

Globalization and Autonomy: An Overview

WILLIAM D. COLEMAN* & DIANA BRYDON**

**Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada*

***University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada*

ABSTRACT *This article introduces the Globalization and Autonomy research project, dedicated to understanding globalizing processes through the lens of autonomy, and the special issue to which it has led. It describes the initial impetus for the project, the changing contexts in which the research took place, its interdisciplinary practices, and its key findings. Finally, the article introduces the remaining contributions in this special issue, which have arisen out of work on the project.*

Este artículo presenta el proyecto de investigación de la Globalización y la Autonomía, dedicado al entendimiento del proceso de la globalización a través del lente de la autonomía y la edición especial a la cual lo ha conducido. Describe el ímpetu inicial hacia el proyecto, los cambios en los contextos de los cuales tomó lugar la investigación, sus prácticas interdisciplinarias y sus resultados claves. Finalmente, el artículo presenta las contribuciones restantes en esta edición especial que surgieron como parte del trabajo en el proyecto.

本文介绍了全球化与自治研究项目。这一项目致力于通过自治这一视角理解全球化的多种过程，它还导致了这一特辑。本文介绍了这一项目的最初动机、研究背景的变化、项目中跨学科尝试以及主要发现。最后，文章介绍了由这一项目衍生的这一特辑中的其他论文。

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How does a focus on autonomy change understanding of what is at stake in globalization? This special issue includes research that uses autonomy as a conceptual window through which to assess contemporary and historical globalizations and the ways in which they are currently

Correspondence Address: William D. Coleman, Balsillie School of International Affairs, c/o Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo, 200 University Ave. W., Waterloo, ON, N2L 3G1, Canada. Email: wcoleman@balsillieschool.ca; Diana Brydon, University of Manitoba, Room 230, St John's College, 92 Dysart Road, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2M5, Canada. Email: brydond@cc.umanitoba.ca

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understood within and across disciplinary framings. The research emerged out of a collaborative, interdisciplinary project that brought together scholars from 12 universities across Canada, another 20 or so academic contributors from outside Canada, including scholars from Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovenia, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, an affiliation agreement was set in place integrating an interdisciplinary research team of 26 scholars based in Tunisia, the Groupe d'Études et de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur la Méditerranée (GERIM), and including some members from France, Spain, Jordan, and Lebanon. Scholars from the following disciplines were involved: anthropology, comparative literature, cultural studies, economics, English literature, geography, history, music, philosophy, political science, and sociology.

In introducing the special issue and the project, we begin by looking at the intellectual genesis, the objectives, and the interdisciplinary approach to collaboration followed by the research team. We then review briefly some of the findings of the project, concluding with a discussion of the articles collected in this issue.

Genesis, Objectives, Interdisciplinarity

Initial discussions for a collaborative research project on globalization began at the newly founded Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition at McMaster University in September 1998. The Institute differed from many research centers of this kind in being built upon a full partnership between scholars in the humanities and social science disciplines. This partnership would carry forward into the larger project. At that point, the world was still a little over a year away from the widespread protests that accompanied the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial meeting in Seattle. Nonetheless, it was already clear from events during the Uruguay Round that a stronger global legal framework for trade had raised intense concerns about agriculture, intellectual property, control over investment, and the spread of neoliberal thinking. Intellectually, scholars had seen the publication of the hyper-globalist works of Ohmae (1990, 1995) and others in the first half of the decade and the first in what was to become a long line of reactions from those who might be called 'globalization skeptics'. An intermediate position, often termed transformationalist, was beginning to be articulated, particularly by scholars in the UK such as David Held and Jan Aart Scholte. Held and his colleagues published *Global Transformations* in 1999 and Scholte the first edition of his highly influential critical introduction to globalization in 2000. On the academic front, scholars from a growing number of disciplines were beginning to engage in the discussions. Historians were being drawn into the debate on the question of the novelty of globalization, as were economists, particularly economic historians. Geographers were beginning to respond to claims of the hyper-globalists about changes in the production of space and place that raised questions about disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices. Postcolonial scholars in humanities disciplines began to address the political forms of culture in relation to transnational or globalized capitalism (Appadurai, 1996; Hitchcock, 1999; Jameson and Miyoshi, 1998; Jordan and Weedon, 1995; Lowe and Lloyd, 1997), its colonial antecedents (Bhabha, 1994; Mignolo, 2000; Said, 1993; Spivak, 1999), and the role of English as a globalizing force (Pennycook, 1994). Sociologists like Manuel Castells (1996, 1997), Saskia Sassen (1991, 1996), and John Tomlinson (1999) had begun to explore the linkages between the information and communications technology revolution and new robust network social structures linking capitalism, cities, and cultural practices in parts of the world.

As we look back on the origins of the project, we can see how our thinking was strongly influenced by this context. We opened our proposal to the Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) with a quotation from Jamaica Kincaid in her short polemic, *A Small Place*.

