Globalization Development and Social Justice

Are there existing alternatives to corporate globalization? What are the prospects for and commonalities between communities and movements such as Occupy, the World Social Forum and alternative economies?

*Globalization Development and Social Justice* advances the proposition that another globalization is not only possible, but already exists. It demonstrates that there are multiple pathways towards development with social justice and argues that enabling propositional agency, rather than oppositional agency such as resistance, is a more effective alternative to neoliberal globalization. El Khoury develops a theory of infraglobalization that emphasizes creative constitution, not just contestation, of global and local processes. The book features case studies and examples of diverse economic practice and innovative emergent political forms from the Global South and North. These case studies are located in the informal social economy and community development, as well as everyday practices, from prefigurative politics to community cooperatives and participatory planning.

This book makes an important contribution to debates about the prospects for, and practices of, a transformative grassroots globalization, and to critical debates about globalization and development strategies. It will be of interest to students and scholars of international relations, globalization, social movement studies, political and economic geography, sociology, anthropology and development studies.

**Ann El Khoury** is Honorary Associate and Sessional Lecturer in the Department of Geography and Planning at Macquarie University, Australia.
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Edited by Barry K. Gills
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and Kevin Gray
University of Sussex, UK

This series is designed to break new ground in the literature on globalization and its academic and popular understanding. Rather than perpetuating or simply reacting to the economic understanding of globalization, this series seeks to capture the term and broaden its meaning to encompass a wide range of issues and disciplines and convey a sense of alternative possibilities for the future.

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Masoud Mohammadi Alamutí

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A propositional political approach
Ann El Khoury
This pioneering and insightful book resources a new style of political imagination, practices of politics and a politics of hopefulness.

Richard Le Heron, Professor of Geography, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Ann El Khoury’s work lays out a cogent philosophical platform for a more diverse, less deterministic, and scalar-sensitive means for analysing global economic and social change, and, in doing so, gives voice to those who have for too long been forced to the margins of analysis and debate.

Neil Argent, Professor, School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences, University of New England, Armidale, Australia
Globalization Development and Social Justice
A propositional political approach

Ann El Khoury
For Dad
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Foreword

‘Globalization’, whether seen as an economic, political, cultural, ideological or ecological process, has been a growing focus of academic enquiry for some two decades or so. For many on both the political right and the political left, it is seen to be the ‘natural outcome’ of the expansive nature of capitalist accumulation, portrayed either as part of a Fukuyaman ‘end of history’ or a Leninist ‘highest stage of capitalism’ phenomenon. In such views, capital – in the shape of transnational corporations – is typically viewed as the prevailing force behind recent developments in the way in which the planet’s economy is interconnected. For sure, some labour unions and other organizations have been given credit for trying to stanch its planetary spread. But, for the most part, corporations and their allies in government in various nation states are seen to be driving the globalization bus whilst everyone else is pretty much just a passenger.

But globalization as a process and as a concept is slippery. For one thing, it often seems that, as with Humpty Dumpty’s explanation of the benefits of linguistic legerdemain to the young Alice, the term ‘globalization’ can be taken to mean pretty much whatever its user wishes it to mean – neither more nor less. Thus, is globalization simply about me being able to eat Thai food and drink a British beer and watch the World Cup being broadcast live from Brazil whilst sitting in my abode in Athens, Georgia? Or does it mean something else, a more fundamental challenge to the power of the nation state so that it has now become necessary to talk about ‘globalization’ rather than old-fashioned ‘internationalization’? If we have a new terminology, is this because we have had to invent a fresh language through which to describe a new world which is presently being made, or does this new lexicon simply represent a fad, the use of new words because we are bored with the old ones? Moreover, just how global is this globalization talk and the phenomenon that it is supposed to unproblematically represent, that being the ‘process of globalization’? What is the geography of its origins and of its spread? Does it mean the same to people who are presumably on the receiving end as it does to those who are on the giving end?

Coming out of such questions are a number of issues that speak fundamentally to the nature not only of globalization but also of comprehending it. Thus, how is globalization represented and known? And with what purpose and outcome? These are not merely esoteric matters. Rather, they are fundamental to the kind
of world many of us would like to help build or see not built, for how we think about something will shape how we behave. This fact has certainly not been lost on many advocates of corporate globalization, who have published books with such provocative titles as *The Borderless World* (Kenichi Ohmae), *The World is Flat* (Thomas Friedman), and *Market Unbound: Unleashing Global Capitalism* (Lowell Bryan and Diana Farrell), books which serve both to putatively describe the present state of the world but, more importantly, to try to convince people that the emergence of such a world has been inevitable and so we should not try to fight its further unfolding on the stage of world history. Constantly suggesting that the world is ‘inexorably going to become more globalized’, then, is an important element in the kind of self-fulfilling prophesy chatter in which such authors are engaging.

Concomitantly, discussion of globalization is not just about what type of globalization – that of capital or that of proletarian internationalism – might be afoot but also how we understand the nature of ‘the global’. Is the global a pre-existing scale to be colonized or is it something that must be made? Whichever of these two perspectives we adopt – and my own view tends towards the latter notion, that the global is made and not simply revealed or occupied – will have significant implications for how we come to know the global and represent it. Equally, should we view transnational corporations as ‘global’ entities or as ‘multi-locational’ ones and how does this shape what we think is possible to do and thus our own behaviour? – a corporation that is understood to be a ‘multi-locational’ entity will probably appear easier to challenge than one which is understood to be a ‘global’ one, which seems a much more substantial challenge.

Into this fray has stepped Ann El Khoury. Whereas much of the analysis of globalization has assumed that it is driven by capital and has focused upon the highly visible actions of the ‘big guns’ of globalization, together with the large-scale feats of resistance to this engaged in by ‘counter-globalization’ and ‘anti-globalization’ entities such as – to name just a few – labour unions, the World Social Forum, and the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon that has spread, rhizome-like, across the political and economic landscape, in this work she seeks to do a number of important things when considering the debates over globalization. Drawing upon ideas of social legibility and illegibility and the concept of public transcripts, El Khoury takes a third James C. Scott idea – that of infrapolitics (the everyday forms of resistance that Scott has called the ‘small arms fire’ in the class war) – and develops the notion of infraglobalization to analyze the contemporary scene.

The concept of infraglobalization, she suggests, presents a way of thinking about globalization which seeks to critically intersect ways of seeing, ways of knowing, and ways of doing so as to ‘look below the surface of apparent accommodation by the dispossessed to recognize how outward consent can mask practices of subversion’. Rather than focusing upon public transcripts of globalization, transcripts which have traditionally been seen in academic and popular accounts to have been written by large institutions and their representatives, the concept of infraglobalization allows us – nay, forces us – to look at the world beyond these to activities which are more opaque, though no less real. Infraglobalization,
then, is not so much Other to the public transcript of corporatist globalization as it is ‘another and arguably much larger layer of social reality occupying the same physical space, whose practices corporatist entities such as the neoliberal state cannot necessarily infiltrate, regulate or subsume’.

In exploring such ideas and presenting, for empirical substantiation, a case study of the economic and social development successes made in Kerala, India, during the past few decades, El Khoury compels us to do several things. First, she obliges us to judiciously examine the notion of globalization, what it is and who and what drives it. Second, in so doing she calls upon us to contemplate more carefully the notion of social agency and how the everyday actions of ordinary people play important roles in shaping how processes of globalization unfold and thus how the world is being remade in the early twenty-first century. Third, drawing upon critical human geography, she challenges us to not reify the global as a scale of social action but, rather, to consider how it is both made as a social product and how it is then represented to shape what is considered to be possible in terms of political and economic actions – just who has the power to ‘go global’ and what does that even mean, anyway?

