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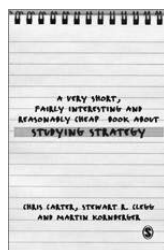
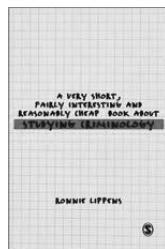
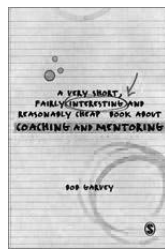
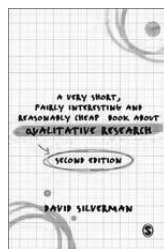
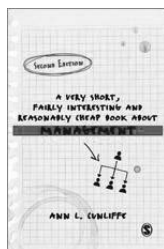
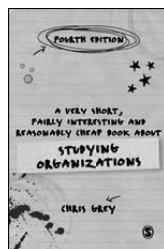
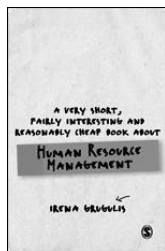
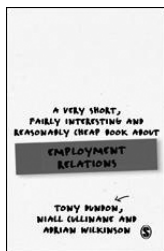
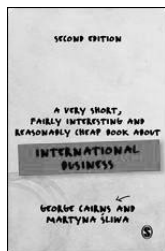
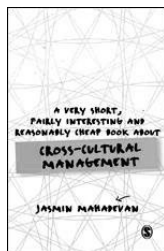
# GLOBALIZATION

←  
LEO MCCANN



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The title for the 'A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about...Series' was devised by Chris Grey. His book, *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Studying Organizations*, was the founding title of this series. Chris Grey asserts his right to be recognized as founding editor of the A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about...Series.

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# Contents

<i>About the Author</i>	vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
 Introduction: Globalization at Christmas, on the High Seas and in Outer Space	 1
1 Globalization – The Rise	6
2 Globalization as Myth and Hype: Exploring the Globalization Sceptics	28
3 Critics of Globalization in the North and South	48
4 The Globalization Culture Wars	70
5 Global Times, Global Organizations?	91
6 Globalization – The Fall?	109
 <i>References</i>	 128
<i>Index</i>	143

# About the Author

Leo McCann is Professor of Organisation Studies at Alliance Manchester Business School, the University of Manchester. His research focuses on globalization, political economy and critical studies of management, work and organization. He is especially interested in how the 'global' forces of economic change impact on workplaces and occupations, especially white-collar, professional organizations. Workplaces and occupational settings where Leo has conducted qualitative and ethnographic research include those of corporate middle management (banks, automotive manufacturers, insurance companies), as well as public service professions (emergency services, healthcare and the military). He is currently working on a new book on England's ambulance services and the paramedic profession. Leo's work has been published in journals such as *Human Relations*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization*, *Public Administration*, and *Human Resource Management*, and he is currently one of the editors-in-chief of *Competition & Change* (a journal of globalization, political economy and financialization). His books include *Capitalism and Business* (Sage, 2015), *International and Comparative Business* (Sage, 2014), *Managing in the Modern Corporation* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) and *Deconstructing the Welfare State* (Routledge, 2015). He teaches courses on globalization, US society, professional work and ethnographic research methods.

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# Introduction

## Globalization at Christmas, on the High Seas and in Outer Space

For much of the world – perhaps for around a third of the global population that describes itself as Christian – the 25th of December is Christmas Day. One of the most important dates of the Christian calendar, it marks the birth of Jesus; in Christian doctrine, the son of God and redeemer of mankind's sins. The date shares ancient symbolic resonance, coinciding with Roman rituals such as Saturnalia and the Pagan Winter Solstice from which the traditions of gift-giving and Yule logs might derive. In today's hyperglobalized Western world, Christmas is one of the few moments in the calendar year that can provide reflection and release from the incessant pace of life that characterizes today's supercharged capitalism.

