

PART ONE

Globalization: Past

Dis:connectivity in Global History

Roland Wenzlhuemer

ABSTRACT

This chapter takes a historical perspective on processes of globalization. It evaluates how the historical sciences have hitherto applied the concept of globalization in historical research and examines some of the discontents that have emerged among historians in this context. The chapter claims that such discontents are often the consequence of an oversimplified, unidirectional understanding of globalization that ignores the role of disconnections in processes of global entanglement. It advocates a stronger focus on the interplay between global connectivity and disconnectivity (captured by the term *dis:connectivity*) and develops this claim with the help of examples from the history of telegraphy.

KEYWORDS

disconnections, dis:connectivity, global history, history of globalization, telegraph

CRISES AND GLOBALIZATION

Etymologically speaking, crises are dramatic—perhaps even life-threatening—phenomena (Koselleck, 1982). So far in this still-young twenty-first century, individual crises might seem temporary, but the state of crisis that plagues society more broadly seems all too permanent. For years now, we have been enduring a constant, deeply transformative state of emergency, consisting of overlapping economic and social crises (Macho, 2020). Not long after the horrific attacks of September 11th and the subsequent “Global War on Terror,” much of the world suffered a dire financial crisis starting in 2008. Just as the global economy gradually started to recover, public consciousness began to grasp the reality of climate change, whose socioeconomic effects are becoming ever harder to ignore. As

people slowly started to engage with the climate crisis, it was overshadowed in the mid-2010s—at least in Europe—by the “refugee crisis” and the fears it evoked. While both of these issues remain with us, they have faded into the background, outshined by the ominous and mercurial COVID crisis.

For all their overlap and interrelations, these crises, of course, display important differences: they all move at their own paces and in their own temporalities; they all affect different regional epicenters, which can change over time; they all manifest themselves in our everyday lives in their own ways; they all engage particular collective and individual fears; and each one poses its own range of ethical dilemmas. There is one thing, however, that all these crises have in common: they are deeply embedded in processes of globalization, past and present. Politically and religiously motivated terrorism, for example, is nourished by a complex global web of geopolitical ambitions and cultural antagonisms extending back at least to the days of triumphant European imperialism (Dietze, 2016; Schraut, 2018). In economics, the subprime mortgage crisis in the United States in 2008 permeated global capital markets along countless reciprocal ties. A regional real estate bubble rapidly induced a global banking crisis. In ecology, human-induced climate change is inseparable from the history of industrialization and consumerism. Rapid growth, interregional mobility, and the global division of labor are what fuels it. Climate change pays no heed to human boundaries, national or otherwise. It is among the few literally global phenomena. Another, surely, is COVID-19. In early 2020, the virus spread effortlessly around the entire planet along the routes of global mobility networks. Dense, interconnected, global networks are what all these crises share. They would be unthinkable without processes of worldwide exchange that have grown over the last two hundred years or so. These crises make the scope and depth of global networks uniquely palpable.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE STUDY OF HISTORY

Crisis situations and vexing issues are not the only things that spread thanks to global networks. Global connections and processes of exchange utterly permeate our modern societies, and their particular anatomies are often the result of long-standing historical processes. Historical scholarship has accordingly long concerned itself with the emergence and social significance of such interrelations. For example, the history of European expansion, of colonialism, of imperialism, of the world wars, and of the international postwar order has preoccupied historians for decades. Since global history entered the scene around the turn of the millennium, there has been a research program to investigate phenomena of global entanglement and their historical significance beyond Eurocentric preconceptions. As a branch of history, global history privileges global connectivity and devotes considerable effort to identifying and analyzing global connections.

Processes of globalization are, thus, nothing new in the study of history. Still, many historians are uneasy with the term *globalization*. While economists and sociologists had already begun probing the concept of globalization in the 1960s and '70s, historians first came to it in the 1990s and proceeded to follow the trend that made the term “an academic buzzword that penetrated every discipline” (Epple, 2012).¹ The enthusiasm was, however, short-lived. It was quickly overshadowed by the sobering effects of the increasingly dominant approaches from cultural history and the increasingly strong critiques of the term’s Eurocentricity. Cultural history found little value in a term whose universalizing scope offered so little room for cultural contexts and ascriptions of meaning.² Historical anthropology was suspicious of any concept whose teleological pretensions largely occluded historical actors and their agency.

Global history, transcultural history, and especially so-called “extra-European history” wrestled with the Eurocentrism that lurked inescapably in many analytical applications of globalization. Frederick Cooper provides one example. His critique marshaled episodes of African history to demonstrate how limited such an understanding of globalization and its attendant paradigm of integration can be (Cooper, 2001, 2005). Cooper’s misgivings found broad approbation and helped to strengthen doubts about the analytical utility of the term *globalization* in African history as well as in the broader discipline (Austin, 2018: 23).

