# Conversation 1

## *Postmodernity or the Second Modernity?*

JOHANNES WILLMS   *Let's begin with what sociology means, and why it's useful. What is the task of sociology?*

ULRICH BECK   The simplest answer is that sociology is the study of society. But that just regresses the question, because what is society? You can't see it, you can't smell it, you can't taste it, and you can't hold it in your hands.

*What do you mean? Are you saying that society isn't sensuous? If I walk down a crowded sidewalk, or into a bar or football stadium, society seems to fill my senses, sometimes almost to the point of overwhelming me.*

Yes, but that's not what sociology means by society. Society is certainly there where you sense it, but it goes beyond your senses. It is present where you find a lot of bodies, but it can't be reduced to them. It's something that manifests itself through them. The individual who reads a book quietly all alone in her room is still doing it within the force field of society. It is there in her origins and her education. It could be that she's writing a review. But whether she's making a living or fulfilling a duty or experiencing a pleasure, society is enabling and constraining her. Society is realizing itself through her actions.

Society's ethereality is only the first in a series of problems. We have then to deal with the fact that society is always disguising itself. It is covered over with a thick shell of its own

interpretations. Society is composed of conscious agents, be they parties or unions, or less formally defined groups like the rich or the educated, and every one of them is constantly producing its own interpretations in order to explain and defend its position. This is the decisive difference between the social and the natural sciences. You can't just stick society in a test tube and analyze it scientifically. Unfortunately, these interpretations are not just nonsense that can be dismissed and swept away. They are important. They contain essential and indispensable knowledge that can only be gained by studying them in detail and analyzing out their truths.

What sociology does is to develop its idea of society out of these partial views and in contrast to them. For this reason, the sociological understanding of society necessarily entails at least a partial withdrawal from immediate perception. Society in the sociological sense is only graspable by means of a conceptual framework, one which has to seem abstract by comparison with the partial views that frame our everyday experience.

Then there is the question of power. By means of this process of abstraction and development, sociology necessarily undercuts the self-interpretations of society's actors. This necessarily brings it into collision with the lay sociologists who represent them. Some of these views have a great deal of power behind them. Others have less power but have the authority of expertise because they are propounded by social critics or cultural theorists.

What we get in the end is such a tangle that sociology often seems cursed. But this is also its attraction for an ambitious thinker: the challenge of making sense of it all, and beyond it of society.

*Let's take up the question of power for a moment. What would you say to the view, to put it a bit polemically, that sociology is just the handmaiden of power? That it supplies the information that political decision makers need to do their job?*

Many sociologists would deny that. But the fact is, there is a deep connection between the ideas of sociology and the reality of the nation-state that manifests itself even in denial.

To start with, it's worth pointing out that sociology doesn't usually analyze society. It analyzes *societies*. We talk, every day,

without giving it a second thought, about German society, French society, American society, Iranian society, Japanese society, etc. But what this way of speaking implies is that there are as many societies as there are nation-states. In the common sense of sociology, societies are assumed to be organized in nation-state terms. The state is assumed to be the regulator and guarantor of society. The nation-state is conceived of as something that contains society within its borders. The state is conceived of as something that fixes society, that secures and stabilizes it.

This idea that fully realized societies are nation-state societies is sociology's fundamental postulate, and it has molded every one of its central concepts. This is what I mean when I say that sociology is dominated by *methodological nationalism*. Its key assumption is that humankind is split up into a large but finite number of nations, each of which supposedly develops its own unified culture, secure behind the dike of its state-container.

*How does this affect sociological practice?*

It structures our entire way of seeing. Methodological nationalism is the unquestioned framework which determines the limits of relevance. The social space that is bordered and administered by the nation-state is assumed to contain all the essential elements and dynamics necessary for a characterization of society. The nation-state has become the background against which society is perceived. And when the sociological gaze is attuned like this, it has enormous difficulty in perceiving society when it appears outside this framework. The result is that non-nation-state forms of society are overlooked, minimized, or distorted. They are literally difficult for sociologists to conceive of.

Historically speaking, what sociologists have done in practice is that they've analyzed one nation, the one they've lived in, and then drawn inferences about society in general. In the best of cases they dallied a bit in a middle stage where they compared their chosen society with a couple of others before leaping to universal conclusions. This is true of Marx, who built his picture of capitalism out of the experience of nineteenth-century Britain. It holds for Durkheim, who was thinking of France when he asked his question "What holds modern societies together?" (He famously answered of course by arguing that the

new division of labor that divides society also produces a new kind of organic solidarity to hold it together.) And it's true of Weber. When Weber was constructing his theory of bureaucracy and instrumental rationality, the main picture before his eyes was turn-of-the-century Prussian administration. To make a mea culpa, it was originally also true of me. My first book, *Risk Society*, articulated a vision of how global risk consciousness would soon affect society. But society was assumed to be a welfare state much like Germany of the 1970s and 1980s.

*But isn't this methodology a little questionable? To distill concepts out of the experience of your own society, and then make those the standards against which to measure all societies of the same period, no matter how different their historical formations?*

It's extraordinarily questionable. And, as many people have pointed out, it also represents a kind of western conceptual imperialism.

Yet none of that should blind us to the paradoxical fact that this approach was extremely fruitful for a long time. No matter what school of social thought you subscribe to today, sociology had a major role in shaping it. And every sociological concept, whether developed by Marx or Durkheim or Comte or Simmel or Weber, grew out of this generalization of the European experience of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its genius and its limitations are inseparable.

This is also the mixture that allowed western thought to misrepresent imperialism as the process of "western rationalization." Sociology was contemporaneous with, and was one of the expressions of, the formative upsurge of European national consciousness. Within that framework of thought, colonial exploitation was firmly identified with progress. As an explicit assertion, this idea has now long been abandoned. But it still survives tenaciously in our assumptions. You can see it in the conceptual blindness that ascribes all improvement in developing countries to westernization, and ascribes all deterioration in their situation to not westernizing or not modernizing enough.

These conceptual blinders impose serious limitations on our ability to produce valid theories about the present world situation. They are also a political barrier, since, as a narrative of the history of the relations between the so-called center and the

so-called periphery, this one is so opposed to the historical experience of the periphery's inhabitants that it poisons the attempts of the two sides to communicate. This is one of the main reasons why, for many non-Europeans, "globalization" looks like just a new euphemism for the same old imperialism and exploitation, only this time by a "world market" that flies no flag. For both the sake of a social science worth its salt, and a politics that is just and effective, it is urgent that both sides communicate. For that to happen, we need a historical and conceptual framework that makes sense of both sides' experience.

*What you say of sociology's conceptual imperialism is clearly true in retrospect. But as you say, it was true of all nineteenth-century European thinking. It doesn't seem like something we can really condemn sociology's founding fathers for not transcending.*

That's true. But the retrospective view highlights deficiencies that we still need to fix. What we today consider conceptualized description, most of their contemporaries regarded as prescription and prediction. We don't because we can easily see that the world they predicted didn't come to pass. But this means something was fundamentally wrong with their system of statements that we need to fix in order to understand the world as it actually exists.

The achievement of classical sociology was to grasp the internal dynamics of the industrial market society that was then just coming into existence. Sociologists distilled its basic principles out of their own contemporary experience. The concepts they developed spread out and conquered the intellectual world. They were extremely fruitful for empirical research and they had huge political effects. But the irony is that the power of these ideas, and their consequent success, was all founded on this questionable inference from each theorist's society to society in general. We could call it the universalist inference. It's false. Yet the perspective it made possible had an enormous amount of explanatory power.

Our job now is to rethink sociology so that it no longer presumes this inference in each and every one of its concepts. We have to change our perspective. This necessarily also means changing our sociological practice. No one knows better than sociologists that every perspective rests on a social foundation.

The reason this task has finally become urgent is that the explanatory power of the classical model has been steadily growing weaker. Globalization is creating a world very different from the nineteenth-century world in which this universalist inference took form. It presupposed a world of bounded and opposed societies, each in its own container, and each with its own culture, its own economy, its own identity, and control over the destiny of its own people.

What we need to do now is make the change from a *universal* perspective to a *cosmopolitan* perspective. When we infer from *a* society, usually our own society, to society in general, the result is naïve universalism. *Globality*, by contrast, is what results when sociologists from all countries of the world, having interpreted their own societies through the use of the same universal categories, then meet and confront each other with their different findings and try to reconcile them. It then becomes immediately clear that there is no longer a privileged standpoint from which society can be investigated. In order to deal with this problem, a global or cosmopolitan sociology has to introduce a radical change of view. It has to open itself up to *dialogic* imagination and research. In order to accomplish this, it has to rethink and rebuild both its conceptual and its organizational forms. It has to get away from using the nation-state as the underlying unity of its thought and observation. It has to get away from the North Atlantic, and from the myth that this region shows the rest of the world its future. It has to move out to embrace the social cosmos. What is happening is a mutual reorganization of the global and the local, destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries for ever. Postcolonial voices from the so-called periphery have to play a weightier role, not only for understanding the periphery, but also for understanding the so-called center. The reason why sociologies and social theories of the center have traditionally been blind to power might well be because it's right in front of their face. The perspective of the other, sharpened to the reality of power through the experience of humiliation, has an essential role to play in understanding both sides of the power equation.

The transition from the classical to the cosmopolitan perspective in the social sciences will be analogous to the change from a Newtonian to a relativistic perspective in physics. The former has validity, but it will be shown to be a special case. However, in the case of the social sciences, this will take much

longer, because a cosmopolitan viewpoint by definition cannot be the work of one man, even a genius, and it cannot be summed up in a few universal laws. It will be more like the change of perspective that accompanies the transition from a rural society to an urban one. Only this time it will accompany the transition from national perspective to a global one.

*I see that many of the concepts we'll take up later at great length have already managed to sneak their way in. But I'd like to spend a little more time talking about the classics of sociology. How did they become the classics?*

The most remarkable thing about the holy fathers of sociology is that their scriptures are still actively reverenced today. They haven't passed into history like their equivalents in all other sciences and most of the humanities. There is no other social science in which writers who wrote in the nineteenth and the turn of the twentieth century are still such a central, living presence. Weber, one of the greatest thinkers of his time a century ago, is still one of the most influential thinkers in sociology today.

