

Assemblage, Place and Globalization

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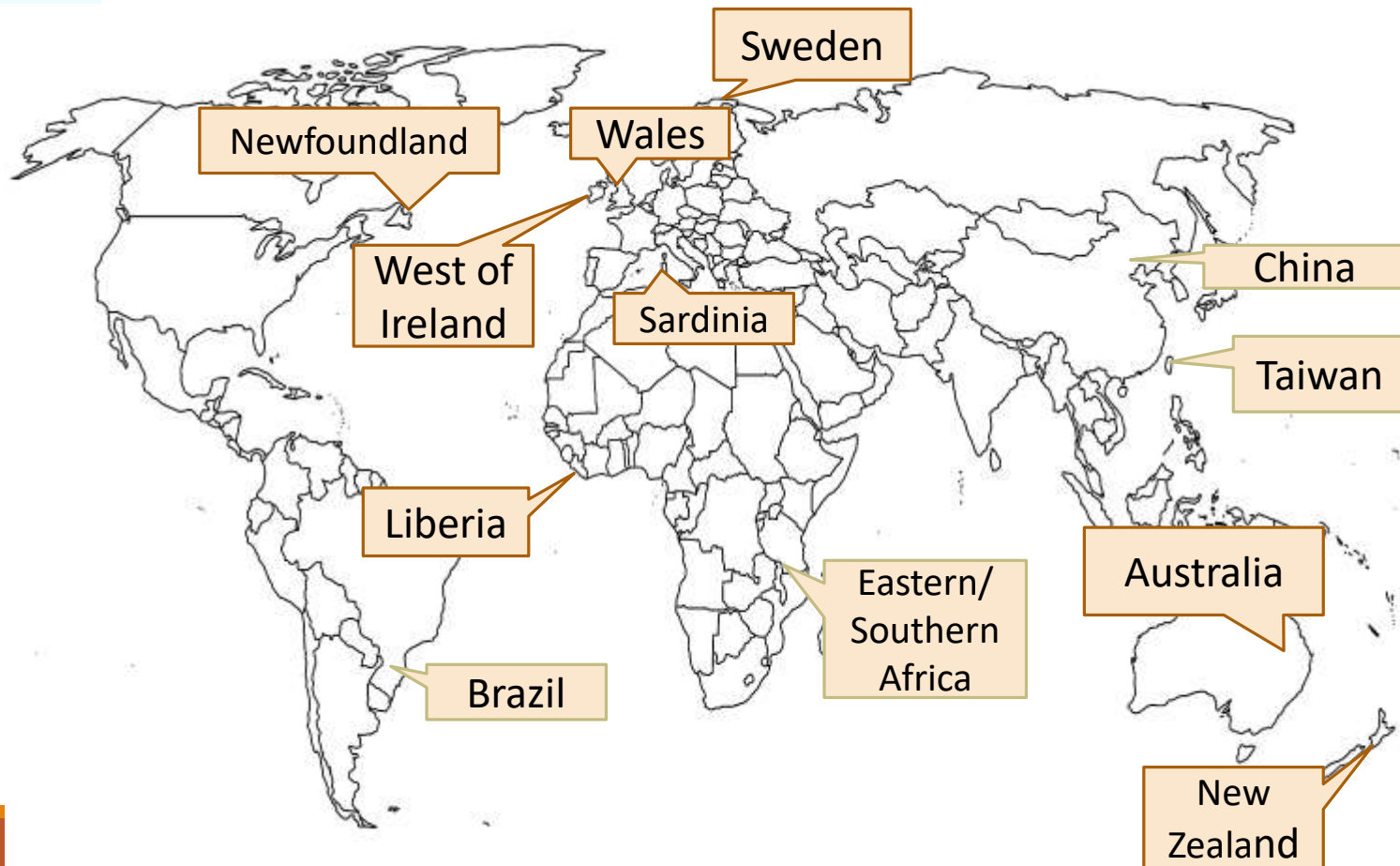




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Background

Point of departure is the relational critique of globalization articulated by Ash Amin, Doreen Massey, Michael P Smith and others

“Globalization is not a single all-embracing movement (nor should it be imagined as some outward spread from the West and other centres of economic power across a passive surface of ‘space’). It is a making of space(s), an active reconfiguration and meeting-up through practices and relations of a multitude of trajectories, and it is there that lies the politics” (Massey, 2005: 83)

Background

- How to operationalise a relational approach to globalization?
- How is globalization reproduced through local places?
- How are places transformed within globalization?

