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## Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization

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The multiple processes that constitute economic globalization inhabit and shape specific structurations of the economic, the political, the cultural, and the subjective. Among the most vital of their effects is the production of new spatialities and temporalities. These belong to both the global and the national, if only to each in part. This “in part” is an especially important qualification, as in my reading the global is itself partial, albeit strategic. The global does not (yet) fully encompass the lived experience of actors or the domain of institutional orders and cultural formations; it persists as a partial condition. This, however, should not suggest that the global and the national are discrete conditions that mutually exclude each other. To the contrary, they significantly overlap and interact in ways that distinguish our contemporary moment.

These overlaps and interactions have consequences for the work of theorization and research. Much of social science has operated with the assumption of the nation-state as a container, representing a unified spatiotemporality. Much of history, however, has failed to confirm this assumption. Modern nation-states themselves never achieved spatiotemporal unity, and the global restructurings of today threaten to erode the usefulness of this proposition for what is an expanding arena of sociological reality. The spatiotemporality of the national, upon closer inspection, reveals itself to be composed of multiple spa-

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tialities and temporalities that are at best organizable into something approximating a spatiotemporal order—one, for instance, that can now be distinguished from the global.

Crucial to the project of this essay will be its conception of the dynamics of interaction and overlap that operate both within the global and the national and between them. Each sphere, global and national, describes a spatiotemporal order with considerable internal differentiation and growing mutual imbrication with the other. Their internal differences interpenetrate in ways that are variously conflictive, disjunctive, and neutralizing. The theoretical and methodological task of this essay will be one of detecting/constructing the social thickness and specificity of these dimensions with the aim of developing a suitably textured understanding of dynamic spaces of overlap and interaction. Given the complexity and specificity of both the global and the national, their interlacing suggests the existence of frontier zones—from the perspective of research and theorization, these analytic borderlands are sure to require independent theoretical and methodological specificity. Given the historically constructed meaning of the national as a dominant condition that mutually excludes both other nationals and the nonnational, these frontier zones are likely to be marked by operations of power and domination. A possible outcome of these dynamics of interaction between the global and the national, I suggest, is an incipient and partial denationalization of domains once understood and/or constructed as national.

Theoretically and operationally, these processes seem thus far to have favored certain kinds of subjects and topics as strategic and capable of illuminating the issues at hand. In the domain of the global economic, transnational corporations, financial markets, and (in my analysis at least [Sassen 1998, chap. 4]) immigrant workers are emblematic subjects. At a greater level of complexity, so are the question of sovereignty in the context of globalization and the formation of border-crossing networks of global cities.<sup>1</sup>

These are the elements I begin to explore in this essay. I will focus especially on analytic operations that I have found to be helpful, if not necessary, to explaining the dynamics of national-global overlap and interaction. As my past research has made me more familiar with the global than the national, the global will provide my angle of entry into these issues.

1. Many more such subjects and topics have already been identified and conceptualized in other domains. See, for example, Appadurai 1996 and Palumbo-Liu 1999.

There is a specificity to the conditions and contents of the global. Two elements that are key to its formulation are the degree of economic globalization's embeddedness in the national and the specificity and social thickness of the global.<sup>2</sup> The global economy cannot be taken simply as given, whether what is given is a set of markets or a function of the power of multinational corporations. To the contrary, the global economy is something that has to be actively implemented, reproduced, serviced, and financed. It requires that a vast array of highly specialized functions be carried out, that infrastructures be secured, that legislative environments be made and kept hospitable. These requirements need to be produced or secured, even in the case of what we might consider merely the cross-border spread or imposition of particular national forms, whether Anglo-American accounting standards or U.S. styles of food and entertainment.

Not everyone would agree with this assessment, however. Much scholarship on economic globalization has either rejected what I am calling its specificity—some reject even its reality—or confined its conceptualization to cross-border trade and capital flows, thereby denuding it of most of its social thickness.<sup>3</sup> Among those who do grant it a specific presence, the tendency has been to understand economic globalization in terms of the technological achievements of hypermobility and the neutralization of distance (Ohmae 1996). Arguments about the compression of time—real-time simultaneity and instantaneous integration—have become the predictable commentaries on such descriptions.

