Abstract
This article deals with the relation between cultural process, the politics of culture and global systemic dynamics. The central argument is that cultural forms are generated out of socially constituted experience, what I refer to as the experiential substrate of culture, and that the latter is itself elaborated in specific conditions of social existence that can be linked to global processes. The history of the culture concept is discussed in such terms and the emergent salience of identity politics from the mid 1970s is understood to be part of a larger process of Western hegemonic decline. From the point of view of the larger system, the new cultural politics is an expression of real political and cultural fragmentation. This systemic decline is also the basis of real political-economic globalization and the emergence of cosmopolitan elites that are the major bearers of the discourse of globalization. The latter is part of a process of class polarization that pits emergent cosmopolitan “hybrid” elites against downwardly mobile indigenizing locals.

Much of the rapidly growing literature on cultural globalization has strangely enough dealt only sporadically with the question of culture and even less with the nature of globalization. These terms are usually taken for granted as self-evident realities. I have in a number of publications attempted to distinguish between a global systemic approach to globalization and the kind of impressionistic and often evolutionist interpretations that have dominated at least the anthropological discourse (“before we were local; now we are global”, we are entering a new millennium of “diasporic hybridity”, etc.). I shall argue here that such representations should themselves be subject to an analysis of both content and of their socially positioned nature, but my aim is primarily to try and work out an adequate approach to what is often referred to as the cultural in global analysis. Since the 1980s the usage of the term culture has spread rapidly, from cultural anthropology in United States to Europe, where the term was not popular until the eighties, from the social sciences to popular discourses and not least to social movements where culture has often
been conflated with notions of identity and instrumentalized in various political claims. It might be suggested that the explosive increase and dilution of the term from this period can be understood in global systemic terms, but in order to do so it is necessary to return to the history of the concept itself.

Biographical Sketch of the Culture Concept

I do not attempt here to present a detailed analysis but to suggest the outlines of a series of changes in what I interpret to be dominant understandings. I date my suggestions from the official emergence of the concept in American anthropology. The nineteenth century is, of course, an important historical source for grasping the transformations that I address. What is most important is the general association of culture with peoplehood. It has been remarked that the notion of race before the development of biology combined what might be called physical and cultural features, often summarized in the notion of custom. A people or race could be characterized in terms of both linguistic, religious and other cultural features, as well as physical features and even psychological attributes. This was simply a classificatory scheme of difference, one similar to that used by many civilizations in the past to organize the different populations within their realms. The classification of the “other” is part of the imperial project, and it takes on numerous forms. European classificatory schemes have a particular property related to the emergent modernism of the nineteenth century. They are evolutionary. While the ranking of peoples is common in both Chinese and Arab empires, it is primarily a spatial classification. In Europe, as in the classical Mediterranean, space is translated into time. The “out there” becomes the “back then”, thus providing a developmental scheme, an evolutionary order that leads to the hegemonic center itself. This is not the whole story, of course, since neighbors within the centers were also categorized in terms of a collection of attributes of the same kind. The equation of peoplehood, race, and culture were common characteristics of the nineteenth century. This should not be taken to imply that there was no understanding of the capacity of humans to learn and change, but it does not enter into the classificatory assumptions, perhaps because this was not an intellectual issue. One of the most important changes occurs within the evolutionary schools themselves. Tyler’s famous definition of culture stresses that it includes all that can be learned, thus distinguishing culture from natural phenomena. The notion of culture as learned became the cornerstone of a new discipline. It is Boas’s reformulation of this innovation that was the foundation of American cultural anthropology. Culture became an autonomous object of investigation, independent of nature, of the biological characteristics of the human being. It was a variable, a historical construct, a structure of meaning, of cognition, as well. Culture was understood in two ways: The break with the past was the assertion that humans were cultural animals, that the way in which they organized themselves was independent of their biological characteristics. This generic notion of culture was crucial in staking out the territory of anthropology. The other understanding was logically derivative of the first, even if the two notions have parallel histories. It is the translation of the actual differences in ways of life into cultural rather than racial differences. In this way the generic concept could be transformed into a specific or differential concept. The specific ways of life of mankind could be brought into the realm of study as arbitrary examples of the capacity of humans to create difference. This was further elaborated in the notion of culture as “superorganic”, even if the subject of considerable debate between two of Boas’s most important students, Alfred Kroeber and Edward Sapir. Was this a mere stroke of scientific insight, a scientific revolution? I think not. At the same time other important conceptual differentiations were occurring. Durkheim was arguing in France for the autonomy of the social, that the social fact, just as Boas’s culture, was an object worthy of understanding in itself, that social phenomena could not be reduced to individual psychology. The “social fact” can in this way be equated in functional terms to the “invention” of the culture concept. Psychoanalysis was also emerging in the work of Freud, via the assertion of the importance of psychic structures, the role of fantasy in the construction of the self, the role of language and of the specific semantic processes of displacement and condensation in the formation of the unconscious. Freud’s conflict with his colleague Breuer concerning hysteria was related to the former’s denial of the necessary truth of patients’ reports (Freud and Breuer). Finally, Saussure established modern linguistics based on the assertion of the arbitrariness of the sign relative to the signifier. Schoenberg invented a new kind of music in which formal structure came to dominate content, and...
in abstract art and poetry form became the object of art itself. All of these changes occur in the same two decades, decades that witnessed Mann’s Buddenbrooks, a history of social and family decadence, Kafka’s tales of the alienation of modern bureaucratic society, Proust’s longing for his childhood, and Tönnies (1912) critical essay on Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. This was a major crisis of the modern, the experience of the social as impersonal, rational abstraction independent of the people who inhabited it. The period is also one of economic crisis and restructuring and of massive ideological conflict. Durkheim’s sociology is clearly related to the ideology of the Parti Radical to which he belonged and whose corporatist ideology understood society as an organism that could become sick and had to be cured. His functionalism is clearly comprehensible in such terms.

