

GISELA WELZ

Transnational Cultures and Multiple Modernities: Anthropology's Encounter with Globalization

Abstract: In the 1970s, anthropology began to examine its role in the establishment and expansion of colonial rule in non-Western societies and its continuation in new forms of economic and political domination exerted by the West after the disbanding of colonial administrations. Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) proved to be immensely influential in this context. Today, globalization has emerged as the domain in which anthropologists critically recast their relationship to the post-colonial field. Anthropologists increasingly study the cultural effects of the worldwide diffusion of commodities, technologies and media products, as well as the increase of immigration and other forms of transnational mobility. Faced with a surge of greatly increasing cultural diversity worldwide as a consequence of these intensified exchanges, anthropology has been forced to revise its earlier notion that globalization would inevitably bring about a culturally homogenized world. This article addresses the concept of the pluralization of modernities, explores its potential for interdisciplinary research agendas, and also inquires into problematic assumptions underlying this new theoretical approach.¹

Anthropology emerged as a scholarly enterprise inquiring into pre-modern societies. Historically, the discipline of anthropology emerged as a systematic attempt to learn about traditional cultures which often did not possess written records of their history and cultural heritage. The specific methodology of ethnographic research – fieldwork and participant observation – was developed to meet this challenge. Throughout much of the 19th and 20th century, anthropologists were intent on recording and salvaging traditional cultures before they crumbled under the onslaught of modernization. Edward W. Said claimed that anthropology “has been historically constituted in its point of origin during an ethnographic encounter between a sovereign European observer and a non-European native” (Said 1989, 211). It was not until the 1960s that anthropology started to critically examine its role in the establishment and expansion of colonial rule in non-Western societies and its continuation in new forms of economic and political domination exerted by the West after the disbanding of colonial administrations. Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) proved to be immensely influential in this context, feeding into the growing discomfort among anthropologists with their complicity, real or imagined, with colonial powers. More so, with its poignant analysis of Western hegemonic

¹ This essay is based on a paper presented at the conference “Transcultural English Studies,” Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe University Frankfurt, May 19-23, 2004.

exoticism, it provided anthropologists with a vocabulary in which to analyze the past endeavors of their discipline and to unmask them as emerging from and also constituting an unequal relationship between Western anthropologists and the imperialized others they produced in their ethnographic representations (see Fabian 1983). The incorporation of the concept of alterity into anthropology and the subsequent move to make colonialism and the production of anthropological knowledge into objects of study in their own right² led to a heightened sense of introspection and an awareness of how anthropology even today stands the risk of unwittingly contributing to legitimizing power asymmetries of the modern geopolitical order. Said was especially influential in introducing the Foucauldian-derived concepts of power and knowledge into anthropological theorizing, paving the ground for a systematic de- and reconstruction of anthropology's modes of knowledge production and its prominent genre of representation, ethnography (see Marcus and Fischer 1986, Clifford and Marcus 1986). Interestingly enough, in a sweeping assessment of anthropology's attempts to come to terms with its colonial legacy that Said delivered at the 1987 meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago, he admitted to being impatient with what he then called the "aesthetic response" of the so-called Writing Culture movement, spearheaded by James Clifford and George Marcus. Rather than retreating into the "politics of textuality" (Said 1989, 209), anthropology should respond to the political challenges posed by a post-colonial world.

In his speech, Said himself was hesitant, however, when it came to a prognosis of a future for anthropology:

I cannot say whether it is now possible for anthropology as anthropology to be different, that is, to forget itself and to become something else as a way of responding to the gauntlet thrown down by imperialism and its antagonists. (Said 1989, 213)

At that point in time, neither he nor his colleagues in anthropology could have predicted that globalization would emerge as the domain in which anthropologists would critically recast their relationship to the post-colonial field. During the 1990s, globalization processes started to become prominent objects of anthropology. In particular, migration, mobility and the social groups they produce – refugees, tourists, labor migrants – were put on anthropology's research agenda. Today, anthropologists increasingly study the cultural effects of the worldwide diffusion of commodities, technologies and media products, as new communication and transportation technologies bridge huge distances in ever briefer intervals of time, and release people from geographically restricted communities of interaction. Cultural artifacts – not just material things but also political ideas, scientific knowledge, images of the future and interpretations of the past – travel further and more swiftly than ever before. They are available simultaneously almost everywhere, but, of course, their accessibility is restricted to those social actors who have the economic means or the cultural capital to make use of them.