Attracted to assemblage thinking for its emphasis on emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy

Drawing on Foucault and Latour, but especially DeLanda's Deleuzian-inspired rendering of assemblage thinking

Structure

- Assemblage and globalization
- Towards an assemblage framework for globalization research
- Assemblage and place
- Globalization and place: an assemblage perspective

Assemblage and Globalization

Examples of different usages and inflections of assemblage in globalization research

- Anderson et al (2012): Assemblage as descriptor, ethos and concept
- Brenner et al (2011): Empirical, methodological and ontological articulations of assemblage analysis

Many apparent uses of assemblage in globalization research are empirical, with assemblage deployed as a descriptor

> Saskia Sassen (2006) on 'global assemblages'

Assemblage and Globalization

Global Assemblages and the Foucauldian Perspective

Collier and Ong (2005) – global assemblages as “systems that mix technology, politics and actors in diverse configurations that do not follow given scales or political mappings” (Ong 2005, p 338)

Draw on Foucault’s concepts of biopolitics and governmentality

Ways that technological, administrative and ethical regimes are articulated through global assemblages and how these reshape ways of ruling and living

Assemblage and Globalization

Global Assemblages and the Foucauldian Perspective

“The product of these interactions might be called the actual global, or the global in the space of assemblage. In relationship to ‘the global’, the assemblage is not a ‘locality’ to which broader forces are counterposed. Nor is it the structural effect of such forces. An assemblage is the product of multiple determinations that are not reducible to a single logic. The temporality of an assemblage is emergent. It does not always involve new forms, but forms that are shifting, in formation, or at stake. As a composite concept, the term ‘global assemblage’ suggests inherent tensions: global implies broadly encompassing, seamless, and mobile; assemblage implies heterogeneous, contingent, unstable, partial and situated.” (Collier and Ong, 2005: 12)

Assemblage and Globalization

Global Assemblages and the Foucauldian Perspective

Assemblage as ethos, emphasizing heterogeneity, contingency and situatedness and role of micro-processes in addressing globalization

Influential in analysis of global mobility of policy and especially consolidation of neoliberalism as dominant ideology of C21 globalization

Even in more geographical applications (e.g Hollander, Li), asymmetrical in language

Assemblages are transnational networks, regimes, communities of practice etc; places not conceptualized as assemblages and remain unpacked

Assemblage and Globalization

Assemblage Urbanism and the Latourian Perspective

Builds on Latour, Callon, Law and actor-network theory

Foundation for assemblage urbanism as an 'alternative ontology for the city' (Farias 2010)

Rejects binary counterposition of the local and the global

Global exists only in sites in which it is assembled from components

- Study of the global must start by localizing the global back to these sites
- Only then can the global be re-assembled by laying “continuous connections leading from one local interaction to other places, times and agencies through which a local site is made to do something” (Latour 2005, p 173)
- Global not necessarily spatial, also specific to general

Assemblage and Globalization

Assemblage Urbanism and the Latourian Perspective

Diverges from 'global assemblages' approach in interrogating the urban structure itself

Emphasis on materialities of the city

Infrastructures that connect the urban to the global: airports, ports, roads, railways, energy grids, water supplies, office blocks, communications systems (Bender 2010; Bennett 2005; Graham 2010; Harris 2013; Hepworth 2013; Kanai and Kutz 2013)

Begins to answer the question of 'how globalization transforms local places?'