The emergence of the modern culture concept, then, is arguably part of a series of disconnections and objectifications that occurred at the turn of the last century and that are rooted in a major transformation of European society. Culture became an abstraction that took on many variants during the century. The early understanding of culture as the totality of learned behavior in its socially specific form was maintained by materialists and evolutionists, not least White who insisted on the symbolic content of all forms of human adaptation, but insisted equally on the functional relationship between this symbolic entity and the environment, on its energy capturing capacity, and so forth. For Boas and many of his followers, culture was a kind of cognitive grid or code that ordered the entirety of social life. For personality and culture theorists, culture was inculcated in the individual in such a way that the latter could be said to be a true expression of cultural socialization. This extreme viewpoint is that which has been mistaken for what is often treated as the essentialism of anthropology, since it can be interpreted as asserting that individual subjects are cultural clones. The scope of culture became considerably reduced in the 1950s and 1960s, except for the neo-evolutionists and cultural materialists who maintained the older concept. For the others, culture became increasingly limited to meaning itself, whether in the form of symbols, cognitive maps and codes for those who stressed the emic, or simply as texts for those who entertained, like Geertz (e.g., 1988), the implicit conflation of observer and observed. For Geertz, social life and its objects were reduced to texts that could be read “over the shoulders” of those whom we observe. This development takes us up to the more recent critique of ethnographic authority, an authority best expressed, in fact, in Geertz’s textualism rather than in Malinowski. What some have called a postmodern turn, the critique of modernist paradigms, of theory in general, is already present in Geertz’s suspicion of the theoretical as just another folk model. But what is not questioned is the framework itself in which culture is all there is.

