

## Social Institutions, Organizations, and Relations

# Global Perspectives on Social Institutions, Organizations, and Relations: Beyond Universalisms and Internationalisms

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### INTRODUCTION

Given the reworkings of national sovereignty, citizenship, and international orders, it becomes necessary to ask fundamental questions such as: what knits people together; what ensures the continuity and sustenance of communities; what drives them to do violence against others; and what are the other deep social forces that either accelerate or slow the forces of global change as they are experienced and embodied in everyday life?

Social scientists seeking to understand global complexity look for the basic power relations that bring some people together, exclude others, disrupt social orders, and invent new social relations. However, doing so may require fundamentally revisiting concepts and mechanisms related to social institutions, organizations, and relations in order to move knowledge forward and better understand meaningful social changes, compositions, and mechanisms, both conceptually and empirically. For example, how do we understand international relations when the institutions that used to organize relationships across nations may no longer be the primary centers of power or influence?

Today's global challenges, such as rising authoritarianism, near-ubiquitous surveillance, mutating neoliberalism, climate crises, or pandemics, remind us of other moments in social history when intellectual figures emerged to offer compelling interpretations and explanations about the nature of the human condition, the character of social change, the failure of social protection, and the emergence of social institutions, organizations, and relations (e.g., in the late nineteenth century, the early twentieth century, and after World War II). These rather gloomy characterizations might also be matched by more optimistic expressions about the possibilities of social media connectivity for reducing isolation and increasing human understanding; the possibilities of open science and shared scientific practices for quickly advancing both knowledge and applications for the benefit of the earth and the human world; or the possibilities of the multitude of formal and informal networked relationships connecting people, places, and organizations that are resilient or resistant to the provocations of a few bad actors or nations; or the emergence of new forms of global governance (Anheier 2019).

The paradoxes of today cry out for better explanations and plausible answers. Qualitative shifts in social relations are frequently invoked as explanation and outcome in these times of both extreme connectivity and insularity resulting

from our global technosocial landscapes. For example, technology has spread access to the means that might connect us all while at the same time concentrating powerfully destructive tools in the hands of just a few. With globalizing technologies, other paradoxes emerge. How do we make sense of the real possibilities of human-to-human compassionate contact across the globe with the proliferation of expressions of profound fears of the "other" and concomitant insecurities and violent acts against the "other" and from almost every corner of the globe?

While some might argue that social scientists have not yet caught up with globalization, I would argue instead that because of the global turn, scholars have been liberated to productively observe empirical phenomena in far greater detail to reveal exceptions, previously unobserved phenomena, and new global connections that animate social institutions, organizations, and relations. Instead of seeing the scale and complexities of globalization and global connections as an even more challenging observational and explanatory task, accompanied by intensified shortening of temporal and spatial distances, I would argue that it is not so much about scale or complexity but about the challenges of conceptual abstractions. Conceptualization is how we see the world. How can that crucial tool be put to work to better capture the rich, dynamic, and complex nature of global social life to reveal patterns of power and levers of social change?

The rest of this essay offers a few conceptual guideposts for scholarly consideration and provocation. First, I provide my own perspective on how the adoption of the term *global* provides an epistemological upending of social science frameworks. Second, I turn to a brief discussion about the conceptual definitions of social institutions, organizations, and relations in light of a global framework. Third, I illustrate the value of the framework with reference to recent social science research, connecting empirical insights with the conceptual guideposts. The illustrative examples are organized around four topics: genders, migrations, poverties, and ecologies. In conclusion, the essay invites scholars to engage with, and contribute toward, this proposed scholarly agenda.

### GLOBAL AS PARADIGMATIC SHIFT

Why global? *Global Perspectives* acknowledges the profundity of an intellectual shift that puts the term *global* front and center. The term has quickly become a widely accepted

modifier to describe phenomena and processes that appear to touch many parts of the globe. Imposing such a modifier allows for elaborations and explanations that are decentering, variably encompassing, and diverse but shared. As a modifying term, *global* replaces its twentieth-century predecessor—*international*—but, in doing so, fundamentally shifts a social science gaze. Whereas in the twentieth century, world-spanning, preeminent organizing institutions, organizations, and relations might have been defined principally as between nations, the term *global* invites scholars and practitioners to adopt a lens that sees a far more complex and multilayered set of world-spanning ties between a multitude of actors and organizations that are not necessarily anchored by a nation-state. Similarly, global viewpoints acknowledge increasingly meaningful world-spanning flows of goods, currencies, people, images, information, energy, and bytes that are variably mediated or controlled by nation-states. Instead of assuming the nation or the national as an essential category or natural end point at one level of social order, adopting a *global* modifier liberates social scientific inquiries and invites conceptual and empirical investigations into the relevance and varying import of the national or the nation-state.