But Christmas is far from immune to the imperatives of global capitalism. It has long been common to bemoan the commercializing of Christmas and its exhausting excess of shopping, cooking and consuming. Christmas, since at least Victorian times, has been a commercial project (Hancock and Rehn, 2011) and today has mushroomed into an orgy of borrowing, spending and consuming – a form of intensified seasonal project work from which one has to recover with a New Year's healthy living drive. December brings 'Black Fridays' of hard discounting in which overzealous shoppers are seen crushed in supermarket doorways or fighting over tripled-sized plasma screens. Police, ambulance services and hospital staff struggle to deal with a Yuletide swelling of drunk and injured revelers, especially the overspill from office parties all held on the same Friday before Christmas. Rampant consumerism seems to have hijacked a supposedly sacred season.

And yet it could still be said that Christmases in global consumer capitalism retain a sense of magic and epiphany. They even feature visitations from far-off lands. Take a container ship inbound from China as an example. These miraculous beasts seem to defy the laws of physics. The largest vessels weigh around 50,000 tonnes unloaded, can carry nearly 20,000 containers and over a 100,000 tonnes of cargo. The design and construction trends are for ever-larger vessels, requiring governments to extend and redesign canals and ports to service them.

They find their way across thousands of miles of ocean by following a celestial network of high-technology navigation satellites such as the USA's GPS, Russia's GLONASS, or the EU's Galileo system. Goods from afar will stock Western shops in time for the holiday period, for which some workers have been paid a Christmas bonus and many retailers will hope to achieve as much as half of their full year's volume of sales (Bozkurt, 2015: 479). Philosopher Alain de Botton in *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* here describes one of these giant hulks homing into view at London's Tilbury docks:

The ship's course alone is impressive. Three weeks earlier she set off from Yokohama and since then she has called in at Yokkaichi, Shenzhen, Mumbai, Istanbul, Casablanca and Rotterdam. Only days before, as dull rain fell on the sheds of Tilbury, she began her ascent up the Red Sea under a relentless sun, circled by a family of storks from Djibouti. The steel cranes now moving over her hull break up a miscellaneous cargo of fan ovens, running shoes, calculators, fluorescent bulbs, cashew nuts and vividly coloured toy animals. Her boxes of Moroccan lemons will end up on the shelves of central London shops by evening. There will be new television sets in York at dawn. (de Botton, 2009: 15)

De Botton, in a typically elegant paragraph, introduces us to the complexities and interconnectedness of global capitalism, making the strange familiar and the familiar strange. While this passage largely celebrates the exoticism and distance-destroying nature of globalization, a reader can detect a hint of critique at the oddness and irrationality of toy animals from China and lemons from Morocco. Why have we come to expect television sets at dawn?

One reading of our increasingly globalized economy marvels at the extent, diversity, complexity and newness of global trade; in the shipping example above this includes the international logistics, the multinational crew of the vessels, the powerful computing and engineering systems that keep the global economy afloat and enable the 24/7 availability of the bountiful fruits of international capitalism. But one could just as easily view globalization with trepidation, scepticism and criticism. The same computer systems that enable international navigation also destroy the skills and well-paid, unionized jobs of seafarers and dock workers. Bulk container shipping lines frequently sail under 'flags of convenience' – a practice whereby ocean-going vessels are registered in nations with the lowest safety, ecology and labour standards in order to boost profits, cut costs and evade inspections. I've used the word 'our' at the top of this paragraph, but who actually owns

today's global capitalism? Critics ask who, if anyone, is in charge of regulating and policing it? Who are the winners and losers in this new game of global trade?

The huge literature on globalization therefore contains elements of awe, celebration and promotion, but also fear, concern and protestation. This theme – of the positive and negative elements of globalization being at once contradictory yet also somehow inseparable, perhaps even complementary – will be central to this book. Globalization can include democratic, progressive and modernizing elements. It is often associated with a dramatic increase in economic efficiency and with raising the general standard of living of the world's population. But opening up world markets and breaking down barriers to international trade also exposes nations, governments and citizens to new risks and entanglements. We can celebrate the complexity, variety, efficiency and technological sophistication of global markets. But we can also wring our hands at job losses, factory relocations, the rise of sweatshops, criminal networks, terrorism, drugs smuggling, arms trading and the sort of pointless consumerism seen at the supermarket deli counter before Christmas (Bozkurt, 2015).

