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# The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization<sup>1</sup>

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## Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind

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by Michel-Rolph Trouillot<sup>2</sup>

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Sociocultural anthropology often arises from the banality of daily life. I will start this essay with three banal stories.

In January 1999, Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in economics, on his way to a conference in Davos, was stopped at the Zürich airport for entering Switzerland without a visa. Never mind that he was carrying credit cards and his U.S. resident green card. Never mind that he claimed that the organizers had promised him a visa delivered to the airport. North Americans and Western Europeans can, of course, enter Switzerland without a visa, whether or not on their way to a conference, but Sen uses his Indian passport. The Swiss police were worried that he would become a dependent of the state, as Indians are likely to be. The irony of the story is that Sen was on his way to the World Economic Forum, the theme of which that year was "Responsible Globality: Managing the Impact of Globalization."

Less amusing but just as banal is the story of the 14-year-old "Turk" who was sent *back* to Turkey by the

1. This essay was prepared for the Close Encounters Conference of the Department of Cultural Anthropology of Stanford University on April 9–10, 1999. A revised version was presented at the colloquium "Resilience or Erosion? The State Under Attack from Above and Below" of the Centre d'Etudes de Relations Internationales, Paris, June 15–16, 2000. I thank participants in both meetings for their comments, as well as Benjamin Orlove, Gavin Smith, and the anonymous referees for this journal. Gwen Faulkner and Clare Sammells provided useful research assistance. I owe special thanks to Kay Warren for her encouragement.

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German government when in fact he had never set foot there, having been born and raised in Germany. The French and U.S. governments routinely expel "aliens" whose school-age children are citizens by birth.

Less amusing still is the encounter between one Turanne Deville and the U.S. government in the 1970s. At the news that the Immigration and Naturalization Service was to send him back to Haiti, Deville hanged himself in his prison cell. Deville's suicide is no more dramatic than the wager of hundreds of Haitian refugees who continue to dive—both literally and figuratively—into the Florida seas, betting that they will beat the sharks, the waves, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Are these encounters with the state? In all three cases, we see a government—or a government agency—telling people where they should or should not be. If, as James Scott (1998), among others, argues, the placement of people, including their enforced sedentarization, is a major feature of statecraft, the encounters I have just described do seem to be cases in which state power was wielded to enforce physical placement.

My three stories speak of borders—of the space between centralized governments with national territorial claims, where encounters between individuals and state power are most visible. Yet millions of encounters of the same kind also occur within national or regional boundaries: a car owner facing state emission laws in California, a family facing school language in Catalonia, India, or Belize, a couple dealing with a new pregnancy in China, a homeless person deciding where to sleep in San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, or New York, a Palestinian in the Occupied Territories having to decide which line to cross and when, or a citizen of Singapore or Malaysia having to conform to prescribed behaviour in a public building.

Behind the banality of these millions of encounters between individuals or groups and governments we discover the depth of governmental presence in our lives, regardless of the regimes and the particulars of the social formation. The opening sentence of Ralph Miliband's (1969:1) opus on the state still rings true: "More than ever before men now live in the shadow of the state." One can even argue that the penal state has actually increased in size and reach in a number of countries since Miliband wrote—notably in the United States, with the increase of prison space and the routinization of the death penalty.

This, however, is only one side of the story. Indeed, while signs of the routinization of governmental presence in the lives of citizens abound everywhere, this turn of century also offers us images of governmental power challenged, diverted, or simply giving way to infra- or supranational institutions. From Chiapas and Kosovo to Kigali and Trincomale, separatist movements have become increasingly vocal on all continents. Further, and on a different scale, analysts increasingly suggest that globalization renders the state irrelevant not only as an economic actor but also as a social and cultural container. They point to the significance of practices that reject or bypass national state power—such as the "new"

social movements—or to the power of trans-state organizations from NGOs and global corporations to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as concrete signs of that relative decline.

Thus this century opens on two sets of contradictory images: **The power of the national state sometimes seems more visible and encroaching and sometimes less effective and less relevant. This paper explores how as anthropologists we can make sense of this tension and fully incorporate it into our analysis of the state.** To do so, we need to recognize three related propositions: (1) State power has no institutional fixity on either theoretical or historical grounds. (2) Thus, state effects never obtain solely through national institutions or in governmental sites. And (3) These two features, inherent in the capitalist state, have been exacerbated by globalization. Globalization thus authenticates a particular approach to the anthropology of the state, one that allows for a dual emphasis on theory and ethnography.

If **the state has no institutional or geographical fixity**, its presence becomes more deceptive than otherwise thought, and we need to theorize the state beyond the empirically obvious. **Yet this removal of empirical boundaries also means that the state becomes more open to ethnographic strategies that take its fluidity into account. I suggest such a strategy here**, one that goes beyond governmental or national institutions to focus on the multiple sites in which state processes and practices are **recognizable through their effects.** These effects include **(1) an isolation effect**, that is, the production of atomized individualized subjects molded and modeled for governance as part of an undifferentiated but specific “public”; **(2) an identification effect**, that is, a realignment of the atomized subjectivities along collective lines within which individuals recognize themselves as the same; **(3) a legibility effect**, that is, the production of both a language and a knowledge for governance and of theoretical and empirical tools that classify and regulate collectivities; and **(4) a spatialization effect, that is, the production of boundaries and jurisdiction.** This essay is an exploratory formulation of this strategy.

## Thinking the State

Exploratory though it may be, this exercise requires a conceptual baseline. First we need to determine at what level(s) best to conceptualize the state. Is the state a “concrete-concrete,” something “out there?” Or is it a concept necessary to understand something out there? Or, again, is it an ideology that helps to mask something *else* out there, a symbolic shield for power, as it were?

Unfortunately, sociocultural anthropologists have not given these questions the attention they deserve. **In a major review of the anthropology of the state, Carole Nagengast (1994:116) wrote: “Insofar as anthropology has dealt with the state, it has taken it as an unanalyzed given.”** Interestingly, Nagengast’s own treatment of the state in the context of her assessment does not attempt

to turn this unanalyzed given into an object of study.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, is there an object to study?

The anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown answers this question with a resounding no that should give us food for thought even if we disagree with its extremism. Introducing Meyer Fortes’s *African Political Systems* in 1940, Radcliffe-Brown (1995[1940]:xxiii) wrote:

In writings on political institutions there is a good deal of discussion about the nature and origin of the State, which is usually represented as being an entity over and above the human individuals who make up a society, having as one of its attributes something called “sovereignty,” and sometimes spoken of as having a will (law being defined as the will of the State) or as issuing commands. **The State in this sense does not exist in the phenomenal world; it is a fiction of the philosophers. What does exist is an organization, i.e. a collection of individual human beings connected by a complex system of relations. . . . There is no such thing as the power of the State. . . .**

One could call this death by conceptualization inasmuch as Radcliffe-Brown conceptualizes the state into oblivion.