The normative corollary to the twentieth century's essentializing of the national or the nation is the notion of the universal or universalisms. While intended to articulate a worldview of inclusion, its Western (Global North) philosophical roots failed to realize the diversity of the multiplicity of identities and the variable relevance of corporal individualism (Kuhn and Vessuri 2016). Even the many critiques of the universal—or the related term, *universalisms*—while producing significant and important theoretical, empirical, and practical debates about cultural relativism and multiculturalism over the last three decades, were caught in an intellectual bind created by the limitations of the nation and the national (James 2019). With a global framing, however, these binds are severed and an articulation of a new paradigmatic framework accomplished, which moves beyond the linearities of these particular “isms” (international or universal). Conrad's (2016) recasting of world history to global history offers an important articulation about the global as a crucial paradigmatic shift, bringing together different pasts into one frame and rendering visible connections not previously observed or imagined. It is this starting point that animates the overall agenda of *Global Perspectives* and this section's particular scholarly agenda.

These fruitful renderings of a new paradigm require substantial and crucial theoretical and empirical efforts to better elaborate and explain past, current, and emergent social phenomena. A global paradigm requires new research tools but not just in terms of standard scholarly quips around mixed-methods approaches or interdisciplinary integrations. It is a far more difficult and challenging agenda.

From easier to harder, the following list articulates the challenges. *First*, it is an agenda that upends methodological nationalism because it requires empirical assessments that breach and fracture the preeminence of nation (Chernilo 2006). *Second*, it is an agenda that upends modernity and disrupts the academic organization of disciplines because it requires transdisciplinary approaches that can decenter the disciplinary core identities. *Third*, it is an agenda that upends epistemologies because it engages with ways of knowing that are far outside the realms of the Global North (Burawoy 2009; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). Such an agenda is an unsettling one, because the institutions, organizations, and relations that have anchored and affirmed our scholarly identities are rooted in pre-global

epistemics. Rather than dissuade our scholarly agenda, we should rise to the challenges, since we are not alone. Our times require radical rethinking—a task that should be taken up by scholars, especially social scientists (Steger and James 2019).

Thus, it will be a worthy effort to make explicit fundamental social science conceptualizations and employ insights from a global perspective that incorporates critical investigatory lenses to reconceive theoretical characterizations without Euro-Western, or Global North, biases, many of which have been unmasked in recent decades. We already have invaluable tools in hand that might be systematically applied, and this agenda is one articulated elsewhere by many of the coeditors for this section of *Global Perspectives* (Burawoy et al. 2000; Darian-Smith 2019; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017; Sassen 2007, 2014; Sparke 2013; Steger and James 2019).

As Chase-Dunn et al. argue in their founding essay for *Global Perspectives*, a systemic and a networked approach is one fruitful and necessary direction for illuminating global research inquiries. Building upon the ideas of several of the coeditors for this section, I argue that the structure of those networked systems must be infused with content. In other words, network ties emerge, form, become thinned or thickened, dissolve, and are curated only through interaction with social institutions, organizations, and relations. Conceptual elaborations and evaluations of social institutions, organizations, and relations that assess their articulation with global network studies are an additional and necessary part of a larger *Global Perspectives* agenda.

## REVISITING CONCEPTUAL ABSTRACTIONS WITH GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

While a global paradigm affords new social science approaches that allow for complicated, diversified, interdependent dynamics between social institutions, organizations, and relations, where are the guide rails for directing inquiries? What might be the logic of practice for mapping reasoned inquiries? To answer these questions, let me begin with fairly simple and classic definitions of social institutions, organizations, and relations. Then let me offer a few ways in which global perspectives complicate these definitions and necessitate scholarly revisiting of conceptual abstractions.

Social institutions are humanly derived social constructs that constrain human interactions with all animate beings, as well as with the inanimate (Anheier 2019; North 1991). As Ostrom and her colleagues have offered, these are the formal and informal norms, rules, and shared strategies for regularizing human behavior (Crawford and Ostrom 1995; Ostrom 1990). Because temporal and spatial distances governing transactions throughout much of history create uncertainties around the future of social life, social institutional analyses offer ways, for example, to understand how uncertainties are framed, managed, and possibly limited through the infusion and reification of values and feelings into specific guidelines for expected actions and outcomes (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2019; Williamson 1998).