And might not knowing why they are the way they are, why they do the things they do, why they live the way they live and in the place they live, why the things that happened to them happened, lead these people to a different relationship with the world, a more demanding relationship, a relationship in which they are not victims all the time of every bad idea that flits across the mind of the world? (Kincaid, 1988, p. 57)

We followed with a statement of the problem in language that is reminiscent of the fervor about understanding globalization common at that time.

Over the past several decades, processes now termed globalization have been restructuring the way many people live and how they relate to others. They are reducing many limits on social interaction once imposed by time and place. Globalization is also destabilizing existing centers of authority and security, with new centers emerging in every sphere of social life, from the global down to the most local levels. Changes have also come to the organization and scope of markets and the production and diffusion of cultural forms and practices. The changes are potentially so profound that they require us to rethink the fundamental bases of many aspects of the human condition. As Ulrich Beck (1992, p.28) has asked when looking at the global character of environmental challenges: 'How do we wish to live? What is the human quality of humankind, the natural quality of nature to be preserved?'

Many individuals and collectivities have begun to resent the changes involved and have moved to oppose and resist the dynamics of globalization. Others are seeking to exploit new opportunities that come with globalization in the hope of changing their cultural and social lifeworlds. In both situations, human beings are seeking to harness or repel these new forces in order to maintain their *autonomy*, a capacity crucial for enhancing the human condition. We propose to take a comprehensive look at the impact of these processes on the realization of autonomy and on the molding of new lifeworlds.

This choice of autonomy as the second keyword in the project, in retrospect, might be seen as a surprising one. We had discussed the concept in our informal meetings at McMaster with the idea that people were articulating concerns, if not fears, about losing capacity to influence how they lived. We thought that these fears might be addressed theoretically through the concept of autonomy. Autonomy can be seen as a personal capacity of individuals or as a capacity for self-rule of collective actors, including nation-states. Our thinking at the time was that the more problematic concept was globalization itself, not autonomy and we expected to spend the first year of the project trying to come to some common understanding of the notion of globalization. In time, however, this thinking proved to be wrong. We had fewer debates and collective anxieties about globalization, but more debates, more difficulties, and more anxieties about autonomy. In a way, we walked into a dangerous forest when it came to autonomy, not realizing what was before us nor questioning sufficiently the cultural standpoint from which the concept came.

The project was funded by the research council and began operation in April 2002. Already, the political and societal context was shifting. The attack on the World Trade Center in September of the previous year had led to deep concerns with national and individual security in many parts of the world. Talk of a 'borderless' world common in the 1990s seemed anachronistic as a result. The WTO was struggling, the legitimacy of the IMF and the World Bank never very high, was more under question, the UN's need for reform was more evident than ever, the Kyoto Accord was foundering, and so on. At the same time, the increasing economic weight of some developing countries like China, India, and Brazil was being reflected in WTO circles. Older geopolitical questions, it would seem, had only been briefly submerged under the sense of 'opening' that followed the end of the Cold War.

So when the research team met for the first time in October 2002, these concerns were very much present and discussed both formally and informally. The debates of the 1990s about being in a new world, a world where nation-states were losing significant powers and importance, and where differences among peoples would become significantly reduced in favor of a global culture—these kinds of debates retreated to the background. We concluded, however, that understanding the dynamic interrelationships between globalization and autonomy remained important, if not more so, for understanding better the world in which we were living.

As in most large collaborative research projects, the research objectives and core research questions had been discussed and incorporated into the grant application itself. When the full team gathered together for the first time in October 2002, these formulations of the problem were strongly challenged, particularly on their openness to humanities disciplines, leading to a two-day-long debate in a committee of the whole about the project's purpose. At the beginning of the third and last day of the meeting, team members agreed on a revised set of objectives and questions that opened the project up to interdisciplinary research. The objectives outlined here are part of the official statement of project objectives agreed upon at the research team meeting in October 2002.

Overall Research Objective

To investigate the relationship between *globalization* and the processes of securing and building *autonomy*.

To this end, we will seek to:

[a] refine understanding of these concepts and of the historical evolution of the processes inherent in both of them, given the contested character of their content, meaning and symbolic status.

Given that globalization is the term currently employed to describe the contemporary moment, we will:

[b] determine the opportunities globalization might create and the constraints globalization might place on individuals and communities seeking to secure and build autonomy;

[c] evaluate the extent to which individuals and communities might be able to exploit these opportunities and to overcome these constraints;

[d] assess the opportunities for empowerment that globalization might create for individuals and communities seeking to secure and to build autonomy;

[e] determine how the autonomy available to individuals and communities might permit them to contest, reshape, or engage globalization.

At the same meeting, researchers agreed to engage with the core objectives of the project by focusing the research in three, interrelated directions. First, research would proceed on the assumption that globalization and autonomy have *deep historical roots*. What was happening today in the world was in many ways continuous with what had taken place in the past. From its inception, capitalism has incorporated a globalizing dynamic. Political, economic, and cultural structures of varying form, often grouped under the headings of empires and imperialism, have reflected global ambitions. Struggles for autonomy have occurred at the frontiers of these empires, at their dissolution and in many other sites both within and outside imperial structures. Central to many of these struggles are those over the introduction of Western notions of property rights. The burden then of any contemporary examination of globalization and autonomy is to assess in some way what is new and what has changed in significant ways. Researchers agreed to investigate how a host of political, economic, technological, ideological, and cultural events contributed to new circumstances that drastically increased the depth, breadth, speed, and range of penetrations of global operations, including property rights.

