Roman Loimeier, Dieter Neubert & Cordula Weißköppel

Globalization in the Local Context –
Perspectives and Concepts of Action in Africa.
An Introduction

Bayreuth African Studies Online

Die Bayreuther Online-Reihe "Bayreuth African Studies Online" präsentiert Forschungs-ergebnisse des Afrika-Schwerpunkts der Universität Bayreuth. Sie umfasst Aufsätze, Sammelbände und Monographien. Alle Beiträge durchlaufen ein Peer Review Verfahren. Es gibt keine festen Vorgaben für die Publikationssprache und die Länge der Beiträge.

Beiträge zu dieser Reihe können direkt oder über die Hochschullehrer/innen bzw. über die Mitglieder des SFB/FK 560 eingereicht werden. Das Herausgebergremium bestimmt zwei Fachgutachter (auch außerhalb der Universität Bayreuth) und entscheidet auf der Basis der Gutachten über die Aufnahme.

Die Schriftenreihe "Bayreuth African Studies Online" ist über den Online-Katalog der Universitätsbibliothek mit ISSN-Nummer erfasst. Außerdem ist jeder Band über den Opus-Volltextserver unter folgender URL recherchierbar:
http://opus.ub.uni-bayreuth.de/suche/index.php
Weitere Links befinden sich auf den Homepages des Instituts für Afrikastudien:
http://www.uni-bayreuth.de/Afrikanologie/IAS/index.html   und   des   SFB/FK   560:
http://www.uni-bayreuth.de/sfbs/sfb-fk560/index-publikationen.html   sowie   auf   den
Homepages der einzelnen Lehrstühle und Professuren der Universität Bayreuth.

Adresse:
Universität Bayreuth
Institut für Afrikastudien & Kulturwissenschaftliches
Forschungskolleg (SFB/FK 560)
D-95440 Bayreuth
Telefon: 0921/55-2088
Fax: 0921/55-2085

Notes on Contributors:

Dieter Neubert, professor for development sociology at Bayreuth University. Main fields of interest are, Sociology of Africa and development sociology, violence and conflicts, development policy, globalization and local knowledge.

Roman Loimeier (b. 1957), has been doing research on Senegal, Nigeria and Tanzania since 1981. He presently is at the Centre of Modern Oriental Studies (Berlin) where he directs a research project on "Plural Concepts of Time in (trans)local Contexts"

Cordula Weißköppel is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Cultural Studies, University of Bremen, Germany. From 2000 to 2003 she worked as a research associate at the Humanities Collaborative Research Centre (SFB/FK 560), Bayreuth University. Based upon fieldwork in Germany and Sudan, her research interests include gender studies, anthropology of youth, migration and diaspora. Her latest book publication is "Religion in the Context of African Migration" (co-edited with Afe Adogame. 2005, Bayreuth BASS No. 75)

Abstract

Typical shortages of the public debate on globalization are reflected in the academic discussion such as the distorting simplicity of catchwords like the „global village", „jihad vs. McWorld", the „new global age" or the assumption that globalization is a completely new phenomenon. However, the academic debate itself is still restricted. There are only few attempts to cover and analyze processes of globalization on a broader basis in all parts of the world: not only the „North", but also the „South". Despite the multi-centric character of the world, the analysis of processes of globalization has remained largely confined to the North, while events in Africa, for instance, are taken notice of only when they are of specific relevance to the North. This paper, which originally is the introduction to an edited book (published in German), tries to analyze these shortages and to present approaches which look at the processes of globalization from different and perhaps more „African" perspectives. However, this overview shows that it is still debated, whether established concepts of the globalization paradigm can be confirmed from an African perspective or whether they have to be revised or even rejected.

Preface

This paper is the English version of the introduction to the volume "Globalisierung im lokalen Kontext - Perspektiven und Konzepte von Handeln in Afrika" edited by Roman Loimeier, Dieter Neubert and Cordula Weißköppel. 2000, Berlin, Hamburg, Münster: Lit Verlag. The paper and the attached table of contents may stimulate interest in casting a look at the entire volume. To those who will not read the book, this paper offers at least insights into the discussions of the collaborative research program "Local Action in Africa in the Context of Global Influences" at the University of Bayreuth.

Bayreuth, February 2005, R.L., C: W. & D.N.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Roman Loimeier, Dieter Neubert, Cordula Weißköppel

The debate on globalization is and always was much more complex than is suggested by popular catchwords such as the "global village" (McLuhan 1967), "Jihâd vs. McWorld" (Barber 1996) or the "new global age" (Albrow 1996). Firstly, the very books from which these formulations are taken contain analyses that are more sophisticated than is suggested by the catchwords themselves. And it is important to remember that the debate on globalization was many-faceted and controversial right from the beginning.[1]
If the first studies were mainly devoted to analysis of the increasing integration of national economies in the world market and discussion of the new political world order, these were soon followed by anthropological and sociological studies which observed the effects of globalization in widely differing societies and proposed theories of a turning point in processes of cultural change; and by historical studies which questioned the idea of a turning point and underlined the longue durée of globalization and its predecessors.

Despite the complexity of current academic discussions, two theories have become established in the public debate: the theory of the global homogenization of cultures (Ritzer 1993) and the theory that globalization is a completely new phenomenon (Albrow 1996, Lash/Urry 1987) with no parallels among earlier processes, and which cannot be seen as a result of long development processes. The theory of globalization as a contemporary and paradigmatically new development gained publicity simply because public discussion of globalization only began in the 1990s and the greater part of the literature relating to globalization grew out of the specific historical context of the late 1980s and the 1990s. But even early writers on the subject, such as Robertson (1992) or Giddens (1995), stress its historical dimensions and reject the definition of globalization as an exclusively contemporary development. They point to long processes of social and technological transformation, especially in the 19th century, which show

---

[1]   For a compact and readable overview, see Dürrschmidt (2002), Schirato/Webb (2003), and the readers by Inda/Rosaldo (2002) and Lechner/Boli (2000, 2004).

parallels to present-day globalization. In more recent times, Hopkins (2002) and Osterhammel/Petersson (2003) in particular have pointed to the historical roots of globalization. Thus, the absence of distinctions in the public debate is not due to corresponding gaps in academic analyses. So why yet another academic book on globalization?

