



Paul James

**GlobalismNationalismTribalism**

Bringing Theory Back In



# Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism



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## Bringing Theory Back In

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Towards a Theory of Abstract Community, Volume 2

Paul James

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*For Stephanie*



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Finally, I thank Stephanie Trigg for her fabulousness. I dedicate the book to her in love, enduring appreciation, and with the hope that the world in which we live will begin to step back from its current madness.

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## ONE Introduction: Global Savage

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A suit-wearing European man sits in the dark talking with three tribal men around a campfire. The night sky behind them is deep purple, and into the colour of the sky is written the words, 'Talk anyone's language: Windows 2000'. Advertising images such as this provide windows onto contemporary worlds. They provide us with heavily researched and creatively engineered reflections of our times. They are reflections that perversely re-present the surface reality of contemporary social relations, and which nevertheless take us into the intensities of its promises, fears and dreams. Ironically, this advertising image reflects the tensions and contradictions that *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism* is trying to understand. What is happening to the world under present conditions of intensifying contradiction, and how did we get here? What does it mean, for example, when a Vodafone advertisement depicts a satellite picture of the globe with clouds swirling over Africa, shrouding a Europe that is flattened by the parallax of perspective? The inscription on that advertisement reads, 'Vodafone spoken here'. Like the Microsoft advertisement, Vodafone projects the globalism as transcending difference. However, at the same time, its very accentuation of a 'possible world' of open communication makes us aware that place and identity still intensely matter. It gives the impression that globalization is wonderfully inclusive. However, at the same time, we are implicitly reminded that the present world can be characterized as 'global savage' in a second sense – that is, globalization as a savagely distancing and mediating; globalization that cares little for those who cannot keep up, and fears those who are its 'others'.

Microsoft's Noble Savages are postmodern motifs for everything primitive *and* modern: their spears speak of many remembered images. Like other postcolonial lads, as I grew up I watched the 1964 film *Zulu* and read Rider Haggard and Doris Lessing. Now, in the contemporary representations of popular culture it seems that 'the tribes' are coming again – and



either they are becoming us, or, alternatively, for example in the case of the ethnic nationalists of Eastern Europe, the supposedly more primordial of us have always been them. Look closer into the Microsoft advertisement and you can see that the warriors are wearing tartan, just like the clans in Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995). It is ye olde clothe of the medieval 'Scot', William Wallace, as he patriotically ran into battle against Edward I of Hollywood's England. In shops in Scotland, years after *Braveheart* swept through the land, you can still find depictions of the American-born Australian-claimed actor, Mel Gibson, his nose and cheeks smeared blue with Celtic woad. The Scottish artists who lovingly paint Gibson's face did not care that the director of a film about this nation's 'birth' was an Australian-in-Hollywood rather than a son of the Highland soil. Nor did the stone mason who set out to capture the spirit of William Wallace through Mel Gibson's body. The statue is located at the entrance to the National Wallace Monument in Stirling, a spear's throw from Stirling Bridge where the 1297 battle against the 'English' took place. Gibson as an outsider, like the Irish actor Liam Neeson in *Rob Roy* (1994), is non-English enough to depict a Scot.

Elaborating upon this illustration of the connections between tribalism, neo-traditionalism, and globalism, Gibson's *Braveheart* provides significant inspiration for the League of the South, a group that began in 1994. On 4 March 2000 they signed their Declaration of Southern Independence. 'We, as citizens of the sovereign states of the South, proclaim before Almighty God and before all the nations of the earth, that we are a separate and distinct people, with an honourable heritage and culture worthy of protection and preservation.' Their Southland is the land of the losers in the American Civil War, currently part of the United States of America. At their annual honouring of Jefferson Davis, last president of the Confederate States of America, a kilted piper plays *Scotland the Brave*. The League has its own confederate tartan approved by the Scottish tartan authority, as incidentally do the expatriate Scots in Australia, with both tartans commercially available over the internet. The globalizing world is thus an amazing and contradictory place of local allusions and national recursions. It is not simply an open series of invented traditions, advertising slogans and postmodern film narratives, but nor is it a place of simple primordial depth or straightforward continuities from the past.

As I write the first draft of this chapter, sitting in an office built above the medieval city wall of old Edinburgh, the writing is both abstractly connected to everywhere *and* thoroughly bound in time and place. A 'moment' ago, I used Netscape, one of Microsoft's rivals, to find out the year when *Zulu* was made. I found myself in a place that I had never

been, reading a person I will probably never meet. On the University of Wales, Swansea Student Union website, I was reading Louise Burridge's response to a posting that said '*Zulu* is quite possibly one of the best films of all time'. Two years after writing that last sentence – note how temporally confusing the abstraction of print can be – I find myself in Leeds (June 2002), reading a brochure for an exhibition called 'The Mighty Zulu Nation' at the Royal Armouries Museum. The vice-president of the Anglo-Historical Zulu Society, pictured on the African savannah in safari garb, is advertised as giving a lecture, accompanied by a screening of *Zulu* and by 'artefacts from his own collection for visitors to handle'. Six months later again, at a granite monument in Pretoria, two men put their lips to ram's horns to mark the most sacred moment of the year for the Afrikaners. At precisely noon, a ray of sun shines through a hole in the roof of an empty tomb symbolizing the death of the 470 pioneers who 164 years earlier, with guns and God on their side, defeated 10,000 Zulu warriors in the Battle of Blood River. Later still, on a plane returning from Chicago (September 2004), I read that airlines communicate globally in a single world-standard idiom called '*Zulu*'.