What both of these mainstream accounts tend to leave out of the analysis is that global-economic features like hypermobility and time-space compression are not self-generative. They need to be produced, and such a feat of production requires capital fixity (Harvey 1982), vast concentrations of very material and not so mobile facilities and infrastructures. As such, the spatiotemporality of economic globalization itself can already be seen to contain dynamics of both mobility and fixity (Sassen 1998, chap. 10; Brenner 1998). While mobility and fixity may easily be classified as two distinct types of dynamic from the perspective of mainstream categories, they in fact enjoy no such distinction. Each presupposes the other, thereby raising empirical, theoretical, and political questions that defy the explanatory power of unified theories of hypermobility and time-space com-

2. William Sewell has developed the notion of “thickening the social.” In a slight play on the terms I argue here that we need to bring social thickness to our analysis of globalization. This can be particularly helpful in identifying sites that allow for complexity in an inquiry about economic globalization.

3. See Smith et al. 1999 for a fairly broad range of positions.

pression. The global city is emblematic here, with its vast capacities for controlling hypermobile dematerialized financial instruments and its enormous concentrations of those material and human, mostly place-bound, resources that make such capacities possible. Cities demonstrate one way in which economic globalization can be said to be nationally embedded, in this instance institutionally and locationally so.<sup>4</sup>

If the global is indeed rich in content and characterized by a diversity of conditions, then its insertion in an institutional world that has been historically constructed as overwhelmingly national is eventful. Indeed, it is what gives meaning to the notion of overlap and interaction among the multiple spatialities and temporalities of the national and the global. These insertions remain in process, continuously producing new specificity, which already differs greatly today from what it was only fifteen years ago.

The extent to which global conditions today resemble the conditions of earlier eras is a subject of much debate (Arrighi 1994; *Political Power and Social Theory* 1999). Of interest here is Fernand Braudel's (1984) examination of the times and spaces of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe. His treatment of the distinctiveness of the period's major cities—the "supervilles"—highlights a coexistence of several spatialities and temporalities. But these tended to define mutually exclusive zones; for the most part, only cores and peripheries were articulated to each other, and then by relations of hierarchy. What I am positing is different from Braudel's mutually exclusive zones. For instance, within global cities today, the capital fixity that makes possible hypermobility instantiates a spatiality and temporality that is distinct from that of the circulation of hypermobile dematerialized financial instruments. The two coexist without either fully containing the global economic, which overlaps both.<sup>5</sup>

Global processes are often strategically located/constituted in national spaces, where they are implemented usually with the help of legal measures taken by state institutions. The material and legal infrastructure that makes possible the global circulation of financial capital, for example, is often produced as "national" infrastructure—even though increasingly shaped by global agendas. This insertion into

4. In a different domain, I read Appadurai's (1996) account of global cultural disjunctures as a conceptualization of the spatialities and temporalities of the global that captures this specificity of conditions and contents, so that disjunctures internal to the global are revealed.

5. On the other hand, what Appadurai identifies as disjunctural in global cultural flows has a global economic parallel in the disjuncture between financial market deregulation and the compensation of investor losses that result from financial crises that (we now know) are a regular outcome of deregulation.

the national of global projects, originating both domestically and externally, begins a partial unbundling of national space. It is only partial, as the geography of economic globalization is strategic rather than diffuse,<sup>6</sup> as well as for the reason that national space was never unitary or fully integrated to begin with, despite its institutional construction as such.<sup>7</sup> These developments signal a transformation in the particular form of the articulation of sovereignty and territory that has marked the recent history of the modern state and interstate system, beginning with World War I and culminating in the Pax Americana period.<sup>8</sup> I suggest that one way to conceptualize these insertions of the global into the fabric of the national is as a partial and incipient denationalization of that which historically has been constructed as the national or, rather, of certain properties of the national (Sassen 1996b, chap. 1).<sup>9</sup>

Whether the combined embeddedness and specificity of the global actually achieves these temporal and spatial unbundlings and whether particular constructions of the national have greater capacities for resistance or accommodation than others are the concerns of the second half of this essay. Its first half considers the specificity and complexity of those frontier zones born of the interactive overlapping of global and national orders.

6. There is disagreement in the literature on this point. Some authors see globalization as a universal and universalizing condition, especially when it comes to the sphere of consumption. In my research I have tended to focus on the operations necessary to the management and coordination of the global economy as well as those that organize the appropriation and control of profit. From this angle, the geography of globalization is partial and not all-encompassing, though it is strategic. These two different angles can be interpreted as instantiations of different spatialities within the global.