There is not in sociology a set of theoretical models that define the discipline, as there is in the natural sciences or in economics. The classics are our replacement for theory. That's why they seem irreplaceable, and that's what makes them classics. Unfortunately, this privileged role they play (especially in German sociology) is what makes it so difficult to relativize the historical content they poured into categorical form 150 years ago when modern society was just beginning to take shape. To give them their due, these were thinkers who really knew how to forge a concept. However, the end result is that their system of mutually necessary truths is still the rail system on which sociology travels today.

*This sounds to me like a paradox out of theology. Religious truths are developed under specific social conditions, from which they are then abstracted. The result is that they end up covertly dragging along social ideas that once made transparent sense (like lord and master) and translating them into completely different social contexts. There, though, the source of the problem is clear. The fathers of the church can never be murdered.*

*The object of the classical sociologists, the nation-state which they called society, has clearly gone through a lot of changes since they lived within its boundaries. It is not only that those boundaries have become much blurrier. The nation-state has also lost the sacred meaning that it had in the nineteenth century, when nationalism was widely considered a form of moral regeneration. It was already impossible to think that way about nationalism after World War I, and that was almost a century ago.*

*So now we live in a new era, and we need new categories to understand it. Isn't it obvious that sociology has to completely reinvent itself if it's to meet the challenge of the changed situation?*

I think so, and this is central to my diagnosis of what's wrong with sociology. I also think it is the key to many of the tensions, uncertainties and outbreaks of hatred we see in society at large. Many of them emanate from difficulties in coping with the same basic question: "How can we think, or even live, without the cherished ideas that make us who we are?" When sociology debates – or rather mainly resists – the question of its own reinvention, it is reflecting many of these tensions in society at large.

My theory is that what we are dealing with here is a *meta-change*, a change in the coordinates of change. This meta-change is best understood as a new dynamic that was created when the process of modernization began to transform its own taken-for-granted foundations. Modernity then passed an inflection point and began to change into something qualitatively new.

Many of my colleagues react with panic to this interpretation because they think it sounds the death knell of sociology. I think the opposite. I think it marks its rebirth. However, unlike when sociology first was born, this time it starts out already firmly established in the university system, socializing students from all over the world into its system of reference, and disposing of far-reaching research facilities. Now it suddenly falls into a situation where the framework of society is changing. This should be exciting. It means all the big questions have to be rolled out again, and all the small ones too. They all have to be posed anew, negotiated, and answered again – and not through universalistic arm-chair theory, or through the lost innocence of counting national flyspecks, but through truly transnational and comparative statistics that we have yet to develop. Sociology doesn't have to sacrifice the professionalism it has attained. But

we have to have the courage to pose the big questions again, and not continue to assume that they've all been answered. So this should be the opposite of the death of sociology. On the contrary, opening these questions up again is exactly what is needed to give sociology back the ability it once had to fascinate everyone who came into contact with it.

*You speak of a crisis, a conceptual and foundational crisis in the social sciences, as a source of renewal. Max Weber once said something similar. He said: sometimes the light changes, and it makes all central problems look different, and then the sciences have to re-equip their conceptual toolkit to make any progress. But how does one go about it practically?*

Essentially there are two complementary ways of proceeding. The first is to unearth fundamental assumptions that are now shaky. The second is to treat new phenomena as if they were really new, and ask, "How can we understand this sociologically?" The way to renew sociology is to treat problems as starting points rather than ending points.

My own theory begins with this empirical curiosity, which is indispensable for a renewal of the social sciences. My own central concept of the "second modernity" is very much something that grew out of empirical analysis. Of course, that also made it a declaration of war on a petrified sociology that had repressed and forgotten the historicity of its object through its fascination with the classics.

My central contention is that sociology developed in the container of the nation-state. Its categories of perception, its self-understanding, and its central concepts were all molded to its contours. And because the concepts thus engendered refuse to die, the sociological imagination is now inhabited by zombie categories. They haunt our thinking. They focus our attention on realities that are steadily disappearing. And they haunt our empirical work, because even the subtlest empirical work, when framed in zombie categories, becomes blind empiricism. Zombie categories embody nineteenth-century horizons of experience, the horizons of the first modernity. And because these inappropriate horizons, distilled into *a priori* and analytic categories, still mold our perceptions, they are blinding us to the real experience and the ambiguities of the second modernity.

*That's a big claim. The proof, of course, is in the working out. Can
you give me a concrete example?*

Here's a good example. The household is a central unit of ref-
erence. It plays a key role in almost all our categories of social
analysis. In order to define classes, for example, we operational-
ize our definition of households. The income of households,
which is mostly identified with the male breadwinner, is used
as an indicator for the class position of all members of the
family. But what exactly counts as a household nowadays?
Pressed far enough, that simple question can throw your average
inhabitant of Europe into as much confusion as if you asked
him what New Labour stands for.

   In the microcosm of the family, you can see taking place in
miniature all the changes that are taking place in society, and
you don't have to be a sociologist to be struck by them. There's
a little bit of everything in there. My children, your children,
our children; divorce, remarriage, living together, living apart, or
having more than one living space; juggling different careers,
permanent mobility, etc. Just take grandparents, for example. It's
not only that they are becoming more important, as a reserve
army of home care that stands ready to help manage the
turbulence of everyday family life. They are also multiplying,
through no effort of their own, and without any genetic mani-
pulation, simply through the divorce and remarriage of their
children.

   All this only scratches the surface of the normal chaos of love.
Against this background, the question "What is a household?"
is like one of those little kid questions that seems simple but in
fact calls everything into question. But remember, if you can't
define a household, you can't tell us anything definitive about,
for example, class.

   This is a perfect illustration of a zombie category. None
of what I've just said is news, least of all to sociologists. Yet
we still measure households like we always have. And we still
use numbers based on them because "they're the only reliable
numbers we've got." So all of our assertions about social reality
are built on something we know is a fiction, but which we con-
tinue to treat as a reality. So what keeps this dead idea walking
as if it were alive? The dauntingness of the alternative. We know
households don't correspond to the old model anymore, and

that in fact only a small minority now consist of a breadwinner, his wife, and two kids. What we don't know is where to begin to make a new model. Because if we admit it isn't a unity, how do we measure it at all? Furthermore, since the family reflects in miniature changes going on in society as a whole, redefining it necessarily involves other terms that are just as questionable, such as career, religion, ethnicity, and class. Pull this one thread, and the whole sweater starts to unravel. It seems impossible. Yet the alternative is that the heart of our social reality is dissolving and we're acting like it's not. Not only family sociology, but the sociology of classes, and sociology itself, rests on the household. And it doesn't exist anymore.

*Now I'm beginning to understand the attitude of your colleagues. This is subtle sociology. But it also seems like sociology dissolving itself, no?*

No, on the contrary, it's the beginning of the process forward. The critique of zombie concepts is the first step in the creation of a reflexive sociology. The renewal of sociology begins with the question, "To what extent are our fundamental categories based on assumptions that have become historically obsolete?" Each answer to that question begins the process of developing new and more historically sensitive categories. So first we uncover key generalizations that are no longer true. Then we develop new dichotomies and a new system of reference. And then, having opened up a new space for the imagination, a new way to think about society and politics, we color it in and fill it with life through empirical work, empirical work that this rethink has made possible. Once this process gets rolling, it will take on a dynamic of its own. It will continuously reveal the weaknesses of accepted ideas and suggest new ways to improve them.

Part of what we need is a willingness to try out alternatives. If we can't define the household or the family, then can we begin somewhere else? The French sociologist Jean-Claude Kaufmann starts out with the question, "What is a couple?" The immediate answer in that case is no more obvious than it is with the family. A couple is no longer defined by a marriage license or even by gender preference. So Kaufmann tries a different kind of answer: a couple exists when two people do one load

of washing. In other words, he uses an empirical marker. But by fully explicating its meaning, he reveals much of what is new about everyday life: a whole tissue of entanglements, negotiations, excuses, and protestations that he sums up under the heading of "dirty laundry" (which is the title of his book).

The fact that nothing is obvious when you look closely is the key to understanding these negotiations. It's what generates them. To start with, what counts as dirty? Who washes for whom? When does it have to get done by, and is ironing really necessary? Most important of all, what happens when he answers yes to one of these questions and she says no? What makes everyday life second modern is that everything is in principle negotiable, because there are no pre-given norms from which we can derive answers; and yet *answers are continuously arrived at*, because the work has to get done, and it can't be divvied up without implicitly producing working principles.

It's not always a conscious or intellectual process. In fact, crucial parts of it probably can't be. There are always several key questions that a couple can't negotiate directly because it drives them nuts. In addition, the practical realities of living together mean that we can't question everything all the time. So we consciously set limits to our doubting. This is where the real problems of empirical analysis begin, because, as we all know, most arguments about dirty laundry aren't about dirty laundry. They're about mutual recognition and feelings of neglect. This is also true of society's "dirty laundry" in general. Almost all fights about everyday tasks are overlain with potentially explosive conflicts about recognition and identity. What does it *mean* that you won't do my laundry? It means that you have no respect for me as a person!

Behind the zombie category of the household lies a rich social reality. Reinventing sociology means conducting excavations on the unknown society in which we live. Society is reproducing itself, and transforming itself, behind the façade of our cherished descriptions. We have a lot of work to do before we can see what it really looks like.

*"Zombie category" is a wonderfully nasty phrase, which is probably why I'm inclined to linger on it a bit. How do you recognize a zombie category when you see one? You've given us an example, with the household. Are there general principles?*

There's no litmus test for it, of course. But I think we can say somewhat systematically that there are three principles on which our old conceptualizations rested that have now become questionable. And although it may not be immediately obvious, all of them ultimately derive from the national container perspective.

The first is the assumption that territory is essential to the nature of society. The conceptual world of sociology still bears the impress of the national container in which it was formed. It assumes any social action requires physical traction on the ground. It assumes that geographical closeness produces social closeness, even though we are faced with a growing number of situations in which people who live geographically close to each other are socially isolated from each other, while being intimately connected with people far away.

Almost all social and political theory still has this territorial bias. Today we occupy a world of transportation and communication networks in which social and physical space have diverged. Social and spatial borders now vary independently of each other. Both kinds of border still exist, both are still important, and both are being constantly redrawn and reinforced. But to understand them, we need to rethink their relation from the ground up.

The second shaky principle is the belief that to understand individuals sociologically, we have to subsume them under pre-existing social collectivities. Sociology understands the individual as largely determined by the situation in which she finds herself, and we mainly conceptualize this situation as assigned (rather than as chosen). This is how our concept of classes works, as well as our concepts of family and nation and many others.

