

Chapter 1

Globalization: a contested concept

Manfred B. Steger

GLOBALIZATION

A Very Short Introduction

Fourth edition

Although the earliest appearance of the term 'globalization' in the English language can be traced back to the 1930s, it was not until more than half a century later that the concept took the world by storm. 'Globalization' emerged as *the* buzzword of the 1990s, because it captured the increasingly interconnected nature of social life on our planet mediated by the ICT revolution and the global integration of markets. Twenty-five years later, globalization has remained a hot topic. Indeed, one can track millions of references to the term in both virtual and printed space.

Unfortunately, however, early bestsellers on the subject—for example, Kenichi Ohmae's *The End of the Nation State* or Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*—left their readers with the simplistic impression of globalization as an unstoppable juggernaut, spreading the logic of capitalism and Western values by eradicating local traditions and national cultures. This influential notion of globalization as a ruthless techno-economic steamroller flattening local, national, and regional scales also appeared as the spectre of 'Americanization' haunting the rest of the world. Such widespread fears or hopes, depending on how one felt about such homogenizing forces, deepened further in the 2000s during the so-called Global War on Terror spearheaded by the global military superpower—the United States. Moreover, the

current public debates about the power status of America in the age of Trump and the corresponding rise of the 'BRICS' (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) have done little to soften this popular dichotomy casting the West against the 'rest'. As a result, many people still have trouble recognizing globalization for what it is: a complex and uneven dynamic linking the local (and the national and regional) to the global—as well as the West to the East, and the North to the South.

As an illustration of such a more nuanced understanding of globalization as a thickening 'global-local nexus'—or what some Global Studies scholars refer to as *glocalization*—let us consider the world's most popular sports event: the men's Football World Cup. First organized in 1930 by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), the event was soon seen as the ultimate national contest pitting country against country in the relentless pursuit of patriotic glory. The World Cup has since been held every four years (except for 1942 and 1946) in host countries located on all continents except Oceania. In fact, this transnational rotation of host countries coupled with the event's name 'World Cup' (instead of 'Nations Cup')—gives us a first indication of why the global should not be rigidly separated from the national. But let us delve more deeply into the matter and consider even more telling facts. Indeed, the 2014 World Cup will shed light on the complex 'glocal' dynamics that define the phenomenon we have come to call 'globalization'.

The global-local nexus and the Brazilian World Cup

The twentieth FIFA World Cup for men's national football was held from 12 June to 13 July 2014 in Brazil. The 32 best national teams from a total of 207 original contestants competed for the coveted Golden Globe Trophy. These included five nations from Africa, four from Asia, thirteen from Europe, four from North and Central America, and six from South America. Sixty-four games were played in twelve Brazilian cities, drawing a live crowd of over five million spectators. More than a million tourists

from around the world visited Brazil in June 2014, which reflects an increase of nearly 300 per cent from June 2013. More than 70 per cent of international tourists arrived by air, 27 per cent by road, and the rest came by boat. More than 11 million game ticket applications were received by FIFA but only 3 million could be allocated in advance to the general public (see Figure A).

The global-local dynamics are rather obvious here: national teams playing in Brazilian stadiums in front of a mixture of local, national, and global spectators as well as a virtual global audience

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Country	No of tickets allocated to the public (by residency)
Brazil	1,636,294
United States	203,964
Argentina	63,128
Germany	60,991
England	58,690
Columbia	52,509
Australia	40,902
Chile	40,200
France	35,347
Mexico	35,006
Canada	30,026
Japan	22,942
Switzerland	17,880
Netherlands	16,374
Uruguay	16,142
Spain	13,886
Israel	12,443
Ecuador	11,762
Russian Federation	10,858
Italy	10,155

A. Global ticket allocations for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

Source: data taken from 'Global Ticket Allocations for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil,' <http://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/tournament/competition/02/44/29/89/fifaworldcupnumbers_120714_v7_eng_neutral.pdf>

watching the games on TVs and digital streaming devices. Indeed, the Brazilian World Cup was shown in every single country and territory on Earth. The in-home coverage of the competition reached an audience of over 3.2 billion people—45 per cent of the global population—who watched at least a few minutes of the event. A whopping 695 million people followed at least twenty consecutive minutes of the championship match between victorious Germany and runner-up Argentina.

