

OVERHEATING

The three crises of globalisation: An anthropological history of the early 21st century

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The period examined by the project, the present era, begins with the discontinuities of 1989–91 – the coming of the Internet and mobile phones, the breakup of Yugoslavia, the end of the Cold War and the end of apartheid; and the project amounts to a globally comparative investigation of the converging crises of the 21st century – finance/economy, climate/environment, culture/identity – as perceived from local vantage-points.

Introduction

On his 100th birthday in November 2008, the anthropologist and founder of structuralism Claude Lévi-Strauss was paid a visit by President Nicolas Sarkozy. In the press reports from the meeting, the centenarian, whose seminal book on kinship had been published six decades earlier, said that he did not really count himself among the living any more. By saying this he referred not just to his very advanced age and diminishing faculties, but also to the fact that the world he cherished was gone. Lévi-Strauss had devoted his life to the study of humanity under the most varying cultural circumstances imaginable, in order to develop his theory of human universals. Throughout his life – he was a cultural pessimist already in the 1930s – he witnessed the accelerating disappearance of that world, that is the world of radical cultural difference.

Elaborating on his own comment to Sarkozy, Lévi-Strauss added that the world was now too full. *Le monde est trop plein*. Presumably he meant that it was overfilled by humans and the products of their activities. At the time of his birth

in 1908, the planet was inhabited by 1.7 billion persons; global population currently stands at 7 billion, and the proportion with their own Internet accounts and mobile telephones increases every year. No matter how one goes about measuring degrees of interconnectedness in the contemporary world (cf Tilly 1984), the only possible conclusion is that many more people today are much more connected than ever before in history. There are more of us, and each of us has, on average, more links to the outside world than our predecessors, through business travel, information, communication, migration, vacations, political engagement, trade, development assistance, exchange programmes and so on. The number of transatlantic telephone lines has grown phenomenally in the last few decades; so has the number of Websites and international NGOs. At the latest count (November 2011), more than eleven per cent of the world's population were members of Facebook (800 million, Facebook's own figures). **Exponential growth** can be identified in a broad range of networks to do with transnational communication.

It can indeed be argued that this is a new world, one which in significant ways differs from all epochs that preceded it. Most of us now live under the powerful headlights of modernity or in its shadows, as genuine contemporaries, aware, however dimly, of one another, divided and united by the same destiny. The present research project aims to study, describe and analyse the present world from an anthropological perspective. This entails that many of the relevant contextualisations, and all the original data, derive from local life-worlds invested with meaning and significance by agents positioned in a particular way, but continuously articulated with transnational and global processes, which are also studied in their own right. By focusing on the three major crises of globalisation – economy, environment, culture – the project addresses inequalities and diversity overtly and explicitly.

Among social theorists, a flurry of books, journals, articles and conferences appearing in the last two decades have sought to re-define the human world – the post-cold war world, the postcolonial world, the world of global modernity or of a deterritorialised information society – sometimes inventing new theoretical concepts, sometimes giving new tasks to old vocabulary. A number of conceptualisations recur throughout this vivid and

sometimes cacophonous discourse; a few should be mentioned here for the sake of positioning the project in a broader, interdisciplinary discourse.

The concept of the network. Established as a staple in studies of globalisation by at least two of the most prominent scholars in the field (Castells 1996 and Hannerz 1992, 1996), the concept of the network implies that stable hierarchies and structures are giving way to nodal, multcentred and fluid systems, and that this change takes place in numerous fields of interaction. (This concept should not be confused with the ANT idea of the network developed by Bruno Latour, to which it is related: ANT networks include both human and non-human agents.) In Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000), a book which argues the disappearance of territorial powers to the benefit of a jellyfish-like, omnipresent force that the authors call 'empire', the influence from Deleuze and Guattari's contrasting of rhizomes and treelike structures (*rhizomes et racines*) in *Mille plateaux* (1980) is essential, and Hardt and Negri's description of the world of global capitalism is also reminiscent of Castells' account of global networks based on the 'space of flows' rather than the 'space of places' (see Escobar 2008 for an ethnographic account).

The glocal. Although the term itself is relatively uncommon, glocalisation (Robertson 1994) is a standard theme in nearly all anthropological writing about globalisation as well as most of the sociological and geographical literature. The argument goes as follows. In real life, there exists no abstract, huge, global level of affairs on the one hand and local, lived realities on the other. The local level is in fact infused with influences from outside, be it culinary novelties or structural adjustment programmes; but these 'influences', on their part, have no autonomous existence outside their tangible manifestations. 'Microsoft' thus exists as a company based in Seattle, and simultaneously as the computer software used to run most personal computers in the world, but it does not exist as a global entity except as an abstraction of debatable value. It has numerous concrete manifestations, all of them local, and it offers a shared language which makes transnational communication (and file exchange) possible, but as a global entity it exists only at the level of situated thinking. Moreover, concepts describing impurity or mixing – hybridity, creolisation and so on – are specific

instances of this general approach stressing the primacy of the local. The local–global dichotomy is, in other words, misleading.