² For assessments of the influence of Said's Orientalism on anthropology, see Rapport and Overing 2000 and Ortner 1999.

1. Reconfiguring the Concept of Culture

As a consequence of these transformations, anthropologists have abandoned established notions of how culture relates to territory. Swedish social anthropologist Ulf Hannerz suggests that the well-established anthropological concept of cultures as “packages of meanings and meaningful forms, distinctive to collectivities and territories” was put to a test when anthropologists started to take a closer look at the

increasing interconnectedness in space. As people move with their meanings, and as meanings find ways of traveling even when people stay put, territories cannot really contain cultures. (Hannerz 1996, 8)

Originally, the anthropological concept of culture referred to the way of life of a bounded social group in a fixed and clearly-defined geographical location or territory. Both the increased mobility and worldwide dispersal of populations, forming diasporas far from home, and the interpenetration of societies by things and ideas from elsewhere challenged the unspoken anthropological assumption that “culture sits in places” (Escobar 2001). With globalization, cultures ceased to be static objects. They would no longer hold still for ethnographers to portray them, as James Clifford, American historian and critical theorist of anthropology, so aptly put it:

Twentieth-century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere individuals and groups improvise local performances from (re)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols, and languages. (Clifford 1988, 14)

As a consequence, cultural boundaries are much more difficult to fix, let alone map onto territorial divides, as communication channels transgress and migrant communities routinely cross them.

In anthropology, the term ‘transnationalisation’ was adopted in order to capture those cultural processes that flow across the borders of nation states. ‘Transnational’ has increasingly become a blanket-term in anthropology to describe any cultural phenomenon that extends beyond or cross-cuts state boundaries and is an effect of the diffusion or dispersal of people, ideas and artifacts across huge distances, often in such a way that they stop being identified with a single place of origin. Anthropologists distinguish transnational processes from globalization. The latter they define as world-encompassing in scale, and embodied in economic and political processes whose protagonists are multinational corporations, national governments and supranational organizations (see Hannerz 1998). Conversely, the use of the term ‘transnational’

draw[s] attention to the growing involvement of other kinds of actors – individuals, kinship groups, ethnic groups, firms, social movements, etc. – in activities and relationships that transcend national boundaries. (Hannerz 1998, 237)

Aihwa Ong, a US-based anthropologist whose studies analyze the changing societies and cultures of contemporary Southeast Asia, asserts that transnationality as a term is best suited to symbolize the “condition of cultural interconnected-

ness and mobility across space” which has been intensified under late capitalism. According to Ong, the prefix “trans”

denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the transversal, the transactional, the translational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states of capitalism. (Ong 1999, 4)

The new concept of transnationalism in anthropology is not meant to reify a view of the world as “composed of sovereign, spatially discontinuous units” (Malkki 1992, 27) but rather intends to destabilize the very notion that cultures and societies are contained and indeed defined by the nation state.

2. Homogenization and Diversity

Many of the new research concerns of anthropology – not just migration and mobility, but media and computer mediated communication, statehood and supra-national governance, commodities and consumption, science and technology – today entail a turn away from the more established patterns of doing fieldwork and writing ethnography. Yet, what remains unchanged about ethnographic fieldwork and what gives it its special advantage over other, less engaged and more distant methods of research is that field-workers immerse themselves in the everyday lives of the people they study, becoming participant observers of social practices as they unfold. Anthropologist James Watson states that

[i]n fieldwork you live where people live, you do what people do, and you go where people go [...] increasingly, all over the world, people are going to McDonald's; they are also going to shopping malls, supermarkets, and video stores. If anthropologists do not start going with them, we will soon lose our *raison d'être*. (Watson 1997, viii)