Abstracted language-protocols? Artefacts to handle? An empty tomb symbolizing glorious embodied death in the name of the nation? The globalization of film culture? This world, like all the others before it, is a place of a myriad messy interconnections, immediate and abstracted, embodied and disembodied. *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism* attempts to make some sense of these connections, all the while keeping in mind their messy unevenness and the way that they are caught up in vast permutations of power. It ranges from questions of apparently irrelevant detail such as 'Who is Gillian Stone, the narrator in the Nescafé advertisements?' and 'What is the relationship between things of stone, wood and flesh in Maubisse, East Timor?' to those of more obvious importance and generality. 'Is it actually resurgent tribalism that is the basis of accentuated global violence today?', 'What is the significance of the war on terror?' and 'How can we understand the formations of nationalism in an era of globalism?' The title of the book and of this introduction attempt to express the ambiguities of the present and its normative confusions. On the one hand, globalization has, with the Good War on Terror, become increasingly savage about how 'others' are treated. The world is seething in a modern abstract barbarianism that allows the four horsemen of the apocalypse to continue to ride this planet, this time in metal machines – sometimes under the banners of humanitarian intervention, military, economic and political. On the other hand, relations of tribalism and traditionalism that were once derided for their backward primordial 'savagery'

have not disappeared as proclaimed by the many soothsayers – from the Social Darwinists to the End-of-History ideologues. The chapter title 'Global Savage' is thus intended to be at once critical and ironical, discouraged and empathetic to the way that all social relations on this planet are increasingly forced to come to terms with globalization.

Rather than treating 'globalism', 'nationalism' and 'tribalism' as discrete formations – with globalization replacing all that has gone before – the present study takes them as recurrent formations with rough-knotted intertwined histories. It helps to explain how they can be concurrent realities in the present. With the tropes of 'tribalism' now increasingly revisited by social theorists with gay abandon,<sup>1</sup> and globalism studies becoming all the rage, nationalism is the one formation of the three that is usually projected as having a dubious future. This is ironic given that for nearly a century the nation-state had been taken for granted as the dominant setting for the intersection of community (as nation) and polity (as state). A revolution in theories of the nation began in the 1980s as the processes of what might be called 'disembodied globalization' were taking substantial hold and the intersection of nation and state had begun to come apart. However, almost as soon as the theories gained a readership, the historical future of the nation-state was called into question. A series of debates began and still continues today. They continue to ask whether or not the nation-state is in crisis, and whether old-style community is still possible.

What tends to be missing from these debates is an appreciation of questions of comparative social form, the question at the heart of this study. In one way this is not surprising – investigating such questions tends to give way to an understandable emphasis upon immediate issues and social exigencies, the very issues brought to the fore by the galloping transformations in social form. In another way, however, it is alarming how the debates fail to take cognisance of the substantial and highly-relevant research that has been going on in a number of quite disparate disciplines. Social theorists are exploring the impact of different modes of communication or technology upon social relations.<sup>2</sup> Critical geographers are doing path-breaking work on the nature and forms of spatial extension lived by different types of communities.<sup>3</sup> Anthropologists are writing challenging works on the changing forms of identity in national and postnational settings.<sup>4</sup> This study is intended to draw synthetically upon these disciplines and others – particularly history and sociology, political theory and international relations – to provide an alternative framework for understanding the current tensions between polity and community, nationalism and globalism. Underlying the entire approach is the presumption that

an adequate theory of tribalism, nation formation or globalization requires a generalizing theory of changing social formations. In other words, a phenomenon such as globalization or nationalism cannot be understood in terms of itself.

If the central focus is on changing forms of social relations, it is always with the view to relating the practices of the past to present trajectories. This is the sense in which the research can be described as a history of the present. It involves comparing tribal reciprocity, past and present – oral cultures involved in gift exchange and production by the hand – to the formations of empire, kingdom and sodality characterized by the development of script/print, paper money and new techniques of production. This is in turn related to the developments in communication, exchange and production that lie behind the emergence of the modern nation-state. It involves comparing face-to-face community with the structures and subjectivities of globalism. We trace the reconstitution of the nation-state as it has undergone unprecedented change – change based in part upon the development of mass communications, fiduciary exchange systems and computer-based production. Throughout, the aim is to draw conclusions about the contemporary underpinnings of polity and community in a globalized world.

The volume would at first glance appear to have the same massive historical scope as Ernest Gellner's *Plough, Sword and Book*.<sup>5</sup> However, except for its generalizing methodological pretensions, *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism* is intended to be much more modest. Rather than sweeping across history, it uses anthropology, comparative historical sociology and political studies in order to understand the structures of the present. Gellner's book is a history of ideas, rarely talking about ploughs, swords and books. *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism*, by contrast, is intended as a genealogy of the underpinning processes of *contemporary* tribal, national and global practices and institutions. The equivalent motifs to Gellner's 'plough, sword and book' are stone and wood, money and clock, book and computer. This is not to imply that we simply move historically from 'things of stone and wood',<sup>6</sup> to things of book and screen. In contemporary tribal life we find the assimilation of these themes into changing but continuous cosmologies. For example, Elizabeth Traube describes the integrative culture of the Mambai of East Timor as incorporating the layers of the invasion of that country – the Portuguese and the Catholic Church – into the passing on of authority structures. The stone and the book come together in their difference:

Then Father Heaven, the great divider distributes a patrimony between his sons. To the eldest, Ki Sa, he gives the sacred rock and tree, tokens of the original ban and signs of original authority over a

silent cosmos. Upon the youngest, Loer Sa, he bestows the book and the pen, which the Mambai regard as emblems of European identity.<sup>7</sup>

