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BARRIE AXFORD

Enacting Globalization: Transnational Networks and the Deterritorialization of Social Relationships in the Global System

1. Introduction

Bordernization, de-bordernization and re-bordernization are all features of the contradictory processes of globalization. The boundaries between societies and cultures, never as firm as much social science supposed, are becoming inchoate under the impact of new economic flows, mass and specific population movements, changes in transportation and communications and, most germane to this essay, the ubiquity of transnational networks of actors, which are fast becoming the "new social morphology" of the globalized world (Castells 1996, 469). The idea of a borderless world constituted of spaces rather than territories, of "global webs" (Reich, 1991) and "actor-networks" (Latour, 1993) is a concept that has been appropriated for different purposes depending on the predilection of the theorist. Recently fashionable accounts of the boundary – dissolving power of economic transactions (Ohmae, 1990, 1993) rely on the network analogy to demonstrate the functional rationality carried through regional and global economic flows which, it is argued, are making territorial jurisdictions and national economies redundant. There is an implicit neo-functionalist logic on offer in work of this sort, to the effect that exogenous economic forces will eventually trigger changes in consciousness and spawn, among other things, global consumers, global managers and global companies. But in such imaginings actors more often than not are globalized simply by being there, caught up in the power of global flows, and the social morphology that results is one of thin and instrumental networks, or else, as in micro-realist reworkings of the character of world society, denser networks of transactions and interdependence and relationships dominated by power and interests (Meyer et al, 1997). When all is said and done, diversity of outlook is admissable in a world where new forms of spatial practice are now widely in evidence, and where the deterritorialization of social relationships is in train, but where old scripts and even older fictions – about fixed identities, feelings of ontological security, authenticity and, of course, about territoriality, still abound (Mann, 1996).

My interest in transnational networks lies not only in the opportunity they afford to interrogate definitions of political, economic and cultural space, in which task students of "postmodern geographies" are now fully engaged (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995; O'Tuathail, 1998; Luke, 1996, 1998) but in their ontological status as social actors and as contexts for the transformation of identities. As part of a modified structurationist perspective on globalization, which I will elaborate later in the piece, (see Axford, 1995) I intend to address the ways in which transnational networks are re-shaping and re-constituting world society through the possibilities they offer for re-imagining the scale of social organisation and for re-defining the self-definitions of actors who make up such networks. A structurationist perspective, albeit one influenced by arguments from institutionalist analysis (Meyer et al, 1987; Meyer, 1997; Wendt, 1992, 1994) privileges an understanding of a networked globality in which actors both construct the world they occupy and are embedded in chronic structures of meaning and culture. In other words it reflects the messiness and indeterminateness of the global condition, and of all life. As I will argue, it also has the merit of avoiding the reductionism or the excesses of some other theoretical positions on globalization whose provenance lies either in warmed over realism (Jacobson, 1979) or chiliastic postmodernism (Inglis, 1996).

The concept of "transnational networks" is used here to designate all sorts of connections between individuals, groups, formal organisations, and movements across national borders (Hannerz, 1996, 6). In this paper I am more concerned with networks of actors, rather than networks from which human agency is absent, or only secondary. At its most basic the idea of network implies nodes and the manner of their interconnection, not centres or peripheries, which in itself challenges binary descriptions of world order; while transnational, played deadpan, suggests only different sorts of traffic across borders. Both these definitions beg awkward questions, notably about the "power of flows" between nodes, about criteria for inclusion and exclusion in networks (Castells, 1996, 469) and about the real charge in the concept of transnationality (and certainly in the the more loaded "postnationality") which is that the connections are not between territorial states, but outside their remit, and may either directly or implicitly challenge the identities bracketed by these jurisdictions. I do not mean to suggest that transnational networks have established the global frame of reference as the only meaning frame for actors , because apart from considerations such as the actual spatial reach of networks, it is clear that being "constrained to identify" with the global condition, as Robertson puts it (1992) can take many forms, from whole-hearted embrace to robust opposition. Football hooligans are globally connected, and their connectivity aims to subvert or bypass the possibility of national and international surveillance and regulation, but the loyalty of gang members or "firms" is resolutely local or national. Hannerz (1990 and 1996) following Kroeber (1945) proposes that transnational networks be understood to constitute a global ecumene of interconnectedness, a convenient expression for an "interwoven set of happenings" tying the world together in complex fashion (1945, 9). As will become apparent, I am happy with this designation because it covers both the spatial reach of networks in various domains and the key matter of consciousness. However, a global ecumene need not imply a single world, if by that is meant more than a quantitative change in the scale and density of social relationships and organisation. In other words it leaves the key issue of transformations in meaning structures and identity conveniently moot, or subject to further empirical investigation.

Throughout what follows I will develop an argument on the need to see transnational networks as part of a restructuration of space and as at least a metaphor for new and often incipient kinds of social organisation and identities. This in turn allows for a treatment of globalization as a contested and enacted process. I will begin by looking at interpretations of globalization, and of networks as features of that process. These interpretations will include realist assumptions about the ontology of actors, macro-realist arguments which relegate action to the rim of social explanation, and purely phenomenological or postmodernist accounts of social action. I will then talk about bordernisation and de-bordernisation as key facets of globalization and discuss the utility of the network metaphor as a means of understanding this dialectic. Then I want to explore the network metaphor more directly, through a consideration of transnational networks, which can be described as being either "thick" or "thin," and which vary as to content, spatial extension and consciousness (Mann, 1998). Finally I will look at some areas of transnational network practice, drawing upon work being done on the European Information Society Project as a way of re-imagining European unity; by discussing examples of what I will call radical connectivity in relation to cyberscapes and mediascapes, and reflect on the notion of global mutualities, or a global sub-politics as outlined in Beck's recent work, and seen too in the burgeoning literature on transnational social movements. In conclusion, I will assess the utility of the network metaphor as a way of understanding contemporary globalization, and point to some areas where more work needs to be done.

2. Theory: Globalization and Transformation

For the various strands of world-systems analysis, the current frisson of globalization is just one more iteration of a world-historical process that now wraps the entire world within its geography (Wallerstein, 1997). As a cultural script territoriality is important only in the sense that the nation-state is the bounded political actor through which the global division of labour is conveniently expressed, inter-nation competitiveness being a functionally required aspect of world-economic integration. As in other realist accounts, the ontology of state and other actors is treated as unproblematic. In a recent paper, Giovanni Arrighi again argues the case for treating current globalization as part of evolutionary changes in world capitalism (1997). In his account transformations bruited as unique to current globalizing trends – the information and communications revolution, the creation of a borderless world in bonds, currencies and equities, and the sheer ubiquity of "transnational connections" (Hannerz, 1996) for example in cultural software and political activism, is interesting only because of its "scale, scope and complexity" (1997, 2).