A global perspective on institutions might reexamine how the results of globalization's temporal intensification and spatial shrinkage create new, or more, uncertainties. Or a global perspective might show how temporal and spatial shrinkages can disrupt or strengthen institutions or create room for entirely new, coincident, or competing, institutional forms through new ideologies, imaginaries, and

ontologies (Steger and James 2019). For example, how are norms of rights-based entitlements traveling the globe and adhering to instantiations of social organizations and social relations in localities? When and where does a global lens observe the breaches of normative assumptions to reveal disruptions to the order of social institutions? An example of such disruptions might include the recent work by Meyers (2019) that demonstrates powerfully the wrongful assumptions of well-meaning global institutions when grassroots organizations in localities “speak back.” Similarly, a global perspective on peace and conflict indicates robust disagreements between social science academics and policymakers that would require fundamental rethinking about the strong international norms of gender rights versus an intersectional and complicating array of identities in the context of reconstruction, reconciliation, or peace agreements (e.g., Berry 2019 or Aharoni 2017).

While social institutions are the norms, rules, and shared strategies constraining human life, social organizations are the practical and immediate patterning of relationships between and among individuals and social groups, both formal and informal. They are the social spaces for controlled human interaction and provide indications of social cohesion (Moody and White 2003). On the one hand, social organizations can be a description of the patterns of interaction or cohesion. On the other hand, social organizations can also be the specific formal and informal collectivities, of more or less complexity, with which individuals affiliate and find commonalities, pool and access resources, assume or delegate authorities, or are controlled by those collectivities. While the former, the description of social patterns and cohesion, is a necessary project, it is the latter definition of social organization that is of interest in this essay. Specifically, social organizations interact, shape, and react with both social institutions and social relations in an interdependent and dynamic way.

A global perspective on social organizations attends to these fundamental actions, structurations, and cohesions (Foucault 2012; Giddens 2003). Global social organizations research might “follow the money” through iconic studies of the flows and landing points around the world of any object, thing, or idea—for example, T-shirts or flip-flops (Knowles 2015; Rivoli 2015). Such studies have the epistemic power to reveal previously hidden, organization-based interlocutors of globalization at both the core and the periphery, possibly unveiling the fundamental mechanisms animating global assemblages (Sassen 2007). There is much work to be done in this area to help explain crucial socio-ecological dilemmas of growing precarity and extreme privilege, for example.

Finally, social relations are fundamental foci of social analyses, defining interactions and statuses between two or more individuals or between an individual and any other higher order social collectivities (Albrow et al. 1994, Reza 2010). Crucial social theorists for understanding the agentic nature of social relations and whose theorizing continues to animate global social science include Bourdieu (1990), Castells (2011), Goffman and Best (2017), Hirschman (1970), Said (1979), and Steger (2018). Affinities, identities, and imaginaries are the cognitive mechanisms embodied and enacted in the everyday interactions of social life and that reveal the power, positionality, and intersectionality instantiated in social relations. And, as Hirschman’s work reminds us, it is not just the instantiation but also the ruptures or dissolutions in social relations that must be observed to fully understand social organizations and institutions (1970).

Global social relations research in this realm can be particularly productive via ethnographic studies of breaching and disruption with an ethnomethodological sensibility of the deeply embodied nature of social relations. A fascinating example of such an approach might be a recent collection of studies examining radicalism, edited by Alexander, Stack, and Khosrokhavar (2019). In that collection, through an examination of radical actions and employing a civil society theory lens, their comparative global studies approach places relational breaching moments at the center of inquiries into understanding institutions and organizations. The collection of cases and their focus on social relations also offers a provocative empirical and theoretical suggestion about how such relational breaches relate to globality and globalization, as they might reverberate dialectically through social institutions, organizations, and relations.

As mentioned earlier, to employ a global paradigm that complicates and thickens the preceding interdisciplinary description of social institutions, organizations, and relations requires systematic attention to overcoming three challenges. Before turning to the exemplary illustrations, it is important to elaborate those challenges, as they provide crucial guides for advancing knowledge.

The first set of challenges relates to methodological nationalism (Chernilo 2006, Zurn 2013), which can plague a conceptual and empirical terrain by making invisible the ways the global is endogenous to subnational terrain, how localities host global formations, or how seemingly national instruments are really the tools of global actors (Sassen 2019). Global assemblages breach borders, bridge localities and regions, and reconfigure boundaries of authorities and rights, both territorialized and deterritorialized (Sassen 2007).

The second set of challenges for a global paradigm is to decolonize knowledge itself and its systems of production (Darian-Smith 2019). Said’s (1979) profound account of the “othering” of Oriental subjects and its impact on epistemologies of power and imagination forced many social science disciplines and disciplinarians to rethink the “how” of knowledge producers and purveyors (Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). Buroway (2009) has written compellingly about collaborations and outlets that provide equitable and reasoned space for the introduction of new knowledge from outside the realms of Western academies or the Global North. This section of *Global Perspectives* seeks to do so and welcomes ideas for engaging in collaborative learning through its online platform and multiple forms of engagement. In this section, the editors will seek to encourage such engagements in collaborative knowledge building with authors and scholars and without compromising the rigor and quality of inquiry.