Reflexivity and fluidity. Bauman’s (2000) term ‘liquid modernity’ sums up this theoretical focus, which emphasises the uncertainty, risk and negotiability associated with phenomena as distinct as personal identification, economies and world climate in the ‘global era’. That identities are not fixed and given once and for all is not exactly news any more, but it is widely held that the current ‘post-traditional’ (Giddens 1991) era is characterised by an unprecedented breadth of individual repertoires, forcing people to choose between alternatives and to define themselves in ways which were not necessary in earlier, less unstable and more clearly delineated social formations. Ambivalence and fundamentalism in the politics of identity are seen to stem simultaneously from this fundamental uncertainty.

Rights issues. While it has become unfashionable to defend cultural relativism as an ethical stance, opinion remains divided as to the legitimacy of group rights and, more generally, the relationship between group and individual in the contemporary world (see e.g. Cowan et al. 2001, Goodale 2009) and the conditions for reproduction for distinctive cultural groups, large or small, in an era of globalised capitalism. Since the very existence of groups cannot, for epistemological and empirical reasons, be taken for granted, the individual is often foregrounded in this literature. The debates may concern intellectual property rights, cultural and linguistic rights, as well as multicultural dilemmas such as ethnic discrimination or the conflict between individualist agency and arranged marriages among non-European immigrants in North Atlantic societies (see e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, Kasten 2004, Edwards 2009, Friedman and Randeria 2004).

The globalisation discourse tends to privilege flows over structures, rhizomes over roots, reflexivity over doxa, individual over group, flexibility over fixity, rights over duties, and freedom over security in its bid to highlight globalisation as something qualitatively new (notwithstanding the presence of dissenting voices like Friedman 1994, Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). While this kind of exercise is often necessary, it tends to become one-sided. Many anthropologists talk disparagingly about the jargon of ‘globalbabble’ or

'globalitarism' (Trouillot 2001), and tend to react against simplistic generalisations by reinserting (and reasserting) the uniqueness of the local, or glocal, as the case might be. In this project, this critique is taken on, but the ambition of a global anthropology, transcending the traditional myopia of social and cultural anthropology, remains a central concern.

There is doubtless something qualitatively new about the compass, speed and reach of current transnational networks. Some globalisation theorists argue that the shrinking of the world will almost inevitably lead to a new value orientation, some indeed heralding the coming of a new kind of person (e.g. Sennett 1998, Anderson 1999). These writers, who seem to proclaim the advent of a new man, or at least new set of uprooted, deterritorialised values, are often accused of generalising from their own European middle-class habitus. The sociologist John Urry, lending himself easily to this criticism, argues in the final chapter of his *Global Complexity* (2003) that globalisation has the potential of stimulating widespread cosmopolitanism (however, he does not say among whom). However, as he readily admits in an earlier chapter in the same book, the principles of closeness and distance still hold, for example in viewing patterns on television, where a global trend consists in viewers' preferences for locally produced programmes (cf also Schiffauer 2004).

Some features of the contemporary world were set out by Castells already in 1998, in a lengthy footnote to the final volume of his trilogy *The Information Society*:

Why is this a new world? ... Chips and computers are new; ubiquitous, mobile telecommunications are new, genetic engineering is new; electronically integrated, global financial markets working in real time are new; an inter-linked capitalist economy embracing the whole planet, and not only some of its segments, is new; a majority of the urban labor force in knowledge and information processing in advanced economies is new; a majority of urban population in the planet is new; the demise of the Soviet Empire, the fading away of communism, and the end of the Cold War are new; the rise of the Asian Pacific as an equal partner in the global economy is new; the widespread challenge to patriarchalism is new; the universal

consciousness on ecological preservation is new; and the emergence of a network society, based on a space of flows, and on timeless time, is historically new. (Castells 1998: 336)

A decade later, he could have added the advent of deterritorialized warfare and political battles involving the question of humanly induced climate change to the list. He might also have spoken of post-Fordist flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989) and transnational migration on a massive scale (Castles and Davidson 2000). Be this as it may; Castells adds at the end of his footnote that it does not really matter whether all this is new or not; his point is that this is our world, and therefore we should study it.

