Global movements:

Action and culture

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For Alain Touraine
This book is an attempt to understand shifts in the grammars of culture and action at work in movements. At its heart is the sense that contemporary movements confront us with a profound transformation, with a shift from the forms of organization and action characterising the ‘social movements’ of the last two centuries, to new grammars of experience. At stake are not only relationships between individual and collective, or a shift from hierarchies to networks, but ways of being in the world, of experiencing one’s own and the other’s embodied subjectivity. The attempt to understand these shifts pushes us to rethink not only what we understand by movement, but also what we understand as action as such. In the process, these movements open out new ways of thinking about globalization, allowing us to move away from ideologies of the ‘borderless world’ of simultaneity, and to begin to understand globalization in terms of multiple worlds, of embodied intersubjectivities, where civilizational ways-of-being interpenetrate in new ways.

In the early 1990s globalization was celebrated in terms of the expansion of the borderless economy, while in the later in the decade the theme of ‘resistance’ become increasingly important. This understood globalization in terms of one centre, while grammars of action were reduced to defending interests, traditions or identities. This imposed a uniformity on movements and action, fundamentally regarding them as a defensive response, one to be understood in terms of the centre they were resisting. Old intellectual frameworks were mobilized to think about them, some emphasising opportunities and strategies, others identities and communities. In the
process, emerging grammars of action, culture and organization have tended to be ignored, in particular in the case of ‘non-western’ movements that fail to correspond to models of ‘social movement’ we are familiar with.

The decade that followed has seen the optimism of the 1990s replaced with new themes of violence, failed states, and the threat of nuclear weapons, as the post-1945 order unravels. We are increasingly offered a choice between the borderless world or the ‘clash of civilizations’.

Freeing ourselves from this choice is an intellectual, ethical and above all practical task, one this book hopes to make some small contribution to. It addresses people involved in creating, experiencing, and thinking about movements and who are living and trying to make sense of shifts in ways of acting, being, feeling and organizing. It also addresses researchers, students and teachers who are trying to think about movements in new ways. And it addresses people who are thinking about and feeling what globalization means, who wonder how to make real the possibilities it offers, of not living in one world, but sharing many worlds.

This book has taken four years to research and write. It would not have been possible without the openness of many people to discuss and explore their action and experience, from people involved in Reclaim the Streets in Britain to anti-globalization convergences in the United States, to practitioners of qigong and Falun Gong, to people involved in forms of piety, or building puppets or telling stories, a decision that in some contexts has been one that exposed the person to potential risk. Nor would it have been possible without
the opportunity to articulate and test ideas, to try to find ways to think about forms of action and experience that did not fit with older models of movement and globalization. Research Committee 47 of the International Sociological Association, *Social Movements and Social Classes*, has played a key role in this, bringing together scholars from every continent in an ongoing attempt to understand movements and action in the contemporary world. The Centre d’Analyse et d’Intervention Sociologiques at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris welcomed me for six months. There I was able to draw the manuscript together, and gain immensely from discussions and seminars with Michel Wieviorka, François Dubet, Yvon LeBot and Nilufer Gole. The University of Melbourne offered a supportive intellectual environment, as well as financial support at critical stages for this research. At one point the University received a visit from a diplomat and political police from a country discussed in this book, who expressed concern about the directions of this research. The response of University leaders was to affirm the importance of social scientific work, and not waver in its support. This book has also benefited enormously from the support of people at Blackwell, its publishers. Phyllis Wentworth played a key role in helping reframe an initial proposal, while Ken Provencher has supported the writing, rethinking and reworking with generosity and patience combined with a demanding intellectual engagement. Readers gave generously of their time, responding to both the initial proposal and the draft manuscript, pushing me to think more clearly about what I was attempting to say.
This book strives to understand the living, being, embodiment and the senses at the heart of movements. These are also central to research and writing. In different ways traces of living with my three children, Gabriel, Lynne and Sarah are present in the chapters below. In a book that does not celebrate collective identity, but tries to understand ways that we become subjects thought the experience of the other, there is an important presence of my partner Lorna Payne. This book would not be possible without the encounter I have had with Alain Touraine. He welcomed me as a doctoral student at the EHESS in the 1980s, and as a co-researcher in the period since. His commitment to understand the world in terms of struggles for freedom rather than systems of domination or strategies of interest shapes his intellectual and personal encounter with the other, from his role in the fight against the destruction of memory in South America, to the time and generosity he accords former students.
PART ONE: MOVEMENTS AND GLOBALIZATION
1. Globalization

‘I didn’t cross the border, the border crossed me’, *Somos más Americanos*, Los Tigres del Norte, 2002