Since the 1980s there has been a change in the social sciences and humanities that I should like to understand in terms of a sea change in Western identity. This is a change that can be witnessed in a series of parallel trajectories. It is often referred to as the “cultural turn”. Up to the mid-seventies, the dominant perspective was materialist and developmentalist. This is the dominant modernist identity that has characterized the history of Western hegemony from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Throughout these two centuries there has been a constant increase in the popularity of evolutionism, developmentalism, a belief in a better future and an assumption that evolving material conditions are the basis of social and cultural development. With the decline of modernism all that changed. The former developmentalist bias began to disappear along with and as an expression of the loss of faith in the future. From the mid-seventies we witness a rapid increase in the politics of cultural identity. This process, which I have discussed in some detail elsewhere, consists in a search for and re-establishment of culturally defined roots. The latter are fixed and independent of a person’s relation to social mobility which was becoming negative in this period. Developmentalism is upstaged by a new cultural relativism, but this is only the start. By the eighties there is also a movement against scientific rationality, and for a more complete relativization of the West as well as a developing critique of everything western. If the reemergence of culturalism corresponds to the coming of cultural politics, replacing an earlier modernist class politics, the following phase is more aggressive with respect to that concept itself. This is heralded by Clifford’s (1983) landmark article criticizing “ethnographic authority”, even if similar kinds of critique were already in existence (Ekholm and Friedman 1980; Fabian 1983). Clifford’s critique resonated with a more general postmodern critique of scientific authority and it ushered in a series of associations linking culture to the colonially installed authority of the anthropologist, to the critique of Orientalism (Said 1978) and to the emergence of post-colonial cultural studies whose principle activity consisted in demonstrating how most of the categories...
dealing with others were essentializing products of imperial relations. Culture itself was critiqued for representing just such essentialism and there were attempts to redefine it as a field of contested interpretations. This deconstruction contained many valuable aspects but it was also an ideological project that tended to attack all categories as expressions of essentialism. In its post-colonial guise a chain of associations was established that identified culture with essentialism, with nationalism, and with racism. The nation-state was often seen as the culprit, supplying the core metaphor for all of the other classifications. What is notable in this development is the persistence of culturalism itself. Thus essentialized culture was replaced by hybridity or créolité, terms that maintain and reduce culture to a kind of substantivized meaning that is blended due to the globalization of cultural flow. The very notion of flow is, of course, dependent on the reduction of culture to a kind of substance, even a liquid. And of course the very notion of hybridity depends on its opposite, purity, which is often projected into some past in which the world was truly a mosaic, when culture did not flow. In all of this there is another tendency which is to objectify culture in the sense of turning it into an object, thus removing the experiential basis of cultural production itself. This makes ethnography much easier since one can simply focus on things in movement rather than the social contexts within which they move and are constituted. Thus it can now be said that things have social lives, when in fact it is social lives that have things. The upshot of this development is that culture is turned into something that we truly can read and/or observe without having anything to do with informants and their worlds. It is in this way that culture can be defined as hybrid even if those that supposedly live it are unaware of the fact.

One might well accept that culture as used today is very much associated with the practice of identity, but it would be a serious error to conflate the two as does Appadurai: “I suggest that we regard as cultural only those differences that either express, or set the groundwork for, the mobilization of group identities” (1996:15). Rather the practice of identity must be understood as a conscious activity that is selective with respect to a larger cultural substrate. It is of course true that culture is indeed a product in the sense of acts of identification, but there is a significant difference with respect to who is doing the identification. When anthropologists identify culture they try to capture a wide range of practices, interpretations and objects. Self-identification as a political act is more restricted, or selective, as suggested above. It is also the case that while anthropological identifications are linked to a larger classificatory project there is a great deal more to the actual study of particular populations, at least this is what is hoped for.

The Experiential Substrate of Culture and Culture as Product

While it might not be necessary to insist on the inclusion of experience in the concept of culture, it is necessary to sort out the problem. The word culture might not be necessary for the anthropological project. If we use it to simply signify the kind of differences that are associated with different populations, then it is merely a classificatory device. The latter might well be criticized as essentializing on the grounds that it should refer to contested fields rather than shared meanings. But this has been countered by Sahlins’s excellent discussion (1999) in which he argues that contestation is always about something that is shared. Otherwise there would be nothing to contest. He argues further that anthropologists, even the classic relativists like Herskovitz (e.g., 1938), were perfectly aware of the degree to which culture was contested and interpreted in various ways by those participating in it. But it should be noted that culture as meaning might equally be understood in terms of various kinds of social representations that can be described quite precisely and need not be gathered before the fact of analysis into a single thing called a culture. If there is a problem with the word culture it is the fact that it may refer to very different kinds of phenomena. This is what permits Geertz to claim that technologies like cosmologies are all similar insofar as they are texts to be read. This flattens out specific realities into identical kinds of phenomena and ignores the very different properties that are juxtaposed in this way. A semantic structure has only semantic properties, but a technological structure also has physical properties, and a social relation also includes the non-intentional properties of practice and interaction that cannot be reduced to meaning or motivated action.