A third set of challenges for a global paradigm is about overcoming simplistic dualisms to describe the empirical terrain of any concept related to social institutions, organizations, and relations. As Urry (2003) and Steger and James (2019) argue, dualisms cannot capture continuities and complexities that are inherent in a global paradigmatic effort. It’s not just about moving beyond dualisms, because fully adopting a complexity science approach necessitates and heightens the need and the challenge of observing small perturbations that can upset larger systems, even at the very margins or periphery of our vantage points. Nevertheless, a complexity science approach has great promise, because it overcomes the extremes of determinism and arbitrariness, allowing for order and disorder to coexist (Prigogine 1997, 189; Hayles 1999), and seeks to elucidate the interactions between structure and agency (Giddens 1984,

2003).

My point in the preceding discussion is to demonstrate how there are compelling fields of inquiry, ripe for synthesis related to social institutions, organizations, and relations, that might productively guide a metatheoretical approach within a *Global Perspectives* research agenda. That metatheoretical approach systematically engages the conceptual terrain of social institutions, organizations, and relations to illuminate insights on the probabilistic patterning of globality and the dynamic mechanisms of power within globalization processes.

## EXEMPLARY ILLUSTRATIONS: GENDERS, MIGRATIONS, POVERTIES, AND ECOLOGIES

To provide some illustrative subjects for global perspective provocations, I briefly describe four topics of substantial inquiry and productive insight: genders, migrations, poverties, and ecologies. I have chosen very large “bins” and pluralized them to capture how late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century global social science research has complicated and clarified the mutually constitutive and interdependent dynamics between social institutions, social organizations, and social relations in the context of these topical inquiries.

First, research on gender from a global perspective illustrates well the diversity and complexity of gender identities, gendered relations, and gendered institutions. That body of work also reveals how globalization from above and below reveals contradictions and paradoxes, reanimating and reinvigorating the dialectic between structure and agency (Moghadam 2019). Second, the study of human migrations, arguably the first instantiation of globalization (Stearns 2016), has revealed extensive temporal and spatial continuities and led to transdisciplinary investigations, as well as resulted in productive new conceptual abstractions complicating social institutions, organizations, and relations. Migrations are not merely involuntary or voluntary, regular or irregular, or forced or unforced, but global scholarship demonstrates how they are transnational and non-linear. Social institutions, organizations, and relations are both reactive and proactive in the direction, composition, and meaningfulness of these spatial mobilities.

Third, and similarly, critically oriented global perspectives on poverty reveal both continuities and complexities for institutions, organizations, and relations. This field is ripe for more global paradigm theorizing, empirics, and integration than is apparent in the fields of genders and migrations (Kiely 2005; McNeill and St. Clair 2011; St. Clair 2006). For example, increasingly, global scholars are asking new questions about precarity or capabilities that force inquiries into assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of social institutions and organizations in places that have been the traditional focus of antipoverty gazes—namely, poor places—gazing, instead, into the interiors of places of growth and the enclaves of the rich and elite. Furthermore, a global paradigm lens focused on poverties and inequalities powerfully reveals how worldwide poverties of freedom, time, and mobilities are inextricably related to the narrower concerns of economics, typically prioritized by Global North institutions and organizations (Mohanty 2019; Page and Pande 2018).

Fourth, and finally, I turn to the most global of subjects: ecologies. The recognition of an emergent conceptualization of a new epoch, the Anthropocene (Crutzen 2002), brings to the fore a global worldview that sees natural and

social systems as intricately related, in the past, present, and future. However, that internationally led and forceful agenda has also opened a debate about the presumption of universalism associated with a reductionist perspective on humans and human institutions, organizations, and relations (Chernilo 2017). In particular, the essentialist formulation assumes that humans are merely self-centered and instrumentally rational. Instead, Chernilo argues that since much of human history indicates otherwise, a global perspective on ecologies might reveal a sociophilosophy that differently informs social institutions, organizations, and relations and offers a way forward that can address the required adaptations, mitigations, and possibilities of net negative solutions to the climate crisis. Such imaginaries about the possibilities of, or future orientations toward, social institutions, organizations, and relations are invited to present themselves on the virtual pages of *Global Perspectives*.