Still one-dimensional, but more convinced of the transformative power of current globalizing forces, are positions which traffic some version of a global entropic field where all differences between local structures and boundaries are dissolved, where identities are protean and actors become interchangeable at some abstract global level (Erikson, 1991; Albrow, 1996; Waters, 1995). Both polarities are convinced of the power of exogenous and global constraints while remaining at odds on the sort of global system that results.

Between these poles subsist a variety of approaches whose stock-in- trade is a modification of basic realist arguments about the morphology of international relations (Jacobson, 1979; Keohane, 1986). As I suggested earlier, some of this is micro-realist in character (Meyer et al, 1997), pointing to ever denser networks of transactions and interdependence between still autonomous territorial states. Neo-liberalism too (Keohane, 1986) though more catholic in its treatment of international actors, remains enamoured of the rootedness of collective action in the rational cooperation of territorial (state) actors. Other arguments, part of a paradigm shift in disciplines such as Anthroplogy, and convinced of the networked nature of social relations, depict a world in which remote connections, dispersed networks and hybridized identities are replacing the older mosaic of separate cultures, societies and localities to create an ecumene of interconnectedness (Friedman, 1997; Hannerz, 1996). At the very least, such visions intimate or look to confirm a radical deterritorialization of social organisation in which processes of globalization are redrawing the economic, political and cultural geographies of the modern world. At most they suggest a world in which "boundaries, structures and regularities" (Appadurai, 1996, 46) are nugatory. Much of the work in the latter categories also bears on the ways in which globalizing forces alter the frame of social agency as they render traditional boundaries (territorial and otherwise) and subjectivities ambiguous and possibly unsustainable, except by dint of retrenchment or through reinvention (Shapiro, 1997, 2). While this is a facet of what I call the restructuration of territorial imaginaries and identities, it is also the subject of a fully fledged and often romantic discourse about the entwinings of the local and the global, about local resistance, and about the authenticity or otherwise of global cultures.

Finally there are those positions that traffic right up to and over the edge of postmodernist deconstructionism. Such work can be found in treatments of an emergent postmodern geopolitics (Lefebvre, 1974; Luke, 1995; Agnew, 1998; O'Tuathail, 1998) in which dominant representations of space, or the Euclidean world of "spatial blocs, territorial presence and fixed identities," (O'Tuathail, 1998, 6) of binary geographies and rationalistic discourse, gives way to what O'Tuathail calls post-spatial binaries (as in Benjamin Barber's Jihad versus McWorld, 1995) or the space of flows outlined in Appadurai's allusive references to global scapes and contingent global subjects (O'Tuathail, 1998; Appadurai, 1990 and 1996). Seductive as these images may be, and I must confess that I am more than willing to flirt, ideas about postmodern geopolitics have to be tempered by the recognition that everywhere a growing number of postmodern characters still perform in resolutely modernist scripts (Rosenau and Bredemeier, 1994). For all that, my argument will be that globalization is contributing to an undoing of the present, where that refers to the cultural scripts and structural forms and identities of modernity. In particular, I will argue that transnational networks increasingly populate a global cultural and political economy where territoriality as the most powerful constitutive rule is in retreat (Axford and Huggins, 1998). Transnational networks are a convenient, perhaps even the paradigm expression of the labile and transformative qualities of the current phase of globalization in which many social relationships are stretched over ever greater distances and without regard for the constraints of time.

Yet pretty much everywhere the space of the networks and flows of the global continues to subsist with economic, cultural and political architectures characteristic of territorial spaces and the identities tied to them. So the danger lies in treating transnational networks as modal phenomena, rather than as just intimations of what Timothy Luke has called "third nature" (1996), and in whose functioning Ulrich Beck has already divined a politics based upon "global mutualities " (1994, 1996). While the rise of transnational interest groups or transnational social movements, such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International, may be seen as going beyond mere interconnectivity to fashion both a cognitive and a global moral density, and even to constitute new solidaries, communal ties and collective frames of reference, a proper social – scientific caution is necessary. Sidney Tarrow's recent discussion of transnational collective action (1996) is a pertinent reminder of the pitfalls in conflating what are actually different forms and generalities of collective action. Tarrow suggests that what are rather airily discussed as transnational social movements are often instances of the diffusion of nationally-based collective action, forms of transnational political exchange between actors fully rooted in national contexts, or transnational issue networks. Tarrow's strictures are helpful in establishing a useful typology of collective action, but less so on what for me are the key issues of how and with what effects do active agents (in this case transnational networks as collective actors) engage with institutions and rules of greater generality, to constitute and perhaps transform themselves and the conditions for their action? To begin to address this question, I will now outline a structurationist approach to globalization.

3. A Structurationist Perspective on Globalization and Transnational Networks

To reiterate, transnational networks are becoming ubiquitous features of a globalizing world, although they are not its only expression. At the very least networks are contributing to a process of growing interconnection and exchange between individuals, groups, businesses and movements across borders. While this gloss is unexceptionable, it is also pretty anodyne. The real burden attached to the idea of transnational networks as collective actors is that they are, or can be, coherent discursive entities, even communities, active in the construction of their own world, where that includes its transformation as well as its reproduction, rather than being implicated in those processes simply by being there, or in effect. For example, the activities of human rights activists in INGOs instantiates a politics of rights not governed by the imperatives of national actors (Boli and Thomas, 1997), while through strategic networking self-consciously "global " managers interact with each other and with "environmental" constraints, to imagine "global" companies. Both bear witness to the reflexive relationships between actors and the conditions of action.

From a structurationist perspective agency and structure are mutually constitutive (Giddens, 1990, 1992). This is not a conflation of agency and structure, because while agents engage with structures through reflexive interaction, structures themselves are often scripts of great social and cultural power which carry rules, resources and meanings for agents, thereby contextualising and legitimating their actions. The part played by agency in the reproduction and transformation of structure can be seen in the ways in which social institutions(rules) as frameworks for action are initiated, legitimated and diffused by the practice of actors routinely and where there is co-presence, and through more conscious and even "distanced" interventions, for example as members of transnational networks. In the global circumstance, the power of agency to confront rules which are not local in origin or scope may seem limited, but transnational collective action can expand the sphere of agency in a world where co-presence is increasingly rare. From the point of view of the power relationships involved, the key issue is less the spatial scale of the relationships and more how agents use the available rules and resources to reproduce themselves and to reproduce or transform contexts which supply meaning.