The approach to globalisation represented by scholars like Castells, David Harvey, David Held and John Urry (among many others) gives useful overviews and quantitative surveys of the state of the world and the dynamic interrelations between subsystems and regions. However, as argued earlier (e.g. Eriksen 2007), the life-world approach of ethnography is missing from these overviews, and these analyses accordingly tend to be weak as regards local perceptions, strategies and variations. It is precisely this knowledge gap that the present project aims to fill, drawing on extant research in a number of fields, including anthropological studies of specific sites or regions, but building the argument around **five major case studies** from around the world as well as ten minor empirical studies, also widely distributed in terms of geography. All fifteen ethnographic projects build on a **shared methodology** and ask the same research questions. Naturally, developing a global anthropology requires **interdisciplinarity**, and this project draws extensively on history and sociology, in particular, as complementary sources of knowledge to the ethnographically based methods.

State of the art

The present era is often characterised by references to **global crises** or challenges facing humanity as a whole today. The metaphor of *overheating* central to the project, calls attention to accelerated change and a heightened

level of activity in the realms of economy and communication; and one may similarly, again metaphorically, speak of the quest for *shared traffic rules* on a global roadmap where traffic is growing by the minute. At the level of transnational policymaking, such concerns are at the forefront of all three problem areas singled out in this research project, and which are also, arguably, the central defining challenges in a globalised world (with poverty and war seen, in this contextualisation, as effects of each of them): **Finance/economics, climate/the environment, and culture/identity.**

Although a vast literature on globalisation exists, and numerous research projects on global issues are at any given time under way, no satisfactory body of work synthesising global perspectives with the anthropological insistence of seeing the world from distinctly local vantage points exists yet. In proposing to develop such a perspective, and in its theoretical framework, the present project represents a new approach. The project combines knowledge from a **range of disciplines**, and produces **original ethnographic material** from five sites, in order to investigate the nature of the contemporary global crises, their local effects and local responses to them. Partly growing out of the interdisciplinary CULCOM (Cultural Complexity) research programme at the University of Oslo, directed by myself (2004–2010), the present project represents simultaneously a continuity and a departure from CULCOM (which largely concentrated on the crisis of identity and culture, see www.culcom.uio.no/english) by connecting this crisis, conceptually and empirically, to the other two (finance/economy and environment/climate). The crisis of culture and identity is linked with processes that may result in (or prevent) identity and emotions anchored in community and self-esteem being thwarted or threatened in ways that create alienation, fragmentation and violence. For example, xenophobic tendencies tend to be boosted by economic uncertainty; and the mobility of people, leading to new frictions in the realm of culture and identity, is directly connected to environmental deterioration as well as economic processes. **Security** is a central concept in this regard, seen both in its physical and existential manifestations (Eriksen et al. 2010), and it is a key term for seeing the three crises in relation to each other and as forming an experiential unity. Yet, the security of a cultural community (or of a liberal democracy) may have little value for its population if

environmental processes undermine predictability in the appropriation of material resources necessary for survival and **social reproduction**. Likewise, if the financial and techno-economic systems falter, societies will no longer be capable of exploiting the material resources in a sufficiently sustainable and efficient way.

The environmental crisis is primarily about the **material conditions of life**; the crisis of culture and identity is about **cognitive, emotional, relational and political circumstances**; and the crisis of finance and economy is about the functioning of **trust in abstract systems, efficacy in production, material survival and social justice**. Both locally and empirically, and globally and conceptually, the three crises are connected. (Some connections are obvious. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda could not be understood without knowledge of colonial and postcolonial identity politics, economic stagnation and environmental deprivation owing to rapid population growth.) **Non-sustainability** and the emergence of **'bursting bubbles'** are also central concepts with relevance across the crises.

The context of the current crises can be described in a number of ways. In the social science literature on globalisation (see Eriksen 2007 for an overview), risk and vulnerability have been analyzed extensively (e.g. Bauman 2000, Beck 1999, Wisner et al. 2004). The local impact of global economic transformations is, likewise, the subject of a considerable literature, not least in anthropology (e.g. Ferguson 2006, Friedman 1994, Sting 2005), as are the key elements of the global economic crisis (e.g. Reinsert 2006, Hart et al. 2010). Environmental change and, more specifically, **climate change** is also the subject of a rich academic literature ranging from biology to law (e.g. Johansen 2006, Crate and Nuttall 2009, Adger et al. 2009, Edie et al. 2011), and so are the conflicts and tensions resulting from the transnational character of **contemporary cultural and religious differences** (e.g. Nederveen Pieterse 2007, Eide et al. 2008). Of the aforementioned, Beck and Friedman, in particular, have to some extent sought to relate the crises to each other.

Apart from the specialist literature dealing with the empirical fields in question, three bodies of scholarly literature inform the project.

