

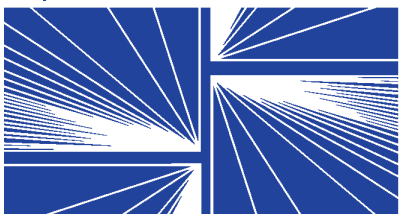
The Politics of Globalization Studies: From the problem of sovereignty to a problematics of government

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The Politics of Globalization Studies: From the problem of sovereignty to a problematics of government

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In the interest of convenience, the study of globalization can be grouped into three camps – hyperglobalist, sceptic, and transformationalist approaches (Held et al. 1999). Over the past decade or so, the first two have gradually fallen into disrepute for their empirical weaknesses and their theoretical lack of sophistication. By default, proponents of the transformationalist thesis, although by no means a unified approach, have emerged triumphant by being able to offer increasingly compelling examinations of the changing relation between space and sovereignty.

These advancements notwithstanding, this paper argues that the transformationalist thesis remains unsatisfactory because it takes for granted many of the problematic dualisms upon which modern political and sociological knowledge relies – e.g. state/individual, market/society, knowledge/power – and as a consequence fails to develop a critique of its own political ambitions. Alternatively, this paper presents a Foucaultian analytics of government which problematizes both the concept of sovereignty and the preoccupation with geographic scale presently preoccupying students of globalization. The aim of this paper is to problematize the spatial ontology globalization studies draws upon by presenting an approach to globalization that is preoccupied with temporal ruptures, discursive fissures, and events instead. It concludes with a consideration of the potential problems a Foucaultian approach to government may harbor.

GLOBALIZATION STUDIES REVISITED

The term globalization is as popular as it is disputed. Debates around globalization usually revolve around the conceptualization, origins, chronology, content, consequences, trajectory, and policy implications of the term. These have grown so prolific and diverse that they have earned themselves a quasi-disciplinary status marked by the honorary title of “globalization studies”. Since a parsimonious global social remains an unrealized ambition (Rosenberg 2005), most discussions are content to explore the issue at a most basic, that is, ontological level: Does globalization exist or not? Are its effects real or imagined? In answering these questions, a common standard of reference is found in the ontological imagination of modern geopolitics. Here the world is perceived as a unitary whole divided into mutually exclusive sovereign units, each with its own clearly demarcated territory, system of governance, and national populous (Toal 2005, 66). The existence, extent, and substance of globalization are to be assessed against this model. It must be shown that transnational processes have

such an unsettling effect on the traditional relation between space and sovereignty, that a research program centered on “globalization” is warranted. Not only are the empirical validity and analytical significance of globalization at stake here, but the academic credibility of globalization studies is equally on the line. It follows that students of globalization are faced with a two-fold task. First they must demonstrate that transnational processes have the ability to undermine or reconfigure the parameters of modern geopolitical ontology. Second, they must show that globalization theory holds great explanatory value and political promise for the study of these dramatic changes. Although the study of globalization has branched in a multitude of directions beyond such definitional and disciplinary issues, globalization studies – perhaps more than any other field of inquiry – is still being asked to demonstrate that “‘globalization’ today is [not just] yesterday’s *Zeitgeist*” (Rosenberg 2005, 3). In this section I review three distinct answers to the provocations above.

One of the most comprehensive surveys of the literature (Held et al. 1999) holds that approaches to globalization can be grouped into three camps – hyperglobalist, sceptic and transformationalist – depending on their treatment of the causation, periodization, impacts, and trajectory of global processes (Ibid. 3).

The *hyperglobalist thesis* defines globalization as a radical break with the past and an unprecedented moment in human history. Together the rise of a global economy, the emergence of global governance institutions, and the hybridization of traditional cultural units signals the beginning of a new global order, one in which nation-states are “little more than transmission belts for global capital” (Held et al. 1999, 3). Although globalization is thought to impact every aspect of modern socio-political organization, economic explanations enjoy causal primacy in the hyperglobalist thesis. Globalization, according to this view, is understood as the natural consequence of growing transborder flows, the denationalization of national markets, and the rise of a global economy. Inevitably, growing levels of economic integration and openness exert tremendous pressure upon national governments to adapt to neoliberal imperatives. In this context, the role of politics is reduced to the art of sound economic management. National governments are expected to manage the social consequences of globalization in a way that does not interfere with, but promotes the smooth functioning of neoliberal market processes.

Whether this reading of globalization is applauded as the highest form of human progress or lamented as a threat to social development depends on one’s political inclinations (Held et al. 1999, 4). Both liberal and left-leaning voices can be found under the umbrella of the hyperglobalist approach because, despite their normative divergences, both camps agree that economic globalization is the natural consequence of a teleological process of capitalist evolution that will eventually replace the nation-state with a burgeoning world society. Where they differ is not in terms of their empirical assessment of globalization, but in determining the political purpose of a world governed by market forces. Liberals celebrate the market as the highest expression of human rationality and individual autonomy, whereas Marxist scholars salute the hyperglobalist future because the contradictions it is thought to harbor are expected to bring about the downfall of this global order. In effect, despite diverging hopes for the future of globalization, both liberals and Marxists have a reason to rejoice at the demise of the nation-state in the face of economic globalization.

The *sceptical thesis* takes the opposite position. It argues that contemporary flows of goods and services, levels of economic integration and openness, and transnational relations are by no means unprecedented. Using vast economic and historical data, proponents of this view seek to demonstrate that the levels of transborder economic activities observed at the turn of the 20th century (1870-1914) were either identical or more pronounced than what we are currently witnessing. In effect, current economic indicators do not point to the emergence of a global economy. We are dealing with an internationalized, rather than globalized, economy where nation-states, especially the core industrialized triad of North America, Europe, and Japan, remain the prime political actors and economic building blocs (Hirst and Thompson 1999). According to this view, the world economy is governable and controllable through already existing state mechanisms. States have the regulatory power to encourage and sustain economic liberalization; they hold the necessary political authority to determine when and how sovereign prerogatives are to be delegated to or shared with sub- or supra-state actors; and only they possess the bureaucratic, military, and financial capacities for managing large populations over vast distances (Ibid. 275-6). Hence, states are not passive victims of internationalization, but its prime architects.

