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## A Genealogy of ‘Globalization’: The Career of a Concept

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**ABSTRACT** *‘Globalization’ is an extraordinary concept. It is a complicated concept that burst upon the world relatively recently, but soon became a household concern. It is a concept that was rarely used until the 1990s, but processes of globalization had been happening for centuries. This article follows the genealogy of the concept from its unlikely beginnings in the 1930s–1950s to the heated scholarly debates across the end of the twentieth century to the present. Before it became a buzz word, the concept of ‘globalization’ began to be used in the most unlikely fields: in education to describe the global life of the mind; in international relations to describe the extension of the European Common Market; and in journalism to describe how the ‘American Negro and his problem are taking on a global significance’. The article begins to answer the question ‘Through what lineages and processes did the concept of globalization become so important?’ Drawing on textual research and interviews with key originating figures in the field of global studies, the article attempts to get past the usual anecdotes about the formation and etymology of the concept that center on alleged inventors of the term or references to first use of ‘globalization’ various dictionaries. The article tracks the careers of major scholars in relation to the career of the concept.*

**Keywords:** globalization, globalism, meaning, ideas, ideologies, imaginaries

Naming the person who first conceived of a significant word or thing has been crucial for the evolution of modern Western public consciousness. At least since the European industrial revolution, intellectual innovators and technological inventors have been singled out and showered with praise. Over the last century, this process has become even more individualized—as if something as complex as electricity or the computer was the sudden invention of a single person. This potent individualizing drive has been busily at work in recent decades with

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regard to the emergence of new buzzwords such as ‘globalization’—a phenomenon the French sociologist Dufoix (2012, pp. 30–31) aptly refers to as ‘the religion of the first occurrence’. For example, the *New York Times* (6 July 2006) featured an article headed, ‘Theodore Levitt, 81, who coined the term “globalization”, is dead’. Unsurprisingly, the generous obituary that followed was organized around this utterly false claim. While Levitt played an enormously important role in imbuing ‘globalization’ with economic meanings configured around the neoliberal signifier ‘free market’, he surely did not ‘invent’ the term *ex nihilo*. As we demonstrate in this essay, ‘globalization’ had been in use in the English language in various senses at least as early as 1930. Admitting to their error a few days later, the *New York Times* (11 July 2006) was obliged to run the following correction:

An obituary and headline on Friday about Theodore Levitt, a marketing scholar at the Harvard Business School, referred incorrectly to the origin of the word ‘globalization’. While Mr. Levitt’s work was closely associated with the idea of globalization in economics, and while he published a respected paper in 1983 popularizing the term, he did not coin the word. (It was in use at least as early as 1944 in other senses and was used by others in discussing economics at least as early as 1981.)

This story not only affirms the persistence of this individualizing ‘religion of the first occurrence’ in the twenty-first century, but also is indicative of the poverty of our historical and genealogical understanding of ‘globalization’—one of the most important concepts for understanding the passage of human society into the third millennium. Although ‘globalization’ mediates and frames how we understand our increasingly interconnected world, there exists no comprehensive genealogy and critical history of its meaning formation in the English language. At this point, we can only resort to trite anecdotes centered on alleged inventors like Levitt or short references to when ‘globalization’ made its first appearance in leading dictionaries and encyclopedias. Although there have been intense academic efforts to define the concept from a variety of perspectives, the very quality of the efforts to define the concept adequately and achieve analytical clarity has paradoxically pushed the possibility of a deep conceptual genealogy even further into unexplored intellectual territory.

### Approaching the Genealogical Vacuum

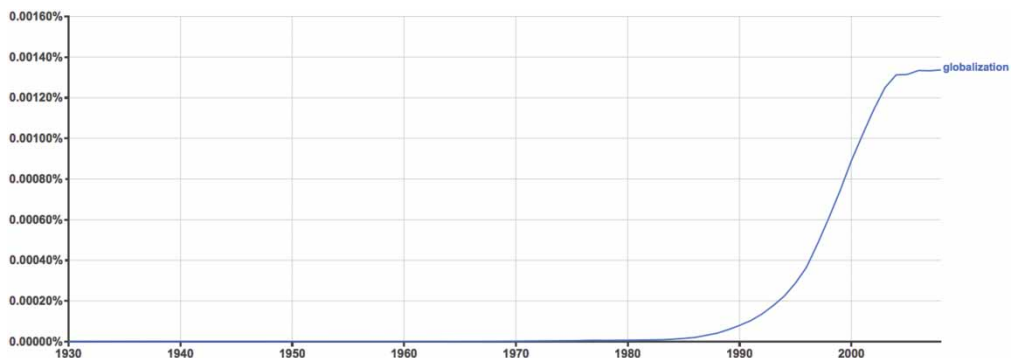
This introductory essay of the 10th Anniversary issue of *Globalizations* seeks to take an initial and rather modest step toward filling in this knowledge vacuum by examining the under-researched genealogical and epistemological foundations of the concept ‘globalization’. The present article is part of our larger research project, which explores the meaning formation of this tremendously influential concept from its obscure origins in the 1930s to its discursive prominence in the early twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> Our endeavor draws on Williams’ (1958) seminal study on the concept of ‘culture’, which contributed foundationally to elaborating better understandings in the field of literary studies and, later, cultural studies. While Williams’ ambitious exploration spans a two-century period, our research project investigates a much shorter timespan. Concretely, we are examining the precedents of ‘globalization’ in various incarnations from the 1930s to the 1970s as well as the formation of the concept as we now know it from the 1980s and 1990s to the present. In addition to his work on culture, we also are indebted to Williams’ particularly insightful investigation of what he called *Keywords* (1983). What the British thinker had in mind were pivotal terms that showed ‘how integral the problems of meanings and relationships really are’ (1983, p. 22). Although keywords represent a critical mass of the vocabulary of any given era,

the history of their meaning construction often remains obscure. 'Globalization' is no exception. While the meanings of other seminal 'keywords' such as 'economics', 'culture', or 'modernity' evolved rather slowly and built upon a relatively continuous base, 'globalization' has had a very short and discontinuous history. After a few tentative and disparate uses across the mid-twentieth century, it erupted in the 1990s with explosive energy in both public and academic discourses that sought to make sense of momentous social change.