My purpose in offering what might otherwise appear as a highly abstract schematic for the understanding of how global social relations may be configured, and what part transnational networks play in those configurations, is to suggest that the scope for effective agency may be enlarged because of the growing complexity and globalization of modern life. Now, agents are faced not just by a dominant set of structural properties, largely based on the foundational principle of territoriality, but by intersecting, overlapping and sometimes contradictory sets where institutional scripts – local, national, inter and supra-national, gender, welfare and so on-cross-cut (Axford, 1995, pp 86-93). Multiple sources of authority and meaning in the "external" world may be matched (perhaps through autopoeisis) by internal ambiguity and tension, as actors variously imagine and enact the global circumstance, informed by rapidly changing conditions. One of the effects of these changes is to problematise what constitutes a political sphere or a cultural order and who are to be allotted roles as legitimate and competent actors in them. Globalization has relativized the world and identities in it by penetrating and dissolving the boundaries of previously closed systems, sometimes of a communal or ethnic variety, creating inter-societal and supra-territorial discursive spaces and networks of relationships along the time-space edges of existence. On the way, various transformations are in train, including reconceptualisations of existing categories of social stratification, and of key signifiers such as race, ethnicity, locality, class, gender and sexual preference, along with key associations such as citizenship and nationality. Is the outcome a rearranged social space where networked social actors (perhaps only convenient summaries of shifting identities) predominate and identities can be constructed out of place and out of time?

4. The Dialectic of Borders and Globalization

Globalization involves variable shifts in the spatial reach and ordering of networks and the stretching of social relationships across time and space, but it also involves changes in consciousness, as individual and collective actors embrace, oppose, or are in some way "constrained to identify" (Roberston, 1992) with the global condition. Borders – to taste and imagination as well as to the seminal modernist script of territoriality – are being redefined. This at least is the strong position on globalization; how does it stack up? Historically, globalizing forces produced global systems which were of limited extent spatially, and in which the density of social relations established across borders and time, varied greatly. As we approach the millennium, it is clear that through various media – the exponential capacity of electronic communications to compress both time and space, changes in technology which are allowing production and culture to be divorced from space, capital's ceaseless and inventive search for accumulation, the pervasiveness of ideologies on subjects such as the environment and gender equality, and of course, recent seismic shifts in the world's geo-political demeanour – the world is now thoroughly, if contentiously, globalized.

The strong position on this undoubted shift in territorial dynamics has it that territorial borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the real flows and actual patterns of much economic, political and even cultural activity. Kenichi Ohmae's vision of a borderless world paints a picture in which the order of national and societal territories is increasingly moribund and is being replaced by a glocalized networked cultural economy of production and consumption (see also Burton, 1997). In a state of the art comment laced with a dash of polemic on the ways in which information and communications technologies (ICTs) are bringing about major alterations of social space and in modes of association, Geroid O'Tuathail counsels that "territoriality is being eclipsed by telemetricality" (1998, 6). This may be too glib, and I will return to the ways in which new technologies are altering the frame of social agency and how they may be rendering traditional territorialities and subjectivities ambiguous, drawing upon the limited empirical work to date on this facet of globalization. For all this, territoriality remains a durable institution, and seen from a structurationist perspective, both its obduracy and its fragility are understandable.

Actors reproduce structures through their routine interaction with sets of institutionalized rules. Constitutive rules such as territoriality, provide powerful meaning frameworks for action and for securing identity, validating the ontological status of actors by providing broad cultural contexts for social action (Barrett, 1992, but see also Boli and Thomas). So that while it may be appropriate to describe national sovereignty and territoriality as no more than "discursive structures" or intersubjective phenomena rather than material ones, as Wendt notes,worlds defined intersubjectively are not necessarily malleable, and certainly not as much as they would be in postmodernist discourse. At the same time structures have themselves to be reproduced by actors through both routine and dramatic interventions. Even powerful constitutive rules like territoriality have to be practised in order to remain universal frameworks for action. Where the identity securing power of structures is challenged or vitiated through various media: a deterritorialized currency such as the Euro; by glocal production and global communication flows, and by the difffusion of global cultural commodities such as Oscar- winning movies, it becomes less likely that they will be able to suggest to people how they should live, think and, above all imagine. When actors such as transnational social movements make conscious and in Giddens' (1990) sense "distanced" interventions in, for example, the issue of the human rights record of notionally sovereign states, or their track record on immigration and refugees, the secureness of terrritorial representations of space and of territorial boundaries around a status such as citizenship is called into question (Soysal, 1994; Wiener, 1997). The modern "geo-political imagination," sold on the isomorphism of people, culture and territory (Collins, 1990) looks much more threadbare, and the opportunities to redraw boundaries as legal and cultural markers between people more bullish.

And yet, while such changes in imagination open up possibilities for new forms of structuration, they can also serve to intensify homogenisation in individual and collective constructions of the world. While the autonomy of local and national boundaries and meaning systems is relativised by a host of transnational networks – formal and informal, interdiscursive, economic, religious, democratic – the resilience of the inside-outside dialectic, discussed by Connolly (1991) and the fear of flying immanent in its removal still vitiates the possibility of many forms of "radical interdependence" across borders (Campbell, 1996, and see Slater, 1995).

To a condiderable extent this is a matter of consciousness and affect, rather than (just) a question of resources. Embracing the networks and flows of the global is experienced by some actors as a disabling loss of identity and culture. Hybridised identities, bruited as the hallmark of an interpenetrated world, or "habitats of meaning" (Bauman, 1992, 190) which owe more to Sony than soil, are sometimes taken to defile sacred or civilizational scripts. Even more prosaic examples of global fare in the form of meat patties, leisure wear, or Blockbuster rental videos, may be treated as incursions from a globalised culture that is by definition, protean, depthless and therefore inauthentic, to say nothing of threatening. Such responses can and sometimes do fortify existing boundaries, or lead to nostalgia for previous ones,as well as mobilising a politics fed on such sentiment. On the other hand, as Ohmae says, one of the features of a borderless world has to be growing consumer indifference to the national origins of products, except where these carry some sort of cache, or if the Sunday Times is to be believed, if they are automobiles. (May, 1998). Just how far French people (as opposed to French cultural elites, or politicians with an eye for publicity) experience Disney's Hercules, or Marks and Spencer's sandwiches as diminutions of Frenchness, is open to question. Perhaps less open to question is their continued attachment to the symbols of French democracy and the particular esprit of French political culture.