The beginnings of this twenty-first century have been dominated by contradictory and chaotic processes of globalization. But what is at stake seems extraordinarily difficult to grasp. Right across the planet there are signs of the changes at work, from the globalization of the economy or the rise of the Internet to the increasing importance of global fashion, architectural styles, consumption patterns and celebrities. The rise of global media and extraordinary increases in travel and mobility have combined to produce new kinds of global events, from the Olympic Games, the World Cup or the funeral of Princess Diana, to the September 11 destruction of the Twin Towers or the 1999 Seattle mobilization against the World Trade Organization. Our sense of living in a global world has been heightened by the increased awareness of the interconnectedness of new types of problems, from pollution, global warming or failed states, to the increasing numbers of refugees and the emergence of global pandemics such as AIDS or the threat of terrorism. All these cut across borders, emerging from and constituting new types of networks and flows: of power, finance, information, people, experience, violence, emotion and images. An older international context, where social life largely took place within the borders of nation states, and where states were the main actors on the international stage, is increasingly giving way to a context involving new global actors, from NGOs, organized crime or terror
networks, and with it, to a whole series of debates attempting to interpret the nature of this emerging global world.

This book explores one of the most important dimensions of contemporary globalization: the emergence of new kinds of networks and flows of communication, action and experience that I am calling global movements. Attempting to understand such movements is critical to the struggle to make sense of the possibilities and dangers reshaping our world. And while there is much we can learn from the frameworks social scientists have used to explore the social movements that emerged over the past century in western, industrial, national societies, attempting to make sense of emerging global movements demands of us new conceptual tools. We need to grapple with forms of sociality transforming the relationship between individual and collective; with grammars of movement that are better understood in terms of cultural pragmatics (Alexander 2004) and personal experience (Touraine 2004, 2005) than organization building and collective identity; with new forms of complexity and fluidity (Urry 2003); with civilizational grammars shaping ways-of-being and acting in the world (Eisenstadt 1999), interpenetrating in surprising ways (Bulleit 2004). The forms of practice and communication we encounter in these movements are more embodied and sensual than deliberative and representational. They underline the urgent need to rethink our understandings of action in terms of touch, hearing, moving, feeling, tasting, memory and breathing. They point to limits of the autonomous, secular subject and the models of intentional action that underpin major approaches to social movements. They confront us with forms of public
experience that do not correspond to understandings of deliberative, rational, disembodied public spheres that have become increasingly influential over recent years (in the influential writings, for example, of Jurgen Habermas 1991, 1996). At the same time, the forms of action we encounter in these movements confront us with the limits of ‘identity’ paradigms emphasising communities, norms and group cultures. Emerging global movements confront us with transformations in action and culture that demand a radical paradigm shift, pushing us beyond rehearsing largely familiar debates. In so doing, they confront us with the challenge of rethinking the way we understand globalization.

A borderless world?
During the 1990s, dominant understandings of globalization were framed in economic terms. This reflected the importance of global corporations, the role of the finance industries and the new forms of communication and information technologies integrating them. Influential management theorists (Ohmae 1990) championed the new ‘borderless world’. Without any hesitation, this dominant view regarded the increasing integration of the world economy as leading to a convergence of societies. This formed the basis of what came to be known as the Washington Consensus, it shaped the policies of organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and became the accepted wisdom in international think tanks such as the Swiss-based World Economic Forum. New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman was one of many journalists to popularise this argument, referring to globalization as a ‘golden straightjacket’, where ‘once your country puts on the
golden straightjacket, its political choices get reduced to Pepsi or Coke’ (1996 87). The political scientist Francis Fukuyama (1993 1996) expressed the same argument in a more philosophical way when he argued that the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 ushered in ‘the end of history’, where countries would inevitably adopt a consumer culture and competitive political system as a result of their integration into the world economy. These arguments all implied that the emergence and triumph of globalization involved a universal, western, model of social and economic organization. Fukuyama was explicit, arguing that the end of history represented the ‘triumph of the west’ (1989). Friedman’s choice of beverages, Coke or Pepsi, conveyed a similar message.

Sociologists largely shared this same view. For the influential British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990 1), ‘modernity’ is a type of society and culture produced by the west, while globalization involves its extension to the planet as a whole, continuing a process that has its origins in seventeenth century Europe (1999). At the same time Giddens foreshadowed forms of defensive reaction to the ‘runaway world’, in particular the emergence of fundamentalism, which he understands as ‘embattled tradition’ (1999).