The discursive explosion in the use of 'globalization' at the end of the twentieth century is extraordinary given that the term did not begin to enter general dictionaries until the 1960s—for the first time in 1961 in the *Merriam-Webster Third New International Dictionary*.<sup>2</sup> Most major books on the subject of globalization now begin with a seemingly mandatory paragraph or two defining the concept, locating it historically, and telling us that it is now used ubiquitously (Bisley, 2007; Held & McGrew, 2007; Robertson, 1992; Scholte, 2005). Substantial dictionaries and encyclopedias of globalization as well as multi-volume anthologies of globalization, including by the present authors (James et al., 2007–2014; Steger, 2011; Steger, Battersby, & Siracusa, 2014), have been published, which explore the phenomenon in all its complexities.

Thousands and thousands of works have been authored, which deal with the objective aspects of globalization. We can now track these writings through such mechanisms as the new search process *Ngram* (Figure 1), Google's mammoth database collated from nearly 5.2 million digitized books available free to the public for online searches (Michel et al., 2010). The exceptionally rich *Factiva* database lists 355,838 publications referencing the term 'globalization'. The *Expanded Academic ASAP* database produced 7,737 results with 'globalization' in the title, including 5,976 journal articles going back to 1986, 1404 magazine articles going back to 1984, and 355 news items going back to 1987. The *ISI Web of Knowledge* produced a total of 8,970 references with 'globalization' in the title going back to 1968. The *EBSCO Host Database* yielded 17,188 results reaching back to 1975. *Proquest Newspaper Database* listed 25,856 articles going back to 1971.

Despite the immense intellectual attention expressed in these quantitative records, it is striking that in the thousands of articles and books there is never an extended discussion of the history or etymology of the concept. Similarly in the many dictionaries and encyclopedias devoted to 'globalization' there is never an entry for 'Globalization, the concept of'. For example, one high-profile dictionary devoted to the subject of globalization with the subtitle *The key concepts* has no entry for



**Figure 1.** The Use of 'Globalization', 1930–2008. Source: Retrieved April 14, 2014, from [https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=globalization&year\\_start=1930&year\\_end=2014&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct\\_url=t1%3B%2Cglobalization%3B%2Cc0](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=globalization&year_start=1930&year_end=2014&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cglobalization%3B%2Cc0).

‘globalization’ as such (Mooney & Evans, 2007). Similarly, Jones’s dictionary (2006)—again organized broadly around the theme of globalization—contains only a page-and-a-half to an entry to discuss globalization directly. Moreover, this entry is confined to listing various approaches to the phenomenon rather than offering even a short genealogy of the concept. The massive *Encyclopedia of Global Studies* (Anheier, Juergensmeyer, & Faessel, 2012) has two major entries on globalization—‘Globalization: Approaches’ and ‘Globalization, Phenomenon of’—but there is no entry on the etymology of the key concept. Scholars thus take for granted one of the very tools of their trade. The word that we use to carry our intuitions, histories, arguments, politics, and considerations about the contemporary social imaginary is left shrouded in mystery. There is no equivalent here to Forgas’s (1984) elegant genealogy of the concept of ‘the national-popular’ or Zernatto’s (1944) classic historical investigation of the keyword ‘nation’.

This lack of research represents too large a vacuum in the scholarly literature to be shrugged off as a curiosity. Understanding such a major aporia in the field must tell us something about the nature of our globalizing world and those who study it. It is our contention that an examination of the concept ‘globalization’ will help to illuminate the surprisingly under-researched epistemological foundations of the field of global studies. More than that, it has the possibility of contributing to an investigation the social underpinnings of how we take for granted ‘our’ social place in an increasingly interconnected world. The first thing that can be said by way of explanation is that key writers have explored the definition of the concept (Robertson, 1992; Scholte, 2005; Turner & Khondker, 2010). This deferred what should have been an equally important task—that is, understanding the way in which the concept emerged to mean what is now does. Delving into the formation of the concept of ‘globalization’ was set aside as the urgency of explaining the phenomenon of global interconnection took over the imagination of sociologists, political scientists, urbanists, geographers, historians, and other scholars.

Second, it is consequential that this generalizing concept of social relations gripped the imagination of both academic analysts and journalistic commentators at the same time that generalizing theory—or at least ‘grand theory’—lost its pre-eminence in academia. Thus, understanding globalization as both a set of practices and forms of subjectivity linked to a sense of the ‘social whole’ became the standout object of critical enquiry at the very time when most writers were throwing away prior big tools for theorizing the social whole. This has led to paradoxical outcomes. Rosenberg (2000), for example, retained his orthodox structuralism while criticizing some of the foibles of key attempts to generalize an understanding of the phenomenon. None of the scholars interviewed in this special anniversary issue set out to develop a singular theory of globalization. The study of globalization began precisely through the period in which little hope was held out for more than a sophisticated, empirically generalizing, understanding of what globalization meant. In other words, globalization demanded the light of generalizing attention at the very moment when residual pretensions that an all-embracing theory might be found to explain such a phenomenon were effectively fading away.

Such contextual reflections offer some initial explanations of how it happened that such a big and unwieldy word as ‘globalization’ began to define the late twentieth-century sense of the shifting social whole in the English-speaking world and beyond. It is important to both deepen and broaden this sort of contextual inquiry. How did such a new and relatively technical term enter so quickly into common usage while its origins and conceptual evolution remained so obscure, divided, and uncontested, at least during the first period of its emergence? Who were the principal codifiers and shapers of its meanings? Why did some meanings become prominent whereas others never took off? And, finally, what does the astonishing ‘career’ of the concept tell us about today’s dominant ways of understanding social change?

The present article—and especially the ensuing interviews with 12 pioneers of what later came to be known as the transdisciplinary field of 'global studies' configured around its master concept 'globalization'—offers some preliminary responses to these critical questions. As we noted, the first part of our larger research project seeks to provide a historically sensitive mapping of the conceptual origins, evolution, and genealogical lineages of 'globalization'—and the related older concept of the 'global'—in the English-speaking academic world prior to its common usage in the 1990s. The present essay can only address this period in a very brief and general way. The second part of our research project explores how and why a previously obscure scholarly concept suddenly exploded within and onto academic communities in the 1990s. The 12 interviews that constitute the bulk of this special issue offer important clues as to why 'globalization' managed to take the world by storm so quickly and comprehensively.