Some historians were nearly ready to eschew the term completely (Middell & Engel, 2010). Other studies employed such broad and hazy definitions of globalization that it lost any analytical value (Gills & Thompson, 2006: 4; Mazlish & Iriye, 2005: 2). And when the concept did play a meaningful role in a historical study, it quickly became apparent how many different definitions it was supposed to subsume and how easily this led to scholars talking past each other.³ As a result of such obstacles, historians long avoided productive engagement with the concept of globalization and shied from probing its potential for historical research.

The term continued to pop up occasionally in historical research, but its uses were generally simplistic and referred merely to increasing global connections and integration. Globalization principally referred to deepening global connectivity (Giddens, 1990) or—conversely—the decoupling of human interaction (i.e., time sharing) from close proximity. Such interpretations have taken geographic space as a socially divisive element, thus identifying “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1989) as an important marker of globalization processes. The history of globalization remained oddly linear, both in the public discourse and in academic debates. People migrated. Markets integrated. Information propagated around the globe with great speed. Snappy metaphors were invoked to capture this view of globalization in easily digestible images. The world is shrinking. It’s a village. “The world is flat” (Friedman, 2005).

Even as global history grew into a research program of its own, this concept of globalization remained largely unchanged in its core. Indeed, global history focused

still more intensely on its central motif: global networks of increasing density (Conrad, 2016; Komlosy, 2011; Wenzlhuemer, 2020). While invoking processes of global entanglement and their profound social significance, the principal phenomena under investigation remained largely undertheorized (Wenzlhuemer, 2019). Identifying and evaluating global connections in diverse causal relations throughout history was long understood to be the central empirical concern of global history and related disciplines, whether they used the term *globalization* explicitly or not.

Only in the past decade has global history begun to reflect on the concept of globalization and its analytical utility. If the term were to continue to find purchase in the study of the “transformation of the world” (Osterhammel, 2014), for example, the teleologies and automatisms it contains could no longer be ignored. One important step was to talk in terms of *processes of globalization* in the plural rather than of *globalization* in the singular, with each process situated in its own historical and social context (Barth, Gänger, & Petersson, 2014; Epple, 2012; Hunt, 2014; Osterhammel, 2017). Jürgen Osterhammel in particular made the case that pluralizing the concept of globalization would greatly benefit historical research. According to him, the plural would “politically defuse” the term and temper the “drive towards holism in the contemporary discussion” about globalization. “The plural simplifies the historians’ lives by letting us preserve our attention to detail and skepticism towards generalizations without forcing us to evade the big questions” (Osterhammel, 2017: 12–13).⁴

However, Osterhammel continued, “the idea of singular (and unique) megaglobalization would remain lurking in the background” in spite of processes of integration being framed in the plural (Osterhammel, 2017: 13). Thus, even though a wider historical perspective extending beyond European history has led to a more refined and stratified concept of globalization, actual research practice remains focused on investigating increasing connectivity. In any event, this approach persists as the lens through which individual phenomena of globalization are viewed and analyzed.

As a result, historical scholarship—among other disciplines—still lacks a nuanced conception of global connections that can finally do away with outmoded presumptions about linearity and universality and is able to capture various forms and articulations of connectivity (Wenzlhuemer, 2019). Countervailing processes, interrupted connectivity, the significance of absent integration, and the role of cumbersome and circuitous exchange are areas of particular neglect. Connections can be slow and arduous. They can be cut or never come to be in the first place. They can be absent where one would expect them. They can leave gaps. When a subgroup of actors intensifies their connections, others will fall away—at least in relative terms. The relevance of connections lies not only in how they relate to other connections, but also because they are embedded in forms of disconnectivity and isolation. When the scope of globalization is expanded in this manner, it becomes amenable to more complex analyses of contemporary society and more useful as a tool for historical study.

GLOBAL HISTORY AND DISCONNECTIVITY

In historical globalization research that *has* dealt with the significance of disruptions, disintegration, and the absence of global connections, two types of argument recur. Either there is the objection that focusing too narrowly on global integration obscures the many whose practices remain untouched by such developments and whose cultural contexts risk being thereby overshadowed, or there is the attempt to show how processes of global integration can reverse in certain circumstances and lead to limited instances of deglobalization.