To be sure, this answer carries the added weight of both empiricism and methodological individualism. Yet Radcliffe-Brown is not simply saying that “army” is merely the plural for “soldiers.” Nor is he saying that the state does not exist because we cannot touch it. Governmental organizations have different levels of complexity even if for the sake of functionality, when not for the sake of functionalism. Thus, a generous reading of Radcliffe-Brown, which would prune out the added philosophical baggage of his school and times, still leaves us with a powerful answer. The state is neither something out there nor a necessary concept. Each and every time we use the word, words such as “government” would do the conceptual job, and they would do it better.

I do not agree with this answer, but it seems to me that anthropologists cannot continue to ignore it. **Radcliffe-Brown’s answer to the state question contains a warning that anthropologists should keep in mind. Since the state can never be an empirical given, even at the second degree (the way, say, particular governments can be thought to be), where and how does anthropology encounter the state, if at all?** What can be the terms of our analytical encounter with the state? What can we possibly mean, for instance, by an ethnography of the state?

In an important article, Philip Abrams revives Radcliffe-Brown’s warnings. Abrams provides a sophisticated demonstration of the reasons for rejecting the existence of the state as an entity and raises some serious doubts about the analytical purchase of the state concept. He writes (1988:76):

3. **Anthropological attempts to look at institutions of the national state ethnographically since the publication of her review include Gupta (1995), Heyman (1998, 1999), and Nugent (1994).**

The state . . . is not an object akin to the human ear. Nor is it even an object akin to human marriage. **It is a third-order object, an ideological project. It is first and foremost an exercise in legitimation. . . . The state, in sum, is a bid to elicit support for or tolerance of the insupportable and intolerable by presenting them as something other than themselves, namely, legitimate, disinterested domination.**

Contrary to Radcliffe-Brown, Abrams admits an object for state studies, the very process of power legitimation that projects the image of an allegedly disinterested entity—"the state-idea."<sup>4</sup> As stated, Abrams's state-idea is not immediately conducive to ethnography, but it does provide a warning that balances Radcliffe-Brown. Something happens out there that is more than government. The question is what.

Theorists have provided different answers to this question, which I will not survey here. For the purposes of this paper, let me only say that **my own evolving view of the state starts with the "enlarged" notion of the state first put forward by Antonio Gramsci. I also find extremely fruitful Nicos Poulantzas's reworking of Marx and Gramsci. I continue to gain also from various writers such as Ralph Miliband (1969), Louis Althusser (1971[1969]), Paul Thomas (1994), James Scott (1998), and Etienne Balibar (1997).**<sup>5</sup> All this is to say that I do not claim to provide an original conceptualization. Rather, I hope to make a contribution to an ongoing dialogue with an eye to the kind of research best performed by sociocultural anthropologists (see also Trouillot 1997).

Most of the writers I have mentioned have insisted that the state is not reducible to government. In Miliband's (1969:48) words, "what 'the state' stands for is a number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as part of what may be called the state system." Miliband's overly sociological treatment of that system needs to be backed by Poulantzas's and Gramsci's more elaborate conceptualiza-

tions of the state as a privileged site of both power and struggle. Gramsci's insistence on thinking state and civil society together by way of concepts such as hegemony and historical bloc is fundamental to this approach. I read Gramsci as saying that, within the context of capitalism, theories of the state must cover the entire social formation and articulate the relation between state and civil society. One cannot theorize the state and then theorize society or vice versa. Rather, state and society are bound by the historical bloc which takes the form of the specific social contract of—and, thus, the hegemony deployed in—a particular social formation. "A social contract is the confirmation of nationhood, the confirmation of civil society by the state, the confirmation of sameness and interdependence across class boundaries" (Trouillot 1997:51). Yet even that phrasing needs to be qualified lest it seem to reinforce the 19th-century homology of state and nation.

As institutionalized in degree-granting departments in a context in which faith in progress was unquestioned, 19th-century social science built its categories on the assumption that the world in which it was born was not only the present of a linear past but the augur of an ordained future. For most of its practitioners, the world may not have been eternal, but the referents of the categories—if not the categories themselves—used to describe that world were eternal. Thus the conflation of state and nation was naturalized because it seemed so obvious within that present—evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. But what if the correspondence between statehood and nationhood, exemplified by the claimed history of the North Atlantic and naturalized by its social science, was itself historical?<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there are no theoretical grounds on which to assert the necessity of that correspondence, and there are some historical grounds for questioning it.

**If we suspend the state-nation homology as I suggest we should, we reach a more powerful vision of the state, yet one more open to ethnography, since we discover that, theoretically, there is no necessary site for the state, institutional or geographical.** Within that vision, the state thus appears as an open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional fixity—which is to say that it needs to be conceptualized at more than one level. Though linked to a number of apparatuses not all of which may be governmental, the state is not an apparatus but a set of processes. It is not necessarily bound by any institution, nor can any institution fully encapsulate it. At that level, its materiality resides much less in institutions than in the reworking of processes and relations of power so as to create new spaces for the deployment of power. As I have put it elsewhere (Trouillot 1990:19), "At one level the division between state and civil society has to do with content. . . . At another level it has to do with methodology in the broad sense."

I will return later to the particular consequences of

4. **Since the state is an ideological projection, the purpose of state studies is to decipher this exercise in legitimacy—the processes behind the idea of the state and its cultural acceptance.**

5. Gramsci's enlarged view of the state, inseparable from concepts such as hegemony, civil society, and historical bloc, offers the fundamental point of departure that, **in the context of capitalism, theories of the state must cover the entire social formation because state and civil society are intertwined.** The intellectual and political implications of that starting point cannot be overestimated. See Bucci-Glucksmann (1975), Macchiocci (1974), Thomas (1994), and Trouillot (1990, 1996). Miliband launched the Marxist critique of Leninism and its implication that seizing control of government meant seizing control of state power. That critique, implicit in Gramsci, arose timidly in the '60s and grew in the '70s, especially in England and France. For Miliband, **although government is invested with state power, the state is not reducible to government. Further, the leadership of the state elite includes individuals who are not in government proper but often belong to the privileged classes.** Miliband barely cites Lenin, but the critique is evident. He also suggests (1969:49) that the study of the state must start with the preliminary problem that "'the state' is not a thing, that is, does not, as such, exist." On Poulantzas's contribution, see Thomas (1994) and Jessop (1985). On Althusser, see Resch (1992).

6. **For a critical assessment of the state-nation homology, see Trouillot (1990:esp. 23–26).**

this position in the age of globalization. First, however, I need to make explicit what I mean by “globalization.”

## A Fragmented Globality

If by “globalization” we mean the massive flow of goods, peoples, information, and capital across huge areas of the earth’s surface in ways that make the parts dependent on the whole, the world has been global since the 16th century. To acknowledge these earlier global flows is not to claim that there is nothing new under the sun. Rather, the reference to a massive empirical record of global flows helps us, first, to expose what I call “globalitarism” as a dominant ideology of our times and, second, to insist on the political and scholarly need to establish a critical distance from that ideology.