Watson, along with a team of East Asian colleagues in anthropology, decided to do just that, to accompany people going to McDonald's in five Asian metropolitan areas, Taipei, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing. The anthropologists Yunxiang Yan, James Watson, David Wu, Sangmee Bak and Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney contributed to the book *Golden Arches East* which contains five case studies, exploring “how McDonald's worldwide system has been adapted to suit local circumstances in five distinct societies” (Watson 1997, ix). The team found out that East Asian consumers have managed to transform McDonald's into local institutions and that this localization process has led to a proliferation of McDonald's restaurants that not only differ from those in the US or in Germany, but also show considerable variation between the East Asian cities studied. What consumers actually do when they frequent the hamburger restaurant is very different from city to city, as are the cultural meanings that they are afforded: a popular after-school place for high school students where they do their homework, a place for three-generation-family outings on a weekend, or else the equivalent of a high-priced restaurant where *nouveau riche* couples go for din-

ner. The book is an enjoyable read and quite convincing in presenting evidence that the spread of fast food does not necessarily undermine the integrity of indigenous cuisines, nor can fast food chains simply be called agents of global cultural homogenization. The study can be criticized, of course, for not paying sufficient attention to socioeconomic inequities within the societies studied, to problematic labor relations within McDonalds, or to the detrimental ecological effects of food production for hamburger empires. However, the special achievement of the study is that it takes the term McDonaldization literally and examines the empirical value of the term. In popular social science discourses this had become a synonym for the negative dimensions of globalization, for Americanization and cultural imperialism. Yet, instead of finding cultural standardization, the researchers were confronted with a new cultural diversity as McDonalds is adapted and effectively indigenized in the various settings.

Anthropology had started to study globalization with the expectation and indeed fear that globalization would bring about a culturally homogenized world. Instead, the discipline witnessed a surge of greatly increasing cultural diversity, an observation that contradicted everything that anthropologists were led to believe. The global transformations underway today – the increase of transnational migration, the intensification of economic exchanges, and the global reach of media and consumer culture – are in a sense the epitome of the process of modernity writ large, a global expansion and intensification of modernization. What modernization had fallen short of, the production of a single unified world culture, globalization for sure would achieve. This is what anthropologists assumed, as for decades they had observed the incursion of monetary economies and capitalist markets into tribal life worlds and indigenous social systems, turning them inside out and mangling them beyond recognition, leaving populations adrift in the rapidly growing urban slums of Third World mega-cities, bereft of their identities and cultural meanings. Globalization has intensified these modernization processes. In its wake, there has not been a significant alleviation of poverty in many post-colonial societies, and the social inequalities within these societies, and between them and the prosperous and powerful societies of the West, have deepened. Meanwhile, new links of economic and political relations have been forged which often are called neo-colonial.

Yet, cultural difference has not disappeared, on the contrary. Culturally, globalization has produced some unexpected and indeed contradictory effects. It has not led to the emergence of a single, unified world culture. Of course, we can observe the worldwide diffusion of modern institutions – the bureaucratic state, formal education, mass media and telecommunications, health systems and military infrastructures. The globalization of the capitalist economy has left no society on earth untouched. However, the consequences of these processes are – in spite of all prognoses and prophecies – not the same everywhere (see Eisenstadt 2000). The globalization of modernity has produced both sameness and difference; uniformisation and differentiation are evolving side by side. Even though globally standardized institutions and practices are being introduced and adopted

all over the world, the increased interaction between societies does not automatically lead to any significant leveling of cultural contrasts. Rather, when local cultures interact with global imports, new amalgamations of tradition and modernity are produced that are unique to the time and place in which they occur.

3. The Global Cultural Economy

Thus, new cultural forms grow out of historically situated articulations of the local and the global:

The trappings of globalization – world markets, mass media, rapid travel, modern communication [...] have had the effect of greatly increasing cultural diversity because of the ways in which they are interpreted and the ways they acquire new meanings in local reception. (Ong 1999, 10)