Money matters related to the World Cup are equally 'glocal' in nature. Brazilian authorities spent about \$13 billion to finance the mega-event, including \$2 billion for security purposes. Still, the World Cup was a good deal for the host nation. The Brazilian Ministry of Tourism reported that tourism and investment would bring in \$13.5 billion within a year and an extra \$90 billion in revenue over ten years. The World Cup-related infrastructure projects alone generated 1 million jobs, of which 710,000 became permanent. Over the four-year cycle 2010–14, the games generated \$4.8 billion in revenue for FIFA. \$2.4 billion was made in TV rights, \$1.6 billion in sponsorship revenue, with the most significant contracts going to such powerful TNCs as Adidas, Coca-Cola, Visa, Emirates, McDonalds, Castrol, Sony, Hyundai Motor Group, Johnson & Johnson, and Budweiser. When the glocal mega-event ended on 13 July 2014, FIFA happily pocketed a handsome net profit of \$338 million, which pushed the transnational organization's total financial reserves to over \$1.5 billion.

The official World Cup match-ball, too, was an impressive example of the glocal dynamics constituting globalization. Supplied by Adidas, a successful TNC headquartered in Germany, the football received the name 'Brazuca' from the majority of over a million Brazilian fans voting in a naming contest via social media. Brazuca means 'our fellow' in Portuguese and is used by Brazilians to describe their national pride in their national way of life. In spite of their apparent local and national identity, however, the Brazucas were manufactured by low-wage workers at the Forward Spots

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factory in the Pakistani town of Sialkot (replica balls were made in China). Designed to have a more accurate and repeatable flight path, the prototype Brazucas were thoroughly tested in locations covering all sorts of climates and altitudes in ten countries on three continents. These trials took nearly three years and involved 600 international players to make sure that the Brazuca worked for all positions of the game. Finally, the football contains chemical compounds produced in several countries and plastics generated from petroleum imported from the Middle East and Norway. South Korean-built supersized container ships carried the transnationally assembled Brazucas to football fans around the world.

What do Lionel Messi and J. Lo have in common?

But perhaps the most striking illustration of how globalization erupts simultaneously within and across all geographical scales involves two of the most celebrated superstars of the Brazilian World Cup: the Argentinian superstar Lionel Andrés Messi, the tournament's most valuable player, and American singer-entertainer Jennifer Lopez. 'J. Lo' performed the official anthem of the 2014 FIFA World Cup at its opening ceremony together with the Cuban-American rapper Armando Christian Pérez ('Pitbull') and celebrated Brazilian singer-songwriter Claudia Leitte ('Claudhina').

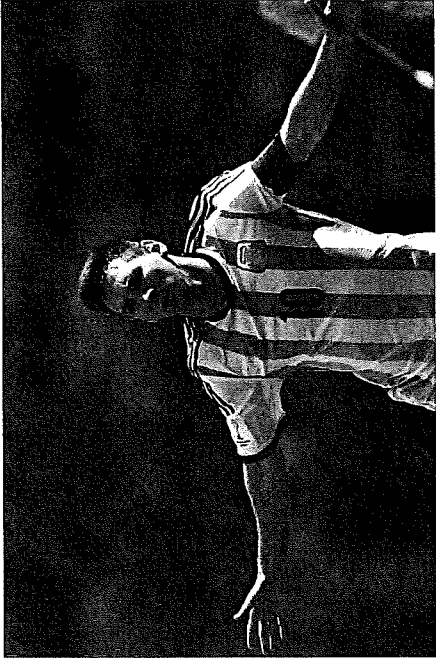
Born in 1987 into a working-class family of Spanish and Italian heritage in Rosario, Argentina, little 'Leo', as Lionel was called, developed a passion for football at a very early age. However, his future as a professional player was threatened when, at the age of 10, he was diagnosed with growth hormone deficiency—a malady that required \$1,000 per month in hormone treatments. Unable to pay for the injections in a country collapsing under the strain of the economic crisis of 1999–2001—a topic we will turn to in Chapter 3—the Messi family turned for help to relatives in Catalonia, Spain. They managed to arrange Lionel's transfer to the legendary football club FC Barcelona—also known as 'Barça'—in

spite of his unusually young age of 13. In 2001, the entire Messi family relocated to Barcelona and moved into an apartment near the club's legendary stadium, Camp Nou. Although Lionel has remained in Barcelona for his entire football career so far, he has maintained close ties to his hometown of Rosario and even refuses to sell the old family house. Indeed, the global football icon has often referred to himself as an Argentine 'local boy'. At the same time, he has not only contributed to the soccer glory of his adopted Spanish city, but has also accepted the global task of serving as a tireless goodwill UNICEF ambassador, engaged in charitable efforts aimed at helping vulnerable children around the world. Still, Messi's positive image was tarnished when a Barcelona court found him and his father guilty of tax fraud and sentenced them to suspended jail sentences and huge monetary fines.