Finally, she emphasizes that critically re-evaluating how we think about globalization requires addressing questions of both ontology (what is globalization?) and epistemology (how do we understand it?) and that one way to do this is to draw inspiration from ideas in quantum physics about indeterminacy and probabilistic models of reality. Thus, rather than assuming that we live in a world in which causes and events can be clearly identified and fully known (a deterministic model of being and knowing) we should, she avers, adopt a plural ontology and post-positivist, post-Newtonian/Cartesian views of being and knowing in which understanding is always partial and situated and in which causes may not be reducible to specific actions.

All in all, then, this is a book worth reading.

Andrew Herod, Distinguished Research Professor of Geography and Adjunct Professor of International Affairs and Anthropology

*Athens, Georgia, USA*
Preface

In this book I seek to make a contribution toward transforming and democratizing globalization praxis by introducing the idea of infrageographies in the political-geographical imagination and by developing infraglobalization as a propositional praxis. As this book goes to press, the centenary of the First World War is being marked. It has been a long twentieth century, and in many ways it still has not quite yet ended. Collectively, we are still grappling globally with the same types of conflicts, nationalisms, imperialisms and colonialisms, the effects of fossil-fuel based industrial growth, the growth of executive and corporatist power as well as entrenched and widening inequalities, and the extended depth and reach of capitalist financialization.

There are a number of other continuities. The long twentieth century has been bookended by Anglophone hegemonic interventions in Iraq. The current turmoil in the Middle East is turning the promise of the vaunted Arab Spring into a fixation on the apparent Jihadi Winter, with the bloody unstitching of Sykes–Picot, a direct legacy of the aftermath of the Great War. The war also gave rise to the emergence of the discipline of International Relations and its central concern with creating world orders that could be configured to promote peaceful interaction and prevent further mass conflict, and to understand and shape globalization and global order.

The present moment of contemporary empire shows this project is still being grappled with. The need for a peaceful and progressive propositional politics negotiated from the grassroots rather than imposed from the practitioners of ‘high politics’ in the advanced capitalist states of the ‘Global North’, as it was in the aftermath of the First World War, is still very much in order. It is a key argument of this book that people’s actions across various scales help make the world in various ways and also co-produce space. These active constructions are often underplayed in scholarly and corporate accounts, and those of transnational corporations, banks, non- and inter-governmental institutions and states are often overstated. I present infraglobalization as a way to account for the greater socio-spatial reality of globalization, and assert that alternatives to corporatist globalization are not merely about oppositional strategies such as ‘resistance’, a depiction which tends to ossify actors into a reactive stance, but rather seeks to re-direct the focus to cultivating and subventing alternatives as more enduring propositional strategies. I argue that infraglobalization is not merely a speculative enterprise – though
it is also a normative project – but a living, breathing and existing phenomenon
that pertains to already existing alternatives, as showcased in the major empiri-
cal exploration of Kerala. It is significant that many sources of innovative politi-
cal and economic forms are emerging from less advanced capitalist states, or the
Global South, which historically have been the focus of development interven-
tions by the North. What I call a propositional politics is observable in a number
of contexts depending on how one looks, which informs the politics of knowing
and of agency.

Infraglobalization is thus advanced as an alternative way of seeing, knowing
and doing that emphasizes creative constitution, not just contestation, of global-
ization processes. The book investigates the prospects for a transformative glo-
balization praxis that is multi-site and ground-up, and argues infraglobalization
is both achievable and in process. In Chapter 1 I develop a template for think-
ing about globalization and grassroots agency that involves a shift between three
syndromes of global development I call subsumption, subversion and sub rosa
subvention. I argue that the third, sub rosa subvention, offers the best prospects
for enacting progressive propositional politics. Like the less visible but neverthe-
less large part of the visual spectrum, infraglobalization is posited not only as
a form of actually existing globalization but one that also constitutes more of
the spectrum of social reality than the corporatist projection of globalization, the
focus of Chapter 2. It is introduced here as a socio-spatial imaginary and heuristic
that applies and extends James C. Scott’s complementary notions of infrapolitics,
the public and hidden transcripts, and mētis, all of which underline the role of
informal order and sub rosa agency in social organization, the focus of Chapter 3.
This book engages with a more hidden globalization that often underwrites more
publicly visible processes, but which I argue is also a fertile source of processes
and sub rosa socio-spatial ordering itself. I suggest recognition of multiplicity and
indeterminacy in socio-spatial ontologies is informed by post-positivist world-
views that may be more fruitfully embraced as a way to open up agential possibili-
ties, explored in Chapter 4.

In the book I extend infrapolitical agency to denote not just the realm of surrep-
titious resistance but also of enabling strategies and cultural agency. I argue these
can foster community development as a domain of diverse economic practice and
innovative emergent political forms, as explored in the Chapter 5 historical and
economic geography case study on Kerala. Endeavouring to be mindful of how
the way we imagine space has direct agential implications, I argue that strategies
are often best incubated infrageographically lest they be co-opted or crushed by
corporate capital or repressive functions of the state, but that the state may have
a facilitative role to play, as the case of Kerala shows with its participatory plan-
ning programme and community-led microenterprises. Infraglobalization also
denotes a rethinking of the sufficiency of the oppositional politics of ‘resistance’
and an endeavour to shift focus towards more propositional strategies of replica-
tion, reclamation, recognition and redistribution. The book aims to both contrib-
ute to a more progressive socio-spatial conceptualization of globalization as well
as rethink a well-known development case study by examining some of its chal-
enge and innovative responses within the rubric of globalization.
Original empirical research in the book draws primarily on qualitative fieldwork conducted in several towns and villages throughout the southern Indian state of Kerala first in 2002 and in follow-up interviews and correspondence by email and telephone with interviewees. My fieldwork consisted of field visits, in-depth formal and informal semi-structured interviews, participant observation, cultural immersion and critical self-reflection. I thank my interviewees first and foremost for their generosity and hospitality, and to field guides and translators. I am also indebted to Global Exchange who have organized reality tours to Kerala and have made possible access to key interviewees I may not have otherwise had in a shorter time frame than is the case for more extensive ethnographic fieldwork, for example.

The Kerala case study draws on additional *ex-post facto* research, including keeping up to date with the institutionalization of the People’s Plan Campaign. Fieldwork conducted in the north Australian township of Maleny, considered the ‘cooperative capital of Australia’, was initially considered as a contrasting case study. Ultimately, time and length constraints precluded developing the Maleny study as a full chapter, but the fieldwork plays an important role in informing my research and, in particular, thinking about strategies and alternatives. I was fortunate to meet a number of inspiring community activists and witness the workings and daily operations of major cooperatives in both places. In particular I would like to thank my Kerala interviewees and guides: Dr T. M. Thomas Isaac, Dr P. K. Michael Tharakan, Ms M. Valsala, Dr Joy Elamon, Mr S. P. Sreedharan, Professor T. P. Kunikkanan, Associate Professor K. N. Harilal, Mr Suresh Kumar and Mr K.P. Sreeraj. In Maleny I would like to acknowledge in particular the late Jill Jordan, Ann Jupp, Peter Pamment and Marcelle Holdaway.

This work was influenced by and owes an intellectual debt to a number of ground-forging scholars. The scholarship of James C. Scott above all bears acknowledgment as a major stimulus to my thinking in considering that there is more to informal order than what is legible through the corporatist projection of globalization. I found that two of Scott’s major and influential studies on informal order and resistance were rarely considered together and sought to incorporate them in developing a new conceptual framework. I was intrigued by the idea of sub rosa spaces and strategies that gave people more credit and capacity than conventional accounts and even some critical accounts did. Further, I found it striking that plurality, indeterminacy
and parallel worlds are reflected in cosmologies that have been increasingly influential in post-normal science and poststructuralism alike.