This was a very important premise in the history of sociology. It was this assumption that justified abstracting from individual action to sociological concepts in the first place. Sociology considered individual self-understanding suspect on ideological grounds, precisely because the facts of the collective situation only receive partial expression there. But while this principle played a constitutive role in the creation of sociology, today it is obscuring new forms of individualization which we'll discuss in greater detail later on. (See chapter 2.)

The idea of society as being fundamentally made up of large constituent subgroups presumes that there are pre-given collective situations that make common sense to all members of those groups. New processes of individualization and differentiation are rendering this assumption less tenable. As each individual's relation to society's institutions becomes less like those of her fellows, correspondingly more in each individual situation has to be consciously chosen. Choice has become not only a more important but also a more constitutive element of the individual situation. We can no longer treat volition as an epiphenomenon.

Individuals are increasingly constructing their most important collectivities and doing it consciously, in the broadest sense of the word conscious. Consequently the self-definition and identity of individuals is increasingly independent of any single collective situation in which we might like to frame them. Rethinking sociology will require us to develop a new concept of individualization, and to place it in the foreground. We will also have to rethink the social basis of individualization. Society still enters deeply into the constitution of the individual, but in a different way, and not simply through constraint.

The third crumbling pillar of the classic perspective is the evolutionary principle. By this I mean the assumption that the West's is the best possible way to organize a society; that its pattern of differentiation is the one all other societies must develop toward if they want to develop at all; and that its future will necessarily be a continuation of its past. This is an article of faith rather than science, of the original faith in progress that gave birth to social science. It now stands in the way of that science's continued development because it blocks sociology off from the implications of contingency. Social development is open-ended. Its end cannot be foreseen, and that has to be incorporated in our conceptual framework. This same faith has also kept us from seriously considering the question of whether some aspects of the first modernization have not been outweighed by their dark sides, especially when those dark sides have been exported to the periphery, or to the future, and not therefore credited to the present account.

*The uneasiness caused by these developments has been felt in many places and formulated in various ways. Some people talk*

*about postmodernity, others about the second modernity. The
latter is your concept, of course. What is the second modernity?
How would you distinguish it from the concept of postmodernity?*

Well, there are as many postmodernisms as there are postmodernists. I've learned a lot from many of them, such as Zygmunt Bauman, and even from French philosophers of postmodernism like Lyotard. There could not have been a theory of reflexive modernity without having engaged with the central ideas of postmodernism.

However, that said, postmodernist theory only tells us what is *not* the case. It doesn't say what *is* the case. I'm afraid I am somewhat sick of the "post-ism," "de-ism," and "beyond-ism" of our times. Individuals and institutions and social movements need a reasonable picture of meta-change that they can use to orient themselves, which requires empirical investigation and conceptual hard work.

Modernity is a problem in need of a solution for which Europe bears a special responsibility. Europe invented it, even if it did borrow crucial bits from other cultures. Europe therefore has a special responsibility for its shortcomings. When a manufacturer puts a faulty product on the market and it causes trouble for the customers, the manufacturer announces a recall and offers to fix it. In a certain sense, Europe needs to "recall" modern society, which it sold to (or forced on) the world with all its faults. What we need is a fundamental self-critique, a redefinition – we might even say a reformation – of modernity and modern society. Modernity needs to be re-formed in the fullest sense on a global level.

For this task, postmodern thought is inadequate. It explains why the old ways of conceiving modernity are no longer valid, and then it stops short. It explains why the old ways of drawing boundaries rested on hidden and unjustifiable assumptions, and then it stops, leaving it a complete mystery how social life continues on. It seems unconcerned with that. There seem to be two obvious inferences to be drawn from this attitude. One is that the ruling ideas must not matter much, because if you destroy them, things carry on much as before. The second is that there must not be a real crisis. It must only be a confusion of ideas, because if there was a real crisis, a turning point in reality, there would be some urgency about addressing it.

This finally is my real beef with postmodernism. Despite all the hubbub, when its stance is reasoned out to its ultimate conclusions, postmodernism finally seems to deny the newness and crisis nature of our situation. That is true even of the term itself. What seems to be an end, a breakdown, a "post" is, looked at from the other side, always a beginning and a restructuring. This has always been true in history, and history's not ending, not so long as there are humans left to interfere.

So to simply criticize normal sociology and then stop, to simply deconstruct and then stop, is not enough. We need to reconstruct and to restructure our concepts. If the old science of society is no longer adequate – and it is not – then we need to develop a new one.

This is exactly what we are doing in the research institute in Munich that I'm involved in. We are trying to redefine the basic concepts of social science. We are trying to make clear what distinguishes the first modernity from the second modernity, and to develop the pluralized perspectives necessary to comprehend it. The challenge of theorizing the second modernity is that the system of coordinates is changing. But we are not simply between two perspectives. We are involved in a transition from one perspective to several simultaneous perspectives. There is a pluralization of modernities in the making.

A fair starting point is to say that the difference between the first modernity and the second one is the difference between "nation-state centered" modernity and "non-nation-state centered" modernity. However, this is a much deeper change than it looks like at first sight. Every fundamental distinction and criterion that we have up until now identified with modern society takes as its premise that society and the nation-state are identical. If we remove this taken-for-granted premise, these distinctions no longer make sense.

It may not be immediately obvious that the nation-state is at the bottom of all our sociological and political concepts, but that is only a sign of how pervasive and naturalized this assumption has become. We literally find it difficult to imagine thinking without it. Therefore, we think, it *must* be true. But it isn't. And once we admit that it isn't, where do we begin? What can "modern society" mean if *not* the nation-state? What can modernization mean if it is *not* equated with westernization and Europeanization?

If the first modernity was predominantly a logic of structures, the second modernity is largely a logic of flows. But how can one research such a "liquid modernity" (to use Bauman's term for it)? As a practical matter, how can we make reasonable decisions about the future under conditions of radical uncertainty? Especially collective decisions? And how can reflexive social institutions grow and develop in a world that is, in some respects, literally fluid and boundless?

*So these are the sorts of questions you are tackling at your research center?*

Exactly. As well as trying to build the organizational structure of a cosmopolitan social science, where scholars bring different perspectives and evidence from various parts of the world into fruitful confrontation and collaboration.

*Let's return to the postmodernists. Your main criticism is that they are interested in deconstruction without reconstruction, and that the social sciences need to construct new concepts.*

Yes, and also, very importantly, that these new concepts have to be connected to the empirical world.

*Are there ideas in postmodern theory that you think are useful for understanding the second modernity?*

Oh, absolutely. There are many places where postmodernism has furnished our starting point. Take, for example, the idea that there has been a fundamental change in the nature of boundaries, including social and conceptual and even natural boundaries. This is central to the thinking of several postmodern thinkers, and it is central to the definition of the second modernity. There has been a pluralization of the boundaries: within and between societies; between society and nature; between us and the other; between life and death. This pluralization changes the inherent nature of boundaries. The more boundaries increase, the easier it becomes to draw new ones, for better and for worse. They become not so much boundaries as attempts at drawing them. Every boundary becomes in some sense optional, in some sense a choice, and in some sense arbi-

trary. This in turn changes the nature of the collectivities that are defined by them.

Postmodern and second modern theorists are in complete agreement up to this point, but then they diverge. Where postmodernism simply celebrates this multiplication and opening up of boundaries, the theory of second modernity starts with the problem this new reality poses for individual and collective decisions, and with the problem that the continued existence of such decisions poses for theory. People have to make decisions. Neither social nor individual life is possible without them, and every decision draws a line of inclusion and exclusion. So long as social life goes on, there must be a practical logic that allows us to draw boundaries on a daily basis, and it is the job of sociology to find out what that logic is.

Through empirical examination, we find out which boundaries are being created along with decisions. At the border between life and death, there are now multiple boundaries where there used to be one. For example, the brain can be dead while the heart is still beating. Here, exactly as theory posits, the more boundaries there are, the more each takes on an "as-if" character. But the result is not that it is impossible to determine a socially legitimate boundary. Instead what happens is that there is a heated debate, and an arbitrary and fictive boundary is designated, but one which thereafter is handled as if it were true.

Institutions that are capable of such conscious boundary drawing are enabled in a way that those of the first modernity were not. But this process also generates qualitatively new kinds of trouble and crises. To investigate those troubles is to unveil the emergence of the second modernity.

This is a different approach from that of a thinker like Donna Haraway, who celebrates cyborgs. She implies that we should celebrate that there are no borders anymore and that everything is combined with everything else. I think this is a challenging view, and in some respects it has validity in the realm of culture, but social institutions don't work that way. They have to construct and legitimate boundaries in an age of flows. That's what they do, that's what makes them social institutions. In the second modernity, they have to do it in a new way, they have to do it reflexively.

*So how would you distinguish your view of contemporary society from that of postmodernity?*

Modernity has not vanished, we are not post it. Radical social change has always been part of modernity. What is new is that modernity has begun to modernize its own foundations. This is what it means to say modernity has become reflexive. It has become directed at itself. This causes huge new problems both in reality and in theory. The first modernity depended, tacitly but crucially, on many non-modern structures for its clarity and stability. When modernization begins to transform those structures, and make them modern, they cease to be usable foundations. This is what distinguishes the second modernity.

This is not an intentional process. It is a process of cumulative unintended side effects that eventually produce a change in fundamental social principles. These are often effects that were originally intended to be more narrow in scope than they turned out to be. Market expansion, legal universalism, and technical revolution, after shattering the boundaries of traditional society, have gone on to revolutionize their own foundations. Marx once summed up this process in the phrase "all that is solid melts into air." It turned out to be even truer than he could have imagined.

*Is this what you mean by "reflexive modernization?"*

This is exactly it. Simple modernization becomes reflexive modernization to the extent that it disenchants and dissolves its own taken-for-granted premises. Eventually this leads to the undermining of every aspect of the modern nation-state: the welfare state; the power of the legal system; the national economy; the corporatist systems that connected one with the other; and the parliamentary democracy that governed the whole. A parallel process undermines the social institutions that buttressed this state and were supported by it in turn. The normal family, the normal career, and the normal life history are all radically called into question and subsequently have to be continually renegotiated.

This is the new and complex reality we have to figure out on both a theoretical and an empirical level. It is not beyond modernity. The distinction between the first and the second

modernities is an attempt to account for both the continuities and discontinuities that are involved in this change. The goal is to open up a space for redefining modernity as a global conflict.