The sceptical thesis goes as far as to argue that since present-day levels of economic integration and openness fall short of the ideal type of a “globalized economy”, globalization can be dismissed as myth or instrumental rhetoric. What we call globalization is best described as an internationalized economy building upon regional trading blocks. In fact, regionalization is a much more appropriate term for capturing present-day changes in modern geopolitics (Held et al. 1999, 5). The social reality of globalization does not reach beyond discourse. The term is of use only to neo-liberal policy-makers who invoke globalization as an excuse for pushing through unpopular reforms (Ibid. 7).

Although the hyperglobalist and the sceptical approaches to globalization seem to reach diametrically opposed conclusions, they are in fact variations on the same theme. Both theories depart from an ideal definition of globalization against which the real world is to be measured. If the current levels of international trade, foreign direct and equity investments, currency exchanges, and capital mobility are found to be higher than in the past, it follows that globalization exists. While hyperglobalists and sceptics may disagree about the outcome of this assessment, the debate remains of no theoretical consequence because in both positions the content and meaning of globalization remain fixed. Both hyperglobalists and sceptics work with an extremely narrow understanding of the term, which grants causal primacy to economic processes of integration, while ignoring the role of media, technology, ideas and identity (Appadurai 1996, 33). Although no definition of globalization can be exhaustive or flawless, as we shall soon see, approaches that reduce globalization to financial exchanges or trade flows have a hard time convincing or capturing the imagination of their audiences.

Finally, the *transformationalist thesis* takes a *via media* between hyperglobalist eschatology and skeptical denial. It starts by recognizing the novel and comprehensive impact globalization has upon all aspects of modern existence, from social to political, economical, technological, and cultural domains. Social reality, in its entirety, seems to be changing as a result of the shrinking and accelerating time-space coordinates of globalization (Held et al. 1999, 7). Rather than a unified, integrated, and universal process propelled by a single determining force, globalization is understood

here as a multitude of transformations and challenges that become apparent through transnational interactions across and despite borders. Despite the existing disagreements regarding the consequences of globalization and the policy implications needed to mitigate them (Held 2004; Scholte 2005; Stiglitz 2006), proponents of the transformationalist approach agree on the necessity to rethink and reinvent sovereign politics as porous borders, global risks, and transnational publics are increasingly undermining the once stable nexus of sovereignty-territoriality-nationality-and-democracy. In this context, we are likely to witness an “unbundling” of state sovereignty (Ibid. 8) where nation-states renounce their position as single or primary centers of authority to share their privileges and responsibilities with sub- and supra-state organizations – be they civil or corporate (Ibid. 9). The result is not a zero-sum relation between state and non-state bodies, but a burden-sharing practice where national governments continue to enjoy exclusive *de jure* prerogatives in mediating, regulating and managing global and transnational processes.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEBATE

There can be no doubt about the symbolic significance of this debate: it sets the disciplinary origins of what we now know as “globalization studies”. Whether a debate between these three contending approaches really took place during the '90s or whether the metaphor of the debate was once again, like in international relations, deployed as a heuristic device to endow the globalization research community with a sense of disciplinary belonging and continuity is to a large degree irrelevant. To the extent that a debate was present, it was largely confined to political scientists, economists, and economic historians with anthropologists, historians and humanities scholars taking a backseat to the controversy. Ultimately, what matters are the immediate consequences of the imagery/imaginary of a debate. As both the hyperglobalist and the sceptical position gradually fell into disrepute, a fruitful exchange emerged between much more sophisticated, albeit arguably less distinct, arguments around the problem of sovereignty in a global age.

The hyperglobalist thesis may have been prominent during the early '90s when the immediate reaction to the fall of the Iron Curtain generated an almost messianic belief in “the end of history” (Fukuyama 1992), but it fell into disgrace by the turn of the millennium. The tumultuous decade following the end of the Cold War demonstrated that the “free world” of liberal democracy and market capitalism was much more complex and controversial than hasty appraisals had led us to believe. Similarly, the sceptical approach to globalization proved increasingly difficult to uphold. In the face of rising global migration, global risks, global publics, and global ambitions, the advent of globalization was no longer only a matter of economic indexes. Although, from a quantitative point of view, globalization processes were not entirely unprecedented, the same could not be said about their qualitative dimensions. The rise of a global mindset – a global consciousness where local processes cannot be divorced from an awareness of the world in its totality – radically altered the way in which non-state, corporate, and institutional actors perceived the world and their place in it. In light of the intersubjective quality of globalization, the profoundly novel character of present-day transnational processes could no longer be denied (Robertson 1992; Tomlinson 1999; Bierstecker 2000).

An equally important reason for the gradual demise of hyperglobalist and sceptical accounts of globalization was their unsophisticated and increasingly untenable treatment of the relation between space and sovereignty. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the empirical validity of globalization along with the academic legitimacy of a field of inquiry dedicated to the study of globalization depends on the ability to demonstrate that transnational processes have the power to undermine or reconfigure the parameters of modern geopolitical ontology. To the extent that it can be shown that a perfect congruence between territoriality and political authority is no longer a requisite for the exercise of political power, globalization studies can claim a disciplinary space for itself at the intersection between international relations and political sociology, between the international and the national, between the system of state and the government of societies.