First, the social science literature on economic, technological, political and cultural globalisation, ranging from Wolf (1982) and Castells (1996–8) to Appadurai (1996) and Held et al. (1999), gives empirically grounded descriptions of the growth of the **contemporary networked, interconnected world**.

Second, the literature on complex systemic processes and the properties of **networks**, whether scalefree or not (Watts 2004, Gladwell 2000, Caldarelli 2007, Keller 2005, Urry 2003), offers methodologies which enable an investigation of the **patterns and feedback processes** emerging from global interactions.

Third, the literature on **social capital**, social relationships and the conditions of **trust** (Putnam 2000, Fukuyama 1995, Kohn 2009, Granovetter 1973, Eriksen 2006) gives a methodology for studying the substantial **social and cultural content** of the networks enhanced by processes of globalisation.

These fundamental questions and relevant analytical approaches have so far not been combined in an interdisciplinary research project grounded in ethnographic methods. The conceptual difficulties are obvious, but the rewards could be very considerable. In a global situation characterised by population growth, enhanced electronic communication networks, deregulated economies, mounting environmental crisis and an upsurge in identity politics and cultural transformations, it is of crucial importance to develop theoretical and empirical syntheses which can both stimulate further research and serve as a knowledge base for decision-making and resistance.

To conclude, the status of knowledge is considerable but patchy. The theoretical and empirical syntheses proposed have not been attempted before.

Objectives and research questions

Anthropological fieldwork will be carried out in five locations (by the PI, by two postdocs and two Ph D students). Additional empirical material will be collected by MA students in year 3 and 4. All researchers will be required to collect material on local responses to all three crises. A part-time senior researcher will also contribute to the analysis.

Building on the original ethnography of global crises, and drawing on historical and contemporary sources for comparable cases elsewhere and global overviews, the analysis is framed by the following hypothesis:

Owing to 'overheating' in the realms of the economy, the environment and in culture, conditions for local reproduction in these three domains is being undermined, and efforts are being made locally and transnationally to recreate sustainable conditions.

In pursuing this hypothesis, the project distinguishes (i) between global processes and local realities, and (ii) between physical and socially constructed levels of observable reality in local settings.

The metaphor of **overheating** requires some elaboration. In physics, heat is synonymous with speed or velocity (cf. Eriksen 2001). In social life, acceleration and the intensification of systemic interconnectedness results in what I call overheating, as a unifying metaphor for the three crises. The term **friction** has been proposed as a metaphor for 'the diverse and conflicting social interactions that make up our contemporary world' (Tsing 2005), and there is a certain kinship between the terms, but unlike friction, overheating calls attention to the sense in which the world is 'trop plein'. While the metaphor 'a world on fire' (Chua 2003) is too apocalyptic to be useful, heating and in particular overheating seems to capture both the *Zeitgeist* and physically observable realities witnessed in the depletion of natural resources, the growth of slums (millions of persons who are 'matter out of place' seen from a market or government perspective) and intensified tensions and clashes between different cultural groups, whether due to international migration or domestic economic rearrangements.

At the physical level, effects of the **environmental crisis** could be enforced changes in livelihood, drought or flooding, displacement or desertification. Financial crises and instabilities trickle down to local life-worlds through changed economic conditions – increased commodity prices, unemployment, marginalisation, loss of market opportunities and so on. The crisis of culture, less easy to observe directly, can be identified at this level

through changes in economic and political autonomy leading to changes in kinship systems, belief systems and various traditional practices which become, in practice, unsustainable. **Vulnerability** is endemic.

The second level of ethnographic observation concerns **perceptions of and responses to the glocal crises**. It has been observed that the disembedding forces of globalisation are frequently met by re-embedding strategies (e.g. Eriksen 2007), and similarly, that perceptions of risk and vulnerability are met by local strategies intended to counteract this. Thereby, a simple dialectic between the global and the local (or glocal) is produced, but it should be pointed out that local reactions to global processes are highly diverse, mediated by incomplete knowledge, and in principle unpredictable.

The analytical focus is, accordingly, located to the space between **social/cultural constructions** and the **physical realities** on the basis of which they are constructed.

Following from the most general problem formulation, the following research questions will also be pursued by everyone in the team:

- In which ways is **knowledge and experiences** relating to the crises produced locally, and how are they acted upon by different segments or groups in society?
- What are the **internal dynamics** leading to 'overheating' in each of the crises, and which countervailing processes can be identified?
- How can models of **complex networks** shed light on contemporary global processes of crisis, what are the threshold values, and how do positive and negative feedback mechanisms regulate these processes?
- How do the conditions for **trust** in different kinds of entities change with globalisation – interpersonal, local, national, transnational, global, as well as trust in technology, science and expert knowledge – and to what extent do the three crises lead to mistrust and a loss of legitimacy for formal power-holders?
- Which are the social and cultural **transformations** resulting from the global crises, and what are the consequences for autonomy and continuity with the past?