But narrows the perspective, understating wider social and political-economic processes (see Brenner et al 2011)

Assemblage and Globalization

DeLanda and a Deulzo-Guattarian Perspective

Attributes of assemblages (DeLanda 2016):

1. Assemblages have a fully contingent historical identity, and each of them is therefore an individual entity
 - ‘entities operating at different scales can directly interact with one another, individual to individual’
 - collapsing of the global and the local: relations between global and local assemblages are not mediated through national assemblages, but are direct
2. Assemblages are always composed of heterogeneous components
 - Material and expressive roles

Assemblage and Globalization

DeLanda and a Deulzo-Guattarian Perspective

Attributes of assemblages (DeLanda 2016):

3. Assemblages can become component parts of larger assemblages
 - Nested set of assemblages
 - Relationships not hierarchical
4. Assemblages emerge from the interactions between their parts, but once an assemblage is in place it immediately starts acting as a source of limitations and opportunities for its components
 - Global assemblages create opportunities but also impose constraints

Assemblage and Globalization

DeLanda and a Deulzo-Guattarian Perspective

Parameters of assemblages (DeLanda 2016):

- Territorialization and Deterritorialization
- Coding and Decoding

Assemblage and Globalization

DeLanda and a Deulzo-Guattarian Perspective

Assemblages defined by the *exteriority of relations*

- If the components of an assemblage are not tied by necessity, then it follows that their convergence and engagement is non-essential, and thus likely to be contingent, temporary and unstable
- assemblages may be taken apart while at the same time allowing that the interactions between parts may result in a true synthesis' (DeLanda 2006: 11)
- entities are 'never fully actualized within any of the relations that constitute an assemblage' (Anderson et al. 2012: 179)
- 'a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different' (DeLanda 2006: 10)
- entities can be and are components in multiple assemblages at the same time, and may perform different material and expressive roles in each

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

1) Globalization involves re-arranging components in assemblages

- Adding, detaching, altering material or expressive roles, reconfiguring relations between components, transferring components between assemblages
- Branch plants sold by one company to another; international land transactions; commodities trade transnationally; migrants moving from one social assemblage to another.

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

2) Globalization occurs through the recurrent interaction between assemblages

- Aligns or fuses capacities to produce new translocal assemblages with global reach
- e.g corporate mergers; coalescence of social movements; tendency of trading blocs (e.g. EU, NAFTA) to negotiate agreements to create more extensive trade areas

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

3) Globalization also occurs through the deterritorialization of assemblages

- New connections made or relations between components re-ordered to overspill the boundaries of the assemblage
- e.g. Company starting to export; household sending member abroad as a migrant worker.
- Literal forms of deterritorialization as detachment from territory (e.g corporate divestment, refugee fleeing from home)

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

4) Globalization proceeds through cycles of coding, decoding and recoding

- Includes linguistic coding of scale (e.g. local, regional, national, international)
- Decoding as internal rules of assemblages are transgressed (e.g. tax avoidance by transnational corporations; illegal immigrants)
- Global assemblages develop their own internal codes and rules and give rise to new transnational regulatory assemblages

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

5) Globalization fostered by the tendency of (global) assemblages towards internal homogeneity

- TNCs standardizing supplies, products and processes
- Tourism operators making the exotic familiar
- Supra-national organizations adopt and promote universal values and standards
- Neoliberalism pushing global economic assemblage towards trade liberalization and eradication of trade barriers.