Jeremy Adelman's essay "What Is Global History Now?" (Adelman, 2017), which was intensely debated among historians when it appeared in 2017, is an example of the former. Adelman sharply criticized actual practice in global history. He expressed his unease in the face of some fellow global historians' euphoria, which can sometimes even verge into an unbecoming triumphalism. He warned of the increasingly normative aspirations of scholarship in global history. And he admonished all to avoid the historiographical traps that lurk whenever history is written only with reference to the experiences and convictions of highly mobile, cosmopolitan observers. These are just some of the valid criticisms that led to a lively discussion in the field about the significance of local contexts and "small spaces" in global history. The resulting process of *placing* history and probing the relationships between global, national, and other contexts is still far from over.⁵ Another of Adelman's criticisms has found relatively little resonance. He calls on us to "dispens[e] with the idea that global integration was like an electric circuit, bringing light to the connected." Persisting with this metaphor, he continues:

Lighting up corners of the earth leaves others in the dark. The story of the globalists illuminates some at the expense of others, the left behind, the ones who cannot move, and those who become immobilised because the light no longer shines on them. [. . .] To shift the imagery: understanding inter-dependence means seeing how it expands personal and social horizons for some, but also thins bonds with others. At least until those bonds become more meaningful than an Instagram list, there will be much more resistance to integration than we have admitted. To gain better insights into the dynamics and resistances to integration, to give as much airtime to separation, disintegration and fragility as we do to connection, integration and convergence, we are going to have to get rid of flat-Earth narratives and ideas of global predestination once and for all. (Adelman, 2017)

This passage contains three critical points for the meaning of disconnectivity. First, the metaphor of illumination and enlightenment refers to a pervasive, but subliminally held view of global integration that takes processes of integration to be momentous forces of historical significance. It coincides with the converse view of the disconnected as an inert mass. Adelman is criticizing the normative undertones of much research in global history. Second, he points out on another level the biases of historiographical attention. Global and globalization history have principally focused on mobile, globally active, and relatively cosmopolitan

groups of actors. Immobile people bound to their locales have largely been, to follow Adelman's metaphor, stuck in the dark. Global historians have generally ignored their stagnating and sometimes retrograde participation in globalization processes. Third, Adelman invokes forces of active resistance that the literature on global research has also neglected. In sum, it is a call to bring less normative baggage to the history of global integration and especially not to overlook the historical influence of those who were not the fulcrums of such processes of exchange and who instead might even have tried to actively avoid them.

Another context in which the discourse of global history has turned to interruptions and lacking global connectivity is "deglobalization," referring to phases in which the scale of global integration and its social significance decreased. The interwar period and the Great Depression are the classic examples. That commercial integration and trade volumes were much lower in this phase than was the case in the nineteenth century or in the postwar years has become a commonplace (James, 2001; Obstfeld & Taylor, 1998; see Williamson, 1996). Many such studies are based on a purely economic, "pendulum theory" of globalization, as Stefan Link has recently emphasized (Link, 2018: 344). Such interpretations assess globalization primarily in terms of global trade, the integration of global markets, and price convergence, which follow a sine-wave progression. Like a pendulum, periods of retarded integration or even deglobalization follow periods of intensive globalization (Link, 2018: 344).

In effect, absent, broken, or intermittent connections—disconnections—have not played a starring role in global history, nor have they been completely neglected. While branches of economic history have developed a model of alternating phases of globalization and deglobalization, Adelman has tried to prevent the laggards and the dissidents from being forgotten. Pierre-Yves Saunier, for his part, considers Adelman's call superfluous on the grounds that many studies in global history have considered the disconnections that pertain to their particular contexts as a matter of course. Saunier invokes a number of examples, like work on the history of communication and transportation, which necessarily also took note of immobile infrastructures. Sedentary, nonmigrating populations have always played a role in studies on the history of migration (Saunier, 2019: 38–39). Accordingly, Saunier comes to the conclusion that global history has in no way omitted or overlooked disconnectivity; rather, it is always already part of the equation.

FROM DISCONNECTIVITY TO DIS:CONNECTIVITY

Does it then follow that historical scholarship has already long grasped disconnective phenomena in the context of globalization and has long been approaching such objects of investigation with subtlety and nuance? Not even close. This becomes especially apparent in Saunier's very objection. Disconnective phenomena are treated as mere foils for whatever is actually being examined, if at all. There

is practically no theoretical or methodological engagement with disconnectivity. Such simple invocations and contrasts do little to disrupt global history's bias towards stories of integration; if anything, they subtly reinforce it. Claiming that disconnectivities have always been part of the equation distracts from the need to engage seriously with nonconnections, their role in constellations of connections, and how they relate to global connections.

