an assumed connection between modern time/space and globalizing processes to project their truth claims. These claims link together such concepts as 'connectivity', 'progress', 'development', 'growth', 'efficiency', and 'just-in-time'. They are not just any words. They are temporal-spatial concepts that are used to promote mainstream social change. In this context, concerns about sustainability and vulnerability mingle with extraordinary claims about the renewing capacity of technologies. It is part a general consciousness of modernity that arose as a vision that human beings can create social life in a new image. Our argument here is not to criticize change or connectivity per se. It is to challenge the uninterrogated dominance of either 'change for change's sake' or 'connectivity for connectivity's sake' that is seen as essentially good, simply because it involves change.

With the emerging dominance of the global imaginary, 'the city' has become the hotspot of change and connectivity (Sassen 2001). Urban life now signifies a world of changing connections and openings. While particular nation-states and federated polities continue to legislate for each city's day-to-day activities, the feeling is that the city is post-national, legitimately connected to a global network of possibilities. A global city is now its own centre within a globalizing network, just as it provides spaces for individual movement and connectivity. Modern spaces from cities to nation-states remain territorialized and marked by abstract lines on maps—with places drawn in by our own histories.

At the same time, however, modern embodiment has become an individualized project used to project a choosing connected self. This self can choose to live in this locality or not. As modern epistemology (the nature of knowing) becomes an act of analytically dismembering and re-synthesizing information, our faith in the information technologies thus tends to redoubles despite massive evidence that this faith got us into trouble in the first place. Hence the idea of the 'Smart City' abounds. Unfortunately it is unthinkingly tied in practice to a form of modernism that is

associated with the dominance of capitalist production relations, commodity and finance exchange, and techno-science. None of these processes have a glowing record in relation to sustainability questions. However, in the context of such a world of possibilities this record matters less than what frames our ideas, ideologies and imaginaries. Just there may be multiple intelligences, not just IQ, so there are multiple ways of being 'smart', not only by putting in massive and complicated IT systems of abstract connectivity.

Concluding Remarks

Where do we go from here? A number of writers from Jane Jacobs (1961) and Richard Sennett (1994) to David Harvey (2013) and Sharon Zukin (2010) have argued that contemporary cities—rather than becoming just spaces of abstract connectivity—need to be built in such a way as to encourage enriching forms of embodied friction between different peoples. They argue that social life needs to return to the streets as more than simulated or commodified authenticity. Locals and strangers should rub shoulders—sometimes perhaps uncomfortably—as they move through in locally defined places. While agreeing with this vision, our argument presented here goes further by calling for the deepening of reflexively understood 'ontological friction'. What we mean is a creative facilitation of positive and painful intersections of engagement, which allow for different ontological orientations to be present in the same place. As Tony Fry (2012) has emphasized, this includes our relationships to fellow human beings as well as to nature. The establishment of modern town square and the creation of urban commons—Tahrir Square in Egypt, Taksim Square in Turkey, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, Shahbagh Square in Dhaka, or Washington Square in New York—represent a necessary yet minimal condition of positive connectivity. To be sure, we have seen how such urban commons provide the setting for both short-lived political revolutions and quiet, relaxing family afternoons in the park. But the politics of the town square tends to remain largely one-dimensional. In the context of complex globalization, the urban project must dive much deeper.

Designing creative ontological connectivity—rather than just abstracted connectivity—entails building localities in a way that explicitly and reflexively recognizes ontological difference across different social formations, such as between relations of customary tribalism, cosmological traditionalism, constructivist modernism and relativizing postmodernism. It entails allowing various ontological frictions to play themselves out across the society-nature continuum. Local public spaces should facilitate people 'rubbing shoulders', but good design and positive engagement should also explicitly take into account the different ontological meanings that 'rubbing shoulders' or 'confronting nature' have for different people. In short, it is not globalizing connectivity per se that is either the problem or the answer. Rather, it is we submit that modern conceptions of 'connectivity' have come to overwhelm all other ways and modes of living in local places.

Acknowledgements

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