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Messi's career at Barça is the stuff of football legends. Considered by some as the best football player of all time, the Argentine striker has broken all club records, leading his team to seven Spanish 'La Liga' national league championships, four European championship titles, and three Copa del Rey titles so far. Messi is to date the only football player in history to win the FIFA's Ballon d'Or Award for Best Male Football Player in the World five times, four of which he won consecutively 2009-12. He has also won three European Golden Shoe awards. Already the all-time scoring leader in both La Liga (over 300 goals) and a single European Champions League match (five goals), the 28-year-old football wizard scored his 500th career goal on 3 February 2016 in a match that pitted Barça against FC Valencia. In that month, Messi's awesome global popularity was reflected in the staggering number of 81,364,376 'Likes' that graced his Facebook page.

Despite his stellar city club achievements, Lionel Messi's greatest moments to date have come on the global stage in Brazil, where he led his national team to an impressive second place finish (see Illustration 1). This made Argentina the most successful



1. Lionel Messi scoring at the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

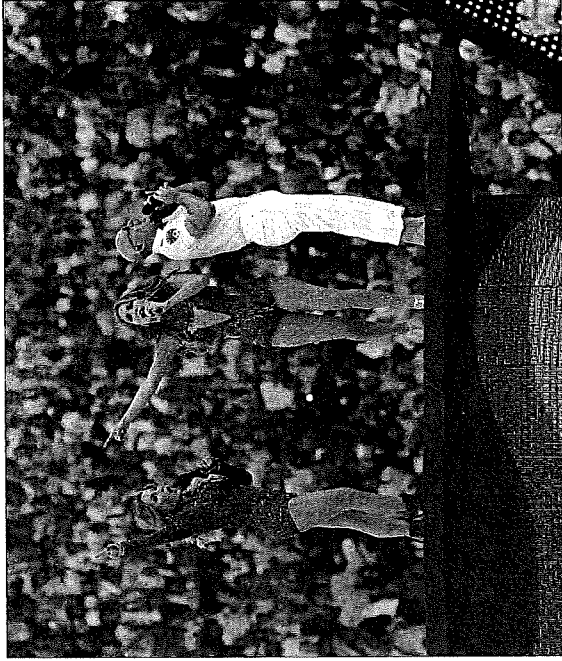
South American country of the 2014 World Cup, surpassing the dejected host and football superpower Brazil, which placed a disappointing fourth. Proudly wearing the iconic blue and white-striped number 10 jersey of his nation, Messi dazzled local and global fans alike with his ball-playing skills, speed, elegance, and goal-scoring instincts. Although his team lost the championship match against Germany in heart-breaking fashion in extra time, Messi won the Golden Ball for the best player of the tournament. Indeed, the Argentine striker and many of his fellow footballers performing in Brazilian World Cup stadiums embodied the glocal dynamics of globalization as they played for national teams that entertained local and global audiences while simultaneously retaining the football identity that linked them to their contracted clubs in global cities around the world.

A careful deconstruction of FIFA World Cup entertainer Jennifer Lopez reveals similar glocal dynamics that show why we should not approach globalization as a disconnected phenomenon floating above local and national contexts. Jennifer Lynn Lopez

was born in 1969 in New York City to Puerto Rican immigrants. Growing up in the world's most multicultural city, J. Lo began performing as a singer and dancer at the age of 5. As a young woman, she danced in a musical chorus that toured Europe and later acted as a singer, dancer, and choreographer in the Japanese TV show *Synchronicity*. Her breakthrough to stardom came in 1997 in the title role of the biographical musical drama *Selena*. The film featured the life and career of the late Tejano music star who exerted a remarkable transcultural appeal across North and Latin America. Thanks to J. Lo's talent, the movie was a big box office success, grossing \$35 million in the USA alone.