If culture, in the minimal sense, can be understood as merely differential (i.e., that there are many ways to skin a cat, to interpret the significance of skinning a cat, etc.), we are still left with the issue of shared-ness within a population as a crucial component of this concept. For if differ-
is important to note is that the objects produced within social lives are potentially distinct from those lives (especially if they are lifted out of their contexts) and that their social significance can only be understood within those lives.

Disorder and Fragmentation

The above argument entails that the production of culture (in the sense of texts, representations, cosmologies, etc.) is dependent upon the existential substrates within which they are produced. Now if we understand the orientations that have emerged in anthropology, outlined in the first part of this essay, as very much a question representations, then it can be suggested that the changes in the field can be related to other broader changes in the way reality is interpreted in other social domains.

Figure 1. Hegemonic cycles and cultural identity

This might be illustrated in the following way. This graph (which I have used since the 1980s) is meant to illustrate a hypothesized relation between political and economic hegemony and cultural identity, one in which the former is the inverted function of the latter. Thus, the increase in hegemony is related to the decline of local cultural identities and local political units. There may well be resistance in such periods but the ten-
dency is strongly in favor of increasing hegemony. The effect is the de-
note of cultural identities, either by physical elimination or cultural in-
tegration into the expanding realm of the hegemon. In the Western na-
tion-state system this has meant the dominance of modernism, and a
strongly assimilationist or at least strongly ranked developmentalist cul-
tural order. Hegemony has gone hand in hand with modernism and evolu-
tionism entailing the representation of culture as part of a past world to
be surpassed by the modern. Thus a period of increasing hegemony is a
period in which indigenous groups disappear by either physical destruc-
tion or social integration, the latter in the form of assimilation or of the
formation of marginalized minorities. It is noteworthy that cultural rela-
tivism is not the negation of the premises of evolutionism. They are,
rather, two versions of the same basic interpretative framework insofar as
the former is a negation only of the evaluative terms of the latter. The
cultures of the world are still ordered in terms of a universal technological
scale of development, but development itself is relativized with respect to
human progress, thus opening the door to a re-evaluation of other cul-
ture. In this sense modernism functions as the dominant paradigm, or-
ganizing the field of possible interpretations, whether for or against de-
velopment. The decline of hegemony carries a more thorough form of rel-
ativization. In this period, modernism itself declines and the relativ-
ism that emerges is total. It begins by relativizing the scientific enterprise
in its totality. Anthropology, just as other Western discourses, is denied
the privileged positions of universality and objectivity. Together, they are
all reduced to local and relative discourses. Scientific knowledge is simply
pretentious knowledge that aspires to speak for the world. It is replaced by
terms such as wisdom and it is attacked for its self-designated authority.
Other societies are reduced to a collection of cultural differences, often
incommensurable with Western knowledge and with one another. This
shift is apparently an across-the-board phenomenon in the West, even if
opposed by many. It occurs at the same time as a broader shift in identi-
fication. From the mid-1970s, earlier in some places later in others, there
is a decline in belief in the future, in development, in modernity and
instead a retreat to cultural roots. In France, the global center of modern-
ism, increasing numbers of people begin to read about premodern France,
about the Celts. There is increasing talk of finding one’s roots. Regionalism
re-appears, from Brittany to Occitania, and there is increasing use of the
concept of ethnicity, later to be supplemented with the
discourse of multiculturalism. Similar phenomena occur throughout Eu-
rope in this period. In Germany, the TV series Heimat, a partly ethnogra-
phically based study of German life in this century, gains tremendous
popularity. Long lines of cars queue at the entrance to the city of Trier,
the birthplace of Marx, but it is not Marx that interests the tourists. RATHER,
it is the set of the TV series that attracts them. From the 1970s until today
there has been a steady increase in a series of parallel identifica-
tions, indigenous, national, regional and immigrant. The regional
identities that re-emerged in Europe surprised many researchers who in
the previous period had assumed that all minority identities were in the
process of disappearance. This sudden reversal is expressive of the cycle
described in the above graph. This resurgence occurs in the same period
as indigenous identities in areas of Western dominance witness a rena-
sissance, leading to a struggle for cultural and political rights. The number
of self-identified indigenous people expands rapidly. This is clearly not a
biological phenomenon but a massive process of cultural re-identifica-
tion. Immigration to centers of the West increases significantly from the
1970s, in a period in which central economies are on the decline. Labor
immigration ended in the early 1970s in most of Europe and was replaced
by a massive increase in refugees. This migration is related to the general
crisis of world accumulation in this period. The massive export of capital
and the reduction of national tax bases is related to economic and ensu-
ing crises in other parts of the world. The disintegration of the Soviet
empire leads to internal fragmentation and warfare. With the end of the
Cold War, government support for African states declines leading to eco-
nomic catastrophe, ethnicization, and generalized violence. This vio-
lence and increasing poverty generates massive displacements that take
the form of migration toward the centers of the world system. And this
occurs in a period of decline in those very centers, declining investment
in the public sector and downward mobility, tendencies that occur even
during the financial boom of the late 1980s and which simply amplify the
polarization between the increasing wealth of one segment of the popu-
lntion and the decreasing wealth of the rest. This situation is bound to
cause conflicts, both class and ethnic. Immigrant populations meet a
fragmenting Western nation-state in which multiculturalism has become
a powerful new ideology, and in which national identity has increasingly
become ethnicized. In this situation the migration process is itself ethni-
cized or diasporized. Relations to places of origin, economic links, kin-
ship and marriage, and diasporic cultural identity become central features of migrant communities in conditions where unemployment is high and integration into the host society is considerably weakened. Multiculturalism, an elite and often state-initiated policy reinforces this tendency.