7. The doctrine of extraterritoriality was developed precisely to accommodate the nonunitary condition of the national and to secure the extension of state authority beyond the geographic boundaries of national territory (Mattingly 1988).

8. There is considerable disagreement as to the impact of economic globalization on the national state (see for instance Smith et al. 1999; Olds et al. 1999). Simplifying, one could say that on one side are those who argue that not much has changed for the state (Krasner 1999) and on the other are those who argue that the state is losing much of its significance (Ohmae 1996). Both of these positions share assumptions that I reject, in particular that the national and the global are two mutually exclusive zones for theorization, empirical specification, and politics.

9. Further, insofar as the global is constitutive of as well as constituted through a distinct spatiotemporal order, and insofar as the dominant, though not exclusive, spatiotemporal order over the last several decades has been the national, we can conceptualize the global as a denationalized spatiotemporal order—both in the sense of the denationalizing of elements of the national and in the sense of a novel order distinct from the national. The national here is to a large extent linked to the territorial state and those of its organizational capacities necessary for the territorializing of capital. See also Harvey 1982; Brenner 1998.

**Analytic Borderlands**

Specifying such borderlands has its own particular challenges: What are the activities that distinguish borderlands? How are their contents produced? What theoretical tools are needed to resist the collapse of these zones into thinly linear demarcations of difference?<sup>10</sup>

Far more work on this issue has been done in fields other than those dealing with the global economy. For instance, Homi Bhabha's (1994) explorations and theorizations of spaces of intersection and "in-between" forms of difference make a large contribution to our understanding of borderlands. I also read such an effort in an extraordinary new book by David Palumbo-Liu (1999, 1) in which he posits that his construction "Asian/American," at once implying both exclusion and inclusion, "marks both the distinction installed between 'Asian' and 'American' and a dynamic, unsettled, and inclusive movement."

For a political economist, the analytics and the contents of such borderlands are of course quite different. Most of my effort has focused on the intersection between systems of representation that are sufficiently diverse as to render their interaction analytically inconsequential for mainstream analysts. For instance, I have argued that globalization has contributed to a series of economic activities that take place in national contexts but that are sufficiently novel in some of their features (organizational or locational) so that while they do not appear to violate existing regulatory frameworks, they cannot be said to comply with them either. I describe the in-between spaces these practices bring into being as "regulatory fractures." Such fractures include, for example, financial operations that, without violating regulations, destabilize national governments—as speculative attacks by foreign hedge funds on the Thai currency did in mid-1997: No regulations were violated, yet this was war. Another example is the informal economies growing in major cities of the highly developed world. Frequently, these are represented as having little to do with the global economy; instead, they are construed as remnant economic practices imported by immigrants from developing countries to global cities. In my research, I have found such economies largely to

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10. I have developed the concept of analytic borderlands in Sassen 1996a. It entails opening up a line (represented or experienced as dividing two mutually exclusive zones) into a border zone that demands its own theorization and empirical specification and that can accommodate its own distinct practices. My notion of the global city is one instantiation, clearly one on a rather macro level. The work I am doing currently on the state (Sassen 1999) concentrates on another, particularly the notion of incipiently denationalized (highly specialized) institutional orders that negotiate between the world of the exclusive sovereign authority of national states over their national territories and the implantation of global operations in those same territories and institutional orders.

be an outcome of the new types of organizational, spatial, and temporal requirements that are in fact entailed by the growth of those cities' global sectors (Sassen 1998, chap. 8).<sup>11</sup> Replete with such regulatory fractures, global cities include dense and complex borderlands marked by the intersection of multiple spatiotemporal (dis)orders.

**Interactions and Overlaps** A vital concern for research into these borderlands is the discernment and preservation of the complexity produced of the combined thickness and specificity of the national and the global. An important contribution in this area is Arjun Appadurai's thesis of global cultural disjunctures (1996, chap. 2), in particular his insistence that disjunctures themselves interact dynamically and uncertainly. The relationship between cultural and economic levels, Appadurai argues, is irreducible to a one-way process "set wholly by, or confined wholly within, the vicissitudes of international flows of technology, labor, and finance." In consequence, analysis of these circumstances cannot be accomplished merely by "modest modification of existing neo-Marxist models of uneven development and state formation." Today social actors are likely to live, and entities likely to operate, in overlapping domains of the national and the global. The distinct formations produced of these dynamics require empirical specification and theorization on their own terms.