Few things demonstrate this need as clearly as the manner in which disconnective phenomena are typically treated in relation to processes of integration. The typical case is a simple, binary connection/disconnection model, in which disconnectivity is simply treated as the opposite of connectivity. This tendency is as clear in Adelman's essay as it is in the many studies on deglobalization. When Adelman warns that focusing attention on the connected simultaneously leaves the unconnected in the dark, he is not only recapitulating one of the central arguments of contemporary critiques of globalization, which have long argued that the history of globalization has left many behind, exploited, and marginalized in its wake (Hardt & Negri, 2000; see, for example, Klein, 2002); he is simultaneously reinforcing the dichotomy. When economic history points to halts and reversals in processes of global integration, it also reflects a very simple, effectively binary conception of globalization.

In reality, though, connective and disconnective processes are deeply interwoven and interreact intensively, which becomes immediately apparent in relation to Adelman's argument. There is an interdependency between the connected and the unconnected, an inverse proportionality. As places, regions, and people around the globe integrate, the corollary is that others cannot (or don't want to) participate in those integrative processes to the same degree, and they will be left behind, relatively speaking. Global networks are lumpy; some branches are especially dense. The denser they are, the more conspicuous the patchy and empty areas become. To invoke another beloved metaphor of globalization research, the world is not "shrinking" as a whole; it's warping. The Suez Canal, one of the best-known examples of the history of global infrastructure in the nineteenth century, is a shining example. When the canal opened in 1869, it greatly facilitated and shortened the journey between Europe and Asia. The canal rerouted much maritime traffic. Valeska Huber, who has carefully studied the significance of the Suez Canal for the history of mobility, has stated that the canal turned the Mediterranean "from a lake to a lane" (Huber, 2012: 141). Other routes—in this particular case the long route around the Cape of Good Hope—saw less traffic and were then used primarily by sailing ships for freight. As one region grew more tightly coupled with the globe, another became (relatively) decoupled. Such warping of global space will also play a starring role in the case study described in the next section.

The same applies to the assumption that, in comparison to the late nineteenth century, the diminished flows of goods and capital during the interwar years constituted a period of deglobalization. This is but a small part of the bigger

picture and one sorely lacking context. The fact that the global economic crisis of the late 1920s and '30s propagated outward from the United States to soon grip the entire world is in itself a strong indication of the degree of global integration at the time. The global history of crisis management techniques (Patel, 2016), the simultaneous proliferation of international organizations (Herren, 2009; Sluga & Clavin, 2017), and the global dissemination of fascist thought (Framke, 2013; Hedinger, 2021) are further examples. Using the example of the interwar years, Jörn Leonhard flagged precisely this simultaneity of integration and disintegration. He wrote that “historically speaking, structural globalization has often coincided with sectoral deglobalization, with the two often reinforcing each other” (Leonhard, 2020: 413).⁶ This applies to processes of global integration in general. Globalization is not a ratchet mechanism, nor is it a reversible macro process. It consists, rather, of many small, interrelated, complementary processes.

The actors and places of globalization are themselves always embedded in connective and disconnective circumstances simultaneously (Biedermann, 2021: 25), and they must be studied in that state of tension. Connections and nonconnections converge in particular places and in the lived experiences of historical actors, revealing their significance in their interrelations. The Suez Canal is an illustrative example here, too. The canal was one such place where connective and disconnective phenomena converged and collided in a number of ways. The canal did not merely connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, inaugurating a new sea route of global significance; it also bisected ancient caravan routes, requiring travelers and camels to wait for gaps in the sea traffic so they could ferry across the canal (Huber, 2010: 340).

In the article cited above, Leonhard mentions the “tension between globality and deglobalization” (Leonhard, 2020: 413), touching on one of the most important points of an adequate conception of globalization.⁷ The tension that derives from the simultaneity and mutual constitution of connective and disconnective elements exerts a crucial influence on how processes of globalization develop and are shaped, experienced, and categorized. Its importance for the study of global history can hardly be overstated. From this perspective, the term *dis:connectivity* is invaluable because it captures precisely this mutually constitutive, tense relationship between global integration, disintegration, and the absence of connections whose relevance is only apparent in the context they collectively build. The term privileges neither connective nor disconnective processes, but focuses instead on their turbulent interplay, which becomes the decisive factor in grasping the social force of globalization. This is a fundamentally new approach to global history and to more present-minded studies of globalization—one that will continue to grow and be further articulated and developed in concrete empirical studies.