In all discussions of globalization to date there has been no attempt to test theoretical notions on a broad basis in all parts of the world. The few empirically supported arguments mainly concern international economic or political structures. Studies of globalization from the micro perspective of concrete environments and social action are rare and frequently relate to groups, networks and spaces for which the significance of globalization is obvious: business managers, the Internet or diaspora communities. And research in the broad field of globalization is rather surprisingly restricted in its perspective. For although the term globalization means that the object of analysis is the whole world, the vast majority of illustrations, examples and empirical data are taken from countries in the "North": they are concerned with developments in Europe, North America and Japan/East Asia in the light of worldwide networks and consolidations.

The authors argue that old centre-periphery models have outlived their usefulness and that categories such as "Third World" are no longer meaningful. Nevertheless, references to the "South", in particular to the countries of the continental trio, Latin America, Africa and southern Asia, are mostly of a selective nature. The few studies which do take the "South" into account do so with reference to big cities or to the degree of integration of certain countries in the world economy, and focus on regions which are obviously part of international networks, such as Malaysia with its computer chip production plants. However, not all societies in the "South" share and participate in the processes of globalization to the same extent and with the same intensity (which can also be said of those in the "North"). Even studies which look at the new polarization or inequality in the world, the new international stratification and new forms of distinction, for instance in the organization of labour (Castells 1996, Lash/Urry 1994), show empirical gaps in this respect.

This concentration on the "North" goes hand in hand with a further weakness: despite the fact that the multicentric character of the world is repeatedly mentioned in the globalization debate, this aspect is not given the attention it deserves. Only in connection with globalized media production is there some indication that there are new, globally significant centres outside the old ones, with reference to Brazilian "telenovelas" or the role of Indian film production (see the article by Förster in this book).

But even these examples belong to the globalized culture industry and

follow the model of Hollywood. Are there really no other centres and are other centres always also a part of the capitalist world market? Is globalization mainly a process of "westernization", as is believed, for instance, by many Africans and many Muslims?[2]

In the debate on globalization, Africa in particular belongs to those regions that are largely ignored. There are isolated references to Africa in the literature, for instance to African women traders who procure their wares from Europe by air. But hardly anyone has asked to what extent the general postulates regarding globalization apply in this part of the world.[3] This lack of interest corresponds to the real position of Africa in today's globalized world: Africa has almost no significance on the world market and in world trade, and in political terms Africa is commonly regarded as a continent beset by crises. The short phase of benevolent attention during the wave of democratization in the early 1990s has done little to change this view. Events in Africa are normally only taken notice of when they are of spectacular relevance to the "North".

This is where the present collection of articles has its place. All the contributions are concerned with Africa and refer to the globalization debate against the backdrop of developments in Africa. "Africa" stands for the many societies on the African continent that are now organized as nation states, but not only for these: the general term "Africa", which is first and foremost a geographical concept, must also be considered as a construct, a conglomeration of meanings, which has resulted from a historical process of contact between African societies and the "rest" of the world, whether from the point of view of colonial history or from the perspective of African intellectuals, mainly in the African diaspora in North America and Europe, who have philosophized about the Panafrican ideal and related identities (see the article by Macamo). Thus, as a result of past and present emigration processes, there are groups and actors who also count as belonging to "Africa" because of their political identification or genealogical connection with the construct of Africa, even if they live in other parts of the world (see the articles by Probst and Weißköppel).

Focusing on Africa in the globalization debate thus seems to us to be promising in many respects. It is a means of confronting the globalization debate directly with empirical findings from a region that has been hitherto neglected, so that the established theoretical concepts of the globalization paradigm can be reevaluated in the light of these findings. This approach involves another change of perspective: in the present book attention is

---

[2]   See the reports in African newspapers.

[3]   Exceptions to date are the collections of articles by Bauer/Egbert/Jäger (2001) and Smith (2003).

centred on local action and its relations to the process of globalization, which either become manifest or play no role in this action. Awareness of being embedded (Giddens 1995) in processes of globalization and its significance for human action at various places in Africa is thus not simply assumed, but is the central theme of the articles.

The theoretical articles question in particular the existing categories of "global" and "local" which are subject to inflationary use today, and look at gaps and nuances which are of vital importance for the relationship between the local and the global (Cooper 2001: 208f). In particular they ask how the global is conceptualized in the the local context, and how this relates to the action of the local people. This is one of the reasons why we chose the title "Globalization in the local context. Perspectives and concepts of action in Africa". The phenomenon of globalization and the globalization debate are considered here from a radically different point of view, in the sense that local (emic) perceptions and manifestations of the global are assumed. In addition, and this is also rare in the globalization debate, the book represents a broad range of disciplines which are all in agreement on this change of perspective (anthropology, Islamic studies, religious studies, geography and sociology). This reversal in the direction of the discussion within an interdisciplinary research context is a central result of the work carried out in the Bayreuth collaborative research centre "Local Action in Africa in the Context of Global Influences" (hereafter referred to as SFB/FK 560).