### GENDERS

Gender studies in the context of global studies has made considerable contributions to a new global paradigm and perspective (Moghadam 2019). Mohanty’s postcolonial critique of feminism (1988) served to open the floodgates of scholarship that has brought scholars from the margins to the fore and complicated intersectional notions of gender, race, feminism, nation, and community. Perhaps it is not surprising that much of the subsequent critical gender studies literature starts from the premise that globalization is gendered (Moghadam 2019). These researchers revealed through their gender lens and feminist methodologies generalized insights for globalization scholars concerning flexible and feminized labor markets, as well as the precarity of work and its relationship to mobilities and migration.

One of the iconic mechanisms of becoming global is the internet. While the internet and the spread of broadband were predicted to yield social disruptions, some of the most revelatory research about social institutions, organizations, and relations systematically focuses on the internet’s gendered manifestations. Online sites and the data they generate provide a wealth of insights on gendered social institutions, organizations, and relations. Studies of how work has become more or less flexible or precarious typically reveal those insights through a gendered global paradigm. Or studies of how expectations and identities manifest themselves online to maintain, exacerbate, or dissolve social control or inequalities typically take a gendered global paradigm. For example, Billari et al. (2019) demonstrate how heterogeneous access to broadband creates a digital divide in achieving desired fertility—revealing insights about social stratifying organizations and institutions. In a similar, gendered global paradigmatic vein, a study of refugee women’s engagement with social media yields insights on the paradoxical social relations of empowerment and social sanctioning that occurs for refugee women (Almenara-Niebla and Ascanio-Sánchez 2019). New insights about gendered social organizations and relations are also revealed through a study of an online credit crowdsourcing site (Kuwabara and Thébaud 2017), in which the authors find that a woman’s perceived beauty significantly disadvantages them in their quest for access to credit for business purposes.

What these gendered global paradigmatic studies of the internet show, besides revealing important insights about gender, is particularly important for achieving the epistemological goals of *Global Perspectives* because they provide

valuable empirical and theoretical purchase for comparative purposes. By this I mean that what becomes apparent with the new and rich data from online sites is that often-times they emerge in such a way as to intentionally (or unintentionally) eliminate a previously relevant social institution, organization, or relation. As the previous example of credit crowdsourcing illustrates, the online site intended to eliminate finance organizations and diminish the sanctioning or protective effects of institutions. The outcome was meant to make credit more accessible and to even the playing field. Because two conceptual categories are eliminated, the gendered global paradigmatic study reveals the powerful influence of gendered relations in the context of that study. While global paradigmatic approaches pose special methodological challenges, they can also offer powerful social science insights, especially when considering how global phenomena disrupt taken-for-granted social institutions, organizations, and relations.

Gendered global paradigmatic insights have also fueled numerous insights around global-local development regimes and outcomes. A cornerstone of this work has been a consistent commitment to multidisciplinary, multiperspectival, multimethod, post-positivist, and critical social science. For example, Sommer et al. (2019) represent a multidisciplinary, multiperspectival team whose research demonstrates how international regional development banks can have competing relational logics with profoundly different results for women's health. That globally insightful and revelatory research might not have happened without the decades of postcolonial critical gender and development studies (Moghadam 2019) and the research team's diverse gender, discipline, and cross-national composition.

As a result, gendered global studies are now moving toward far more complex illustrations of the relationships of power between global institutions, local organizations, and individuals' relationships to the imposition, adoption, or resistance of practices. For example, Springer (2019) reveals how the quantification of international universal values around gender equality and equity paradoxically disempowers gender advisors in local development agencies. A global perspective brings to the fore this kind of critique and the long lineage of gendered global paradigms of critical social science and post-positivist scholarship informing a larger epistemic challenge for social scholars—namely, the social institutions, organizations, and relations informing the dynamic between power and knowledge.

Global scholarship around social struggles, social movements, and advocacies are importantly informed by critical gender scholars who offer alternative epistemic and intersectional standpoints. These might include Icaza (2018) or Icaza and Vazquez (2013), whose methodological approach systematically compares Global North and South sites through a shared analytic framework. Or Lee's (2019) and Meyers's (2019) critical analyses of the notion of "thinking globally, acting locally," whereby rights-based universals meet resistant practices that challenge the universals. Or Velasco's (2020) analyses of LGBT rights-based norms and their diffusion through two different social organizational forms, transnational advocacy networks or bilateral foreign aid.

These few illustrations of research about genders is only a brief foray and merely touches lightly upon the ways in which scholarship informed by gendered global paradigms has been particularly illuminating for illustrating social institutions, organizations, and relations in the context of a global perspective. This large body of research has productively and explicitly tackled the three challenges of method-

ological nationalism, decolonization of knowledge, and illustrations that overcome dualisms. That fact is a major accomplishment and should be regularly acknowledged in this venue and elsewhere. The foray is intended to offer welcoming portals for scholarly entry, as well as to demonstrate how much valuable research already exists and provides a particularly rich array of research inquiries from which to develop questions of particular interest for *Global Perspectives* scholars.