Challenges or perceived challenges to local and national practices, and thus to the jurisdictional boundaries and cultural walls which isolated and insulated them, seldom go uncontested. The sort of politics which results can be relatively benign, or more visceral. In Algeria, Islamist opposition to western secular values and cultural commodities like satellite dishes, not only presents difficulties for modernising (Westernizing) elites in the form of the quasi-socialist and military regimes that have ruled there over the past few decades, but also (and this is another possible dynamic of a globalized world) fuels the demonology of those who see the flip side of a globalized liberalism as being a regrettable slide into primitivism and fanaticism (Huntington, 1996; Rodrik, 1997).

To add to this soup, retrenchment is not, or need not be, just a response to perceived globalizing threats to territory, identity and culture. The dissolving of a trans-territorial hegemony in the form of the Soviet world-empire, has contributed to a pluralization of conflict in which national, regional, ethnic and civilizational strains are apparent. Ethno-territorial conflicts precipitate an increase, rather than a decrease in the number of land boundaries and territorial claims which configure the world map, and claims to be acting in the national interest are still the stock-in-trade of jobbing politicians. At the time of writing this piece, news bulletins are reporting further fighting in what is descibed as the breakaway region of Abkhazia in the Russian Federation and Pakistan's foreign minister rallies his people in face of world opprobrium at Islamabad's tit-for-tat response to India's testing of nuclear devices, by invoking the mantra of national defence and the protection of contested boundaries.

So what is the message? In a globalized world borders matter, for how could we be deceived into thinking anything else in face of the growing commitment to orthodoxies that celebrate exclusion and nurture dreams of a savage past, or appeal to the ideal of a closed community against the depradations of any number of demonised Others or mere strangers? Frontiers too often remain landscapes of bitter contention; between Arab and Jew, and between Jew and Jew in the West bank, and between Indian and Pakistani over Kashmir. Only in the heritage cultures of some post-historical societies has the visceral symbolism of landscapes and nature been educated out of the collective consciousness. The world remains a patchwork of frontiers, often peopled by those willing to defend them.

And yet there are significant intimations of a post-territorial world polity. In Europe, the construction of a non- state citizenship (Wiener, 1997, Soysal, 1995) through EU policy and treaty provisions, proceeds, albeit at a snail-like pace. There has also been what Sidney Tarrow (1995) calls a marked "Europeanization" of conflict through the agency of Euro-groups and transnational movements, where the locus of conflict and of conflict resolution is shifted upwards to the Community level. In Italy at the moment, growing concern with North African immigration is perceived as a European, rather than an Italian problem, stemming from EU policy interventions that have turned Europe into a world space. Reactions to this, in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, range from a willingness to celebrate mobility and hybridity to brutish affirmations of difference. Still within the EU, the scope for forms of "private interest governance" in the shape of transnational policy networks and communities is also mightily enhanced through the willingness of corporate and other associational actors to engage with European institutions as major allocators of value. How far this engagement Europeanises actors, or exactly what this means, as opposed to simply altering their behaviour, remains in doubt.

Transcendance and reaffirmation of boundaries are all part of the dialectic of globalization. When William Connolly talks about the need to transcend the borders of democracy through a politics of non-territorial democratization of global issues (usually the environment, human rights and gender equality, but also Third World debt and poverty), we can point to the now established politics of non-state transnational actors whose interventions have at least problematised thinking about the spaces of democracy and accountablity and, where human rights are concerned, created a truly global discourse (Boli and Bennett, 1998). At the same time the continued attraction of what Shapairo (1998) calls the "Neo-Tocquevillian gaze" – with its penchant for democratic civil societies organised as territorial states, and with the world beyond these enclaves seen as untamed wilderness, liminal and only potenially redeemable – bears witness to the continued power of the liberal discourse on democracy. On the wilder shores of reflection the sheer exuberance of claims to discern an anarchic yet fructive "contragovernmentality" (Luke, 1996, pace Foucault, 1984) amid the spatial re-orderings generated by the collapse of state socialism and the various "scapes" of dis-organised capitalism (Appdurai, 1990; Lash and Urry, 1994) is intellectually liberating, once again provided that due regard is taken of the resilience of "mythic liberal categories, identities and narratives".

Luke's schema (see 1994, 6 and 7) offers the whole postmodern package and then some. In a powerful anti-realist diatribe, he argues a profound de-territorialization of world politics in which new anti-statal, transnational and extraterritorial social forces proliferate – both sub and supranational in origin and scope – and where territories "branch into fractal nets". This is a global field on which anyone can play, or so it seems, as long as the effect of their interventions is to undo statist territories and the discourse of territoriality. Balkan ultra-nationalists, Baltic nationalists, Islamicists, friends of Friends, virtual communities in cyberspace, in short, anything or anybody which encourages contragovernmentality and which "rewrights," yes rewrights, people as different kinds of denationalized agents are part of the creation of "neo-world orders" (1995) made up from rearranged glocal space. The upshot is a more dynamic, more interconnected, more interdependent, yet more fragmented and certainly more fluid milieu for enacting authority, playing out roles and managing flows of influence from multiple sources than can be contained by the Euclidean geometry and identity spaces of territorialized modernity. As Fritz the Cat once said, "heavy traffic," but can this sort of networked globalized world be discerned, if not in full, then in part, and where?

5. The Network Metaphor and Transnationalization

Processes of globalization move through the negotiated and often contingent articulation between local subjects and more encompassing global flows and structures. The growing complexity of these articulations intimates the possibility of disorder, rather than functional closure, since the connections reveal new sites for potential conflict and new opportunites for structuration and transformation. William Robinson (1996,13) certainly no globalization groupie says that "globalization is redefining all the fundamental reference points of human society and social analysis," while Luke has it that " Moving from place to flow, terrains to streams, introduces non-perspectival, anti-hierarchical and disorganisational elements into traditional spatial/industrial/national notions of sovereignty" (1995, 127). So notions of the world as a single place, an ecumene of interconnectedness do not, can not describe a featureless, anodyne global field; despite, as McGrew, says a sameness in the "surface appearance of social and political life across the globe" (1992). Rather, we can discern multiple configurations in a globalized world (Axford, 1999) which overlap with, but also confront each other. Briefly, these configurations encompass a world which is little more than a map of variable tastes; one in which processes of relativization and indigenization are both characteristic demeanours of actors coming to terms with global pressures; a world in which whole cultures and identities are becoming "impure and intermingled" (Rushdie, 1991) and one in which local resistance to global scripts challenges hybridity and the dissolution of borders.