As important as the continuities and assimilations within and across communities are, the differences between communities still have to be theorized. In addressing this issue, the discussion will move across different dominant *levels* of the analysis.<sup>8</sup> At one level – that is, at the level of analysing conjunctural relations – the focus will be on the following *modes of practice*: first, the changing forms of communication and information storage from print to electronic communication; second, the changing forms of exchange from gift exchange and barter to abstract money; third, the changing forms of production from manual production to robotics; fourth, the changing forms of enquiry, particularly the rise of techno-science; and fifth, the changing forms of organization, with the increasing predominance in the contemporary period of bureaucratic rationality. At a more abstract level of analysing categories of social ontology the focus will be on the changing way in which we live the categories of time, space, the body and ways of knowing.<sup>9</sup> Moving across these levels of analysis, the task will be to examine how the changing modes of practice – disembodied communication, abstracted exchange, post-industrial production, techno-science and technical rationality – bear upon the subjectivities and practices of political community in the age of disembodied globalism. The writing will explore the ways in which more abstract forms overlay (rather than replace) earlier modes of practice. In doing so, the book will attempt to draw political conclusions about alternative possibilities for polity and community as they play themselves out in the realms of tribe, nation and globe.

The present study thus enters into debates in social and political theory. One of the dominant avant-garde approaches in social theory continues to be post-structuralism, while the dominant mainstream emphasis in the academic disciplines is on empirically-grounded studies or rational-choice style approaches. Across these diverse, and I think unsatisfactory, ways of approaching social explanation, there is a common tendency to criticize the possibility of generalized analyses and to dismiss approaches which attempt to understand the 'social whole'. In some circles it is an anathema to talk of structures of social practice or to make broad characterizations about a social formation. There are good reasons for the post-structuralist critique of generalizing approaches, but the methodological problems they point to are not insurmountable. On the contrary, there is a pressing urgency to bring together and rethink the respective strengths of old and new ways of theorizing. Moreover, unless

we develop a more synthesizing overview of the trajectories of the present and its historical antecedents, we will be left with only vague renditions of contemporary life as a postmodern condition dissolving into difference, or as a fragmented world of self-interested rational choice. As a contribution to this political-methodological problem, the project is intended as an analytical interpretative history of some of the central institutions of the present, taking the intersection of polity and community as one of its key framing themes. It is an attempt to find a pathway between and beyond the modern confidence in grand theory and the postmodern rejection of other than piece-meal explanations for this and that discursive practice. It does so, not by setting up a grand theory, but by setting up a sensitizing and generalizing 'grand method' to explore the structures and subjectivities of social formations that traverse history as we know it.

Carrying through the concurrent themes of globalism, nationalism and tribalism, the book is divided into three parts. The first part is concerned with critically introducing existing theories of social formation, and setting up an alternative approach. Choosing which theorists to discuss was guided by three antithetical desires: the first was to keep the discussion as introductory as possible. The second desire was to give an adequate sense of both the complexity of individual theorists and the incredible range of theoretical traditions and approaches. The third was to choose generalist writers who would be most acutely useful for developing an alternative approach to understanding the abstractions and contradictions of social formation in the present. With these principles in mind, the following writers were selected: Ernest Gellner, Michael Mann, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, and Michel Foucault. Even as I am critical of their approaches, they provide us with a wealth of provocative writing. Chapter 3 elaborates their methods of analysis, and later chapters expand upon the details of their research and theoretical direction in the context of trying to develop an alternative position that can carry forward their strengths. These theorists, as if in a novel, thus become central characters, along with lots of other figures of occasional reference, throughout the rest of the book.

The second part, 'Rethinking Formations of Practice and Being', begins with the question of how customary or tribal community is constituted through relations of reciprocity, kinship and analogy as the dominant modes of exchange, organization and enquiry (Chapter 5). The chapter serves as a comparative base for later chapters on the changing dominant formations of traditional, modern and postmodern society. Chapter 6 continues the themes of communication and exchange, tracing the development

of writing and money as they fundamentally change from conditions of social reciprocity. It is an incomplete story. The study does not really cover the full diverse implications of the overall method. It concentrates on the modes of communication and exchange, but these are intended as indicative rather than *the* primary modes of practice. Similarly, when we come to Chapters 7 and 8 on the nature of time, space and bodies, the analysis is indicative rather than comprehensive. The basic argument through these chapters is that when dominant patterns of social change are drawn out from the incredible complexity of social life, we can trace an increasing abstraction of temporality, spatiality and embodiment across human history, layers of abstraction that overlie and reframe prior ways of being.

This analysis is intended to provide a schematic framework for understanding the changing forms of polity from traditional to nation-states, and the stretching forms of community from the local to the global. State as polity and nation as community are thus the focus of Chapters 9 and 10 respectively. These two chapters begin Part III of the book, 'Rewriting the History of the Present', with a third, Chapter 11, focussing upon questions of globalization. The book ends with Chapter 12 turning to what should be integral to any social theory – an account of its ethical assumptions and implications.

If the overall theoretical argument of the work is that the dominant constitutive level of contemporary society is becoming increasingly abstract,<sup>10</sup> the overall political-ethical argument is that we have to forge a counter-practice that revivifies the social importance of more embodied and continuing relations of mutuality and co-operation. We have to reflexively reconfigure social life in such a way as to qualify the runaway excesses of the abstract globalizing society, without treating the processes of social abstraction as bad in themselves. This position will be caricatured as anti-globalist and backward-looking by a dominant neo-liberal position. It is not. What it intends, first, is a counter-position to the dominant and utterly blinkered faith in modern globalizing progress. This belief is characterized by displacement-projections about the putative sources of evil in the world today. In the words of one apparently-congenial and very powerful global administrator: 'Extreme nationalism, protectionism and tribalism are the curses of our species and inevitably lead to the restriction of liberties, blocking the advance of human rights and lifting of living standards and conditions.'<sup>11</sup> By contrast, I argue that nationalism and tribalism are ways of life – again, neither intrinsically good nor bad – but important to what it has meant to be historically human. What this book intends, moreover, is the development of a counter-position that allows us to make decisions

about political-ethical directions on the basis of an understanding about the complexities of different forms of community and polity, rather than on the basis of ideologically-driven prejudice about the essential virtues of savage globalization.