Second, the dynamics of the relationship between globalization and autonomy are related to a series of important changes in the locations of *power and authority*. Moreover, the tensions

between integration on the one side and fragmentation on the other that occur in the contemporary period pose particular problems for governance, autonomy, democracy, and accountability. This period has also created openings for new realms of activity subject primarily to private rule-making and private authority. This activity may complement public authority, compete with it, displace it, or hurry in to fill governance gaps no longer capable of being addressed by nation-states.

Finally, the globalization-autonomy dynamic plays itself out in the *construction and reconstruction of identities, the nature and value of community, and the articulation of autonomy in and through culture*. The ways in which a variety of communities exercise, enhance, find, or lose their autonomy are changing in response to different globalizing pressures. Autonomy can take the form of an ideology, a response to governance or governmentality, a form of everyday affective association and identification, a value, and a discursive form across variegated contexts of national and transnational life.

These three areas of research then became the focus of the more detailed research questions negotiated on the third day of the first meeting and that subsequently guided the research of the team. The full listing of the questions is available at <http://globalization.mcmaster.ca/ga/ga81.htm>.

Interdisciplinarity

Like many complex problems of current concern—climate change, promoting wellness in company with respect for the environment, sustainable urban transportation, peace-making and peace building, reducing poverty—the relationship between globalization and autonomy seemed too large to be dealt with well within a single discipline. As the sociologist John Tomlinson (1999, p. 13) has argued, ‘the complexity of the linkages established by globalization extends to phenomena which social scientists have laboured to separate out into the categories in which we now, familiarly, break down human life: the economic, the political, the social, the interpersonal, the technological, the environmental, the cultural and so forth. Globalization arguably confounds such taxonomy.’ Our consciousness of the complexity of the phenomenon also affects the kinds of methodologies and research strategies that we might employ. As Tomlinson (1999, p. 14) adds, ‘given both the difficulty of accounting simultaneously for all aspects of the phenomena and the power of academic disciplines in the organization of knowledge, it is not surprising that attempts persist to account for globalization in “one-dimensional” terms. . . such attempts are likely to misrepresent globalization: lose the complexity and you have lost the phenomenon.’ We were a group of scholars who wished to hang on to the complexity. But how should we proceed?

What doing research in an interdisciplinary way involved remained an ongoing topic of discussion and an evolving set of practices over the course of the project. We concluded that doing research in an interdisciplinary way meant putting disciplinary-based theories and conceptual frameworks into dialogue with one another with a view to developing new theories and understandings of human societies. How was such a dialogue to be constructed? We defined several prerequisites for such research.

A. Intellectual integration. We believed that doing research in an interdisciplinary way should bring humanities and social science disciplines into a relation of mutual influence, where perspectives are integrated without subordinating one to another. The key word in this phrase is that of *integration*. What might integration mean in a collaborative team-based setting where theoretical and methodological pluralism were encouraged? We decided that

intellectual integration would come from team members agreeing on a set of *core research objectives* informed by existing writings on globalization and autonomy, a number of *research questions* designed to address these objectives, and a *research plan* that would permit us to address these questions in a focused, systematic way. The project director and a project management board would assume responsibility for ensuring the research team remained focused on these objectives, core questions and the associated research plan.

B. Open-minded, curious researchers. Behind this thinking was the realization that intellectual integration would place particular demands on scholars wishing to engage in successful interdisciplinary research. As Petrie (1976, p. 35) observed, interdisciplinary research requires ‘more or less integration and even modification of the disciplinary sub contributions while the inquiry is proceeding. Different participants need to take into account the contributions of their fellows in order to make their own contribution.’ Taking these contributions into account would also require that researchers accept that there are limits to their own disciplines and that they become more aware of how other disciplines construct the object of knowledge. Each discipline has its own ‘cognitive map’ that includes basic concepts, modes of inquiry, what counts as a problem, standards of proof, types of explanation, and so on.

Interdisciplinary research does not imply, therefore, that all researchers share the same theoretical framework. Rather, it requires that the researchers involved ‘learn the observational categories . . . and the meanings of the key terms in the other discipline’ (Petrie, 1976, p. 37). This learning permits the researchers to interpret problems and to think about questions in the terms of other disciplines. Such learning, however, is only possible if the researchers involved are sufficiently open-minded and intellectually curious that they will attempt to learn how to think a little in other disciplines. They have to agree, as well, on the importance of the endeavor, that is, not only on the research questions and objectives, but also on the value of working collectively across disciplines.

C. Methodological pluralism. Interdisciplinary inquiry should be expected to involve the use of multiple methodologies. For example, Alford (1998, p. 50) identifies three different *paradigms of inquiry*—ways of combining theoretical claims and empirical observations—*multivariate*, *interpretive*, and *historical*. We sought to bring together a research team composed of scholars utilizing methodologies from each of these paradigms. Such an approach is essential for the study of globalization because it ‘brings together theories, methods and evidence in a way that allows much more complex relationships to be analyzed’ (Alford 1998, p. 123).