Transnationalization is a feature of all these configurations and is expressed through various kinds of linkages. It is seen particularly in the growing reach and density of networks and flows-of goods between nations, through migration, businesss and tourism, (Ash, 1998) as well as in the post- national politics of INGOs and the cyborg cultures of "organisationless" transnational coprorations which, through strategic networking, show a "single face" to the world. Such interconnections globalize the world in a measurable way, but do so more profoundly because they are redefining the experiences and perceptions of more and more actors. Thus, the taxonomic status of a global company may lie more in its management style and corporate culture than it does in objective measures of globality, such as the proportion of its operations and employees abroad. At all events, the global now becomes the cognitive frame of reference for many actors in many domains, although (as I have suggested above) it remains much less so in matters of culture and morality.

The globalized world created out of the intersection and entwining of these multiple congfigurations is likely to be disordered, chaotic in the sense suggested by Jonathan Friedman (1992, 94, 97). In it ontological certainties are themselves relativized and as I have argued, constitutive rules, even hegemonic scripts are increasingly challenged through the transformative capacities of agency. As a metaphor for such a world, the imagery of transnational networks is entirely appropriate. From my structurationist perspective the advantages of network analysis are obvious. For one thing, it affords a more systematic picture of the organisation of global social relations than is possible in any postmodernist account, where only the discursive practices of individual actors are deemed relevant. In network analysis, both the frames of meaning used by actors and the circumstances in and on which they act are admissable.

This admissability involves understanding the reflexive relationships between the actor and a notionally external world which is both natural and social. I say "notional" to emphasise the point that actors enact their environments, but as suggested above, this does not mean that the external world is simply a mirror of "internal" identity or consciousness, as in autopoietic systems.

Hannerz says that the global ecumene is a network of networks where individuals and groups are drawn into "a more globalised existence " (1992, 47) and the morphology of networks facilitates this shift. In the first place, networks can be intra and inter as well as trans-organisational, and can cut across more conventional units of analysis to clarify lnkages which exist between different personal and institutional domains (Axford, 1995, 78-82). Most appropriate to the global setting, networks can structure social relationships without constraint of place or the need for co-presence. Much of the work done by cultural anthropologists addresses the ways in which local and global social relationships are articulated and either reproduced or transformed by sustained or fleeting encounters. By contrast, in the field of International Relations the interest in networks, most pronounced in the study of international regimes, has stemmed largely from a concern with the problems of cooperation in a world still governed by the rational anarchy of the international system of states. More recent and theoretically impertinent work does look to explore the ways in which global instabilities are challenging the bordered world of states, having regard for the burgeoning number of "postnational mobilizations" (Shapiro and Alker, 1995) that are both the product of that instability and which subvent it.

The network perspective draws attention to those increasingly widespread and diverse forms of transnational mobilization found in networks – of business men and women, of exchange students, of pen pals and diasporas – whose relationships (pace Hannerz) may be either long-distance or involve a mixture of presence and absence, of coming together and moving apart, of brief encounters on the telephone, or extended dialogues, or many-to-many exchanges on the Net. The strength of the network metaphor is that it captures the openness of social relationships which do not involve only economic or market exchanges, and are not just governed by administrative rules, the systematic use of power, or the constraints of place. In this it shares some of the anti-categorical fervour of postmodernist positions. The network idea, perhaps I should say the network ideal, stresses complementarity and commitment, as well as accommodation between participants, in which the key "entanglements" are reciprocity and trust (Powell, 1991, 272). This does not mean that power and conflict are absent from networked relations, which are unlikely to be pacific. Doreen Massey (1995) cautions the need to be aware of the power-geometry present in de-spatialised social relations, and this is a pertinent reminder that the "organisation of diversity" in the global ecumene, is often quite brutal, attesting to great asymmetries of power. This noted, the network metaphor affords insights into a world becoming more integrated, while acknowledging that the processes of global integration are "more pluralistic, decentralized and mutable" (Marcus and Fisher, quoted in Hannerz, 1992, 36) than is often assumed. Network analysis portrays a looseness and diversity which go some way to capture the inchoate character of current globalization, and offers a glimpse of the diverse contexts through which a more acute consciousness of the world is occurring for many people.

The very looseness and inchoateness of the globalized, post-hegemonic world itself accelerates the dissolution of bounded and autonmous nation-states and territorial geo-politics. The postmodern feel of this liminal environment is palpable, as the borders between the domestic and the international implode, to reveal "configurations of people, place and heritage (which) lose all sense of isomorphism," to quote Appadurai (1996, 46). Geography, as Latour (1997) has opined, now becomes a matter of association and connectivity, not space. For Latour the globalized world is made up of "actor-networks" consisting of collectives of humans, cyborgs and technologies, which quite confound received wisdom about territories and the subjects and objects under their dominion.

This is good knockabout stuff, and useful for its uncompromising embrace of new ways of imagining global space and new forms of representation. But in such a world there are only networks and everything else "melts into air," to borrow a phrase. Even in Hannerz's more cautious arguments there is a sense that considerations of place are often secondary to the transnational reach of a network, and for some social relationships this has to be true. For networks of commodity dealers in world markets, place has meaning only to the extent that local factors impinge on the functioning of the market, through civil war, change of regime, earthquake or famine. Yet these same dealers may also enact intense and visceral identities as locals, and in other aspects of their non-working lives, continue to behave as though "real" culture is fully the property of particular territories. Networks often carry highly specialist discourses of a technical variety, and their "thinness" in this respect makes it hard for some commentators (Smith, 1995) to accept that they can be firm or authentic contexts for identity formation. In the case of diasporas, whose raison d'etre is the myth of return to a particular territory, the growing sophistication of electronic communications which link members of the diaspora, may be no more than a convenient instrumentality. On the other hand, it might be argued that the ease with which cultures of "real virtuality"

(Castells, 1996) can be sustained on the Net, as well as by fax and telephone , could vitiate the appeal of returning, though the "ingathering" of Jews to Israel from the former Soviet Republics continues apace. My point here is that in discussing the relative potency of networks as opposed to places as the repositories of firm or thick identities, we should not reduce place (localities, any territories) to a space through which meanings flow, nor should we assume that networks are immanently fragile, perhaps unworkable contexts for identity formation. Of course, in a thoroughly postmodern world there would be no solid referential contexts or identities, and no need for them, but the world is not (or not yet) like that. Even Silvio Berlusconi, prophet of the networked "videocracy," was moved to ground his popularity in appeals to the foundational principles of Italian life, at the same time as his actions as media mogul were serving to erode what Paul Rabinow has called the "traditional spaces within a culture" (1993).