If we approach globalization naively as the recent emergence of “a world without boundaries,” we find ourselves repeating advertising slogans without knowing how we ended up doing so. We overlook the fact that words like “global” and “globalization” in their most current use were first broadcast most aggressively by marketing agents and marketing schools. Masaki and Helsen (1998) locate what they candidly call “the globalization imperative” in the search for new marketing strategies.<sup>7</sup> Scholarly analysis needs to go beyond the slogans, clichés, and narratives that sustain these strategies. These tropes not only silence the histories of the world but also veil our understanding of the present—including their own conditions of possibility—by hiding the changing story of capital. Changes in the composition and spatialization of capital are crucial in shaping the uniqueness of our present. In this essay, I reserve the word “globalization” for the conflation of these changes.<sup>8</sup>

Capitalism has always been transnational. Crossing political borders is inherent in its historical trajectory. Indeed, some analysts have long suggested that capitalism is necessarily prone to cross borders inasmuch as it must find new places to integrate into the sphere of capital (Luxemburg 1951[1914]). Today as in the past, most firms that operate in more than one country have a distinguishable home base. What is new is not the internationalization of capital as such but changes in the spatialization of the world economy and changes in the volume and, especially, the kinds of movements that occur across political boundaries.

Indeed, present world history is characterized by a se-

ries of fundamental changes in spatialization, many of which are both captured and obscured by the word “globalization.” Changes in the spatialization of markets—the market for capital (both financial and industrial), the market for labor, and the market for consumer goods—create overlapping spatialities that are not synchronized but together help to give the world economy its current shape. The world economy now looks like a Triad (Ohmae 1985)—a triangle with three major regional centers as its poles, one in North America (the United States and Canada), one in Asia (with Japan at the epicenter), and one in Western Europe (with Germany as the epicenter).<sup>9</sup>

A major change is in the dynamism of international investments. The magnitude of foreign direct investment—for instance, capital deployed from one country into branches and subsidiaries located in another country—was reportedly US\$317 billion in 1995, dwarfing records from all past eras. Further, in spite of some yearly fluctuations, notably in 1992 and in 1998 after the Asian crisis, the long-term rise seems continuous. Indeed, foreign direct investment is becoming the primary form of exchange across state borders, a place traditionally occupied by commerce, and is thus influencing more than ever the rhythm and direction of international exchanges.

Within this foreign direct investment, the major transfers have moved away from manufacturing to target “nonproductive” assets such as real estate, tourism, department stores, banking, and insurance (Weiss 1997:8). Among the leading countries, only Japan’s foreign investments remain relatively high in manufacturing. The major profits, national and transnational, are now in rent form, notably in the financial markets. As many transnational holdings involved in manufacturing become, in fact, “financial groups with an industrial concentration” (Chesnais 1994:61–66), the logic of finance capital—which, both Marx and Keynes warned us, is very close to the logic of usury—becomes the dominant logic of the system. The fragility of unregulated financial markets combines rumors of immediate doom with hopes of extravagant profits. Indeed, quick profit anywhere, by any means, a goal inherent in the logic of capital itself, becomes the explicit ethos of managers. At the same time and for the very same reasons, capital does not move freely across borders. Rather, the spatial distribution of capital is increasingly selective. Most world economic movement and especially foreign direct investment occurs between or within the poles of the Triad.<sup>10</sup>

7. Both “globalization” and “global village” date at least from the 1960s, with Zbigniew Brzezinski and Marshall McLuhan emphasizing respectively the universal status of the North American model of modernity and the technological convergence of the world (Mattelart 2000).

8. Economists do not fully agree on the list of changes that make up globalization. I have tended to rely on the more critical observers. François Chesnais (1994) and Serge Cordelier (2000) provide two accessible summaries and Linda Weiss (1997) one of the most brutal critiques of globalization. See also Adda (1996a, b), Reich (1992), Sassen (1998), Wade (1996).

9. In 1970, 64 of the world’s top 100 corporations were based in the United States. The United Kingdom was a distant second with 9, followed by Germany, Japan, and France. By 1997, 29 corporations on *Fortune’s* top-100 list were based in Japan, 24 in the United States, 13 in Germany, and 10 in France.

10. The capital invested tends to come from six countries: the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, more or less in that order. More important, the investments reach mainly the same countries with the notable addition of China. Of the US\$317 billion invested across state boundaries in 1995, US\$194 billion stayed in the North Atlantic (in the United States, Canada, and the European Union). Outside of the

Outside of the Triad, exchange tends to take the minor form of subcontracting.

That global exchange remains concentrated among a few countries, mainly in the North Atlantic, China, and Japan, is one of many aspects of a third major feature of our times—the increasing concentration of economic power. Exchange occurs primarily between the same countries, between firms of the same sectors, between branches of the same firm. Far from moving toward more open markets, the world economy has witnessed in the 1980s and '90s the emergence of “private markets” that dominate its most important exchanges.

Likewise, **we have not witnessed the global integration of the price of labor that some optimists promised in the 1960s. On the contrary, the world labor market has become more differentiated.** It is differentiated by region, with the highest prices in the North Atlantic and the lowest in most of Asia, Latin America, and, especially, Africa. It is also differentiated within countries. Only at a lower level, that of consumer products, is the global economy moving, at great speed, toward a single integrated market. And even there, a few industries account for most of that integration.

In short, globalization does not mean that the world economy is now integrated into a single space. Rather, it means that **the economy is developing three contradictory but overlapping modes of spatialization: (1) increased, though selective, flexibility of capital, mainly financial capital, within or between the poles of the Triad, (2) differentiated labor markets within and across national borders, and (3) increased but uneven integration of consumer markets worldwide.**

A major socioeconomic consequence of these overlaps is global polarization. This polarization takes many forms. Between sellers and buyers, we are witnessing the rise of world oligopolies: a few firms now control the world market for most major commodities. Polarization has also increased between countries. Gone are the developmentist dreams that assumed all countries to be on the same path. A majority of countries and some continental chunks (notably sub-Saharan Africa) are becoming poorer every day. Even more important, what happens there is becoming irrelevant to the world economy. Given the declining significance of geopolitics in the post-cold war era, this means quite concretely that chunks of humankind are seen by world political and economic leaders as superfluous. The global map increasingly has large black holes.

Polarization occurs also within borders, even in the North Atlantic. According to former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich (1992), one-fifth of the population of the United States is doing increasingly well while the remaining four-fifths are on a downward path. Socialist-oriented programs are slowing down similar trends in Europe, but they are under serious political attack from

big business and their allies. There as here the debate continues about the number of citizens who will fall on the bad side of the gap. Still, **the public acknowledgment that populations within the same industrialized countries are headed in different directions is a new feature.**

**To make matters worse, academic, political, and corporate leaders in most of the world have joined in what Linda Weiss (1997, 1998) calls “the political construction of hopelessness,” telling citizens that they cannot do anything about the social consequences of globalization.**

Once-unequivocal assumptions that citizens of Western democracies had some control over the fate of their neighborhoods, their towns, or their children are now being questioned.<sup>11</sup>

We are far from the idyllic vision of a global village in which everyone is connected to everyone else. Rather, our times are marked by an increasing awareness of global flows and processes among fragmented populations. World histories and local histories are becoming both increasingly intertwined and increasingly contradictory. Homogenization is at best superficial.