Unfortunately, hyperglobalist and skeptical approaches did little further the two-fold task at hand. Both camps approached sovereignty as an abstract, indivisible and inalienable bundle of legal prerogatives, the meaning of which remained uncontested and the practice of which was ignored (Williams 1996, 112). Yet, as Walker already excellently demonstrated, sovereignty is not so much an abstract legal claim, as it is “an exceptionally dense political practice” (1993, 154). The failure to question the spatio-temporal fixity of the modern nation-state under global conditions perpetuates one of the greatest moments of silence in Western political discourse. Proponents of the hyperglobalist and sceptical position are guilty of this silence. Rather than contesting and unpacking the practice of sovereignty, they preferred to treat it in terms of a dualistic simplicity, which retains its century-long elegance yet conceals its history and practice (Walker 1992, 188). Sovereignty, according to this view, is either in demise or on the rise, gained or lost, here or there, inside or outside. But it can never escape the metaphysics of presence and absence it is locked into (Walker and Bigo 2007a, 730). In refusing to unpack the techniques, discourses, programs, scales, apparatuses, and power dynamics through which sovereignty operates, reproduces and sustains itself on a daily basis, hyperglobalists and sceptics have given us a static and simplistic examination of sovereignty where the only thing that might change is the spatial container of sovereign power, but never its meaning or practice.

This brings us to the equally problematic treatment of space in hyperglobalist and skeptical analyses. Regardless of whether sovereign power is deemed to be on the rise or in decline, such assessments are always made in relation to a spatial canvas that is understood as a fixed ontological platform for socio-political processes. According to this view, space is always the dependent variable, the natural, fixed, and cohesive background against which events unfold and relations redrawn (Brenner 1999, 40). Unfortunately, hyperglobalist and sceptical readings of globalization have done little to perturb this Cartesian imagination of space. Whether states are bound to remain the centers of political power or whether they are going to dissolve into a world state, whether bounded territoriality is going to remain a pervasive feature of socio-political organization or whether it will give way to cosmopolitan dreams of deterritorialization, space remains the natural platform of social action – never constituted and never subject to change (Ibid. 45-6). The deterritorialized future hyperglobalists announce is nothing more than the structural equivalent of national sovereign space skeptics want to hold on to (Walker 1993, 70). In effect, the territorial boundaries of a sovereign unit may stretch or shrink, depending on which end of the teleological progression one chooses to subscribe to, but the

relation between space and sovereign power is bound to remain as historically ignorant and phenomenologically empty as ever.

So, we owe it both to the untenable empirical evidence and the unpersuasive theoretical propositions offered by the hyperglobalist and the sceptical theses that the globalization literature is increasingly moving towards a rapprochement around the transformationalist position. Although this triangular debate in globalization studies may be a thing of the past, this should not suggest that we are now facing a period of silence and stagnation. Convergence around the transformationalist position has not generated a consensus around the shape, content, or direction of globalization. On the contrary, it has given rise to a fruitful and prolific *conversation* between arguably similar yet much more theoretically sophisticated and empirically grounded arguments. The stark differences and rigid categories that once defined the parameters of globalization studies have now dissolved into fine nuances.

WHY THE TRANSFORMATIONALISTS HAVE WON THE DEBATE

The transformationalist approach opposes one-dimensional appraisals of globalization in favor of more sophisticated readings that emphasize differentiation and localization as opposed to homogenization or internationalization. Globalization, in this view, cannot be reduced to the quantity of cross-border economic flows and exchanges, but is stretched to include anything from products and services, to identities, norms, ideas, institutions, communities, cultural goods, social relations, regulatory mechanisms, policy tools, technologies, and aesthetic tastes that are, in one way or another, being affected by “time-space compression” – globalization’s *prima facie* (Harvey 1990). Today, the study of “varied globalization” (Albert 2007, 167) touches upon so many disciplines, paradigms, and research programs that it becomes difficult to talk about a transformationalist approach or thesis as if it were some coherent theoretical framework for the study of globalization. However, the term continues to be useful as a heuristic device for teasing out the common threads of globalization studies today.

This section tries to pull out some of the main ideas dealing with sovereignty, space, and the changing relation between the two under conditions of “varied globalization”. Certainly, this reading cannot present an exhaustive and comprehensive snapshot of the literature. Neither can it do justice to its vast complexity and many political, social and cultural nuances. The purpose of this review is to point out the difficulties inherent in a study of globalization centered on the problem of sovereignty and make space for an analytics of government in its stead.

Sovereignty

Over the past decade or so, most students of globalization have learnt to draw a fine line between de-centering the state *in* global politics and dismissing the state *from* global politics (Rosenau 1999, 292). Contemporary globalization scholars continue to acknowledge the relevance of nation-states, but refuse to privilege them as objects of analysis or political units. While states are assumed to loosen their grip on political authority, policy autonomy, and territorial exclusivity, they continue to retain at least a *de jure* claim to sovereign power and, from this, an ability to engage in global politics not so

much through direct intervention, but rather by sharing attributes, downloading responsibilities, promoting norms, and offering incentives (Garrett 2000). This is the *via media* most proponents of “varied globalization” agree on. Although the state cannot be dismissed from global politics as irrelevant or redundant, it is difficult to ignore the devolution of political authority from national governments to multi-level systems of governance, international regimes, policy networks, transnational policy spaces, expert communities, and alter-globalization movements (Grande and Pauly 2005, 5). The emergence of new spheres of authority, the geographical expanse of which often do not coincide with the sovereign boundaries of the state, represents both a procedural modification of the Westphalian order and a spatial challenge to the once stable territorial canvas of the state.