These simultaneous and parallel processes can be summarized as follows. The decline in hegemony referred to above is the product of the decentralization of capital accumulation. The latter leads to economic decline in the center for significant portions of the population and also creates disorder in abandoned areas of both center and periphery. This in its turn leads to downward mobility and the economic crisis generates serious identity problems. The decline of modernism is closely related to the impossibility of maintaining a future orientation based on the liberalization from the past, from tradition and an investment in the new, in change and both personal and social development. In this decline, there is a turn to roots, to ethnicity and other collective identities, whether ethnic or religious, that replace the vacuum left by a receding modernist identity. This re-rooting is the resonating base of cultural politics and political fragmentation that spreads throughout the hegemonic center. It takes the following forms:

1. Indigenization: Where there are indigenous populations within the state territories, these begin to reinstate their traditions and to claim their indigenous rights. The Fourth World movements have become a global phenomenon, institutionalized via United Nations organs such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. The demography of this phenomenon is significant. The population of North American Indians more than doubled from 1970 to 1980. Most of this was re-identification. Five new tribes appeared during the same period.

2. Nationalization: The nation-states of Europe have become increasingly ethnic over the past 15 years, moving from a formal citizenship/modernist identity to one based on historicized roots. This has been documented via the rapid increase in consumption of historical literature. In France, the Middle Ages, the Celts and everything that preceded the modern state were highest on the list from the late seventies on. Much of this has an indigenous quality to it, especially where there is no competition from other indigenous populations. The so-called “New Right” movements in France, Italy, and Germany harbor ideologies that are similar to fourth world ideologies. They are anti-universalist, anti-imperialist, against universal religions and exceedingly multi-culturalist. Thus Jean de Benoist, spokesman for the French New Right, stated in 1980:

Given this situation, we see reasons for hope only in the affirmation of collective singularities, the spiritual re-appropriation of heritages, the clear awareness of roots and specific cultures ... We are counting on the breakup of the singular model, whether this occurs in the rebirth of regional languages, the affirmation of ethnic minorities or in phenomena as diverse as decolonization ... [whether in the] affirmation of being black, the political pluralism of Third World countries, the rebirth of a Latin American civilization, the resurgence of an Islamic culture etc. (cited in Tagulieff 1993/94: 119).