*So it is not a rupture but a mixture of continuities and discontinuities. Can you systematize your distinction between the first and the second modernity?*

Yes. For the purposes of empirical research, it has been useful to identify a basic set of assumptions which underlie the first modernity, and which are called into question in the second through the process of reflexive modernization. They are as follows. In the framework of the first modernity, society is thought of as organized in terms of the nation-state. Secondly, it is conceived of as based on pre-given collective identities that are anchored in large collective groups. Thirdly, it is thought of as full-employment society. Paid labor is supposed to be available for all normal people, and people are defined as normal by participating in it. Fourthly, the first modernity rests on a clear distinction between society and nature. Nature is conceived of as the "outside" of society, and as a functionally infinite resource and sink. And lastly, the first modernity presupposes Weber's principle of technical rationality, which presumes that all the side effects of industrialization and rationalization are predictable and controllable.

These are the basic premises of the first modernity. When I say they are increasingly being called into question through the process of reflexive modernization, this is not something that happens all at once, but rather something that has been happening on several different time scales since the middle of the twentieth century. The presumption that society is something "contained" in nation-states has been undermined by globalization, which I don't mean only, or even mostly, in the economic sense, but even more as a social and cultural and political phenomenon. The idea of pre-given collective identities that are provided by a small number of large collective groups has less and less empirical relevance to a society that has been structurally transformed by the ongoing process of individualization. The paradigm of a full-employment society is increasingly inapplicable on account of the fragmentation of work and the increasing variety and predominance of non-normal forms of

employment. The idea that nature is an infinite sink and resource has been called into question by the ecological crises that loom in every direction. The idea that that there is a clear distinction between society and nature has been called into question by things like gene technology, human genetics, and nano-technology, all of which blur the line between them.

These last technologies also bear on the premise of predictability and controllability, which has been undermined by the proliferation of global risks. Because such risks are systemic, they change the very concept of risk, from one of probability to one of radical uncertainty. The fact that they cross national borders also makes them impossible to capture in national statistics or to cope with through national action.

Global risks produce global risk society. (See chapter 3.) This brings us to the last point, which is that sociology's view of society as a closed and self-equilibrating system full of linear processes, a view most clearly embodied in the work of Talcott Parsons, is being historically superseded through reflexive modernization.

The concept of the second modernity is necessarily an open one. We can't describe it in terms of a closed arrangement of institutions. We can only describe it as a process of transformation of the first modernity. Since modernity was always a dynamic system of continual change, what we are thus describing is a change in the coordinates of change. This is why I've called it a meta-change.

The goal and direction of this change is completely non-determinate. It can yield new institutions, but it can also yield new fundamentalisms that attempt to resurrect and reinforce the premises of the first modernity under changed conditions. So this is a very variable process which can give rise to a host of completely different scenarios. It can't be interpreted as a simple process of transformation from A to B. The second modernity is not an evolutionary concept.

Nor can the first and the second modernities be thought of as mutually exclusive in time or space. They exist simultaneously, and completely interpenetrate each other. This is what makes the analysis and understanding of this meta-change so difficult.

It was precisely to solve this analytical problem that I introduced the distinction between the first and second modernities.

It is purely a heuristic device. Its purpose is methodological and pragmatic. It enables us to pose the question of new categories of thought and a new frame of reference in the clearest possible terms. It allows us to conceive of frameworks in emergence, and of frameworks in overlap, and of both at the same time, which in the end is what we're actually dealing with. It should in no way be misunderstood as an evolutionary periodization.

*You wrote a book about "reflexive modernization" with Scott Lash and Anthony Giddens. But Lash and Giddens both seem to mean the term differently than you do. Could you briefly sketch out the differences in your positions?*

Well, of course a theory that values pluralism as highly as this one should be internally pluralistic, and in fact it's true that our common book contains three very different interpretations of reflexive modernization.

With Tony Giddens, it's actually *reflective* modernization that's his central concern, in the sense of self-reflection on the foundations and consequences of modernity. He sees this as anchored in systems of experts who are continually analyzing and then overthrowing their old conceptual foundations and thereby making new structures possible.

This overlaps, of course, a great deal with my own approach. I completely agree that self-reflection is an important motor of modernization. But there are also a few problems, from my point of view. In the first place, if we make this the central identifying feature, it becomes almost impossible to draw a distinction between reflexive modernity and normal modernity. I think this leads Giddens to interpret reflexive modernization as essentially a new stage in the same process. He emphasizes the continuity more than the discontinuity. I focus more on the unintended consequences of the modernization process, and on how they eventually coalesce into a qualitatively new dynamic, a transformation of society.

A key part of this has to do with the concept of uncontrollable and incalculable risk. The dominant view is still that all risks can be reduced to probabilities and thereby rationalized. This amounts to pretending that there is no such thing as the unknowable future. It denies in effect that such kinds of risk can exist and only makes them worse.

My work in this area began with my first book, *Risk Society*, which focused on the environment. This was clearly an area where dangers were being intensified through being denied because experts literally couldn't perceive them, never mind reflect on them. So when I speak of reflexive modernization, I specifically mean to include this kind of non-reflection. What I mean by reflexive modernization is the self-confrontation of modernity, its confrontation with the side effects of its own success.

For me, reflex is *action*, action directed backwards, a process of alteration that begins to alter itself, to progressively become a new process. One of the key effects of this is that it introduces turbulence into institutions. This is not only true whether experts register it or not, but in fact their initial obliviousness often plays an important contributing role.

*How would you distinguish your view from that of Scott Lash?*

Scott Lash developed a position in that book that contrasts with those of both Giddens and myself, and I think he made some very strong points. He accused us both of largely limiting our notion of understanding (at least in practice) to cognitive under-standing, and of not giving enough emphasis to the noncogni-tive and emotional aspects of modernization. He claimed that while both of us focused on the importance of taken-for-granted backgrounds, we didn't fully appreciate that being noncognitive was essential to their nature, that it is what enables them to serve as backgrounds. He does a very good job of bringing the philosophical tradition to bear. He concentrated most of his fire on Giddens, because there the difference was more stark. Lash argued that neither emotional phenomena, nor violence, nor aesthetic symbols could be considered "reflexive" in the con-scious sense that Giddens was using it. In Giddens's framework, they would have to be treated as non- or pre-reflexive. My use of the word reflexive is very different, as I've just discussed, and doesn't at all exclude unconscious phenomena. But Lash's larger philosophical points about the importance and nature of back-grounds could just as well have been raised against me. I took them very seriously, and I've attempted to meet them in later publications.

*So, to return to my opening question, in the face of the second modernity, is the task of sociology no longer to describe the society before us, to illuminate it, to make an efficient model of how it functions, but rather to predict the future society that will result when all these side effects have run their course?*

No. That's impossible, because the process is not determinate. The idea that we can predict the future is something we have to get over. Not only is the future indeterminate, but its indeterminacy is part of the meaning of the present. This is something we need to incorporate into the way we think.

The first thing we have to do is describe how society is reacting under the new conditions. Our starting hypothesis is that all everyday social relationships are changing and dissolving along the lines of our household example. Everywhere we look, our familiar black/white either/ors are becoming checkerboards of overlap. For example, the enormous split between the center and the periphery, the first and third world, is now being displaced to, and reproduced within, the metropoles themselves, where the super-rich and the globally excluded often occupy neighborhoods that are physically actually quite close. We still think in the orderly categories of the first modernity, but we live and act in the gray zones and turbulence of the second modernity.

This is by no means simply a negative process. Inside the container state and outside it as well, new social realities are taking shape that we can study as exemplars of how society is beginning to regenerate itself in deterritorialized forms. This is visible among the global elites, who already think of themselves as global players, as citizens of the world. They are aware of happenings all over the globe and they all speak the same language. At the other end of the economic spectrum, there is a vast body of transmigrants who are developing forms of life which are just as transnational. It is normal now for an Indian taxicab driver to live in Chicago but to be at the same time still intimately tied to his homeland. Modern technology makes it possible for him to be as much a part of an extended household as if he lived in another part of his home country. The money he sends home can arrive just as regularly, and cable television and cheap phone calls can keep him in daily contact with events. He is integrated into both societies, and a new form of society is being

integrated by people like him. He doesn't live in the either/or reality of container societies, where you are either in the USA or you are in India. He lives in the this-as-well-as-that reality of transnational society. He exemplifies how this society is coming into being.

Part of the work before us is to analyze exemplary phenomena like these from the perspective that they may symbolize the future development of society. That's exactly what the classic sociologists of the nineteenth century did, by the way; they didn't just describe the society before them. But while we are just as intent as they were to study society in transition, sociologists today have to completely give up the idea that we can predict the future.

Comte dreamed that sociologists would become the priests of society. That never happened and thank goodness. Real sociologists can't assume the status of experts, and shouldn't want to. In the first place, it's anti-democratic, and in the second place, it's anti-scientific. Experts who proclaim the dominant creed of social development are expounding a dogma. Even if we could make it less dogmatic, by incorporating contingency and contradictoriness, this mode of pope-like proclamation is in itself inimical to the advance of knowledge.

Sociology's job is to take the trouble to make empirical observations, to document them clearly, and then, by means of these results, and a heightened sensibility, and a methodical approach, to make a developing reality clear and graspable.

*If we assume the second modernity as a given, how should sociology react? And doesn't this necessarily launch you into a war with all your colleagues? You seem intent on taking away all the toys they've become fond of.*

The first step is to think seriously about what will happen if we really remove the nation-state from the concepts and principles that organize our research. What does it mean to *not* assume the nation-state as the fundamental category before we even begin? At that point we enter an amorphous zone, where we have to try out new ways of measuring, perceiving, and distilling reality into concepts. I think the starting point should be what Martin Albrow calls "globality": the everyday and often banal experience of living in a global world.

*What does that mean, concretely speaking?*

We could start with the feeling that we are facing a common threat, that we now live in a world that has the capacity to destroy itself. The interconnectedness of the world, and the extent to which it outruns our capacity to foresee or control it, is illustrated in things like Chernobyl or the Asian financial crisis. As the world gets more interconnected and more technologically advanced, it becomes more prone to systemic threats.