This is closely followed by the important bodies of work of Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler (Chapter 2), Kathie Gibson and Julie Graham (Chapter 3), Alexander Wendt and William Peterman (Chapter 4) and Thomas Isaac and Richard Franke (Chapter 5). My sincere appreciation is extended to Bob Fagan, Richard LeHeron, Andrew Herod and Neil Argent for constructive criticism on a previous draft, and to William Peterman for his receptive and helpful suggestions on Chapter 4, as well as to Alex Wendt for his generous correspondence on his latest work just before this book went to press. The usual non-implicating disclaimers apply, and my syntheses, interpretations and any errors remain my own.

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Abbreviations

ABCD       Asset Based Community Development
ACORN      Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (US)
ADB        Asian Development Bank
ASEAN      Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATTAC      Association pur la Taxation des Transactions financiers pour
            l’Aide aux Citoyons (English: Association for the Taxation of
            Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens)
BPL        Below Poverty Line
BRIC       Brazil, Russia, India and China
BSE        Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (‘Mad Cow’s Disease’)
CapDecK    Capacity Development for Decentralization in Kerala
CDFI       Community Development Financial Institution
CEO        Chief Executive Officer
Chindia    China and India
CIA        Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
CIAL       Cochin International Airport Limited
Co-op      Cooperative
CPI (M)     Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CSOs       Civil Society Organizations
CSS        Centrally Sponsored Schemes
DITS       Dinesh Information Technology Systems
DIY        Do It Yourself
DRPs       District Resource Persons
EIPE       Everyday International Political Economy
EU         European Union
FBI        Federal Bureau of Investigation (USA)
FDI        Foreign Direct Investment
FPI        Foreign Portfolio Investment
FRIENDS    Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for Disbursement of
            Services
FSM        Free Software Movement
FTA        Free Trade Agreement
GAO        Government Accountability Office (USA)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDI</td>
<td>Gender Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GST</td>
<td>Goods and Services Tax</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCBPL</td>
<td>Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Proprietary Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>(Personal) Identification</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRTC</td>
<td>Integrated Rural Technology Centre (Kerala)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWW</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World</td>
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<tr>
<td>KDB</td>
<td>Kerala Dinesh Beedi Workers Central Cooperative Society Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>KILA</td>
<td>Kerala Institute of Local Administration</td>
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<td>KRP</td>
<td>Key Resource Persons</td>
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<td>KSSP</td>
<td>Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (People’s Science Movement, Kerala)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDF</td>
<td>Left Democratic Front (Kerala)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LETS</td>
<td>Local Exchange Trading System</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>Less Industrialized Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSG(I)</td>
<td>Local Self Government (Institution)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAI</td>
<td>Multilateral Agreement on Investment</td>
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<td>MGI</td>
<td>McKinsey Global Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>NABARD</td>
<td>National Bank for Agriculture and Development (India)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>N.d.</td>
<td>No date</td>
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<tr>
<td>NED</td>
<td>National Endowment for Democracy (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy (Russia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Government Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHGs</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIDL</td>
<td>New International Division of Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIEO</td>
<td>New International Economic Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIC</td>
<td>Older Industrialized Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pers. comm.</td>
<td>Personal communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestine Liberation Organization</td>
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<td>PNAC</td>
<td>Project for the New American Century</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPC</td>
<td>People’s Plan Campaign</td>
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<td>RIPE</td>
<td>Regulatory International Political Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rs.</td>
<td>Rupees</td>
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<td>SAFTA</td>
<td>South Asian Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>Special Air Service (Special Forces of the British Army)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCO</td>
<td>Shanghai Cooperation Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</td>
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<td>SEWA</td>
<td>Self Employed Women’s Association (India)</td>
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<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self-Help Group</td>
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<td>SIV</td>
<td>Structured Investment Vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
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<tr>
<td>TARP</td>
<td>Troubled Asset Relief Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNC</td>
<td>Transnational Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front (Kerala)</td>
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<td>UFC</td>
<td>Union Finance Commission</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US(A)</td>
<td>United States (of America)</td>
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<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollars</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAT</td>
<td>Value Added Tax</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCP</td>
<td>Women’s Component Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
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<td>WSF</td>
<td>World Social Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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1 Introduction

Infraglobalization

Another globalization is not only possible, it already exists. This book advances what I term *infraglobalization* as a catalytic socio-spatial concept and practice with emancipatory potential for greater grassroots agency. In this book I build a case for a propositional praxis for the reclamation of ground-up globalization, which involves multiple pathways towards development with social justice. As an interpretive framework, infraglobalization is conceived as a contrapuntal way of seeing, knowing and doing that can contribute to the creative constitution of global and local processes. From the outset my argument adheres to the idea that strategically asking the question ‘what is already being done?’ rather than ‘what is to be done?’ may be a more enabling entry point that helps foster greater autonomy for various grassroots groups and movements. With the southern Indian state of Kerala as my principal empirical locus, I investigate a number of already existing alternatives as well as the prospects for a plurality of successful strategies, which also may exist in parallel with ‘neoliberal’ restructuring. These include participatory planning and community-led microenterprises as an alternative to corporatist-led microfinance.

In this Introduction, I outline this book’s *problématique* and aims, as well as lay out an alternative framework I have developed for apprehending globalization and grassroots agency. These contours, which I suggest have moved from subsumption to sub rosa geographies, are both descriptive and normative. In developing my argument, I call into service a spectral metaphor, wherein the ‘infra’ prefix underlines the value of the less visible (as specifically refracted through what I identify as the ‘public transcript’, corporatist lens) as well as the informal, which seeks to strategically broaden the subjects, spaces and constituency of globalization. Infraglobalization – which might also be suitably described as the infrageographies of globalization – is conceived as a propositional socio-spatial interpretative framing; I abjure the oppositionally framed terms such as ‘counter-globalization’ and ‘anti-globalization’ (less so the more satisfactory...
Introduction

‘alter-globalization’) and make the case that ‘infra’ is more enabling and more accurately reflective of reality. Infraglobalization is introduced as a socio-spatial imaginary and heuristic that applies and extends James C. Scott’s complementary notions of infrapolitics, the public and hidden transcripts, and mētis, all of which underline the role of informal order and sub rosa agency in social reality.

Infraglobalization is presented as a contribution towards developing a propositional politics of development and a socio-spatial grammar of instauration. It contributes to rethinking globalization and agency through refraction (ways of seeing), ontological politics (ways of knowing) and, to showcase but one template of a propositional and prefigurative politics (ways of doing), Kerala’s democratic decentralization and social economy experiments. These three dimensions coincide with Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the propositional heart of this book, in contradistinction to Chapter 2, which outlines the oppositional case. My focus is on the active prefiguration of alternative spaces and practices in the present, of ‘worlding’ in the here and now rather than a predetermined politics of deferment and waiting. Worlding is here employed as a verb rather than a subject-object, reflecting a process-based orientation that involves reading and bringing the increasingly shaped possibilities of the future into the present. It is informed by the notion that we – and I use ‘we’ throughout the text invitationally – need to imagine and enact new worlds if we are to break free from subordination to the imperatives of capitalist accumulation.

This book is also a contribution to the argument about the production of space and how the way we imagine space has direct agential implications. I seek to employ the infraglobalization heuristic as a layered spatial differentiation that recognizes the importance of depth as well as breadth in imaginaries framing globalization, informed by the idea that manifold realities may inhabit the same space. This spectral metaphor is thus also very much spatial, one that draws on space and social processes as multiplicity rather than singularity. In doing so, I assert that this is a way globalization may be reclaimed and redeemed from a singular and narrowly sectional corporatist representation underpinned by what I identify as a ‘command and control’ ontology of dominatory space. This works to produce an ideologically limited circumscribing of agency, extrapolated from a view of space as subject to necessarily only one, all-encompassing trajectory, whether it is imperial or neoliberal.