With a few exceptions, like the 2003 commercial failure of the romantic movie *Gigli*, J. Lo has been enjoying a stellar career as a singer-actor that includes appearances as a judge in the TV mega-show *American Idol*. In 2012, she released 'On the Floor', one of the best-selling singles of all time. The music channel VH1 ranked Lopez in the top tier on its list of the 'Greatest Pop Culture Icons', and she was honoured by the World Music Awards with the Legend Award for her contribution to the arts. Hailed for her ability to traverse difficult racial boundaries, J. Lo developed a musical style that mixes a number of genres such as Latin pop, dance, R&B, hip hop, rock, funk, house, and salsa. In many ways, both her personal background and her style of music can be characterized as a form of 'hybridization'—the process of mixing different cultural elements and styles. As we will explore in more detail in Chapter 5 of this book, such cultural hybridization processes have been greatly accelerated by globalization.

On 12 June 2014, J. Lo took centre stage at FIFA's World Cup Opening Ceremony at the Arena de São Paulo in São Paulo, Brazil (see Illustration 2). In her flashy green, Lebanese-designed playsuit, the sparsely dressed superstar was joined by fellow artists Pitbull and Claudhina in the performance of 'We Are One (Ole Ola)', a song that reached a top 20 spot on the billboard charts of twenty-seven countries on four continents. This glocal



2. J. Lo, Pitbull, and Claudhina performing *We Are One (Ole Ola)* at the 2014 FIFA World Cup Opening Ceremony, São Paulo, Brazil, 12 June 2014.

FIFA World Cup anthem was co-written by the performing trio plus six other artists hailing from three continents: the Colombian Daniel Murcia, the Dane Thomas Troelsen, the Australian Sia Furler, the American Lukasz 'Dr Luke' Gottwald, the Canadian Henry 'Cirkuitt' Walter, and Moroccan-Swede Nadir Khayat 'RedOne'. A clear example of today's hybrid, global-local creations of material culture, the commercial success of 'We Are One' owed much to the cross-cultural creativity of these songwriters. Moreover, the song served as a global appeal to humanity to come together 'as one' and tackle the serious global problems of the 21st century. Indeed, such global awareness is especially evident in Pitbull's three successful albums that are appropriately titled: *Global Warming* (2012), *Climate Change* (2016), and, yes, *Globalization* (2014).

So what—in addition to their multilingual facility and their remarkable transnational appeal—do the US Latino pop star performing a globalized World Cup anthem and an Argentine football legend playing for a Spanish city club have in common? They are both the products and catalysts of globalization processes that make more sense when considered as a global-local nexus we call ‘globalization’.

In fact, even the embarrassing corruption scandal that rocked FIFA in the years following the immensely popular Brazilian World Cup reflects the global-local dynamics of globalization as they apply to transnational crime. In 2015, the federal US agencies, the FBI and the IRS, arrested several FIFA officials on suspicion of bribery, wire fraud, racketeering, and money laundering. The investigations related to these arrests and eventual indictments also unearthed collusions between South American, Caribbean, and North American sports marketing executives with strong ties to FIFA.

A total of eighteen individuals from fifteen countries were indicted, including nine FIFA officials. When it became clear that such global criminal activities had even tainted the selection processes for several FIFA World Cup sites as well as the 2011 FIFA presidential election, the Attorney General of Switzerland decided to investigate Sepp Blatter, the long-term Swiss FIFA President, for criminal mismanagement. In December 2015, FIFA’s Ethics Committee—representing all continental football bodies—banned Blatter and Michel Platini, the Head of UEFA, from all football-related activities for eight years (reduced in 2016 to six years). Although the FIFA corruption scandal sorely tested the confidence of billions of global fans in the virtuousness of their beloved sport, it also serves as a perfect example of the glocal character of globalization as evident in the transnational dynamics of localized criminal actions, and the ensuing global cooperation among national government agencies that tracked down the local culprits.

Our deconstruction of the Brazilian World Cup and the corruption scandal following in its wake has prepared us to tackle the rather

demanding task of assembling a working definition of a contested concept that has proven notoriously hard to pin down.

Towards a definition of globalization

‘Globalization’ has been variously used in both the popular press and academic literature to describe a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age. Given that these competing labels have very different meanings, their indiscriminate usage is often obscure and invites confusion. For example, a sloppy conflation of process and condition encourages circular definitions that explain little. The often-repeated truism that globalization (the process) leads to more globalization (the condition) does not allow us to draw meaningful analytical distinctions between causes and effects.