On a procedural level, political authority takes a multi-dimensional, disaggregated and complex form. It operates through informal and open-ended networks the legitimacy of which is no longer inscribed in or guaranteed by legal prerogatives, but assessed in terms of results-based efficiency and rational problem-solving. Any and every actor that has the ability to effectively influence policy decisions is regarded as authoritative in a specific sphere (Rosenau, 1999, 294). The state does not necessarily take a backseat to these operations. Due to its constrained ability to single-handedly shape policy, the state has given up its role as negotiator and mediator, which it occupied for most of the 20th century, to become a manager of complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1997). In a globalized economy that proves to be unstoppable or uncontrollable through state intervention alone, states are better served by becoming themselves market actors. From this position, they can attract investment through industrial and labor market flexibilization, encourage private investments by pursuing non-inflationary policies, promote “new growth” through education, R&D, and infrastructure development, and attract foreign talent by tailoring immigration and citizenship requirements (Cerny 2000; Ong 2007).

These changes in the objective, scope, and content of political authority leave no doubt that a new architecture of global governance is on the rise. Governance, in the contemporary context, emerges out of the confluence of capabilities, interests, and normative ambitions of a plurality of governing actors, be they political, civil or corporate. It involves “a convergence of structure and processes” that enables communities, associations, and organizations of all kinds to frame issues, mobilize action, and effect change through systems of rule (Rosenau 2006, 144). Different from government, which implies the exercise of disciplinary power over a clearly delimited social body, the term governance rejects the rationalist premises of its etymological cousin: the state-centric ontology of the international; the anarchy-egoism thematic in global politics; the idea that state actors are rational, coherent, and tightly integrated; an economic definition of power; and the abstract and ahistorical reading of sovereignty. Used with a post-international ontology in mind, the study of governance, in times of globalization, has squarely situated itself as the intersection between international studies and political sociology (Mansbach and Ferguson 2007).

Introduced in the late '70s to early '80s, the term global governance has had a prolific academic career stretching over a variety of disciplines and generating a multitude of research programs in public policy and administration, international relations, political sociology, and European studies (Lemke 2007, 13). In globalization studies, in particular, the term global governance has gathered so

much interest that it now represents one of the major research clusters in this field of inquiry, along with the sociology of varied globalization, global history, and global civil society (Albert 2007).

But with growing interest comes also greater diversity. The present review cannot do justice to all political nuances and theoretical divergences found in this literature. Suffice it to say that although most present-day studies reject one-sided readings of global governance as either global chaos or world order, only the very few recognize that the fragmentation of political authority does not signal a “retreat of the state” (Strange 1996). There are more voices deploring the bygone days of Westphalian sovereignty than those applauding the emergence of “complex sovereignty” (Pauly and Grande 2005, 4) or “graduated sovereignty” (Ong 2005, 679) as historically distinct models of political authority which could unsettle the European model of sovereign power. Similarly, there are more voices lamenting the impossibility of global order in the face of multiple and overlapping hierarchies, than those seizing on the new horizons for political identity, belonging, and acting opened up by these changes.

Space

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the ways in which sovereign power is being rearticulated under conditions of globalization is to look at how the concept is changing in relation to geography. Historically speaking, the concept of state sovereignty has emerged to express the legitimate rule of the state within clearly delimited territorial boundaries. Although the principle of territorial sovereignty has not become reality until the assertion of the nationalist principle during the 19th century, exclusive territoriality remains an essential component of the discourse of sovereignty and an enduring feature of modern geopolitics (Albert 2007, 170; Walker and Bigo 2007b, 4; Manbach and Ferguson 2007, 538). Despite its relative newness, sovereign territoriality continues to serve as a standard of reference for order and permanence in global politics and social affairs. It is only with reference to the stable space-time coordinates of modern statehood, that globalization can be read as a fundamental transformation of the “Westphalia system”. In other words, only when the time-space compression of globalization unsettles the spatio-temporal articulations of modern sovereignty, can economies, cultures, and identities crack and leak out of the neat “spatial-cum-institutional container” of the state (Walker 1991, 450).

Following such turbulences, Cartesian conceptualizations of space, which take territoriality to be a fixed ontological platform for social action, have given way to more culturally sensitive and theoretically informed approaches (Hubbard 2005, 42). These range from humanist and phenomenological explorations of the psychogeographies of identity, culture, citizenship, and democracy (Sassen, 2000, 2004; Appadurai 1996, 2002) to Marxian and post-Marxist critiques of the relations of production, power, and domination across various spatial scales (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004; Ong 2005, 2007). What unites all of these contributions is a critique of the spatial dualisms imposed by sovereign inscriptions: inside/outside, national/international, domestic/foreign, and local/global. This is a critique that challenges both the spatio-temporal unity of the sovereign container and “the conceptual jail imposed by methodological territorialism” (Rosenau, 2006, 135). But it does not go as far as to argue that national territoriality is disintegrating to give way to a deterritorialized

globality. Instead, it offers a much more sophisticated explanation for the co-existence of competing geographic scales.

Hyperglobalist as well as sceptical approaches to globalization imagine the national and the global as two separate and mutually exclusive territorial sites (e.g., if a transaction occurs within the national territory, it is ipso facto a national process) tied in a zero-sum relation that, for the most part, results in the “deregulation” of national territoriality and the expansion of transnational sites (Sassen 2000, 372). Transformationalist scholars, however, argue that this assessment risks once again simplifying the complex negotiation that occurs between national and global processes and reducing globalization to the erosion of the national principle. When we consider that the vast majority of the earth’s surface is under the sovereign jurisdiction of some state or another, the search for an exclusively transnational space becomes futile. There is simply no such thing as global territoriality. This does not mean that global processes and transnational relations do not exist, as Hirst and Thompson (1999) concluded, but they manifest themselves most often at the national, sub-national (e.g., global cities) or supra-national (e.g., regions) level filtered through national institutions and arrangements. Instead of keeping with this simplistic duality, transformationalists observe how the struggle over political authority that occurs between so-called “national” and “global” processes generates new frontiers and contact zones of globalization (Sassen 2000, 374).