## Notes

1 Albeit, loosely: they are never delineated in what I suggest needs to be distinguished as traditional, modern and postmodern forms. On what will later be defined as postmodern tribalism see, for example, Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, London, Sage, 1996. For reasons that I cannot understand, he posits the unsustainable thesis that the new tribalism signals the end of individualism. See Michael Walzer ('The New Tribalism: Notes on a Difficult Problem', in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorising Nationalism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999) for an example of tribalism used as a loose rhetorical device. Ironically, this expanded currency of the term is occurring at the very time anthropologists are becoming increasingly wary of it as applied to traditional reciprocal communities.

2 Two prominent examples, both of which I think are provocative but methodologically flawed, are Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information*, Polity, Cambridge, 1990; and Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992.

3 The literature here is burgeoning. Early seminal texts include the following: Derek Gregory and John Urry (eds), *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, London, Macmillan, 1985; and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1991.

4 See, for example, Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1995, and Birgit Meyer and Peter Geschiere (eds), *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1999.

5 Ernest Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History*, London, Collins Harvill, 1988.

6 The name of an Australian rock-music band in the 1990s, part of the revival of interest in tribalism.

7 Elizabeth G. Traube, *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange among the Mambai of East Timor*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986, p. 55.

8 See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of 'levels' of theoretical abstraction. For examples of other recent books which have been part of developing the same methodology and drawing upon the 'constitutive abstraction' or 'levels' method associated with *Arena Journal*, see Simon Cooper, *Technoculture and Critical Theory: In the Service of the Machine*, Routledge, London, 2002; and Christopher Ziguras, *Self-Care: Embodiment, Personal Autonomy and the Shaping of Health Consciousness*, Routledge, London, 2004.

9 Talking at this level of abstraction I should really say 'categories of temporality, spatiality, embodiment and epistemology', but the technical distinction is not important for the moment.

10 The lineages of this social abstraction involve variously a number of processes that have been much discussed in the literature on social change: (1) rationalization; (2) commodification; (3) codification; (4) mediation; (5) objectification; and (6) extension. For example, Marx takes commodification as the driving social force of modern capitalism, while Weber emphasizes the processes of rationalization including bureaucratization of management and the secularization of religious life. The argument that I draw upon comes from writers associated with the *Arena Journal* such as Geoff Sharp who conceives of abstraction as a socially-constitutive and material process.

11 Mike Moore, *A World Without Walls: Freedom, Development, Free Trade and Global Governance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 9. Mike Moore is Director General of the World Trade Organization.





## Part I

### Returning to a Theory of Social Formation



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## TWO Social Relations in Tension

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We live in confusing times. One of the dominant trends in the present period is the deepening of a set of social contradictions that have only been generalized for a few decades. On the one hand, globalization, a process with long historical roots, has been developing at an unprecedented pace through the end of the twentieth century and into the new millennium. A rough, uneven blanketing of capital and commercialized culture crosses and connects the world in unprecedented ways. On the other hand, there is an intense fragmenting and reconfiguring of social relations at the level of community and locality. Systemic processes of rationalizing homogenization integrate the globe at one level, while ideologies and practices of difference and radical autonomy frame the popular imaginary at another.<sup>1</sup> These are material and lived contradictions rather than simply inexplicable paradoxes.

It is not that we fail to recognize the surface expressions of these contradictions. In their immediate expression we see them quite dramatically. At the turn of the century it has become commonplace for soothsayers to say that the key trends in the coming period will be globalism and tribalism. While the naming of those interlocking but contrary formations is helpful in its starkness, the projections of their prominence are often confusingly presented as a paradox of conflicting epochs. Social life is presented as if we are simultaneously going forward into the technologically-driven world of open globalism, e-commerce and Planet Hollywood, and back into the ambivalent, anachronistic gloom of neo-national tribalisms. Places such as Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya supposedly stand for the past. They are located in mystical times when social life was ruled by warlords, blood ties and village feuds. They are found in backward settings from where primordial and atavistic sentiments come to seep through the curtain of rational modernity. Through

this confusion of times, 'contemporary' social relations are supposedly held together by well-networked individuals winging their way into the future, carrying with them – as light rather than cumbersome baggage – the residual comfort of earlier forms of personal and community connections. It is a confusion of times expressed in recent futuristic films and novels. In the West, we are either portrayed in bleak romanticism as going back to the future in films such as *Pleasantville* and *The Truman Show*,<sup>2</sup> or more blackly shown in cybernetic novels such as *Snow Crash* and *Virtual Light*<sup>3</sup> as going forward to a world of mega-corporations acting as neo-imperial states, with cyborg outsiders living on the edge in neo-medieval burbclaves. Concepts like the 'global village' appear to transcend the tension of past and future but only by leaving the traditional sense of village behind. In the same way that Disney World's Tomorrow Land has been recast as an historical artefact, the concept of 'global village' is now the romantic version of the newer cyberspace term, 'virtual village'.