The project, moreover, aims

- To explore and explain the **origins and forms of the main crises of globalisation** using a common analytical framework showing that they are patterned in the same way, creating a sense of **vulnerability**, a shortage of **trust** in abstract systems and processes, a heightened awareness of **risk**, and a set of localised **responses** to these issues, in a world of globalised processes.
- To develop the vocabulary of the social sciences to enhance its capability to account for and explore, in a dialectical way, **transnational and often deterritorialised crises** occurring in the present era, characterised by networked enterprises, financial markets operating in real time, deterritorialised identity politics, environmental concerns and economic growth.

About the theoretical and empirical framework

As a global anthropology of the early 21st century, the project is temporally delineated to the period beginning around 1991 and ending at the time of fieldwork. It could be argued that the present era of deregulated neoliberal capitalism and global information networks began in earnest in 1991, when a number of defining features of the present age came into being.

First, 1991 was the year when the **Cold War** was called off once and for all. The two-bloc system that had defined the postwar era, was suddenly gone. The ideological conflict between socialism and capitalism seemed to have been replaced with the triumphant sound of one hand clapping. By 1991, it was also clear that **apartheid** was about to be dismantled; Nelson Mandela had been released from prison the year before, and negotiations between the Nationalist Party and the ANC had begun.

Second, **Yugoslavia** began to dismantle itself violently, fed by a kind of nationalistic sentiment many believed to have been overcome. At the same time, the Hindu nationalists of the BJP (*Bharatiya Janata Party*) went from strength to strength in India. The identity politics of the state, or of statelike bodies, was not

something of the past. Openness and closure were still twin features of politics, but they were operating along new lines.

Third, 1991 was the year in which the **Internet** began to be marketed to ordinary consumers. This was new, just as new as the pocket-sized **mobile telephones** that spread globally, from Mauritius to Iceland, around 1991.

Deregulation of markets had taken place in the preceding decade, but many of the effects of a weaker state and a less manageable and predictable market were being felt only now, helped by new information and communication technology. 1991 cannot serve as an absolute historical starting point for an account of the current global crises, but the historical component of the project will emphasise the transition from the pre- to the post-1991 world.

The volatility of global **financial capitalism**, the mounting **climate crisis** and the rise of **indigeneity** as well as other forms of identity politics have all come to fruition after 1991, which was also the year of the first Gulf War, that is the first major war after 1945 which could not be interpreted as a war by proxy between the two superpowers. A proper understanding of this historical transition is necessary for an understanding of contemporary processes.

At the conceptual level, the project is deeply inspired by Eric Wolf's seminal work on the global transformations resulting from **colonialism**, *Europe and the People Without History* (Wolf 2010/1982). Wolf indicated how a **global anthropology** is possible and demonstrated the virtues of the anthropological approach, where the empirical locus is on local life-worlds, which are then interweaved with the large-scale processes of global capitalism and colonial expansion (see also Salman and de Theije 2011 for recent perspectives from anthropology).

The theoretical framework owes less to Wolf's Marxist anthropology than to **ecological and phenomenological approaches** (Bateson 1972, Ingold 2000). The concept of **sustainability** in ecology (which should not be conflated with equilibrium) refers to the conditions for **reproduction**, which are central to this project with reference to both economy, culture (or cultural survival) and environmental issues: As regards the **environment**, the currently widespread use of fossil fuels exemplifies this; while extraction of oil and gas are spoken of as production, these resources are de facto non-renewable, which is to say that they

are not being reproduced. In the **financial sector**, the regular emergence of 'bursting bubbles' (massively failed expectations and concomitant economic crises) illustrate that there is an uncertain relationship between financial capital and economic value, and growing bubbles thus entail a tendency to 'eat the capital' since consumption surpasses production and undermines conditions for reproduction (Carrier and Miller 1998, Graeber 2011). Concerning **culture and identity**, the very conditions for reproduction may be, and often are, thwarted by the demands of the state (Scott 1998) and global capitalism, leading to frictions, transformations and counterreactions.

Only in 2011, two distinctive kinds of social movement have emerged in response to globalised crises – the emergent political opposition in the Arab-speaking world, and the movements opposing neoliberal global capitalism and assumed political mismanagement, ranging from the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement to *Los Indignados* in Spain. The tensions and frictions, conflicts and struggles of the globally interconnected world are in fact constitutive elements of it, and can therefore be very fruitful to study globalisation through its conflicts and crises, without a prior conclusion in mind.