## MIGRATIONS

The study of human migrations reveals extensive temporal and spatial continuities, yielding transdisciplinary investigations and epistemological insights. Migrations and mobilities studies have done much to dismantle social science proclivities for binary or static formulations. Migrations are not merely involuntary or voluntary, regular or irregular, or forced or unforced, but global scholarship in this field demonstrates how they are transnational and nonlinear, mediated by norms, rules, and strategies, organizations, expectations, affinities, and identities. They are both reactive and proactive in the direction, composition, and meaningfulness of spatial mobilities. Chan (2019) summarizes migration research from a global perspective, demonstrating the conceptual and empirical continuities and discontinuities. Similar to the inquiries around genders, migrations inquiries have led the way in advancing global paradigmatic theorizing and empirical investigations. What follows are just a few illustrations of the approaches by which migration scholarship generates rich conceptual terrain for global studies scholars.

From the 1970s onward, the accumulation of evidence from migration scholars attested to the networks of migrant ties between origin and destination (Massey et al. 1999). These network ties and the nature of their evolution were soon linked to past and contemporary social and economic imperatives and quickly provided insights about social relations and organizations that undid linear, progressive assumptions of modernization scholars and their policy adherents (Curran 2016). Sassen's prolific contributions in this area generated crucial insights about linked mobility of capital and labor (1988), global cities (1991), global assemblages (2006), and the linkages between expulsions and dislocations (2014). From this work emerged newer insights about hyperprecarity (e.g. Lewis et al. 2015) or transnational ruptures (Nolin 2017). Similarly, continuities and disruption across time and space, as well as the capabilities to trace genealogies and family accounts back and forth between origins and destinations across generations, now yields a layering of relationships that may or may not accrete into organizational forms or may or may not influence or be influenced by institutions (Conway 2016). These are tantalizing possibilities for continued inquiries.

The concept of the transnational also emerged out of the interdisciplinary and multimethod engagement of migration scholars, as well as from scholars of communication and media, finance and commerce, and consumerism and public cultures (Glick Schiller 1997). However, in this short overview, I'll merely focus on the roots of the term in relation to migrations, given its profound mutually constituted impacts. Basch et al.'s (2005) compilation of migration studies set the stage for crucial conceptual evolutions that now include ideas such as deterritorialized nation-states, the simultaneity of societal identities (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), cosmopolitan sociabilities (Glick Schiller, Darieva, and Gruner-Domic 2011), polymorphous transnationalism

(Morawska 2011), transnational social protection (Levitt et al. 2017), or transnational social spaces (Faist 2019).

These research agendas have led global perspectives scholarship in providing empirical observations anchored in the lives of dispersing and dispersed peoples and communities, allowing for temporal and spatial dynamics in social sites where social categories are actively disrupted and reconstituted. In many ways, the transnational social field becomes an exemplar for Urry's methodological call for a global complexities approach (2003). Similarly, migrations research has generated valuable provocations around the nation-state and international prerogatives concerning the worthiness of humans and their citizen status within a nation. These include ideas such as bounded citizenship (Brubaker 2009), flexible citizenship (Ong 1999), free citizenship (Van Gunsteren 2018), or emerging instrumental citizenship (Joppke 2019).

Chan (2019) places human migrations in a comprehensively global way by contextualizing the reciprocal dynamics in relation to historical and ecological dimensions. In Chan's account, the dichotomies of voluntary and involuntary migrations are problematized in relation to the making of empires or the exogenous shocks of climate change. Chan's argument dovetails with James Scott's (2017) in his recent volume upending theories about history of the earliest state formation. Upon reviewing the most recent literature in archaeology, biology, and paleontology, Scott dispels myths about linear trajectories from settlements to states, arguing instead that much of the evidence indicates that spatial mobility was the norm throughout most of human history. Furthermore, Scott argues that states forced the settlement of pastoralists to benefit the state in the production of taxable goods (2017) and the accumulation of wealth. Scott's argument dovetails with more recent scholarship about the history of empires (Burbank and Cooper 2010), which demonstrates the fundamental continuities associated with variable management of human spatial mobilities and settlements. A global perspective on human mobilities requires such attention to the possibilities of conceptual continuities rather than simplistic dichotomies, nonlinearities rather than uniform trajectories, or multidimensional forces across space and time. In so doing, the opportunities for new insights abound.

## POVERTIES

The preceding light briefs about genders and migrations are suitable segues to discussions about poverties from a global perspective. This field is ripe for more global paradigm theorizing, empirics, and integration than is apparent in the fields of genders and migrations, although each does touch upon the dynamics at the intersection with poverty. The edited collection by Ehrenreich, Hochschild, and Kay (2003) about women as nannies, maids, or sex workers is a classic example.