3. Regionalism: Sub-national regions have been on the rise since the mid-seventies. After several decades during which it was assumed that assimilation was the general solution to ethnic problems, when social scientists calculated how many generations it would take for ethnic minority groups to disappear into larger national populations, this came as a surprise to many (Lijpart 1977). The weakening of the national projects of Europe became increasingly evident - Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany, Occitania, Catalonia - today supplemented by the Lega Nord and a European wide lobby organization for the advancement of the interests of a Europe of Regions rather than nation states. In the former empire to the east, the break up of larger units is rampant and violent in Central Asia and Southern Europe.

4. Immigrant ethnicization: The optimism with respect to regional identities in Europe was identical to assimilationist/integrationist predictions with regard to immigrant minorities, especially in the United States. What seemed to be a trend toward integration was broken and reversed in the late 1960s when the multi-ethnicity of Black and then Red power movements were supported at both grass roots and elite levels (the Ford Foundation was heavily involved in ethnic community local control projects). Today this has become a major state interventionist project in many Western countries at the same time that identity politics has led to what some have called „culture wars“ in which
the very unity of the nation state, its very existence, is questioned. The question of the diasporization process is simply the ethnicization of transnational connections, so that communication, social relations, and economics become organized and even institutionalized across boundaries rather than immigrant groups becoming transformed into separate minorities. Diasporization is simply the ethnicization of the immigration process. It is unlike other processes of fragmentation because it structures itself in global terms, being both sub-national and trans-national.

The process of fragmentation has not been a particularly peaceful one. In 1993, for example, there were 52 major violent conflicts in the world in 42 countries, the most severe conflicts being in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa. Half of these conflicts had been under way for more than a decade (UNRISD 1995:15). This is very different than the previous decades of the cold war when there was a simpler division and a much stronger degree of control in the world system. It is noteworthy that the great majority of conflicts are intra-national rather than international, demonstrating the degree of fragmentation of political units in the world.

This development, outlined in Figure 1, is a transition from an assimilationist nation-state to a multicultural state. And this multiculturalism under the aegis of cultural politics generates a multi-ethnic state. The process of fragmentation is paralleled by a process of class polarization in which new elites define themselves increasingly in cosmopolitan terms. They take leave of the nation in the nation-state and tend to become a non-national territorial state, ruling a multi-ethnic population. Hardt and Negri’s (2000) Empire is relevant to this process. These authors discuss the emergence of a universal empire ruling a “multitude” of mixed ethnicity. The world they predict is one in which the working class is replaced by an imperial, flexible, and nomadic population. A world that escapes the incarceration of the nation-states understood by these authors as fundamentally reactionary, is one in which power is not embodied in a given locus, but dispersed and omnipresent. It is a world of differences ruled by a globalized political order with no center. The notion of empire is implicit in the self-identity of cosmopolitans who refuse the relation of national sovereignty of anything like “a people”. The latter are by definition “les classes dangereuses”, rooted, red-necked, nationalist, and defensive. They are closed, in contrast to the openness and tolerance of the elites.

![Figure 2. Cosmopolitization, indigenization and globalization](image)

The social order of this emergent state can be represented as in Figure 2. Note that the categories are not fixed, but merely indicate relative positions in a double process of upward and downward mobility. The fragmentation discussed above occurs at the lower end of the social order. Rooting is very much a practice specific to the declining or marginalized sectors of a territorial state even if it is not a simple reaction to the changing economic situation. Thus the ethnicization of regional and immigrant minorities and the diasporization of the latter are part of the same phenomenon as the indigenization of real indigenous peoples as well as populations that indigenize themselves by creating roots, history and spatial boundedness. That this is a practice, a process of identification, rather than the expression of whatever cultural elements might and often are available is demonstrated by the emergence of the Washitaw Indians in the Southern United States, a black community identified as the original American Indians who settled the country when it was still connected to the African continent, who have their own homepage, an empress, but who are also allied with the militia group, the Republic of Texas, and are self-identified as pro-Nazis. Their enemy is Washington, multinationals, the Pope, the Jews, and all cosmopolitan schemes to create a world gov-
The idea of open ended cultural units implies a paradox since the transfer of culture between cultures, so to speak, leads to a situation in which the cultures are no longer identifiable as such. Complete hybridization implies its opposite, homogenization, since all the formerly distinct units become identical insofar as they are all equally mixed. 

