Writing Futures
An Anthropologist’s View of Global Scenarios
by Ulf Hannerz

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the Cold War ended, and “globalization” became a key word in public discourse. In the new situation people could ask, with relief or anxiety, what might happen next. So a small but lively intellectual industry rose to the challenge, creating scenarios for a born-again world. As the world turned, there would be more of them. With 9/11 there was another wave of global commentary. There were hot wars in Central Asia and the Middle East, and then, with economic upheavals spreading rather unevenly over the world, there were shifts in the global centers of gravity. This again generated more scenarios for the world. Often, the future visions could be encapsulated in striking catchphrases: “the end of history,” “the clash of civilizations,” “jihad versus McWorld,” “soft power,” and others. The Eric Wolf Lecture of 2014 scrutinizes world scenarios as a genre of creative writing but also considers their role as a set of representations of the world that are now circulated, received, and debated in a worldwide web of social relationships. As a contemporary sociocultural phenomenon, the scenarios come out of a zone of knowledge production where academia, media, and politics meet. The authors are “global public intellectuals.” While anthropology has contributed little to them directly, these writings deserve attention for the way they offer the “Big Picture” of the world and, at times, for their use of cultural understandings.

As it happens, it was 50 years ago that I first made the acquaintance of Eric Wolf in writing. I was an exchange student at a university in the American Midwest, and I found his new little book Anthropology (Wolf 1964) as I browsed in a small off-campus bookstore. The following year I heard him lecture at a conference in New York, and after that, over the years, we met at various times and places, including Stockholm as well as New York. Then, in 1998, I had my last encounter with him, when he gave the keynote lecture at the biennial meeting of the European Association of Social Anthropologists in Frankfurt. We had a long and enjoyable conversation after that, and he agreed to write a major entry for the large encyclopedia project in which I was involved as editor for anthropology.

But then not so long after, I had a letter from him, where he told me that he would have to withdraw from that project. His doctors had given him bad news. It was not explicit but nonetheless clear that he had learned he did not have long to live. And so he would now have to concentrate on other pursuits after that, and he agreed to write a major entry for the large encyclopedia project in which I was involved as editor for anthropology.

It is not easy, as I consider his very rich body of work, to decide where to link up with it, but in the end I have settled on three points: 1. One is in Wolf’s lecture at that meeting of European anthropologists. It was a masterly overview of the history of anthropological thought, and he concluded it by noting that a distinguishing mark of the discipline is its insistence on observation—“we are now one of the few remaining observational sciences.” That often enough leads to a crit-

1. It seems to me that one of the remarkable characteristics of Eric Wolf’s work, but one not so often commented on, by himself or by others, is that it ranged so widely in formats of writing, Europe and the People without History (1982) now stands out as a pioneering attempt to do anthropology on a global scale. There were topical and comparative books, such as Peasants (1966) and Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (1969). His more essay-like cultural history of Mexico and Guatemala, Sons of the Shaking Earth (1959), may now be among his least widely known works, but I enjoyed it greatly. One finds early essays, too, on topics like Santa Claus as a collective representation and the social organization of Mecca in the days of the prophet Mohammed. In a wide-ranging and very illuminating interview with Wolf, Ashraf Ghani (1987:363), a junior anthropology professor at Johns Hopkins University at the time, indeed began one question by noting that “in your method of presentation you have continuously opted for experimentation with the format.” Ghani has since then moved on with an intriguing career to become, in 2014, the president of Afghanistan.

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tical stance toward abstractions and well-intended generalizing schemes, but it also leads to discerning interconnections; the observational science also becomes an integrative science (Wolf 2001:79–80).

The second point, directly and concretely relating to the first, I find in the account of fieldwork in the South Tyrol for the book *The Hidden Frontier* (Cole and Wolf 1974), a collaborative project by Eric Wolf and his student John Cole. This was a region that Wolf had visited first as an Austrian child with his parents and then again toward the end of World War II as an American soldier. When he came back the next time as an anthropologist, it was indeed to immerse himself in participant observation. While his student often enough took part in card games with the villagers, “Wolf on occasion played the accordion at dances” (1974:14), no doubt watching at the same time. I will get back to that.