We employ the phrase 'career of a concept' in a critical sense to flag our intention to attend to the important contextual and professional dynamics of power and interest with regard to the burgeoning use of the term (Bourdieu, 1990; Carver, 2004; Williams, 1983). The rise of 'globalization' can hardly be separated from the careers of numerous persons and collectivities—academics and others—who endowed the concept with very specific meanings. However, the concept gathered too much force too quickly to be harnessed by any single person or specific intellectual current or lineage. As the interviews show, different academics and journalists engaged in a self-conscious process of career building through accruing cultural capital. After all, one's reputation in academia and journalism is often associated with the capacity to name crucial phenomena. But in relation to coining or claiming concepts as a way of playing the status game, the assertion of a privileged relationship to 'globalization' did little for the academic standing of any of the main scholars in the fields that we have surveyed. Anthony Giddens, for example, is still respected as a key figure in the development of 'globalization' (Giddens (1990), but he never directly attempted to link his name to the term. He lost considerable credibility by trying to do so in relation to climate change when he put forward the term *Giddens' Paradox* (2009, pp. 1–2 and passim). But it did not occur to him to act similarly with regard to 'globalization'. Most likely, the term was too big and already too embedded to be claimed by a single individual. Unlike many other neologisms, the genie seemed to have already escaped the bottle in the early 1990s—long before one specific person could lasso it in. As our interviews reveal, academics often struck upon 'globalization' from very different starting points.

### **Of Globes, Imaginaries, and Condensation Symbols**

People's sense of the social whole changed dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. Potent processes of (post)modernization, denationalization, and globalization were remaking the world long before we had collective concepts to name those processes. For example, when Arendt (1958) published *The human condition*, there was still no familiar concept to describe the process of intensifying social relations that were busily stitching together humanity as an interconnected, yet uneven, entity. Although the German-born philosopher never employs the term 'globalization' in her book, she nonetheless opens the prologue with the 'global' image of an 'earth-born object'—Sputnik—projected out into the universe. Describing the launching of the first satellite as an event 'as important as any other in history', Arendt's story serves to introduce her thesis of *the earth* now constituting the 'very quintessence of the human condition' (p. 2). Sensing the emerging gestalt of a planetary social whole in the late 1950s, she spoke of an incipient *global society* 'whose members at the most distant points of the *globe* need

less time to meet than the members of a nation a generation ago' (p. 257). Although Arendt stumbled somewhat over the problem of how to describe these novel processes of interconnection in social scientific language, it is clear from the sensibility and urgency of her prose that an intuition of a planetary social whole was compelling her thoughts.

While this example of contextualizing the background to the use of 'globalization' is both important and necessary, it is not sufficient to give specificity to the actual process or set of processes. Moreover, since such descriptions usually travel in many different directions, they do not congeal easily into a single word or phrase. Although 'globalization' had not yet appeared prominently enough in the late 1950s' academic and public discourse, notions and images of 'the global' and 'globe' had become very popular from very early in the twentieth century as the modern media and communications industries were becoming acutely aware of their own globalizing networks serving mass audiences. A number of newspapers around the world, particularly in the USA and Canada, were using 'globe' in their titles, such as the *Boston Globe* and the *Globe and Mail*. From the 1920s, commercial airlines resorted to globes in their advertising projections. Founded in 1927, Pan American World Airlines flew under a blue globe logo until its economic collapse during a very different period of global competition in the 1990s. The *Daily News*—later the inspiration for the *Daily Planet* of Spiderman movies' fame—had a rotating giant globe in the lobby of its New York headquarters from its opening in 1930.

Moreover, a number of Hollywood movie studios used globes as part of their corporate image from the 1910s. The first logo for Universal Pictures from 1912 to 1919 was a stylized Earth with a Saturn-like ring. It was called the 'Trans-Atlantic Globe' or 'Saturn Globe'. In the 1920s, Universal Pictures' logo was an Earth floating in space with a bi-plane flying around it, leaving a trail of white vapor in its wake. Built in 1926, Paramount Picture's New York headquarters was topped by an illuminated glass globe, which was later blackened in response to World War II. In the immediate aftermath of the war—and in the spirit of recognizing the global reach of the communications industry—the Hollywood Foreign Correspondents Association initiated a series of media presentations they called the Golden Globe Awards.

On one hand, the prevalence of these kinds of images are a strong testimony to the power of 'the global' as a logo or icon long before the concept 'globalization' began to be used regularly by journalists and academics. On the other hand, however, this visibility of the global makes it all the more strange that much of the late twentieth-century writing on globalizing communications lacked a historical consciousness of anything prior to the immediate 'communications revolution' and the broader process of globalization that they were struggling to understand. The discursive explosion of 'globalization' in the 1990s notwithstanding, the dominant nationalist 'social imaginary' (Taylor, 2004, 2007) of the twentieth century became only very gradually overlaid with a thickening sensibility of global interdependence—a common background understanding we call the 'global imaginary' (Steger, 2008).

Only now, more than half a century after the release of Arendt's *The human condition*, can we take both the subjective formations of the global imaginary and the objective intensification of globalizing processes as the established basis for our attempt to map the evolution of the concept 'globalization'. It was a reflection of her time that Arendt did not employ the concept. Still, her use of the terms 'globe'—with reference to the changing human condition—provides one small but noteworthy entry into understanding this historical process of both framing and naming the rising global imaginary. Exploring the direct uses of the concept of 'globalization'—the task of our larger research project—provides a seemingly more direct entry point. We say 'seemingly' because such an exploration is actually not a simple task. Uses of the term before the early 1980s were rarely directly related to the meanings that the concept now holds. Again, we are not

looking for the 'inventor' of 'globalization'. Rather, we seek to understand the patterns of its formation and how it became intertwined with lives and careers of significant figures in the academic landscape of the English-speaking world and beyond.