To be sure, a few corporations from the United States, Japan, Italy, and France now seem to share global cultural control through the distribution of entertainment and clothing. The planetary integration of the market for consumer goods does link the world's populations in a web of consumption in which national ideals are becoming more similar even as the means to achieve them elude a growing majority. The integration of that market, the speed of communications, and the oligopolies in media and entertainment help to project the same image of the good life all over the world. In that sense, we are truly witnessing for the first time, especially among the youth, the global production of desire.

At the same time, this global production of desire does not satisfy the cultural needs of specific populations. In fact, itacerbates tensions because of the social polarization noted above, the limited means available to satisfy those new desires, and the always-specific discrepancies between global models and local ones. Further, there is no global culture model to attenuate those discrepancies, in part because there is no agreement on long-term meanings. Indeed, with the demise of the Soviet bloc, North Atlantic societies in general and the United States in particular find it increasingly difficult to generate a unified meaning and purpose to social life for their own citizens, let alone agree on an ideal that they can sell to others (Reich 1992, Laidi 1993). In short, within and across state boundaries, polarization and entanglement now create new ways of perceiving distance—temporal, spatial, social, and cultural—thus shaping a new horizon of historicity **that I call “a fragmented globality.”**

11. Right-wing populism feeds on this despair, silencing the fact that social polarization is not something handed down to us by an anonymous world market but the partial and predictable result of conscious political decisions made by North Atlantic states since the Reagan-Thatcher era.

North Atlantic, only China's share (US\$37.7 billion) was significant. Latin America as a whole received about as much as Sweden alone. China was Japan's second-largest trading partner and Japan China's largest trading partner.

## Changing Containers

It is against the background of this fragmented globality that we may best evaluate changes in the effectiveness of the national state as a primary site for economic exchange, political struggle, or cultural negotiation. Further, we need to assess these changes with a sober awareness that the national state was never as closed and as unavoidable a container—economically, politically, or culturally—as politicians and academics have claimed since the 19th century. **Once we see the necessity of the national state as a lived fiction of late modernity—indeed, as possibly a brief parenthesis in human history—we may be less surprised by the changes we now face and be able to respond to them with the intellectual imagination they deserve.**<sup>12</sup>

These changes cannot be measured quantitatively on a single scale. Even if we were to reduce states to governments, a quick comparison of Iran, Mexico, India, France, Iraq, and the United States within and across their recognized borders suggests that one cannot measure governmental power on a continuum. Thus claims of the declining relevance of the state along globalist lines are at best premature if only because they presume such a continuum.<sup>13</sup> Rather than unilinear, the changes are multiple and, as I have suggested, sometimes contradictory (see also Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). I will note only a few of the most significant ones.

First, and directly related to globalization as defined here, the domains of intervention of national governments are rapidly changing. Second, and quite important for sociocultural anthropologists, national states are now performing less well as ideological and cultural containers, especially—but not only—in the North Atlantic. Third, new processes and practices which seem to reject or bypass the state form—such as the new social movements—are creeping into the interstices thus opened. Yet, fourth, statelike processes and practices also obtain increasingly in nongovernmental sites such as NGOs or trans-state institutions such as the World Bank. These practices, in turn, produce state effects as powerful as those of national governments.

To complicate matters, none of this means that national governments have stopped intervening in the ec-

12. As part of their bold move to link economy, society, and the ideological-cultural tenets of neoliberalism in our times, Comaroff and Comaroff (2000:318–30) provide a more ambitious summary of the debate about state and globalization than I can here.

13. There are other problems. These theses also rest on the illusion that the political is an analytically distinct sphere, a proposition long questioned by Talcott Parsons (1951:126) and explicitly rejected by most of the state theorists I have used here, notably Gramsci. A second theoretical slip is the illusion that states are equivalent to governments. Since many of the kinds of intervention traditionally thought to be within the purview of governments are less easily achieved or simply impossible today, globalitarians conclude that the state has declined. A third theoretical rejoinder to the declining-relevance thesis is that the state—and the international system of states without which each state is, in turn, unthinkable—are necessary conditions for globalization. Globalization is inconceivable theoretically or historically without a number of strong states and especially a strong international state system.

onomic or in other walks of life. Indeed, the number of sovereign states has more than quadrupled between 1945 and the end of the last century. Yet, the kinds of intervention national governments perform have changed—at times considerably. For instance, as Terry Turner (n.d.) acutely notes, we can see in retrospect that since the end of World War II military intervention within the North Atlantic has become obsolete as the means to capture the leadership of the capitalist world economy.<sup>14</sup> More recently, changes in the composition and spatialization of capital have rendered government interventions in international commerce both less necessary and less effective.<sup>15</sup>

Most crucial for sociocultural anthropologists, the national state no longer functions as the primary social, political, and ideological container of the populations living within its borders. To be sure, it was never as solid a container as we were led to believe. However, in the North Atlantic at least and, to a lesser extent, in the American states that saw the first wave of decolonization, it often secured the outer limits of political struggle, economic exchange, and cultural negotiation. More important, their performance notwithstanding, national governments were often expected—and often pretended—to act as cultural containers. Now, neither citizens nor governmental leaders expect the state to play that role effectively.<sup>16</sup>

This is in part because of governments' inability (especially in the South) or unwillingness (especially in the North Atlantic) to deal with the increased inequality ushered in by globalization and, more important, the citizenry's perception of that inability or unwillingness. It is also, relatedly, because of the increased inability of national governments from Iran and China to France and the United States to play a leadership role in the shaping of cultural practices, models, and ideals. Further, almost everywhere both the correspondence between the state system and what Althusser (1971[1969]) calls the "ideological state apparatuses" has declined as these apparatuses increasingly reflect rather than deflect locally lived social tensions, notably those of race and class.<sup>17</sup>

14. Ironically, the two big losers of World War II formalized this new trend better and faster than their competitors. Japan and West Germany reaped the benefits of having to renounce, both by choice and by force, the threat of war. This argument does not invalidate the benefits of a war machine in revamping a national economy, as both Reagan and Clinton administrations demonstrate.

15. There are areas of great controversy, as the ongoing banana wars between the United States and the European Community suggest. Also, trans-state government interventions to remove trade barriers tend to pressure the South much more than the North to remove its tariffs and protections.

16. The recent history of France makes the point. From Francis I to Louis XIV to Napoleon, De Gaulle, and Mitterrand, French governments have always taken seriously the role of the state as a cultural container. Against that background, the rate of decline of expectations in this regard in recent years is telling.

17. The overall erosion of ideological state apparatuses in the former colonies is obvious. An overview of either the Catholic Church in France or the educational system in the United States from the 1950s to the present could illustrate the point for the North Atlantic.

The fiction of isolated national entities constructed by 19th-century politicians and scholars no longer fits the lived experiences of most populations.