The phenomenological dimension of the project, central to the ethnographic components, aims to elucidate local interpretations of the local effects of the global crises, as well as identifying the trust/mistrust and security/insecurity nexuses in relation to the crises. Theoretical tools from 20th century anthropology will be useful here, since certain aspects of human lives are universally present notwithstanding technological and economic changes. **Reciprocity and trust** remain fundamentals of human lives everywhere (cf. Eriksen 2006), but reproducing these forms of human sociality can be difficult under circumstances of rapid change. An emphasis on the 'glue' of social life, which will be strongly present in the ethnographies of this project, directs attention away from the flows, uncertainties and cultural mixtures dominating the globalisation literature up to the present, instead emphasising the factors that create stability, predictability and order; replacing, in a word, descriptions of form with an improved understanding of content and motivation, showing how delinking is counteracted by relinking.

In a series of final analyses, the three levels – **the global, the physical world and cultural responses** – are brought together: The networked world as a whole after 1991, the objective effects of the crises of globalisation, and the local ways of dealing with them. No simple answers are envisioned, but the shared conceptual framework and methodology ensure compatibility between the subprojects and may inspire further research along similar lines.

To sum up: Using a variety of sources, but with a main emphasis on **fieldwork in five locations**, the project aims to describe the **three crises** of globalisation – economy, environment, culture – and strategies devised to adjust to or counteract their **local effects**, linking the analyses of local life-worlds with an analysis of global interconnectedness. Using network analysis, phenomenological method and systemic approaches, the project will distinguish between, and study the relationships between, the global (and otherwise macro) contexts, perceptions and actions. As a result, it will contribute an analysis of globalisation which simultaneously charts attitudes and values, documents the functioning of institutions and practices, and demonstrates the **connections between global processes and locally lived realities**. The project is comparative, interdisciplinary, multisited and global in its ambitions.

Methodologies

The project is innovative in that it combines a commitment to long-term ethnographic fieldwork (6–12 months for postdocs, 12–16 months for Ph Ds) with an equally strong emphasis on macrosociological and historical analysis, insisting on the complementarity of these methodologies with the aim to explore the global through the local. It can be described as a **global macroanthropology**.

This implies the need for **interdisciplinary competence** among the scholars involved in the project. Although skills in ethnographic methods are essential, participants will also be chosen on the basis of proven competence in historical and macrosociological analysis, and knowledge of contemporary global processes in the economic, environmental and cultural realms. It is equally critical of the myopic tendencies in anthropology and of the superficial handling

of people's life-worlds in sociology and world history; equally committed to the richness and empirical naturalism of good ethnography, the synthetic qualities of quantitative sociology and the narrative strengths of history. The project is both multi-sited and comparative, but it is also global in its scope and analytical ambitions.

Research could have been carried out in either fewer or more locations than five. For the sake of empirical breadth and diversity, five is a minimum number. However, for systematic comparison to be possible, a higher number could easily become unmanageable, as anthropologists do not compare quantitative findings but qualitative, narrative materials relating directly to locally embedded life-worlds.

The aim is for all the researchers to be in the field simultaneously and communicate with each other (via Skype and/or webchat) on a weekly basis in order to fine-tune and adjust methodologies under way. Since ethnographic methods can be very diverse in practice, regular communication about fieldwork is essential to ensure compatibility between the sub-projects. Through regular communication, research questions can be shared, and preliminary findings can be communicated within the group.

As is the case with most contemporary fieldwork, these ethnographies will depend on **more than one method** of data collection. After selecting the physical site, researchers will identify **four distinctive networks** or clusters of persons who are differently positioned in relation to the crises: an **elite group** of decision-makers, a group of **activists** or NGO workers, a comparatively **affluent group** and a comparatively **poor group**. Focused interviews and participant observation will be undertaken in all four groups, sequentially or simultaneously. Equal emphasis will be placed on observational data and verbal data. Data will be recorded and coded in such a way as to be transparent and accessible, chiefly for the sake of sharing and making comparisons within the research group. Representativity concerning gender and age will be ensured, and other forms of differentiation will also be taken into account. In addition, the researchers will follow the **media discourse** relative to the crises systematically, and will, where applicable, observe relevant **public events**

(demonstrations/rallies, international meetings etc.) and their local repercussions.

Carrying out fieldwork among four groups who are positioned in structurally different ways is challenging, but far from impossible. In the context of this project, it is crucial that each subproject demonstrates the **diversity**, and potential **contradictions**, between the social groups that make up society. Focusing exclusively, for example, on environmental activists or on elites, would give a skewed and misleading picture of society as a whole.