In his attempt to theorize the global cultural economy for anthropology, Arjun Appadurai stresses the importance of mass mediated products – radio, television, music videos, movies – which in conjunction with migration processes come to the fore as forces “that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination” (Appadurai 1996, 4). This has been explored ethnographically by a number of anthropologists in their research on the audience reception of popular media formats. Sarah Dickey’s study of the significance of popular cinema for moviegoers in South India (1993), Purnima Mankekar’s work on television in India (1999), and Lila Abu-Lughod’s (2000) interpretation of how Egyptian audiences respond to television serials show that viewers use “crucial moments of the serial to confront their own positions in their family, community, and class” (Herzfeld 2001, 301) and by doing so, diverge from intended interpretations. The new readings they create vary within an audience of viewers at one single location, as their responses are gendered and also specific to social classes and generations. Michael Herzfeld, in his highly informative overview of anthropological work on media reception, points to the new unexpected effects of cross-cultural media reception, such as the popularity of Indian films in Nigerian Hausa culture (see Larkin 1997), and to the ways in which media consumption fuels a “creative retooling of social identities in interaction with media” (Herzfeld 2001, 308). His assessment resonates with Appadurai’s assertion that

the consumption of mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and in general agency [...]. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labor prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape. (Appadurai 1996, 7)

For Appadurai, this is what links globalization with modernity. He claims that globalization marks an era where modernity is, as he puts it, “at large.” According to him, anthropology challenges conventional assumptions about modernization and has the potential to contribute to a new social theory of modernity. Once anthropology starts to systematically address as ‘sites of modernity’ precisely

those cultural situations it once sought out because they appeared to harbor relics of tradition, the discipline will reinvent itself as an anthropology of modernity. With this change, anthropology also abandons its earlier self-appointed task of documenting and salvaging traditional cultures before they succumb to modernization. It is not, however, giving up its role as a prime witness and quite often also a plaintiff, accusing colonial powers and neocolonial actors of “transforming colonized peoples into alienated human beings, as commodity relations dissolve pre-existing cultural relations among people, uprooting them from former ways life” (Ong 2001, 9945) and eroding their subsistence bases. In an essay on the anthropology of modernity, Aihwa Ong asserts that thus “a strong anthropological tradition [emerged] to study the varied impact of the capitalist juggernaut on native social forms, subjectivity, and social change” (Ong 2001, 9944).

Anthropologists, then, have always been close observers of what is actually happening when Western institutions make incursions into non-Western societies. One of the most prominent voices in anthropology, Clifford Geertz, who is well known for revolutionizing anthropological epistemology with his approach to cultural interpretation, namely thick description, is also most knowledgeable and critical of so-called development in Third World countries. Four decades of fieldwork engagement with communities in Morocco and Indonesia have given him unique insights into how social change plays out on the ground, how ‘progress’ impacts on the everyday lives of communities, and what choices local people actually make when confronted with new options. In his book *After the Fact*, Geertz weaves a rich, ethnographically informed tale of this change, a change that is not so much a “parade that can be watched as it passes” (Geertz 1995, 4), following prescribed stations – traditional, modern, postmodern, or feudal, colonial, independent –, but a discontinuous and disjunctive process. It progresses by leaps and halts rather than smoothly, and, in its course, spawns surprising and largely unintended effects. Modern life in Morocco is totally unlike that in Indonesia, and both bear little semblance to France or the United States. Geertz is at his best when he gives a thick description of an improvised and quite innovative ceremony in an Indonesian community (143ff.). The public event he selects is a graduation ceremony for adult students of an English language course. The course was organized and marketed by the enterprising leader of a Muslim school of religious instruction. As if this concurrence was not incongruous enough, the ceremony described by Geertz turns out to be a hybrid event, hardly able to contain the contradictory cultural currents it tries to combine, some local, some national, some global, some Muslim and some Western. Geertz reports how this event generates ironic self-reflection and puzzlement in the audience and, by extension, he evokes these responses in the readers of his book.

Poetic insights such as the ones afforded by a master like Geertz resonate with many other situations around the world, where cultural diversity, hybridity and ironic effects are generated when local populations appropriate globally distributed commodities and media products – even if these are only hamburgers or music videos. Modernization and globalization are but two sides of the same

coin. Observations of the contradictory and highly productive cultural effects of globalization can be fruitfully linked to a theory of modernity that incorporates the anthropological attention given to everyday life, social agency and the ways in which people give meaning to the circumstances in which they find themselves. The globalization of modernity that we experience today indeed has, from its inception, been part and parcel of the trajectory of modernity which has always been inherently global in scope and intent.³