6. The Network Metaphor: Some Key Issues

In other respects the network metaphor as a means of addressing the transformative qualities of globalization needs some fine-tuning. Before turning to an examination of different forms of transnational practice, I want just to deal briefly with three issues: The first is the question of technological determinism; the second concerns networks and power, where that refers to questions of inclusion and exclusion rather than the power of networks as such; and the third is the matter of where to locate transnational networks in the morphology of the globalized world.

6.1: Discussion of transnational networks often, and rightly, puts stress on the space and time devouring capacities of various forms of electronic communications and associated technologies. It is quite common to find arguments to the effect that these technologies have, in and of themselves, remade the "bonds, boundaries and subjectivities of actors, societies and polities, as they have unfolded across global space" (O'Tuathail, 1998, 6). Castells's powerful exegesis of the "network society" is perhaps the most complete statement of the significance of information technologies in the spread of networks throughout the entire social structures of bounded societies and beyond (1996). He argues that networks "constitute the new social morphology of our societies" (469) making new sorts of spatial practices possible. Being part of a network is vital to the exercise of power in the information age. Now much of this is unexceptionable, but, and clearly this is not Castells's intention, it does rather smack of determinism. From what I have said above, it is the potential for both re-structuration and re-trenchment that resides in globalizing forces that is its most disturbing and challenging characteristic. In structurationist terms, new technologies have to be seen as new cultural scripts in relation to which agents adopt reflexive strategies of accommodation and resistance.

6.2: Networks transcend and may even destroy borders. On the face of it they might seem like ecumenical forms of social organisation, quite free from the trammels and divisions that characterise modern imaginaries: universal and particular; insider and outsider; powerful and powerless; and of course, centre and periphery. However, it is important to guard against the vision of the networked world as being bloodless,anodyne and benign. If networks dissolve certain kinds of boundaries and walls, they inscribe others. Questions of inclusion and exclusion remain significant, partly because of the uneven distribution of resources and skills available, partly because networks are almost always specialist discourses, more discriminating of membership/inclusion than the amorphous social categories they may be replacing. In other respects, networks may serve to entrench existing inequalities or centre-periphery relations, or to reproduce them in another form whose spatial reach reflects existing geo-politics or geo-economics as north-north and south-south networks. Research into the use made of computer-mediated communications by men and women (Herring, 1996) found that "electronic speech" often replicated the sex differences found in face-to-face communication. Castells says that in the network society, the key power-brokers are always the "switchers" who connect the nodes of the network, while Doreen Massey (1995, 146-56) reminds us of the power geometry found in different networks and flows, often populated by those who are not "in charge". Migrants and refugees are not in charge in her usage, while members of an executive club of business travellers are. An elderly person eating a TV dinner-for-one while watching an American film on B.SKY. B is just a passive recipient of global fare – a description of the consumer and of the audience which is contestable – whereas virtual travellers on the Internet are conscious and probably willing participants in the compression of their own world (Axford, 1997,490).

6.3: Received models of territorial societies and bounded states depict them as the containers of both thick and thin identities. By "thick" I intend a notion which is closer to the idea of community (Gemeinschaft), perhaps even of "habitus," though without its more brutish overtones. Here the idea of "us" refers to palpable communites and the jumble of meanings that bind people to particular places and to the past (Lash and Urry, 1994, 316). Thick identities constitute a group of people, closing the gaps between them. By "thin" I imply more apparent instrumentality in relationships and an emphasis on procedures which open up spaces for and between people as individuals, thereby respecting their autonomy. In some measure, but only loosely, this notion is akin to the established concept of Gesellschaft. Now clearly, what constitutes a community in a globalized world is open to debate. Referring to the possibility of transnational cultures, Hannerz (1996, 98) says that the idea of "transnational communities is not a contradiction in terms," because what is personal, primary and has the feeling of intimacy is not always restricted in space. In other words the spatial reach of networks is, in itself, no barrier to their "thickness". Of course one of the problems with conceptualising transnational networks as thick in the sense used here, is that thick cultures are seen as providing the basis for a cohesive, and probably exclusive form of community, while thin constructs seem to owe more to the observance of a common set or rules or protocols, which overlay or disguise more elemental attachments. Thick communities have the feel of wholeness, they are overarching and primary, while thin networks are partial, convenient, secondary or ephemeral, except in postmodern discourses where the distinction is meaningless. To some extent this imagery demonstrates the continued power of the territorial narrative and the continued appeal of "real" places. Like Monty Python, we all know implicitly what we mean when we say that the extension of social relationships across space and across borders is likely to produce only thin networks of capital, production, communication, INGOs and epistemic communities. In this imagination, firm or thick cultures are found in localities, in bounded nations, in ethnies, in tribes and in criminal gangs. Where exceptions are made, as in the case of cults and diasporas, it is because they are vivified by transcendent and all-subsuming spirituality, by love of particular places, and occasionally, as in the case of some transnational social movements, by ideology or some powerful expressive motivation which augments mere connection. Imagery apart, it seems to me that the de-centring of the nation-state and of territorial identities still has to be addressed through the growing spatial reach of transnational networks, the increasing density of their actions and interactions in different domains, and the changing consciousness of networked actors. At this point in the contested transformation of territoriality, the thickness or thinness of their ontologies is perhaps less crucial than the fact that their appearance is discommoding to this order, though their character remains crucial to the sort of world that is emerging.

7. Transnational Networks in Practice

In the final section of the paper I want to look at different forms of transnational network practice in different domains. I will do this by examining i) recent work on transnational networks and movements, which either adopts a world society problematic, or else is located as part of a discussion of the "geographies of resistance" (Pile and Keith, 1997), ii) by discussing some forms of what I call radical connectivity, applied both to virtual networks and to those which now routinely use information and communcations technology to compress the world, and iii) through a consideration of different ways of conceptualising European unity in the spaces and flows of the European Information Society.

