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## **The 'G-Words': Critical Understandings of Globalizations in Context**

Globalization is a highly contested buzzword. The term has seen an extremely successful spreading in the public and the media, and it may be found on the political, economic and academic agenda of almost any government, company and research institution. Therefore, this special issue contributes with the transdisciplinary study of globalization in a culture perspective.

Globalization is a term “often used to designate the power relations, practices and technologies that characterize, and helped bring into being, the contemporary world” (Schirato/Webb 2006: 1). However, there is neither a simple, nor a widely accepted definition of the term. The widespread use of “g-words” (Scholte 2000), such as global, globalization or “glocalization” (Robertson 1992), covers a wide range of meanings. As a consequence, this special issue contributes with critical studies of globalization in context.

Moreover, this special issue is edited by members of the Cultural Research Unit at the Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University. It contributes with critical understandings of globalization not only in context, but also in a culture perspective. It offers empirical studies of the concepts of globalizations and their theoretical implications, as well as notions of globalization that challenge prevalent understandings of the term.

Globalization is human made. In a culture perspective, two major understandings of globalization may be distinguished. On the one hand, globalization denotes a condition of being global. If we apply Bau-

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mann (1999), we may speak of the “having” of globalization. In this perspective, globalization denotes a phenomenon or a tendency which is “just out there”, and which is inevitable and irreversible. Phenomena like the convergence of media, markets and cultures, may then be seen as a function of globalization. Globalization then means “globality” (Scholte 2000: 42) or a global condition. On the other hand, globalization denotes the processes of becoming more global, and their consequences. In this process oriented understanding of globalization, the focus is on practices, on the doing or “making” (Baumann 1999) of globalization. However, we argue with Baumann (1999) that the ‘having’ and the ‘making’ of cultural phenomena are related. In order to ‘have’ globalization, globalization has to be ‘made’. In order to understand globalization, we have to look at the processes and practices in diverse areas of societies, which create the phenomena we identify as globalization, such as business, politics, law or arts.

The question is, however, which practices and processes we have to investigate in order to contribute to the field of globalization research. In order to answer this question, we make use of Scholte (2000). Scholte points to redundant understandings of globalization: In his view, globalization very often is used to rename already well-known phenomena, namely liberalization, universalization, internationalization and westernization. If we follow this argument, we can eliminate a range of well-known processes and practices, such as: the unhindered flow of products, services, labour force, or money (or liberalization); the convergence of value orientations (or universalization); the spreading of corporate activities to an infinite number of countries on many or all continents (or internationalization); the dissolution of borderlines between companies, media, countries and other entities (or westernization). As a consequence, this special issue on globalization contributes with critical understandings of globalization in the diverse areas of corporate citizenship, contemporary China, market communication and poetry in an early modern centre of globalization.

This special issue invites the reader to engage in innovative and original work on globalization. Five researchers from three European countries and diverse fields such as political economy, market communication, cultural studies, sinology, and history, explore understandings of globalization that go beyond the redundant use of the word. The articles

selected for this issue are therefore characterized by their elaborate and critical approach to globalization in context.

**Grahame Thompson** offers original insights into the new emerging global legal order. In his contribution “International Quasi-Constitutionalism and Corporate Citizenship: Language, Troubles, Dilemmas”, Thompson studies the implications of global corporate citizenship and how this concept is in conflict with concepts such as national state, citizenship of a state, and legislation of national states. In demonstrating how global corporate citizenship is undergoing a process of institutionalization by international politics and law, Thompson distinguishes between two approaches: the “Acts Citizenship” and the “Status Citizenship”. The ‘Acts’ Citizenship is based on the idea that a corporation can claim certain rights analogous to the rights of citizens. The ‘Status’ Citizenship is based on the idea that, analogous to the core notion of democracy, corporations like citizens have both rights and obligations. The institutionalisation of those rights takes outset both in law (juridicalization) and in fundamental civic rights (constitutionalism). As those developments take place in a borderless environment (a “global economy” vs. an “international economy”), globalization is one of the drivers of this trend.