However, globality is experienced very differently depending on where you live. We all experience the global imperative, but we don't experience it equally. In the USA, the experience of globality and the experience of nationality overlap and confirm each other. Here the everyday experience is the indescribable lightness and self-forgetfulness of imperialism, which vanishes (for those who practice it) into its good intentions. For Europe, a shorthand for all other countries with solid democracies, globality is experienced as something which threatens their existence as nation-states. And for the vast majority of countries in the world, for example, those in Africa, South America, and Asia, globalization is primarily experienced as the de-democratization of democracies that were fragile to begin with. They experience the global imperative as a series of economic impositions whose executives are the IMF and the World Bank. Lastly, there are those regions of the world in which state structures have completely collapsed and which have become the no-go zones of the so-called world community. For them, globality is the experience of a new economic apartheid. We have to keep these divisions continually before our eyes if the idea of a "global conversation" is ever to become more than a literary phrase.

But there are also other very different ways in which globality has become part of everyday life. The British sociologist Michael Billig has developed a very suggestive argument about how everyday routines reflect and mold our political consciousness. He has dubbed this process "banal nationalism." He describes a wealth of ways in which we "show the flag" in everyday life in the course of our normal routines; how this marks off our political identity from those of others; and how such

identities are reproduced and reinvigorated through this constant semi-conscious national rivalry.

I think Billig is spot on in his description of how political identity is anchored in the routines of everyday life. But I think he is selective to the point of distortion in his choice of routines, because there are obviously many cases of "banal cosmopolitanism." I think that in fact there are more of them, and that the disparity is growing. I think banal cosmopolitanism is hollowing out the everyday experience of nationalism, and filling us instead with the experience of globality, even if our conscious recognition is still lagging behind.

A simple example is food. If we are what we eat, none of us is national anymore. It simply isn't possible to eat locally. The labels may disguise the fact, but even yogurt, meat, and fruit involve us in global chains of production and consumption. And let's not even talk about the Germans' supposedly national dish, the wurst; it's a global mish-mash. The food of the world has already united, and we experience this unification every time we go to the supermarket. We are now all used to finding foodstuffs that used to be separated by continents and cultures freely available side-by-side as mass market commodities. This selection is both fostering and filling a new need. It is the basic ingredient of a culinary cosmopolitanism that many of us are just as viscerally attached to as local people were once attached to their local foods. Where the norm of food was once repetition and the perfection of traditional standards, now the norm for many of us, at a surprising number of class levels, is eclecticism. It is not something we do by accident and substitution. It is something we celebrate and revel in. World society is in some ways baking in the oven and broiling in the pan. The national dishes that Billig emphasizes are really islands in an overwhelming river of banal cosmopolitanism.

So if we accept Billig's argument about how political identity is reproduced through the routines of everyday life, and remove the blinders that make us think that the only kind of politics are nation-state politics, we are led inexorably to the conclusion that new cosmopolitan political identities are being formed through the experience of everyday life. When the phrase is unqualified, this is what I mean by the "experience of globality." The background of our national consciousness is

changing. And as originally happened with nationalism, what is still a pre-political and pre-conscious identity today can become a political and conscious one tomorrow. But it needs concepts that suit it, and institutions to give it form. Without them, it often goes unnoticed and underestimated, just as the signs of national identity first did in the age of empires.

When the "German" firm BMW sold the "British" firm Rover, the workers in the affected regions mobilized against it. In this case, the flare-up of banal nationalism was quite visible. But it was also short-lived, and after their protest, the workers went down to the pub, drank "Dutch" or "German" beer, and cheered on their "home team," a soccer squad that combined players from completely different national cultures as if it were the most normal thing on earth. We are all of us more cosmopolitan than we think.

*So how does sociology go about forging concepts that capture the experience of globality?*

The first step is accepting globality as a reality, and accepting it in its full diversity and contradictoriness. That is easy to say, and in fact things like that are said every day. Unfortunately, however, once people start investigating, they almost always leave those proclamations on the shelf, and go back to operationally assuming the primacy of the nation-state and the evolutionary nature of modernity. To accept globality as a reality means to truly suspend both of those assumptions in our empirical work. I am using the term "empirical" broadly to include every activity in which we are collecting facts and using them to support our arguments.

A cosmopolitan sociology posits globality as the experience of a deterritorialized culture. Modernity is no longer conceived of as a phenomenon that has secured a large territory and is trying to spread out and secure more. We must start from the premise that there is more than one modernity; that there is more than one perspective on each of them; and that none of those viewpoints is inherently privileged, including the western one.

The question then is, "How we can operationalize this conception of the world as a collection of different cultures and divergent modernities?" It's not as difficult as it looks. We can't

investigate globally; we can't investigate the whole world at once in all its aspects. But we don't need to if we follow out our basic insights about deterritorialization. The second modernity can be found right this moment in many widely scattered places. It is being born within the interstices of the first modernity, most of all within its cities, but by no means only there.

There are two different ways to understand globalization. The first one is *additive*, and the second one is *substitutive*. As long as one posits the nation-state as an unchanging reality, to which all social phenomena are subordinate, then globalization can only be conceived in the first sense, as an *external* relation, as something added on to the nation-state.

*What your English friends have called "another dimension of analysis"?*

Exactly. One is left analyzing what those English theorists have called the *interconnectedness* of nation-states, in which the framework of globalization is seen as simply an additional dimension of analysis. This perspective of globalization as an add-on never really puts the nation-state into question. In addition, the term "*inter*-connectedness" is at its heart euphemistic, because it implies symmetry where there are often in fact very asymmetrical relationships. It creates a bias towards glossing over the issue of dependence.

In my conception of the second modernity, by contrast, globalization is considered as a phenomenon *internal* to the nation-state, and *internal* to its citizens. It is something that is transforming them from within. Social networks are not being added on to the national container; they are changing its nature, both by making that container more permeable, and by introducing relationships that pass through it that are weightier than the relationships within it.

Transnational forms of life – transnational paths of work, transnational connections to homelands, transnational means of communication, and the transnational consciousness and identity that arise from experiencing them – are occurring at *all* levels of society. They can be seen at the national, the regional, and the local level. They can be seen in economics, in the workplace, in social networks, and in political organizations.

So I think globalization should be chiefly conceived of as globalization from *within*, as *internalized* globalization. This is how we can suspend the assumption of the nation-state, and this is how we can make the empirical investigation of local-global phenomena possible. We can frame our questions so as to illuminate the transnationality that is arising inside nation-states. This is what a cosmopolitan sociology looks like. Internalized globalization is its object of investigation.

The food analysis gives just one example of how this can be investigated within the container of the nation-state. Banal cosmopolitanism is only one aspect of internalized globalization, and food is only a tiny part of that. So there are no practical barriers to the empirical sociology of the second modernity. What we need is to forge a new set of concepts and build a new perspective. It isn't as hard as it seems because we don't have to do it all at once. In fact we can only build it bit by bit. That's not a shortcoming. It's integral to the nature of the enterprise.

The result is that globalization can only be investigated locally. This is not just a practical limitation. It also has theoretical importance. In a paradoxical sense, globalization can never be global, that is, homogeneous, precisely because it is divergent.

Furthermore, the essence of globalization lies in its transformation of locality. It produces a new definition of place, both geographically and socially. It also gives a new structure to "locality." As the mayor of New Orleans said recently, it's hard to be a mayor anymore without having your own foreign policy. Cities and metropolises are the nodal points of the second modernity, the main site of the global-localization that some people have dubbed "glocalization." In these newly transformed glocalities, first and third worlds are becoming mixed.

A cosmopolitan sociology is one that treats the transnational existence of its inhabitants as the emergent rule, rather than as the increasing exception. Transnational connections do not simply fuzz the barriers between nation-states. They weaken the container nature of the container-state. These new connections puncture and pass through it and develop out into transnational networks and institutions and patterns of life. In order to gain access to this new reality, all that is needed is to be open to it, which essentially means investigating it within a framework that treats it as central rather than marginal.

   This idea of a world society existing locally is not new. In Nietzsche we already find the idea that we are entering an "age of comparison." What Nietzsche meant by an age of comparison is that cultures were no longer divided into territorial empires that were separate and distinct. Rather in each cultural space elements of every other culture were to some degree present. This seems to me to be one of the very first conceptions of global society existing locally. What really differs today is the degree. Now we can actually look at many localities and *see* global society existing locally. It sometimes looks as if they were settlements of a more plural world society that have been set down in the midst of (relatively more) homogeneous national societies.

   Our mixing may differ in degree from that of Nietzsche's time, but his reflections on this question were quite deep, and may apply to our time even better than his own. He noted that a single element of a culture is easily absorbed, just like one person is easily absorbed into a culture. But a collection of elements, or a collection of people, brings with it its own cultural logic. And, as Nietzsche is most famous for arguing, cultural logics don't mix harmoniously right out of the box. On the contrary, what usually strikes us most forcefully at first is their incompatibility, their irreducibility, the ways in which they contradict each other. However, if contradictory cultural elements are forced to coexist, and forced to interact, they will over time evolve a *modus vivendi*.

   An indispensable part of any such solution will be a learned ability to translate from one culture to another. Thus, when driven past a certain point, the age of comparison turns into the age of cultural translation. This is something that takes place inside our own lives as much as it takes place in zones of world culture. They are two sides of the same coin. In both cases, contradictions that have long been present in the world, but have previously only been put into intellectual relation to each other, now come into close proximity and real relation. They contradict each other inside individuals and localities. We live those contradictions and we are forced to come up with makeshift solutions to resolve them. Such solutions require creativity. They require non-algorithmic solutions. And the necessary precondition of such creativity is a *dialogic imagination*. But dialogic imagination is simply these new social relations, this new

lived experience, made conscious. This new background is what makes new solutions visible, not only to the immediate problems of our own lives and identities, but also to the political, economic and scientific problems that face us collectively.

*So unlike earlier eras, ours can't erect ghetto walls that will isolate these elements that contradict everything we believe in. As when people would sit back after an Easter dinner and give the fullness of their salvation an extra savor by reflecting on the terrible suffering of people far away.*

That dinnertime utopia is now an empty incantation. The idea that one can lock the aliens out, send them back, localize them, or confine them so that the rest of society won't need to worry about them is simply untenable. The aliens are here. They are already integrated into our lives, even if they have not yet been integrated into our national political societies or our consciousness.

*But isn't that exactly the big danger right now, if we can jump into current politics? Many people are clamoring that we should reinforce the walls of the nation-state container. They believe very much that the nation can still be defined in ethnic cultural terms and that only the will is lacking. They feel themselves threatened by the processes that we've sketched out here under the name of the second modernity. They feel threatened in their property, threatened in their feelings of social security, and threatened in their expectations for the future. And they react to this feeling of having everything endangered by circling the wagons in a hedgehog defense.*

Yes, that's one reaction formation. I agree that the same conditions that are presenting us with *theoretical* challenges – the opening up of closed structures, the melting away of borders, the loss of clear dichotomies – are also producing the increased *polarization* that seems to mark the advent of the second modernity. This is what makes our task so pressing. It makes intellectual challenges into political and social ones. These attempts to build new and better walls, to draw new borders that re-exclude the others, and to enforce this with violence and terror – that's definitely one reaction.