Perceptions of space frame epistemological parameters and thus help shape the way power, authority and agency are understood and enacted. Different ways of seeing globalization itself contribute toward bringing it into being, in the same manner time-zones operationalize what is really a constructed imaginary. While much attention has been focused on the practices of power and domination that attach to this singular conception of space, this book is an acknowledgement that greater attention might better be directed to the production of progressive space that corresponds with fomenting and amplifying grassroots agency. This book takes as its point of departure the disabling limitations of what I call conventional interpretations of social and political space for investigating contemporary practices within the framework of globalization. I will focus on prospects for human agency and preclude ‘posthuman agency’ – while I am sympathetic to the strategic
decentering of human beings to bring in considerations of nature and processes, I am also concerned at over-inflating the concept of agency for my purposes here, such that any ‘actant’ has agency, including inanimate objects.4

The book endeavours to contribute towards a socio-spatial framework more appropriate to meet this challenge, recognizing that the organization of space has clear political impacts, that socio-spatial imaginaries matter and that representations of space help circumscribe our self-perceptions, ways of ordering the world and behaviours. With agential concerns in mind, a number of argument summaries and propositions follow. The following summaries preclude detailed references, which appear in the corresponding chapters. These argument summaries and propositions are grouped around what I have identified as the following three syndromes of globalization and grassroots agency (Figure 1.1) in which a shift from subsumption to subversion to sub rosa subvention is both discerned and advocated. Throughout the text these are embedded in, rather than tightly circumscribing, the organization of chapters, and the book bears their imprint in the manner of a research argument watermark. I also attach the qualification that these three syndromes, which will each be examined in turn, are not envisaged as an unproblematic linear progression – all three may exist contemporaneously in different contexts and across various places, spaces and scales. I assert that the third, sub rosa subvention, offers the best possibilities for constructing enduring global grassroots autonomy.

**Subsumption**

The assumption of this form of globalization is that the whole world is headed along the same path. In such a framing imagination the whole uneven geography of the world is reorganized into a historical queue. Geography (a spatial simultaneity of differences) is turned into history (seen as a single succession). Both space and time suffer here: on the one hand the contemporaneity of space is obliterated; on the other hand temporality is reduced to the singular. There is one historical queue (one model of development, say), and it is defined by those ‘in the lead’ (there is one voice). An evident result of this manoeuvre is that those supposedly ‘behind’ in this queue have no possibility (no space, precisely) to define a path of their own. Their future is foretold.

(Doreen Massey)5

Reflecting dramatic changes from the early 1970s onwards, capitalist globalization has become a mainstay concern in the social sciences. Whether variously or

*Figure 1.1* The ‘sub’ syndromes.
at once understood as cliché, leitmotif, axial organizing principle (regulation and restructuring), a set of material processes, a historical period, and a set of discourses, this conception of globalization has as its main assumption that globalization takes only one major form – which is characterized here as corporatist – to which other forces can only react or accommodate and which necessarily erases the contemporaneous heterogeneity of the world. The global spatiality of what I define as corporatist globalization is an extension of this singular linear progression described by Doreen Massey in the quote above. In this book, I employ the term ‘corporatism’ to denote a subsumptive approach that can characterize both state and market players, with the common characteristic of a totalizing singularist occupation of socio-spatial reality. Subsumption is also understood here in its wider adjectival meaning as ‘the act of subsuming or the state of being subsumed’ rather than in its specific, albeit similar, application in Marxist social theory.

This highly particularist but conventional projection of globalization subsumes all other reality into its self-conceived purview, which marginalizes and buries other ways of understanding, constituting and participating in global processes. After Scott, I have adapted a concept to describe this conventional representation of globalization as ‘public transcript’ globalization. The majority of public processes and events, including resistance and civil society, are here consecrated to the public ‘official’ transcript, upon which conventional social scientific research mainly focuses, in contradistinction to the offstage critique by subordinate groups in what Scott describes as the ‘hidden transcript’. I argue that this distinction offers a way to think beyond the hegemonic narratives and dominant accounts of globalization and structural geopolitics, accounts that tend to be narrowly sectional and both reflective and reproducing of dominant power structures. These conventional accounts often leave out the rest of the body politic, treating only the public event. It also corresponds with ‘great man’ theories of ‘high politics’ that commonly reduce complex global phenomena to the designs and proclivities of the most visible actors and institutions.

Conversely, some presentations may so privilege structure over agency, even in critical accounts, that they are purveyors of a subjectless structuralism that hides the agency of the powerful as well, and instead attributes causality to abstractions, which may suit an ideological purpose. Whether actors at various scales are privileged, marginalized, hidden or excluded, orthodox globalization can imbue impersonal processes and institutions with agency rather than people, impelling an acceptance of the seeming inevitability of what I will identify as the neoliberal political project. These structures are endowed with superhuman agency out of which there may only be a resultant fatalism – this is much closer to medieval than modern modes of thinking! Without denying the importance of structure or entering into the perennial structure–agency debate, the degree to which this focus on ‘restructuring’ has colonized discourse is apparent in the lack of a corollary concept to restructuring. To wit, there has been no equivalent concept of ‘re-agencying’, which has generally been denoted by the term ‘post-structuralism’.

This depiction is also crucially one of clear and total universalizing capitalist hegemony, expressed in critical accounts in such concepts as ‘neoliberal market
civilization’ (Stephen Gill, 1995) and ‘capitalocene’ (Jason W. Moore, 2013), a way of organizing nature. In the latter, Moore views as problematic the notion of the Anthropocene – where humanity is assigned as a geological agent in a short two-century modernity—and argues a more fitting term is Capitalocene, where capitalist ‘world-ecology’ is situated in a historical long-view ‘shaped by relations privileging the endless accumulation of capital . . . a civilization that joins the accumulation of capital, the pursuit of power, and the production of nature as an organic whole’. Capitalist world-ecology is a world-praxis that sees capitalism as environment-making process, and these environments ‘include factories no less than forests, homes no less than mines, financial centers no less than farms, the city no less than the country’. Similarly, in Nitzan and Bichler’s conception, dominant capital (defined as the wealthiest 0.01 per cent) do not merely mould or shape the social order, they create the order, or ‘creorder’ in their neologism.

These are all powerful and percipient critical characterizations, but my contention is that descriptions like these may foreclose on progressive political possibilities. Capital has been conferred with unprecedented power to define not simply our political economy but has become an assignation that characterizes our contemporary civilization and ‘world-ecology’. While it is true that virtually anything that can generate an income stream can be capitalized and thus subsumed, including nature, DNA and the future, it need not colonize our imaginations and ability to conceive and practice alternatives also. So while I do not contest the subsuming nature of dominant capital, I do consign it to one bandwidth of reality that does not nearly make up the whole spectrum. For example, I take on board Nitzan and Bichler’s cogent characterization of capitalism as a mode of power, but I would also seek to qualify this insight. First, I identify layers to this creative ordering which takes the creordering monopoly away from dominant capital and confines it to the public transcript. My argument is that it is not simply the purview, prerogative or power of dominant capital, through capitalization, to creorder the world, to which all of us are subject and straitjacketed. Informal order, I argue, may be the ‘dark matter’ of what is a manifold creordering, present but not as visible or quantifiable, and yet more greatly constitutive of what exists.