Cracks in the fiction appeared soon after World War II. In the North Atlantic, the declining relevance of war as the path to global economic leadership meant a decline in the use and effectiveness of nationalist rhetoric—partly masked and delayed, especially in the United States, by the existence of the Soviet bloc. Elsewhere, the deep tremors experienced in Africa and Asia during the second wave of decolonization<sup>18</sup> augured ill for the presumed national homogeneity. Where and how to establish the borders of the new African and Asian polities often proved an unforeseen predicament. Partition by decree in cases as varied as India-Pakistan, Israel-Palestine, and French and German Togo exposed the artificiality and the use of power inherent in border-making practices. Cases such as Algeria's *pieds noirs* suggested that even the distinction between home and elsewhere was not as easy as once thought.

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the cold war, in spite of its rhetoric, also brought home the relevance of events happening in other regions of the globe. In North America, Vietnam—as later the taking of hostages in Teheran—played a key role in producing that understanding. In the 1970s and '80s, citizens throughout the North Atlantic discovered their partial dependency on foreign imports after most OPEC countries assumed ownership of their oil fields.

One can safely suggest, however, that geopolitical and economic changes on the world scene as such were less crucial in breaking down the fiction of impermeable entities than the manner in which those changes were brought home to ordinary citizens in the North Atlantic and affected their daily lives. To give but one example, the objective degree of U.S. involvement in Indochina in the 1960s was arguably less than that of Spain in 17th-century Mexico, that of France in 18th-century Saint-Dominique/Haiti, or that of Britain in 19th-century India. It might not have been enough to change the imagination of North Americans if not for the fact that television made the Vietnam War a daily occurrence in their homes just as it would later make the Iran-U.S. confrontation a matter of nightly routine. Even more than television, refugees knocking at the door, new patterns of immigration, and the reconfiguration of the ethnic and cultural landscape in major North Atlantic cities brought the "elsewhere" to the home front. The speed and mass of global flows—including the flow of populations deemed to be different and often claiming that difference while insisting on acceptance—profoundly undermined the notion of bounded entities, and not just on an abstract level. The barbarians were at the door, which was bad enough, but they were also claiming that "our" home could be theirs.

18. The first wave of decolonization occurred, of course, in the Americas in the 19th century with the successive independences of the United States, Haiti, the former Spanish colonies, and Brazil.

North Atlantic natives, in turn, both rejected and accommodated that daily presence. Thus, segregationist practices notwithstanding, the commodification of exotic customs and products from Zen and yoga to Mao shirts and dashikis facilitated a guarded cultural acceptance. Food played a major role in that process. Korean vegetable shops in the United States and Arab groceries in France provided needed services. More important may have been the wave of "ethnic" restaurants that swamped Paris, London, Amsterdam, and New York beginning in the 1970s and now brings couscous, curry, or sushi to inland cities once thought impermeable to Third World cultural imports. The daily presence of the Other, mediatized, commodified, tightly controlled, yet seemingly unavoidable—as Other—on the screen or on the street, is a major trope of globalist ideology. Yet this trope functions at least in part because it illustrates for local populations the national state's increasing difficulty in functioning as a container, even in the North Atlantic.<sup>19</sup>

## Toward an Ethnography of the State

None of this means that the relevance of the state is declining, if by "state" we mean more than the apparatus of national governments. **If the state is indeed a set of practices and processes and their effects as much as a way to look at them, we need to track down these practices, processes, and effects whether or not they coalesce around the central sites of national governments.** In the age of globalization, state practices, functions, and effects increasingly obtain in sites other than the national but never entirely bypass the national order. **The challenge for anthropologists is to study these practices, functions, and effects without prejudice about sites or forms of encounters.** I will note the possibilities of this approach by further sketching the state effects mentioned at the beginning of this essay as grounds for an ethnography of the state.

**Nicos Poulantzas (1972) identified what he called the "isolation effect," which I read as the production of a particular kind of subject as an atomized member of a public—a key feature of statecraft.** Through the isolation of socioeconomic conflicts, notably class divisions, the state not only guarantees its own relative autonomy vis-à-vis dominant classes but also produces atomized, individualized citizens who all appear equal in a supposedly undifferentiated public sphere. In many societies today the national public sphere is fractured differently

19. There are plenty of other signs of the tension between the visibility of groups clearly marked as Others and the homogenizing claims of the state. The consolidation of "ethnic" votes in the United States is among the most blatant. I have concentrated on the North Atlantic here not because similar signs are lacking in the South but because the fiction of homogeneous entities never fully obtained in the South or in Eastern Europe. To put it otherwise, the peripheral state was never as competent in producing an identification effect as the state in France, Britain, Germany, or the United States.



from when Poulantzas wrote. At the same time, the relative increase in judicial power in almost all of the North Atlantic countries suggests that individual atomization is accompanied by new forms of homogenization. Identity politics notably signals new configurations of the citizenry. The development of notions of universal human rights and the global spread of North Atlantic legal philosophy and practices—to cite only one example—are producing isolation effects, North and South, at times with the backing of national governments or with the still timid support of transnational statelike institutions. In short, the isolation effect—including the masking of class divisions and the joint production of a public and the atomized subjects that constitute it—still obtains, but the processes and practices—and hence the power—that produce it are being deployed in unexpected sites.

Following Poulantzas's approach and terminology, we can identify a number of state effects that he did not identify by name. To the isolation effect we can add, as suggested earlier, an identification effect, a legibility effect, and a spatialization effect. In all these cases we observe a *déplacement* of state functions, a move away from the state system described by Miliband or even from the state apparatuses described by Althusser. State power is being redeployed, state effects are appearing in new sites, and, in almost all cases, this move is one away from national sites to infra-, supra-, or transnational ones. An ethnography of the state can and should capture these effects.

For instance, we may call an identification effect the capacity to develop a shared conviction that "we are all in the same boat" and therefore to interpellate subjects as homogeneous members of various imagined communities (Poulantzas 1972, Balibar 1997, Scott 1998, Trouillot 1997). This homogenizing process, once thought the fundamental purview of the national state, is now shared by the national state and a number of competing sites and processes from region to gender, race, and ethnicity. Here again, identity politics helps redefine the national for better and—often—for worse. The so-called new social movements have also become sites for accumulating, redirecting, or deploying social and political power that often tries to bypass or challenge national states, albeit with limited success.<sup>20</sup> Many are both parochial and global, with multiple boundaries.<sup>21</sup> Few see national borders as the main line of demarcation of their activities.

The national state also produces what I call a legibility effect, following Scott's (1998) development on legibility practices. However, as Scott himself suggests, governments are not the only actors who "see like a state." Notably in the South, NGOs and trans-state institutions from the World Bank to the IMF now perform

—sometimes better—on that score and produce similar if not more potent legibility effects. UNESCO or ILO statistics are more reliable than those of quite a few national governments. NGOs' capacity to plan effectively at the local and regional level all over the South and the World Bank's or the IMF's power to envision and promote everywhere a future based on their assessment—however questionable—of the present have now moved a number of state practices away from the national. For better and for worse, these are all, analytically, statelike institutions.