D. Theoretical pluralism. Faced with researching the complex relationships involved in globalization, an interdisciplinary approach means that our work would be necessarily *pluri-theoretical*. Theory and analysis are usefully seen as emergent activities, rather than definitional, or even paradigmatic. They are exploratory, changing alongside the ongoing development of the questions of research. We argued that theories would be most effective when in addition to applying ideas rigorously, researchers also go on to acknowledge the limitations of each theoretical perspective and consciously set out then to cross boundaries and use other perspectives (even incommensurable ones).

In short, by building intellectual integration around a set of core research objectives and questions, encouraging researchers to acknowledge the limits of their own disciplines and to think about and interpret problems in other disciplines, and by fostering methodological and theoretical pluralism, we hoped to be able to assist the research group as a whole to raise

their work to a new level. The goal would not be to combine disciplines as in multidisciplinary approaches nor to merge them, as in transdisciplinary work. Rather we would seek to arrange a process of cooperation across disciplines, a process which would permit each researcher to build on the individual strengths of her or his colleagues. In the process, we hoped that each person's work would become transformed as the thinking and findings of other scholars from different disciplines came to infuse her or his work.

Research Dissemination: Reaching Academic and General Audiences

In our original application to the research council, we outlined a plan that would lead us to make the findings of our research available not only to the usual academic audiences, but also to a general audience across the world interested in learning more about globalization and autonomy. For academic audiences, we agreed upon a series of thematic volumes that addressed our core research questions from interdisciplinary perspectives (http://www.ubcpres.ca/books/series_globalization.html).

Two volumes address the first set of issues related to *historical roots of globalization and autonomy, the role of empire, the globalizing dynamic of capitalism, and the nature of the new circumstances associated with the accelerated penetration and depth of global processes*. The first of these places considerable emphasis on empires (Streeter, Weaver, and Coleman, 2009), while the second uses the lens of property and rights to property to examine the contemporary period (Coleman, Prudham, and Weaver, n.d.). Both books underline that the past three centuries of globalization have seen the emergence of an idea of personal autonomy—the self-reliant individual who is a bearer of rights. The groups entitled to this form of autonomy have expanded from propertied males to include former slaves, peasants, women, and minorities—in short, the subaltern groups that have gradually won more rights over time. This expansion is not linear, nor does it take the same form everywhere. Variations in these processes are examined, whether they involve indigenous peoples, the decline of empires from imperial power to semi-colonized client, the subjugation of territories like Tibet, or the control of workers in export-oriented production. The legacies of imperialism and colonization and struggles over property shape how personal autonomy comes to be understood in different parts of the world.

Similarly, the volumes demonstrate that the depth and form of collective autonomies in a world moving towards the globalization of the nation-states system are by no means uniform from one part of the world, and from one community in the world, to another. The historian Arif Dirlik (2007) has explained global modernity as a world where the institutions of modernity—the nation-state, the market economy, industrialism, and militarism—take root throughout the world. How these institutions take root, however, depends upon the histories of cultural practices in given places, their relations with imperialism and other forms of domination, and the ways in which they engage with global capitalism. The hierarchy of scale—local, subnational, national, international—that is globalized with the nation-state system is explicitly a political one that does not necessarily correspond to patterns of economic relationships. Nor has this hierarchy of scale corresponded very neatly to patterns of cultural relationships, including religious ones. As we know, the boundaries of many nation-states were constructed by imperial powers that often ignored cultural or economic boundaries in the interest of maximizing their own economic plundering.

Contributors who looked at the contemporary period argue that the lack of correspondence among political, cultural, and economic geographies has become steadily more pronounced.

As globalizing processes are supported, if not enforced, by neo-imperial powers, they call into being new ideas and practices of autonomy in several ways. First, the denial, removal, or repression of collective autonomy in societies can bring the values, advantages, and need for collective autonomy into the social consciousness of subjugated groups. Acting on this kind of social consciousness will vary in form over time as globalization itself becomes more extensive, intensive, and rapid.

When the influence of US economic doctrine is examined from the perspective of many poorer countries, US-led globalization demonstrates disturbing similarities with previous imperial experiences, which have shattered alternative forms of globalization that might have preserved collective autonomy. In short, globalization and imperialism seem to be part of the same long bad dream from the perspective of many so-called developing countries. The political shell of collective autonomy that remains in many of these states becomes controlled by autocratic and corrupt leaders, who repress their citizens, sometimes violently, all the while attempting to shape their economies to fit with constantly changing development models.

Fortunately, some globalization processes, when abetted by digital technologies and mass media, can impel, if not compel, the work of the imagination and, through it, novel notions of autonomy and agency. The volumes suggest that an increasing number of persons in the world are able to challenge the assumptions in official thinking, regardless of whether they are extreme forms of entrepreneurial development or oppressive forms of collectivism. Part of the critical imagination is focused on the realization of collective and personal autonomies in situations where these are denied.