As Kiely argues (2005), theorizing about the relationship between globality and poverty remains a challenge. For example, increasingly, global scholars are asking new questions about precarity or capabilities that force inquiries into assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of social institutions and organizations in places that have been the traditional focus of antipoverty gazes—namely, poor places—gazing, instead, into the interiors of places of growth and the enclaves of the rich and elite. Such investigations were the subject of a recent special issue of *Globalizations* (vol. 16, 2019), which took comparative approaches across nations, historic periods, and sectors but notably

struggled with and debated the conceptual and empirical usefulness of the idea of precarity.

On the other hand, some would argue that the methodological nationalism of poverty measures masks profound inequalities, again a subject of both epistemological and empirical concerns for contributors to *Global Perspectives*. Jordan (2017) argues that the concept of precarity provides a foothold to understand more completely livelihoods in relation to multiple dimensions of well-being such as housing, income, jobs, food, information, and time. At the same time, such analyses and new perspectives offer comparative continuities, rather than the usual epistemological discontinuities erected between the Global North and South. In fact, some of the new conceptual terrain suggests substantial overlap in the poverties of time, freedom, and security (Anwar and Graham 2020). At a minimum, a global paradigm lens focused on poverties and inequalities might create a new intellectual space to reveal how worldwide poverties of freedom, time, and mobilities are inextricably related to the narrower concerns of economics, typically prioritized by Global North institutions and organizations (Mohanty 2019; Page and Pande 2018).

## ECOLOGIES

Most major volumes related to global studies or global perspectives highlight the profound impact of the astronaut's view of Earth from space and how the magic of that view elicited a global perspective on the uniqueness of our place in the universe and the fragility of the relationship between humans and nature (Steger and James 2019). A global perspective, especially a complexity approach (Urry 2003), aligns well with an ecological perspective. For example, Scott's (2017) reexamination of the archaeological record upends taken-for-granted relationships between agriculture and settlement by fully embracing a complexity science approach that observes perturbations at the margins, coexistence of order and disorder, and the dynamic balance of power between structure and agency. Epistemologically, it's a notable argument that might not have happened without a global paradigm, because such a paradigm immediately challenges false dichotomies and atomized approaches. As Urry (2003, 32) writes, humans are woven into the landscape of ecologies on every part of our planet. Indeed, a growing volume of social science research recognizes that integral and integrative dynamic, from Hondagneu-Sotelo's account of the Southern California landscape (2014) to Baer and Singer's (2018) volume on the anthropology of climate change. Many look to Carson's (1962) essays as a crucial articulation of the linkage between politics, economics, society, and nature. But there are two other elements that anchor Carson's work and approach to a *Global Perspectives* research agenda.

First, Carson invokes a global imaginary about the future as an antagonism for action. Such an approach is one often taken by global scholars, especially when seeking to make sense of the present, in light of the past or the possibilities of the future (Steger and James 2019). Second, Carson puts forth a call for action in the name of scientific and human integrity. Such an explicit standpoint on ethics is not one to be shied away from. Darian-Smith (2019) and Chernilo (2017) each call for an approach that avoids reductionisms and embraces an ethics of environmental social justice praxis in light of discoveries and knowledge (and vice versa). Social institutions, organizations, and relations are the instantiation of the parameters that resolve the particular and the universal precisely because humans are evaluative,

cooperative, and reflexive (Chernilo 2017). Chernilo makes the compelling argument that because of these capacities, humans can be both species-centric and uniquely capable of understanding the workings of nature. But to do so, they may have to decenter themselves, which requires a profound paradigmatic shift (Jonas 2001). Decentering requires making explicit moral assumptions in evaluating social institutions, organizations, and relations, and that possibility can be realized only because humans can be appealed to as moral agents (Chernilo 2017). While such philosophers may argue for universalisms about our moral responsibilities, social scientists might provide the empirics that make apparent when those norms are more or less enhanced or more or less instantiated. In doing so, *Global Perspectives* might also offer a doorway for understanding when and how decentering might occur, revealing wherein lie the responsibilities that both build knowledge and shape actions (Chernilo 2017).

## CONCLUSION: AN INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE *GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES* CONVERSATION

For the purposes of a starting point, but with full cognizance that the preceding articulation should be mutable, questioned, and rearticulated through subsequent interrogations that may be published in *Global Perspectives* and elsewhere, I began by briefly offering a perspective on how “global” upends social science paradigms. I then offered an outline for how one might consider what is meant by social institutions, organizations, and relations.