On the other hand I'm convinced that there are also tendencies which are combining local consciousness and cultural rootedness with openness and a desire for cosmopolitan renewal. I think these tendencies have a strong foundation in the process we just described, where the global and the local are developing into something new, into a global sense of place. I also don't think this global sense of place is taking shape only in the world's metropolises. It's occurring in other places as well.

I think therefore we are standing before two alternatives. The globalization process will affect all local identities, there is no escaping that. The alternatives result from how each local culture responds. It can try to block itself off from these developments. But – and we have to be clear on this point – that is just as much an active process as opening up. It means a locality has to actively attempt to change its course of development, and in a sense to refound itself anew against resistance. The other option is that the duality that local inhabitants are already experiencing can become conscious of itself and find a way of expressing itself coherently. It can produce a new kind of plural culture, one that satisfies the desire to reach backward into local traditions without stopping local culture from opening up and letting more of the world in.

The second modernity emerges from this field of tensions. At the moment it's not clear what will be the final result of this clash of reaction formations. This is the fundamental misunderstanding I keep running into in discussions of the second modernity. People always want to know whether it's an optimistic scenario or a disaster scenario, when the whole point is that it's neither, it's a new frame of reference for interpreting new social structures. Within this new framework, we can sketch out various scenarios as a means of clarifying our thinking. But my attempt is to lay a new foundation for social interpretation. It has nothing to do with optimism.

If we look back at the nineteenth century, we might say that all the classical sociologists were optimists when compared with their contemporaries. The prevailing idea at the time was that all the values that held up society were dissolving into anomie, and that without the force that church and religion exercised over men's souls, society would no longer be possible. The classical sociologists by contrast said, "No, what's happening is the

coming into being of a new order, an industrial order, which will bring with it class conflict, and revolution, and democracy, and what we need to do is forge a new way of thinking that comprehends it." To their contemporaries, this sounded completely absurd and Pollyannish. What they found hardest to swallow was the idea that economics and politics could hold society together without religion, never mind that society might be even more tightly integrated than it was before. Now, of course, we all agree that the economic interpretation was obviously right. On the other hand, from our new perspective, it doesn't seem all that optimistic. Nobody thinks of those gloomy Gusses as optimists nowadays. However, their claim that a new society was being born was undoubtedly true. Today we find ourselves in a similar situation. Foundations are being destroyed that we can't imagine society without.

This is why I think it's so important that we recognize the second modernity as a structure of possibilities, one that presents several different paths of development, several of which can at this point only be adumbrated. We have to do a lot of work in order to make ourselves conceptually sensitive to these new possibilities. But their existence as real possibilities doesn't rule out the equally real possibility of this reflex desire to enforce new borders, this mobilization of violence, this inscription of ethnicity with blood that we've seen in the Balkans and in other places as well. Both paths are possible. Both are realities.

Look at Europe, for example. There it's easy to see the opposition of two different projects in the same geographical space. On the one hand, there's the conservative idea of a Christian Europe, which excludes all other religions, and which intends to remain eternally frozen into nation-states, each bitterly defending its sovereignty. And then there's the completely opposed project of a cosmopolitan Europe. The latter is deeply bound up with the new civil religion of human rights, a doctrine which in principle can't stop at the borders of the nation-state, and can't be limited to those with whom we share a national identity. It is a creed which is diametrically opposed to the old ethnic reflexes. It's also one which seems without question to have grown by leaps and bounds over the last decade.

*There are many parallels to this in the history of the first modernity. Throughout its history, modernity was (and still is) marked by extremes of uneven development that on occasion led to crises. Some were overcome by great leaps forward in social organization, and some led to enormous wars. The situation seems to be the same in the second modernity. We have extremely uneven development that is unleashing similar kinds of instability. Once again, there is more than one way to react.*

Do you have any specific parallels in mind?

*Well, to start with, both transformations were driven by a revolution in communications in the largest sense of the word, including transportation. In both cases, this was combined with a revolution in manufacturing and a qualitative transformation of capital markets. In the second half of the nineteenth century, it was the expansion of the railroads that played a key role. In the late twentieth century, it was the expansion of the internet. Where the first industrial revolution was synonymous with a revolution in manufacturing, the analogous revolution in recent years was the integration of computers into the production process, which was at the heart of the so-called "productivity revolution." Lastly, the nineteenth century saw the transformation of large banks into public corporations that were able to mobilize the extensive savings of the little people into large-scale investments. Today, innovations have enabled the little people to speculate directly, daytrading in stocks or futures or what have you, and the influx of their funds has once again revolutionized the financial system.*

Those are all excellent points. On the other hand, when we leave the economy and turn to the political front, the parallel only goes halfway. The first time around, these economic developments were accompanied by, and stimulated the development of, a national political democracy that was in many ways the solution to the problems they caused. This time around, one can't help but be struck by how the nation-state framework that supported earlier developments is now being broken out of on all sides. For the parallel between the first and second modernity to be complete, a world state should be coming into being to play the role that the nation-state did before. That doesn't seem to be happening. Instead of a transition from nation-state

to world state, we seem to be witnessing a transition from state to market. Instead of a transition to something different but equivalent, it looks like we're suffering a loss. It looks like the foundations of politics are being dismantled.

That last point is certainly true: the old foundations are being dismantled. But I think we err in thinking that world economy can only be matched by a world state. I think that's taking the historical parallel too far, acting as if the future can only be a rerun of the past, and that if it's not, we can only be headed for disaster.

The problem is that when we try to conceive of a world state, we think of a big nation-state, that is, a huge mass of territory. We think of the world economy in the same terms, even though we know it isn't true. A more fruitful way to frame the problem is to say that we have a deterritorialized, multi-centered economy, and we need a deterritorialized multi-centered state to go with it. And that, it turns out, is not only possible, it's in the process of evolving. Its eventual shape and extent is of course indeterminate, but not its possibility.

The raw material of politics is power, and there is no question that power is now being wielded most effectively by capital markets and transnational corporations. If we look closely, we will see they are wielding power in completely new ways. In a certain sense they are like Columbus, discovering a new country . . .

*. . . or rather something beyond country. Like Columbus, a new world.*

Right, a new world. They are putting down their flags in deterritorialized space and claiming it for themselves. This global space that they've begun to move about in is showing the rest of us what deterritorialized power looks like. This is what states have got to learn to emulate. I would argue that they are in the process of learning exactly that. They are evolving into the kind of states that can wield such power. They are not in the same league yet, but they can get there.

Global action exerts a qualitatively different kind of power than that exercised by the territorial nation-state. It is a soft and diffuse power that is more efficiently coercive than the military power that is the monopoly of states. We have seen it bring

states to their knees. The advent of this kind of power is the decisive difference between the dawns of the first and the second modernity.

*But can state power develop a counterweight to such power? Or will the state just crumble before it? Isn't it possible that the end of the national container will be the end of politics as we know it?*

As we know it, sure. But I don't believe this is the end of the state, never mind the end of politics, or even the end of state-based politics. It's the end of a certain kind of state, and the end of a certain understanding of politics that went with it, namely the politics of the *territorial* nation-state. But the state hasn't come to an end. It is possible to have a deterritorialized state. And it is completely conceivable that a new kind of state and a new age of politics will emerge out the state's desire to hold power.

In order for states to counteract the power of transnational corporations and NGOs, they will have to evolve into what I call *transnational cooperation states*. In order to understand what that entails, we have to take a closer look at the nature of deterritorialized power that is currently being exercised by transnational corporations.

The power of the multinationals is not their power to invade. It's their power to withdraw, to exercise their exit option. To paraphrase Joan Robinson, in the age of globalization, the only thing worse than getting exploited by multinationals is not getting exploited by multinationals. It's this power to withdraw, to *not* enter countries and to *not* provide investment, that is their real coercive force. This is what forces states, against their will, to dismantle their systems of social protection and instantiate the neoliberal regime. This diffuse economic force is purposeful, and it is cooperative. Competing investors and companies all share the same basic demands, and they all refuse to enter a country until those basic demands are met. Together they wield what is proving to be an irresistible force.

Now, where is the state in all of this? The old power game between capital, labor, and the state took place within the container of the nation-state, and in that container, the state held all the trump cards, whether it used them or not. Capital has

now escaped that game. It is playing a new, higher-level game, in which labor and the state are not only completely out-matched, they're not even in the game. It's as if they are using the same pieces to play checkers while the companies are playing chess. They make their moves just like they always have, and then they're checkmated, and there's no way to avoid it, because they don't know how to produce a checkmate of their own.

Historically, though, as you pointed out, they've been in this position before. The national corporations of a century ago had a similar power that transcended local boundaries, and it set off a similar tax competition, a similar competition for jobs. They were met by a national state and by national unions. The transnational corporation will have to be met by transnational unions and transnational states. But the key here is the concept of *transnational*. It is not just a bigger version of a national state. If it comes about, it will be qualitatively, fundamentally differ-ent. There will be transnational *states*, plural. They will evolve from the national states we see before us now, but they will be different in their individual nature and different as a systemic whole. To provide a counterweight to the power of the global economy, they will have to wield deterritorialized power them-selves. To do that, states will have to become themselves deter-ritorialized. The societies which they represent are already on the way to doing just that.

*This is interesting, but I'm not sure I'm following you here. You say the power of the transnational corporations lies in their power to march out of countries rather than their power to march in. In other words, they can choose the location where they will set up pro-duction, and the locations have to compete for their favors.*

Exactly. That's the decisive point. International economic agents choose their location on the basis of purely economic criteria. So when they compare states, they compare how far they can maximize the infrastructure that will be provided for them and how far they can minimize the tax and social contributions they will have to make in return. This power of withdrawal, this threat of packing up and moving elsewhere, has been qualita-tively increased in the last 25 years by the advance of informa-tion technology and the global organization of production.

*But how can states imitate that power? During the first industrial revolution, where you made steel where the coal and iron was, and regions that were blessed with such resources, like the Ruhr Valley, had a certain inalienable power tied to the land. Now such districts are in crisis. Once power is deterritorialized, what can the state's counter-power be based on?*

On cooperation and the denial of that cooperation, just like the power of transnational corporations.