A second pair of volumes places particular emphasis on assessing *the changes in the character, form, and location of authority, the implications of these changes for governance, and the questions raised about the future of democracy and self-rule for communities, nation-states, and regional associations of states*. The first of these looks at institutions and their contributions to global ordering (Pauly and Coleman, 2008). It argues that organizations like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization have mandates or aspirations that far exceed their current capacities, while emerging private structures ostensibly delivering de facto regulation suffer from legitimacy deficits that reflect their simultaneous location in the space of places and the space of flows. Although some serious experimentation with new institutional forms is now underway, it seems mainly to be limited to regional venues, the most innovative of which is Europe. But pressures both for effective problem solving and for maximum feasible degrees of autonomy have now evidently gone global. The book suggests that the story of institutional development and change thus far indicates not only that human beings want to shape and live in a world that is prosperous, secure, and sustainable, but also that they insist on one that preserves in principle a high degree of autonomy for themselves and for the collectivities with which they identify.

The building up and breaking down of key institutions for coordinating the actions of states is certainly part of the long story of internationalization, despite the often overly simplified functionalist logic and assumption of inevitability associated with much related analysis. In this regard, one thinks of the League of Nations, commercial unions, monetary standards, and federations that have come and gone. Even in cases where reform has actually been achieved, erosion and constant adaptation seem more common than stability. The trend is clearly evident in the institutions established by the victorious allies after World War II: the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

The studies in the book demonstrate that there is nothing inevitable about the creation of structures to sustain what is best in those relationships or to ameliorate their negative consequences.

Reshaping old institutions and fostering new ones requires basic agreement on principles and norms and the willingness of leaders and followers to make trade-offs between those that are competing or contradictory. The transformative processes of globalization do not necessarily make it any easier to achieve such agreements or engineer such trade-offs. In fact, by making increasingly visible the multi-polarity of the world, whether in terms of economic power, cultural systems, or social practices, they render more and more inconceivable a world where institutions are designed, adapted, and led by the United States and European states alone.

The second of these volumes focuses on the unsettling of legitimacy (Bernstein and Coleman, 2009). Collectively, the individual chapters in this book at once analyze the forces of globalization that have disrupted or led to reconfigurations of political authority and warn of the dangers of moving in a direction increasingly taken in the contemporary world: legitimacy for a permanent state of exceptionalism that justifies a suspension of rights in the name of security. Simultaneously, they demonstrate the possibilities and constraints of preferred responses to the challenge. Though no single label could adequately encapsulate the full range of those responses discussed in the book, a discernable set of findings did emerge that might best be described as a global form of liberal internationalism. Though this overall response offers no radical critique of globalization, it is morally uncompromising. Some might even call it conservative. Political legitimacy at multiple scales of authority is under strain, and globalization creates demands for regulation, security, and protection of rights and expressions of individual and collective autonomy within and across multiple political and geographic spaces.

In this regard, three broad findings emerge from this study. First, the assertion of state authority remains necessary for individual and collective autonomy, though with an important caveat. Namely, in light of struggles for the renegotiation of sovereignty, the book warns against new configurations of authority that threaten, even more than traditional configurations of state sovereignty now under strain, to undermine both individual and collective autonomy. Second, the growth of an autonomous, yet often disenfranchised and frustrated, global civil society constitutes a danger for new configurations and sites of political authority, if it continues to lack adequate opportunity for efficacious political action. Such opportunities depend in large part on the willingness of interstate institutions, global public authorities, and global sites of private authority to engage in political discussions of key issues. They also require transparent accountability, openness, and representativeness of global civil society organizations themselves (Coleman and Porter, 2000). Third, there remains a need to take far more seriously twentieth-century liberal values, especially human rights and citizenship, expansive (rather than solely property-rights based) notions of rule of law, democracy, and other expressions of empowerment and self-rule. Globalization has not diminished the need to protect such values in domestic constitutions—a need the particular historical circumstances of insecurity that mark the early twenty-first century has only increased. Nevertheless, globalization's consequent disruption and re-imagining of political community unsettle legitimacy, thereby increasingly necessitating the entrenchment of such values in interstate, as well as transnational and global institutions.

To be clear, the authors do not endorse state sovereignty as the sole appropriate form of political authority, if understood as the exclusive jurisdiction over territorial spaces. Other sites of authority are emerging as the *Global Ordering* volume suggests, as well as new forms of community as a volume discussed below emphasizes (Brydon and Coleman, 2008). States are increasingly called upon to share their monopoly, in theory or in practice, on the protection or legitimate expression of autonomy. To the degree states fail in an era of globalizations to

satisfy new legitimacy demands, renegotiations of political authority are necessary. The contributors nonetheless see value in renegotiating new forms of sovereignty that involve the state and the continued importance of the state and interstate cooperation to achieve public goods.

Two other volumes focus primarily on the project's questions related to the *construction and reconstruction of identities, the nature and value of community, and the articulation of autonomy in and through culture*. As noted above, the first of these books focuses on renegotiations of community as a lens for examining the project's questions (Brydon and Coleman, 2008). Communities are changing in response to globalizing pressures on the ways we live and work together and in response to the opportunities for expanded socializing and networking afforded by technological innovation. With a decline in the role of the social welfare state in wealthier countries and continued unavailability of social policies in poorer ones, new demands are being placed on community at the very moment its traditional forms appear to be threatened. Will the evolving forms of renegotiated community be able to meet such demands? The book concludes that the jury is still out.

