

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

David Inglis and Debra Gimlin, *Globalization of Food*. Oxford & New York: Berg, 2010, 296 pp. \$28.63 paper (978-1-691-84520-2)

One would assume that for members of a discipline that has placed understanding social change and social order as its original preoccupation, the causes and consequences of globalization are most likely to be one of the prime topics of curiosity among sociologists. Yet, until the 1980s, the topic was not given much attention by sociology or by its sister discipline, anthropology, even though most agree that globalization as a process existed much before the emergence of sociology as a discipline.

In all fairness, the term globalization did not even exist in the English language until the 1960s, and only after the 1970s did we begin to see a phenomenal growth in the interest on the topic. So the answer to the above puzzle can be partly found in the label. While sociologists were very much involved in studying multiple processes, institutions and transformations that are now identified as part of the process of globalization[s], only after the 1970s did the label globalization come to be used in relating all these different but interrelated processes.

While globalization and its pre-modern forms can be dated back to Columbian explorations, in the post-World War II (WWII) era, facilitated by improvements in transportation, communication and information technologies and through the involvement of transnational corporations, and international organizations, this process has intensified. What possibly made globalization such a phenomenal topic of curiosity, however, was the rise of the neoliberal discourse in the 1980s, which legitimized corporate and state restructuring as a solution to the world economic crisis that took place during the 1970s. Globalization, as an inevitable developmental strategy, with priorities of privatization, deregulation, and removal of obstacles to free movement of capital became the dominant perspective in the neo-liberal era. From regional free trade partnerships (NAFTA) to regional state formations (EU), and global trade agreements (GATT, WTO), many new processes were identified as part of the globalization process. In a short time, globalization captured the imagination of politicians, media, business leaders and social scientists, including sociologists and anthropologists.

As the social science literature on globalization expended exponentially in this era, many of the past social processes and transformations, such as urbanization, industrialization, the spread of commodity relations, the rise of nation states, explorations, the slave trade, colonialism, and imperialism, came to be re-evaluated through the lens of globalization. Globalization of various social and economic processes, sectors, relations, and institutions became legitimate fields of interest. In a short time globalization has become an interdisciplinary field of inquiry with significant new theoretical contributions on multiple aspects of the field such as globalization of culture, economy, trade relations and governance.

If interest in the not-so-recent process of globalization is relatively new, another seemingly mundane facet of everyday life that has managed to escape the attention of mainstream sociology for a long time, food and eating, gained considerable popularity among sociologists in recent decades. Recognizing the fact that global forces have transformed all aspects of the food cycle and diets, many of the food-focused contributions chose to apply a global/local lens as more and more. A multi-focal interest in different aspects of the agri-food system, from production to consumption, from environmental aspects to trade relations, captured the attention of sociologists—so much so that new journals such as the *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* emerged in the 1980s. Recognizing the importance of looking at the big picture of complex interrelationships and interactions in the food system from an interdisciplinary perspective led to emergence of Food Studies as a new field of inquiry bringing in insights from sociology, anthropology, geography, nutrition, cultural studies, environmental studies, and so on.

Globalization of Food by David Inglis and Debra Gimlin is one of these recent contributions, providing a comprehensive guide to key issues involving globalization of production, distribution and consumption of food in the early 2000s. The book covers a wide range of issues such as slow food movement, food localism, fair-trade, global value chains, dietary transformation, the obesity epidemic, cosmopolitanism and hybrid cuisines, providing insights on how globalization is seen by 21 social scientists, most of whom are sociologists and anthropologists. While this creates a rather disjointed approach to study food globalization, what unifies all of these pieces is the desire to view food through the lens of globalization and globalization through the lens of food.

The book is divided into three sections. Part I includes a single chapter by the editors, David Inglis and Debra Gimlin, and introduces key issues and analytical perspectives on what they call the “ironies, and ambivalences of food, cuisine and globality” (p. 3). This is a compre-

hensive yet accessible introduction, scanning a representative body of recent contributions to the globalization of the agri-food system from the 1980s to 2009. It also provides an analytical map for reading the remaining chapters, as the book does not follow a coherent analytical focus or framework and instead emphasizes the complexity of the issues and aspects of globalizations. Inglis and Gimlin identify this complexity as “the quintessential multifariousness of food globalizations in the plural” (pp. 5-6).