The third point is his overall view toward that central concept of anthropology, “culture.” It is true that he may have been even more consistently and explicitly concerned with matters of power. But what to do with “culture,” and indeed its relationship to power, was an issue that he had reason to return to at different times, from varying angles, often with a critical perspective toward the historical development of the concept. Here I have in mind a formulation in a lecture in 1982 to one of the regional associations of American anthropologists, where he suggested that “cultural sets, and sets of sets, are continuously in construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction, under the impact of multiple processes operative over wide fields of social and cultural connections” (Wolf 2001:313). That, I think, is a sensible and productive view of culture. For Eric Wolf, culture was always on the move, never sealed off from other realities of human life. Moreover, I like to see this view together with the fact that, already in that little book 50 years ago, he had endorsed a conception of culture then recently formulated by the psychological anthropologist Anthony Wallace (1961). Culture had tended to be seen only as sharing, as a “replication of uniformity,” Wallace noted, but we are frequently better off seeing it as an “organization of diversity.” To map that “organization of diversity” in all its aspects and to understand how it works I see as a central and continuously challenging task of anthropology. That has a lot to do with my topic here.

Now I agree with Eric Wolf’s understanding of the centrality of observation and field study to the anthropological endeavor. But then the time comes when you no longer see and hear as well, or run as fast, as one should to be an ideal fieldworker; and if not sooner, you then realize that there must also be some room for what has been described as “armchair anthropology,” a kind of work that tends to be a matter of engaging with texts—reading them, scrutinizing them, reflecting on them, perhaps making comparisons, and constructing new syntheses. (Indeed, that is a branch of the discipline in which Wolf also excelled.) So here I will focus on a certain kind of text that has drawn my interest for some time now: a set of scenarios for the twenty-first-century world.

You could say that Eric Wolf was very much an anthropologist of the twentieth century, focusing on peasants and peasant rebellions, on ideologies, and on the responsibility of scholars at times when their remote field sites became battlegrounds somehow connected to the ongoing Cold War. Yet at the same time, he was always committed to linking the present to the past, connecting anthropology with history. What I will do here, then, might seem to be something very different: I will focus on the future and what people say about it.

The Global-Scenario Genre

The kind of scenarios I am concerned with began to appear toward the end of the twentieth century when the Cold War ended and “globalization” became a key word in public discourse. Under the circumstances, people would wonder what the world and their lives would be like now, and so the scenarios offered an array of startling concepts, claims, forecasts, and proposals, frequently encapsulated in striking catchphrases: “the end of history,” “the clash of civilizations,” “Jihad versus McWorld,” “soft power,” “the world is flat,” and others.4

As the world turned, there would be more of these scenarios, and to a degree they would come and go. With 9/11 there was another wave of global commentary, and then there would be new hot wars, economic upheavals spreading rather unevenly over the world, and shifts in global centers of gravity. So again, we have had about a quarter-century of the development of this genre of texts. Possibly in very recent years it has been a little less lively, but I would not be sure that this marks an enduring decline.

Now if you want to scrutinize these writings, you can approach them in different ways. You can submit them to a textual critique—and here you have to keep in mind that they are about the future. You cannot observe the future, you have to imagine it. But you do that from your vantage point

2. For a succinct statement of his view of power concepts, see Wolf (1990); this article is also included in Wolf (2001).

3. I have discussed the central role of notions of diversity in anthropology elsewhere (Hannerz 2010b), although without, in that context, going into the more specific issues of the organization of diversity more than marginally.

4. These phrases originated with the writings of Francis Fukuyama (1992), Samuel Huntington (1996), Benjamin Barber (1996), Joseph Nye (2004), and Thomas Friedman (2005), respectively. The edited volume *Why America’s Top Pundits Are Wrong* (Besteman and Gusterson 2005) offers anthropological critiques of the early work in the genre by Huntington and Friedman, as well as by Robert Kaplan, also one of its most prominent contributors. I have previously sketched my own point of view toward the genre in a few articles (Hannerz 2003, 2008, 2009).
toward the present and, perhaps, the past. So a future scenario is an intriguing hybrid of fiction and fact. And consequently, a critique may need to be both a scholarly and a literary critique, involving a concern with facts as well as persuasive style.