**Stig Thøgersen** shows in his contribution on “China’s Symbiotic Narratives of Opening and Globalization”, how post-Mao China gradually is adapting to the Western idea of globalization. He studies political narratives and how they gradually acknowledge, instrumentalize and adjust to the idea of globalization. Comparing five periods in contemporary Chinese history, Stig Thøgersen points towards different ways of wording and interpreting globalization. His study starts off with Deng Xiaoping’s policy of reform and opening from 1978, and concludes with the investigation of narratives on the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

As Stig Thøgersen is focusing on “how China’s leaders have told the story”, his article provides interesting insights into the narrative strategies of the Chinese Communist Party when dealing with the phenomena of globalization: A very interesting observation in the article is also the shift in the phrasing of the gradual opening of the country: While the early term *kaifang* implies “a process of liberation from control and constraints”, the Chinese word for globalization, *qunqihua*, denotes the

rather different meaning that China – as the rest of the world – “is exposed to, not the result of political choice”.

This article offers valuable insights into the globalization processes of an isolated political sphere that gradually has to acknowledge, relate to and open up to global developments. It also is an interesting study of how a state keeps its (national) identity alive in spite of the growing impact from outside influences.

**Iris Rittenhofer** and **Martin Nielsen** challenge the concept of the global market. In their article on “Marketscapes. Market between culture and globalization”, Rittenhofer and Nielsen look at market communication from a cultural perspective. From the perspective of both a static and a process oriented understanding of culture, the authors critically review the essentialist notion of the market prevalent in market communication theory. Particularly when market communication embraces a globalizing world, the a priori assumption of the “thereness” of markets entails an understanding of a global market which suffers from several shortcomings: The upscaling and addition of (national) markets to a global market does neither capture the complexities, nor the heterogeneity or the dynamics of the processes of globalization. Moreover, in market communication theory, an understanding of globalization is applied to the concept of market, which suffers from the above-mentioned redundancies. The result is a none-comprehensive conception of a global market.

The authors advocate for a post-modern and social constructionist approach to the global market and develop the notion of “marketscapes”. Drawing on Appadurai’s (1990) concept of “-scapes”, they challenge the classic notion of market communication as communicative interaction with territorial entities such as regional, national and global markets. Offering the concept of “marketscapes” as an alternative, Rittenhofer and Nielsen advocate the abandoning of the idea that markets are geographical entities which exist prior to and independent of market communication.

**Ulrich Ufer** takes the position that globalization is not only a contemporary phenomenon, but a historical one. Ufer places his investigation within a research tradition of World Systems Analysis and argues that globalization dates back to much earlier developments than the fall of the Berlin Wall. In his article “Globalization and Modern

Identity Practices – Locals and Cosmopolitans in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam”, historian and social anthropologist Ufer examines “how the opening of a locality to global interconnectedness has impacted on identity practices and cultural change in an early modern centre of globalization.”

Ufer’s point of departure is a constructionist concept of culture as “attributed meaning”. He offers an analysis and phenomenological investigation of 17<sup>th</sup> century Amsterdam. His special focus is the cultural expressions both of a contemporary poet’s work, and of a biography of a cosmopolitan merchant. Understood as “identity practices”, these cultural expressions are read as elements in the development of a “cosmopolitan civic identity”, situated between the local and the global. In this way, Ufer offers illustrative empiric insights into identity formation processes related to polarisations of the local and the global.

This special issue of HERMES contributes to the expanding academic discussions on globalization. The authors and their contributions all apply critical angles to their study of globalization and offer valuable context related insights into ongoing globalizing processes. Therefore, we see the contribution of this issue of HERMES to the broad field of globalization studies less as a widening of the scope than as an accretion of useful understandings of globalization substantiating what processes of globalization are actually about.

The editors

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