In effect, globalization has not altered national territoriality *per se*. It has only undermined its sovereign exclusivity (Sassen 2006). State territoriality is no longer the only or the dominant geography. It is also not an exhaustive geography anymore. The bundle of sovereignty-territoriality-nationality-citizenship is disintegrating to reveal a “graduated sovereignty” that corresponds to new patterns of citizenship, new nodes of transnational activities, and an abundance of scales and actors (e.g., global cities, cyber-space, refugee camps, regional labor markets, war zones, high-tech districts, sanctuary cities, reserve territories, and so forth) (Ong 2005, 697). The new frontiers of globalization are no longer determined in terms of jurisprudence, but recognized in the encounter of the national and the international, the local and the global *within* the national territory (Sassen 2000, 374). Where transformationalist scholars disagree is with regard to the political implications of these changes. Spatial and procedural rearticulations of sovereign power are deemed to be desirable whenever they promise to recreate democratic notions of order, security, and legitimacy. Alternatively, they are condemned wherever they are recognized to suspend democratic politics to produce new conceptions of right, new zones of exception, and new forms of biopolitical intervention (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

No doubt, the transformationalist position has successfully complicated the often rigid theoretical assertions and one-sided empirical investigations of previous approaches to the study of globalization. These merits have been acknowledged on many occasions and are well reflected in the current state of the literature, where the transformationalist thesis has come to occupy a central, almost unchallenged position. Be this as it may, I find the transformationalist approach unsatisfactory in two respects: it continues to take modern geopolitics with all its problematic dualisms as a reference point for the study of globalization and it lacks a politics of its own.

The study of globalization only makes sense if it can be shown that transnational processes have had an unsettling effect on the traditional relation between space and sovereignty.

Transformationalists, in particular, are often too quick (and content) to locate evidence for globalization wherever some sort of modification to the spatial container of sovereign power can be found. What they forget however is that, to take modern geopolitics as a reference point for change, one must employ an ahistorical reading of the concept and practice of sovereignty, a reading that assumes that the “past” used to be stable, ordered, and static. Such historical amnesia has important consequences for the knowledge produced under the rubric of globalization studies. While we are constantly being reminded that change is underway, rarely are the political dimensions and the historical significance of this change explored. Most present-day assessments of globalization have trouble rising above the level of descriptive platitudes. We know that globalization manifests itself most visibly through the fragmentation of traditional loyalties, the proliferation of multilayered identities, the delegation of political authority, and the disintegration of national territories, but we still know very little about the objectives, scope, and rationalities of these modifications. Partly, this can be attributed to the fact that the transformationalist approach has been more concerned with softening the rigid conceptual categories of rationalist approaches to globalization than with engaging in a thorough critique of them. Although there are notable exceptions to this trend (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004; Appadurai 1996; Ong 2005, 2007) most transformationalist scholars have found it more useful to replace *government* with *governance* and *sovereign territoriality* with *a geography of scales* than to devise a politics of globalization studies. The transformationalist thesis has offered us a compelling description of “varied globalization”, but has difficulty presenting a critique of globalizing strategies, techniques, and programs. Even those committed to “fine-tuning” globalization processes by designing mostly social democratic policy alternatives (Held 2004; Scholte 2005; Stiglitz 2006) participate in the process of consolidating the rationality, efficiency, and accountability of global governance without pausing to question the politics that lurks behind these technocratic ambitions of problem-solving. I cannot promise that a Foucaultian analytics of government can resolve this impasse, but it can at least throw some light on the impasse of the transformationalist thesis and offer some exit options from this.

FROM THE PROBLEM OF SOVEREIGNTY TO THE PROBLEMATICS OF GOVERNMENT

At first sight, Foucault’s writings on government, most of which are concentrated in his 75-76 and 77-78 Collège de France lectures later published under the titles *Society Must Be Defended* (2003) and *Security, Territory, Population* (2007), do not have much to do with globalization. Not only do they speak of a time most would situate “before globalization”, but they seem to be dealing with topics better suited for historians and sociologists than for students of globalization. How are we to adapt Foucault’s insights to present-day conditions when most of his examples and material were drawn from 18-19th century state formation, Enlightenment medical practices, and Bentham’s panopticon incarceration design? Also, how are we to account for Foucault’s neglect of scale, his refusal to situate his insights on the national/international nexus? (Fraser 2003, 162) Indeed, there is very little in Foucault that reminds us of time-space compression or transnational processes, which is also why his discussions on sovereign power, biopolitics, and governmentality have had greater resonance amongst historians such as Colin Gordon, political sociologists like Nikolas Rose and Andrew Barry, and

political theorists like Barry Hindess, Barbara Cruikshank, and Arnold Davidson than with students of international relations and globalization studies. All of the “big theorists” of globalization, from Bauman to Beck, Giddens, Castells, Lash and Urry show a complete disregard for his writings, with the exception of Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004). Even when Foucault is used in the context of globalization studies, it is mostly in terms of his theories of discourse, power/knowledge, and occasionally modes of subject formation. Nonetheless, I argue that Foucault’s writing on government can prove useful in the present context to the extent that they can problematize the theoretical parameters within which sovereign power and its spatial ontology are being treated in globalization studies. To quote Thomas Lemke “Foucault’s ‘timeliness’ lay in the fact that he sought answers for questions we are only discovering today” (2003, 178).