Second, in recognizing the way much oppositional work re-inscribes the discursive dominance of capitalist reality, neoliberal capitalism is characterized as an ideology that structures the coordinates of the reality it purportedly merely describes. Here, social Heisenberg principles are at play with neoliberal measures and assumptions; human beings are not the atomistic, rational self-seekers and individualistic maximizers of these ideologies, but neoliberal structures are performing the human subject into its own image. Re-appropriating this process of re-subjectification is a key strategy explored in Chapter 3. Also, as Peck and Tickell point out, as the primary ideological rationalization for corporate globalization, or its ‘operating software’, neoliberalism is a system of metaregulation that self-defines and passes itself off as a system of non- or anti-regulation. It is a project that in Thomas Lemke’s words ‘endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists’. To what extent can we reboot and reinstall this ideological operating software or challenge the perceived primary of this platform?
Corporatist globalization also bears the imprint of the rationalist high modernist impulse, which consists of the belief that the social order can, and should be, redesigned in accordance with supposedly scientific universal laws, often presented as inevitable and incontestable. This extends Scott’s observations about the state’s high modernist schemes to the market, whereby market and transnational institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) may be replacing the state as the imposer of subsumptive legibility, evidenced in the one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter development prescriptions emblematic of those institutions.

As well as extending rationalism to neoliberalism and corporatism’s global marketization project, as John Ralston Saul has also intimated, an ideology of supremacy that has the same subsumptive impulse informs both military and economic doctrine – from ‘full spectrum dominance’ to neoliberal structural adjustment policies. Material and martial thinking alike can be seen to be informed by the subsumptive impulse, and the policy of full spectrum dominance, the avowed US military policy of pursuing omnipotence announced in 1997, could be viewed as the military expression of subsumption.

Recalling Doreen Massey’s point in the quotation above, the high modernist translation of spatial heterogeneity into a uni-linear temporal sequence – wherein different countries are situated along a progress ‘queue’ behind the West – draws directly from a rationalist command and control ontology. This involves mastering, conquering and colonizing what is essentially closed and singularly conceived space rather than creatively co-inhabiting it. This view of space also draws directly from classical scientific laws, not simply from space as a Euclidean container but also on the Newtonian premise that no two objects can occupy the same physical space at the same time. With space fixed or immobile, corporatist capitalist relations can more easily subsume all – or spurn spaces not deemed useful to dominant, oligarchic capital. This more easily begets processes of servitude, control and zero-sum power. This cosmology is important in constituting power relations – and it is also crucial, I argue, in reconstituting them (see Chapter 4).

Both the exercise of capitalist globalization and the rationalism that animates it is here recognized as a form of domination, without which there can be no appropriation – or accumulation for that matter. Rationalism is a central pillar of modernity; its domination is not intrinsic to rationalism but is produced when all other things are subsumed to it, when it becomes instrumentalized. The interesting question of the tyranny of instrumental rationality is outside the parameters of this book and is necessarily only alluded to here. Suffice to say, as an ordering mechanism and philosophical impulse, part of the tyranny of rationalism, as Michael Oakeshott has observed drawing upon Blaise Pascal, is ‘not its recognition of technical knowledge, but its failure to recognize any other’. This speaks directly to the subsumption purveyed by this projection of globalization.

Despite its tendency to scientism and scientific pretensions, neoliberal globalization is certainly itself not devoid of normativity, but can be deftly presented by its exponents as already existing reality (if not inevitability), thus accordingly enacted through the way perception powerfully affects and shapes reality.
Hence, globalization is commonly represented as a powerful set of forces from beyond the more local community and the nation state, to which there are few realistic alternatives (as if each individual alternative needed to be a behemoth to supplant all of capital ‘G’ corporate globalization!). From about the 1990s, this representation of globalization has become entrenched as a discourse that normalizes certain ways of looking at the world and what is possible within it. This includes the greatly trumpeted role of global civil society and the role of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), which I argue have to a significant degree been made captive to the public transcript of globalization. Largely co-opted sections of civil society take on an essentially ameliorative and limited role in this corporatist subsumption.

The best non-capitalocentric processes can get in this conception is Lilliputian status while the corporatist ‘giants’ retain top billing. On the one hand, it is true that to examine globalization is to also examine neoliberal theory and practice, as many of its exponents have actively sought to conflate neoliberal principles with globalization in privileging the regulatory mechanisms and norms of the (globalized) market over the nation-state. On the other hand, a large part of the critical literature in social science has been solely oppositional in intent and content, competently demonstrating the flaws of neoliberalism but sometimes locked into critique and even appearing to accept and reinforce its perceived dominance by default. Part of my argument is that examining the fragmented and uneven nature of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’, though a valuable endeavour, is only part of the repertoire of strategies toward enacting just policies. I argue we should also apply our attention to its actually existing alternatives as well, studying health and not just disease; that globalization should be, and is, also about non-neoliberal realities often unrecognized or consigned to the local scale, clearly no match for the goliath globalization its advocates have used to try to ideologically colonize the global scale.

These strategies are testament to realities outside that are presented and shaped solely by corporatist interests. If it is accepted that the corporatist state and market can subsume all space, then it is being imbued with far more power than the informal order that it is in fact undergirded by. To what extent do we, as scholars, activists, ordinary citizens, allow neoliberalism and neoconservatism to colonize our social reality? Does only corporatist capitalism make its order to which we are all subsumed?

**The limits of conventional globalization: beyond subsumption**

The key propositions here are that the conditions of global possibility may partly be shaped and conditioned by corporatist capitalist socio-spatial relations, amongst other influences, but are not subsumed by them: there is a world, or worlds, outside of the ‘public transcript’ representation of globalization, currently dominated by neoliberal conceptions and practice, which has always existed and continues to exist.

Recognizing the role of socio-spatial imaginaries in legitimating certain power configurations is also a recognition that contemporary imperial representations of
global reality serve to reproduce social inequality, and that it is in the interests of social justice that progressive scholar-practitioners frame their own understandings towards a more genuine democratization of globalization praxis. This project involves decolonizing globalization from a high modernist command and control ontology, and producing heuristics that might better ferment progressive political enactments.

Subversion

To exist is to resist

(Unknown)\textsuperscript{17}

A conceptual intermediary between subsumption and sub rosa geographies, subversion seeks to challenge processes of subsumption but may not succeed in escaping the gravitational pull of conventional globalization. I argue that this is because subversive movements may over-rely on reactive resistance rather than cultivating propositional alternatives. Oppositional politics and resistance are important strategies but may nevertheless persist in ontologically privileging the primacy of conventional, public transcript globalization, in which subsuming corporatism is dominant. The way resistance and alternatives are represented is itself problematic and can be bound by the same frameworks and ontologies that undergird conventional globalization accounts. This plays out in a number of ways, including in terms of strategies: when set up as marginal or minute, it is not surprising that alternative, overlapping and parallel systems such as local currencies or fair trade systems are easily dismissed, derided as marginal, as wanting to ‘wish away’ or ‘write out’ capitalism. But such discourses of ‘resistance’ and ‘local alternatives’ are sometimes deployed in ‘straw man’ arguments; actors may not seek to replace corporatism with another singular subsuming narrative but to change the totalizing singularity of all systems and to create space for alternatives.