TELEGRAPHY AND DIS:CONNECTIVITY

To provide at least some hint of how dis:connectivity can facilitate new perspectives on processes of globalization, it is necessary to momentarily return to the history of telegraphy. This technology played a key role in the spurt of globalization that took place in the nineteenth century. The telegraph converted short messages into electric impulses and transmitted them along cables and wires with unprecedented speed over great distances. Around mid-century, the technology had become mature enough to enable transoceanic telegraphic connections between continents. By the turn of the century, a global telegraph network had grown that allowed, as contemporaries put it, “communication at the speed of thought” and greatly contributed to the “shrinking of the world.” In most studies of telegraphy in global history, the technology is held to be an archetypal connector (Wenzlhuemer, 2013).

But that is only part of the story. On closer inspection, it quickly becomes clear that telegraphy did not shrink the world; rather, it—to follow the metaphor—warped it at best. The communicative distance between some regions contracted, while others remained unchanged and were thus pushed to the communicative margins. Disrupted connections were routine even along the most important trunk lines, frustrating a clientele that had rapidly become accustomed to the convenience of telegraphy. Moreover, telegraphy did not dissolve geographic space, as some contemporaries claimed (Morus, 2000; Stein, 2001); it joined the intense existing interplay of such space with other kinds of connectivity.

A letter to the editor that was printed in the *Times of London* (Anonymous, 1870) leaves no doubt about the first two points at least. In this letter, the author describes the difficulties he had recently experienced in trying to send a telegraph from London to Calcutta in the evening. He begins describing his late-evening trek through London with the following sentence: “I had occasion to telegraph to Calcutta between 9 and 10 in the evening.” The necessity of doing so seemed to the author completely ordinary and understandable, requiring no further explanation or justification. The ability to communicate telegraphically with distant geographies had become, for a certain type of actor, a matter of course already by 1870. But the first complications were not long in coming. The author noted that he was uncertain as to “what offices would be open at that hour.” Therefore, the safest course of action seemed to be to proceed to the main branch of the General Post Office. Once there, however, a sign on the door directed him to the telegraph agency in Cornhill, which would accept telegrams from 8 p.m. to midnight. Upon arriving at this next destination, the author opines that the agency was direly understaffed and that the agent serving him seemed perplexed at the author’s wish to send a telegram to Calcutta: “‘Calcutta!’ he said, and looked very much as if I had asked to telegraph to Fernando Po. [. . .] Now, Sir, Calcutta is not an unknown

place. I thought it was the capital of British India, and that it was in close and constant communication with the City of London.”

This passage speaks volumes. From the protagonist’s point of view, this “close and constant communication” brought Calcutta much closer to London than the counterexample he invoked of Fernando Po, the island now known as Bioko off the coast of Cameroon. Fernando Po is supposed to exemplify utter isolation. But in terms of pure geography, Fernando Po is around 2,500 kilometers closer to London than Calcutta, and in the nineteenth century it occupied a strategically valuable position on Africa’s west coast. European ships frequented the island, and it was an important port for the British navy. Still, the author of this letter to the editor used it to symbolize remoteness, while treating Calcutta as if it were just around the corner.

Indeed, the global telegraph network of the time had developed a particular structure that promoted such views. Beyond the Mediterranean and the European coastal areas, the initial attempts to lay subsea cables across great distances in the 1850s and 1860s focused on a transatlantic connection and a cable to India. The first great overland projects, like the “Siemens Line” (Bühlmann, 1999), extended from Europe towards South Asia. These enterprises clearly took their cues from the imperial interests of the European powers, especially the British Empire. Thus arose a strong east-west axis in the global communication network that connected Europe—especially Great Britain—in the center with North America in the west, passing across the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean to India in the east. This axis extended further eastward to Oceania in the 1870s (Wenzlhuemer, 2013: 105–23). In later years and decades, the network propagated outward from this core axis. The east-west trunk long remained the stretch with the highest bandwidth and the greatest demand, while other regions were markedly less connected. Connections along the African coast did not come until much later, let alone overland lines into the continental interior. Although the continent of Africa was long an undeniable obstacle when planning routes between Europe and Asia because of the circumnavigation involved, this pattern was fundamentally disrupted by the particular structure of the telegraph network as well as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (see previous section). Telegraphy did not “annihilate” space, but warped it. In effect, Fernando Po became much less central. Contraction in one dimension coincided with expansion elsewhere (Wenzlhuemer, 2013: 123–29).

Returning to the letter in the *Times*, the addled agent sent the agitated author to the office of the Falmouth, Gibraltar and Malta Telegraph Company on Broad Street. There he learned that the cable to India was out of service at the moment. “[The clerk] informed me that the Falmouth line was broken between Lisbon and Gibraltar, that it would consequently take five or six days to telegraph to Calcutta, and that his company advised the public for the present to send their messages through Persia by the Indo-European Company, whose office was in

Telegraph-street.” Not until he reached the telegraph agency on Telegraph Street did the author finally manage to send his telegram to Calcutta.