In my own research on the global economy I have increasingly come to see that much of what we think of as a new economic dynamic—for example, that the global is dominated by finance—in fact emerges from the juxtaposition of the national and the global. This is especially so, perhaps, when it comes to the discrepant temporalities that distinguish institutional and organizational settings associated with the national as constructed in developed countries during the post–World War II era from those associated with the global as constructed during the last decade.

**Juxtaposed Temporalities and New Economies** The question of temporality in the economy raises the familiar issue of how technology has altered the duration

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<sup>11</sup> The deregulation of leading sectors in the context of economic globalization requires significant legislative changes and enormous resources. Because of the high stakes and the power of those involved, a growing number of countries have been willing to do this, often at significant cost to the national treasuries and to the taxpayers that finance them. At the bottom of the economic system the work of deregulation has been a low-cost operation in samizdat. Where the will to deploy these resources is lacking, as it frequently is, costs are absorbed by the workers, families, and communities involved. What we describe as deregulation at the top of the system is informalization at the bottom. See Sassen 1998, chap. 8.

of a variety of economic practices. Accounts of how technology has accelerated economic practice abound, but acceleration is not the whole story. Discrepancies between the rates of acceleration affecting different economic activities can engender differing temporalities, and it is these differences that should be of the greater interest to us. The ascendancy of finance and the dematerialization of many economic activities assume their full meaning only when we juxtapose the uneven temporalities they foster—juxtapositions that illustrate, for example, the disjuncture of digital and material temporalities.

Such a disjuncture can be seen through a comparison of the different capital forms mobilized in, for example, the production of a car versus the provision of a financial service. Profit is realized from automobile manufacture in about nine months; the duration of a financial service transaction could be a day or less.<sup>12</sup> These are produced temporal orders each embedded in a complex institutional world belonging, I would argue, to a distinct spatiotemporal configuration. In the gap between the two orders lies a world of business opportunities. This is not necessarily a new event (see Arrighi 1994 for a discussion of Marx's cycles of capital), but the divergence between the organizations of manufacturing capital and financial capital is part of the specificity that characterizes the overlap of the national with the global today. The sharper the differentiation between these two temporalities grows (with dematerialization/digitalization), the more abundant the business opportunities become. This is one way in which economic globalization today is constituted: Temporal features of finance capital empower it to subject other forms of capital to its rhythms.

The emergence of new profit opportunities at these interfaces of discrepant temporalities in advanced economies occasions new questions for theory and research. Insofar as much of this activity happens in cities, enriching them with new sources of growth and hierarchies of profitability, much new critical and analytic effort is directed at the city. As new ventures stake claims in cities' borderzones—spaces belonging to none of the sectors whose converging unevenness creates their profitability—borderzones have become the sites of analytic interest and complexity.

12. I should add that through the manufacturing of products such as cars or airplanes, etc., an enormous amount of capital gets concentrated under one form of management. Market economies always face the challenge of securing the concentration of sufficiently large amounts of money so that they may function as investment capital. In the case of Volkswagen, for instance, the manufacturing of cars secured vast amounts of capital that was not continuously used at a similar level of intensity over the nine-month production cycle and hence allowed its financial services division to use that capital for shorter term operations.



### Excavating the Temporality of the National

I would like now to focus on one aspect of the foregoing discussion, the temporality of the national. As a master image of globalization, accelerated time has already become a distinct object of study. If the temporality of the national has, by contrast, remained submerged, an unnamed condition, it is partly because it is our given condition, the assumed temporality of much social scientific practice. If the institutional orders that embed the national are traversed by the global, however, the national may well be said to contain a deteriorating temporality.<sup>13</sup>

The time of the national is elusive; it needs excavating. It is constructed of a past filled with the nation's founding myths and a future set to inherit the state as the necessary consequence of the nation—that is, the national is a time that looks to the past and inherits a future. As such, work that interrogates the past and locates it in the present is especially compelling. Jean and John Comaroff (1997) situate their work against a broader set of conceptual and historiographic practices in a way that instructs us in the temporality of the national: “While, at least in one obvious sense, the making of the modern world has run its course, its grand narrative has been rendered all the more enigmatic by the sheer unexpectedness of its closing scenes . . . the jury is still very much out on some of the enduring issues of social theory” (xiv). Theirs is “an account of a colonial past that reaches into the present—each chapter carries forward into this century—and contemplates the fashioning of the future” (xvi). What I take from this volume, *pace* the matter that it is a colonial past, is the notion that the past is unsettled, not in the sense that it yields only imperfect knowledge or data, but in the sense that it lives.