Departing from the traditional historiography of asymmetric power relations and resistance among dominant and subordinate groups, James C. Scott argues that a dissident political culture develops through potentially subversive cultural practices in disguised forms, which he terms ‘infrapolitics’. This may include subversive satire, vernacular languages, tax evasion, foot-dragging, folklore, jokes, songs and sabotage. Like infrared rays, infrapolitical activity may not be visible or legible to those who wield public power nor fit into their narratives, which he terms the public transcript. It is infrapolitical because practices and discourses are illegible to state and official authority and invisibilized in the public transcript – legibility here translates into visibility. Infrapolitics is offered as a way to look below the surface of apparent accommodation by the dispossessed to recognize how outward consent can mask practices of subversion. Wielded as ‘weapons of the weak’, infrapolitics operates in what Scott identifies as ‘hidden transcripts’, or offstage discourses of subordinate groups. Subversive, covert and surreptitious resistance is less well documented and its illegibility to power-holders in the public transcript often has tactical advantages.
Human agency and resistance here may take many forms, often ingenuous and hidden – and ingenuously hidden, with a ‘hidden in plain sight’ quality. Open, ‘declared’, political action is often only the visible tip of the iceberg and Scott significantly posits infrapolitics as the elementary, foundational form of politics, the ‘building block for the more institutionalized political action that could not exist without it’. Tactical invisibility can provide requisite cover to incubate and eventually to publicly mount strategies. The disguising of resistance in the hidden transcript may not however lend itself to historical or social scientific documentation, at least not in the public transcript, and Scott avers that subordinate groups themselves may even be complicitous in contributing to a sanitized official version in order to cover their tracks. The upshot is that apparent and outward compliance does not necessarily mean capitulation, and that subversion can occur with an apparently less obtrusive corrosion of hegemony.

The idea of a hidden transcript underscores the role of informal order in constituting more of the spectrum of reality, including globalization, than is conventionally represented in the public transcript. The representation of socio-spatial processes has been dominated by formal institutions and official actors, which the work of a number of social scientists has highlighted and sought to remedy. This informal order is animated by a long incubated yet adaptable grassroots intelligence and ‘folk wisdom’ Scott calls mētis after the ancient Greeks. In wielding high modernist ideology, applied from Prussian forestry techniques to the imposition of surnames upon villagers, central governments have often destroyed or lost this crucial local knowledge by attempting to force legibility on their subjects in the course of statecraft. In conjunction with a number of other conditions, grand statist schemes often fail when they fail to heed mētis. Pointing to such cases as the planned city of Brasilia and its unofficial counterpart city that sustains it, Scott asserts that the modernist project itself routinely relies on an unacknowledged ‘dark twin’, within which one could include modern capitalism.

This also underscores how ways of seeing matter: what outwardly looks like consent can mask fertile acts of resistance. What looks like capitalism’s subsumptive domination of everything conceals (and crucially depends on) systems of mētis, mutual aid, informal order. When it comes to the capitalist behemoth, in other words, the object appears larger than it really is. Informal practices that make up the bedrock of reality on the other hand, are concealed and are variously insubordinate and illegible to the former which it quietly parallels, and without which capitalism could not operate.

In globalization praxis, this segues with the roles of resistance and informal order, with two major points to draw out about its extensibility. The first is the apparent similarity between the notion of mētis and that of social capital. In understanding mētis as local know-how and practical savoir faire that exists infrageographically – outside the reach of the public transcript – it might be considered as a mode of knowing and doing that is deeper than social capital, particularly social capital as it is understood and played out in the public transcript version of global civil society. I thus consider there are at least two layers of informal order, that underneath the public transcript’s civil society with its more visible social capital
there are infrapolitical processes and spaces informally governed by the native intelligence of métis.

Second, infraglobalization is not here conceived as simply a ‘gap’ between state and market, as civil society is sometimes framed. Aligning with Scott’s original conception, infrapolitics is recognized here as the foundational form of politics rather than as interstitial spaces and practices that occur between the public transcript corporatist mainstays of ‘market’, ‘state’ and ‘labour’. I make the case that infraglobalization may be intersectional and interstitial depending how you look, and whether it is refracted through the conventional globalization lens. It is here acknowledged as a major section of the spectrum of order and reality in its own right.

The optical dimension of this argument is also related to how the ideological hegemony of dominant groups is predicated upon projecting a particular way of seeing the world and upon then apparently having it accepted and internalized by subordinate groups as common-sensical or natural. This not only inverts the relationship between the dependency of the formal upon the informal, but within the purview of this book it also relates to how initially grassroots innovations and concepts like social capital and microfinance can be appropriated and colonized, such that critical development accounts may refer to them as ‘paradigmatic of neoliberalism’. This could also be described as the formal order’s attempt to mimic and replicate for its own purposes the properties of the informal order, its métis.

Yet the notion that a hidden globalization underwrites public transcript-visible processes is one where it essentially plays a supporting rather than leading role. Sites and circuits of the informal economy, from households to community cooperatives, local economies to transnational networks, may effectively underwrite the formal, more public-official processes but, I argue, are also important in their own right and not simply as subordinate adjuncts to public transcript processes, which are presented as the reality. A hidden transcript replete with resistances may succeed in disrupting the naturalized hegemony of the formal sphere of economic activity, its claimed correlation with the global scale and comprehensive universal application across diverse socio-spatial spectrums, successfully subverting the idea that corporatism subsumes all, but its disruptive effects stop short of efforts at creation and construction.

Historically, recognizing the public transcript order as an arbitrary power configuration is a crucial first step in developing political consciousness and to developing alternatives: undoing the perceived hegemony of corporatist globalization is exposing its uneven, heterogeneous, contradictory, fragmented and partial character that is belied by the appearance of cohesion and contiguity. There are however discernible limits to subversion, from its cooption and weakening of dissent through the covert planting of official propaganda to the funding of ‘astroturf’ groups that mimic the appearance of and effectively manufacture fake grassroots movements (so named as astroturf is a Monsanto product of artificial grass turf). Corporatist interests can covertly act in ways that range from ‘controlled opposition’ such as the use of gatekeepers and planting moles, to the US
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and neocon foundation funds that have gone towards exploiting the genuine resistance in the various international ‘colour revolutions’, for example, such as the ‘Orange’ and ‘Rose’ revolutions in the Ukraine and Georgia respectively.

It is also significant by way of appropriation and subsumption that international organizations and financial institutions have strategically imbibed social movement and community-inflected language, such as ‘participatory’, ‘community’, ‘capacity building’ and ‘self-help’. Critics have charged that ‘participatory boosterism’, for example, fails to address questions of power, inequality and poverty and serves to depoliticize conflicts, enabling the smuggling in of aggressive neoliberal practices. Pablo Leal, for example argues that it is no coincidence that participation ‘appeared as a new battle horse for official development precisely at the time of the shock treatment of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) inflicted . . . by the World Bank and the IMF’.

The adaptability of progressive forms to different contexts means they are also at risk of being captured by neoliberal ideology. Several processes have both a cooperative and a corporatist conception in which the latter appropriates, co-opts and makes it legible for the public transcript, such as decentralization and corporatized microcredit. Decentralization in the hidden transcript occurs in the context of fostering autonomy and reducing reliance on or subjection to the coercive state apparatus and/or corporatist capital. Self-help in the corporatist public transcript has been appropriated in the context of welfare roll-backs. My contention is that any claimed relationship between neoliberalism and practices such as decentralization is ideological, it is not natural or given.

Similarly, one of the foundation myths of capitalism is that it either invented or has a monopoly on entrepreneurship, or that it is the only system that has, or exemplifies, a ‘market’ economy, such that even the term ‘market’ is often used synonymously with it. Cooperatives and informal order did not come into being as ‘anti-capitalist’ forms. These forms pre-existed contemporary neoliberal capitalism. While practices can be appropriated and manipulated to give a self-responsibility patina to justify the retreat of state and corporate responsibility, the point is that neoliberal ideology has no monopoly on process and meaning.