Since most state effects can be captured in part through the subjects they help to produce, ethnographers are well positioned to follow this worldwide displacement of state functions and practices. To give one obvious example, we are well equipped to follow NGOs "on the ground," to evaluate their capacity to interpellate and the conscious acceptance or rejection of that interpellation. Kamran Ali's ethnography of a family-planning campaign in Egypt—which involves USAID, internationally funded NGOs, and the national government—suggests that one of the potential outcomes of the campaign is the production of newly atomized "modern" subjects (Ali 1996, 2000). I read Ali as saying that nongovernmental and governmental practices combine in the production of quite new but quite "Egyptian" citizens. Similarly, NGOs attempting to reform "street children" in Mexico City are also producing new but Mexican subjects, with a different mixture of accommodation and resistance on the part of the citizenry so shaped (Magazine 1999). Indeed, the extent to which the emerging subjects recognize the statelike nature of nongovernmental organizations and institutions varies. Still, there are indications that awareness of their role is increasing.<sup>22</sup>

NGOs are only the most obvious cases begging for an ethnography of state effects. We need to note, however, that they fit within a more general movement of privatization of state functions (e.g., Hibou 1999) of which the rise of privately run prisons, the proliferation of private armies in Africa and Latin America, and the privatization of public enterprises worldwide are other evident manifestations. Only careful ethnographies will tell us the extent to which these—or less visible emergent manifestations—produce state effects.

Are national governments left only to guard their borders—and quite ineffectively at that? The three stories with which I started this paper suggest that government

22. Beatrice Pouligny (personal communication) reports that some Haitians say in reference to NGOs: "yo fè leta" (literally, "they make the state"), which in Haitian parlance suggests that they have identified a site of power equal to and capable of challenging the state but also the makings of a potential bully. (The same word can mean "state" or "bully" in Haitian.) At least some street children in Mexico seem to be aware of the social overlap and flows between the personnel of state agencies and that of NGOs, an overlap that is not unique to Mexico; I read Magazine as saying that the governmental/nongovernmental divide is not significant for the street children.

20. Emily's List and the Sierra Club in the United States and the German Greens suggest that the capacity of social movements—feminist, ecological, or other—to avoid national-statelike institutionalization is not as evident as once thought.

21. Thus, almost all separatist movements have branches outside the geopolitical borders of the state they contest.

still performs this role.<sup>23</sup> More important, regardless of the relative effectiveness of governments at border patrol, the national state still produces—and quite effectively among most populations—a spatialization effect. Citizens all over the world may reject the slogan that all nationals are in the same boat, but they remain aware that “we” (however defined) do live in a place usually defined in part by a political border.

While the spatialization effect may also be produced in other sites, national governments are less likely to let go of their power in this domain. Indeed, with the spectacular exception of the European Union—a truly innovative and changing formation of which we cannot even guess the long-term political consequences within and outside of Europe—national states are likely to hold on to their power to define political boundaries. First, in a context marked by the obvious incapacity of national states to function as cultural containers, the protection of borders becomes an easy political fiction with which to enlist support from a confused citizenry. Second, the right to define boundaries remains a fundamental component of sovereignty to which national governments must cling in an age in which many state functions are being performed elsewhere. To put it bluntly, national states produce countries, and countries remain fundamentally spatial. Hence, quite understandably, most human beings continue to act locally most of the time, even while many more now claim to think globally. Anthropology’s challenge for this century may very well be to pay deserved attention to the tensions inherent in that contradiction.

The respatialization of various state functions and effects is taking place in a context already marked by the differential respatialization of markets. These incongruent spatialities inevitably produce tensions in the location of state power and in citizens’ perception of and reaction to its deployment. An anthropology of the state may have to make these tensions a primary focus of its research agenda. These tensions will be found not only in organized politics but in the many practices through which citizens encounter not only government but also a myriad of other statelike institutions and processes that interpellate them as individuals and as members of various communities. In short, anthropology may not find the state ready-made, waiting for our ethnographic gaze in the known sites of national government. Government institutions and practices are to be studied, of course, and we can deplore that anthropology has not contributed enough to their study. However, we may also have to look for state processes and effects in sites less obvious than those of institutionalized politics and established bureaucracies. We may have to insist on en-

23. They also suggest that it is not always efficient—or at least that its performance is now marred by increased ambiguity. After all, Sen did go to Davos and receive a public apology from the Swiss government. Since 1999 Germany has recognized *jus solis* (citizenship right by birth) as well as *jus sanguinis* (right by descent). Other difficulties of ethnic Turks are now being addressed by German courts—one more sign if needed of this global expansion of judicial rhetoric and reach.

counters that are not immediately transparent. We may indeed have to revert to the seemingly timeless banality of daily life.

## Comments

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This is a stimulating contribution. Political anthropology as a specialized subdiscipline originated with the efforts of scholars like Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) systematically to explore political organization in conditions where nothing like the modern state existed. The problem is posed anew in an age when that modern state, always a highly unrealistic ideal type, has been seriously eroded. Political anthropologists have regularly been accused of ethnocentrism for basing so much of their theorizing on a historically specific version of the modern state. Yet most specialists have held onto the term, and so indeed does Trouillot himself, appropriately “enlarged” and demystified by a galaxy of Western Marxists.

I admire Trouillot’s substantive diagnosis of globalization, which is historically informed and acutely sensitive to widening social inequalities. He draws useful distinctions and shows that consumption is the sole domain in which strong claims for global integration may approximate reality. On the whole he strikes a sensible balance, though he may underestimate the continuing force of national states and exaggerate the exceptionalism of the European Union, at least as it currently functions. The “daily presence of the Other” in the form of the efflorescence of ethnic restaurants does not, it seems to me, significantly undermine a national state such as the British. Trouillot overlooks the extent to which the most popular media and sports continue to reinforce the national “containers.”

Beyond this general point, area specialists will surely quibble over detail. As an East Europeanist, I would point out that foreign direct investment has made a big difference in this region in recent years, notably in Hungary. Contrary to Trouillot’s claim (n. 20), the “identification effects” of some “peripheral states” in this region have been strong. Putting these two facts together helps explain why increasing numbers in Eastern Europe now oppose entry into the European Union, which they fear will lead to still greater economic domination by the West and loss of identity.

Trouillot’s call for novel ethnographic approaches is welcome. One might have wished, perhaps in place of the neo-Marxist theory, for more substantive discussion of the many ways in which political anthropologists have set about this task in the past. For example, there exists for many parts of the world a literature on local factions and on patron-client relations which takes as a central theme the impact of (central) states on (local) peripheries,

sometimes formulated in dialectical models of interaction. Surely some of this work could prove useful as we explore new forms of interaction between the local and the global?

I miss, too, any discussion of the different forms and types of state developed by several generations of political anthropologists, for example, in explaining its evolution (Claessen and Skalník 1981) or in documenting the variety of contemporary postcolonial states (Chabal 1986). Lumping together all the states of sub-Saharan Africa seems unhelpful. The recent work of John Gledhill (2000) reviews ways in which anthropologists and political scientists can usefully work together, going beyond mere typologies, to reach better understandings of how different kinds of state achieve their effects (and how they fail to).