The protagonist demonstrated little understanding for the situation in his letter: “I confess I thought it odd that in the centre of the heart of the British Empire a man should thus be sent from pillar to post, according to the hours of the night, in order to find the right end of the electric wire which is now the very nerve of the social body.” Why anybody should need to send a telegram to British India so late in the evening was simply a nonissue for him. Global connectivity was taken for granted, even though obstacles and interruptions naturally remained. In this case the telegram only traveled to India overland, because the undersea cable was out of service. This was a common occurrence in the 1870s and 1880s, as repeated mentions in the telegraph companies’ annual reports can attest. In 1881, the undersea connection between Great Britain and India was completely inoperable for more than a month in July and August. Four years later, the cable was down between June and October (Administration Report, 1874, 1883, 1890). And the *Administration Report of the Indo-European Telegraph Department* stated that, for the fiscal year 1882–83, “The Suez route was either partially interrupted or defective in one or more of its cable sections for nearly the entire official year” (Administration Report, 1883, Paragraph 31). In the second half of the nineteenth century, such disruptions to undersea-cable connectivity were routine. Overland lines to India were little more reliable (Bektas, 2000: 692). Adding insult to injury, saboteurs and charlatans would sometimes deliberately disrupt the connections (Wenzlhuemer, 2015: 358–59).

To understand the third of the points listed above, we must leave the letter writer’s London and go to a more remote node in the global telegraph network. The network continued to branch out as the nineteenth century progressed, necessitating ever more relay stations towards the end of the century. For infrastructural reasons, many were built in exceedingly remote locations, like small islands in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans that served as intermediate stations and network nodes. Three such stations can perhaps exemplify the wider phenomenon: Ascension, an island in the South Atlantic, became an intermediate station between Cape Town and Cape Verde in 1899 and 1900, with a cable leading to Europe and another to South America; a telegraph cable between Fremantle, Australia, and the east coast of Africa opened in 1901, with the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean serving as a relay station; and between 1902 and 1903, a transpacific cable connected Fiji with Vancouver, passing through the tiny atoll of Tabuaeran (a.k.a. Fanning Island). European telegraphers performed their duties at these and other distant, isolated locations, where they were ensconced in very different connective contexts simultaneously. They were among the first people on the planet to hear and propagate the latest news, but they themselves were practically immobile. They were forbidden from using the telegraph for private purposes. Communication with friends and family could only proceed by mail.

Supply ships might only land every few weeks, and delays and attendant supply shortages were common. The result was an extraordinary tension between the extremely high and low global connectivity that these actors had to navigate. Upon the outbreak of the First World War, an especially illustrative incident occurred on Fanning Island. German warships from the East Asia Squadron received orders to destroy the British relay station on the island and all telegraph cables connected to it. The telegraphers on Fanning Island received advance warning that a German cruiser was headed their way, but they could do nothing but wait for the German landing party to arrive and destroy their communication equipment (Wenzlhuemer, 2020: 47–68).

RECAPITULATION

Even a cursory glance at the history of telegraphy, like the one above, reveals several kinds of dis:connectivity in processes of globalization. First, the connectivity of some regions and actors coincides with the others' relative disconnectivity, which the structure of the telegraph network in the late nineteenth century makes imminently clear. Further, interruptions, delays, and communicative detours regularly afflicted the global telegraph network. Despite the regularity of transmission problems of various kinds, telegraphy induced high expectations with regard to connectivity. The letter to the editor described above clearly exemplifies the resultant dis:connective tension. And finally, telegraphy reveals the simultaneity of different forms of global connectivity that overlapped and intersected at particular people and places and could manifest in very different ways. Such was the case on remote relay stations, where the interplay between communicative and spatial connectivity and disconnectivity becomes immediately perceptible.

These are just a few particularly clear examples of what dis:connective phenomena can mean in processes of global integration. They are especially interesting because they derive from the emergence of the global telegraph network in the late nineteenth century, which historical research on globalization tends to treat as an archetypal case of global integration. Instead, this case demonstrates that globalization implies disruptions, delays, and absences in varying forms and intensities, not linear and total interconnectedness. The specific character and social significance of integration processes are unthinkable without reference to such processes. This applies just as much to current developments as it does to the history of globalization, as is evident in the shortages in the United Kingdom following Brexit and the constipation of global logistics caused by the *Ever Given* freighter running aground in the Suez Canal. The major crises mentioned in the introduction also indicate the tension between global integration and disintegration. The Global Financial Crisis that began in 2008 grew out of a speculative bubble in the American real estate market. Its origins are to be found in the tension between locally bound, immobile property (i.e., real estate) and