Central questions concerning the globalization paradigm

Because the studies are carried out from the local perspective, it became necessary to specify and differentiate the globalization paradigm, as already demanded by critical voices (e.g. Cooper 2001: 192). The constructive-critical discussion of established concepts of the globalization paradigm in relation to specifically African contexts and the development of analytical instruments for empirical investigations in Africa which this involved proved to be a very fruitful process, the results of which are presented here. Three areas have proved to be particularly important for the studies in this collection and they are discussed with different degrees of intensity in all the articles:

1)   the importance of developing parameters for concrete definition of the global and the local (see the articles by Förster, Loimeier, Verne),

2)   reference to the relationality of the local and the global, for instance in respect of particular knowledge systems or frames of reference (see the articles by Geschiere, Macamo, Müller-Mahn, Probst), and

3)   analysis of the interconnectedness of the local and the global (see the articles by Neubert/Macamo, Voll, Weißköppel).

Against the backdrop of empirical research in Africa there also arise a number of necessary distinctions and problems of definition within the globalization paradigm which are formulated as knowledge-guiding questions in the articles, and which are set out in detail below:

-     What are the implications for the concept of globalization itself of critical reflection on the globalization paradigm, based on empirical results of research relating to Africa?

-     What consequences for the debate on the globalization paradigm arise from ascertaining the historical depth of independent globalization processes in Africa (but also in Asia and America) and thus of the multicentric character of the world?

-     The manifestations and dimensions of the global and the local are relational. What does this mean when trying to distinguish what is global and what is local in a specific context?

-     When investigating local action, the question of reference quantities and standards repeatedly arises. How can these be defined as global or local "frames of reference" (see explanation below)?

-     What dimension is added to local-global relations by their increasing interconnectedness and the resulting suspension of absolute categories of local and global? Are these terms still meaningful without their relational opposite, and which other theoretical concepts could replace them? Can this be achieved by the concepts of hybridization or syncretization, which come close in different ways to phenomena of mixing or coexistence of different frames of reference?

The answers offered in this book do not claim to formulate a new theory of globalization. Their intention is to encourage critical development of the globalization debate with more clear-cut concepts. The arguments presented in the different articles are not all the same, despite their common analytical perspective with its emphasis on the local, and similarities in their criticism of the current globalization debate.

Critique of the globalization paradigm from the perspective of research on Africa

As Förster says in his article, theories of globalization tend not only to be very broad, but also to make sweeping statements about individual and collective action. These statements are frequently based on presuppositions which are scarcely reflected upon or which are difficult to verify or falsify empirically. Thus, in the globalization debate, despite their very different theoretical positions, authors repeatedly refer to a core of specific (qualitative and quantitative) characteristics of globalization (see below) for which there is no detailed empirical evidence. An essential aspect of many articles in this book is therefore a critical and detailed discussion of the simplified and abbreviated arguments commonly used in the globalization debate, which for its part is frequently the product of a particular period and context. In this connection we are justified in speaking of the inflation of terms relating to globalization, such as "unbounding", "acceleration", "compression", "scapes", "flows and closures", "glocal", which, because they are used so frequently and often without any clearly defined meaning, have been referred to as "globaloney" (Harvey 1996: 1).

Such terms are frequently used to express the characteristics of globalization processes, without making clear to what extent the diagnosis really applies, how much empirical evidence there is for it, or whether "acceleration" or "compression" are distinct from other processes of social change which go further back in time, or where and for whom these processes were effective, at what period and with what degree of intensity. But if these questions remain unanswered, the concept of globalization becomes just a hollow catch-word. After his vain search for clear criteria for defining what is "global", Verne speaks more benevolently of an "aesthetic category, a metaphor", which by definition remains imprecise and ambiguous and which therefore cannot be used as an analytical category (see also Cooper 2001), but which serves quite well for everyday purposes to refer to a complex set of circumstances.

On the basis of the empirical findings from African societies, it is now indeed possible, as emphasized by many of the articles in this book, to produce a range of fundamental objections to the inflationary and decontextualized use of terms relating to globalization, and either to make them more concrete and meaningful or to reveal their hollowness once and for all. As Loimeier and Verne suggest, it would be possible to prove the existence of globalization as such by using certain parameters to check each of the supposedly characteristic aspects of the globalization paradigm. In the individual parameters of a characteristic aspect of globalization, such as

unbounding, decisions taken under the influence of globalization processes by people in a particular local setting become manifest. However, when investigating these parameters it is also necessary to ask whether discussions and debates are really held in a particular local setting concerning changes which affect not only places such as Zanzibar in Tanzania or Berberkia in Niger, but also Cairo, Teheran or London. Are these changes them-selves embedded in a global context, and are they linked on different levels of interaction and communication, so that they are interrelated in many different ways? To be consistent we should only speak of sharing and participation in a globalization process on the local level if, after investtigating the local impact of the parameters describing the characteristic features of globalization, it is possible to observe not only transformation processes of the local setting but also changes which indicate an embedding of local change in global transformation processes, to which they are positively or negatively related.

When looking at globalization it is important not to neglect the dynamics of social change within society. This is something which figures prominently in discussions by sociologists but is pushed to the sidelines and ignored in the context of the globalization debate because it does not fit into the paradigm of apparently global, externally induced, translocal transformation processes. In the final analysis, we must ask whether the concept of globalization, as suggested by Giddens (1995), ought to be analysed within the framework of a continuous process of modernization (see the article by Neubert/Macamo), or whether the concept of globalization might not actually disappear into thin air if examined too closely (see the articles by Förster and Verne).

The historical dimensions of globalization

On closer analysis of local contexts, many of the parameters discussed in the context of the globalization paradigm, such as unbounding or time-space compression (see Harvey 1989), indicate a gradual rather than a fundamental qualitative change in the past fifteen to twenty years. For processes of globalization began not just at the end of the 1980s when they were described within the framework of a changed academic and political paradigm, but had already begun much earlier, differently in different regions, and with different degrees of intensity.