Journalistic accounts offered a similar account, foreshadowing ‘backlashes’ would emerge in a desperate attempt to defend tradition against the relentless march of the global market (Friedman 1996). This view of a conquering globalization came to been widely embraced by radical intellectuals and populist leaders as well, from the theories of empire articulated by Toni Negri (Hardt & Negri 2000), the influential work of Noam Chomsky (1999) to French farmer José Bové’s claim to defend local tradition and authenticity against
invading homogenizing forces of the European Union and World Trade Organization.

Such celebrations and condemnations of globalization share a similar premise. As Robertson and Khondker argue (1998 32), they perpetuate a view of the global as constituted by an active, dominant centre, and defensive or subordinate reactions (groups or countries) forced to defend themselves against a process originating from outside. From this point of view, there is one source of globalization, ‘the west’ or ‘capitalism’. This understanding of globalization remains firmly within an older paradigm of modernization, understood as the universalisation or diffusion of a dominant social model. Not only is there one source of globalization (the centres of global power), but also there is one process of globalization (the universalisation of the model of these centres). Globalization travels in one direction, and to the extent it encounters obstacles, these are essentially defensive, subsumed within (and understandable in terms of) the generative process of globalization. As Karin Werner notes with regard to such analyses of fundamentalism, these construct an overall modernization project that is confronted with growing ‘fundamentalist holes’, in the process setting up a framework where modernization is global, while universalising fundamentalism ‘as a highly predictable form of anti-modernity, which as such remains “inside” the global modern orbit, whose references can only be reversed, not negotiated’, an approach that ‘limits the cultural spectrum to either a modern or an anti-modern option. Through this narrowness of focus it reduces the chance of
recognizing hybridities, overlappings, and juxtapositions’ (Werner 1998 39-40).

Abstract space, homogenous time

When Kenichi Ohmae celebrates the ‘borderless world’, like Giddens, he understands globalization in terms of the expansion of borders, a process whereby more and more of the world comes to exist ‘within’ the abstract space constituted by globalization. Writing at the end of the 1980s, Ohmae’s metaphor for the globalizing world is a spatial one where a border expands, gradually encompassing countries and regions. This metaphor of an expanding border is particularly powerful because it frames globalization in terms we take for granted. It understands globalization as an extension of what Law and Urry (2004) call the ‘Euclidean world’, where space is understood, and experienced, as empty and abstract, constituted by the borders that surround it. This understanding of space plays an important role in the political theory of Thomas Hobbes, who studied Euclid and mathematics while living in France, absorbing the principle that space should be understood as continuous and a continuum, uniform in all directions. Hobbes’ Leviathan (1651) lay the basis for an understanding of the State where all subjects could be understood as functionally equivalent within a given abstract space. This idea would be influential in allowing the government of Charles II to conceive of taxation for the first time in terms of aggregates rather than individual cases (Poovey 1995 29). This understanding of ‘abstract space’, constituted by borders, would play a key role in allowing European states to construct nations, and would later be
decisive in European colonization. Sunil Khilnani underlines the importance of such bordered, abstract space in the creation of ‘the idea of India’:

‘What made possible the self-invention of national community was the fact of alien conquest and colonial subjection. It was the British interest in determining geographical boundaries that by an Act of Parliament in 1899 converted ‘India’ from the name of a cultural region into a precise pink territory… The arbitrary precisions of colonial techniques thus brought forth an historical novelty, a unified and bounded space called India (1997 155).

The new understanding of abstract space played a key role in the construction of what we now understand as ‘the social’ (Poovey 1995). This was part of a wider transformation. Alain Desrosières explores the development of statistics and the ‘politics of large numbers’, which made it possible to think in new abstract terms, allowing the integration of the different registers of reality into a single construction, with local singularities disappearing and becoming understood as parts of a greater whole, as manifestations of a general order (1998 72). Law and Urry argue that it was this ‘Euclidean world’ of abstract space that made possible the idea of functional equivalence, which led to an understanding of the world in terms of larger containers (states) within which there were other discreet entities standing in hierarchical or inclusive relationships – the behaviour of the smaller units had to be understood within the framework of the larger units within which they fitted. Here we see the origins of a new interest in categories and class, out of which would emerge the economic and social theory of Karl Marx. In this process, the sense of
living in where a world experienced as made up of different orders living in the same country came to be replaced by a ‘new way of understanding social collectivites’, leading to a new experience of society itself as an ‘inclusive aggregate’ (Morris 2004 7). This new understanding of inclusiveness did not, of course, deny difference and conflict – but this was understood as taking place within a new understanding of the social, corresponding to the nation, as one unified world. Today’s celebrations of the borderless world extend this abstract space, seeing it at work every day in exchange rates, currency flows and a host of economic data. The influential idea of ‘global society’ is so credible, and almost self evident, because is yet another Euclidean container, ‘the largest yet imaginable’ (Law and Urry 2004 399).