its valuation in highly fluid, deeply integrated financial markets. This interplay becomes even clearer upon consideration of what catalyzed the crisis. While panic traveled along dense global capital flows, the fundamental crisis was one of trust—an utterly primal form of connection—in this highly networked system. The same applies to the climate crisis, whose creeping, almost surreal progression contains a disconnective element. So far, attempts to counter climate change have failed principally due to lack of will and the limitations of international cooperation. Although global warming affects the entire planet, parochial interests and structures have trumped global cooperation in managing the crisis. Large-scale refugee migrations exemplify more than just human mobility. Rather, their principal characteristics are unfair treatment, closed borders, long delays, strict asylum regimes, and even brutal “pushbacks.” Here, too, connective and disconnective elements interlock directly.

All these crises are not just instances of global integration; they directly highlight the disruptive, nonconnected aspects of globalization. With their constant interplay, both factors shape the course of the overall process. The concept of dis:connectivity is an attempt to gain analytical purchase on such phenomena, one that will yield new perspectives on past and current processes of global integration and perhaps even to better understand how such processes are involved in crises.

NOTES

1. Author’s translation.
2. Even the groundbreaking article by Arjun Appadurai (1990) on cultural globalization, which sought to reconcile the concept with cultural history, was based on a linear model of integration despite the “disjunctures” in the title.
3. Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giráldez conducted an instructive debate with Kevin H. O’Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson that illustrates the point (Flynn & Giráldez, 1995, 2008; O’Rourke & Williamson, 2002, 2004).
4. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author’s.
5. These reminders are doubtlessly justified and, in many ways, overdue because they rest on accepted and uncontroversial foundations of historical scholarship. The question is one of critical reflection and situatedness, of the normative or explanatory character of scholarly research. Still, together with others who were pointing out the limitations of global history (see Bell, 2013, 2014), Adelman’s essay unleashed a lively, sometimes emotional debate about the state, the potential, and the weaknesses of work in global history. Richard Drayton and David Motadel, for their part, published a widely received and equally incisive reply to Adelman and Bell in 2018 in the *Journal of Global History* (Drayton & Motadel, 2018). Ghobrial (2019) provides the best summary of the debate to date.
6. Author’s translation.
7. Author’s translation.

REFERENCES

- Adelman, J. (2017). “What Is Global History Now?” *Aeon*, March 2. <https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment>.