These processes of change do not necessarily represent a complete break with what went before. The dynamic acceleration of globalization-type transformation processes (Robertson (1992: 57) speaks of the take-off of

globalization) in East Africa can be dated back to the 19th century, before the colonial period (see Loimeier's article). Although this observation certainly does not apply to all regions of Africa, it points to the fact that globalization processes began at different times in different regions and do not always develop at the same speed.

Osterhammel/Petersson (2003) point out in this connection that the run-up to present-day globalization began very early on: increasingly global networking of the existing world systems began as early as the 15th/16th centuries and ended with today's globalization. Moreover, there was intense growth in global networking and exchange relations during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which slackened off as a result of the two world wars, the world economic crisis of 1929-33 and the Cold War, and did not recover until the 1970s. In many areas, the year 1913 still represents the peak. But this also means that the thesis of globalization as a contemporary development is no longer tenable (Osterhammel/Petersson 2003: 26-7, 109).

In this context other authors (such as Abu Lughod 1989, Hopkins 2002, Mitterauer 2003) have also pointed out that historically there is not just a single globalization process whose roots lie in northwestern Europe. Rather there is a whole range of globalization processes which are fed by specific local and regional sources and are bound up with particular concepts and views of the world as a whole, in the case of the Muslims for instance with the conception of an Islamic world (Arab. umma, see the article by Voll). A multicentric world thus means more than just the existence of several centres within the world of capitalism, mass consumption and multilateral political rules of action. Although this is certainly implied by critics of the homogenization thesis (Appadurai 1992, Hall 1996), it is not taken to its logical conclusion. Moreover, the multicentric character of the world is not a new result of the (one) globalization process, but again is a result of earlier processes of unbounding and enlargement of the scale of action.

A number of other contributions (see Förster and Neubert/Macamo) consider the long history of globalization processes and their links with the process of modernization. What is important here is not the question whether recent developments since the 1970s and 1980s have brought about a fundamental change, but pointing out the similarities between "present-day" processes of globalization and earlier transformation processes. It is shown that the terms and concepts developed within the globalization paradigm can be, and to some extent already have been, applied meaningfully and fruitfully to processes of change in earlier periods and in regions outside or on the periphery of the sphere controlled by western states.

This is true for instance of unbounding and enlargement of scale, a concept which can be traced back in the East African context through Bang (2000) to Iliffe (1971) and Alpers (1975). Alpers in turn refers to the model

described by Redfield (1956, 1953) of great and little traditions, which was discussed in the 1950s as a theoretical basis for the analysis of frames of reference in micro- and macro societies, such as the religion Islam or the region India (see below).

The archaeology of the terms (Foucault 1973) and of the explanatory paradigms associated with them reveals that there were social processes in earlier periods which can be described using the conceptual and method-ological instruments of the globalization paradigm. Thus the East African example, as Loimeier underlines in his article, points to earlier processes of change which correspond to the characteristic parameters of "modern" globalization, but which belong historically to the context of the late 19th century. Each globalization process thus seems to have its own particular dynamic, expressed in warming up and preparatory phases the length of which differs locally and regionally (after Osterhammel/Petersson 2003: "the run-up to globalization"), but naturally also in the different local and regional shape of the globalization processes.

These processes, moreover, as shown by the British historian James (2001) through the example of the world economic crisis of 1929, can repeatedly be subjected to interruptions and setbacks; globalization, like any transformation process, does not proceed in a straight line but is character-ized by breaks, which in turn have a specific regional character reflecting the effective power of the local.

The relationality of the parameters "local" and "global"

It has been repeatedly noted in the more recent globalization debate that local and global are relational to each other (see the articles by Förster, Verne, Macamo, Müller-Mahn and Probst): something is identified as local by being put in relation to something that is characterized as global (see Robertson 1995). But if global and local are only explicable through their relationality, it is doubtful whether there actually can be anything like global or local, especially when relational concepts such as local and global are linked to additional dichotomies such as particular and universal. Because of the interconnectedness of the two concepts it is necessary to clarify what really is local or global.

The answers given in this book for different empirical fields range from clear classification as local or global (see article by Neubert/Macamo) to a consistently relational definition of the two categories. The relationality of local and global is a central issue in the article by Verne, who discusses the problem of how far one can refer to "global goods" in the village of

Berberkia in Niger. As there were no linguistic equivalents for global and local goods in the local language, Verne approached the question via various etic and emic criteria, these being:

1) The concrete origin of the goods: here there was the problem of deciding where to draw the line between local and global goods. Goods which originally came from outside Africa and are of especially great importance for the local markets are now produced in Africa itself, as shown by the example of Maggi cubes.

2) The origin of the goods category: here the problem was that with an unlimited time horizon for "origin" almost all goods that are consumed locally are originally of external origin, which would rob the concept of global of any specific explanatory force. From which point of time on does a "global good" become a "local good"?

3) The worldwide distribution of goods: here origin no longer plays a role, global goods can come from anywhere. However, it is questionable whether specific statements can be made on the basis of global distribution alone.

4) Local terminology for potentially "global" goods: here the problem was that in Berberkia there is no word for "global". These goods are identified as "non-local" and are frequently referred to as "things of today".

5) There was another category, that of culturally "foreign" goods: however, the use of "foreign" in the local context is not necessarily the same as external definitions of "foreign".

Verne's discussion of the soundness of these five criteria or parameters clearly shows that the term "global good" as applied in the local context is always a highly complex concept.