The authors argue, however, that there is a clear need to situate such questioning by paying full attention to the particular circumstances of each community. The chapters seek to integrate attention to the pragmatic needs of community in particular situations more closely with the various philosophical resources on which thinking through the relation of community and autonomy might rely. If knowledge as conventionally constituted has a tendency to seek certitude and reaffirm familiarity, then it can find itself ill equipped to deal with the genuinely new or unfamiliar. Understanding of community appears to have reached this point. Established definitions appear inadequate to the current moment, while evolving definitions are testing our knowledge-making resources.

This book serves as a window from within the project on what we see as the current stakes engaged in thinking through the ever-changing dynamic of the autonomy–community relation in global contexts. It represents a contribution to a growing global dialogue about what it means to *be-together* in particular places, including the virtual, under intensifying transplanetary connections. The authors stress the notion of renegotiation because globalizing processes are interrupting, if not breaking fully with, earlier patterns of community formation and renewal. Although communities have always involved negotiations over boundaries and membership to a greater or lesser extent, current globalizing pressures seem unprecedented in the changes they are fostering. The authors' trust in negotiation reflects their faith in autonomy as the value best suited to enable self-determination through self-conscious reflection and discussion across differences.

The second book speaks to identities, culture, and community through a focus specifically on 'cultural autonomy' (Rethmann, Szeman, and Coleman, 2009). The authors in this volume share a common interest in understanding better how cultural autonomy is linked to challenging and resisting hierarchies of control and domination. In exploring this common interest, they find three contemporary social trends to be of particular importance. First, contemporary globalizing processes tend to increase the importance of the relationship between cultural autonomy and the global economy while diminishing its relationship with the political imaginaries of the territorialized nation-state. Second, when put in a historical perspective, this first trend involves a change from colonial modernity—in which Eurocentrist hierarchies articulated through the imperialist nation-state form structured cultural autonomies—to a capitalist global modernity. In this global modernity, Eurocentrism is fundamentally contested, opening the door to new ways of contemplating differences, competing knowledges anchored in varying ontologies

and epistemologies, and a relativization of Euro-American cultural forms. Third, the importance of the economic frame of cultural flows is intensified in many new ways through rampant commodification of cultural products under contemporary global capitalism. The circulation of visual forms using extensive innovations in information and communication technologies is crucial in this regard. These same technologies, however, create openings for rhizomatic networks of cultural sharing and activism that enable resistance to commodification and its violences in the contemporary world.

Accordingly, together, the authors in this book investigate the possibilities for challenging hierarchies shaping cultural autonomy in contemporary globalizing conditions. They consider whether changes in cultural autonomy linked to new digital technologies leave openings for challenging those hierarchies and forms of power that currently exist. They also note that collective cultural autonomy involves networks of persons *embodying* distinct cultural practices, whether direct democracy in negotiating cultural logics of networking, challenging corporatization as public intellectuals, growing and eating foods, and articulating alternative visions of living with nature and of the socio-economic order. In living these ways, exercising cultural autonomy, they conclude, involves the articulation of alternative cultural practices that resist the effects of commodification, individualization, and anomie that accompany contemporary globalization.

The final two books in the project's Globalization and Autonomy Series take into consideration all three groupings of the project questions but from particular vantage points. The first argues that the insights of indigenous peoples open up unexplored possibilities for understanding not only the dialectical relationships between globalization and autonomy but also the meanings of the concepts themselves (Blaser, deCosta, McGregor, and Coleman, 2010). Their analysis is circumscribed in that they are speaking principally about indigenous peoples in settler societies. Notwithstanding the diversity of indigenous peoples in the world, the main empirical focus of the volume is on the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia. Although the book raises many issues that may well apply to indigenous peoples elsewhere, the sources used in their discussions and the authors' own experiences force them to be circumspect regarding the scope of their arguments and conclusions.

Authors in this volume suggest that from the point of view of indigenous peoples, the research problematic of the project—to *investigate the relationship between globalization and the processes of securing and building autonomy*—is one framed according to a Western rationality. Its relevance for their worlds is a result of the long trajectory from colonization to globalization. Working on this volume threw our research objectives and questions back at us; they pushed us to ask how these very questions are part of the processes that have undermined, if not destroyed, indigenous peoples' epistemologies, languages, and ways of living. With this volume in particular, the question of the extent to which autonomy is in some senses a universal value and it is culturally specific and therefore limited in its helpfulness emerged as one our project raises at its end, but did not answer.

Indigenous struggles for autonomy have profound political and epistemological implications and the authors do not stand aside in a neutral position in drawing these out. In effect, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004) has pointed out when speaking of 'alter-globalization' movements, many indigenous peoples, their activists, intellectuals, supporters, and sympathizers enact a sociology of *absences* and *emergences*. The first seeks to point out practices that actively obscure and render absent alternatives to the present order of things. The second refers to bringing forward those alternatives that are immanent in social movements but are not yet fully articulated or realized.