7.1: Transnational networks are part of the changing logic of collective action in the globalized world (Cerny, 1995), but the "radical interdependence" across borders that they exemplify and foster (Campbell, 1996, 96) is nowhere near modal, although it is increasingly dense and visible. As Michael Mann says (1998, 187) however we choose to define transnational networks, there has been a huge increase in the shift away from local networks of interaction, to the national, the international and the transnational, and of course to the global. One index of this development is the growth of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) over the last one hundred years or so. As part of a study to demonstrate the roles played by INGOs in shaping world culture and impacting upon states and inter-statist organisations, Boli and Bennett (1997) chart the increase in active cross-border organisations from a base of 200 at the turn of the century to 800 in 1930, to 4000 in 1980. Their argument is part of a strong case for transnationality, tempered by the recognition that territorial states and their offshoots still exercise great power in the world polity. In this hybrid world INGOs as transnational actors in areas like population policy, the environment, the status and role of women and technical standardization, "employ limited resources to make rules, set standards, propagate principles and broadly represent "humanity" vis-a-vis states and other actors" (1997, 172). Related evidence on the impact of transnational INGO activity on the policies of national states can be found in Jakobsen's account of the way in which transnational dynamics affected the policy of Brazil and India on climate change (1997). In like vein, Mato (1996) seeks to reveal the manner in which transnational networks, and what he terms other "global agents" have been instrumental in the reconstruction of civil societies in Latin America.

On a more cautious note, Sidney Tarrow (1996) is agnostic on the question of whether a transnational civil society is being constructed out of the many cases of diffusion, political exchange, issue networks and social movements, all spawn of the globalization of the world economy and the greater density of transnational ties (1996, 14). He is aware that notionally objective conditions – economic and geo-political flux – are not enough in themselves to trigger collective action, just as a sense of common identity or a more diffuse awareness of shared interests may not be sufficient to produce action. Questions of transaction costs and other resource considerations are also critical in turning potential into actual mobilization. Tarrow acknowledges that there are important forms of transnational collective action, but insists that most of what is defined as transnational collective action, or more narrowly as transnational social movements are not actually cases of unified movements which cross national boundaries at all, but forms of action which, on the face of it, are more in keeping with the world as it is, being largely national or international in scope and character. This is quite a powerful critique, but in key respects misses the point, which lies less in the taxonomic status of networked actors, and more in the kind of politics which their existence opens up, and the challenges they pose to the script of nationality and national definitions of value, even where their remit may be thoroughly local and their actions confined to particular places. Terrains of resistance, as Paul Routledge says, comprise a "multiplicity of possibilities and movements" (1996, 526) and can refer to any site where contestation between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic powers and discourses takes place (1996, 516).

In all this activity there is not and probably never can be any uniformity of purpose or organisational style. Local resistors meet with their transnational counterparts only on the site of contestation that is the territory and the representational forms of the nation-state, or maybe in opposition to the ideology and practices of global neo-liberalism or unaccountable government. Even where they consciously challenge globalization, they are often implicated in it, and, as Castells says (1997, 70) are themselves "symptoms of our societies," impacting upon social structures and cultures with variable intensities and outcomes. Which view is not too distanced from the more assertive and up-beat formulation offered by Ulrich Beck in his discussion of the "sub-politics" of an emerging cosmopolitan world society (1996). Like Castells, Beck argues that transnational networks are symptoms of the current disorder, which in his case is the advent of a global "risk society". Beck insists that the contingent qualities of the world risk society promote intense reflexivity and open up the prospects for a cosmopolitan society made up of "global mutualities," cooperative global institutions and forms of "sub-politics" which give shape to what he calls the "world public". Sub-politics constitutes a form of globalization from below in that its appearance through new transnational actors, such as Greenpeace, establishes a politics which is outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states (1996, 18). Critically, he suggests that "sub-politics sets politics free by changing the rules and boundaries of the political" (1996, 18). In all these accounts of transnational networks, the importance of information and communications technologies (ICTs) is seen as critical.

7.2: The key role of ICTs in at least facilitating the formation and work of transnational networks is acknowledged widely. Castells writes that new technologies are critical to the survival of social movements, especially where they are oppositional. Referring to the "Zapatistas" in Mexico, he opines that without the aid of fax, Internet and alternative media they might have remained an isolated and localized guerrilla force (1997, 107). In an aside to a more thorough-going examination of transnational migrant communities and the nation-state, John Rex muses that "ethnicity today often operates by e-mail" (Rex, 1998, 73). But aside from their obvious instrumental uses in promoting "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson, 1993) and other, seemingly more respectable kinds of social movement, there is often some reluctance to treat with networks actually constituted by electronic communications as authentic, despite the fact that they must be a expression of a globalized world par excellence. In this respect Tarrow's sentiments are typical. He worries lest the growing web of virtual networks – e-mail conferences; gossip-swaps and so on – are proving so seductive in terms of their ability to reduce transaction costs and afford "visibility" that they blind participants to the real social costs incurred. These are that such networks do not, indeed can not deliver the same "crystallization of mutual trust and collective identity" (1996, 14), the same thickness, as the interpersonal ties seen for example among the founders of nineteenth century socialism or Islamic fundamentalism. Here once again is a clear rehearsal of the points I raised above. Electronic networks are by definition, inauthentic, incapable of being either subject or context. These sentiments echo the debate about the impact of media cultures on the stock of social capital in the United States (Puttnam, 1995) and are part of a neo-Tocquevillian romanticism about the propriety of certain political forms and practices relative to others. Part of the problem with countering these claims is that there is dearth of empirical evidence on the construction and functioning of electronic networks. Prescription and perhaps hyperbole abound. Appadurai (1996) waxes lyrical about the profusion of "diasporic public spheres" effected through the mediascapes and technoscapes of a deterritorializing globality, but we know little about the actual working of these, because the more lumpen reality is that to date there is a lack of the kind of ethnographic studies of electronic networks which are now commonplace for other transnational communities and transnational networks (see Basch, 1994; but see the proposals under the UK/s ESRC Programme on Transnational Communities). And yet "global communications spaces" (Schlesinger, 1992) as well as Appadurai's mediascapes are obvious sites for the examination of communities entirely reliant upon electronic mediation, even if this has to be conceptualised as the study of diverse audiences. Mediascapes offer large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes for audiences throughout the world (Uncapher, 1994). As sharers in a mediated culture, these audiences "experience themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards" (Uncapher, 1994, 21). Too slick? Possibly, but most assuredly these developments bear strongly on questions of meaning and identity. But when the opportunity arises for the creation of new transnational, borderless environments in cyberspace, the convention is that by far the most durable are those which allow people to interact in a shared place where they can feel secure. The attempt to construct actor-networks which are more than "thread-like, wiry and stringy" to quote Latour (1997) and to analogise properties of the "real – world" – from bills of rights to the virtual mansion as a meeting place – demonstrates just how strong our older fictions are.