Conversely Müller-Mahn discusses the complexity of the local in relation to the global, since the limits and extent of "space" are more and more frequently questioned in the context of the globalization debate. In geographical discourses space is concretized as a "land-scape", a "region", or a topographically fixed "place", in which or at which people act as supposedly local actors. His survey of the theorization of space in this closely defined sense thus also provides confirmation from a geographical perspective for the current idea that space or the local should be considered as a result of the interactive and communicative appropriation and penetration of sections of the earth's surface by human beings. Consequently the extent and quality of the local always depends on the degree of relevancy for the people involved and is tied to their structured actions (see Giddens 1995). Müller-Mahn

stresses that the extent of the local is chiefly determined "by the availability of necessary resources and possibilities of determining the area of effectiveness of one's own actions". These resources include not only material capital but also social capital, for example when individual influence can be extended from one place to several places through a social network, so that the local as a point of reference is not only relativized but tends to be multi-plied. Commuting between several places, countries or even continents, as practiced by pilgrims or traders long before the age of globalization, can thus be interpreted as multilocal or translocal action, depending on the analytical focus.

In the article by Probst a new definition of the local is attempted from an anthropological perspective, also in the light of practical and theoretical considerations (inter alia Giddens 1995, Ortner 1984). The qualities of the local are sought here not in social processes of territorial appropriation of space, but in sensual and physical experiences. These are forms of em- bodiment (after Moore 1994) of cultural meaning which can be remembered and reactivated, independently of concrete places. His ethnographic example of representation of the Osogbo cult by Yoruba members on the Internet clearly shows that virtual places such as websites can become important places for public image cultivation and for stimulating the imagination. Among other things they can be used to promote the ethnic identification of diaspora actors, while other visitors to the site have no such access. Thus limits can be created even in virtual situations, which, although they may be invisible, still contribute to the quality of the local.

In his article on the question "What is Africa?", Macamo gives a different example of the social construction of the local in its historical and present- day extension. Taking as his starting point the intellectual debate as to whether it is possible to speak of an "African" philosophy at all, Macamo discusses the historical (in the sense of colonial and postcolonial) events and subsequent political developments which have led to a situation today where, without causing comment, we can speak of "Africa" as a culturally homogeneous space, populated by "black people" who share a common destiny, namely the history of slavery and of colonialism. On the one hand, Macamo makes clear that it is only the outside view which has produced the need for a common identity, because former slaves on their return sought an identity to create solidarity with other exiles from Africa – and finally found this identity through appropriation of the foreign term "African". On the other hand, Macamo emphasizes that this construction of identity is something which must be "carried out" permanently, in other words which must be continuously confirmed and perpetuated in both general and particular discourses, in order to be able to survive as a socially relevant concept. That this particular construction is successful far beyond its

geographical limits is demonstrated not only by collections of scholarly articles relating to Africa, but also by popular publications (a recent example is Grill 2003) which are not about single countries or regions but about Africa as a whole. All this points to the attractivity of umbrella reference concepts which abstract the local in a specific manner but do not necessarily negate it.

Local and global frames of reference

In attempts to explain human action in "local" or "global" contexts, the question repeatedly arises as to what the actors in each particular case are really guided by. In this collection of articles, the standards by which action is guided are called the "frame of reference" (see the articles by Neubert/Macamo, Loimeier, Weißköppel). By this we mean the standards of evaluation and orientation which can be applied by actors in a specific situation and which make fundamental statements about the actual and ideal nature of the world. Reality is interpreted with the help of and within central frames of reference. This interpretation offers an essential basis for individual decisions to act, independently of the situative requirements. Frames of reference are thus a form of supraindividual orientation and they apply to groups of people.[4]

For the analysis of globalization in the local context it is there-fore helpful to make an analytical distinction between local and global frames of reference. Frames of reference are limited in their range of application to certain groups or environments, and have a concrete local reference, the validity of which is defined locally and is geographically-spatially limited. In this sense, frames of reference are always local frames of reference. The process of globalization, or more generally, supralocal communication, means that frames of reference become effective beyond their original area of application and in extreme cases become known all over the world.

---

[4]   "Reference systems" is the term used in the application documents of the SFB/FK 560 "Local Action in Africa". "Reference systems" and "frames of reference" can be used synonymously. But we prefer "frames of reference" because the term "frame", unlike the term "system", makes no structural implication in the sense of a systematic organization within defined limits. In sociology the term "frame" is reminiscent of Goffman's "frame analysis" (Goffman 1977). The use of the term frame suggested here is perfectly compatible with Goffman's ideas. However, our term is used in a broader sense and is thus more open. Goffmann's theory, with its specific premises and distinctions regarding the theory of action is one possible way of making a more precise analysis. The general term *frame of reference* is appropriate for our interdisciplinary discussion for another reason: frame of reference is used both in the sciences and in cultural studies in a wide variety of contexts and, unlike "system", it implies no specific theoretical perspective.

Global frames of reference are then (originally local) frames of reference which have become known globally and are globally effective. But we should only speak of global effectiveness when local action is related to these frames of reference at a large number of different and widely scattered places (meaning worldwide), whether through complete adoption, partial adoption (or appropriation) or rejection and resistance. Global frames of reference in this sense are for example:

-       the "world" religions as a formalized framework for interpreting the world and justifying values,

-       (natural) science as a formalized analytical framework for explaining the world,

-       international law (including human rights and international comercial law) as a formalized legal framework for international cooperation. This is also connected with fundamental legal principles, which (can) have an effect on national and local law.

All these frames of reference involve specific assumptions about the actual and ideal nature of the world, which have a great influence on the prestructuring of everyday actions. In addition, global validity is usually attributed to these frames of reference by their followers. The frames of reference are correspondingly universally formulated. This claim to universal validity is substantiated by pointing to their worldwide effectiveness. In the case of the world religions, expansion took place long ago and their worldwide presence is now accepted as given. The spread of the (natural) sciences with their rational world view is closely connected with the project of modernity and they have also been effective in all parts of the world for a long time. In the current globalization process the worldwide establishment of international law and its extension to more and more areas is an important factor and plays a corresponding role in the current globalization debate. At least equally important is the increasing political pressure to standardize legal principles at both national and local levels.