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### Globalism and localism

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The related tension between globalism and localism is everywhere. In the north London borough of Islington, the global corporation Microsoft randomly chooses a street to create what company executives and Blair government ministers proclaim to be the first computer community in Britain. Not to be outdone, IBM announces a trial project, the first Wireless Virtual Village, based on their new 'WebSphere Everyplace' software and covering a one-kilometre radius and the homes of 5,000 Helsinki residents. In Malaysia, the universalistic Muslim organization Mendaki expresses concerns about the dying of Malay community spirit, *gotong-royong*. In Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew gives a speech to the Tanjong Pagar Development Council about vision Singapore 21, a state-run program aimed at drawing the counter-identities of what he calls the 'cosmopolitans' and 'heartlanders' into a new cohesive knowledge-based economy. In Mauritius, a cyber-city of call-centres and back-office operations is being built with a completion date of 2005, now passed. It is projected as somehow overcoming the tendency towards locals working in jobs of low skill and long hours.

Across the world, signs of this tension between the local and the global have seeped into the popular imagination. As an indication of the new sensitivity, advertising campaigns in the mid-1990s began to explain how transnational corporations transcend the divide between different senses of locale in the global village. In Australia and New Zealand, the

worldwide franchiser of hamburger outlets, McDonald's, began an advertising campaign explaining how each of its franchisees will organize local community notice-boards.<sup>4</sup> In Cambodia, the 'Japanese' car manufacturer Toyota ran a campaign under the banner headline 'This is Our Town'. To the backdrop of a photograph of planet earth spinning in space, the patronizing copy speaks with postcolonial sophistication of the mutuality of the global project, all the while slipping between different meanings of the 'local' and different meanings of the 'we':

It's the global village. We live here. You do, too. We're neighbours. And since we're neighbours, we should be friends. It seems that we are all of us – everywhere – slowly coming to this realization. But how do we do it? In a practical sense what steps do we take? We can't speak for others, but for ourselves we can say this: we will do our part to bring the world together by building up the global auto industry ... For the first half of the century we thought of ourselves as a Japanese company ... Now we think of ourselves as a world company. Our responsibility is to everyone.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this self-conscious commercial-political emphasis on the intersecting trends of globalism and community, and despite its embeddedness in everyday life, we still have a poor understanding of the structures, systems and institutions that in the age of disembodied globalism both integrate polity and community and simultaneously threaten to break them apart. Social theorists over the past decade have made globalization a constant point of reference. However, in turning to ugly concepts such as 'glocalization', defined as the simultaneous globalizing and localizing of social relations, they have named the processes that need to be worked through rather than given us the tools with which to do so. Roland Robertson notes that the concept of 'glocalization' comes from the Japanese word *dochakuka*, originally *dochaku*, which means 'living on one's own land'.<sup>6</sup> However, dragged into the context of global micro-marketing campaigns such as 'This is Our Town', the term came to be instrumentalized as the act of adapting locally to meet global circumstances. This in itself should have given pause for thought, but nevertheless the term quickly became part of the social theory lexicon as an easy shorthand concept for an extraordinarily complicated phenomenon. It is not so different from the way in which the Finnish concept *kännykkä*, 'extension of the hand', used as a Nokia trademark for their mobile telephone, subsequently passed into the generic parlance of Finnish teenagers as the word for phone.<sup>7</sup> More than that, the embedded and grounded meaning of the terms themselves – living on one's own land, extension of the hand – carry us further into the contradictions of our time. The expressions of the abstraction of our relationship to others are often carried in the relatively concrete language of the body and of grounded place.

*Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism* attempts to understand these contradictory processes of globalism-localism, universalism-particularism, homogenization-fragmentation, and abstraction-embeddedness, though neither simply by posing them as dualistic opposites, nor by coming at them directly. The globalism-localism debate has become a bit like the burning bush during Moses' exodus from the desert: best not looked upon too directly for a source of enlightenment. The present discussion approaches the problem through a discussion of the changing nature of modes of practice – in particular, production, exchange, communication, organization and enquiry – placing these practices in historical context while relating them to lived categories of time, space, embodiment and knowing. The book is directed towards understanding the dominant forms of polity and community in the present, but this entails making some broad comparisons to other forms of exchange, communication, production, organization and enquiry, and to ontologically different ways of living in time, place and corporeality. This is to take up the relatively unfashionable subject of what Scott Lash, in his search for a second modernity, calls 'forms of social life':

This ground – which alternatively takes the form of community, history, tradition, the symbolic, place, the material, language, life-world, the gift, *Sittlichkeit*, the political, the religious, forms of life, memory, nature, the monument, the path, fecundity, the tale, habitus, the body ... has been too much forgotten by cultural theory and reflexive sociology.<sup>8</sup>

The trouble with this evocative list is that it lists an extraordinary range of incommensurably-named phenomena. They are things that, variably defined, are part of all social formations, not just Lash's underside to 'rational modernity'. Still, such lists are instructive. Theorizing the ground of contemporary life has to be able to keep this messiness to the fore while, at the same time and seemingly in contradiction with acknowledging that messiness, finding ways of providing an account that allows us to explore its structural patterns. Lash's list has some of the same qualities as the taxonomy from Jorge Borges's apocryphal Chinese calendar, the one that Michel Foucault famously quotes as his inspiration for *The Order of Things*. This list, linked as an Arabic alphabetical series, and devoted to different kinds of animals, begins with (a) belonging to the Emperor, and serially goes through those animals that are embalmed, tame, sucking pigs, sirens, fabulous, stray dogs, included in the present classification, and frenzied. It finishes with (n), those that from a long way off look like flies.<sup>9</sup> Foucault, writing in the period of his intellectual history before he was taken over by the enthrall of post-structuralism, responds by saying that there may be a 'mute ground upon which it is possible for entities to be juxtaposed',<sup>10</sup> a ground made invisible by

Borges's intentionally comic device of alphabetical ordering. This 'ground' for Foucault is not the essentialized ground of being, but an unconscious level of knowledge broken up into epistemological fields or what he calls 'epistemes' that can be discerned by archaeological excavation (discussed in Chapter 3). Although sympathetic to the notion of 'an archaeology of knowledge', *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism* is an attempt to find a methodological pathway between and against the ideas that social life can be understood either in terms of an essentialized ground or a series of discursive formations. There is a *missing middle* of structural-subjective patterning that this study wishes to address, and to do so will entail moving between the headiness of abstract theory and the glorious grubbiness of life's particulars to set up a method of structures of connection.