4. Multiple Modernities

Anthropology engages itself with the place that cultural difference and cultural diversity occupy in the modern world. Ulf Hannerz, with his lively interest in the to and fro of cultural flows between the centers and peripheries of the world, and the resulting hybrid and creolized cultural expressions, asks the question outright: "How does modernity go with cultural difference?" He himself subscribes to a view of "modernity as a civilizational complex, spreading globally, affecting the cultures of ever more societies, and at the same time being itself reshaped in those locations," (Hannerz 1996, 48) resulting in a heightened degree of diversity within interconnectedness, new cultural forms, expressions and interpretations that are unique to the societies that employ them and can no longer be classified according to simple dichotomies such as non-Western tradition vs. Western modernity.

Hannerz suggests two perspectives that may address this state of affairs:

As the civilization of modernity enters into contact with other cultures, changes and refractions result, so that one may see it alternatively as one increasingly internally diverse civilization or as multiple modernities. (Hannerz 1996, 44)

While Hannerz himself has been leaning towards the former notion that modernity forms a framework in which cultural diversity manifests itself, an increasingly vocal group of his colleagues in anthropology have opted for the latter notion, proposing that each society or social group generates its very own version of modernity that is unlike any other. So wherever we go, there are particular regional forms of modernity. These cannot simply be explained by the presence of relics of tradition that co-exist with modern elements. Rather, this recent theoretical innovation in anthropology, talking of multiple or plural modernities, of the 'alternatively' (Knauff 2002) or 'otherwise' modern (Trouillot 2002), attempts to solve the

paradox that people in different world areas increasingly share aspirations, material standards, and social institutions at the same time that their local definition of and engagement with these initiatives fuels cultural distinctiveness. (Knauff 2002, 2)

³ Obviously, colonialism shares many important characteristics with modernization and globalization. It has been suggested that both colonial subjects and representatives of power have already been modern for centuries as they were part of the world-encompassing story-and-map of modernity. See Taylor 1999.

To talk of multiple modernities effectively collapses any contradiction or conflict between being modern and adhering to local cultural practices and beliefs. Rather, the notion of “alternative modernity” acknowledges the fact that in each society there is a “social and discursive space in which the relationship between modernity and tradition is reconfigured,” as Bruce Knauft points out against the backdrop of his many years of ethnographic work in Melanesia. He adds that this “reconfiguration is forged in a crucible of cultural beliefs and orientations on the one hand, and politicoeconomic constraints and opportunities on the other” (Knauft 2002, 25). In a brilliant survey essay, Joel Kahn summarizes recent moves in anthropology to pluralize the modern. As an illustration, he employs his own ethnographies of Malaysian and Indonesian society and points out that today these countries can easily be interpreted as “wanting: modern perhaps, but incompletely modern at best,” particularly according to standards set by conventional modernization theory which inevitably raises points such as the “incomplete separation of public and private,” meaning incomplete secularization and the strong role of religion in public life, or the “failure of differentiation of economic and political spheres” (Kahn 2001, 657), referring to social relations labeled from a Western perspective as patronage and nepotism. “Measured against the yardstick of modernist narratives,” Kahn continues,

Malaysia and Indonesia become ‘other to the modern’ in significant ways, forcing us back into the language of a liberal social evolutionism in which otherness was constituted as historically anterior to and, as a result, an incomplete or immature version of the modern, civilized self [...]. Southeast Asia appears at best perversely modern, or to manifest various perverse forms of modernity. These may be explained away as pre-modern survivals or invented traditions, but neither explanation does much to come to grips with what is apparently unique to such places. (Kahn 2001, 658)