This last point relates to a further line of inquiry that remains largely implicit in the interviews that follow below. What does the 'career of the concept' mean for the dominant way of understanding the social whole? How did 'globalization' emerge as the core concept of the late twentieth-century social imaginary? Or, to put it the other way around, how did it contribute to the palpability of 'the global' in our time? These questions point to our interest in how such keywords are set within four levels or layers of meaning formation: ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies (Steger & James, 2013, p. 23). *Ideas* are elements of thoughts and beliefs—the most immediate and particular level of meaning formation. *Ideologies* are patterned clusters of normatively imbued ideas and beliefs, including particular representations of power relations. Known as various 'isms', these ideological maps help people navigate the complexity of their political universe and carry exclusivist claims to social truth. *Imaginaries* are patterned connotations of the social whole. They are ways of imagining how 'we' are related to each other in concrete communities or entities of belonging. These deep-seated modes of understanding provide largely pre-reflexive parameters within which people imagine their social existence—expressed, for example, in conceptions of 'the global', 'the national', or 'the moral order of our time'. *Ontologies* are the most generalized level of meaning formation. They are patterned ways of being-in-the-world that are lived and experienced as the grounding conditions of the social—for example, modern linear time, modern territorial space, and individualized embodiment. Instead of just concerning relations in time and space, ontological analysis concerns the very nature of that time and space.<sup>3</sup>

Our central argument is that 'globalization' took off because it became embedded in the formation of meaning across these four levels. As a concept integrated into the idea of global interchange, its emergence took multiple paths with different starting points and orientations. If it had just stayed at the level of ideas its future trajectory would have been rather limited. By infiltrating and reconfiguring existing ideological systems, however, it took hold because it was used to argue or project a particular *political* understanding of the world. Consequently, the use of the concept in its current generic meaning of expanding and intensifying social relations across world-space and world-time was always part of ideological contestation and codification of concrete political programs and agendas. 'Globalization' eventually became what Freedman (1996) calls a 'core concept'—one of few powerful signifiers at the center of a political belief system. Thus, it contributed to the articulations of the emerging global imaginary in new ideological keys that corresponded to the thickening of public awareness of the world as an interconnected whole. This meant, of course, that the conventional 'isms' of the last two centuries were coming under full-scale attack by 'globalization'—a phenomenon rendered visible by what could be called a 'proliferation of prefixes' (Steger, 2008). 'Neo' and 'post', in particular, managed to attach themselves to most conventional 'isms', turning them into 'neoliberalism', 'neoconservatism', 'neanarchism', 'post-Marxism', and so on. These prefixes attested to people's growing recognition that we were moving 'post' the familiar ideational categories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also suggest that we were entering a 'new' ideological era in which our conventional political belief systems no longer neatly applied.

Inextricably linked to material processes of 'time-space compression' (Harvey, 1990), the transformation of the ideological landscape in the late twentieth century was largely driven by a rising global imaginary whose core concept 'globalization' was articulated and translated



in different ways by new ‘globalisms’. In other words, as the concept, the imaginary, and material processes became stronger and mutually reinforcing, we witnessed the birth of new ideological constellations such as ‘market globalism’, ‘justice globalism’, and various religious globalisms (Steger, Goodman, & Wilson, 2013; Steger & James, 2013; Wilson & Steger, 2013). Deeper still, ‘globalization’ became linked to dominant and emergent ontologies of ‘our time’. In particular, the meanings and practices of modern spatiality were destabilized by a relativizing, postmodern sense that the bounded territorial space of the nation-state could no longer contain the complexity of human difference and identity (James, 2006). The interviews collected in this volume convey a collective sense that this destabilization of the national imaginary in the last two decades of the twentieth century cried out for articulation and explanation.

Seeking to enhance the acuity of Williams’ ‘keyword’ approach, we added three additional methodological dimensions. First, we draw upon Ricoeur’s (1984) exploration of the relationship between *emplotment* (or making a narrative) and *aporia*—an exploration of what is left ‘unsaid’. Sensitivity to such aporia provides insight into what is narrated and naturalized as part of the more general social imaginary. This hermeneutical concern with how people narrate globalization is why interviews with key academic figures are so important. They are ideas-makers but, more importantly, they are key figures of ideological contestation eager to gauge social imaginaries and frame social conditions.

Second, we draw on the underutilized literature on *condensation symbols*, which gives specificity to the issue of how what is ‘said’ can be understood in textual context. Doris Graber, for example, likens condensation symbols to a ‘magical verbal concoction’ that can activate a whole host of evaluations, cognitions, and feelings (1976, p. xi). She calls them ‘condensation symbols’ because they ‘condense a whole coterie of ideas and notions into symbolic words or phrases’ (p. 134). Edelman’s path-breaking studies of political symbolism (1964, 1988) emphasize the emotional functions of ‘condensation symbols’. He relies on the psychoanalytic origins of the term denoting a single symbol or word becoming associated (especially in dreams) with the emotional content of several, not necessarily related, ideas feelings, memories, and impulses. Utilizing the ideas of both thinkers, our research project draws on especially the path-breaking work by Kaufer and Carley (1993). It provides us with a means of structuring this element of our approach. After all, what makes condensation symbols such special symbols is that they condense a broad range of ideas and meanings into a single word or short phrase; exhibit a close connection with other related symbols; and are ‘well connected in a network of meaning primed by the context’ (Kaufer & Carley, 1993, p. 202). ‘Well-connected’ is understood according to three criteria: *situational conductivity* is the capacity of the symbol both to elaborate and to be elaborated by other concepts in a particular context of use; *situational density* is the frequency with which a linguistic symbol is used in relation to others and within a delineated context and social group; and *situational consensus* refers the extent to which the meanings of a concept are elaborated in similar ways across a given population in a given context (pp. 202–205). Applying this methodological approach, we contend that ‘globalization’ conveyed increasingly condensed meanings as it became embedded across the four levels of ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies.

Our attention to ‘social fields’ leads us to our third point of reference. It is clear from our research that the concept of ‘globalization’ emerged from the intersection of four interrelated sets of ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998): academics, journalists, publishers/editors, and librarians. This notion of ‘communities of practice’ intersects with both Stanley Fish’s ‘communities of interpretation’ (1980) and Pierre Bourdieu’s work on ‘fields of practice’ (1990). Like Bourdieu (1990), we have chosen to concentrate in this special journal issue on *homo*

*academicus*. Unlike the French social thinker, however, we found that the scholars who worked closely with the concept of 'globalization' as it rose to prominence were not necessarily associated with a clear taxonomy of status. But this last point is only one of emphasis. It does not mean that the career of the concept and the careers of individuals were not related. Quite the opposite as some of our interviewees confirm, their engagement with 'globalization' proved to be a crucial factor in the making of their academic careers.