7.3: In the European Union many of the issues that I have raised here are being played out in the most audacious experiment in regional integration seen in the modern world. Current interest in the integrative process centres on whether the EU is to be understood as some kind of superstate, an exercise in advanced intergovernmentalism, or, as is now fashionable, sui generis, a unique, multi-level polity and exemplar of the "new governance" (for a summary of these positions, see Hix, 1998). In the new Europe of the 1990's all sorts of boundaries are being redefined (Axford and Huggins, 1998), partly by dint of the liberal ideology of deregulation which has driven the Single Market process, partly because of the collapse of state socialism, and also through the space and time devouring capacities of electronic communications. Along with global markets, digital technologies are attenuating the territorial state's claims to autonomy and its status as the sole locus and guarantor of the "imagined community of the nation". For all this, confusion over the way to conceptualise the EU polity, the official version of constructing Europe owes much to a "conceptual grid" (Caporaso, 1996) which converts what are really questions about transnational governance into the niceties of territorial government, thereby suggesting that uniting Europe is, or can be, a process akin to that of nation-building. But the EU does not fit easily into any accepted category of government, and its lack of legitimacy among national populations in member states makes it difficult to conceive of it as an imagined community. To consolidate the integration process, the Commission has given prominence to the idea of a European identity as a key building block in the integration process (Laffan, 1996). But the "inarticulate major premises" (Ruggie, 1992) governing the ideals of territorial rule and ways of legitimating it culturally, seem at odds with the more postmodern concept of Europe as "space of flows," which Ruggie also puts forward, and which is the rationale of the internal market process (though not of Maastricht). Now to some extent, the EU has already addressed the fact that the idea of "a" Europe is in reality only a pot-pourri of local, regional, national, ethnic and even global identity claims. So pluralism of sorts is already part of its wish-list for a viable "united" Europe.

If Europe is a space of flows, even a loosely articulated multi-level polity, then it is possible to imagine Europe as a network polity and civil society, as a space created and reproduced through transnational, regional and local networks of interaction – cultural, commercial, scientific, military and educational – rather than, or as well as a territory to be governed or regulated in the usual sense of these terms. This is clearly Castells's intention in his discussion of the network state in Europe, (1997b) and it informs Michael Mann's insistence (1998, 205) that "Euro" is an ecumene of interaction networks, composed of multiple, overlapping and intersecting networks: of specialists, Euromanagers, Socrates exchange students and so on. However, as I have suggested, this mildly postmodern interpretation runs up against the imagining of those seeking European cultural integration and *a* European identity. These conflicting visions of Europe collide in the policy space of the European Information Society Project (ISPO).

Overall the idea of a European Information Society offers a general prescription for a virtual Europe made up of transnational networks (Bangemann 1994; High Level Group of Experts, 1997; Bangemann, 1997). At the same time, it is influenced by two strands of thinking about culture as an integrative force and about the role of ICTs as the chosen means of cultural production and delivery. The first strand interprets culture as a discourse which transcends national societies and expresses a genuinely European heritage. In this strand, ICTs are integral in mapping a post-national cultural space, which not only affects the ways in which people interact with each other across borders, but also changes their perceptions through the representation of existing culture, through the ways in which cultural goods are produced and disseminated, and thus through the ability of people to understand the traditions and cultures of the past. ICTs are thus the gateway to the representation of a new European cultural metanarrative.

By contrast, the second strand emphasises the role of ICTs in reviving local cultures, or the cultural survival of spatial communities of various kinds. Here the EU is mindful of the "space annihilating nature" of information technologies, while it also holds out the prospect of new non-spatial "communities of interest," that is, specialist discourses, which presumably subist in (rather than transcend) the wrack of local cultures and fit alongside the transcendental discourse of European culture. Leaving aside the functionalist use of culture on offer in Euro policy statements, this collision of different imaginings of Europe looks quite fruitful and properly inchoate, though it results in a good deal of policy confusion. The increasing reliance on transnational networks and communities of interest to initiate and deliver programmes under the ISPO remit represents a significant institutional innovation and a re-imagining of policy space. In addition it problematises what is meant by community. Both Mann and Anthony Smith (1998; 1995) wish to distinguish any form of European network identity or symbolic community from national sentiments which are embedded in communities of ritual and emotion. Smith goes so far as to argue that it is impossible to create an authentic European identity in the absence of real European signifiers, but in the absence of much hard evidence it is wiser to be less dogmatic. My structurationist, and mildly postmodern position is that the networks and flows of the European information society, open up new possibilities for the articulation of spatial and virtual communities and new ways of imagining European unity.

8. Conclusion

The role of transnational networks, both thick and thin, in remaking the world's social, political and cultural geographies is widely acknowledged, but in key areas pertaining to their formation and functioning, and in relation to their ontologies as collective actors, much empirical research still has to be done. To adapt William Connolly (1991) the radical changes which we usually refer to as globalization are still falling through the gaps between disciplines with different rules and agendas. My argument here has been that a modified structurationist approach to the ways in which these "new" actors both reproduce and transform the conditions for action will yield important insights, despite the claims that structurationism is difficult to use in empirical investigation. As to the thesis that transnational networks are contributing to a radical deterritorialization of social relationships and identities, the evidence is mixed, some of it confirming the thesis, the rest pointing to the continued vitality of states as actors and particular places as the repository of firm identities and traditions. This is not, or not yet a borderless world, but how could it be otherwise? As my brief discussion of the European case suggests, the world being made through the multiple intesections of and sometimes the conflicts between transnational networks, which stretch social relationships; and between them and other versions of social organisation which traffic ideas about world order still rooted in terrritory (sometimes super-territories) and tradition. For all this I do not subscribe to the view that transnational networks are by defintion "thin," if by that is meant in some way inauthentic, or incapable of sustaining identities. To argue thus, without the benefit of detailed empirical investigation is the worst kind of a-priori reasoning. In the case of European unity, study of transnational networks can reveal a rather different vision of that process and of the outcome than is possible in either intergovernmentalist or conventionally integrationist positions. It trades on the recogniton that transnational networks and communities of affect and interest ought to be understood as what Featherstone (1990) calls "third cutures," which all afford opportunities for new allegiances and identities, but (and this is significant) without the necessary concomitant of the destruction of older ones, because (where ISPO is concerned) of their location in the hyperspace and cyberspace of European flows. This picture of a hybridized European ecumene in a globalized world seems to me to reflect curent circumstances, and may be paradigmatic. Transnational networks are re-ordering the world "from below" as it were, and we should beware of responding to this either through reflex hand-wringing about the world we are losing, or ritual hand-clapping about the joys to come.

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On a Sociology of Borderlines: Social Process in Time of Globalization

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To Walter Bühl

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