One possible answer to this predicament is to reconceptualise modernity in the plural. Multiple modernities are about “alternative constructions [...] in the sense of moral-political projects that seek to control their own present and future” (Ong 1999, 23), as Aihwa Ong succinctly puts it. These can no longer be denigrated as lacking or labeled non-modern, pre-modern, or traditional. This conceptual pluralization of modernities has been welcomed as a liberation within anthropological theoretical debates, breaking down the divide between tradition and modernity. It allows anthropologists to acknowledge as modern those cultural practices that co-exist with capitalist modernity but do not conform in any narrow way with the Western European or US American model of a modern way of life. The Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000a, 2000b) points out that it is not sufficient to explain such forms as “inventions of tradition” or through the idea of “the modernity of tradition” because such “invocations of the restored, contrived, or resistant powers of a tradition accept the notion that there is a universal narrative of modernity, against which local variations can be measured” (Mitchell 2000, xvi). However, these are not residual elements or fragments of the past, nor simply an absence of modernity or indicators of its incomplete fulfillment. To talk of multiple modernities, then, means to explore the possibility of a heterogeneous account of the emergence of colonial modernity,

as Timothy Mitchell points out in the introduction to the anthology *Questions of Modernity*. Chakrabarty's work has been especially evocative of how

colonialism has made European narratives a global heritage that inevitably structures any subsequent account of this modernity [...]. A theme that emerges from studies of this kind is that in the production of modernity, the hegemony of the modern over what it displaces as 'traditional' is never complete. As a result, modernizing forces continuously re-appropriate elements that have been categorized as non-modern, such as religious elements, in order to produce their own effectiveness. [...] failures do not indicate the inability of modern secular politics to delimit the traditional powers of religion. They show that producing a colonial modernity requires the production of groups and forces designated as non-modern yet able to contest the hegemony of the modernist politics that called for them. (Mitchell 2000, xix and xviii)

The different versions of modernity that are generated in different places, then, are no longer to be seen as mere aspects of the emergence of the 'real' modernity, on the sidelines of the one plot that really counts. Rather, anthropologists stress the fact that modernity is emerging outside or on the margins of the geography of the West. These developments are not to be assessed as to what "their contribution to the singular history of the modern" (Mitchell 2000, xii) is. Rather than gazing at the grand designs of colonial power and modernizing states, anthropology starts looking at the local sites "where the modern is realized and continually translated, in its articulation with and production of the non-modern" (Mitchell 2000, xxvi). And this may happen at a neighborhood grocery, a village school, a video store, a fast food establishment, but also in a government office, a conference room, or a research lab. Anthropology's fieldwork approach leads us to look closely at sites where we can observe modernity as it is socially produced, in the actual social practices of people who are engaged in the making of modernity.⁴

5. Post-Colonial Critiques

In adopting this stance, social theory has come a long way from the 1960s and its conventional modernization theory, the epitome of which were standardized sociological measurements of the percentage degree of modernity acquired by individuals in so-called Third World countries (see Inkeles and Smith 1974). To conceptualize modernity in the plural also implies stressing that each society has the right to determine how and to what end it wants to modernize. Yet, some cautions are in order. If the conceptual switch from emphasizing a divide between tradition and modernity to acknowledging a multiplicity of modern cultures entails merely a celebratory attitude towards the hybridity that is generated by local-global encounters, then anthropology would fall back into older habits of essentialising non-Western cultures as 'others.' Also, to indiscriminately declare contemporary cultural expressions as modern does not make sense, as it renders the designation meaningless. Joel Kahn warns that if we "reject any gen-

⁴ For exemplary case studies, see for instance Burawoy 2000.

eral understanding of modernity,” this may well be an “escape route out of modernity altogether.”⁵ By the same token, to suggest that all social practices are legitimate as long as they can be explained as expressions of ‘alternative modernity’ implies an irresponsibly relativist stance that uses the multiple modernities paradigm as an excuse to evade the responsibility of dissent, critique and engagement. To talk of multiple modernities cannot simply mean to recognize everybody as modern. If we do not at the same time make visible and critique the inequalities and power asymmetries that are being produced by a globalizing economy and the new geopolitical world order, then the designations ‘otherwise modern’ or ‘alternatively modern’ are simply another way of saying ‘backward,’ or of replacing the older labels ‘pre-modern’ or ‘traditional.’