### The Many-Branched Tree of 'Globalization': Early Uses of the Concept (1930s–1970s)

We begin our larger genealogical project with two central questions. First, how did the present understanding of the concept of globalization develop? Second, how was the concept initially used? But we approach the second question quite differently from the usual individualizing 'religion of the first occurrence' that is reflected in the *New York Times* obituary for Theodore Levitt. We do not ask which person 'invented' the concept. Our research shows that there was no first genius who coined 'globalization'—a term which then, slowly or quickly, became part of the common sense of an age. Instead, we found that the beginnings of the use of the concept are complicated and involve several intellectual currents. Most surprisingly, the early uses of 'globalization' go back to meanings and discursive paths that did not endure on the long road to consistent academic (and public) language use. Like the emergence of *homo sapiens* as a species where, over millennia, different kinds of hominids thrived for a time before becoming extinct, a number of lineages of the concept turned out to be evolutionary dead-ends. Indeed, we found that the evolution of the concept of 'globalization' was many-branched, and the shoots of its development were often discontinuous and intermittent—buffeted by ferocious winds of change and encountering unanticipated twists and reversals.

Exploring the early uses of the term involves finding it used in written texts and then recording the sequences and patterns of use. But developing a critical genealogy of the *concept as we know it* is quite a different matter. Tracing concepts (as opposed to terms) entails, first, reading texts for their meaning and discerning the extent to which their authors have a reflexive understanding at the time that they are using a particular term such as 'globalization' to denote what is now the dominant meaning—the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-space and world-time.<sup>4</sup> Second, it also involves a contextually sensitive biographical search, which includes asking pertinent authors to talk about how they came upon the concept—hence the significance of the interviews presented in this Special Issue. Third, it entails understanding the shifting nature of an increasingly interconnected world into which such a term becomes both possible and necessary.

In the earliest uses of the term, 'globalization' was caught in a broad web of meanings. It variously signified the universalizing of a set of meanings or activities, the connecting of a region, the act of being systematic, and the process of linking a world together. Here the concept of 'the world' had no necessary correlation with the globe. It could be local, regional, or theme specific. The development of a social imaginary that made it 'obvious' that the concept of 'world' was to be equated with planet earth took decades to develop.

One branch of the use of the term related to the universalization of knowledge. In 1930, the concept was first employed by the Scottish educator Boyd and celebrated author of the classic *The history of western education* (1921), which went through 10 editions between 1921 and 1972, to denote a holistic view of education: 'Wholeness, ... integration, globalization ... would seem to be the keywords of the new education view of mind: suggesting negatively, antagonism to any conception of human experience which over-emphasizes the constituent

atoms, parts, elements' (Boyd & MacKenzie, 1930, p. 350). In this case, 'globalization' has hardly anything to do with the world since it addresses the issue of learning processes going from the global to the particular. Boyd acquired the term by simply translating the French term *globalization* as used by the Belgian educational psychologist Decroly (1929) in the 1920s. It referred to the 'globalization function stage' in a child's development highlighted and served as a new concept in the early twentieth-century 'new education' movement. Decroly had devised a holistic pedagogical system for teaching children to read—*la méthode globale* ('whole language teaching')—which is still used in Belgian and French schools that bear his name. But this 'education' branch of the meaning evolution of the concept died out without any significant follow-up discussion.

Over four decades later the concept was again used in relation to knowledge, but the later use had no relation to the first. In 1976, an article by the sociologist Lamy (1976) with the portentous title 'The Globalization of American Sociology: Excellence or Imperialism?' promised a lot. However, except for the title, perhaps given by an editor, the concept was not once used in the text. The closest the author came to implying a specific meaning of 'globalization' was in the article's abstract, which employs the spatial concept of 'international expansion'. Three years later, the Canadian sociologist Harry H. Hiller published an article, which used the concept of 'globalization' in reference to Lamy's (1976) essay. Again, the concept was used only once. This second article responded with apparent articulate precision that 'we cannot expect national sociologies to be mere transitional devices in the globalization of sociology' (Hiller, 1979, p. 132). However, in the overall schema of the article, this sentence was but a passing comment without adequate elaboration. In the end, the concept was not given any pressing analytical significance and disappeared inside another framework.

A second evolutionary branch of the term developed an economic meaning in relation to a possible extension of the European Common Market. Here, 'globalization' had a rather tenuous beginning and soon withered out. In 1959, the document using the term was published in the journal *International Organization*. A few decades later, that periodical would carry hundreds of references to globalization; however in this article, the scope of the term was regional and administrative. The document suggested that the European Community countries could take a series of steps toward their common market goal, including by the 'globalization of quotas'. In other words, the geographic reach of globalization did not extend beyond six European countries (Anonymous, 1959). It merely served to describe a process of connecting a regional whole. A 1961 article in the London periodical *The statist: A journal of practical finance and trade* also noted with concern the dilution of European cohesion as the Common Market was extended or 'mondialized'. The passing comment did not use 'globalization', but self-consciously employed 'what the French call "Mondialization"', marked by a capital 'M' and in inverted commas. It did not mean 'globalization' in the sense used today. Similarly when a year later the *Sunday Times* bemoaned 'Our own comparatively timid intentions towards globalizing the Common Market' (28 January 1962), the meaning of the concept had broadened, but it still did not mean the extension of economic relations across the globe, as Europe remained the focus.

In the same year, 1962, Perroux, a French political economist, also used the term 'globalization'. As with Hannah Arendt's concern with the human condition, the figure of Sputnik and the space race lies in the background:

The conquest of space and nuclear achievement belong to the two super-powers which they reinforce and oppose: their peaceful and warlike consequences are global, whether the powers wish it or not. For the moment, the two super-powers are resisting this globalization (which is also universalization, because it is of interest to humanity and to the entire being of each man. (Perroux, 1962, p. 10)

For Perroux, 'globalization' appears to be much more akin to contemporary dominant meaning related to the formation of increasingly integrated economic markets on a planetary scale. Indeed, as the contemporary French sociologist Dufoix (2013b, p. 2) points out, at one point Perroux (1964, pp. 847–850) refers explicitly to the *mondialisation de certains marchés* ('globalization of some markets')—nearly a generation before the alleged 'invention' of 'globalization' by Theodore Levitt. However, we need to be careful here. Perroux wrote the original essay in French and the term was a translation from the French *mondialization* ('worldization'). Dufoix (2013b, p. 2) informs us that, in 1916, the Belgian lawyer Paul Otlet used this term when he argued that it would be necessary, in the field of natural resources, 'to take steps of *mondialization*'. Again, it should be noted that the actual meaning of *mondialization* in this quotation is quite different from the one that is now usually translated as 'globalization'. Otlet connects *mondialization* to *internationalization*, the former being the ultimate level of the latter: the *mondial* is 'what is good for all nations' (Otlet quoted in Dufoix, 2013b, p. 2). In any case, the concept *mondialization* is dependent on going beyond the earth in order to globalize, with the term 'universalization' often used to stand in for what we would now assume would comfortably invoke the concept of 'globalization'. In fact, Dufoix (2013b, p. 2) informs us that the *mondialization* was even translated into English—not as 'globalization' but rather as 'mundialization'.<sup>5</sup>