### Relating polity and community

The relationship between polity and community is historically one of the most discussed themes in contemporary social theory – at least as an implicit theme – and yet one of the most under-theorized areas of social relations. One of the reasons in the past for this lack of direct attention was a curious theoretical stumbling point that afflicted writers well into the twentieth century. Let me take one illustration. In 1915, in the cataloguing spirit of high modernism, the now-unknown Basil Hammond published a magisterial world history that took the political forms of community as its direct subject. For all this attention, he was unable to overcome one of the common issues of his time: the difficulty of treating an abstract community and associated bodies politic as ongoing forms of social relations. In other words, how does a thing called a 'community', abstracted from the living bodies of its constituent members, live on even though members of that community will die? The question is a real one, and not to be dismissed too quickly from our comfortable contemporary vantage point. Hammond wrote:

A community or a body politic retains its personal identity complete only from the death of one of its members to the death of the next; and as soon as all its members are dead its existence as a body consisting of certain definite persons is entirely ended. But through the space of thirty years, for which a generation remains in its prime and is not superseded by its sons, the persons gathered in a group for common purposes remain for the most part the same. Thus the lifetime of a community or body politic is about thirty years.<sup>11</sup>

The telling phrase here is 'personal identity'. By contrast, even at a time when the state was still being theorized in embodied terms as having a



personality,<sup>12</sup> Hammond, like others, found it somewhat easier to deal with the abstraction of the state than the abstraction across time and embodiment of polity-communities. He did this through invoking the legal doctrine initiated, he said, in the seventeenth-century age of treaty-making states. The doctrine suggested that the word 'state' can be 'adopted as a technical name for any succession of bodies politic which transmit rights and obligations from generation to generation'. For states, Hammond confidently concluded, 'bear no relation to concrete things'.<sup>13</sup> Thus, his approach becomes thoroughly confused. The state is wrongly conceived as immaterial because it is hard to form in the mind as a 'complete image' and the body politic is wrongly conceived as its opposite and reduced to a perceptible body of bodies:

A body politic, on the other hand, may be a perfectly concrete thing. All the members of a German tribe, or of a Greek city, or of the modern republics of Andorra or San Martino could, or can, be seen at a glance; the German tribesmen could all be heard at once if they murmured disapproval, or the citizens of Athens if they shouted or groaned ... And beyond that every body politic ... is like a concrete thing in its capacity for acting as if it were a single person.<sup>14</sup>

This persistent theoretical stumbling point, only misleadingly 'resolved' in Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society), was one reason for the lack of direct attention to the relationship between community and polity. A second reason became the very obviousness of the modern interrelation between community and polity. The nation-state embodied the intersection of state as polity and nation as community, and by the middle of the twentieth century even in the discipline of international relations the nation-state came to be taken for granted as the unified and framing category of analysis. Mirroring the limits of Max Weber's methodological individualism, this was the development of 'methodological nationalism'. The nation was the society and the society was the nation. It was not until the 1980s – ironically as the predominance of the nation-state began to be questioned and processes of globalization became more obvious – that theories of the nation-state took a leap in sophistication. The outstanding book of this renaissance was Benedict Anderson's awe-inspiring work *Imagined Communities*.<sup>15</sup> However, in the rush to theorize the nation-state, there was an overriding interpretative trend to over-accentuate the invented and modernist nature of the nation.<sup>16</sup> This became a third reason for the lack of direct attention. Whether or not the authors of such studies intended it, the emphasis upon contingency and cultural invention became part of a broader postmodern trend to criticize any engagement in Grand Theory

and any attempts to draw out broad (contingent) structural patterns in contemporary life.

At the same time, with a number of notable exceptions to be discussed in a moment, the boundaries between disciplines such as political science, anthropology, cultural studies and economics became firmer. Into the 1990s, questions of polity and community continued either to be subordinated or separated out into distinct realms. The window of opportunity that had been opened as writers no longer took the intersection of polity and community for granted was half-closed as the (post-structuralist) aversion to generalizing theory combined with the emphasis in the mainstream disciplines on particularizing studies. For example, thinking about the changing nature of the polity remains largely the preserve of political science, and then all too often with a narrow emphasis on the state as an institution of public administration.<sup>17</sup> Philosophers embrace questions concerning the ethics of community,<sup>18</sup> sociologists and anthropologists conduct case studies of particular communities, and geographers tend to limit themselves to the spatiality of community.

Throughout this period, some important social theorists continued to write against the trend carried within both mainstream and avant-garde theories that reject generalizing approaches to the social. Theorists who stand out in this respect include Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Maurice Godelier, Michael Mann, and Ernest Gellner.<sup>19</sup> They each in their various ways attempt to understand the structures of our society and to research the relation between structure and culture.<sup>20</sup> I intend to draw synthetically upon the work of these theorists in a way that they perhaps would not appreciate. For all that their research is extraordinarily enlightening, there is much in their approaches of which to be critical. The very breadth of their respective projects blinds them to methodological issues raised by their academic 'competitors'. Though they work in kindred realms, they barely acknowledge the influence of the others upon their thinking.