As much as anthropology welcomes the paradigm shift, we cannot – and at our own peril, must not – ignore the fact that, of course, Western centers of power continue to consider themselves more modern than anybody else. At the same time, a number of supranational institutions continue to claim the right to assess the accomplishment of modernity by political systems, economies, and cultures around the world, and whether they deserve benefits, support and attention, or else are to be fined, sanctioned and boycotted for their lack of ‘good governance’ and ‘best practices.’ Post-colonial scholar and social anthropologist Vassos Argyrou asserts that through the process of modernization, non-Western societies do not acquire a Western identity, rather, “they constitute themselves as Western subjects” while at the same time, “the West essentializes itself as the only true source of legitimate culture so that the practical manifestations of [non-Western] claims to modernity seem a poor version of the ‘original’” (Argyrou 1996, 178). For Argyrou, it matters little whether we continue to use the term modernity in the single or plural mode if we do not pay attention to the mechanisms of domination and governmentality at work in the modern world order (see Argyrou 2002). Timothy Mitchell has pointed out that modernity of the Western type always requires the non-universal, non-Western against which to define itself. The mode of production of modernity depends on “what remains heterogeneous to it” as its constitutive outside:

Yet in the very processes of the subordination and exclusion, it can be shown, such elements infiltrate and compromise that history. These elements cannot be referred back to any unifying historical logic or any underlying potential defining the nature of capitalist modernity, for it is only by their exclusion or subordination that such a logic or potential can be realized. Yet, such elements continually redirect, divert, and mutate the modernity they help constitute. (Mitchell 2000, xiii)

⁵ Joel Kahn suggests viewing modernity as a product of contradictory cultural processes rather than, as liberal modernization narratives and also their critiques imply, “a single cultural movement of liberty or discipline.” Kahn asserts that these cultural processes entail a conflict between “autonomy” and “rationalization,” rather than between tradition and modernity. He gives examples from his fieldwork among Malay muslims that show that “the theme of reconciling the apparently contradictory processes of rationalization (‘globalization’) and expressive meaning (understood as the expressive values of a particular people that were are wont to call their culture)” is central here as well. See Kahn 2001, 662.

The adoption of Mitchell's notion allows us to "acknowledge the singularity and universalism of the project of modernity" (Mitchell 2000, xiii) and, at the same time, to view modernity as "something concrete, embedded in particular institutions and cultural formations, but also a singular process that is global and multi-cultural from its inception" (Kahn 2001, 664). Ultimately, this calls on anthropology not only to reveal the many versions of modernities in non-Western societies, but rather, to apply this research perspective to ourselves, to our own position as German, British, Swiss or American scholars. Anthropologists need to historicize and cross-culturally compare their very own versions of modernity. As Joel Kahn points out, this new anthropology of modernity "compels us towards an ethnographic engagement with modernity in the West" (Kahn 2001, 664) and, incidentally, picks up again some longstanding research interests, especially among anthropologists of Europe, who have been exploring the distinct formations of European modernities and their historical and cultural specificities (see Faubion 1993, Frykman and Löfgren 1987, Herzfeld 1992, Rabinow 1989). This resonates strongly with Dipesh Chakrabarty's intention of unmasking the particular historical trajectory and power formation that has made it possible for Europe to make the claim of being everybody's heritage. Chakrabarty asserts that the

phenomenon of 'political modernity' – namely, the rule of modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprise – is impossible to *think* of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe. (Chakrabarty 2000a, 4)

He suggests engaging in an operation he calls the provincializing of Europe, as

European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought – which is now everybody's heritage and which affect us all – may be renewed from and for the margins. (Chakrabarty 2000a, 16)

Chakrabarty – and the adoption of his theoretical stance among Western and non-Western anthropologists – may well be successful in redefining what Said once called "the relationship between anthropology as an ongoing enterprise and [...] empire as an ongoing concern" (Said 1989, 217). Anthropology – as Aihwa Ong puts it (2001, 9944) – is both an extension of modernity and a potential instrument for its undoing. As Edward Said asserted, the realization of anthropology's critical potential ultimately rests on its ability to reconcile

the almost insuperable discrepancy between a political actuality based on force, and a scientific and humane desire to understand the Other hermeneutically and sympathetically in modes not always circumscribed and defined by force. (Said 1989, 217)

Works Cited

Abu-Lughod, Lila (2000). "Modern Subjects: Egyptian Melodrama and Post-colonial Difference." Timothy Mitchell, ed. *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 87-114.