Knowledge about the external world is unevenly distributed within any society and between societies. The correspondence between people's knowledge and the physical world is never simple and needs to be explored. How people perceive the causes of economic, environmental and cultural crises, and which remedies they see as being relevant, is at the core of the ethnographic component of this project. Local reactions may range from riots and massive outmigration to religious activities, petitions and changes in economic strategies, but they are necessarily based on local political power arrangements and cultural understandings of one's place in the world.

The precise choice of sites for the ethnographic component must wait until the staff has been appointed: They will be hired not exclusively on the basis of a particular regional competence, but will have to satisfy a range of criteria (command of theory and methodology, historical knowledge, originality), and although regional competence is essential, several options are available. However, in order to fulfil the analytical programme, sites must include places located to the **centre**, the **semiperiphery** and the **periphery** of the global system, to use the classic terms. This will reveal the necessary variation for a global analysis. Translated into a more updated terminology, fieldwork should be carried out in an OECD country, in a BRIC country (such as Brazil or South Africa), in a semiperipheral country (e.g. in the Caribbean), a country which is marginal to the globalisation processes, not a powerful actor on the transnational stage and with tenuous links between state and society (probably an African country), and in a predominantly Muslim country (such as Pakistan or Turkey). I will myself carry out fieldwork in a 'semiperipheral' country, probably in the Caribbean. Sites will be chosen on the basis of their 'normality': we shall be

looking for the typical, not the extreme. It is also essential, in the concrete choice of fieldwork sites, that all the groups to be investigated (as mentioned above) are present in a compact space. Variables relevant for the comparison will include, apart from obvious markers such as GDP and HDI, **political** systems and **demographic** composition/growth (the shape of age pyramids and growth rates are relevant for all three crises).

Analytically and logically, the analysis moves from the **global context** to the **physical world** in specified localities and, from there, to the **life-worlds** explored ethnographically (which are, naturally, by no means uniform – internal tensions, differences and conflicts are highly relevant). The local reactions to the global crises can be studied, put simplistically, in this sequence:

experiences --> perceptions --> strategies --> confrontations/adjustments

A note on the concept of macroanthropology may be appropriate here. In the 20th century, anthropology was dominated by single-society studies based on ‘ethnographic snapshots’ of a particular social environment or cultural field. Towards the end of the century (and at the beginning of the 21st), anthropologists increasingly began to study transnational or non-localised phenomena (such as migration and human rights discourses), and the need to contextualise the ‘nitty-gritty’ of ethnographic detail in its embeddedness in encompassing processes became ever more apparent in the same period. Pioneering work in this regard was undertaken by Wolf (1982, 1999), Friedman (1994) and Hannerz (1992, 1996), and their approaches have been refined and built upon by scholars such as Tsing (2005), Ong (1999), Gingrich and Fox (2002), Escobar (2008), Vertovec (2009) and many others.

In an ambitious bid to build an **anthropology of global interconnectedness**, Burawoy (2000) reports the work of a team of anthropologists working in distinct sites and addressing the connections between the sites and the ‘global forces’ influencing local life. Hendry (2003), coining the term *globography*, outlines a creative (and methodologically debatable, as she readily admits) method of tracing connectivity through a vast area in a brief period of time. In other words, the ambition to ‘see the world in a

grain of sand' while simultaneously developing an overview of global processes is far from new in anthropology, and there is considerable merit and relevance in this work. However, the present project differs from preceding anthropological research on global connections and 'glocalisation' in its insistence on radical interdisciplinarity and its empirical focus. This is not a study of transnational connections, but a project on ways in which **the global is articulated with the local through crises**, and each locality does not have to be connected with the others. The unique qualities of the present project, I believe, lie in (i) its systematic comparisons, (ii) its clear demonstration of the dynamic interplay between the local and the global as well as different dimensions of the local, using network analysis, and (iii) the global overview combined with highly specific, localised ethnographies.

Research design and timeline

The core team of six researchers including the PI will be consolidated in the first six months of the project. Positions will be announced internationally, although MA students will be recruited from the University of Oslo, but not exclusively from anthropology. Following internal workshops, literature surveys and refinement of methodological and theoretical tools, the five main researchers carry out fieldwork from the second half of year 2. MA students are subsequently recruited; five in year 3, five in year 4. Five of them will carry out fieldwork in the same locations as the senior researchers, the remaining five in complementary locations. The scope of the MA students' fieldwork will be narrower than that of the senior researchers and Ph D students. The MA students will be closely supervised during fieldwork, and shall collect data which is complementary to the material already collected by the other researchers.

A **fortnightly seminar** will be organised internally except during the fieldwork period: one based on readings, one based on writings. In addition, a **monthly seminar** will involve invited speakers from outside.