The ‘global society’ not only involves an extension of abstract space and functional equivalents to the planet as a whole, it also involves the extension of a particular experience of time. Benedict Anderson (1983) underlines the importance of newspapers in the formation of national socieites, in particular their role in reporting daily events, arguing that they produced a powerful new sense of ‘imagined community’. The philosopher Charles Taylor, drawing on Anderson, underlines just how much this modern understanding of society is grounded in a temporal experience. It is an experience of ‘one world’ not only because of the abstract space that makes it up, but also because society is ‘a whole consisting of the simultaneous happening of all the myriad events that mark the lives of its members at that moment’ (2004 157). The culture of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ is one of simultaneity, and there can be little doubt that this culture is a powerful process in the contemporary world. It
drives global product launches, it is celebrated in simultaneous movie
releases throughout the planet, it is at the centre pervasive cultural practices
such as use of mobile phones or the Internet. Global culture is a culture of
urgency (Laidi 2001), embedded in a background of the day-to-day where
television plays a role similar to the role Anderson attributes to newspapers.
Microsoft’s Bill Gates articulates this powerfully when he describes time itself
as ‘friction’, as a drag or impediment to the functioning of the network and the
possibilities of instant access, information and exchange that it brings (1996
191).

Taylor underlines a critical dimension to this new time experience: its
homogeneity. For society to consist of the simultaneous happening of a
myriad of events, these events must constitute what he calls ‘homogenous
time’:

‘this very clear, unambiguous concept of simultaneity belongs to an
understanding of time as exclusively secular. As long as secular time
is interwoven with various kinds of higher time, there is no guarantee
that all events can be placed in unambiguous relations of simultaneity
and succession…. There is a close inner link among modern societies,
their self-understandings, and modern synoptic modes of
representation…. Society as simultaneous happenings, social
interchange as impersonal system, the social terrain as what is
mapped, historical culture as what shows up in museums…” (2004
158)
This idea of the ‘borderless world’ or ‘global society’ combines the idea of expanding abstract space (bringing with it functional equivalence) with a new time-consciousness of simultaneity. In that sense, ‘global society’ can be understood as expanding outwards from the centre, in the way described by Giddens and Fukuyama. This idea of global society converged as well with the increasing importance of borderless networks structured in terms of simultaneous exchange (Castells 2000). But despite its power and its attraction to global elites, this account of ‘one world’ and ‘global society’ is less and less able to make sense of an increasingly complex world.

*From structure to flow*

Most 19th century thinkers relied on metaphors of the machine or stable structures to think about social life. Karl Marx for example had a fondness for the image of the building, with its ‘base’ and its ‘superstructure’, while his conception of social change, as that of his contemporaries, was evolutionary or linear. Over recent years a paradigm shift has become increasingly evident in the social sciences, evident in the development of theoretical models attempting to make sense of new patterns of social life associated with networks and flows. One of the most important contributions has been made by the British sociologist John Urry (2001, 2003). He argues that the conceptual tools we use to make sense of ‘societies’, as bounded areas of social life that correspond to the territories of nation-states, are less and less adequate to the task of make sense of emerging forms of social life and conflict that are increasingly global, and increasingly take the form of flows.

As opposed to the conceptual models that dominated the 19th century, evident
in Marx’s fascination with ideas of equilibrium or Freud’s interest in energy and forces, Urry argues that contemporary forms of social life are complex and uncertain, and that the types of social systems that develop are unstable and, drawing on the work of the natural scientist Ilya Prigogine (1982), are better understood as in non-equilibrium, where small events can produce large and unpredictable effects, meaning that complex systems are increasingly subject to shockwaves (Mann 1985).