Otlet's use of *mondialization* was the forerunner of third and more promising branch of the formation of the concept in the field of international relations (IR). In 1965, Inis Claude published an article on the future of the United Nations. Again treating universalization and globalization as the same thing, he mentions the concept of 'globalization' once in passing under the heading of 'The Movement Toward Universality': 'The United Nations has tended to reflect the steady globalization of international relations' (Claude, 1965, p. 837). Three years later, with no reference to Claude, an extraordinary article appeared, which had the potential of changing the entire field of IR. Penned by the political scientist George Modelski, interviewed in this issue, the article linked the concept of 'globalization' to world politics in general. But this usage had surprisingly little impact. And yet, Modelski (1968) defined 'globalization' in a way that prefigured later discussions on the subject in the 1980s and 1990s:

A condition for the emergence of a multiple-autonomy form of world politics arguably is the development of a global layer of interaction substantial enough to support continuous and diversified institutionalization. We may define this process as globalization; it is the result of the increasing size, complexity and sophistication of world society. Growth and consolidation of global interdependence and the emergent necessities of devising ways and means of handling the problems arising therefrom support an increasingly elaborate network of organizations. World order in such a system would be the product of the interplay of these organizations, and world politics an effort to regulate these interactions. (p. 389)

This passage reveals a remarkably sophisticated rendition of a complex process. Nevertheless, for more than two decades, no citations appeared, which linked the article to the theme of globalization. In fact, according to Google Scholar, the essay has only been cited a total of seven times. William R. Thompson, for example, refers to the article in 1981, but he does not mention the concept around which Modelski's original article of 1968 was framed—even though he later goes on to write extensively on 'globalization' himself (including as Modelski's co-author). In July 1968, Modelski led a team of researchers at the University of Washington in drafting an application to the U.S. National Science Foundation, which, for the first time, used 'globalization' in the title of a comprehensive research project: 'The Study of Globalization: A Preliminary Exploration'. Unfortunately, their application was soundly rejected (as Modelski

describes in his interview in this volume). Over the next decades, this line of ‘globalization research’ was reinvented several times before the first grant to study ‘globalization’ was finally awarded.

Thus, across the middle of the twentieth century, ‘globalization’ remained an idiosyncratic and rarely used term, deployed with a surprising variety of meanings. In 1969, to give one more example, the book *Souslinoid analytic sets in a general setting* pioneered the concept of ‘residual globalization’ (Kruse, 1969). In this instance, the reference was to mathematical equations and systematic relations. A generation later, ‘residual globalization’ was discussed at length in an electrical engineering doctoral dissertation without any reference to the 1969 book. This time, the concept was linked to the idea of ‘vector globalization’, which, like ‘residual globalization’, signified the idea of a connected whole creating a global value:

In the first phase of globalization, all slave nodes send their contributions to the global value of the shared node to the master. After synchronization, the master sums all contributions to create the global value. In the second phase of vector globalization, the master sends the result back to the slave nodes. (Herndon, 1995, p. 54)

Obviously, the slaves being mentioned here are electrical nodes, not persons traded across the Black Atlantic. However, this branch of the evolution of the concept soon withered into arcane technical specificity accessible to only very few experts.

Still, there were two isolated early uses of ‘globalization’, which are consistent with contemporary cultural-political meanings. But we must bear in mind that these were not progenitors of evolutionary branches, because they did not relate to any *situational consensus* about what the term meant at the time. But these two important instances certainly contributed to the soon-to-be verdant life of the tree of globalization. The first case is remarkable for its isolated occurrence, unusual context, and for the form with which it was delivered. In 1944, Lucius Harper, an African-American editor, journalist, and early civil rights leader, published an article that quoted from a letter written by a Black US soldier based in Australia. In the letter, the G.I. refers to the global impact of cultural-political views about ‘negroes’:

The American Negro and his problem are taking on a global significance. The world has begun to measure America by what she does to us [the American Negro]. But—and this is the point—we stand in danger ... of losing the otherwise beneficial aspects of globalization of our problems by allowing the ‘Bilbos in uniform’ with and without brass hats to spread their version of us everywhere. (Harper, 1944, p. 4)

‘Bilbos in uniform’ is a reference to Theodore G. Bilbo (1877–1947), a mid-century Governor and US Senator from Mississippi who was an avid advocate of segregation and openly racist member of the Ku Klux Klan. As Runciman (2013) explains, Bilbo echoed Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* in asserting that merely ‘one drop of Negro blood placed in the veins of the purest Caucasian destroys the inventive genius of his mind and strikes palsied his creative faculties.’ At the time, the elected representatives of the segregated South successfully blocked any legislative attempt to clamp down on lynching, holding it to be a matter for individual states to regulate, and something that Northerners could not understand. Only Southerners knew what was at stake. Bilbo suspected a Jewish conspiracy behind what he saw as Northern interference: ‘The niggers and Jews of New York are working hand in hand’ (pp. 13–16).

By quoting a letter from a Black soldier serving his country in the Pacific theater, Harper allows for political mediation that increases the verisimilitude of the passage. Despite Australia’s closed and racist immigration policy, black American soldiers in World War II were being greeted with a relative openness that confronted Black sensibilities formed in America. The article was

published in the *Chicago Defender*, a Chicago-based weekly newspaper for primarily African-American readers. The paper's executive editor, Lucius Harper, later helped establish the Bud Billiken Club and Parade—the oldest and largest African-American parade in the USA—and also ghost-authored the successful autobiography of Jack Johnson, America's first Black heavy-weight boxing champion. Later, Harper was investigated by McCarthy's infamous subcommittee of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. At the time, the *Chicago Defender* was probably the most influential black newspaper in the USA with an estimated readership of 100,000 (Cooper, 1999). However, it is difficult to assess the impact of Harper's article. Indeed, no other article used the concept of 'globalization' in the *Chicago Defender* for decades after 1944.