The second part of the book includes 6 chapters dealing with the production and distribution of food. These chapters are neither chronically nor analytically interrelated but can be seen as snap-shots of different aspects of globalizations as captured by different authors. Alison Leitch’s chapter on Carlo Petrini and the slow food movement provides insights on food politics as resistance to the globalization of Fast Foods around the world while at the same time creating an alternative, a “virtuous” form of globalization. Marianne Elisabeth Lien’s chapter provides an exposé on the worldwide expansion of aquaculture. Tasmanian Atlantic salmon as “a food product which is systematically and simultaneously branded as a universal biogenetic artifact and a local brand commodity” (p. 65) demonstrates the complexity in standards, science and scale in defining global food. DeSoucey and Téchoueyres look at how “local food” is defined and presented as an alternative to globalization in the United States and France. Using global value chain analysis and convention theory, Ponte provides insights on quality conventions and governance in global wine trade. Born and Purcell go back to the local-global debate once again, offering a way to perceive geographical scale to avoid “locally trapped thinking” (p. 118). In the last chapter of Part II Caroline Wright looks at the U.K.’s fair-trade food sector and examines non-governmental organizations connecting producers and consumers. It is interesting that while authors in this section address issues of production, they primarily focus on global standards and distribution related issues.

Part III focuses on food preparation and consumption. Johnston, Baumann and Cairns look at the gourmet food writing in the U.S. and issues of cosmopolitanism and exoticism. They examine how national identity prevails in an environment where cultures move more fluidly across state borders. Wilk’s paper on neophobia and neophilia provides some insights from Belize on local’s attitudes to difference, both in terms of food and people, pointing to the role of ideological influences in defining legitimate/familiar and illegitimate/foreign fashions. Gallegos looks at the examples of Mediterranean diet and genetically modified foods in exploring how nutrition as a discourse and form of governmentality

serve as a tool for risk minimization in order to build identity as a global citizen.

Globalization of Food provides a perspective of the world from the vantage point of mostly Western industrial societies. The South is mentioned, but is mostly marginal. In the final chapter of the book, Pat Caplan, for example, offers an anthropological comparison of Mafia Island, Tanzania and Chennai, India. Counihan's paper looking at local-global hybridity in a mostly Hispanic Community in Colorado, U.S, is another short anthropological piece that explores the South in the North. The only Southern voice, Krishnendu Ray, provides insights on how Indian food has appeared in the pages on New York Times in the last Century. Alan Warde's comparison of British and French eating habits and Sobal and McIntosh's paper on the globalization of obesity also provide important links and useful analytical insights on the globalization of diets and their health consequences.

This is a well-researched, well-written book with short, yet effectively organized chapters. The authors demonstrate effectively the complexity of the globalization of food. As the editors state, "food globalizations are many and manifold, not singular and uniform" (p. 31). While the editors are aware of the complexities, insufficient focus on issues such as hunger, land grab, corporate concentration, GMOs, health and environmental impacts of globalization, and global trade negotiations make one wonder if this is the first of many volumes to follow, or if this lack is included purposefully to demonstrate that globalization is also highly uneven. Despite this shortcoming, it can be a useful textbook in upper level undergraduate courses on the globalization of food, especially for those who like to focus on consumption issues.

Ryerson University

Mustafa Koc

Mustafa Koc is a professor at the Department of Sociology and the Centre for Studies in Food Security at Ryerson University in Toronto. His areas of specialization include sociology of agriculture and food, food security and policy, globalization and population movements. In recent years he has been actively involved in the development of food studies as an interdisciplinary field. He served as the founding president of the Canadian Association for Food Studies and Chair of Food Secure Canada. His contributions include *For Hunger-proof Cities* (1999), *Working Together* (2001), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Food Studies* (2008), and *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* (2012).