The present study draws critically upon these writers, using their writings to explore the relationship of polity and community, generalizing the approach that I earlier outlined in *Nation Formation*.<sup>21</sup> To narrow down the terms of the project, the background themes of polity and community are focussed upon two constellations of reference points: first, the social relations of the computer, money and print; and second, the social relations of time, space and embodiment. The reference point of 'print', for example, allows us to talk about the modes of communication relevant to both the constitution of different forms of polity and the integration of different forms of community. The most exciting research in

this area is by Jack Goody. His numerous books include *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*.<sup>22</sup> Other researchers in this field include Walter Ong, Elizabeth Eisenstein and Florian Coulmas.<sup>23</sup> The extraordinary thing about Goody's work, and also Ong's, is the demonstrated connections made between a technology and technique of communication and forms of human subjectivity and social organization. This kind of analysis cries out to be connected into an understanding of the history of contemporary forms of community-polity.

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### Defining globalism, nationalism and tribalism

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The heightened reflexivity about social relations explains why apparently simple concepts such as 'tribe', 'race', 'nation', and 'ethnicity' are now so hard to define. It is why, across various disciplines, scholars are increasingly shying away from using these concepts. In fact, what theorists tend to do is problematize the terms so that they no longer work, and then use the very same terms anyway. This has made it increasingly difficult to write anything about the social without careful definitions of every inherited concept and the inventing of a thousand new concepts to deal with the perceived problems of the old. For example, some writers even want to give up on the rich and complex term 'culture' with one theorist writing that the concept was now too baggage-laden to be still useful. It should be replaced, he said, following Michel Foucault, with the concept of 'powerful discursive formations, globally and strategically deployed'.<sup>24</sup> Apart from making for very long sentences, here the theoretical assumptions of the writer are blatantly evident – maybe that is a good thing, allowing us to criticize his instrumentalist assumptions – and those assumptions are developed in a way that limits rather than extends our understanding of the rich complexity of lived cultures. What I intend to do here is use old words rather than neologisms, but to define a few key concepts in relation to each other as part of an interconnected method of understanding. Each new definition will appear to 'stand alone', as much as it is possible for the meaning of any concept to stand alone. Beyond that, a deeper understanding of the revisited old terms does depend upon understanding how they fit into the weaving of the overall theoretical approach. From this it should be possible to work out the definitions of the thousand other concepts that have been left implicitly rather than rigorously defined.

One concept that does need explicit attention is social formation. It had its origins in the neo-Marxist attempt to get away from what was

earlier referred to as 'methodological nationalism'. Rather than treating society and nation as coextensive, conceiving of a social formation was to write in a more abstract register. In this sense, a social formation was a community-polity in all its historical specificity, but with its cultural-political boundaries crossed by broader social forces. Those forces were framed in theory by the dominant mode of production in articulation with other modes of production. I want to use the term in a more generalized way than the 'mode of production' approach. It will be used as the generic term for patterned formations of social practice and discourse (notice here that the word 'formations' acts simultaneously as a noun of outcome and of process). These formations can be described at various levels of analytical abstraction. At the level of empirical analysis, a nation or global community, or even a kinship group, can be called a social formation, always keeping in mind that such a formation is never unitary, homogenous or self-constituting. At the much more abstract level of categorical analysis, for example, it is possible to distinguish social formations by the way in which practices and subjectivities of temporality, spatiality, embodiment and epistemology are framed: that is, in terms of social formations as ontological formations – tribalism, traditionalism, modernism and postmodernism.

In contrast to the concept of 'social formation', the terms associated with 'globalism'<sup>25</sup> appear to be the easiest set of concepts in the world to define: in one way, globalization is simply the spatial extension of social relations across the globe. It is literally evoked in the picture that we have become accustomed to seeing in satellite photographs. However, that definition leaves us concentrating on the past few decades.

### Globalism and historicalism

A working definition of the cluster of terms around 'globalism' begins from the method that I have begun to outline, relating the various intersecting modes of practice to the extension of social relations across world-space. Across human history, as those practices have at one level become more materially abstract, they have tended to maintain or increase their intensity while becoming more extensive and generalized. 'Globalization' is thus most simply the name given to the extending matrix of those practices and subjectivities as they connect people across world-space.<sup>26</sup> Exemplary contemporary systems of materially-powerful but disembodied extension include the stamping presses of finance capital, electronic warfare, or electronic broadcast culture. There are, however, earlier or more concrete

forms of globalization that need to be incorporated into any definition. There are lines of *traditional* global connection carried by agents of the early expansionist imperial states, by traders on the silk routes, and by crusading war-makers going off to smash the infidels 'because they were there' living in the same world.<sup>27</sup> In the contemporary period there are continuing movements of people as refugees, migrants and travellers that have an obviously continuing embodied character.

Given this long-term history and its changing nature, globalization is defined not as the annihilation of space, or as an end-state that we will finally reach when the local is subsumed by the global. Rather, it is the extension of matrices of social practice and meaning across *world-space* where the notion of 'world-space' is itself defined in the historically-variable terms that it has been practised and understood phenomenally through changing *world-time*. Globalization is thus a layered and uneven process, changing in its form, rather than able to be defined as a specific condition. It is a matrix of ongoing practices and associated ideas and sensibilities that may become more totalizing but can never be complete – at least while we remain human and bound to some extent by our bodies and immediate relations. Here I am very sensitive to the critical excursions of Justin Rosenberg in his raunchy polemic, *The Follies of Globalisation Theory*.<sup>28</sup> As he argues, changes in the nature of time and space have been elevated by some writers into a grand architecture of explanation that has the potential to dehistoricize the processes of global extension. Nevertheless, notwithstanding Rosenberg's telling methodological injunction that if globalization involves spatial extension, it cannot be explained by invoking the claim that space is now global – the explanation and the thing-being-explained, he rightly says, are thus reduced into self-confirming circle – it is still legitimate to treat globalization as a *descriptive* category referring to a process of extension across a historically constituted world-space. With a few refinements that is all that I am doing here. An explanation as to why the dominant modes of practice contribute to the genie of globalization is not contained inside the definition, even if a method for beginning such an enquiry is inferred.