The new element that is revolutionizing the nature of power is the change in the nature of cooperation that has been made possible by the digital revolution. It has allowed economic cooperation to evolve beyond the cooperation of localities in geographic space to an integrated cooperation based on function. A little while ago, we were talking about how the revolution in communications technology, through its effects on the transmission of money and packages and people, was making social distance independent of geographic distance, so that someone could be closer to a person on another continent than to their neighbor next door. Well, this is exactly what has allowed the multinational corporation to organize itself globally on functional lines. It is limited by cost, but the cost of such technology is now quite low. The result has been a deterritorialized organization of the relations of production and of the calculation of profit and loss. It is an organization which not only escapes the container of the nation-state, but which, through its joint cooperative action with its fellows, is contributing to the erosion of that container. (See below, p. 170.)

Now, as we've just said several times, when we inquire into the transnational corporation and the nature of its power, we find it is no longer the imperialism of marching in, but instead the imperialism of marching out. It is the *withdrawal of cooperation*, the banishment of a state from the cooperative economic network that is now essential to its existence, that is the terrible threat. This is a threat that each individual multinational can wield both as an element in, and as a representative of, that global economic network. The positive sanction of bringing in employment and tax revenues necessarily implies the negative sanction of taking them out. This negative power, this power of saying no, is the power of the economic network being wielded.

It is the *power of denial*, of the denial of the cooperation on which the state is now dependent.

This power of denial is almost exactly the reverse of what we normally understand as territorial power. The state's monopoly of the use of legitimate violence is bound up with its control of a clearly bounded territory and all the people in it. It is this combination of forces that equips it to win its position of power in the world. If it wants to exercise this power against another territorial state, it does so by marching into its territory, or by blackmailing it with the threat of it.

But where the power of the state is based on borders, the power of the transnational corporation is based on free capital flows. What "free" means is free with respect to borders, that is, free to flow across them in both directions, free to operate as if they didn't exist. In this world of flows that can rush across borders, the worst thing that can happen to a society is that the flow suddenly rushes out, leaving them high and dry. The state suffers a shock to its circulation system, that is, its tax revenues and its ability to provide jobs. On a day-to-day basis, this threat has given economic actors a power superior to the powers of the territorial state.

Now we come to the point. This is what people see and what makes them think, "This is the end of politics." But it's not. It's the end of first modern politics. It's the end of the primacy of the territorial state *vis-à-vis* the economic (and social) actors it "contains," precisely because it no longer "contains" them.

Every time a system of politics has passed away in history, people have thought it was the end of politics. It never has been. The question should be rather what will be the shape of the politics to come. In other words, it's a question of how politics can be globalized to match the globalization of the economy.

*But what guarantee do we have that politics can be globalized? Maybe every loss of politics in the past has led to a new form in the future, but, as they say in the markets, "past practice is no guarantee of future results." More importantly, if the only politics we really care about is democratic politics; and democratic politics arose only with the modern nation-state; then isn't there a real possibility that democratic politics will vanish with that state? A democratic world government is difficult to conceive of. And even if we can conceive of it, it's hard to imagine it happening any time*

*soon. So if by politics we mean democratic politics, why isn't the end of the territorial nation-state the end of politics for the fore-seeable future?*

Because the state as we know it isn't ending. It is undergoing a transformation analogous to that of the transnational corporation. It is being transformed into a transnational state. It is undergoing this transformation as a reaction to the power of the corporations. It is one step behind them, just as it was during the rise of the first modernity. But there is every reason to think that when it finishes this transformation, it will be more than a match for the transnational corporation, just as the national state was more than a match for the national corporation. (At least in theory. Whether it exercised that power in any particular nation-state depended, of course, on politics. But the real possibility of exercising that power was always the basis of real national politics.)

The key point is that we don't need a world government to exercise power anymore than corporations need a world corporation. What we need is a cooperative network of governments. We need the kind of states that can take their place in a flexible network of power because they are internally connected. They will then be able to wield the power of political non-cooperation in a way analogous to the way corporations and investors now exercise the power of economic non-cooperation. A community of states would then wield the ultimate power in the international realm just as the national state wielded the ultimate power in the first modernity.

If we look at developments that are now going on, at transformations that state and society are presently undergoing, the possibility of an effective community of states, a flexible network of state power that is just as deterritorialized as the economic power of global corporations, is not inconceivable. States are already transforming, just like societies.

*But you've talked about the territorial state becoming a zombie state.*

And I mean it. But it is exactly where it's becoming a zombie state that the transnational state is being born. Remember, a zombie concept is one where the idea lives on even though the

reality to which it corresponds is dead. But that doesn't mean reality is dead! It means exactly the opposite. It means that there is a lively new reality that we are not seeing because our minds are haunted and clouded by dead ideas that make us look in the wrong places and miss what's new.

In other words, every place where the nation-state is becoming a zombie state is a place where we can red-pencil that function and ask, "Why do individual states do that anymore?" This is especially clear in Europe. Why do we need state central bank systems when both macro- and micro-economic decisions are increasingly being made by the European central bank? Conceptually we can go one step further and ask whether all states really need their own ambassadors to every country in the world.

If we want to know the politics of the future, this is the key question. How far can political actors go in emulating economic actors in escaping the bonds of the territorial state and exercising their power extra-territorially? The same question goes for non-state actors that find themselves up against the power of transnational corporations. We are seeing the beginnings of this in the labor movement, which is trying to reorganize itself on a global scale, and to harness the same information technology that has changed the redistribution of work to change the organization of workers. This emerged into the public view in a big way with the coming together of various protest movements in Seattle. The process is also going forward in less spectacular ways that may in the end be farther reaching. The union at Volkswagen, for example, now has a transnationally organized works committee, where the various transnational parts of the enterprise are covered by a correspondingly transnational union representation.

It's also important to note that, while the transnational corporation disposes of a new form of power, it also seems to be afflicted with a new form of vulnerability (See p. 141ff.). It may even turn out in the end to be more vulnerable than the national corporation, because unlike it, it won't have a state to call its own in time of crisis. If political and social power eventually evolve into a network reality in the way economic power already has, the contest between them may be more than equal.

We have to realize, however, that this doesn't happen all at once. There won't be a constitutional convention where we'll

all sit down and create transnational institutions. Instead, there is a transnational reality in which states and societies are all already participating. States are evolving into the kinds of states that can serve as the elements of a larger network through their participation in networks that already exist. If countries do someday give up their individual ambassadorships, it won't be something that comes out of the blue. Ministries and subdepartments are already linked horizontally into a network of ongoing and cooperative relationships. It is true that these links are still being broken and overridden at crucial junctures by the imperatives of the nation-state. But it is not far-fetched to think that these networks will continue to develop further, in a sort of two steps forward, one step back progression, and that the nature of the state will continue to be transformed by the process. Post-national cooperation-states are conceivable. And with them so is a counterweight to the power of transnational economic actors.

*But couldn't Europe and the EU serve just as well as a counterexample, displaying how a process that could have happened in fact didn't? Arguably, this was on purpose. In many ways, from its original founding as the EEC, the European Union has been a project to rescue the nation-state from its embarrassments. Wasn't the European Coal and Steel Community a conscious attempt to deal with parts of the nation-state that were already by that time in crisis? And to solve them with solutions that traversed borders, but in such a way as to leave the political core of the nation-state untouched? The European Union often looks as if it were designed intentionally to preserve the old model of the nation-state by enabling nation-state cooperation in spheres like the economy without allowing the emergence of any corresponding transnational state institutions. Without such transnational state institutions, the EU never gains the legitimacy they would bestow. This seems to be the EU's great lack.*

The EU is the biggest single challenge for state theory today. It doesn't have what Max Weber called the state's sine qua non, the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its territory. There isn't a European army or a European police. In addition, the EU has almost no power to levy taxes on its own, so it can't finance and control its own budget. On top of that,

almost everything that constitutes the welfare state has been left to the individual members. So by the classical definition, when we look at the EU, there isn't any state there. The one feature that sort of looks state-like, the euro, was only accepted after being put to national votes, and was discussed by national publics in terms of national costs and benefits.

Yet at the same time there is all this talk of how states are losing their sovereignty, and of how the European community is exercising power over them. If those things are true – and they are – there can't be nothing there, even if the classical definition says there's nothing there. The solution is that what's there is a network. A dense, regulative network, a network of power. And each of the states in it is undergoing internal modifications so as to adapt to that network. Each state is being regulated, and each is contributing to the production of new regulations.

How far this regulative regime will extend in a political direction is still an open question. Monetary policy and health regulations already contain a lot of clearly political content. But the EU regulative regime also seems to be expanding by a process of trial and error into more explicitly political areas. For example, the control of immigration. Or, for that matter, the expansion of the union itself. These are issues of internal and external borders, of political inclusion or exclusion, that go to the very the core of what used to be called citizenship.

Recently there was an ad hoc reaction to the election of a coalition in Austria that was assumed to be hostile to immigrants and expansion. That was an excellent example of a case where inclusion seemed to get raised to a principle on a trial and error basis in a way that might get built on and institutionalized in the future. Even if it was something of a failure in the short term, it stirred passions and determination because it touched on core realities and interests. It is possible to imagine the political project of a cosmopolitan Europe crystallizing out of a string of events like this into something that is not a super nation-state, but a densely regulative network of transnational cooperation states. In the end, it is even possible to conceive of the EU itself as a form of cooperation state or regulation state, as a network of power that precipitates out of cooperative action. (See p. 214.)

It is thus quite possible to imagine the transnational political network taking on more and more of the powers and functions of the nation-state without becoming a nation-state itself. We have to be careful that we aren't blinded by our deep but hidden assumption that a territorial state is the only form that can wield these powers. Another buried assumption is that the nation-states we grew up with have an eternal nature that they can't change. The truth is that as the network evolves among them, they evolve too. They have the same borders, but those borders have different meanings, and are controlled differently. It is quite possible that nation-states will evolve into transnational cooperation states without any change happening on a map. But the meaning of their borders will change.