But then these global scenarios are not hidden away in some obscure corner of contemporary thought: they are quite conspicuously present in public, even global public life. Some years into my concern with them, in 2005, I could find that when the British journal of politics, culture, and public opinion *Prospect* and the American journal *Foreign Policy* copublished a list of what they proposed were the top 100 global public intellectuals, 10 authors of these scenarios were among them. And at the bookstalls at Heathrow Airport in London, Changi Airport in Singapore, or Schwechat Airport in Vienna, you could frequently find their books on prominent display. Beyond examining these works as texts, consequently, I am interested in how the basically small-scale commentatorial enterprise of a handful of writers has somehow worked itself through varied institutional contexts and across borders to grow into a significant component of global public consciousness.

The authors of these texts—which to begin with were often journal articles but in a next step would develop into books—come from some different backgrounds. The genre has certainly had its major base in the United States, and many of the authors are indeed Americans. Several are political scientists, such as Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington, Benjamin Barber, and Joseph Nye. There are a number of historians, several of whom are of British origin, although often trans-Atlantic migrants or commuters: Paul Kennedy, Niall Ferguson, and Timothy Garton Ash. The occasional British scholar-diplomat, such as Robert Cooper, may be included. But then there are also stars from the world of journalism, such as Thomas Friedman and Robert Kaplan.

They are at work in a varied but coherent present-day landscape of knowledge production, made up of academia, think tanks, media, and politics, distributed among the institutions of this landscape but also mobile between them. So the professor may be on campus at one time, then in a government office for some years, and then again back on campus, meanwhile writing op-ed pieces in major newspapers and articles for influential journals. The journalists, too, will occasionally be visible around universities, and we learn that their best sellers are what prime ministers or presidents read over Christmas or bring to the beach when the summer holiday comes.

From these points in the landscape, moreover, their ideas, and not least those catchphrases, would spread, in public culture and through the world, in the original language or in translation. And they would enter the common vocabulary of more or less informed citizens and “opinion leaders,” so that they would no longer require even mental footnotes to the original author.

No doubt the borders of the genre of writings and the group of writers I have in mind are somewhat blurred. Yet I would say that the circle of scenario authors exhibit a degree of mutual awareness and a certain network density. They have continued to quite often refer to each other, comment on each other, review each other, debate with one another, and occasionally interview one another; and they also frequently write blurbs for the back covers of each other’s books. But this does not mean that their comments on each other’s products are always friendly—after all, what they offer are often competing visions of the future.6

There is really no anthropologist who is prominent within this circle. And so that has become another facet of my interest in these texts. It is a project of what I have called “studying sideways”: inquiring into the work and thought of people who are on tracks more or less parallel to that of anthropologists in trying to depict the world. “Studying sideways” involves reflecting on other modes of knowledge production, what we can learn, and what we may want to avoid. I should say, too, that I came to the scenarios after another “sideways” study, of news media foreign correspondents, another group of people engaged in reporting on the world and its parts to the public. That was a multisite field study, but it drew my attention to the emergent symbiosis between short-term news work and long-term future scenarios (Hannerz 2004).

5. In the bookshops of Berlin, Vienna, or Zürich, you might thus find Thomas Friedman’s *Die Welt ist flach*, Samuel Huntington’s *Kampf der Kulturen*, Francis Fukuyama’s *Das Ende der Geschichte*, Benjamin Barber’s *Coca Cola und Heiliger Krieg*, Robert Kaplan’s *Reisen an die Grenzen der Menschheit*, Robert Kagan’s *Macht und Ohnmacht*, Joseph Nye’s *Das Paradox der amerikanischen Macht*, Niall Ferguson’s *Das verleugnete Imperium*, and Timothy Garton Ash’s *Freie Welt*. I could go into a Paris bookshop and find Huntington’s *Le choc des civilisations*, Friedman’s *La terre est plate*, Fukuyama’s *Le fin de l’histoire et le dernier homme*, and Barber’s *Djihad versus macworld: mondialisation et intégrisme contre la démocratie*. In Rome there would be Nye’s *Il paradossi del potere Americano*. And so on.