Today's global population of 7 billion humans creates an estimated 4 billion tonnes of waste per year (Moses, 2013). Think of those same shipping containers making their return trip back to the Orient stuffed with trash for landfill disposal, to say nothing of the estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic waste clogging our oceans for decades to come. Much worse, every day on the world's sea, air, rail and roads, *human* traffic is present in thousands of trucks, buses, shipping containers and unseaworthy boats in the form of refugees and migrants. Some are trafficked by international criminal gangs (Nordstrom, 2007; Ritzer, 2010: 381–2). Tragically, the young, frail, sick, old or otherwise unfortunate often won't survive the journey. On arrival, refugees and migrants can expect further tribulations: paramilitary-style holding camps, processing through Kafka-esque nightmares of paperwork, security checks and work-permits. Families are separated. Migrants then scramble for work, housing and immigration status, often in the face of overt and covert racism and discrimination.

This constant swirl of physical, economic, financial and human traffic projects a fearsome muddle of international bureaucracy; who is responsible for this global web of people, products and movement in all its complexity and turmoil? Is globalization creating new forms of unity for humankind, or is it dividing people against themselves? Who is making sense of or trying to control this incessant change and disruption? Whose regulations are we supposed to be bound by? The compression of the world by new transportation technologies and the opening of

economic borders arguably increases a sense of a world consciousness (Steger, 2013: 15) and an appreciation – sometimes sketchy – that global integration poses both risks and opportunities (Giddens, 1991). Mainstream, optimistic globalization theory tempts us to think about globalization as progressive, peaceful and unifying. But notions of a ‘global personhood’ or ‘global community’ (Steger, 2013: 15) are necessarily contested and uncertain things.

A possible illustrator of this is the story of a famous photograph taken by the crew of the NASA Apollo 8 spacecraft. It is a picture of a gloriously colourful planet Earth, much of it hidden by the inky blackness of space, somehow miraculously ‘hanging’ in the cosmos. Foregrounding the image is the barren Moon’s surface. The Earth’s exceptional vivacity is captured between the emptiness of deep space and the Moon’s deathly hostility. The picture’s official bureaucratic identifier, so beloved of government agencies such as NASA, is AS8-14-2383, but it is much better known by the more poetic *Earthrise*. Crammed into the 36 x 12 feet Command and Service Module, the three-man crew of Apollo 8 were the first humans to see the planet from this unique perspective. The shot was taken on 24 December 1968. Christmas Eve. It was the tail end of an extraordinary year in which mass public protests had broken out all over Europe and the USA; fierce conflict and debate over urgent issues of poverty, inequality, racism and war. The US itself was embroiled in a disastrous war in Vietnam, a centrepiece of the global Cold War standoff between the USA and its Western European allies versus the communist USSR and China. None of these conflicts could be seen from lunar orbit, but this photograph, and the later, equally famous NASA ‘Blue Marble’ image, hint at the fragility of a ‘spaceship Earth’ and a broader global consciousness that ought to protect the priceless planet and its warring, ecologically wasteful human occupants. The crew even read out a Christmas message to the millions of TV and radio listeners – the first ten verses of the Book of Genesis, which astronaut Jim Lovell suggested was:

the foundation of many of the world’s religions, not just the Christian religion. There are more people in other religions than the Christian religion around the world, and so this would be appropriate to that, and so that’s how it came to pass.

They closed their broadcast with good wishes for everyone ‘on the good Earth’ (NASA, 2014).