When we start to think about social life in terms of fluid and flows as Urry urges us, change is not linear, but shaped instead by ‘tipping points’ where events occur which cannot be predicted, but which cause dramatic change and new patterns to emerge – such as, for example, the development of the mobile phone or the Internet. The patterns of change here are not expressions of an evolutionary logic that can be mapped out and projected out into the future, but take the form of complex systems reorganising themselves in ways that cannot be predicted. Urry argues that increasingly complex social life is closer to a fluid moving across an uneven surface than to nineteenth century metaphors of the machine. He draws on social studies of science (Mol and Law 2001) to suggest that social life can be analysed in terms of regions, which take the form of spatial, bounded areas, such as cities or societies; networks, which stretch across regions, such as information systems for example; and fluids, which move through networks, but which can also spill over into others – for example, ideas that emerged in New Age networks have spilled over into management sciences (Thrift 2001).
The Indian anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai, also points to the changing nature of contemporary experience. Rather than attach primary importance to the economic or the institutional, Appadurai (1996) argues that it is the cultural dimension that is most critical in shaping contemporary globalization, where increasingly it is the imagination that constitutes the field of social practices. Above all he underlines the importance of disjunctive experience, the sense that globalization consists of experiencing multiple places and multiple temporalities, dimensions that we will see as crucial to the ‘another globalization’ movement that emerged over the 1990s. In an analysis that has important convergence with the work of John Urry, Appadurai proposes exploring contemporary globalization in terms of five ‘scapes’, or global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. The use of the term ‘scape’ underlines the unevenness and unpredictability of flows and the importance of perspective, in much the same way as does the concept landscape. Appadurai introduces these terms in the following way. Ethnoscape refers to the shifting terrains of people that constitute the world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers. Technoscape refers to the global systems and networks of technology, from the Internet to transport systems. Financescapes refers to the increasingly unpredictable flows of finance that rebound around the world. Mediascapes refers to the increasing importance of global media, from television, the Internet, magazines, to the flow of audio and video cassettes. Ideoscapes refers to the increasing importance of global flows of ideas and ideologies, concepts that are generated in one local but then flow and take on extraordinary global significance (Appadurai 1996).
For Appadurai, what is critical to understanding the nature of contemporary globalization is the increasing disjuncture between these different scapes, or between the flows of people, machinery, money, images or ideas. In an integrated, hierarchical world, these flows all move together, as in Marx’s model of ruling class and ruling culture, or in the theory of taste developed by Pierre Bourdieu, where the dominant class innovates and the rest of the population follows. In the contemporary world characterised by disjuncture, these movements diverge, collide as well as converge. Fashion, for example, is no longer generated by an elite and then descends the social hierarchy. While it flows along structures of social inequality, it is not determined nor produced by these – its grammar is experiential, it constitutes a structure of feeling.

Urry’s analysis of networks and flow underlines two dimensions of particular importance. Rather than regarding technologies as an extraneous force breaking down communities (the traditional negative view that many sociologists have had with regard to technology), Urry argues instead that technologies increasingly are the media through which social relationships are constructed. The social, he argues, is increasingly characterised by forms of hybridity; it is no longer helpful to think of the social in terms of bounded geographic communicates, but rather needs to be understood as forms of flow and mobility constituted through technologies, from the car to the Internet. Many social scientists still regard technologies as a factor breaking down the social world, from the radical analyses of the Frankfort school in interwar
Germany to Robert Putnam’s (1996) view that television is undermining ‘social capital’ in the United States today. Urry, on the contrary, argues that it is increasingly through technologies that the social is itself constituted, and calls for the development of concepts able to develop analyses of the increasing hybridity of socio-technological networks.

*Network society?*

One of the most important attempts to make sense of what is at stake in the transformations at work in globalization is developed by the Spanish sociologist, Manuel Castells (1997, 2000). He argues that globalization represents a planetary shift to a network society, involving a shift from what he calls an ‘Industrial Paradigm’ to an ‘Information Paradigm’ (2000). Castells puts technological shifts at the centre of this process; above all the role of electronics-based information/communication technologies, while also suggesting an increasing role will be played by genetic technologies. These technologies bring with them new patterns of social organization that are informational, global and networked. Networks, he argues, manifest technological and organizational superiority because of their capacity to deal with uncertainty and complexity, and because of this they inevitably triumph over other forms of organization such as hierarchy and bureaucracy. Networks dissolve centres and disorganize hierarchy, making the exercise of hierarchical power ‘increasingly impossible’ (2000 19). As a result, Castells argues, the nation state increasingly finds itself bypassed and weakened by all sorts of emerging networks: of capital, trade, production, science, communication, human rights, and crime, to the point that the State can no
longer remain a sovereign entity within a world increasingly organized in terms of networks. Other hierarchical structures find themselves similarly bypassed, whether schools, churches or other forms of bureaucracy. The network/information logic is insatiable because of its superior efficiency – it absorbs or marginalizes all other competing forms of social organization.