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

6) Globalization is a more-than-human phenomenon

- Global assemblages can only be global because of incorporation of non-human components that enable them to transcend space (e.g. jet engines, fibre optic cables, satellites, refrigeration technologies etc)
- Non-human components only arranged in this way and inscribed with meaning through human agency
- Some non-human entities escape from globalizing assemblages to form new dissident assemblages (e.g. invasive species and pathogens)

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

7) Globalization is not a linear process

- Territorialization/deterritorialization, coding/decoding
- No clear line of causality
- Rhizomic assemblages reproduce through mimicry and imitation (e.g. social movements, cultural fashions, technological mimicry)

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

Two further issues:

Scale

- Reconciling assemblage as a flat ontology with inevitable language of scale in globalization
- Scale as magnification (nested sets)
- Scale as reach
- Scale as coding

An Assemblage Framework for Globalization Research

Two further issues:

Power and agency

- Distributed agency
- There is no predominant direction to the exercise of power and agency in globalization
- The global does not always impose its will on the local

Assemblage and Place

Analysis of how globalization transforms local places also requires understanding of places as assemblages

Surprisingly limited geographical analysis of places as assemblages

- Urban assemblages (Farias and Bender, 2010; Blok and Farais 2016)
- Parker (2009) on Amman
- Rosin et al (2013) on Central Otago
- McFarlane (2011) on Mumbai and Sao Paulo

DeLanda (2006, 2016) frequently refers to examples of cities and nations to illustrate aspects of assemblage thinking

Assemblage and Place

DeLanda on places as assemblages:

- Material components including buildings, public spaces, infrastructure
- Expressive components including building facades and iconic skylines
- Territorialization linked to processes of congregation and segregation in social mixing of population
- Deterritorialization through processes such as out-migration and innovations in urban transportation
- Capital cities as tightly coded, maritime cities as less coded and deterritorialized
- Components of places defined by exteriority of relations

Place and Globalization

- 1) Globalization impacts on places through the interactions between place-assemblages and translocal social, economic, cultural, political and technological assemblages
- Place- and translocal assemblages share components, but with different roles
 - The relations of a component in a translocal assemblage may change without affecting the material or expressive role of the entity in a place-assemblage (e.g. factory switched to producing goods for new market, or taken-over by another TNC)
 - Reterritorialization of a translocal assemblage impacts on the material role of a component in a place-assemblage (e.g. closure of a factory; FDI; arrival of new migrants)
 - Entities lose material role in place-assemblages due to reterritorialization of translocal assemblages, but retain an expressive role



Samson and Goliath, Belfast



Nambour, Australia

Place and Globalization

2) Effects in translocal and place assemblages linked by developments in assemblages of connectivity that provide conduits between places

- Enabling and constraining effects
- Budget air travel enabled expansion of international tourism, transformed new destinations, denuded traditional resorts, but is constrained by location of airports, landing fees and distance range of aircraft

New Zealand Dairy Industry



Place and Globalization

3) Patterns of deterritorialization and re-territorialization in translocal assemblages prompt patterns of deterritorialization and re-territorialization in place assemblages

- FDI and divestment, booms in international tourism, out- and in-migration all deterritorializing pressures on place assemblages as they dilute internal homogeneity and/or transgress spatial boundaries
- New forms of territorialization and connectivity introduced, which may be spatial or organizational



Ballyhaunis, Ireland

Place and Globalization

4) Globalization can prompt processes of decoding and recoding in place-assemblages as meanings are re-negotiated and 'rules' no longer hold effectively

- Changes in formal codes, e.g. land use planning policies
- Changes in informal rules of everyday social interaction, e.g. language, customs and cultural practices
- Re-coding from incorporation into translocal assemblages and tendency toward internal homogeneity, e.g. new rules for areas designated as national parks, nature reserves etc..
- Changes in relative strengths of coding of transnational vs place-assemblages (e.g. conservation assemblages)

Trepassey, Canada



Conclusions

- Assemblage thinking highlights the micro-politics of globalization, emphasizing contingency, heterogeneity and contestation
- Globalization involves processes of (re-)assembling through interactions of global, national and local assemblages (as nouns)
- Places are reconstituted in globalization through interaction with translocal assemblages, introduction or withdrawal of components and processes of reterritorialization and recoding
- Assemblage thinking provides a framework for operationalizing a relational perspective to globalization, addressing questions of how globalization is reproduced through places and how places are transformed through globalization