   Thus the spread of global frames of reference mainly describes non-material contents of the globalization process. However, in addition to the fundamental frames of reference mentioned above (religion, science, international law), there are other reference quantities which can become globally effective. These are formalized rules and accepted conventions within narrowly defined fields of action such as rules in different sports (football, chess, tennis) or conventions in the use of road signs, or the Morse code. In this sense the technical conventions of the Internet may also be seen as reference quantities which are applicable anywhere in the world. These reference quantities and rules influence the behaviour of athletes, drivers,

radio operators or Internet users all over the world, but without making any fundamental statements about the actual and ideal nature of the world.

In addition there are non-formalized frames of reference which can have a considerable influence on human action with specific standards of evaluation and orientation. These are ideas such as the freedom of the individual or the social equality of women and men, but also such concepts as a romantic love match, expressed through a white wedding. Their increasing spread is closely linked to the presence of global media. Less fundamental but just as noticeable in day-to-day behaviour are patterns of consumption, such as fashions in the field of music or clothes. However, from these informal reference quantities affecting day-to-day culture and formalized rules applying to narrowly restricted areas of action, there is a fluid transition to fundamental assumptions about the actual and ideal nature of the world on the one hand and global frames of reference on the other. It is therefore important to point out that while many frames of reference are explicitly articulated as such, there are others which influence action only implicitly.

Global frames of reference can therefore only be defined in the particular analytical context. For this purpose, two important distinctions must be made. Firstly, global and local frames of reference must be distinguished; decisive here are the criteria of global awareness and effectiveness as well as the claim of having global validity. Secondly, it is necessary to decide how broadly the concept of frame of reference is to be understood. For instance, to what extent must standards of evaluation and orientation be recognizably tied to fundamental assumptions about the actual and ideal nature of the world? Explicit frames of reference are discussed in the articles by Loimeier and Voll (with the example of Islam as a world religion) and in the article by Neubert and Macamo (with the example of local and scientific knowledge). Weißköppel and Förster, on the other hand, look at everyday situations in which the relationship to fundamental frames of reference is implicit and must be deduced from observed situations.

The distinction made here between local and global frames of reference continues earlier discussions within cultural studies. Thus Redfield, to whom we have already referred, and Grunebaum pointed out the significance of the relations between local and bigger frames of reference as long ago as the 1950s, with their model of great and little traditions. The debate arising from the work of Redfield and von Grunebaum, especially within Anglophone Islamic studies and anthropology, has led to many publications in which Islam, for instance, has been considered as a global frame of reference, presenting itself as a worldwide system of Muslim concepts, ideas, symbols and discourses: "Islam as a discursive world system" (see the article by Voll).

Further discussion of the concept of the frame of reference can be found in Lévy-Bruhl's book (1985) on "primitive thought", in studies in the field of symbolic anthropology (e.g. Douglas 1971), and in the more recent debates on the sociology of science and knowledge (for instance Latour 1984, Knorr-Cetina 1999). But at present, as Neubert and Macamo show in their article, interest is centered on the organization and structuring of knowledge and on the question of how far it is possible to distinguish different forms of knowledge: researchers ask what actors are guided by, what is the nature of standards for interpreting reality, how these change under the influence of globalization or modernization, and how the frames of reference for action and thought present themselves.

Neubert and Macamo examine the organization and structuring of knowledge and show contradictions or competing interpretations between different frames of reference, such as "local knowledge" and "scientific knowledge". It is important to remember here that the term local knowledge is a generic term for a wide number of different terms and concepts: it essentially means being related to a concrete place. Local knowledge is often compared to scientific knowledge, which gives rise to dichotomous opposites in which scientic knowledge is said to be reductionist and fragmented or theory-based, while local knowledge is presented as holistic, action-oriented and value-based. The assumption is that scientific knowledge is aimed at the specific production of knowledge and new findings and is also characterized by systematic reflection on the production of knowledge, while local knowledge is not concerned with the specific production of knowledge and does not systematically reflect on it.

The confrontation of different frames of reference in local action is examined in the light of these facts. It is basically possible to distinguish three forms of confrontation: the frames of reference may exist side by side, they may be closely intertwined or even fused together, or one frame of reference can incorporate elements of another while retaining its own logic (see also the article by Weißköppel); but even where there is fusion, situations may arise in which it is necessary to choose one or the other frame of reference. Here, Neubert and Macamo ask the important question, on the basis of what knowledge are relations to which frame of reference actually created: Who knows about it, what are the themes and contents of local knowledge, and who knows anything at all? From these questions and through the conflict with external systems of knowledge, there continually arises a "dispute over hegemony of interpretation" (see the article by Neubert/Macamo), in other words a dispute over which frames of reference should be used in the case of conflict.

The interconnectedness of "local" and "global"

In the globalization debate it is assumed that the interconnectedness of action horizons is experienced in a specific way in the processes of globalization. Despite the great importance attached to action, there has been very little theoretical discussion of this idea. Yet global interaction in today's world has created manifold opportunities for the formulation of specific traditions in a cosmopolitan way, which in turn, as Voll shows in his article, reveals surprising aspects of local traditions. In the Islamic world, for instance, teachers and public persons combine ideas and models which definitely have an Islamic character but which are expressed in a new, globally compatible and familiar way. Thus the synthesis of local and global becomes an important component of particular identities and also an important part of that which can be seen as local. This kind of development is significant in the relations between African 'localism' (term used by Voll) and other Muslim experiences and themes.