Castells argues that in this emerging network society, the nature of power and conflict also changes. In this world, power is no longer vested in formal political institutions, but becomes decentralized (networks being decentred) and immaterial, taking the form of the flows and codes of networks. Networks possess a binary code of inclusion/exclusion: what is compatible with the network is integrated, what is not is either ignored or eliminated. While Castells argues that it is social struggles that assign goals to networks (reflected in their communication codes), once the network is programmed it imposes its logic on all its members. To challenge a network, actors have to challenge it from the outside. They may seek to counter it by building an alternative network based on alternative values, or develop a defensive, non-network structure or commune, one which ‘does not allow connections outside its own set of values’ (2000 16). Castells argues that social change occurs through each of these two mechanisms, both of which are external to dominant networks, and this has important implications for the way he conceptualises contemporary movements and the way they challenge the forms of social domination and power associated with a global, network society. He sees a first type of challenge involving alternative networks, built around alternative projects, ‘which compete, from network to network, to build
bridges to other networks in society, in opposition to the codes of the currently dominant networks.' (2000 22-23). A second type of opposition involves a rejection of the network logic by affirming values that ‘cannot be processed in any network, only obeyed and followed’. For Castells, the first form of challenge to emerging dominant networks is evident in alternative networks such as ecology, feminism, and human rights movements. He sees the second form of challenge, one that rejects the network logic, expressed by emerging forms of fundamentalism as well as other forms of ‘cultural communes’ ‘centred around their self-contained meaning’, such as ‘religious, national, territorial, and ethnic communes’. Both these new alternative networks and new defensive communes use new communications technologies such as the Internet. But it is not the technologies they use that make them networks; rather, the issue at stake is the extent to which they can communicate with different networks, beyond their self-definition.

For Castells this emerging networked world confronts us with a central dilemma:

‘The fundamental dilemma in the network society is that political institutions are not the site of power any longer. The real power is the power of instrumental flows, and cultural codes, embedded in networks. Therefore, the assault to these immaterial power sites, from outside their logic, requires either the anchoring in eternal values, or the projection of alternative, communicative codes that expand through networking of alternative networks. That social change proceeds
through one way or another will make the difference between fragmented communalism and new history making’ (2000 23).

Actors and subjectivities

The social sciences, sociology in particular, played a key role in representing new forms of collectivity and aggregation, contributing to shaping the modern nation state as a social world ordered in terms of clear boundaries, citizenship and governance. Today there is a new uncertainty about fundamental categories to make sense of being and acting in the world (Wallerstein 1996). On the one hand, there are those who argue that the contemporary globalizing world is a ‘global society’. This world without borders extends the logic of economic systems to the point where there is no actor, only behaviour, as individuals correspond to the systems of opportunity or incentive that they are part of. Or action becomes understood as ‘resistance’ to this model. But this, as we have seen, places action ‘inside’ the global orbit, and brings with it an understanding of the actor as engaged in purposive, instrumental action, where action is shaped by an understanding of interest and framed in terms of intention (Asad 2003 73).

The core question that confronts us when thinking about globalization is whether we live in one world or in many worlds, whether we inhabit a ‘universe’, or whether we are caught up in, and helping to produce, what Law and Urry term a ‘pluriverse’ (2004 399). This means a shift away from paradigms of abstraction and generality, and means exploring globalization in terms of increasing pluralization and complexity. The themes of disjuncture
and complexity imply a break with ‘one world’, and to approach the world, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues (1998), in terms of particularization and singularities. This does not mean that a global world is made up of a myriad of incommensurable and mutually unintelligible experiences. But it does have implications for the way we attempt to understand general patterns that may be emerging in this context of complexity and pluralisation. As Alberta Arthurs suggests, drawing on Geertz, ‘if the general is to be grasped at all… it must be grasped not directly, all at once, but via instances, differences, variations and particulars; in a piecemeal fashion, case by case. In a splintered world, we must address the splinters’ (2003 581). This does not mean we are faced with the choice of ‘one world’ or a multitude of radically incommensurable worlds. Rather, contemporary globalization confronts us with the challenge of understanding new forms of partial connection, new experiences of border. This opens out as well the possibility of more complex ways of knowing, making possible a ‘fluid and decentred social science, with fluid and decentred modes for knowing the world allegorically, indirectly, perhaps pictorially, sensuously, poetically, a social science of partial connections’ (Law and Urry 2004 400). Rather than understand the world in terms of abstract space and homogenous time, this points to the importance of exploring what Talal Asad (2003) calls complex space and complex time.

A world understood in terms of complex space and complex time is not one where borders are made redundant, but rather one where borders traverse the subjectivity of persons who find themselves living in multiple worlds, as the Mexican band Los Tigres del Norte remind us. French sociologist Alain
Touraine (2004) argues that in the emerging global world, it is the ‘individual’s self-construction as an actor’ that needs to be placed at the centre of the struggle to understand the contemporary world. Over recent years the questions of what constitutes action has become increasingly central to social theory (Joas 1996; Asad 2003). Touraine argues that this lies at the heart of understanding the contemporary world, calling on the social sciences to radically shift focus, ‘from understanding society’ (with a focus on systems, levels and dynamics) to ‘discovering the subject’, placing the struggle to become an actor at the centre of the social sciences. This places the question of movements of action at the heart of the way we attempt to make sense of the contemporary world.

