One

INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONING ‘GLOBALIZATION’

Summary

The first chapter introduces the central theme of the work, globalization. It considers its historical roots and the form which it takes in the present day, its connection to neo-liberal economics, and the ways in which it pervades everyday life. Two theoretical positions on globalization are considered, the ‘hyper-globalists’ and the ‘sceptical internationalists’. The impact of the 2008 recession is considered.

Key concepts

Globalization; hyper-globalists; sceptical internationalists; neo-liberalism; simultaneity; 2008 recession.

Main notes

The background to globalization and its present manifestations and complexities should be discussed, laying the groundwork for wider explorations of its geographical, physical and social implications here and elsewhere in the book.
Background to globalization

Definitions

- What do we mean by globalization?
  - Structural changes
  - Neo-liberal, free market ideology (Washington Consensus)
  - Simultaneity (‘real-time’ events/communications)
- Increased awareness that what is happening in one part of the world is affected by what happens in others
- Crucial characteristic of a global economy = ‘the qualitative transformation of economic relationships across geographical space’
- Nineteenth-century roots of the concept

Historical comparison

- Qualitatively, the world economy is a very different place under the present period of globalization, due to increasing interconnectedness
- Huge increases in intra-industry and intra-firm trade, which indicate functionally fragmented and geographically dispersed production processes:
  - Pre-1914, globalization involved shallow integration
  - Today, deep integration, with global production networks

Globalization today

Globalization is not an inevitable end but a complex set of processes. These should be explored and students encouraged to follow up on their own.

Positions on globalization

- Division of opinion exists on whether globalization is good or bad
- Draw the distinction between:
  - Hyper-globalists: argue we live in a borderless world where the national is no longer relevant
  - Sceptical internationalists: argue that there is nothing new about globalization
- Both positions have adherents of all political stripes and on both pro- and anti-globalization sides

Geographies of globalization

- Globalization reflected in and influenced by multiple geographies, not a single global geography
- Many products have such a complex geography that labels of origin are meaningless
Introduction: Questioning ‘Globalization’

- Disparity between rich and poor countries; development gap continues to widen, but to blame it just on ‘globalization’ is simplistic
- Protest movements as much as capitalist practices are global

The present situation

- Describe the four tendencies:
  - localizing processes
  - internationalizing processes
  - globalizing processes
  - regionalizing processes
- 2008: recession calls into question free market neo-liberalism, setting the context for the rest of the volume’s explorations

Conclusion

- Summarize the definition of globalization and the different philosophical stances on it
- Remind students of the origins of globalization and the distinctive nature of present-day globalization
- Ask students to consider the impact of globalization on geography
- Speculate on the impact of the 2008 recession

Concepts to explore further

Global networks; development; poverty; recession; global–local connections.

Further reading


Media content

Noam Chomsky on Globalization (2007): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdYwAXZh0ME
Questions and exercises

In what way might the present period of globalization be seen as the ‘beginning of history’?

Could a ‘third position’ be found which incorporates aspects of both hyper-globalist and sceptical internationalist positions while avoiding their problems? Define what such a position would incorporate.

Base a short take-home assignment around comparing and contrasting globalization in the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries, in terms of their economic, social and technological aspects (or substitute others according to the focus of your course).

Does the 2008 recession mark the end of globalization, or simply a change in a wider period of globalization? Justify your answer.