The interaction between global and local can produce very different effects: phenomena of competition, tension, conflict, as well as forms of appropriation, chaotic mixing, or systematic fusion of different frames of reference can be observed; the full spectrum ranges from absorption all the way to hegemony. As we mentioned above, study of the interaction of local and global (glocalization, see Robertson 1995) is made difficult by the fact that it is hard to determine the significance and size of the individual interacting elements. The qualification of something as local or global can change over the course of time: what was once global can become local (see the article by Verne), or, put in a different way: the distinctively local is never static or unchangeable (see the article by Probst). But this also means that there have always been local-global syntheses, as Voll shows using the example of the history of the Sufi brotherhoods or of the Mahdiyya in the Sudan. Local forms of expression of Islam have always been repeatedly destroyed and challenged by global forces and dynamics. Thus global and cosmopolitan factors were localized and became part of local institutions, which were then challenged again in a subsequent wave of global influences. African 'localism' has thus become an interactive part of the Islamic world system.

One of the central images used in attempts to describe the nature of globalization is that of "flowing" or "flows" (after Appadurai 1996): "Whether information or ideas, things or signs, anything can spread around the world – in different ways and through different media, more and more comprehensively and at increasing speed – and influence the places it reaches" (Verne in this book). It enters into relations with the local, is appropriated, adapted and changed, new constellations arise. In the article by Geschiere,

however, the idea of globalization as free-flowing streams of goods or information is seen as problematical, because many people remain excluded from these flows. He stresses that there are closures as wells as flows, and that they are mutually conditional: the beginning of new cycles causes the closing of others.[5] Geschiere demonstrates this thesis in his article on the changing role of the village in African societies. In the context of recent democratization processes in countries like Cameroun or Kenya, the village as "home" has undergone revaluation. The village is needed in the expanding politics of belonging. Its meaning has been rediscovered in these times of change and has taken on new attributes. The village has become a place of cultural reorientation, even if under new conditions, and the question as to whether someone is buried in the town or in their home village has assumed new importance.

Finally, the pairs syncretism/syncretization or hybridity/hybridization have also become prominent in theoretical discussions concerning the interaction between the local and the global. These pairs are concerned with the same question, even if from the point of view of different academic traditions and for different reasons: How can the processes of cultural mixing which are increasingly observed in the context of globalization (Nederveen Pieterse 1995, Probst 2000) be adequately described and analysed? In her article, Weißköppel looks explicitly into this question by first analysing the history of the term hybridity in order to define its specific explanatory profile as compared with the competing terms "syncretism" and "creolization" (Hannerz 1987): hybridity aims at cultural plurality, in other words the coexistence, overlapping and penetration of different systems of meaning and frames of reference, which in their specific settings produce something new which can no longer be traced back to clear frames of ref-erence. With this concept, therefore, the division into global and local relations is in fact given up and an attempt is made to describe the newly created situation using terms that go beyond this dichotomy. This cultural theorization of the term hybridity is based on Bachtin's linguistic theory, which was borrowed from the post-colonial theoretician Bhabha in order to give expression to the human production of meaning as conscious and unconscious ambivalence, and not only at times of increased cultural contact and exchange. But Bhabha (1994) and others favour this term when con-sidering heterogeneous and contradictory processes in the politics of identity which affect the "mobile" actors in globalization, such as migrants and other cosmopolitans. Using the example of her research among Sudanese in Germany, Weißköppel shows that this concept is eminently suitable for ethnographic investigation of the different frames of reference used by

---

[5]   See also the collection of articles edited by Meyer and Geschiere (1999).

people, because in concrete situations the choice of one or the other frame of reference is most often spontaneous and not deliberate. Different frames of reference are creatively combined and adapted to the particular context, so that they can be discovered only by means of ethnographic participation and interpretation. With the concept of hybridity we are therefore not aiming at the analytical reconstruction of individual local or global frames of reference (such as for instance in the article by Neubert/Macamo). Rather we wish to describe their interplay and its effect in concrete situations. In order to be able to adequately understand the "glocal" constitution (Robertson 1995) of specific situations or contexts in the age of globalization, we need to make careful "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1987) that are embedded in analyses of the historical context and power structure.

Conclusion

The central thesis of the articles in this book is that it is important to avoid making presuppositions about globalization and involvement in processes of globalization. Rather it is necessary to show evidence of globalization concretely from case to case, from historical context to historical context and from region to region. For this purpose, as shown by Loimeier and Verne, we need parameters which will enable us to confirm or reject the use of the term "globalization" in connection with particular actions or findings. The more such parameters can be categorized, the sooner we can attempt comparative studies in other historical and regional contexts in order to trace the development of globalization in different societies over a long time. But setting up criteria for identifying the global requires that similar criteria be set up for the local, because these two dimensions of action are interactive. Whether we approach the analysis of globalization from the global or from the local side, it is impossible today to ignore the interlocking of the two terms, local-global. It is therefore all the more important to demonstrate the theoretical comprehensibility and practical applicability of this pair of concepts through detailed empirical research.

Africa is ideally suited for our purpose of capturing the abstract features of the global through concrete local action, for, as Förster emphasizes in his article, Africa is still considered to be typical of the "backward" regions of the world, a continent lagging hopelessly behind modernity. Yet the same continent is referred to as a laboratory of modernity, a social space in which tradition and modernity have entered into a special relationship. By analogy it is argued in connection with globalization that the interlocking of local and global observed in Africa is a drastic case of what characterizes pro-

cesses of this kind all over the world. It is as if African societies show the contradictions and problems of globalization through a magnifying glass. Since processes of social change differ from society to society, in other words local experience of change and globalization is not everywhere the same, and since in some societies the processes of change and globalization are faster, more intensive and take place earlier than in others, the concept of globalization must prove itself to be sound even in places where transnational networks, as is frequently presumed, are not at all obvious, namely in an Africa that is apparently excluded from globalization. The articles collected here thus see themselves as an attempt to sharpen the analytical instruments, in order to question some of the rather abstract aspects of globalization as applied to historical and present-day phenomena in African societies. But we can also argue the other way round: only when we study the history, the development and the special features of all regions of the world with the same degree of intensity will we be in a position to understand, justify or refute the special role of Europe in the history of the world in general and globalization in particular.[6]

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, Janet Lila (1989): Before European hegemony. The world system AD 1250-1350. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Albrow, Martin (1996): The global age. State and society beyond modernity. Cambridge: Polity.