Imagery and claims towards a ‘world as one’ are common to many forms of human imagination (political, religious, scientific, ecological, sporting, commercial, media and entertainment-related) yet are shot

through with difference, confusion and conflict – something that Lovell maybe alludes to in his slightly awkward statement. While many would celebrate the Apollo space programme as one of the greatest scientific and cultural achievements of the Western world (see Parker, 2008), many critics – at the time of the Cold War and now – would see reflected in NASA and Lovell all-too-familiar manifestations of American capitalist arrogance and hypocrisy. Just as the Apollo programme reflected the might of US corporations such as Boeing, General Electric and Westinghouse, these same corporations were deeply implicated in US militarism and war profiteering. NASA astronauts were often elite aviators drawn from the US Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. While an elite few were circling the globe in spacecraft and making claims about ‘giant leaps for mankind’ their brothers in arms were unleashing tonne upon tonne of napalm and high explosive on Vietnamese villages in the name of ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty’. The United States’ government, its corporations and its churches might sometimes take it upon themselves to speak for the world, but their influence and worldview are far from globally accepted and supported. Like ‘globalization’ itself, assertions by some nations, communities and political groups of a ‘world in union’ can be regarded by others as superficial, erroneous and demeaning.

This short book explores the various intermingled aspects that make up the processes and controversies of so-called ‘globalization’. This rather ugly word has come to encapsulate a very wide range of substantive developments and debates and a broad spectrum of writings, theories, factoids and opinions. Much of the literature on globalization describes it as powerful, new, inexorable, and a force for good. Closer integration of the world is inevitable and unstoppable. It is pointless to oppose and self-defeating to try. This book will challenge such broadly held assumptions, introducing and discussing all kinds of counterpoints and perspectives that both affirm and challenge the assumptions that underpin globalization, inviting readers to develop their own positions on what precisely globalization might mean, both as a concept and as a set of ‘really-existing’ phenomena. Chapters will explore the history and rise of the concept; sceptical and critical ideas as regards globalization; the intense debates around the possible emergence of a global culture; and the implications of globalization for work, business, management and organization. The final chapter will explore the potential for the decline or even fall of globalization. Overall this book is a rapid dash journey through the theories, debates and manifestations of globalization, and of the lifecycle of the concept as it appears across various texts and perspectives.

# Globalization – The Rise

Globalization is simultaneously an effect and a cause.

(Jan Arte Scholte, 2005: 4)

Globalization means different things to different people. It would probably be pointless (and treading a very well-worn path) to try to find a definition that works for everyone, especially given the broadness of a term that attempts to capture and explain forces, structures and processes that influence the whole of humanity. Many books on globalization start with a discussion of prior attempts to define the term (see, for example, Martell, 2010: 11–16, or Steger, 2013: 9–16), noting how globalization encompasses and influences a huge range of dimensions, including economic, cultural, political, linguistic and organizational. According to Ritzer (2010: 2):

globalization is a transplanetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places and information as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to, or expedite, those flows ...

This definition uses metaphors of movement and blockage, in keeping with other definitions which conceptualize globalization as the increased ability for people and processes to move and operate internationally or globally. Other famous globalization writers describe a metaphorical shrinkage of the world via technological, economic and political developments which somehow bring the population of the world into closer contact. These include the ‘compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole’ (Robertson, 1992: 8) and the ‘intensification of worldwide social relations’ (Giddens, 1991: 64). Although economics and international business clearly play a major role in globalization, the phenomenon is not solely about economics. Instead, globalization is a multifaceted set of phenomena that arguably influences almost all dimensions of life (Steger, 2013), making human society across the world increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

The term or concept of ‘globalization’ shot to prominence in the mid-to-late 1980s (Held et al., 1999: 1; Martell, 2007: 173). From around this point forward, the forces, processes and images of global integration seemed ubiquitous across the worlds of business, politics, academia, journalism and entertainment. They have arguably remained so ever since. To introduce the purpose and content of this book, this opening chapter explores the various meanings of the term, discusses where it came from, and begins to unpack some of its contested debates and interpretations.