The processes of hegemonic decline outlined above entail the rise of cultural politics. I would argue that the same process accounts for the transformations within the discipline of anthropology as well. While the outline of the history of the culture concept begins earlier, I shall only address the latter period on the assumption that similar kinds of parallels might be suggested for other eras. The postmodernization of the human and social sciences began in the mid-1970s with the turn to culture as meaning and even as text. This was followed by the assault on ethnographic authority and the notion of the unity of culture. In sum, culture-as-meaning was made central and it was at the same time fragmented into increasingly smaller entities. Thus the new nationalism connected to marginalization and downward mobility is often anti-state in its orientation. Some aspects of White power racism are truly transnational insofar as there is an aim to create a global racial movement rather than a reinforcement of the nation-state. This would indicate a weakening of the attraction of the nation-state as a source of collective identity. Similarly, the rise of indigenous movements as well as other cultural identity movements is not merely a question of class position, but is related in a powerful way to the weakening of ideological centrality, the hierarchical space that related groups and individuals to a continuum connecting the underdeveloped, the poor, the marginalized, to the developed, the wealthy, the civilized. The rise of international terrorism cannot be directly linked to economic impoverishment. On the contrary, there is ample evidence that those who have been recruited to terrorism are middle class individuals who are often well integrated socially. But the core of the ideology expresses a clear opposition to a decadent West and an expressed wish to replace the current world order with one based on Sharia, with the establishing of a new Caliphate. I would suggest that the emergence of this kind of contesting of hegemonic power occurs in periods of decline. The trajectory of indigenous movements expresses the same tendency, a project of opposition to and disengagement from the modern world system. As Figure 1 implies, such movements emerge in periods of hegemonic fragmentation and they are the very expression of that fragmentation.

The idea of open ended cultural units implies a paradox since the transfer of culture between cultures, so to speak, leads to a situation in which the cultures are no longer identifiable as such. Complete hybridization implies its opposite, homogenization, since all the formerly distinct units become identical insofar as they are all equally mixed.
The parallel in the real world is noteworthy in this respect. In this period, a serious questioning of the authority of the modern nation-state was initiated in a series of indigenous, regional, and immigrant minority movements. For anthropology, what was questioned in indigenous movements, was the right of the anthropologist to the authoritative version of the lives of indigenous peoples. The rise of the indigenous voice is an aspect of the broader rise in cultural politics that began in this period. Thus, anthropology’s treatment of the culture concept can be said to have followed suit. The critique of “ethnographic authority” in the academy occurred in the same period that the authority of anthropologists was being assaulted by indigenous movements. The reorientation of anthropologists led to the various versions of constructivism and inventionism, which claimed that indigenous movements were fundamentally inauthentic, thus reaffirming ethnographic authority. The large-scale migration in the 1980s and 1990s provided a renaissance of the anthropological market. This is especially so as the ideology of multiculturalism became salient. There were positive aspects of multiculturalism for anthropology since their expertise could suddenly become an asset. The very notion resonated perfectly with cultural relativism. But this soon changed. There was another aspect of multiculturalism that expressed social distance, a vertical distance in which the world of differences could be gazed upon from on high, and in which the totality of differences could be defined as a new reality. The new globalizing anthropology of the late eighties exemplified a new positioning in the field. The deeper differences associated with culture were denied. The differences were no longer to make a difference. The former were now part of a single world in which difference was no more than the localization of the global, an instantiation of the latter. If the local were encompassed by the cultural and merely in material terms, then its specificity and its subject status could be denied. And all those who insisted on the existence of local strategies, from anthropologists to indigenous populations, could be identified as both the enemy and just plain misinformed. Thus Meyer and Geschiere seem to admonish both anthropologists and their subjects, anthropologists’ obsession with boundedness is paralleled by the ways in which the people they study try to deal with seemingly open-ended global flows” (1999: 3).