The past is not a linear sequence that can be retraced and left behind. Nor is it present simply in the sense of having fostered path-dependence—that is, of having established the constraints of what will be possible in future. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has observed, often “the legacy of the past” in fact is not given to us by the past at all. Building on Trouillot's observation, I would add that the temporality of the national is organized by “the assumption that history requires a linear and cumulative sense of time that allows the observer to isolate the past as a distinct entity” (Trouillot 1995, 7). Along a similar line, David Palumbo-Liu's (1999) work examines how the term *American* in the hyphenated identity marker *Asian-American* is construed as settled and pre-

13. This is ongoing, unfinished research; see Sassen 1999.

ceding *Asian* in what is constructed as lineal time. Asian is made to seem belated and unsettled. In fact, Liu argues, the relation is not lineal but mutually constitutive.

By examining a similar tension between *global* and *national*, we discover that the dynamics contributing to the formation of global economic systems provide clues to the temporality of the national as well. For instance, the privatization of resources and regulatory functions that distinguishes the current global economic era also accomplishes a shift in temporalities that globalization scholars often overlook. When a firm moves from the public sector to the private sector much more happens than a mere shift in ownership. Insofar as the shift happens through foreign investment, the norm in much of the world, it is likely to entail entry into global economic circuits—that is to say, an institutional world that operates under different conditions of velocity and territoriality. There is also a shift in the location of regulatory functions, from a public bureaucracy to a corporate office. This means a shift from a bureaucratic temporal order, in principle subject to the slow moving and rule-bound public accountability of governmental processes, to the accelerated dynamic of private “regulatory” functions and markets (Sassen 1999).

The same growth of private or self-regulation signals also a shift in institutional orders. Scholarship on public settlement mechanisms, such as courts, has given us good insight into how public institutional orders function. Although guided by a set of questions not directly concerned with temporality, this research nonetheless often yields a sense of the temporal organization of public institutions, suggesting the degree to which privatization ushers firms into different temporal orders. Private international commercial arbitration provides a good example. In past work I have emphasized the privatizing of “justice” that takes place through this type of arbitration (Sassen 1996b). Reconsidering this issue in the terms under discussion here brings to the fore the fact that different forms of arbitration entail discrepant temporal orders, as can be immediately seen in the way in which the avoidance of national court systems ensures quick adjudications and settlements.

### **Cross-Border Spatialities**

A specific kind of materiality underlies the world of new business activities, including those that have been digitalized. Even the most globalized and dematerialized business sectors, such as global finance, inhabit both physical and digital space. Such firms’ activities are simultaneously partly deterritorialized and partly

deeply territorialized; they span the globe, yet they are strategically concentrated in specific places.<sup>14</sup>

The strategic geography of this distribution fluidly traverses borders and spaces while installing itself in key cities. It is a geography that explodes conventional notions of context and traditional hierarchies of scale. It does so, in part, through the unbundling of national territory. We can therefore understand the global economy as materializing in a worldwide grid of strategic places, uppermost among which are major international business and financial centers. This global grid can further be understood to constitute a new economic geography of centrality, one that cuts across national borders and across the old North-South divide.<sup>15</sup>

The most powerful of these new geographies of centrality is the inter-urban geography that joins major international financial and business centers: New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Sydney, Hong Kong. Recent expansions of the network have incorporated São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Bombay, Bangkok, Taipei, and Mexico City. As the magnitude and intensity of transactions among these cities—particularly in financial services, markets, and investing—have increased, economic inequalities between nodal cities and others in their own countries have also increased. The growth of global markets for finance and specialized services, the increasing need for international investment services, the reduced role of government in the regulation of international economic activity and the corresponding ascendance of other arenas and institutional organs, notably global markets and corporate headquarters—all these signal the abundance of energetic economic processes that routinely travel a transnational urban system (Sassen 2000).

14. The space economy of leading information industries raises a very specific question of control and governance. In these industries, more so than in many others, a significant volume of transactions and markets operates in electronic space that is not subject to conventional jurisdictions. The questions of control and regulation raised by the electronic and telecommunications side of this new space economy lie beyond much of the current discussion about the shrinking role of the state in a global economy. Once transactions begin to happen within these new technologies, speed alone creates problems of control that are new and can be handled through neither conventional state-centered nor nonstate forms of authority. The most familiar case is that of the foreign currency markets where volumes made possible by multiple transactions in a single day have left the existing institutional apparatus, notably central banks, impotent to affect outcomes in these markets the way they once expected to. There are other, empowering sides to this story (see, for example, *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 1996).