It is misleading to characterize Radcliffe-Brown as a methodological individualist. In the more commonly cited sentence that follows immediately after Trouillot's lengthy quotation, Radcliffe-Brown wrote that "the political organization of a society is that aspect of the total organization which is concerned with the control and regulation of the use of physical force." Some find this too narrow, and Radcliffe-Brown himself was also interested in "moral coercion." But this is at least a clear definition of the task.

Trouillot's own prescription of seeking out four types of "statelike effect" lacks this virtue of empirical clarity. One wonders why he needs to hold onto the word "state" at all. If "state" has been oversimplified and reified by other academic disciplines and even by some past anthropologists, and if the force of the national state as a "container" is waning even where it was once strong, then why not just drop it, or at least demote it from the privileged position it has always held in political anthropology? If the generation of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard failed to avoid ethnocentrism because it upheld an ideal type of the modern state as it set about analyzing premodern systems, Trouillot remains vulnerable to similar criticism in his pursuit of postmodern systems. The more radical break would be to develop new tools for an anthropology/ethnography of force or *power*. Instead of arguing that some NGOs or the World Bank now exercise "statelike power" we would be deprived of that shortcut and obliged to specify that power more carefully.

If the key question is how to describe and to understand changing forms of power, then, to adapt the author's own comments on Radcliffe-Brown, "a generous reading of Trouillot, which would prune out the added philosophical baggage of his school and times, still leaves us with a powerful answer."

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Trouillot's thesis is simple and useful for anthropologists working at the dawn of the 3d millennium: it is high

time to begin to construct new ethnographies of the state. By giving us an "exploratory exercise," Trouillot wants us to recognize how relevant the state is becoming for anthropologists. Remarking on Nagengast's (1994: 116) argument, he claims that anthropologists have not given enough attention to the state—its formation, structure, and institutionalization. In fact, he argues that we often use "state" where "government" would do. He suggests that for him an understanding of the state begins with the study of Gramsci and his later followers such as Althusser, Miliband, Thomas, Scott, Poulantzas, and Balibar. This list reads like one from the 1960s, as if nothing had happened since. Strangely, Trouillot does not include in his theorization any of the results of the Frankfurt School, a gap that is especially questionable because many of the questions he asks have also been addressed by illustrious representatives of that school such as Habermas, Horkheimer, Adorno, Münch, and Luhmann. At the same time, there are works more within the anthropological tradition that address archaic state formations (Feinman and Marcus 1998), secular and religious regimes (Moen and Gustafson 1992, Wolf 1991), state bureaucracies (Herzfeld 1993, Bailey 1991), and state hierarchy as related to capitalistic labor formation as well as nationalism (Hoppe and Langton 1994, Weber 1977). It is clear from these works that the notion of the "state" is dynamic and far from uniform, hence its various adjectives such as "inchoate," "expansionist," "despotic," "bureaucratic," "militaristic," "mature," "mercantile," "segmentary," "city," "liberal," "dictatorial," and so on. Despite the longstanding anthropological interest in these categories, none of these works figure in the "anthropology of the state in the age of globalization." Of course, one could argue that none of them deal directly with what Trouillot is addressing here.

What I find intriguing in Trouillot's article is that he does not remain at the level of classical (Marxist) concepts or traditional "state-level" inquiries but proceeds several steps further. He argues that there is an interesting duality emerging: on the one hand, there is a conceptualization that "globalization renders the state increasingly irrelevant," and on the other hand the state, especially the penal state, has increased its presence in our lives everywhere. "Capitalism" and "globalization" are two terms addressed in his essay, and it is obvious from Trouillot's treatment that he does not share the current enthusiasm about either of them. I share his view that "globalization does not mean that the world economy is now integrated into a single space." Fine-tuned analyses should be able to support or, alternatively, undermine Trouillot's idea about the contradictory development of the economic modes of spatialization across the globe and its consequent polarization. Indeed, polarization and hopelessness are the key concepts of his thesis.

Surely, this is not an idyllic picture: world oligopolies are increasing, with fewer multinational corporations controlling most major commodities on the world market. Not only are large chunks of regions simply being left out of current developments but also states are be-

coming increasingly hierarchicized as some become poorer and others sell themselves to more prosperous neighbors. Increasingly, as we have seen from recent events in the former colonial states and in East Central Europe, states are becoming the dumping ground of the developed West, causing further division among them. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the cold war, even North Atlantic societies, including the U.S.A., are losing their grip on their citizens. For Trouillot all this leads to a "fragmented globality," one in which states, especially nation-states, are becoming superfluous. In their places new social, religious, and political movements and nongovernmental sites have emerged, producing powerful state effects of their own.

But is the world so fragmented because of contemporary globalization, or are long-term processes also at work here? Have not historical treatises—especially those of Immanuel Wallerstein—taught us that this has been going on since mercantile capitalism arose in the 15th and 16th centuries? Similarly, does this fragmentation really entail less power and importance for national regimes and nation-states as Trouillot wants us to believe? Yes and no. In his rather abstract treatment Trouillot provides scant evidence for this. Relying on Poulantzas, he reinvigorates the argument that there is evidence of a worldwide *déplacement* of state functions and practices, notably through three kinds of effect: identification, legibility, and spatialization. Yet, regimes and states are also less likely to give up their traditional role of defining political boundaries. Thus, "national states produce countries, and countries remain fundamentally spatial." But regions, groups, and nationalities can also create national states. There is a Kurdish nation and there is a Kurdistan even though at the moment there is no Kurdish state. I wonder for how long. What about the Palestinians, Kashmiris, and East Timorese who are willing to fight for their states? Will the Corsicans, the Basques, the Irish in Northern Ireland, and the European Gypsies follow in their footsteps?

Moreover, states—certainly new states and transforming states such as these of recently liberated Eastern Europe or postcolonial Africa, Asia, and Latin America—will also want to maintain a tight grip elsewhere. Despite global economic forces, national economies literally ground transnational forces. As Saskia Sassen writes, "National and global markets as well as globally integrated operations require central places where the work of globalization gets done" (1999:179). I should add here, on the basis of the experiences of the past ten years of freedom, capitalism, and democracy—inarguably all negotiable and contested terms—in the former Eastern bloc countries, that these new states also cling desperately to their roles of defining citizenship, military service, national security, and (national) education. Indeed, many airlines around the world remain in state ownership; media waves are also owned by states, and consequently major radio and television stations will be in state hands for many years to come. Primary, secondary, and higher education are also state-controlled, and most research and scientific institutions are state-owned or

heavily monitored. Similarly, while they celebrate their freedom and autonomy, most publishing, art, and theatre venues are connected, if not ideologically then economically, to state finances and budgetary considerations.

Seen this way, the connection between the state and nonstate civil society, at least in Europe, will remain strained and contradictory, a point Trouillot stresses. But—and I am not sure Trouillot agrees with me on this—the European Union, for him "a truly innovative and changing formation," while it certainly parades as a unique transnational political body, is financed by states and citizens of West European nation-states. Aid distributed by the various programs of the EU, the Council of Europe, or the European Commission passes through state hands before reaching regional or local organizations. This is a contradiction that deserves more anthropological attention.