Accordingly, by the sheer fact that they seek to enact their worlds and understanding of autonomy, indigenous movements constitute themselves as profoundly subversive of the established order and cut a path towards alternative globalizations. The book stresses, however, that the alternative globalizations implicit in indigenous struggles do not necessarily emerge as a conscious design or in the form of a global project. By working against or apart from the universalizing tendencies of the dominant form of globalization, these struggles give rise to visions of alternative ways of living together. In this respect, this book contributes both to political and epistemic projects. It counters the absences imposed by a discourse on globalization that maintains that there are no alternatives to the present modern order. It fosters the emergence of the alternative visions/projects of globalization implicit in many indigenous peoples' struggles for autonomy. It tracks the dialectical encounters taking place in multiple locations between indigenous projects and modern globalization.

The final volume takes the societies and polities in the region of the Mediterranean Sea as a laboratory for exploring history, power and authority, and culture as they bear upon globalization and autonomy (Essid and Coleman, 2010). The Mediterranean region constitutes a space for investigation that is rich because of its cultural diversity, its economic differences and relationships, and its geo-strategic position in the world. In this region, we find one group of states on the south shores that have known modernization but not modernity: an absence of civil society; strong attachment to national interests; a decided commitment to sovereignty and borders; and active, often suppressive authorities. Another group of states on the north shores are more post-national: Western-style democracies; reliant on the rule of law over force to resolve disputes; and seeking security by following transparent foreign policies and consciously building the economic interdependence of their economies.

These differences between the north and south shores of the Mediterranean provide a unique focus on globalization and autonomy for the project. There are numerous peoples living in the Mediterranean basin who share a common past but for whom historical circumstances— invasions, religion, colonization, economic and technological development—have come to profoundly divide them. Globalization comes into a context where the North is prosperous and developed and the South is struggling to catch up.

The authors in the book argue that these two parts of the Mediterranean find themselves face to face today in ways that are apparently forever irreconcilable, despite the timid wishes and tactics to bring about more cohesion. Facing a Europe, whose center of gravity is tending to move more east than south, and for whom globalization is something to be grabbed and built upon, the southern shore is vulnerable, with economies sitting as always on the sidelines of the global economy writ large. The authors investigate whether in this binary Mediterranean region, the paths to globalization and autonomy will always remain divergent. They ask whether in the face of the constraints of forced integration that comes from the increasingly highly interdependent economic, social, political, religious, and cultural spaces and of the destructive interventions of international economic institutions, there remains any space for the southern shore peoples to negotiate their own futures, to wit, to exercise collective and individual autonomy. The analysis in the book provides little reason for optimism.

General Audiences

In applying for its grant from the SSHRCC, the project also made a commitment to 'translate' its findings into accessible language and to make them widely available to general publics interested in globalization and autonomy issues. Under the direction of Geoffrey Rockwell, a

faculty member specializing in humanities computing now at the University of Alberta, the project used digital technologies and the Internet to address this challenge. Over the course of the project, an online publication *The Globalization and Autonomy Compendium* (<http://www.globalautonomy.ca>) was built, using technical infrastructure that meets the highest standards for organizing and communicating information on the Internet. The Compendium includes *summaries* of 750 to 1,000 words of each of the chapters in the academic volumes. These summaries are linked electronically to a *glossary* of key concepts and terms, events, places, organizations, and individual persons. Third, both of these parts are linked in turn to a comprehensive *bibliography* of sources for the research. Finally, the Compendium contains some *research articles* (academic papers prepared by team members as the project has proceeded and published as useful background information) and *position papers* (a vehicle for exploring some of the dimensions of our research of potential interest to a wider public and not specifically addressed in the academic volumes).

The Issue

Although the project had regular review and self-reflection built into its process, this special issue provides the first post-project opportunity to pull together what we have learned. The articles that follow grow out of the project, while addressing questions that arose out of the research. As noted earlier, our awareness of the complexities built into the concept of autonomy grew as our work developed and we came to regret the absence of a philosopher on the team. Diana Brydon's article reflects our growing struggles with this concept and its hidden assumptions and epistemological limitations. Her article considers the 'changing contexts in which discussion of globalization and autonomy are now taking place.' There are two key arguments in the article. First, scholars need to attend more carefully to the interrelations of autonomy, community, culture, and nation within expanded frames of reference that include their feminist and postcolonial critiques. Second, they should expand the disciplinary frames in which these concepts have been understood into more expansive interdisciplinary dialogues. Arguing that contending ideas about autonomy lie behind current discourses of human rights, claims to nation-state and cultural autonomy, and democracy promotion, Brydon explores the limitations of liberal multiculturalism in addressing competing autonomy claims. Her article reveals how important, and difficult, communication across difference can be, and how distinct understandings of key terms and concepts can and do prevent us from imagining 'viable alternatives to the current world order'. She suggests that we need therefore to re-engage more openly with notions like autonomy so as to be less constrained by 'sovereignty's silent framing' and by the reinscription of the (liberal, multiculturalist) same in the name of dramatic, unprecedented change.