The associated concept of 'globalism', at least in its more specific use, is defined as the dominant ideology and subjectivity associated with different historically-dominant formations of global extension. The definition thus implies that there were pre-modern or *traditional* forms of globalism and globalization long before the driving force of capitalism sought to colonize every corner of the globe, for example, going back to the Roman Empire in the second century CE, and perhaps to the Greeks of the fifth-century BCE.<sup>29</sup> In the case of the Greeks, globalism was

conceived as a contested field mostly confined to the mode of enquiry, one with little impact on other modes of practice. Later, the Roman Empire drew lines of organizational connection across vast expanses of the known world, though this was still very restricted by comparison to what might be called *modern* globalization. Claudius Ptolemaeus (c. 90–c. 150) revived the Hellenic belief in the Pythagorean theory of a spherical globe. He wrote systematically about a world-space stretching from Caledonia and Anglia to what became known as Java Minor. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* begins with 'the god, whichever of the gods it was' taking care to shape the earth into a great ball, so that it might be the same in all directions.<sup>30</sup>

Alongside the secular Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, as its name suggests – *katholikos* universal, *kata* in respect of, *holos* the whole – had globalizing pretensions. This does not mean that *globalism* was the dominant or even a generalized understanding of the world. Sacred universalism, for example, was and is not necessarily the same as globalization. By contrast to the European clerics of globalization,<sup>31</sup> the Chinese form of universalism tended to be inwardly turned. For example, although the Celestial Kingdom had produced printed atlases that date long before the European Ortelius's supposedly first historical atlas, early maps of China show the world as fading off beyond the 'natural extent' of territory.<sup>32</sup> While evidence suggests that the Chinese may have travelled the world as far as the Persian Gulf and the coast of East Africa, this does not mean that they acted through a subjectivity of globalism. In other words, the Chinese centred their empire, symbolized by the decision in 1436 to prohibit the construction of seagoing ships.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, we have to take seriously the evidence that the Romans actively extended theirs across the *known* globe. If the Roman Peutinger Table is any indication, the Roman world-view travelled in geometric lines that stretched as far as the travelling eyes of the agents of Empire could see.<sup>34</sup> Beyond military integration, as Jerry Bentley has convincingly argued, commercial trade, micro-biological integration and cross-cultural interaction began to connect societies across the globe long before the onset of the modern.<sup>35</sup>

The definition thus is also sensitive to Roland Robertson's argument that globalism is a deep historical and variable process. However, by including the Roman Empire as having both globalizing sensibilities and practices, it extends Robertson's chronicle of the 'germinal stage' back long before the beginning of *modern* forms of globalism in the fifteenth century with the *revival* of a spherical view of the world.<sup>36</sup> The earlier form of globalism is what I have been calling *traditional* globalism – with all the attendant issues of social form that the concept of 'traditionalism'

entails. This means that the present approach fundamentally questions modernists like Anthony Giddens who suggest that globalism is a consequence of modernity, and utterly rejects theorists such as Martin Albrow who, in a fit of theoretical exuberance, claims that globality is now replacing modernity.<sup>37</sup> Giddens, in this view, does not have more than a single-layered sense of history, and Albrow makes a stunning category mistake. Albrow overlooks the issue that 'modernism' and 'globalism' come to us from two categorically different levels of analysis: 'globalism' is a descriptive term, an empirical generalization made about various practices, processes and subjectivities of spatial extension; whereas 'modernism' is a categorical term that can only be understood in terms of positing either a kind of subjectivity/aesthetic or a general ontological formation. Processes of globalization developed long before modernity (always understood provisionally in epochal terms only as a dominant not totalizing formation), and they will probably continue long after its heyday. However, this does not mean that globality is replacing modernity. It means, as writers such as Jan Aart Scholte and Manfred Steger have recognized<sup>38</sup> that the dominant form of globalization and globalism is changing, as is the once-assumed dominance of modernism.

In the early forms of *traditional* globalism, from perhaps the Roman Empire, through to the *modern* mercantile globalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the connections were carried as lines through a landscape. New ethnographic interpretation suggests first, that rather than passively accepting of change, indigenous peoples responded actively to imperial extensions, and, second, that ongoing interaction preceded formal empire. Beyond the intensely concentrated lines of movement emanating out from the imperial centres, it can still be argued that social life largely carried on regardless in all its localized tribal complexity, however, new archaeological evidence suggests that the lines of the Roman Empire need to be understood as intensifications of interactions that had been going on for generations.<sup>39</sup> New forms of *traditional tribalism*, including new social hierarchies of leadership, came to overlay *customary tribalism*. Nevertheless, the limited extent of this layering effect still makes it fundamentally different from modern globalism. However brutal traditional colonization may have been, the intention of traditional imperialists was to 'civilize' or to dominate traditional and tribal forms of life rather than completely remove them from the face of the planet. By contrast, modern globalization became much more than lines of interconnection. It came to be carried as a plane of connections.

Like earlier forms of globalization, this layer does not completely transform all before it, but, unlike the past, it blankets various social forms of