Anthropologists need to pay more attention to the interplay of globalization and states as well as that of states and purportedly nonstate spheres. All too often "globalization" has been used to render worldwide consumerism meaningful in scholarly terms (Jameson and Miyoshi 1999). In a similar vein, "multiculturalism," "transnationalism," and "interculturalism" need to be understood and analyzed in their local settings (Baumann 1999, Greenhouse and Kheshti 1998, Sassen 1999). For calling attention to these important anthropological areas, Trouillot deserves applause.

## Reply

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I am grateful to Hann and Kürti for their appreciative comments. I am particularly pleased that this appreciation comes from specialists in Eastern Europe, an area of the world where some of the contradictions now marring our understanding of the state are most salient.

Implicit in this article is an epistemological position that is unabashedly antiempiricist and that should be brought forward for the purpose of this exchange. To put it most simply: can the object of study be reduced to the object of observation? The extreme empiricist answer to that question tends to be a naive yes. This answer reduces most matters of methodology to matters of research techniques and mistakenly assumes all empirical studies to be necessarily empiricist in one form or another.

Variants of this answer tend to dominate research programs in all the social sciences. Cultural anthropology—as an empirically based discipline—tended to go with the flow (but vide Lévi-Strauss). Only in recent years has a growing number of anthropologists refused to avoid the issue of the epistemological status of ethnography. This is not the place to review that literature, but it is important to note that many critiques of eth-

nography assume the theoretical confluences inherited from empiricism, thus accepting—or rejecting—en bloc the value of the empirical as framed by empiricism.

How does all this relate to the study of the state in the age of globalization?

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, both the speed and the contradictory directions of global flows have contributed to a blurring of the functions and the boundaries of the traditional objects of observation of the social sciences. One of the most affected objects is “the state,” in part because globalization produces spatialities—and identities—that cut through national boundaries more obviously than before, in part because the social sciences have tended to take these very same boundaries and identities for granted.

My clamoring about these changes may have given both Hann and Kúrty the impression that I am too close to the globalitarians, although both acknowledge that I specify precisely what I mean by globalization. Thus, I agree with Kúrty’s evaluations of current historical trends. What he perceives as disagreements may be due to misreadings or subtle shifts in emphasis. I certainly agree with him that long-term processes are at work in what we now call globalization. I also agree that the European Union makes sense only against the background of national states, that Eastern European governments cling to their role in defining citizenship. Assessing Benedict Anderson’s influential work, I suggested a few years ago that the nation is not an imagined political community but an imagined community projected against politics, more specifically against state power (Trouillot 1990:25–26). In short, I do not think that national states have become irrelevant as containers for the English or the French or as projects for Palestinians, Kashmiris, Kurds, Nevisians, Basques, Martinicans, Puerto Ricans, Corsicans, or Gypsies, to cite only a very few. Rather, my contention is that both the resistance and the efficiency of these containers and the feasibility and desirability of these projects now face qualitatively new obstacles because of globalization.

Any of the above examples can illustrate the contradictions and tensions that mark our times. While the European Union indeed rests upon the power of national governments, it is also developing new forms of transnational sovereignty and a new legal order (Bermann et al. 1993). There and elsewhere, while the state continues to be relevant, that relevance is not encapsulated entirely—if indeed it ever was—by national governments. Further, other institutions are now acting in a statelike manner and producing statelike effects. We cannot simply say that the state is an ideal type and proceed as if national governments were mere historical manifestations of that type—not with NGOs fulfilling many functions once in the purview of government ministries, not with drug cartels or private armies harnessing more enforcement power than the national police. The extraordinary power that the IMF has assumed over the lives of millions of human beings in the past 20 years cannot be forced into a residual category such as the “international.” In short, my starting point is that we can no

longer avoid the issue of the relation between the object of observation and the object of study.

Yet my response to this difficulty, new as it may seem, is simple and old-fashioned in its antiempiricism: the state never was an object of observation. It was always a construction—at worst an ideological construction, at best a theoretical construction, that is, an object of study (Poulantzas 1972). Therefore the theoretical task is to locate conceptualizations of the state upon which we can build this object of study in ways that account both for recent history and for the ideological role of the state. Both Hann and Kúrty acknowledge the necessity of that search. Both also allude to lacunae in my handling of it. Let me explain some of the silences.

First, this text was meant to be not a review article but an essay that I still view as quite exploratory. Second, some of the writings mentioned by Hann and Kúrty assume a state functioning, even if poorly, along the lines inherited from the 19th century. To take Mexico or Peru as examples, it seems to me judicious to posit that what patron–client ties meant in the 1950s may have radically changed and should be open to new investigations. Such investigations require that we problematize anew the relation between object of observation and object of study.

I am not satisfied with the tradition that would simply cast the state as an “ideal type” (Hann) for two reasons. First, in spite of Max Weber’s careful construction of that notion, the general tendency is to posit the ideal type as a construction and then proceed as if that caveat solved the problem of the object of observation once and for all. Second, even in Weber, ideal types function better when the relation between the two objects—the historical particulars “out there” and the object to be theorized—is assumed to be known and, therefore, not subject to profound changes.

Since I suspect that the nature, the role, and the functions of national governments are going through profound changes due to globalization, I find a better anchor in what Hann calls “a galaxy of Western Marxists.” Yet I have neglected a number of stars, most notably the Marxist writings that promote an instrumentalist notion of the state. Rather, I emphasize the tradition that explicitly addressed the illusory character of the state and yet saw the need to construct it as an object of study once removed from “government” and thus twice removed from an empirical given “out there.” Thus, I am holding onto not merely a term or a school but a conceptual lineage and a theoretical apparatus that is evoked—if not fully deployed—every time that word is used.

If that theoretical apparatus is as sound as I think it is, if it is indeed the best able to help us understand new historical forms, then the next issue is methodological. If the state is not a given “out there,” what then is the object of observation? The answer to this question must proceed from the conceptualization. We cannot expect the object of observation to come to the ethnographer with “empirical clarity,” lest we find in the field exactly what we came to find. Nor can we attribute a priori all

deployments of power to the state—a theoretical move that would implicitly reject most of the literature on the state and most of the literature on power.

My development of the notion of state effects, as adapted from Poulantzas, is nothing but a small contribution to the construction of this object of observation. Since that object cannot be an empirical a priori, we need middle-ground notions that can help ethnographers identify the actions, ideas, and facts that will constitute it in each particular case. I see the notion of state effects as one of many possible methodological tools in that search for the relevant empirical material. It makes the task manageable inasmuch as it calls the ethnographer's attention to particular forms of power deployment. Yet it does not preclude novelty inasmuch as it leaves open the circumstances under which these effects obtain. Thus, it can be adapted to various situations in and out of the North Atlantic. In the end, the ethnocentrism of individual theorists matters less than anthropology's contribution to disabling the methodological ethnocentrism that has characterized the social sciences.

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