15. For concrete applications of these propositions, see, for instance, Knox and Taylor 1995; Short and Kim 1999. A key aspect of the spatialization of global economic processes which I cannot develop here is digital space (but see Sassen 1998, chap. 9).

The cities that compose the interurban system are not simply in a relation of competition to each other. Elements of a division of labor exist among them as well. In earlier research I found that there was far less competition and far more specialized and strategic collaboration among New York, London, and Tokyo, especially in the financial sectors, than is usually recognized (Sassen 2000). By the late 1990s, it has become evident that a cross-border system defines relations among these cities. In some cases the system is becoming formalized, as with the strategic alliance between London's and Frankfurt's financial markets and the current effort to create an alliance among eight of the leading stock markets in continental Europe. Hierarchy also characterizes the network. New York and London are, doubtless, the world's leading international business and finance centers, while Tokyo remains the main exporter of capital, though other centers surpass it in the provision of services.

These features of the global economy underline the need to rethink the distinction between the global and the local, notably the assumption about the necessity of territorial proximity to the constitution of the local. This means rethinking spatial hierarchies that are usually taken as given, such as local < national < global. For example, both international professionals and immigrant workers operate in contexts that are at the same time local and global, disrupting conventional hierarchies of scale. The new professionals of finance belong to a cross-border culture in many ways embedded in a global network of local places—particular international financial centers among which people, information, and capital circulate regularly. Further, as financial centers, London, New York, Zurich, Amsterdam, and Frankfurt—to mention just a few—are all part of an international yet highly localized work subculture. We see here a relation of intercity proximity operating without shared territory: Proximity is deterritorialized. Similarly, many immigrants belong to cross-border networks connecting specific work locales with their home communities (Basch et al. 1994; Mahler 1996). Though in a manner different from that of financiers, these immigrants nonetheless also experience a deterritorialized local culture, a proximity relation not predicated on geography.

This type of analysis signals a spatial configuration of major new transnational economic processes diverging in significant ways from the duality of global-national presupposed in much analysis of the global economy. Economic globalization does indeed extend the economy beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and hence reduces the state's sovereignty over its economy. But these boundaries are not simply geographic; they are also institutional and located inside the national rather than at its geographic borders.

Global cities and their transnationally oriented markets and firms mediate relations between nation-states, as well as the relations of those nation-states to the global economy. They destabilize a hierarchy that we have tended to accept as given: one enlarging from the subnational to the national and from the national to the international.<sup>16</sup> In so doing, these cities instantiate denationalized spatialities and temporalities.

### **A Partial Unbundling of the National?**

National state authority has long been represented as territorially exclusive and absolute. When global actors, whether firms or markets, overlap and interact with the national, they produce a frontier zone in the territory of the nation. Not merely a dividing line between the national and the global, this is a zone of politico-economic interaction where new institutional forms take shape and old forms are altered. It would be mistaken to say that such zones are characterized simply by the reduction of regulation or less government. For instance, in many countries, the need for autonomous central banks in the current global economic system has required a thickening of regulations in order to delink central banks from the influence of the executive branch of government.

The highly charged interactions of frontier zones make for epochal change. But not only global firms and markets shape these interactions, as is implied in much of the literature on the declining significance of the nation-state under globalization. States themselves shape these interactions, and not merely by resisting them (Mittelman 1996). Moreover, this exercise reconfigures states (Sassen 1996b, chap. 1; Sassen 1999). This reconfiguration may be guided by global standardization, as in the case of the growing convergence of central banks, or by national idiosyncrasies, as in the case of the different responses of Argentina, Indonesia, and Malaysia to the financial crisis of 1997–98.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the inadequacy of simple theses of the declining significance of the state, research on economic globalization is sometimes troubled by its problematic acceptance of a merely quantitative measure of globalization. Simply

16. Of interest here is the new scholarship on space, particularly the effort to spatialize/rescale social processes which began with David Harvey's pathbreaking work. See Soja 1989; Taylor 1996; Brenner 1998. One of the challenging but possibly more fruitful venues is to engage the scholarship on subnational or regional supranational areas, and what generally is referred to as "area studies," and to renegotiate its area focus with scales not contemplated in many of these studies. See Appadurai 1997.