Alpers, Edward (1975): Ivory and slaves. London: Heinemann.

Amselle, Jean-Loup (2002): Globalization and the future of anthropology. In: African Affairs 101, 213-229.

Appadurai, Arjun (1992): Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In: Featherstone, M. (ed.). Global culture: nationalism, globalization and modernity. London: Sage, 295-310.
(1996): Modernity at large. Cultural dimensions of globalization. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Augé, Marc (1992): Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité. Paris: Seuil.

Bang, Anne (2000): Sufis and scholars of the sea. The Sufi and family networks of Ahmad b. Sumayt, c. 1860-1925. Dissertation. Bergen.

Bauer, Ulrich/Egbert, Henrik/Jäger, Frauke (2001): Interkulturelle Beziehungen und Kulturwandel in Afrika. Beiträge zur Globalisierungsdebatte. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang.

Bhabha, Homi K. (1994): The location of culture. London, New York: Routledge.

Barber, Benjamin (1996): Jihad vs. McWorld. New York: Ballantine.

Castells, Manuel (1996): The rise of the network society. Oxford: Blackwell.

Cooper, Frederick (2001): What is the concept of globalization good for? An African historian´s perspective. In: African Affairs 100 (399), 189-214.

Douglas, Mary (1971): Natural symbols. Explorations in cosmology. New York: Pantheon Books.

Dürrschmidt, Jörg (2002): Globalisierung. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Foucault, Michel (1973): Die Archäologie des Wissens. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

Geertz, Clifford (1987): Dichte Beschreibung. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

Giddens, Anthony (1995): Konsequenzen der Moderne. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

Goffman, Ervin (1977): Rahmen-Analyse. Ein Versuch über die Organisation von Alltagserfahrungen. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

Grill, Bartholomäus (2003): Ach, Afrika! Berlin: Siedler.

Grunebaum, Gustave E. von (1955): The problem. Unity in diversity. In: Grunebaum, G.E. von (ed.). Unity and variety in Muslim civilization. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 17-37.

Hall, Stuart (1996): The question of cultural identity. In: Hall, S./ Held, D./McGrew, A. (ed.). Modernity and its futures. Cambridge et al.: Polity, 273-316.

Hannerz, Ulf (1987): The world in creolization. In: Africa 57 (4), 546-559.

Harvey, David (1989): The condition of postmodernity. An enquiry into the origins of cultural change. Oxford: Blackwell.
(1996): Justice, nature, and the geography of difference. London et al.: Blackwell.

Hopkins, Anthony G. (ed.) (2002): Globalization in world history. London: Pimlico.

Iliffe, John (1971): A modern history of Tanganyika. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inda, Jonathan Xavier/Rosaldo, Renato (2002): The anthropology of globalization. A Reader. Oxford: Blackwell.

James, Harold (2001): The end of globalization. Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Knorr-Cetina, Karin (1999): Epistemic cultures. How sciences make knowledge. Cambridge/Mass., London: Harvard University Press.

Lash, Scott/Urry, John (1994): Economies of signs and space. London: Sage.

Latour, Bruno (1984): The pasteurization of France. Cambridge/Mass, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lechner, Frank J./Boli, John (ed.) (2000, 2004): The globalization Reader. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (1985 [1926]): How natives think. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McLuhan, Marshall (1967): Understanding media. The extension of man. London: Sphere books.

Meyer, Birgit/Geschiere, Peter (1999): Globalization and identity. Dialectics of flow and closure. Oxford: Blackwell.

Mitterauer, Michael (2003): Warum Europa? Mittelalterliche Grundlage eines Sonderwegs. Munich: C.H. Beck.

Moore, Henrietta (1994): A passion for difference. Essays in anthropology and gender. Polity: Cambridge.

Nederveen Pieters, Jan (1995): Globalization as hybridization. In: Featherstone, M./Lash, S./Robertson, R. (ed.). Global modernities. London: Sage, 45-68.

Ortner, Sherry (1984): Theory in anthropology since the Sixties. In: Comparative Studies in History and Society 26, 126-166.

Osterhammel, Jürgen/Petersson, Niels P. (2003): Geschichte der Globalisierung. Dimensionen, Prozesse, Epochen. Munich: C.H. Beck.

Probst, Peter (2000): Mischung und Moderne in: Streck, Bernhard (ed.). Wörterbuch der Ethnologie. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 156-160.

Redfield, Robert (1953): The natural history of the folk society. In: Social Forces 31, 224-8.
    (1956). Peasant culture and society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ritzer, Georg (1993): The McDonaldization of society: An investigation into the changing character of contemporary social life. London: Pine Forge Press.

Robertson, Roland (1992): Globalization. Social theory and global culture. London et al.: Sage.
    (1995): Glocalization: Time-Space and homogeneity-heterogeneity. In: Featherstone, M./Lash, S., Robertson, R. (ed). Global modernities. London: Sage, 15-30.

Schirato, Tony/Webb, Jen (2003): Understanding globalization. London: Sage.

Smith, Malinda S. (2003): Globalizing Africa. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press.

Appendix

Globalisierung im lokalen Kontext – Perspektiven und Konzepte von Handeln in Afrika

(Globalization in Local Contexts. Perspectives and Concepts
of agency in Africa)

Eds.: Roman Loimeier, Cordula Weißköppel & Dieter Neubert
Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung
Lit Verlag: Berlin, Hamburg, Münster 2005.

Inhalt (table of contents)