Some have made an effort to demonstrate that Foucault’s insights on disciplinary power, surveillance, and modes of subjection are malleable and current enough to help us think through the present era of post-Fordist de-regulation and flexibilization (Fraser 2003; Brown 2003). Others, in contrast, have rejected such pursuit altogether arguing that it is based on a misreading of Foucault’s work. It has been argued that a thorough reading of Foucault will reveal that he is not “the great theorist of the fordist mode of regulation” (Fraser 2003, 160). Although he began his career with the theorization of discipline, his thinking changed over the course of his career to eventually point out the limits and contradictions of the disciplinary model of power. His latest lectures on governmentality given at the Collège de France illustrate this change best (Lemke 2003, 172).

One of Foucault’s first goals was to distance himself from the preoccupation with sovereign power. The classical theory of sovereignty, which invested the sovereign with a series of discretionary prerogatives, underwent a series of major transformations during the 18th century. The sovereign “right to take life or let live” was gradually complemented by its opposite, the right to “‘make’ live and ‘let’ die”, that is, the right to administer, regulate, and ultimately optimize the human body and the body politic, in general, through a variety of productive technologies of power. In other words, the sovereign’s power over life was no longer manifested in the sovereign’s right to kill, but in the sovereign’s ability to govern the lives of large population in the best way possible (2003, 240-1). Foucault does not explicitly put a historical end to sovereign power – sovereign power has not disappeared during the 18th century – but he is visibly disinterested in the classical theory of sovereignty, which neglects the mechanisms, programs, and technologies through which power produces the lives of its subjects and endows government with spatial corporeality. Although Foucault was never very interested in studying the state and even less in providing a theory of it, the problem of the state remained central to his thinking (Lemke 2007, 1). But rather than taking the state as the self-evident – institutional or territorial – resting place of sovereign power, Foucault treated it as a political process to be explained, a historical event to be unraveled, a seemingly natural category to be denaturalized. This way, the state was quickly demoted from explanatory framework to object of study (Ibid. 5).

Government, understood in the wide Foucaultian sense, does not necessarily refer to the administration or management of a territorial unit by a sovereign. Although government may occasionally take the form of domination, more frequently it must be understood “as a way of acting

to affect the way in which individuals *conduct themselves*” in a variety of social, economic, and personal spheres (Burchell 1996, 20; original emphasis). Thus, for Foucault, government must be read in a larger, more general sense, as the art of conducting something or someone, as “the conduct of conduct” which can range from the government of oneself like in ancient Greek ethics, early Christian religiosity, or contemporary New Ageism, the government of a household by its head, the government of a family by its patriarch, or the government of a polity by the Prince or another sovereign figure (Ibid. 19). It follows then that the state does not exhaust the possibilities for government. It is only one of multiple ways in which the problem of government can be arranged and codified (Rose and Miller 1992, 176). Although neither an exclusive nor an exhaustive mode for systematizing political power, the state remains one of the most convincing and enduring manifestations of government. No other discursive formation has been endowed with the temporal permanence and spatial corporeality that have been conferred upon the state. Foucault does not deny the reality of the state. Her only challenges its centrality both as a mode of exercising political power and as a way of anchoring political theory. For these reasons, the task Foucault assigns himself is to survey the “historical ontology” of the state in search of ruptures and fissures that could disturb its naturalness (Lemke 2007, 6).

This task is particularly challenging because, instead of trying to look for the state in various geographic locations – territories, regions, borders, islands, cities, zones, or scales –, the analytics of government prefers to give us a snapshot of the governmentalization of the state, that is, a picture of the state in movement. The question being asked here is not, how does the state survive under the present conditions of time-space compression, economic integration or global neoliberal pressures? The much more important question is what technologies of government are necessary for the state to acquire a corporal – institutional or territorial – structure? What programs, tactics, and strategies are being mobilized to stabilize government in the form of the state or to endow the state with much-needed geospatial stability? (Lemke 2007, 5) Here, the spatial corporeality of the state is not given from the outset – to use a phrase from Rose and Miller, the state possesses “neither the unity nor the functionality [usually] ascribed to it” (Rose and Miller 1992, 174-5) , but treated as a consequence. The state is a geography in which technologies of government are localized for a limited period of time.

One might be inclined to deduce from this that geographical categories are not of much interest to Foucault because, ultimately, they represent nothing more than transitory resting places for events, provisional performances of programs, appearances of rationalities, and corporeal manifestations of strategies. But it would be too simplistic to argue that if one preferred to talk in

terms of time, one had to be hostile to space or that if one was interested in history, one had no concern for geography. Although there is scarcely any “place” for geography in his archaeology of knowledge or in his analytics of government, Foucault does not reject space *per se*. If Foucault remained surprisingly silent about geography, it was not because he feared that space may detract attention from temporal processes or that it might compromise his explicitly historical focus (Foucault 1980, 70). Rather, he was more interested in tracing the genealogy of geographical knowledge, than in creating a “place” for geography in his writings.

What is politically interesting is not geographical knowledge in itself, but the programs through which space entered the sphere of conscious political calculation and the technologies through which geographic science became an indispensable tool in the facilitation of government (Foucault 1980, 75). This predilection explains the spatial vagueness that we find in Foucault’s writings. Received geographic categories, such as territory, continent, region, city, island, and borders are often replaced with rather uncertain spatial metaphors, like position, (dis)placement, site, field, plain, domain, and horizon (Ibid. 68). The preference for nomadic rather than administrative, uncertain rather than topographic representations of space can be attributed to the fact that geography is in fact a type of expert knowledge, the prime historico-strategic function of which has been to concentrate government in the territorial container of the state, not disturb it, as globalization students might think (Ibid. 75).