The second instance of employing the concept in a cultural sense is not quite as compelling but more perplexing. In 1951, Paul Meadows, a prominent American sociologist who has never been mentioned in the pantheon of global(ization) studies, contributed an extraordinary piece of writing to the prominent academic journal, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Meadows' article stands out for reasons that will become quickly apparent:

The culture of any society is always unique, a fact which is dramatically described in Sumner's concept of *ethos*: 'the sum of the characteristic usages, ideas, standards and codes by which a group is differentiated and individualized in character from other groups.' With the advent of industrial technology, however, this tendency toward cultural localization has been counteracted by a stronger tendency towards cultural universalization. With industrialism, a new cultural system has evolved in one national society after another; its global spread is incipient and cuts across every local ethos. Replacing the central mythos of the medieval Church, this new culture pattern is in a process of 'globalization,' after a period of formation and formulation covering some three or four hundred years of westernization. (Meadows, 1951, p. 11)

That passage is worth quoting at length, not only because it is one of the first pieces of writing to use 'globalization' in the contemporary sense of the concept, but because Meadows' analysis locates 'globalization' as a *conductive* relation with terms such as 'localization', 'universalization', and 'Westernization'. Meadow's act of putting the concept of 'globalization' in inverted commas suggests that he was either uncertain or self-conscious about using the term relationally. But the synergy formed between such clusters as 'globalization' and 'localization', particularly by writers interviewed in this volume—from Roland Robertson to Arjun Appadurai—suggests that Meadows was far ahead of his time. The difference is that the authors interviewed here do not use the two terms as countermanding processes. In Modelski's words, 'the local level . . . always has to be connected to the other levels'. Another remarkable achievement of this article lies in Meadows' uncanny recognition of a strong link between 'globalization', 'ideology', and 'industrial technology'. As he notes at the end of his article's introductory section, 'The rest of this paper will be devoted to a discussion of the technological, organizational, and ideological systems which comprise this new universalistic culture' (1951, p. 11). Although resisting the pull of the 'religion of the first occurrence' as described at the outset of the present essay, we are tempted to note that Paul Meadows probably comes closest to deserving the questionable recognition of being the first scholar to use 'globalization' in the contemporary sense. Using Google citations and other indices we could not find any subsequent articles or books that directly attribute their own work to this remarkable instance of conceptual clustering of the concept of 'globalization'. But given the place and form of its publication, there is no doubt that the essay must have been widely read. Readership and library subscriptions for *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* were extensive. And yet, Meadows' pioneering efforts remained dormant until Roland Robertson linked the concept to the changing cultural dynamics of the late 1970s.

### Using Interviews to Take the Genealogy Further: 1980s to the Present

For obvious reasons, the period from the 1980s is the richest yet most challenging section of the many-branched tree that is ‘globalization’. Together with our genealogical-historical efforts to engage with primary and secondary textual sources, the 12 interviews collected in this Special Anniversary Issue constitute a crucial element in our systematic effort to understand the processes and conditions of the evolution of the concept. Fascinatingly, as our interviews with these globalization pioneers show, most of them do not remember the ‘eureka’ moment at which the concept took an axiomatic hold upon their minds. Whether they grabbed the concept out of the late twentieth-century academic air that they breathed, or whether they reached inside themselves and took the concept seemingly from their own literary imagination, the concept was somehow ‘already there’ to be deployed in more specific ways related to their own academic interests.

For Jan Aart Scholte, for example, it was delivered verbally through a British university tutor who did not go on to write on the subject. Jim Mittelman confesses to the difficulty of recalling the precise instance when he first heard the concept: ‘But I recognized the phenomenon before I knew the concept. I had lived in Africa for a number of years and had been engaged in development studies.’ Similarly, Jonathan Friedman finds it hard to date his first encounter with the concept, but notes that, ‘The media were starting to use “globalization” and business got into the act as well. And I remember a lot of talk about the “end of the nation-state”, which was very much linked to this new buzzword “globalization”’. The same goes for Nayan Chanda: ‘I don’t recall exactly the first time I encountered “globalization”, but it must have been in the early 1990s.’ Ditto Mark Juergensmeyer: ‘I also remember a lot of talk about “globalization” in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. So that would put my encounter with the concept sometime around 1989 or 1990.’ Such vagueness also characterizes Arjun Appadurai’s memory when he tells us that he ‘probably’ encountered the concept:

In the very late 1980s—most likely sometime between 1989 and 1991. I would say it was after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The context? Most likely, I read about ‘globalization’ in the press, rather than encountering the term through an academic route.

Similarly, Joseph Stiglitz confesses that ‘I don’t remember the context or the first time I heard “globalization”. Perhaps it was around the publication of Thomas Friedman’s book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999) or a bit earlier’. Saskia Sassen joins the chorus: ‘I cannot remember the exact moment when it happened. All I know is that I found myself at some point using it.’

Only Roland Robertson begs to differ:

Consciously, I first heard it from my own mouth . . . I said to myself; ‘Modernization is not just about a particular society—it’s the modernization of the world.’ So if it is clumsy to call it ‘modernization of the whole world’, so what should I call it? So I called it ‘globalization,’ and that’s how it all began.

Note that Robertson is careful to say that is how it ‘began for him’. He is making no claim to be the inventor of the term, only the person who attached the increasingly used concept—‘global’—to a concept predominantly still in the hands of the *cognoscenti* of ‘the modernization of the whole world’. This was an ontological connection. As Google’s *Ngram* shows, it is quite revealing that the concept ‘modernization’ peaked as the concepts ‘globalization’ and ‘modernity’ began to take hold. Indeed, like ‘modernization’ and other verbal nouns that end in the suffix ‘-ization’, the term ‘globalization’ suggests a sort of dynamism best captured by the notion of ‘development’ or ‘unfolding’ along discernible patterns. Such unfolding may occur quickly or slowly, but it always corresponds to the idea of change, and, therefore, denotes transformation.

In other words, 'we' had *arrived* at a time of rapid, transformational change in which 'modernity' and 'globalization' were predominant and interrelating forces. The interviews collected in this Special Anniversary Issue help understand this changing world.