*Global movements*

This book focuses on forms of action and culture that have emerged in different types of movement, each of which has globalized. The first of these became known as the ‘anti-globalization’ movement at the time of the mobilization against the World Trade Organization that took place in Seattle, November 1999, but which now increasingly defines itself as a movement for ‘another globalization’. Over the 1990s this movement became more and more evident through blockades and actions linked to the increasing importance of international summits and meetings of organizations such as the World Bank, the World Economic Forum or the World Trade Organization, where these summits not only served as platforms for bankers and political leaders, but as key convergence points for emerging networks of groups and actors increasingly defining themselves in opposition to ‘neo-liberal’
globalization. These mobilizations accelerated after Seattle in 1999, reaching a peak in Genoa in July 2001, where some 200,000 people protested against what they saw as the agenda of the Group of 8 leaders of the world’s most industrialised nations. For many analysts these massive mobilizations appeared to spring from nowhere, and many influential observers believed that they would disappear following the September 11 attacks in 2001 (Wall Street Journal 2001). Overall this has not been the case, with massive mobilizations taking place outside the United States, such as in Barcelona in 2002 or Evian in France in 2003. But the very size of these mobilizations can be deceptive, overshadowing the crucial role of what Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci (1996) refers to as ‘submerged networks’ within such movements – in this case, new forms of media and Internet networks, the new humanitarian movement, and new forms of culture and direct action that emerged in ecological and urban action, and which are at the origins of the global networks that began to become more visible over the latter half of the 1990s. Once we begin to explore this process we encounter new grammars of action: a shift from older forms of solidarity to new grammars of fluidarity (McDonald 2002).

The movement contesting neo-liberal globalization involves significant dimensions and networks outside countries such as the United States, Europe or similar societies. Below we explore one of the most important of these that played a key role in contributing to the emergence of a wider movement, namely the Zapatista movement that emerged in the Chiapas region of Mexico in January 1994, where a small group of indigenous insurgents,
influenced by Latin American traditions of guerrilla strategy, took control of five towns. Many people in Mexico, including those sympathetic to the plight of the indigenous, were dismayed by these beginnings of armed conflict, coming at a time when a horrendously violent civil war in neighbouring Guatemala was gradually drawing to a bloody close. Many external observers regarded this action as yet another ethno-nationalist movement seeking to defend local, often archaic, traditions against their inevitable decline. In the period that followed this indigenous movement showed an extraordinary capacity to transform itself into something new, with armed conflict effectively abandoned in favour of a new type of action, in particular cultural and communicative action able to link tradition and openness, and which set in motion an extraordinary international dynamic that is still at work today, evident for example in the development of Indymedia, the Independent Media Centre that began at the WTO mobilization in Seattle, but which had its origins in a call for independent global media that was made in the Mexican jungle. The originality of this movement has great implications for the way we think about contemporary globalization, movements, ethics and democracy.

The second movement that this book explores emerged neither in the Americas nor in Europe, but in China. This is the movement of Falun Gong, a cultivation movement that has its origins in the wider qigong movement that emerged in China in the period following the Cultural Revolution. Falun Gong itself is based on a series of exercises developed in the early 1990s by a former public official, Li Hongzi, and over the following decade this was taken up as a form of practice by several million people in China, as well as
receiving the support of influential sections of the power elite, before being declared an illegal cult and subjected to very strong repression from April 1999 onwards, with Amnesty International (2001) estimating that over 5,000 practitioners were sent to labour camps in the two years following the ban. Despite the attempts to suppress Falun Gong in China, it has developed among the Chinese diaspora in East Asia and beyond, in particular through information technologies such as the Internet, and it emerges in China through sporadic actions, such as the hacking into China’s national television network in late 2003. Despite this repression, China specialists suggest that this movement represents the most significant challenge to the Chinese regime since the student movement of 1989 (Vermandier 2001). What is distinctive about this movement is the extent to which it has taken shape around forms of embodied practice such as qigong exercises and meditation, and as such it is part of wider cultural and social transformations in China in the post-Maoist period. This movement is clearly not a ‘social movement’ in the sense that sociologists have traditionally understood the term. But if it is one of the most significant movements to emerge in China over the past decade, we are confronted with the task of developing tools to explore its development and significance. In this case, the Falun Gong and the wider movement of qigong out of which it emerges confront us with critical questions about embodiment, memory and subjectivity – questions posed within a different civilization matrix to that from which sociology and western social science emerged. To explore its development, we need to ‘decentre’ the western experience (Gole 2000).
Thirdly, this book turns to explore the development of new Islamic experiences emerging in the space between diaspora populations and Muslim majority countries. Analyses approaching the increasing significance of Islamic groups and networks do so in very different ways. The French political sociologist Gilles Keppel (2002), for example, argues we are seeing a shift in what he calls ‘re-Islamization’ from above (an emphasis on politics and the State) to re-Islamization from below (an emphasis on piety and personal life). This suggests moving in two ways on the one path, opposing a dominant, western modernization. Other authors point beyond a reactive model, pointing to the emergence of new types of public space (Anderson 2003), the emergence of new types of ‘translocal’ (Mandeville 2001) experiences and subjectivities, and the increasing importance of practices constructed in terms of autonomy, embodiment and subjectivity (Mahmood 2003). These analyses point to something very different from the defensive ethnic or communitarian identities which understand Islamic movements as ‘holes’ in the process of globalization.