One of the challenges presented by this list of three social ordering categories—institutions, organizations, and relations—is that they might be everything and nothing, all at once. In fact, the other sections of *Global Perspectives* might just as likely address all three of these social ordering categories to clarify global markets, politics and governance, law, security and international relations, communications and media, sustainability and technology, culture and values, or epistemologies and methodologies. A section dedicated to illuminating social institutions, organizations, and relations may simultaneously address topics in the other sections, as well. The brilliance of an online journal will allow for just such a transdisciplinary and collaborative social science project.

I argue that social institutional analyses offer ways to understand how uncertainties are framed, managed, and possibly limited. A global perspective on institutions reexamines how the results of globalization’s temporal intensification and spatial shrinkage creates new, or more, uncertainties. A global perspective can also show how temporal and spatial shrinkages can disrupt or strengthen institutions or create room for entirely new, coincident, or competing institutional forms through new ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies (similar to Steger and James 2019).

Similarly, I suggest that social organizations can be the specific formal and informal collectivities, of more or less complexity, with which individuals affiliate and find commonalities, pool and access resources, assume or delegate authorities, or are controlled by those collectivities. Social organizations interact, shape, and react with both social institutions and social relations in an interdependent and dynamic way. A global perspective on social organizations attends to these fundamental actions, structurations, and cohesions.

Last but not least, I argue that social relations are a fundamental foci of social analyses, defining interactions and

statuses between two or more individuals or between an individual and any other higher order social collectivities (Albrow et al. 1994, Reza 2010). Affinities, identities, and imaginaries are the cognitive mechanisms embodied and enacted in the everyday interactions of social life and that reveal the power, positionality, and intersectionality instantiated in social relations.

Following my articulation of a starting point for social institutions, organizations, and relations, in the last third of the essay, I offered illustrations from research on a number of topics that have already had profound scholarly impacts, supporting a global paradigm. These briefings are meant to provide examples of the kinds of topics and approaches that might find their way to the virtual pages of the *Global Perspectives* venue and this section. Furthermore, these briefings are also meant to invite further inquiries and contributions, within and beyond the four topics. The selected four topics are somewhat problem oriented: genders, migrations, poverties, and ecologies. Each topic illustrates ways in which there are already pathways marked and doorways opened for demonstrating valuable new insights for a global perspective on social institutions, organizations, and relations.

As argued earlier and illustrated through examples from research examining migrations, genders, poverties, and ecologies, social institutions, organizations, and relations can be revealed through a critical global paradigmatic lens. These examples should not be limiting; rather, they should be enough to strike a chord of recognition for contributors. Through these works, I hope I have illustrated how “global” has proven an invaluable lens for seeing the world, providing a perspective in these times. These examples show how global perspectives, while upending epistemologies, can also offer systematic and practical observations, both of which open the doorway for radical reframings or reconceptualizations of “taken for granted” social institutions, organizations, and relationships.

*Global Perspectives* welcomes contributions that help us see the taken for granted and that reinvigorate social science imagination to reveal the rules, norms, and strategies that structure the multiplicity of everyday interactions and set in motion future pathways of actions and interactions globally and locally. The essays in this section would contribute toward these new insights by centrally attending to the dynamic, interdependent, and mutable nature of societies and global forces. These essays should reinvigorate investigations of social institutions, organizations, and relations as they inform global complexities and should contribute toward generating new conceptual domains and new knowledge through multiperspectival lenses of space and time, analyses of processes, disruptions and disruptors, recursive reflection, mutability, and dialectics.

We seek papers on topics broadly related to the preceding concerns. Topics might be problem based, and not only those related to the particular topics illustrated in this essay. For example, these topics might include subjects such as digitization and power, governance, social movements, revolutions, public goods, education, health and well-being, sociology of science, expertise, socialization, professionalization, family and kinship, community resilience, and violence and social order, to name just a few.

Those topics might be explored with approaches that focus on how related institutions are reshaped or emerge in response to temporal intensification and spatial shrinkage creating new, or more, uncertainties. Or, through approaches demonstrating how temporal and spatial shrinkages can disrupt or strengthen institutions or create room for en-

tirely new, coincident, or competing institutional forms through new ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies. Or they might take an organizational approach to reveal previously hidden, organization-based interlocutors of globalization at both the core and the periphery that inform new insights about those global problems. Finally, such topics might be explored with a focus on social relations via surveys, analyses of big data—such as unstructured social media data—or ethnographic studies of breaching and disruption with an ethnomethodological sensibility of the deeply embodied nature of social relations. Of course, entirely conceptual or philosophical essays and arguments will also be welcomed, especially as they reflect upon the nature of social institutions, organizations, and relations in the context of *Global Perspectives*.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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