It might appear strange that the people we study have got it just as wrong as we do in their strivings for closure. This attempt to redefine the social world without the benefit of ethnographic data pervades much of the current globalization literature in anthropology. Malkki (1992) for example, after dividing up the “Hutu” refugees from the former war in Burundi who inhabit Tanzania into “nationals” who remain in the camp and “cosmopolitans” who manage to get to the local township of Kigoma and identified often as other than Hutu (but why one might ask), takes another important ideological step. She criticizes what she understands as the moral support for indigenous peoples and asks why they should be more important or valued than migrants (1992: 29). But there is more! The very notion of refugees and people who have lost their homelands, who are thus deterritorialized, is attacked as part of Western ideology. Malkki suggests that this is the product of the national mapping of the world in which cultures are territorialized, even rooted in the earth in specific localities. This creates a certain notion of purity or perhaps homogeneity that besides being the root of most evil and violence also generates categories of non-belonging that can be applied to refugees, thus stereotyping their situations. She suggests, invoking the enormously popular Deleuze and Guattari (1987), that perhaps (although she guards herself against seeing displacement as a positive phenomenon), the being deterritorialized ought to be understood as progressive in some way, as the expression of the rhizomatic. Thus her “cosmopolitans” are imbued with the capacity to challenge the order of the nation-state (as if Burundi and Tanzania are obvious examples of the latter). The stress on roots to “places of birth” and “degrees of nateness” blinds us to a greater cosmopolitan phenomenon, “the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them” (Malkki 1992: 38). I suggest here that the popularity of these kinds of pronouncements derives from the resonance they partake in among the globalizing elites and their wannabes. In another context I have suggested that the kinds of representations here are spontaneously produced in the globalizing sectors of the Western world system in this period of real globalization; among international consultants, members of numerous international elite organizations, the global media, for instance. This indicates that these ideas are not the result of research but of the process of formation of ideological hegemony. In previous publications (Friedman 2000, 2002) I have documented the case for a general interpretation of the world that does not have its origins in research but in the changing cultural conditions of rising elites. What is represented by these inter-
interpretations is an emerging cosmopolitan identity, one that, positioned above the world, appropriates its differences as essential to its own self-definition. To the categories open, tolerant, hybrid, creole, translocal, transnational, trans-cultural are key words in this discourse; Trans-x talk is opposed to the ethnic absolutism, nationalism, localism, and worst of all, indigenity of what have become the new “dangerous classes.” All this demands a critique of culture on the basis that it has been misconstrued by national identity. The latter needs to be replaced by a notion of culture as open and hybrid, a borderless phenomenon. And if real people practice boundedness they are dangerously closed and clearly unaware that the world is unbounded. The great rednecks of cosmopolitan anthropology. The resonance of this image accounts for the popularity of the attacks on local strategies expressed by anthropologists like J. Kelly who makes extraordinary claims to the moral status of the autochthonous Hawaiian movement versus the immigrant Japanese in Hawaii (Kelly 1995), claiming that migrants are morally superior, referring, perhaps unbeknownst to himself, to the least endogamous population in the Islands and one that has gained a position of unparalleled economic and political power. It is, however, the recent publication of Hardt and Negri’s (2000) Empire that is most significant in this respect—now in its 6th printing in the United States and popular among numerous political and cultural elites who normally don’t communicate. Their position is identical to that of the globalizers: “Nomadism and miscegenation appear here as figures of virtue, as the first ethical processes on the terrain of Empire” and opposed to this, “today’s celebrations of the local can be regressive and fascistic when they oppose circulation and mixture, and thus reinforce the walls of nation, ethnicity, race, people and the like?” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 362).

Now globalization ideology is only one among several that are being produced in the contemporary situation. There is a plethora of nationalist and indigenist ideologies as well and the different interpretations of the world are very much at odds with one another. In this sense cultural interpretations in the contemporary period are all forms of cultural politics, and this includes recent discussions of the culture concept itself. From anthropologists who complain that indigenous and ethnic minorities have appropriated who claim that indigenous and ethnic minorities have appropriated and misinterpreted their notion of culture, to those who would reject the concept in toto to those who would redefine it as contestation or hybridity (see Sahlins 1999), there is a great deal of politics involved. And the history of the culture concept seems in all of this to parallel the history of cultural politics in the real world.

Works Cited

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