- Appadurai, Arjun (1996). "Here and Now." *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1-23.
- Argyrou, Vassos (1996). *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2002). *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burawoy, Michael (2000). "Introduction: Reaching for the Global." Michael Burawoy et al., eds. *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1-40.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2000a). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- (2000b). "Witness to Suffering: Domestic Cruelty and the Birth of the Modern Subject in Bengal." Timothy Mitchell, ed. *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 49-86.
- Clifford, James (1988). "The Pure Products Go Crazy." *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1-17.
- Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, eds. (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: The University of California Press.
- Dickey, Sarah (1993). *Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisenstadt, Samuel N. (2000). *Die Vielfalt der Moderne*. Weilerswist: Velbrück.
- Escobar, Arturo (2001). "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization." *Political Geography* 20, 139-74.
- Fabian, Johannes (1983). *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Faubion, James D. (1993). *Modern Greek Lessons: A Primer in Historical Constructivism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Frykman, Jonas and Orvar Löfgren (1987). *Culture Builders: A Historical Anthropology of Middle-Class Life*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford (1995). *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1996). "The Global Ecumene as a Landscape of Modernity." *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London and New York: Routledge, 44-55.
- (1998). "Transnational Research." H. Russell Bernard, ed. *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Walnut Creek, London and New Delhi: Altamira, 235-56.
- Herzfeld, Michael (1992). *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- (2001). "Media." *Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 294-315.

- Inkeles, Alex and D.H. Smith (1974). *Becoming Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kahn, Joel S. (2001). "Anthropology and Modernity." *Current Anthropology* 42.5, 651-64.
- Knauff, Bruce M. (2002). "Critically Modern: An Introduction." Bruce M. Knauff, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1-54.
- Larkin, Brian (1997). "Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities." *Africa* 67.3, 406-39.
- Malkki, Liisa (1992). "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees." James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, eds. *Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference*. Theme Issue. *Cultural Anthropology* 7.1, 24-44.
- Mankekar, Purnima (1999). *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood and Nation in Postcolonial India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Marcus, George E. and Michael M. J. Fischer, eds. (1986). *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2000). "Introduction." Timothy Mitchell, ed. *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, xi-xxvii.
- Ong, Aihwa (1999). *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- (2001). "Modernity: Anthropological Aspects." N.J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, ed. *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 9944-9949.
- Ortner, Sherry B. (1999). "Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering." Sherry B. Ortner, ed. *The Fate of 'Culture': Geertz and Beyond*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 136-163.
- Rabinow, Paul (1989). *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Rapport, Nigel and Joanna Overing (2000). *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Said, Edward W. (1978). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- (1989). "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors." *Critical Inquiry* 15, 205-25.
- Taylor, Peter J. (1999). *Modernities: A Geohistorical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph (2002). "The Otherwise Modern: Caribbean Lessons from the Savage Slot." Bruce Knauff, ed. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 220-37.
- Watson, James K., ed. (1997). *Golden Arches East: McDonalds in East Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

"Modernities are everywhere, at precisely the time modernity as the epochal discourse of the West appears to be on its last legs.Â Nonetheless we cannot deny the positive facts from the globalization, as globalization is not deleting the local culture, and the local culture is not surrendering itself to the powers coming from outside, but it engages with all the benefits that could be adapted. In this modern twenty first century, we cannot say for certain what is global and what is local, and for sure those boundaries are blurred. Multiple Modernities Author(s): S. N. Eisenstadt Source: Daedalus, Vol. 129, No. 1, Multiple Modernities (Winter, 2000), pp. 1-29 Published by: The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027613> . Accessed: 03/01/2011 09:02. Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at . <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>.Â S. N. Eisenstadt. Multiple Modernities. I. The notion of "multiple modernities". denotes a certain view of the contemporary. New or changing cultural phenomena ignite competition among traditions of social theory. These contests often result in a plurality of descriptions of the defining characteristics of the contemporary scene. Most recently, contending perspectives on the globalization debate have emerged and seem unresolvable. The macro-phenomenology of globalization has had tremendous contemporary resonance.Â¹Globalization is a fully fledged buzzword, referring, as often as not, to the blending of cultures in the global marketplace and in the transnational media.Â² The idea of McDonaldization has also had a profound