Despite the difficulties attached to conducting a “historical ontology” of the state – what I have called taking a snapshot of the governmentalization of the state – Rose and Miller (1992) argue that this is possible by examining government in terms of a triad of rationalities, programs, and technologies. *Political rationalities* specify the objects, limits, and scope of political power by designating the legitimate bodies of government and the proper distribution of tasks and attributes between them (Ibid. 175). Rationalities of government have both a moral and an epistemological function. They specify the principles and ideals which power is intended to pursue (e.g., life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) and they do so with regards to certain ontological fields upon which power is to intervene (e.g., body, society, and property) (Ibid. 178-9). *Programs of government* refer to the designs as well as the ambitions put forward by experts, such as social scientists, economists, historians, accountants, management consultants, financial experts, and a host of other professionals that render social reality understandable, manageable, and improvable (Ibid. 182). Finally, *technologies of government* are the complex yet mundane operation of programs, techniques, tactics, calculations, apparatuses, and strategies through which the ambitions of the above two elements of government are to be realized. Often this does mean that some ideal program specified “above” will be perfectly translated “below”. Much rather, we need to pay attention to the “humble and mundane” assemblages of authorities, communities, interests, and identities in negotiating the nature of implementation (Ibid. 183).

At this point, it becomes important to distinguish between “the political form of government” and “the problematic of government in general” (Lemke 2007, 3). Whereas the former refers to a firmly territorialized form of authority that follows a judicial model of power, the latter describes a

matrix of rationalities, programs, and technologies which can take up a variety of forms in order to affect the conduct, circumstances, and environments of populations from a distance (Rose and Miller 1992, 174-5). The problematics of government does not reject the importance of the state altogether. It only refuses to take the theory of the state – the notion that the state is a spatially fixed and temporally stable entity with a territory to be governed, a set of institutions to be managed, and a finite population to be intervened upon (Ibid. 176) – as its point of departure, while at the same time trying to explain how the “myth” of the state is a central component in the organization and structuring of the state (Lemke 2007, 12).

“[A]n analytics of government [...] conceives of the state as an effect and instrument of political strategies and social relations of power. The state is an effect of strategies since it cannot be reduced to a homogeneous, stable actor that exists prior to political action. Rather, the state is to be understood as an emergent and complex resultant of conflicting and contradictory governmental practices.” (Lemke 2007, 10)

A closer look at the sociological history of state formation demonstrates the validity of this point. Only during the 18th century did states acquire the necessary administrative apparatus to exert a centralized authority, provide socio-economic services, promulgate and enforce a code of law, and exert military and police authority over its territory. And even from the 18th century onwards, the state revealed much more flexibility and impermanence than we would like to imagine: responsibilities and prerogatives were always shared, negotiated, downloaded, contested, and reformulated according to constantly changing representations of what is rational, legitimate, and progressive (Rose and Miller 1992, 176).

Most Foucaultian scholars, be they political sociologists or cultural theorists, agree that under the present conditions of policy denationalization, market deregulation, and social disembedding, we are not confronted with “a retreat of the state”, but with a proliferation of government by other means (Lemke 2001). What most commentators refer to as neoliberalism is neither an ideology that puts an end to politics, nor a cancer that originates from the market to take over society and other spheres of life (Brown 2003). Neoliberalism represents a transformation in the rationality of government. Instead of concentrating power relations in the form of the state, neoliberal government transfers social technologies to a variety of quasi-autonomous non-governmental bodies, formulates programs in light of professional expertise and performance indicators, and encourages citizens to assume individual responsibility through empowerment techniques (Rose 1996, 54-60). These conclusions bear a striking similarity to the transformationalist school of globalization. Both demonstrate an interest in the state but refuse to privilege the state as political actor or as analytical unit. Both recognize the enduring stability of the state alongside a rise in extra-governmental decision-making assemblages. Both reject unilateral interpretations of the post-Bretton Woods era that link the demise of the state to a surge in neoliberal capital. And both work with a relational understanding of power, where political authority is not localized in fixed entities, but is diffuse and mutating. Nonetheless, significant differences remain (Lemke 2007, 13).

Differently from a problematics of government, globalization literature – and the global governance subsection in particular – works with a foundationalist ontology where the objects to be studied are thought to pre-exist their examination. Political authority is thought to be reducible to spatial-cum-institutional containers, such as states, regions, cities, international organizations, and non-state actors, not productive of these. Second, globalization studies demonstrates a certain degree of enthusiasm when talking about contemporary possibilities for governance. These are considered to be more progressive, cooperative, and hopeful than what the “past” had to offer when sovereign nation states opposed any type of flexible or networked decision making. Finally, the scope of political authority is a different one for globalization studies. The term governance, in particular, describes a series of cooperative relations, compromises, and accommodations, the purpose of which is to generate the most “representative”, “rational”, and “efficient” type of problem-solving. The idea here is that politics is a rational process informed by perfect knowledge, smooth communication, and noble ambitions (Lemke 2007, 14-6).

A Foucaultian critique rejects all three of these propositions. First, the ontological presence of the state is not taken for granted, but must be demonstrated. The state is neither firmly here, nor fully a matter of representation. It is only one of the multiple ways in which the problem of government can be arranged and manifested. Although “real”, the state is neither an exclusive nor an exhaustive mode of systematizing political power. However, to the extent that the knowledge practices it relies on and the institutional technologies it has at its disposal can mobilize political legitimacy and historical credibility the state can become an enduring mode of organizing political power (Rose and Miller 1992, 177). Second, government, in the Foucaultian sense, is defined as a type of power which, regardless of its location, scale, method, or objective, seeks to shape the conduct of individuals without necessarily exerting sovereign mechanisms of discipline and domination, but rather through the administration of freedom, rights, and responsibilities (Rose 1996). And, finally, the very act of carving out a “political” sphere that is to be governed separately from an economic, social, cultural, or apolitical sphere is part and parcel of a problematics of government that seeks to endow political power with a permanent corporeality (Rose and Miller 1992, 177).