One of the most important expressions of this globalized Islam is the development of what Olivier Roy has termed ‘neo-fundamentalism’ (2004). While Islam is part of a wider reconfiguration of religious traditions (Asad 2002), one where we encounter new subjectivities and public spaces, it is also associated with the emergence of new forms of antimovement (Wieviorka 2005). The ‘identity model’ of social movements would suggest that these are defensive communities constructed against an invasive globalization (Castells 1997). But what is at stake appears very different, with contemporary forms
of fundamentalism constructed against community cultures and histories (Medeb 2003), while located in global flows of people and ideas. The chapters below explore the emergence of new forms of global Islamic experience, but at the same time, focus in particular on forms of embodied subjectivity and practice at stake in globalizing piety movements that put into question understandings of action constructed in terms of disembodied grammars of representation.

**Grammars of culture and action**

The forms of action we explore in the chapters below cut across older understandings of agency and experience. The modern understanding regards action as shaped by intentionality or goals, understanding it in terms of movement to increased autonomy and freedom (Asad 2003 71). Within this framework, the relationship to the body is an instrumental one where the actor experiences him or herself as being ‘in’ a body or being a self that ‘has’ a body (Schoenfeldt 1999 10). Movements, as we will see in the following chapter, have been understood within a recurring dichotomy, one understood either in *instrumental* terms (framed in terms of models of rational action) or in *expressive* terms (with an emphasis on identity, the symbolic or communities). Understandings of public space have emphasized the rational and the discursive, extrapolating an idealised model of the bourgeois public sphere understood as existing between state and society. The individual actor has been understood as secular, disembodied and rational, and this paradigm as well was used to think about organization and the relationship between
individual and collective experience. At the heart of this understanding we will encounter the category of representation.

In the movements we explore in this book we see a shift from older forms of organization to new experiences. We encounter in powerful form experiences of embodiment and embodied presence, and experiences best understood in terms of ‘embodied intersubjectivity’ (Csordas 1993 146) rather than models of representation. These underline the plurality of senses through which we experience the world, the other, and the self. But once we admit of the possibility of acting sensually, we open out the limits of intentional action, as sensory experience cannot be understood primarily in intentional terms. The senses pose a threat to intentional action, perhaps explaining why they have been effaced so thoroughly in the sociology of movements. Throughout this book we constantly encounter embodiment and the senses: dance, music, drumming, bicycle riding, experiences of vulnerability and physical confrontation, where the embodied actor and embodied intersubjectivity become critical to understand: from the embodiment of direct action in antiglobalization action to the embodied memory and embodied public experience in gigong movements or in practices of Islamic piety. These forms of action and culture allow us to break out of often repeated debates framed in terms of individual versus the community, opening out forms of individual autonomy that do not correspond to the rational, disembodied individual.

The movements we explore in this book are not identity movements, they are not expressions of identity. The movements we explore are better
approached in other ways, rather that in terms of ‘categories’ and ‘aggregates’, terms that as we saw, have their origins in particular time and place. Rather than strongly articulated senses of ‘us’, we are more likely to encounter experiences of displacement, often accompanied by experiences of strangeness and what Margrit Shildrick (2002) explores as ‘encounters with the vulnerable self’. Through engaging with these forms of action and culture, I attempt to understand more embodied grammars of subjectivity, intersubjectivity and action. Rather than think of contemporary movements in terms of the paradigms of organization or community that were so influential over the twentieth century, I hope open out the way we think about movements to themes coming from studies of rhythm, music, and resonance. Paradoxically, while globalization brings with it the sense that we are living in different worlds, these movements suggest new ways of thinking about the worlds we share.