The spaces that attach to subversion have been recognized in social science as socially constructed, and relational rather than pre-given or absolute. Subverting corporatist singularity and its colonization of the global scale has also involved recognition in scholarship of the inseparability and co-implication of the local and global; that the global is not just aggregative (the sum of local processes or their network connections) but also generative, that is, measured in terms of extension of influence. Places and communities as constituted by the complex networks and multiple social relations that span across the globe are thus global through those processes, and through the carriage of their influences and effects. In other words, the global is not just ‘out there’, networks of various reach, scope and intensity are co-present and co-constitute everyday practices.

Subverting the corporatist production of space rather than conceding it to be ‘free’ for neoliberal capital is an important step, a recognition that an impoverished
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view of space-time also impoverishes the spectrum of political possibilities. More than that, it erases realities, lifeworlds, voices and multiple pathways. The conception of space as closed, immobile, depthless, the opposite of time rather than inseparable from it (as the most contemporary conceptualizations even in physics have had it for decades) has increasingly been challenged by the emergence of alternative post-Euclidean imaginations of space and scale. I argue that these emergent subversive efforts are promising but bear full fruit in a modality where they are recognized as meriting independent consideration, not only as reactions to that which they challenge.

Subversion can also more easily be controlled through the subsumptive impulse when located within the same singularist spatial ontology. Valuable approaches such as standpoint epistemology rightly highlight the importance of voices from the ‘margins’ that can afford insights not accessed at or from the ‘centre’; these may multiply perspectives yet still be rooted in the same singularist spatial ontology, however. An imaginary that is characterized by a radical multiplicity of realities, rather than simply perspectives within a singular reality, may help challenge these limitations.

Up the ante, transcend the anti

The key proposition here is that the efficacy of grassroots agency within globalization praxis depends upon a ‘both-and’ amalgam of propositional and not just oppositional action. Agency is richer than conventional accounts allow and the ‘infra’ framing is a way of breaking the conceptualization straitjacket of globalization as domination versus resistance, which often locks communities and movements into a limited reactive, oppositional mode. Following on from this, globalization’s informal order – what I have termed infraglobalization – crucially underpins and is the greater parallel to the formal public transcript globalization. Grassroots strategies such as decentralized governance and microenterprises succeed insofar as they allow the cultivation of, and do not harm, this informal order, which may be deeper than civil society as represented in public transcript accounts and are less amenable to conventional social scientific measure. The informal order’s relative invisibility when viewed through the conventional lens is recognized as a representational artifact of the public transcript and belies the fact that, like gravity, it is akin to a force that helps hold everything together. An over-regulated, top-down control and command globalization can stifle and destroy the informal order upon which it is often parasitical.

It is possible and productive to distinguish between the corporate framing of globalization and globalization’s progressive enactments beyond a limited ‘anti-’ or ‘counter-’ framing. Disentangling globalization from its corporatist colonization with which it has been ideologically conflated challenges the monochrome rendering of global reality. The next steps toward taking back the power to author, enact, bargain, perform and create involves a more vivid palette of colours that I argue more closely matches lived realities, and offers greater scope for agency.
Sub rosa subvention

Never again will a single story be told as if it is the only one.

(John Berger)

In this modality, infraglobalization is elevated from an interstitial phenomenon, or one merely underlying formal global processes, to an imbricated reality that is a vibrant and fertile source of creative alternatives and both incipient and pre-existing parallels in its own right. Infrageographies are envisaged as an expansive, experimental and effervescent socio-spatial form, and its spaces conceived as multidimensional, contingent and constructed by human activity, unlike a subsuming conception of singular space based on the static Cartesian grid. If, as the book advances, space matters in how we constitute realities and engage with the world, new ways of imagining spaces outside of capital control is central to the projects for producing viable alternatives. This cannot be done, I suggest, within the rubric of dominant capital’s subsuming spatial frame.

A propositional politics of infraglobalization requires the long-view, and experiments and mètis may gestate over a long time-horizon. Laclau and Mouffe argued 30 years ago that plural democratic movements were shifting from a ‘strategy of opposition’ to a ‘strategy of construction of a new order’, and this process as understood here as a slow cooking hearty historical brew informed by such sensibilities as varied as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) phrase ‘building a new world in the shell of the old’ to ‘do what you can where you are’, to paraphrase Ted Roosevelt. The worlding of futures by enacting alternatives in the here and now could be viewed as infraglobalization’s key strategy of forward-looking prefiguration to capital’s forward-looking capitalization – the process by which expected future gains are monetized by present measures. In this vein, Gélinas similarly sees alternative political-economic forms as the seeds of a future order in which they may be the more prevalent modes:

Just as capitalism matured within the feudalism over several centuries before asserting itself as the dominant system, the alternative economy will likewise need to develop slowly within capitalism before gradually asserting itself in a community, a region, a country and finally throughout the world.

(Jacques Gélinas)

These infrageographies are produced outside official arenas and consist of spaces and sites that are an important but under-represented part of the spectrum of globalization. These may include, but are not limited to, the spaces of the community economy and the informal sector. They may involve utilizing grassroots circuits for information-sharing, solidarity, knowledge production, resource-pooling and policy development as seen, for example, in the World Social Forum movement. Supporting and subventing these strategies becomes a priority for a number of groups to respond more autonomously and in innovative ways as agents actively producing and ordering global reality. There are a wealth of local laboratories
of democratic decision-making, cooperative enterprises, alternative forms of exchange and participatory budgeting. Going by the measures of an old-style progressive politics, the figures may look discouraging, such as the decline in major political party and trade union membership over the past quarter century. But over this same period, the numbers involved in worker-owned businesses, for example, has dramatically increased: even in the heartland of capitalist empire, the US, the numbers of worker-owners involved in cooperatives is estimated to have increased from 250,000 in 1975 to 11 million in 2014; and over a third of the US population are members of a cooperative. A new form of propositional politics is slowly supplanting the old politics.

Experiments may be discontinuous, ebbing and flowing with the dynamics of local institutions, the reshuffling of state and municipal governments and external influences, but their effects can be long lasting and have extensive reach. This can be seen both in the Porto Alegre model of participatory budgeting which lasted a decade and a half in Brazil (1991 to 2004) and spread as an adapted practice to countless cities and municipal councils around the world (see Chapter 3); and in Kerala’s decentralization, participatory planning and social economy experiment which was launched in 1996 and also went through spurts and setbacks depending on the see-saw swing of which state government presided every five year term (see Chapter 5).

Infraglobalization does not exist in dualistic opposition to public transcript globalization as much as it is another and arguably much larger layer of social reality occupying the same physical space, whose practices corporatist entities such as the neoliberal state cannot necessarily infiltrate, regulate or subsume. Parallel practices may include community-led alternatives to the market-determined and state-led appropriations of such practices as microfinance. I argue that microfinance is not circumscribed or ‘owned’ by neoliberalism nor is its wholesale corporatist commercialization and financialization inevitable. This book does not debate or document the clear shortcomings of donor-dependent corporate microfinance and cooperatives which are locked into formal financial circuits, but it bears emphasizing that there is nothing that auto-circumscribes practices such as microcredit, ‘self-help’ and decentralization as political technologies of neoliberalism, as the Kerala case study highlights. Similarly, the role of women and social reproduction can be recognized as central to global development because they happen to assume great importance in the integral informal order, rather than because they are the ideal-typical corporatized microfinance subjects. Practices can be hijacked by neoliberalism, or they can be harnessed more progressively in the service of socially just policies: the point is that they are neither ideologically pre-determined nor pre-disposed.

