

# ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY





NEW

SZÉCHENYI PLAN

# ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

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## Week 12

Crossborder economic practices,  
globalisation

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# The concept of globalisation

- Logic of social processes that transgress borders of nation states
- Process ↔ historical period
- Period:
  - 1970s-
  - economic deregulation
  - end of bipolar world order
  - development of communication technologies
- Science and journalism: “buzzword” ⇒
  - organises popular knowledge: it mobilises
  - organises scientific debates: it polarises

# Basic question of the literature on globalization

- Guillén (2001)
  - analysing 100 social scientific articles/ books
- Can we talk of globalization?
- Does it create convergence?
  - Do political and economic institutions become more similar in different societies?
  - Does it reduced economic inequalities between countries?
- Does it undermine authority of nation states?
- Is it different from modernity?
- Does it create a global culture?

# The cunning state

- Randeria (2003, 2007)
  - discourse on the “weakness of states” part of a political strategy
  - works in two directions:
    - policy decisions explained to local constituencies by reference to weakness vis-à-vis globalisation
    - policy decisions explained to international and market actors by reference to weakness vis-à-vis local actors
  - strategy to blur political responsibility
  - case study:
    - patenting Neem-tree and Basmati rice: indigenous tree/rice, American chemical/food industry corporation wants to patent it
    - selective representation of local interest groups in the international arena





# McDonald's in the world

- Watson (1997), Caldwell (2004)
  - spread of fast food restaurant identified with American culture in different parts of the world
  - ⇔ “McDonaldisation” (Ritzer 1993): homogenisation, “cultural imperialism”
  - how people use McDonald's restaurants
  - meanings radically different from American ones, mixes with local culture:
    - “creolisation”, “hibridisation”
  - Moscow:
    - local beliefs about healthy food
    - “nash”: “ours” emphasising local origin of food
    - change: markedly foreign
      - ⇒ familiarly domestic



# Narratives of globalisation

- Kalb (1999): the time of metanarratives is not over
- Neoliberal theory
  - dismantling state regulation, economic growth
  - political “awakening”, democratization
- Conversationalist theory
  - experiencing cultural difference
  - self-reflection and autonomy
- Hegemony theory
  - leading role of superpowers
  - international exploitation, increase of inequalities
- “Hard cultures” theory
  - the nation-state strikes back, strengthening of local fundamentalisms

# Methodological challenges

- Social sciences: statist paradigm
- Anthropology:
  - study of closed small communities, BUT
  - importance of links and external impacts is significant
- Responses:
  - anthropology of global institutions:
    - WTO, IMF, stock exchanges
  - study of flows:
    - commodity chains, transnational migration
  - multi-sited ethnography:
    - e.g.: Ministry for Foreign Development in Western state + African small village

# Global flows

- Appadurai (1996): global “-scapes”: space for flows crossing cultural borders
- “Ethnoscape”:
  - movement of people, migration
- “Technoscape”:
  - movement technology and innovations
- “Financescapes”:
  - movement of financial capital
- “Mediascape”:
  - movement of information
- “Ideascape”:
  - movement of ideologies (both state and social movements)

# Time and space compression

- Harvey (1990)
- Understanding the postmodern condition: socio-cultural processes embedded in economic processes
- Fordist economy
  - ⇒ flexible accumulation
    - outsourcing, just-in-time, part time work
- Speed-up in turnover time and consumption: fashion, instantaneity, disposability
  - growth of “image industry”
- Cultural transformation:
  - ephemerality, uncertainty, collage becomes value

# Cosmopolitanism

- Hannerz (1990)
  - world culture: plurality, not uniformity
  - socialisation based on local culture ⇔ socialisation based on intercultural mobility
  - mobility not enough, intellectual openness:
    - tourist, business traveller, migrant worker: not cosmopolitan
    - curiosity, depth in other culture needed
  - cosmopolitan ≈ intellectual
    - culture of critical discourse: self-reflexive, problematising, analytical
  - later self-criticism: lack of political dimension (2005)
    - world government, citizenship, responsibility
  - critique by Friedman (2002): cosmopolitanism is class dependent
    - masses: rootedness, ethnicisation

# Creolisation

- Drummond (1980), Hannerz (1987)
- Traditional anthropological approach to culture (locality – people – culture)  $\Leftrightarrow$  cultural blending as decisive process
- Creole:
  - linguistic metaphor: recognised language that developed from the combination of other languages
  - in colonial settings: Caribbean, Brazil, Indian Ocean
  - syncretic religions
- Against cultural essentialism: anthropology of change and interrelatedness

# Global and local

- "Glocalisation"
- Friedman (1990, 1995)
  - globalisation and localisation are not contradictory, two sides of the same coin
  - example: *la sape*: Congolese consumer movement
- Wilk (1995)
  - "a global structure of common difference"
  - local cultural differences follow certain (global) dimensions:
    - valorising certain differences, devaluing others
  - example: beauty pageants in Belize
    - different ideals of beauty, clothes and exercises
    - structure of the event is the same