For me, the big question is not whether this process is happening, but to what extent it is developing its own independent dynamic. In order to be able to ask that question, it's important that we leave open the question of what form this independent dynamic will take. It's not that I'm not interested in whether the EU will evolve transnational political institutions. I'm vitally interested in that. If it happens, it will obviously raise the process to a whole new level. However, that doesn't mean that before it happens, the process isn't already underway. The transnational network, and the transformation of the states that make it up, is already building up through an accretion of side effects that only appear marginal because we continue to look at them through the lens of the nation-state. They seem to be giving rise to an independent dynamic over time. The question now is how strong this independent dynamic will be in relation to the power of the individual nation-states. It's an open-ended process and it varies. There is no predicting which way it may go, even in the short run, *especially* in the short run. It is endemic to this process that there be periodic and clamorous returns to the autonomy and sovereignty of the nation-state. Then at other times the independent dynamic is stronger, and everyone seems to think it's the only way forward. We'll see which way wins out. It's a question of politics, clearly. And, as you point out, a question of legitimacy. There is no question that building cooperative state structures would legitimate the idea of the transnational cooperation state. It would push the process forward and make it less reversible.

*Perhaps. But the problem still seems to be the imbalance of power between politics and the economy. The dominant economic religion today is neoliberalism. Maybe this would be a good place for you to elaborate on the distinction between globalization and economic globalization. Many people equate the two, including both people who are for it and against it. You earlier used the term "globalism" to distinguish this infernal global market boosterism from the broader reality of globalization.*

Globalization is a process of cumulative side effects. It's a multidimensional process that describes a general tendency of change in every aspect of society. It's not something that is just happening in the economy. It includes things as diverse as cultural multiplicity; the development by individuals of transnational forms of social life; and the growing importance and multiplication of non-state political actors, from Amnesty International to the WTO.

Globalism, on the other hand, is the naïve (but very forcefully imposed) idea that the world market is the patent medicine for all of society's ills. It's the idea that if only states stopped trying to regulate the market, and handed over all their functions to transnational capital, then everybody would become rich, and we'd all have jobs, and social justice would no longer be a question, because it would be produced spontaneously by the workings of the market. On this view, all the problems that have appeared, all the negative side effects, are always the result of deregulation not being carried far enough. If something goes wrong, the solution is always to go even farther, because eventually we're sure to reach the promised land of success.

*Isn't that exactly the credo of the WTO? The power of neoliberalism stems from neoliberalism being in power.*

Intellectual power and real power reinforce each other, there's no doubt about that. But that relation can also serve to mask weakness. Personally I think that while neoliberalism is still in power, intellectually it's largely a spent force. Many of the world's best economists have mounted sophisticated critiques of how its assumptions don't hold true and its models don't correspond to reality. Its political opponents have indisputably grown stronger in the last few years. And lastly, there is the

balkiness of reality itself. The failures of this approach can't be indefinitely attributed to not going far enough when one is confronted with catastrophes like Russia in the 1990s, and with growing inequality, and with whole areas of the world, like Africa, that have been completely decoupled from development.

I think intellectual opposition, political opposition, and these policy failures all work to reinforce each other. I expect the opposition to neoliberalism on all fronts to become more forceful in the future.

*What do you think about the prospects of an economic crash? More specifically, what effect do you think such a crash might have on neoliberalism and globalization? Many people fear that such a thing could come to pass when this bubble economy finally bursts. They say that behind this turbo- or casino-capitalism there isn't any real production or provision of services but just pure speculation.*

I share those fears. I'm not an economist, but it seems to me that if you take the underlying model of neoliberalism seriously – the idea that the world's various markets are and should be merging and approximating the reality of a single market – then, if we haven't in fact overcome the business cycle (which we haven't), it seems only a matter of time before we get a globally synchronized downturn, which we haven't seen since the Great Depression. In lesser form, the phenomenon of economic "contagion" is well established, where events in Russia can instantly affect Brazil. There seems no avoiding the fact that system-threatening crises seem to be occurring with a drumbeat regularity: the EMU crisis, the peso crisis, the Asian crisis, the Russian crisis, the latest Argentine or Brazilian or Turkish crisis. All of them have so far been contained at various levels of unraveling. But the image of a system under repeated threat is hard to avoid. If multibillion dollar crisis interventions are constantly necessary, as the IMF claims, to keep preventing system meltdown, then the system is as fragile as the will for such continued intervention.

I think world economic society is developing into a subspecies of what I have called global risk society, where increasing technical control leads us paradoxically into a world of increasing systemic risk. But, as I have argued since my first

book, *Risk Society*, I don't think this is simply a path to inevitable disaster. I think the spectre of disaster, the growth in significance of border-spanning risks (like global warming or mad cow disease), is one of the key factors forcing global society to become conscious of itself, to become conscious of the fact that it is a global community of fate, and that it needs to evolve a global approach if it is ever to become capable of dealing with such problems. I think the same is true of the spectre of global economic breakdown. It tends to stimulate international coordination. If that becomes impossible within the current framework, it is possible that the powers that be will be forced to generate a more legitimate global framework.

*This then brings us back to the distinction between globalism and globalization. If neoliberalism, both as an ideology and as a policy regime, collapses because it reaches its limits, that will not mean the end of globalization.*

That is an extremely important point. Globalism is a particular ideology, which many people, from different motives and perspectives, see as something they have to defend themselves against. But whether or not we have globalism, this won't change the underlying reality of what Martin Albrow and myself have called globality: the fact that we live in a world where borders are of decreasing importance, and where the reality of our everyday lives, of our patterns of work and politics and social relationships, can no longer be properly understood through the image of being enclosed in a national container. We have to adjust ourselves to this new reality and develop a way of thinking suited to it.

For me, one of the great intellectual dangers is that people will equate globalism with globalization, and from the justified critique of the one, draw the conclusion that the other can be shooed away. This is an enormous and dangerous illusion, and one found among left, right, and green. The illusion is that if we conquer globalism, we can then return to the old order of the nation-state – that we can somehow restore the potency of its democracy, and its power to guarantee our welfare and security.

The underlying premise of this equation of globalization with globalism is that there is no alternative way to structure society than the nation-state. This is why I see this view as uncon-

sciously carrying water for the Jörg Haiders of this world, even though many of its proponents couldn't have more opposite motives. The fundamental rejection of globalism has at the same time to present an alternative global future. Otherwise it just leads back into the snail-shell house of the ethnic nation.

*But is such a retreat possible? People like Haider might talk about it, or even try it, but can he pull it off? Haider is an opportunist. The most important thing for him is to take Austrians' fears for their future and remint them into electoral success. Maybe he'll turn around and amaze us, and betray everyone who voted for him, and turn into Austria's modernizing globalizer. I'm convinced that if modern fascism ever comes to power in the second modernity, it will accelerate the re-modernization process just as the original fascism accelerated modernization. Classical fascism used the language of blood and soil, but in fact it gave an enormous boost to modernization.*

The reverse is also true. Fascism didn't hinder modernization. But modernization didn't hinder fascism, either. This is important to keep in mind. Some people think that because fascism failed in its aims, and had to fail in its aims, it can't happen again. But being objectively impossible doesn't stop things from happening. The original fascism only lasted a short while, a tiny conjuncture in historical time. But what a conjuncture! It redrew the map of the world. The whole world lived out the consequences of that conjuncture for the next half-century.

Fascism was a manufactured modernity, a modernized anti-modernity. That is definitely a danger we still have to take seriously as we enter the twenty-first century. Angry, hate-filled citizens don't appear in our classical theories of democracy. But watch the political news and you can see them on the march everywhere. The erosion of the nation-state, of the national economy, and of national identity has produced a very complex and dangerous moment in history. The structures of power are most dangerous when they are collapsing and when they are coming into being. It's difficult to say which period is worse.

We have seen several times how denationalization can lead to the reconstruction and embrace of exclusive ethnic identities

that lead to horrible civil wars. However, there is no theoretical reason why such newly re-produced ethnicity has to stay at the level of subgroups within nation-states. It is quite conceivable that social movements could arise that are ethnic, and exclusive, but transnational, and which avail themselves of the modern means of communication and organization now at their disposal. They wouldn't be fighting to preserve the nation-state, but rather to fight cosmopolitanization in all its forms, with a much diffuser but just as serious goal of taking power. There is definitely a large spectrum of possible alternatives here. To take another scenario, it is quite conceivable that if there were a world economic collapse, there could be a drive to reinforce the state's domestic power with new forms of discipline and control.

To return to your original question, it is certainly true that one possible answer to the challenges of the second modernity could take the form of a new authoritarianism, one that combined traditional elements of authoritarianism with elements of the second modernity it purports to be combating. We have to realize that, while the economy has taken a large bite out of the authority of the nation-state, it has also placed before it, in the form of information technology, the tools of a far more thoroughgoing control. It's not hard to imagine ways this technology could be used to short-circuit the power of public opinion. A simple example is the video cameras that could in the future be posted on every corner. Another is the possibilities that electronic transactions could give the state to monitor every aspect of a citizen's consumption. So it's never a one-sided development. The same technology that leads to a draining of state power *vis-à-vis* the economy can lead to an increase of that power *vis-à-vis* the people. Out of such means, a new authoritarianism could be forged that was adapted to the needs of the world economy, one that was simultaneously postmodern and authoritarian. Globalization's winners would get the fruits of neoliberalism, and globalization's losers would get the back of the hand. A new wall of anti-immigrant sentiment wouldn't keep them out, but would keep them down, would keep them from having a voice in the state. This seems to be more or less the vision of Haider: an unholy marriage of yuppie and law and order. Of which Blairism, to be honest, sometimes sounds like the up-market version.

*These new means of control you mention can already be used by corporations without the aid of the state. When it is finally possible to synthesize all the data it is now possible to gather, who knows how far into a person they will be able to peer? They may know things about us we don't know ourselves, like that in three weeks we'll buy three pairs of green socks and before Easter a blue blazer.*

That may be true. But I want to return to an earlier point, the difference between historical possibility and historical reality, and the fact that you can have the reality, even when it doesn't make sense. Auguste Comte and Marx and Engels, after thinking it over, all came to the same conclusion about imperialism, that colonies just didn't pay. They cost more to maintain than they were worth. Yet, just as Marx and Engels were coming to that conclusion, the age of imperialism began to enter its highest stage. A hundred, a hundred and fifty years later, historians go through all the empirical evidence and say, "Hey, these guys were right!" But just being right is not enough to stop it from happening. Even today, we as societies haven't been able to realize the insight that Engels had way back then, that the military is a very unproductive way of increasing wealth and that it swallows vast quantities of it. Engels said the maintenance of standing armies undercut and contradicted the objective interests of capitalism. A century later we've had two world wars and countless terrible smaller ones. We have to keep this sort of thing in mind when weighing the possibility of a new authoritarianism. It might not be able to solve the puzzles of the second modernity. It might just force them.