Probably the most significant event that contextualizes the explosion of interest in ‘globalization’ is the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union across 1989–91 (Ray, 2007: 3). These dramatic political and economic changes suggested a sudden and irrevocable opening of political and economic relations around much of the world. The political and economic doctrine of neoliberalism was in the ascendant, a doctrine described as ‘(1) an ideology; (2) a mode of governance; (3) a policy package’ (Steger and Roy, 2010: 11). These three elements are central to the continual spread of the policies of ‘market globalism’ around the world and the rhetorical ways in which they are justified. Put simply, neoliberalism implies the expansion of global markets, free trade and commercial business activity and the occlusion of government, welfare and regulation. More competition equals less regulation. Freer markets means weakened states (Beck, 2000: 7).

Rapid technological advances in the fields of telecommunication, transportation and computing technologies throughout the 1980s onwards made international contact cheaper, easier, quicker, more interactive, more prevalent and more necessary. A bull market in the 1990s fuelled investor interest in technology and internet stocks, reinforcing notions of a radically new, digitized, ‘weightless’ economy of worldwide services, including so-called cultural and knowledge industries. Having ‘won’ the Cold War, political leaders in the West championed free markets and the spread of democracy but also worried about the new waves of global change that threatened government power and were difficult to regulate.

These separate yet interrelated areas of change reinforced one another. Dramatic political reform opened up new areas of the world to global markets and sent a rollercoaster ride of free-market capitalism to weave through the world economy including the hitherto sealed-off countries of the former Soviet Union. Triumphant right-wing commentators proclaimed the collapse of communism as ‘the end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1992) and a ‘New World Order’ (the latter notion a soundbite from US President George H.W. Bush’s 1991 State of the Union



address). Other communist nations (primarily China) accelerated their economic reforms towards encouraging ever-greater degrees of market forces, competition and international economic relations. New international markets, workforces and opportunities opened up in places such as India which also abandoned much of its socialist-leaning government planning and regulation of the economy (McCann, 2014a: 255–7). Physically and technically, economic globalization was enabled by improvements in computing architecture, processing speed and software design. The internet rapidly took on a central role in daily life, dramatically broadening, deepening and accelerating international communication and information spread. Stock exchanges became digitized and the rise of ‘high-frequency trading’ enabled and created the need for an acceleration of the pace of financial trading. Time is money after all.

Globalization created and reproduced itself in giant feedback loops that fed into further developments. Technological change, political change, economic change and cultural change all went hand-in-hand. Academic, media and political commentary fed this endless recursive loop. Writings on globalization, digitalization, financialization and a new world order were everywhere you looked. Universities scrambled to develop courses, degrees and departments dedicated to ‘Global Studies’. New academic journals were founded, such as *Global Networks* (launched 2001), *Globalizations* (first volume 2004), and *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* (inaugurated 2009). Indeed, this book – like the notion of globalization itself (Giddens, 1999: 7) – is in some sense a product of the processes it describes.

The terms ‘globalization’, ‘world economy’ and ‘global market forces’ became catch-all buzzwords used by business leaders, politicians, media commentators and academics. Many of these opinion-leaders were members of a cosmopolitan global elite or ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Sklair, 2000) and tended to speak of globalization as something to praise, encourage and normalize. Certainly the first major ‘wave’ of globalization literature by authors such as Kenichi Ohmae and Thomas Friedman (see Held et al., 1999: 2–10; Martell, 2007) promulgated such a worldview as follows: growing international trade is generating more global and local wealth; standards of living are rising; autocratic governments have collapsed; the failed logics of communism, trade barriers and economic planning have been utterly discredited by the successes and dynamism of free markets; and the policies and doctrines of privatization and deregulation are rapidly – and rightly – spreading throughout the globe. These ‘first wave’ globalization texts, such as *The Borderless World* (Ohmae, 1991), *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Friedman, 1999) and *Going*