Hence, I suggest that we adopt three different but related terms. First, *globality* signifies a *social condition* characterized by tight global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make most of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant. Yet, we should not assume that globality is already upon us. Nor does the term suggest a determinate endpoint that precludes any further development. Moreover, we could easily imagine different social manifestations of globality: one might be based primarily on values of individualism, competition, and laissez-faire capitalism, while another might draw on more communal norms and cooperative social systems. These possible alternatives point to the fundamentally *indeterminate character* of full-fledged globality.

Second, let us adopt *global imaginary* to refer to people’s growing *consciousness* of thickening globality. Again, as we have seen in our example of the 2014 World Cup, this is not to say that national and local communal frameworks have lost their power to provide people with a meaningful sense of home and identity. But it would

be a mistake to close one's eyes to the weakening of the national imaginary, as it has been historically constituted in the 19th and 20th centuries. The intensification of global consciousness destabilizes and unsettles the nation-state framework within which people have imagined their communal existence. As we shall see in Chapter 7, the rising global imaginary is also powerfully reflected in the current transformation of the conventional ideologies and social values that go into the articulation of concrete political agendas and programmes.

Finally, *globalization* is a spatial concept signifying a *set of social processes* that transform our present social condition of conventional nationality into one of globality. As we noted in our deconstruction of the Brazilian World Cup, however, this does not mean that the national or the local are becoming extinct or irrelevant. In fact, the national and local are changing their character and social functions as a result of our movement towards globality. At its core, then, globalization is about shifting forms of human contact. Like 'modernization' and other verbal nouns that end in the suffix '-ization', the term 'globalization' suggests a sort of dynamism best captured by the notion of 'development' or 'unfolding' along discernible patterns. Such unfolding may occur quickly or slowly, but it always corresponds to the idea of change, and, therefore, globalization denotes transformation.

Hence, academics exploring the dynamics of globalization are particularly keen on pursuing research questions related to the theme of social change. How does globalization proceed? What is driving it? Does it have one cause or is there a combination of factors? Is globalization a continuation of modernity or is it a radical break? Does it create new forms of inequality and hierarchy? Notice that the conceptualization of globalization as a dynamic process rather than as a static condition forces global studies scholars to pay close attention to new forms of connectivity and integration. Yet, whenever researchers try to bring their object of

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enquiry into sharper focus, they also heighten the danger of provoking scholarly disagreements over definitions. Our subject is no exception. One of the reasons why globalization remains a contested concept is because there exists no academic consensus on what kinds of social processes should be prioritized.

To make matters worse, globalization is an uneven process, meaning that people living in various parts of the world are affected very differently by this gigantic transformation of social structures and cultural zones. Hence, the social processes that make up globalization have been analysed and explained by various commentators in different, often contradictory ways. Scholars not only hold different views with regard to proper definitions of globalization, they also disagree on its scale, causation, chronology, impact, trajectories, and policy outcomes. The ancient Buddhist parable of the blind scholars and their encounter with the elephant helps to illustrate the academic controversy over the nature and various dimensions of globalization.

Since the blind scholars did not know what the elephant looked like, they resolved to obtain a mental picture, and thus the knowledge they desired, by touching the animal. Feeling its trunk, one blind man argued that the elephant was like a lively snake. Another man, rubbing along its enormous leg, likened the animal to a rough column of massive proportions. The third person took hold of its tail and insisted that the elephant resembled a large, flexible brush. The fourth man felt its sharp tusks and declared it to be like a great spear. Each of the blind scholars held firmly to his own idea of what constituted an elephant. Since their scholarly reputation was riding on the veracity of their respective findings, the blind men eventually ended up arguing over the true nature of the elephant (see Illustration 3).