In view of these propositions, I ask how amenable is understanding Kerala’s contemporary development through an infraglobalization lens? What are the prospects for planning as a participatory democratic enterprise (applied infraglobalization?) and asserting autonomy over finance capital, as illustrated in a corporate finance-poor state like Kerala? Has Kerala’s experience of subventing home-grown cooperatives and decentralized budget-supported participatory planning
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as alternatives to corporatist globalization and microcredit been successful, and
further, can it be replicated elsewhere? If so, what is it about Kerala’s cultural-
political milieu that makes its articulation of radical democratic practice and
microenterprises possible? How does a state pursuing a redistributionist agenda
fare in an ostensibly neoliberal period? Can governments and other governing
agents abide by the principle and practice of *primum nil nocere* – first, do no
harm – non-maleficence in at least protecting the mētis of communities? The book
argues that while conventional social scientific frames may not be able to quantify
or definitionally capture mētis, states can nevertheless still act to protect rather
than destroy it.

Infraglobalization is also an imaginary suggesting greater attention be duly
directed to people’s lived experiences with political spaces both of their own
making and those that may also be circumscribed by others. The ‘everyday’ and
sphere of social reproduction here also matter in constituting reality and in initiating
processes that may take on extra-local reach. It engages directly with the
idea – and ideal – of greater autonomy, and the question of the degree to which
social movements and communities develop alternatives outside a system apparently
tied to the desires and whims of corporatist elites. What are the possibilities
for building strategic translocal, global alliances and cultivating subaltern agency
and capacity to shape processes and help effect coordination at a distance?

The previous section foreshadowed the important role played by mētis, which
here refers to grassroots cultural forms, norms and practices, and to vernacular
wisdom, know-how and knack. It is a practical experiential knowledge that may
never be fully comprehended in the public transcript. A mētis-based infraglobali-
zation acknowledges that: first, social relations, like ecological systems, are far
more complex than can be modelled or conventionally represented; and second,
that local knowledge is often not easily written down or ‘proven’ according to posi-
tivistic scientific conventions, thus rendering it invisible in the corporatist world-
view, to be devalued and often destroyed by high modernist planners. Exploring
the experience of Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) or People’s Science
movement is an interesting vehicle for examining how mētis might be harnessed
rather than harmed, particularly in Kerala’s successful literacy campaign which
drew on indigenous cultural forms and social practices rather than imposing a top-
down program that might have ignored the population’s existing strengths.

Infraglobalization also implicitly recognizes the problem of over-determination
inherent in public transcript representations of power. There are multiple ways
various actors engage with, create and experience global flows – it is not simply
about perpetrator/victim in terms of corporate capital and communities respec-
tively for example, nor only about accommodation versus resistance. It is also
about sub rosa development wherein portability, adaptive replicability and net-
works of social movements and community strategies are possible. In other words,
infraglobalization strategies travel too – why only confer mobility to corporatist
forms?

These interweaving layers may parallel as well as intersect and overlap with
civil society and social capital in its more public transcript guises, while not being
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defined or subsumed by either. The point of distinction is that communities and movements may organize and operate in ways incommensurable with the public transcript rendering of reality, which requires practices to be legible for the purposes of corporatist (state or capital) recording, classifying, containing, controlling and monitoring, often through force. They produce sub rosa geographies by virtue of their illegibility to corporatist forms.

In positing infraglobalization as a sub rosa socio-spatial ordering of reality, I make the case that ontology matters. It is significant, I suggest, that there is support for the radical multiplicity of reality in ascendant post-classical worldviews informing our ability to conceive of multiple realities occupying the same space. Infraglobalization accommodates co-existing contemporaneous multiplicities and manifold vernacular realities rather than making the ontological assumption that there is one true reality, as rooted in the classical Western tradition. If bodies and objects help produce, and not just occupy space, then it is possible to envisage different layers of socio-spatial reality which may overlap or intertwine around various orbits people and groups generate. This then relates to the conception of space that attaches to infraglobalization, as superposed, imbricated layers of reality that may be intersectional as well as parallel, criss-crossing with other practices and spaces. These are contemporaneous rather than palimpsestic, the latter implying linear temporal succession.

In exploring the progressive catalytic potential of an infraglobal socio-spatial framing, I underscore its experimentality. It might be envisaged as a social incubus, with spaces of experimentation and incubation, and capacity-building towards greater transformation: not every incubatory experiment may achieve successful transformation, but its gestation may generate highly beneficial social effects and contribute to métis. This is perhaps how métis has in fact been produced historically, through a good deal of trial and error, and an intimate and long-nurtured knowledge of practices rooted in particular times and places, and with mistakes simply adding to the store of grassroots knowledge.

Constituted at various scales, infrageographies are presented as sites of innovation and not just amelioration, where subjects are posited as capable of initiating, and not simply interpreting. I am conscious to try not to reify or romanticize the subaltern, and recognize that socially or ethically regressive practices and customs may also exist infrageographically. This may, in turn, serve as a justification for not always warranted or appropriately executed state intervention, such as with the Roma people. This lies outside the purview of this book, wherein I employ the notion of a subaltern in a way that actually mainstreams the marginalized such that the numerical majority of people may identify both as and with the ‘subaltern’. In Kerala this strategy has historically played out with activists identifying with and embracing the struggle of the ‘untouchables’ rather than spurning people of this caste as external, with an inclusivist struggle that has helped to ferment Kerala’s remarkable history of social activism.

This book does not suggest that an advocacy of informal power should let formal power ‘off the hook’ or that it entails accepting any socially regressive rolling back of state functions such as a social safety net. The struggle to reform
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public, putatively representative, institutions is an important one, particularly as these institutions have often corroded the very values they have been set up to promote. Vigilance about formal power and holding it to account certainly need not preclude informal capacity building. Formal institutional state power is more complex and less monolithic than oversimplifications may imply, and while I have anarchist sympathies I in fact suggest the state may have a constructive, facilitative role to play as the case of Kerala illustrates, especially when there is a credible policy commitment from state representatives and agencies.

From critique to construction

The key propositions in this modality are as follows. Progressive politics requires a progressive time-space, which I have identified as comprising already existing and rich infrageographies that are incubatory, deep, and seek to achieve safe distance from corporatist surveillance, in part through illegibility. Infraglobalization is advanced in this book as a potentially progressive and multidimensional political space, a layer of socio-spatial reality and of informal sub rosa ordering that corporate forces cannot always regulate, dominate or even reach. This recognizes not all spatial forms or differentiations can be derived or caused from the logic of capital accumulation nor in fact any singular and putatively all-subsuming logic. Resignifying space as deeply and dynamically layered and imbued with a multiplicity of form concomitantly helps multiply political possibilities – and actualities. Agents are recognized as capacious subjects who bring global processes into being, cultivate and nourish métis, and build the terrain as they move. I argue that strategies are often best incubated infrageographically lest they be co-opted or crushed by corporate capital or repressive functions of the state, but that the state may have a facilitative role to play, as the case of Kerala shows with its participatory planning programme and community-led microenterprises. The relationship with the state, depending upon the context, can be both facilitative and fraught, both productive and vexed.

It is not surprising many forms of social capital, both as concept and as asset, are too valuable not to be appropriated and instrumentalized by corporatism. I suggest that creating alternative practices involves a large degree of covert capacity-building, drawing upon and cultivating métis, until and unless institutional safeguards and commitments from the state are in place. This proposition will be explored in the case of Kerala (Chapter 5).

How the book is organized

The rest of the book is organized by four substantive chapters, followed by a brief concluding chapter. The chapters correspond with the three syndromes just outlined, with some overlap. The book seeks to distinguish between globalization as a more conventional onto-epistemology (Chapter 2) and as a ‘catalytic’ onto-epistemology (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and reflects the key aims of the book toward fostering viable social alternatives and alternatives-in-waiting, both established