- Administration Report of the Indo-European Telegraph Department for 1873–74* (IOR/V/24/4289) (1874). British Library: Oriental Collections.
- Administration Report of the Indo-European Telegraph Department for 1882–83* (IOR/V/24/4289) (1883). British Library: Oriental Collections.
- Administration Report of the Indo-European Telegraph Department for 1889–90* (IOR/V/24/4290) (1890). British Library: Oriental Collections.
- Anonymous (1870). "The Post Office and the Telegraphs." *The Times*, December 7, p. 6.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Public Culture* 2 (2): 1–24.
- Austin, G. (2018). "Global History in (Northwestern) Europe: Explorations and Debates." In S. Beckert & D. Sachsenmaier, eds., *Global History, Globally. Research and Practice around the World*, 21–44. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Barth, B., S. Gänger, & N.P. Petersson, eds. (2014). *Globalgeschichten: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Bektas, Y. (2000). "The Sultan's Messenger: Cultural Constructions of Ottoman Telegraphy, 1847–1880." *Technology and Culture* 41 (4): 669–96.
- Bell, D.A. (2013). "This Is What Happens When Historians Overuse the Idea of the Network." *The New Republic*, October 26. <https://newrepublic.com/article/114709/world-connecting-reviewed-historians-overuse-network-metaphor>.
- . (2014). "Questioning the Global Turn: The Case of the French Revolution." *French Historical Studies* 37 (1): 1–24.
- Biedermann, Z. (2021). "(Dis)connected History and the Multiple Narratives of Global Early Modernity." *Modern Philology* 119 (1): 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.1086/714972>.
- Bühlmann, E. (1999). *La Ligne Siemens: La construction du télégraphe indo-européen 1867–1870*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Conrad, S. (2016). *What Is Global History?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cooper, F. (2001). "What Is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian's Perspective." *African Affairs* 100 (399): 189–213.
- . (2005). *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dietze, C. (2016). *Die Erfindung des Terrorismus in Europa, Russland und den USA 1858–1866*. Hamburger Edition.
- Drayton, R., & D. Motadel (2018). "Discussion: The Futures of Global History." *Journal of Global History* 13 (1): 1–21. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S1740022817000262>.
- Epple, A. (2012). "Globalisierung/en." *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, June 11. <https://docupedia.de/zg/Globalisierung>.
- Flynn, D.O., & A. Giráldez (1995). "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571." *Journal of World History* 6 (2): 201–21.
- . (2008). "Born Again: Globalization's Sixteenth Century Origins (Asian/Global versus European Dynamics)." *Pacific Economic Review* 13 (3): 359–87.
- Framke, M. (2013). *Delhi-Rom-Berlin: Die indische Wahrnehmung von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus 1922–1939*. Darmstadt: wbg Academic.
- Friedman, T.L. (2005). *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Ghobrial, J.-P.A. (2019). "Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian." *Past and Present* 242 (14): 1–22.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gills, B.K., & W.R. Thompson (2006). *Globalization and Global History*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203799475>.
- Hardt, M., & A. Negri (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Harvey, D. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hedinger, D. (2021). *Die Achse: Berlin-Rom-Tokio 1919–1946*. München: C.H. Beck.
- Herren, M. (2009). *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865: Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung*. Darmstadt: wbv Academic.
- Huber, V. (2010). "Multiple Mobilities: Über den Umgang mit verschiedenen Mobilitätsformen um 1900." *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 36 (2): 317–41.
- . (2012). "Connecting Colonial Seas: The 'International Colonisation' of Port Said and the Suez Canal during and after the First World War." *European Review of History* 19 (1): 141–61.
- Hunt, L. (2014). *Writing History in the Global Era*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- James, H. (2001). *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klein, N. (2002). *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*. New York: Picador.
- Komlosy, A. (2011). *Globalgeschichte. Methoden und Theorien*. Böhlau Verlag.
- Koselleck, R. (1982). "Krise." In O. Brunner, W. Conze, & R. Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Band 3: H-Me* 3: 617–50. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Leonhard, J. (2020). "Keine Dichotomie: Zum Verhältnis von Nationalstaat und Globalisierung." *Forschung & Lehre* 27 (5): 412–13.
- Link, S. (2018). "How Might 21st-Century De-Globalization Unfold? Some Historical Reflections." *New Global Studies* 12 (3): 343–65.
- Macho, T. (2020). "Krisenzeiten: Zur Inflation eines Begriffs." *Geschichte der Gegenwart*, May 31. <https://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/krisenzeiten-zur-inflation-eines-begriffs/>.
- Mazlish, B., & A. Iriye, eds. (2005). *The Global History Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Middell, M., & U. Engel, eds. (2010). *Theoretiker der Globalisierung*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.
- Morus, I.R. (2000). "'The Nervous System of Britain': Space, Time and the Electric Telegraph in the Victorian Age." *British Journal for the History of Science* 33 (4): 455–75.
- Obstfeld, M., & A.M. Taylor (1998). "The Great Depression as a Watershed: International Capital Mobility over the Long Run." In M.D. Bordo, C. Goldin, & E.N. White, eds., *The Defining Moment: The Great Depression and the American Economy in the Twentieth Century*, 353–402. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- O'Rourke, K.H., & J.G. Williamson (2002). "When Did Globalisation Begin?" *European Review of Economic History* 6 (1): 23–50.
- . (2004). "Once More: When Did Globalisation Begin?" *European Review of Economic History* 8 (1): 109–17.
- Osterhammel, J. (2014). *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . (2017). *Die Flughöhe der Adler: Historische Essays zur globalen Gegenwart*, 2nd ed. München: C.H. Beck.
- Patel, K.K. (2016). *The New Deal: A Global History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Saunier, P.-Y. (2019). "Comment: Global History, Jürgen Osterhammel." In M. Tamm & P. Burke, eds., *Debating New Approaches to History*, 35–40. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Schraut, S. (2018). *Terrorismus und politische Gewalt*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Sluga, G., & P. Clavin, eds. (2017). *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stein, J. (2001). "Reflections on Time, Time-Space Compression and Technology in the Nineteenth Century." In J. May & N. Thrift, eds., *TimeSpace: Geographies of Temporality*, 106–19. London: Routledge.
- Wenzlhuemer, R. (2013). *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- . (2015). “Verbrechen, Verbrechensbekämpfung und Telegrafie: Kriminalhistorische Perspektiven auf die Entkoppelung von Transport und Kommunikation im langen 19. Jahrhundert.” *Historische Zeitschrift* 301 (2): 347–73.
- . (2019). “Connections in Global History.” *Comparativ* 29 (2): 106–21. <https://doi.org/10.26014/j.comp.2019.02.06>.
- . (2020). *Doing Global History: An Introduction in Six Concepts*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Williamson, J.G. (1996). “Globalization, Convergence, and History.” *Journal of Economic History* 56 (2): 277–306.