The ongoing academic quarrel over which dimension contains the essence of globalization represents a postmodern version of the

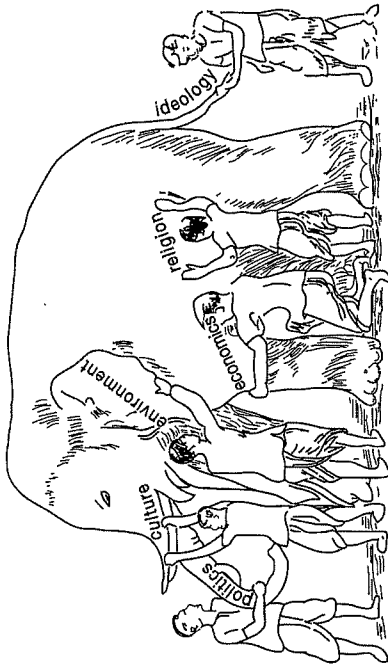
Box 1 Two definitions of globalization

Globalization may be thought of as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions—assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact—generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (David Held, Professor of Politics and International Relations, Durham University)

Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. (Roland Robertson, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Aberdeen)

These definitions point to four additional qualities or characteristics at the core of globalization. First, it involves both the *creation* of new social networks and the *multiplication* of existing connections that cut across traditional political, economic, cultural, and geographical boundaries. As we have seen in the case of the Brazilian World Cup, today's media combine conventional TV coverage with multiple streaming feeds into digital devices and social networking sites that transcend nationally based services.

The second quality of globalization is reflected in the *expansion* and the *stretching* of social relations, activities, and connections. Today's financial markets reach around the globe, and electronic trading occurs around the clock. Gigantic and virtually identical shopping malls have emerged on all continents, catering to those consumers who can afford commodities from all regions of the world—including products whose various components were manufactured in different countries. This process of social stretching applies to FIFA as well as to other non-governmental organizations, commercial enterprises, social clubs, and countless



3. The globalization scholars and the elephant.

parable of the blind men and the elephant. Even those few remaining scholars who still think of globalization as a singular process clash with each other over which aspect of social life constitutes its primary domain. Many global studies experts argue that economic processes lie at the core of globalization. Others privilege political, cultural, or ideological aspects. Still others point to environmental processes as being the essence of globalization. Like the blind men in the parable, each globalization researcher is partly right by correctly identifying *one* important dimension of the phenomenon in question. However, their collective mistake lies in their dogmatic attempts to reduce such a complex phenomenon as globalization to one or two domains that correspond to their own expertise. Surely, a central task for the new field of global studies must be to devise better ways for gauging the relative importance of each dimension without losing sight of the interdependent whole.

Despite such differences of opinion, it is also possible to detect some thematic overlap in various scholarly attempts to identify the core qualities of globalization processes. Consider, for example, the two influential definitions of globalization shown in Box 1.

regional and global institutions and associations: the UN, the EU, the Association of South East Asian Nations, the Organization of African Unity, Doctors Without Borders, the World Social Forum, and Google, to name but a few.

Third, globalization involves the *intensification* and *acceleration* of social exchanges and activities. As the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells has pointed out, the creation of a global network society has been fuelled by 'communication power', which required a technological revolution powered chiefly by the rapid development of new information and communications technologies. Proceeding at breakneck speed, these innovations are reshaping the social landscape of human life. The World Wide Web relays distant information in real time, and satellites provide consumers with instant pictures of remote events. Sophisticated social networking by means of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has become a routine activity for more than two billion people around the globe.

Fourth, as we emphasized in our definition of the global imaginary, globalization processes do not occur merely on an objective, material level but they also involve the subjective plane of human consciousness. Without erasing local and national attachments, the compression of the world into a single place has increasingly made global the frame of reference for human thought and action. Hence, globalization involves both the macro-structures of a 'global community' and the micro-structures of 'global personhood'. It extends deep into the core of the personal self and its dispositions, facilitating the creation of multiple individual and collective identities nurtured by the intensifying relations between the personal and the global.

Having succinctly identified the core qualities of globalization, let us now compress them into a single sentence that yields the following *short* definition of globalization:

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Globalization refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space.

Given the subtitle of our book, however, we ought to do even better. So here is the *very short* definition of globalization:

Globalization is about growing worldwide interconnectivity.

In closing, let us consider an important objection raised by some Global Studies scholars sensitive to historical matters: is globalization really all that different from the centuries-old process of modernization? Some critics have responded to this question in the negative, contending that even a cursory look at history suggests that there is not much that is new about contemporary globalization. Hence, before we explore in some detail the main dimensions of globalization, we should give this argument a fair hearing. After all, a critical investigation of globalization's alleged novelty and its relationship to modernity are closely related to yet another question hotly debated in Global Studies: what does a proper chronology and historical periodization of globalization look like? Let us turn to Chapter 2 to find answers to these questions.

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