Indeed, our interviews suggest that the concept was in the air in the late 1980s and provided oxygen across a number of fields that, through the medium of writing and publishing, are mutually supportive. Moreover, 'globalization' seems to have emerged without fanfare. It first made sense to a few academics, journalists, and editors long before it was popularized, and it was used many times along isolated branches of knowledge before it was treated as significant and first slipped into the titles of some articles and books. The task of adequately describing this world of intensifying global connections and interdependencies was to be a long-term scholarly struggle—both a 'career' and a passion—but, in its beginnings, 'globalization' *presented itself* as both useful and necessary.

A word about the way we conducted this semi-structured interviews. As we see it, interviews capture and record unofficial but extremely informative stories, memories, and anecdotes about how 'globalization' has emerged. Conveyed by crucial contributors to the rise of this keyword, their narratives provide critical *emplacements* in our conceptual genealogy. They disclose intricate dynamics of the formation of meaning that, for various reasons, might not find their way into accepted accounts about globalization understood objectively as a set of material processes.

Though we have tried to minimize our own voices in the interviews, our preferred method of 'strategic conversation' entails an active dialogue in which the interviewer and interviewee gently probe each other's intellectual position, based on some prior understanding of each other's views on the subject. A strategic conversation in this sense goes beyond the usual research interview where an interviewer faces an unknown respondent and asks them to answer a series of set questions on the designated topic. The interviews produced here were based on long discussions that were transcribed and then edited down approximately 5,000 words that contain central themes. These edited interviews were then sent back to the interviewee with the encouragement to make any changes, refinements, and further developments. We worked on the interviews until the interviewees were satisfied that the subtleties of their position or the flavor of their stories and remembrances were appropriately expressed.

## **Conclusion**

Although the concept of 'globalization' emerged in relation to the materially globalizing world that it described, tracking those processes directly is not sufficient to understand its emergence and use. How else is it possible to understand how globalization began centuries before it was named as such. Our argument is that, for all the intensifying of processes of globalization, the concept draws most of its power from a condensation of associations across all four levels of the formation of social meaning. First, at the level of ideas, the increased use of a concept engenders some momentum. That is, it can gain a certain limited purchase as it is being used actively by critical individuals—authors, editors, and journalists—all of whom are attempting to explain changing fields of understanding or conditions of practice. As we have seen, however, this form of mediated meaning formation and negotiation often leads to the rapid emerging of a concept only to be ignored for a long time. In other words, ideas and concepts swirl around in indeterminate ways at the level of the formation of meaning. Individual articulators of meaning are crucial to circulating shared meanings, but the staying power and spread of concepts depend upon deeper levels of the social—both subjective and objective. Hence, we emphasized the importance of our four 'levels of meaning formation'.



Second, at the level of ideologies, contestation over meanings, understandings, and explanations takes this circulation and consolidation of meaning further into ‘political’ territory. Here, the burgeoning of the concept of ‘globalization’ is typical as various political groups might place it within the conceptual framework that provides the ammunition for concrete political programs and agendas. After reading the interviews in this volume, it should become clearer how the concept was given sustenance by a contestation between emerging definitions of the concept within the academy and without. As we shall see, one understanding came out of the field of business studies and economics. A second emerged out of intensifying dialogues in the humanities and social sciences, particularly in the fields of international studies, religious studies, and anthropology. Put simply, this ideological contestation located the concept in a cluster of other meaning associations.

Third, in the ‘imaginary’ layer of the formation of meaning—as the concept of ‘globalization’ gained expressive consonance with a newly emerging social imaginary—it both came to name that largely pre-reflexive ‘global’ imaginary and also accumulated further condensing force. Concepts take off when they are associated with a changing subjective and objective sense of the social whole. Across most of the course of the twentieth century and despite alternative ideologies of cosmopolitanism and internationalism, a predominantly ‘national’ imaginary had prevailed as the common sense of what people projected as the ‘natural’ home for their communal longings and imaginings (Anderson, 1983). A few decades ago, a new globalizing imaginary began to emerge, which still carried substantial parts of the conceptual inheritance of the previously dominant national imaginary. To be sure, globalizing relations are still discussed today in terms of *international* relations, *transnational* connections, and ‘a world system’, but the anachronistic hold of those terms is what Raymond Williams would call ‘residual’. Individual careers have been built on the term ‘international relations’ and it is safer for such individuals to redefine the term as if the ‘national’ is a silent consonant. We believe that our interviews capture how influential academics grappled with this dissonance.

Fourth, concepts become critically important when they provide a way of describing the deepest sense of the human condition. As the interviews suggest, this is what happened to ‘globalization’. At that level of ontologies, the concept tapped into a core of social meaning about contemporary shifts in time, space, and other dimensions of social relations. Given the confines of a journal article, we cannot expand our earlier intimations about how the career of the concept of ‘modernity’—an ontological claim about the nature of ‘our time’—followed a parallel trajectory to that of ‘globalization’. As we need to bring this discussion to a close, one point must suffice. Although ‘modernity’ was being used academically long before ‘globalization’, the concept of ‘modernity’ also entered common parlance in the 1980s, even as it was being challenged and destabilized. What is telling here is that many of the globalization pioneers interviewed in this issue drew connections between these two conceptual clusters. Thus, ‘globalization’ came to be associated with processes that were—and still are—changing the world in fundamental ways. Language use had to catch up to the world of material practices and lived meanings. As it did, the unfolding career of ‘globalization’ contributed significantly to challenging and changing those very practices and meanings.

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## Notes

- 1 Australian Research Council (ARC), 2012–2014 Discovery Grant DP120100159, 'Globalization and the Formation of Meaning: The Career of a Concept'. We want to thank the ARC for generously funding our research project.
- 2 The current Merriam-Webster website incorrectly claims that the first known use of the term occurred in 1951.
- 3 Like the term 'ideology' or 'technology', we use the concept of 'ontology' with an inflexion upon the semantic origin of the term *ology* or *logia*—'knowledge of' or 'body of knowledge'. For the most part, by a process of metonymy, it is used for the object of that field.
- 4 In both the academic and public discourse, this generic meaning of 'globalization' is usually imbued with economic-technical signifiers. Cultural meanings play a secondary role.
- 5 'Mundialization' is still in use today. See, for example, the website of the Mundialization Committee in Hamilton (Canada): <http://mundialization.ca/>. We are very grateful to Stéphane Dufoix for sharing his article 'Between Scylla and Charybdis: French social science faces globalization'. For Dufoix's related work in French, please see Dufoix (2012), Dufoix (2013a), and Caillé and Dufoix (2013).

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