Following fieldwork (second half of year 2, first half of year 3 for Ph Ds), some follow-up trips and short visits to archives may be necessary. It is nevertheless a condition that all scholars involved finish their work according to

schedule. Ph. D.s and postdoctoral projects must be finished after four years, and the publication plan should be followed. The PI's earlier track record in this respect is impeccable. He has edited book series and journals both domestically and internationally since the early 1990s, and has supervised Ph D students to completion for fifteen years. When the project is under way, an arrangement for disseminating the research (three monographs and an edited volume) will be negotiated with a leading academic publisher, probably in the UK. The Ph Ds will be encouraged to write their dissertations in a monograph form and simultaneously present conference papers and publish articles in journals.

Regarding other forms of dissemination and participation in the academic world, one or two workshops on the anthropology of global crises will be proposed for the EASA (European Association of Social Anthropologists) conferences, and one workshop on a related topic at the AAA (American Anthropological Association), with a view chiefly to strengthen networks with American colleagues working in related fields.

At the University of Oslo, an interdisciplinary social science/humanities Ph D course on the crises of globalisation will be held in year 3 and/or 4. The PI moreover intends to design and teach a BA course in global anthropology at the Department of Social Anthropology (University of Oslo) from year 2 or 3.

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Theoretical and methodological preparation | x | | | | |
| Fieldwork, senior researchers incl. Ph Ds | x | x | | | |
| Fieldwork, MA students | | | | x | x |
| Completion of postdoctoral projects | | | | | x |
| Completion of Ph Ds | | | | x | |
| Publications | | | x | x | x |
| International conferences | | x | x | x | x |
| Internal and public workshops | | x | | x | x |

Relevance of the project

At the Department of Social Anthropology, there exists a comparative research project on rainforest management, and preliminary collaboration is already under way. In addition, this project will enhance other extant research on politics and the state, Islam and secularism, cultural change in southern Africa and other projects. It will contribute to **focusing** the research carried out at the department and **consolidating** its identity. The members of the research group will develop broad methodological skills (including systematic comparison) and theoretical insights enabling them to make substantial contributions to development studies, comparative global studies and social anthropology later.

The project will constitute a major contribution to **global anthropology**, and will also pave the way for later research along similar lines, fulfilling anthropology's early promise of 'seeing the world in a grain of sand', that is combining detailed local knowledge with a sound understanding of global processes, as well as taking global **comparison** seriously. At the University of Oslo, considerable effort is currently put into attempts to develop **interdisciplinary research groups**; this project will help give focus and direction to several of the projects devised in this respect (the PI is involved in the KULTRANS research group, on 'cultural transformations in a globalised age'). Internationally, the project will similarly transcend disciplinary boundaries and help reinsert anthropology in its rightful place as a fundamental intellectual discipline by showing its importance for **climate research, geopolitical analysis** and the study of **rights claims and cultural pluralism**. As far as the PI is concerned, the project will function as a means both to expand his knowledge and to exploit, in a systematic and focused way, the intellectual competence and substantial knowledge about the processes in question that he has built up over many years.

The project is also societally relevant in several ways. Faced with mounting and often poorly understood global crises, policymakers and others need knowledge of kinds that cannot be provided by economists and the other experts typically drawn upon. There is a large, uncovered need for knowledge about (i) the growth and emergence of the **presently interconnected world**, (ii)

the ways in which its **inherent contradictions** are being perceived locally, and (iii) as a consequence, **appropriate policies**. In general, local perceptions and reactions to global crises are poorly understood and rarely described on a broad canvas enabling comparisons and a proper understanding of global interconnectedness. If humanity is going to emerge successfully from the present crises, it is imperative that the powerful are made aware of the effects, perceptions and reactions to the global crises in a wide range of localities. The knowledge generated and disseminated through books and articles, some of them intended for a **non-academic readership**, may in fact turn out to be major contributions to a **change in dominant perceptions** of global processes, by placing 'ordinary people' at the centre and thereby empowering the *demos* of the global ecumene.

Challenges, risks and feasibility

Given its geographically sprawling, theoretically ambitious and methodologically complex nature, this project is not devoid of risks. The main challenges involved concern the **multiple methodologies** and need for **compatibility**. Both will be addressed through training before fieldwork and supervision during and after fieldwork. I will direct pre-fieldwork seminars devoted to field methods, selection of informants and the necessity of compatibility/comparability of the results.

The project is methodologically challenging but feasible and, at the level of empirical work, it is no more complex than projects I have directed in the past, although the theoretical ambitions are higher than before. The project will result in an **comparative, collective** and **cumulative** body of anthropological knowledge of broad relevance inside and outside the discipline, giving direction to future ways of doing anthropological research 'outside the cocoon' of academic anthropology narrowly conceived.

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