Overall, the merit of an analytics of government inspired by Foucault is the way in which it problematizes the core mission statement of globalization studies: the need to demonstrate that transnational processes have an unsettling and transformational effect upon the traditional relation between space and sovereignty. Only if this can be demonstrated, is a research program centered on “globalization” warranted. Using Foucault, however, it becomes evident that the ontological parameters of globalization studies are perhaps not the most compelling way for understanding change on a transnational level. Not only do sovereignty and geography lack the corporeal presence usually ascribed to them, but the relation that exists between them cannot be accurately captured by recording changes in the structure of global governance. On the one hand, sovereign power is not interesting in its ability (or lack thereof) to manage or administer some territorial unit or another, but in its capacity to constantly produce and delimit new geospatial dimensions as technologies of government. On the other hand, geography is not interesting as an explanatory framework for the functioning of the problem of sovereignty, but as an object of study to be explained as an indispensable tool of political

calculation. This reading of the relationship between space and sovereign power rejects the possibility of measuring transnational change against some static and ordered “past”. Globalization studies cannot use modern geopolitics and ahistorical readings of sovereignty as a backdrop for examining the “present” without sacrificing political critique.

The first step in developing such a critique would be for students of globalization to acknowledge their active role in consolidating the reality they seek to explain. In failing to problematize divisions such as individual/power, government/governance, national/transnational, and market/individual the globalization scholar – and the social scientist, in general – plays an indispensable role in reproducing the material presence of a sovereign power that is more or less permanent and corporeal (Lemke 2007, 3). In a sense, this is an unavoidable trap. The production of expert knowledge, of which academic knowledge is an integral part, is crucial in the facilitation of government, in representing social reality in a way that renders it calculable, manageable, and improvable. Not only scholars who seek to provide policy-relevant advice are guilty of this complicity, but virtually anyone who helps “render the world thinkable” for further explanation and intervention (Rose and Miller 1992, 182). This generates a reciprocal relationship, where knowledge production and programs of government feed into one another. Government relies on the efforts of professionals and experts as much as knowledge workers to find an outlet for their productions in the problem of government. Viewed in this way, globalization theory acquires certain dynamic and quotidian qualities, which charge globalization scholars with the responsibility of addressing the ways in which they are engaged in specific discursive constructs. Students of globalization need to seriously consider the practice of re-writing the global by resisting the idea that globality is an empirical given or a timeless social reality that can be observed from a view from nowhere and by refusing to reproduce the fallacies of methodological territorialism and epistemological positivism on a global scale.

FINAL DESTINATION?

In lieu of a conclusion, I want to discuss some of the inherent blind spots of a Foucaultian problematics of government. First, the relevance of this analytics of sovereign power seems to be confined to what Nikolas Rose (1996) calls “advanced liberal democracies”, namely, to the Western hemisphere or to the Anglo-Saxon space. It responds, even if in the form of a critique, to a profoundly Eurocentric notion of sovereignty that leaves no room for “fragmented” and “graduated” forms of political authority (Ong 2005) that can be seen in other parts of the world (Lemke 2007, 4) and it cannot accommodate non-developed and non-liberal settings. I attribute this problem to the fact that the founding myth of contemporary Foucaultian theory is located in the demise of the Keynesian welfare state and the subsequent extension and deepening of neoliberal rationality. Apart from its empirical incompleteness, this neoliberal story of becoming implies a linear historical progression, which risks committing the same fallacy the problematics of government was intended to address in the first place. It risks reinforcing the idea that the state is retreating due to an invasion of market forces in all spheres of social and personal life. What is more, locating the origins of neoliberal government in the early 70s, Foucaultian contemporary theory seems to be contradicting Foucault’s

archaeological method, the project of which was to disturb the self-evident continuity of history by philosophizing breaches, contradictions, and taboos (Foucault 1991, 76). Unfortunately this archaeological dimension of Foucault's work seems to have been lost in present-day discussions of government as they unfold in British political sociology and American cultural theory.

Second, although the problematics of government maintains that "power relations have historically been concentrated in the form of the state without ever being reducible to it" (Lemke 2007, 17), I am inclined to suspect this approach of a certain degree of state-centeredness. Despite offering a sophisticated algorithm for analyzing power in a variety of forms and localities, the Foucaultian problematics of government still has to come to grips with transnational processes of government and graduated topographies of power. Although it does not start from the state, too often the problematics of government concludes with it, thus seeming more suitable for examining domestic societal processes and sub-state level relations – hence the attention in political sociology – than for studying the international or the global. What is missing is more in-depth attention to the mundane and minute activities of transnational technologies of government, such as social entrepreneurs, professional elites, philanthropists, medics, epidemiologists, development agencies, business consultants, and the like. Too often technologies of government, although diffuse and mobile, end up stabilizing sovereign power in geospatial containers than unsettling these. Hence, the geography of government remains one firmly rooted in states, or more recently Empires, than one critical of geography's constitutive knowledge categories.

This is precisely where globalization studies can intervene. It can use the analytics of government with its triangular algorithm of rationalities, programs, and technologies to examine a variety of political life forms, not just states and not just advanced liberal ones. Additionally, the study of government can be structured around nomadic, uncertain spaces which locate the transnational not outside of or in contrast to already-existing administrative geopolitical categories, such as regions, states, or cities, but performed through these. Ultimately, this is not about fusing the problem of sovereignty with the problematics of government or about bringing globalization studies into political sociology or vice versa. If globalization studies is to engage the problematics of government, the end goal of this project is not to fashion some sort of accumulative and progressive global knowledge – a global social theory that can account for everything (Walker and Bigo 2007b, 5). Much rather, the ambition here is to encourage an analysis that would problematize the onto-disciplinary conventions that allow the problem of sovereignty and the problematics of government to stand apart from one another and represent their areas of study as two disparate scales of socio-political existence (Ibid. 4).

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The Politics of Globalization Studies:

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