

## Our Small Global World

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*Ethnicities and Global Multiculture: Pants for an Octopus.* By Jan Nederveen Pieterse. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007. 254 pp., \$72.00 cloth (ISBN: 0-7425-4063-4), \$24.95 paper (ISBN: 0-7425-4064-2).

In *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture*, Jan Nederveen Pieterse takes a look at globalization from the viewpoint of ethnicity and multiculturalism. Most fundamentally, he argues that globalization cannot be properly understood without reference to issues related to the world's multiple ethnicities and to the historical dynamics of multiculturalism. The eight chapters in the book are revised from works that have appeared in print or oral publication over the span of more than a decade of research on the cultural dimensions of globalization.

Nederveen Pieterse begins *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture* with two chapters that explore the nature of ethnicity and its relation to nationalism. He argues that ethnicity comes in various guises, most of which ought to be better recognized in social science scholarship, which typically focuses on ethnic conflict. According to Nederveen Pieterse, ethnicity in one place and time cannot necessarily be equated with ethnicity in another place and time. He distinguishes four types of ethnicity: (1) domination ethnicity, which arises in the context of nation-states as nationalism; (2) enclosure ethnicity, which is achieved by confinement to a certain region, such as a ghetto; (3) competition ethnicity, which refers to a state of conflict among ethnic groups; and (4) optional ethnicity, which is voluntarily adopted by means of symbolic appropriations. What these ideal-typical distinctions make clear is that the ethnic experiences across the world and in different epochs vary considerably.

Turning to what is arguably the most relevant empirical manifestation of globalization at present, Nederveen Pieterse devotes a chapter to the global political economy and its relationship to ethnicity. He argues that the perspective of a homogenous ethnic economy is too localized and restricted when expressed in terms of the nation-state. Instead, the ethnic dimensions of the economy should be understood to be essentially cross-cultural. Thus, the study of the worldwide economy also ought to take into account the social capital that is formed by the interethnic relations among workers. Wherever they exist, immigrant economies are always embedded within larger economies that are essentially intercultural in nature.

The next three chapters of *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture* center on selected dimensions of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is defined as a particular institutionalization of a given state of multi-ethnicity. Most important, Nederveen Pieterse argues that multiculturalism is multifaceted and historically variable. The central questions of multiculturalism revolve around at least four axes: (1) the cultural flux of the relative distances and proximities among cultures; (2) the everyday experience of culture within concrete socio-historical settings; (3) the class dimensions of multiculturalism in tolerating certain cultural distinctions when money plays a favorable role, and (4) the politics of recognition in the context of citizenship.

Critical to both ethnicities and multiculturalisms are the group boundaries that are drawn to determine who belongs to which ethnic group and who will be accorded recognition accordingly. Historically, such practices as the drawing of group boundaries have been variably based on colonial histories, cultural conflicts, and the traditions of settler societies—all operating under influence of market strategies. Ethnicity and multiculturalism are also reflected in a variety of practices of representation, such as museums and exhibitions that display the objects of cultures and ethnicities. Typically focused on exotic, faraway cultures, globalization has brought into question the once more easily established differentiations between “us” and “them.” Thus, instead of museums that look at the “other,” the new practices of display focus on dialog and a reflexive self-presentation. Yet, power is often left unquestioned.

Focusing on Islamic culture, Nederveen Pieterse scrutinizes a non-Western form of cosmopolitanism in order to uncover the conflicts that stem from a clash between the cross-national reach of Islam and the quest for global hegemony by the United States. His most important observation in this section is that the Islamic world is itself characterized by multiple cultures and that those cultures have been historically variable. In conclusion, Nederveen Pieterse argues that social science scholarship needs to recognize that multiculturalism cannot be restricted to the nation-state level and thus ought to be investigated globally, in terms of cross-national linkages. To illustrate the importance of this point, he cites the impact of the Danish cartoon that mocked Islam and the killing of Dutch cinematographer Theo van Gogh.

*Ethnicities and Global Multiculture* is part of an increasingly popular trend in globalization studies. In recent years, a considerable number of books have focused on the nexus of ethnicity and globalization (Burgoyne 2000; Castles 2000; Berking 2003), provided comparative and global perspectives on nationalism and ethnicity (Riggs 2002; Tiryakian 2004; Kemp 2005), or studied multiculturalism in the global age (Cesari 2002). In the introduction to *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture*, Nederveen Pieterse remarks that it is perhaps no coincidence that interest in globalization and international studies often comes from scholars who have enjoyed border transcending experiences (see Deflem 2007). Similarly, the rise in the ethnicity and globalization literature can be attributed to the increasingly obvious awareness of a complex reality of global multi-ethnicities.

Although the chapters of *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture* are argued to have been “completely overhauled” from their original publication (p. ix), the book could have been reworked more comprehensively to offer a coherent perspective. Somewhat ironic in the light of Nederveen Pieterse’s arguments on the specificities of ethnicities are his generalizing discourse and the fact that the chapters are presented in a manner that is dislocated from their original contexts. At one point, for instance, Nederveen Pieterse cites Louis Tobback’s position on multiculturalism (p. 99), but he does not explain that Tobback is a Belgian politician and that his ideas were originally presented in a paper delivered in that country. It is also striking that much of the recent literature on ethnicity and globalization is not cited, reflecting the fact that the chapters are based on papers originally prepared in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Some classic works on the cultural dimensions of globalization are also not addressed (for example, Appadurai 1996).

*Ethnicities and Global Multiculture*’s primary contribution to the study of the cultural dimensions of globalization lays in Nederveen Pieterse’s conceptual ability to uncover various analytical dimensions of global ethnicity and multiculturalism. What is missing is a clear theoretical perspective that could account for the patterns and dynamics of ethnicities in the global context. Furthermore, even though Nederveen Pieterse proposes that we should abandon the terms “ethnicity” and “multiculturalism” in favor of “ethnicities” and “global multiculture,”

as featured in the title of the book, he nonetheless uses the more familiar terms throughout the text. At its best, *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture* raises important questions about the cultural aspects of globalization and provides scholars with analytical tools to research some relevant empirical dimensions of ethnicity and multiculturalism and to begin developing systematic theories about them.

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