17. For an elaboration, see Sassen 1996b and *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 1996.

counting the share of foreign inputs in national economies to establish whether globalization is or is not significant overlooks distinguishing features of the current phase of the global economy. It is indeed the case that in most developed countries the share of foreign in total investment, the share of international in total trade, and the share of foreign in total stock market value are all very small. However, to infer from this that economic globalization is not really a significant issue misses at least three crucial features. First is that economic globalization is strategic rather than all-encompassing: It does not require majorities to succeed. Second is that most global processes materialize in national territories and do so to a considerable extent through national institutional arrangements, from legislative actions to corporate agendas, and are thereby not necessarily counted as foreign. Third, in theoretical terms, such an inference denies the possibility that the global economic may be enacted through a specific spatiality, which while imbricated with the national has its own sociological reality. Economic globalization entails sets of practices that destabilize other sets of practices, such as some of the practices by which national state sovereignty has been constituted. By their enactment, global practices produce distinctive and complex spatialities that cannot simply be subsumed or measured under the national.

Thinking about the global in terms of distinct spatialities embedded in the territory of the national yet retaining their own specificity helps us analytically to apprehend that a global dynamic or process may partly operate through a national institution. Thus we cannot simply assume that because a transaction takes place in national territory and in a national institutional setting it is *ipso facto* intelligible in the terms of the national. In my reading, the imbrication of global actors and national institutions is far too complex for that. For example, the case of central banks today illustrates a key aspect of the process whereby national economies accommodate a global economic system. A country's central bank can be a key institution for implementing—in its national economy—some of the new rules of the global game, notably the standards of IMF conditionality. This means that national institutions can become home to some of the operational rules of the global economic system. They become part of the spatiality of the global, raising interesting research questions as to how this is distinguished from the idea of national institutions becoming tools of global capital as, for instance, in Marxist conceptions of neocolonialism or comprador bourgeoisie.<sup>18</sup>

Another distinctive feature of the global economy today is the intermixture of laws securing the exclusive territoriality of national states—and this to an extent

18. I thank Arjun Appadurai for this observation.

not seen in the nineteenth century (Ruggie 1993; Kratochwil 1986)—with laws institutionalizing the rights of foreign firms and legalizing a growing array of crossborder transactions. The combination of these sets of laws facilitates a growing and increasingly institutionalized participation by supranational organizations in national matters, while engaging nation-states in the implementation of processes of globalization.

We can see here the overlapping and intersecting dimensions of the global and the national at work. My argument is that the *tension* between (1) the necessary, though partial, location of globalization in national territories and institutions and (2) an elaborate system of law and administration that has constructed the exclusive national territorial authority of sovereign states has been partly negotiated through (1) processes of institutional denationalization inside the national state and national economy and (2) the formation of privatized intermediary institutional arrangements that are only partly encompassed by the inter-state system and are, in fact, evolving into a parallel institutional world for the handling of crossborder operations.<sup>19</sup> The imperative for research is to identify precisely what remains national today in what has historically been constructed as national, to decode what *national* means today, and to ascertain the new territorial and institutional conditionalities of national states.

### **Conclusion**

Specifying the processes that constitute economic globalization through this particular type of conceptualization brings to the fore how strategic economic projects have emerged in the play between two master/monster temporalities and spatialities. One of these—that of the national state as a historic institution, a master temporality often thought of as historic time—is a deteriorating spatio-temporality. Another, the global, is a spatiotemporal (dis)order in the making.

Conceiving of globalization along these lines confronts theory and research with fresh challenges. The transnational processes that compose economic globalization, in tandem with the partial localization of the global in national territories, undermine a key duality running through conceptual frameworks and methods prevalent in the social sciences: that the national and the nonnational are

19. There are parallels here, in my reading, with a totally different sphere of state activity and transnational processes; that is, the role of national courts in implementing instruments of the international human rights regime and the incorporation in several new national constitutions of provisions that limit the national state's presumption to represent all its people in international forums. See Franck 1992 on the constitutional issue and Henkin 1990 on human rights.

mutually exclusive conditions. As we observe the global economy transcend the authority of the national state even as it roots itself into national territories and institutions, we see more clearly that “national economy” is only a particular territorialization of capital—a particular spatiotemporal order.

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