Louis Pauly extends the analysis of institutions in the *Global Ordering* volume by focusing on the global economic crisis that began in 2007 and drawing on some of his other work related to complex sovereignty. He observes that financial risks as well as opportunities now flow more freely across the borders of all but the poorest countries in the world. But globalizing finance became an observable fact before appropriate political structures were in place to steer it. The basic proposition that robust financial markets both rested on and reinforced the legitimacy of state power was decisively tested during the Great Depression. He adds that it is being tested once again in the current crisis. Two outcomes define the spectrum of policy choices in the medium run. One would return us to a version of the post-1945 order characterized by renewed barriers around national markets and strengthened home-country control of tightly regulated financial intermediaries. The second would entail the grand irony of states

transcending one of the last bastions of sovereignty as traditionally conceived, namely autonomous fiscal authority. During the contemporary crisis, he argues, there were surprising, if opaque, moves in the latter direction.

In her article, Petra Rethmann reflects on globalization and autonomy dynamics in a setting not previously investigated in the project: contemporary South Africa. Her focus is an *imagined* South African autonomy—imagined because the autonomy many had hoped for once the apartheid regime would disappear never came into being. This imagination looked toward administrative self-government and both political and economic independence. It was a radical participatory project envisioned and partially put into practice by the mass democratic movement (MDM) in the 1980s. An imagined autonomy was connected to a form of radical democracy that favored land redistribution, independence from international lenders such as the IMF and World Bank, and grassroots decision-making. It was a hopeful project for the black poor majority that had suffered the most under apartheid and provided many of its cadres. The subsequent African National Congress (ANC) governments increasingly deviated from the liberation movement's mandate as it sought to engage with neoliberal globalization. Accordingly, in much of the South African contemporary literature, this autonomy is referred to as the 'dream deferred' (Gevisser, 2007) or, more radically, the 'revolution deferred' (Murray, 1994). How and why this autonomy is called deferred is the focus of this article.

In the two volumes that focused on the history of globalization and autonomy in particular, but among researchers in the project more generally, there was a felt need to rethink notions of time. Timothy Brook provided intellectual leadership in the project and the article he has written for this issue lays out some of this thinking about time and global history. This thinking influenced greatly the methodology used in the volumes on empires and autonomy and on property. Brook posits the notion of time as moment and, more specifically, as global moment, a notion that he has developed further in his recent research (Brook, 2008). He argues that rearranging our relationship to place from the local to the global may mean having to imagine our relationship to past events differently. If we reject the old opinion that there is only one unfolding story of place-based identity, why should we accept the notion that there is only one timeline linking us to the past? His article thus speaks to how to escape the singular timeline. To wit, he suggests that we select a single moment that all timelines cross, strip away the pasts and futures embedded in those many timelines, and consider what remains: the global history of a moment. By stressing the autonomy of the moment outside durational, teleological thinking while emphasizing its embeddedness and interconnections within potentially alternative frames of meaning-making, Brooks succeeds in illuminating experiences of simultaneity and shifting the ways we re-read the past.

The final article by Coleman and Dionisio uses the globalization and autonomy project as a springboard to consider how collaborative research projects on globalization might address better problems of epistemological exclusion and thus achieve cognitive justice. They observe that collaborations will often be transworld: researchers from different parts of the world, who are examining globalizing processes in different settings will need to come together if such processes are to be well understood. How to build the dialogue needed for transworld collaboration is by no means self-evident and is the focus of the article. They argue that collaborations must open up the possibilities not only of working across disciplines but also across different epistemologies and bodies of knowledge situated in different places. Once we see Western forms of knowledge in relative rather than universal terms as projections of economic, political, military, and cultural power with erasures of other knowledges being consequences of such projections, collaborations must take cognitive injustice into

consideration. Epistemological fairness demands deeper forms of dialogue if collaborative research on globalization is to be adequate for improving understanding.

Each article in this special issue argues the need to reset the frames of analysis, showing researchers questioning the conceptual limits and conventional frameworks of their respective disciplinary practices and the terms they employ in response to globalization. Although only two of the articles here have been collaboratively written in an attempt to cross disciplinary boundaries, the impact of this intense period of interdisciplinary engagement is registered in each contribution. Collectively, they demonstrate the productivity of examining globalization through the autonomy lens, while raising questions about the privileging of autonomy within modernist liberal and decolonizing imaginaries. Through this issue, we have sought to show some of the epistemological challenges and opportunities for reorienting academic and political knowledge construction in global times and to model potential research strategies for resetting their frames.

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William D. Coleman is Center for International Governance Innovation Chair in Globalization and Public Policy at the Balsillie School of International Affairs and Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo. He was Director of the Globalization and Autonomy Project.

Diana Brydon is Canada Research Chair in Globalization and Cultural Studies at the University of Manitoba. She has published books on postcolonial theory and literature, currently serves as a member of the convening group for ‘Building Global Democracy’ (<http://www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org>), and is conducting individual research on global and national imaginaries. She was Deputy Director of the Globalization and Autonomy Project.

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