6. My delimitation of the genre depends both on the public outreach of these authors and the intertextual relationships of their works. Consequently, I do not include a number of academics who have achieved considerable prominence in scholarly circles in the period involved but do not seem to have reached so far off campus. Although their critical writings on world politics or the world economy certainly get a wide range of readers, Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein, radical commentators on the recent era and both on the *Prospect/Foreign Policy* list of “global public intellectuals,” are rarely, if ever, referred to by the scenario authors. Moreover, it has not seemed to me that their writings quite fit into the genre of global future scenarios.

7. The notion of “studying sideways” is obviously inspired by the classic book chapter by Laura Nader (1972) on “studying up.” I first used it in a more wide-ranging paper (Hannerz 1998) on various transnational populations; see also Rao (2006) on fieldwork among Indian journalists and Ortner (2010) on her Hollywood study.
Clashing Civilizations, McWorld, Soft Power

Let me focus now for a moment on the work of three of these scenario writers—work that seems particularly relevant to certain points I want to make. The three are Samuel Huntington, Benjamin Barber, and Joseph Nye. They all happen to be political scientists by scholarly affiliation, although that is not really so central to my view of their writings.

What has become widely referred to as “the Huntington thesis” made its appearance in 1993 with an article in the journal Foreign Affairs, under the title “The Clash of Civilizations?” (Huntington 1993), and was developed at book length a few years later. Samuel Huntington, a veteran Harvard University professor, argued that with major conflict over political ideology now gone, the most important cleavages, and the coming battles, would be between the large-scale cultural blocs of the world. There were seven or eight civilizations in the world now: Western, Latin American, Slavic Orthodox, Islamic, Hindu, Confucian, Japanese, and, perhaps, African.

To get to this result, Huntington had acquainted himself with a wide set of earlier authorities on the history of civilizations—including the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, although this particular reference did not leave much trace in the result. In fact, Kroeber’s work on culture tended to point in a quite different direction.

While states remained the major actors in the international order, the important things about civilizations, in Huntington’s view, were that they are very durable and that they tend again and again to determine who goes with whom in wider configurations of conflict. Peoples and nations now try to answer that most basic question—Who are we?—and use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. “We know who we are only when we know who we are and often only when we know whom we are against” (Huntington 1996:21). Thus, identity politics goes global, and, putting it bluntly, in Huntington’s worst scenario it is the West against the Muslims and the Confucians.

In Huntington’s own view, the advantage of his thesis was that it provided “an easily grasped and intelligible frame-work for understanding the world, distinguishing what is important from what is unimportant among the multiplying conflicts, predicting future developments, and providing guidelines for policy makers” (Huntington 1996:36). When I came across this thesis, I could find a certain pleasure, as an anthropologist, in seeing that a very established, prominent international-relations theorist had been retooling for an engagement with culture and cultural differences. But, unfortunately, Huntington’s understanding of culture turned out to be of a kind I could not agree with. I will not go into the details of his argument here, but I will note that a number of the responses were unenthusiastic. As it became a topic of debate in Foreign Affairs, the journal where it was launched, one commentator, an editor at the magazine Business Week, suggested that “his argument is weak, first and foremost, because it is built on the concept of ‘culture,’ which has about as much concrete definition as a snowflake in June” and went on to conclude that “it might provide pseudo-intellectual ammunition to nativists everywhere seeking justification for ugly thought and uglier deeds” (Nussbaum 1997:165). This more or less paralleled my own sense that “the Huntington thesis” seemed rather like a high-status variant of what the Barcelona anthropologist Verena Stolcke (1995) has described as “cultural fundamentalism”—human beings are by nature culture bearers, cultures are distinct and incommensurable, relations between bearers of different cultures are intrinsically conflictive, and it is in human nature to be xenophobic. Such cultural fundamentalism, Stolcke has noted, differs from traditional racism in that it does not necessarily carry with it assumptions of hierarchy. It may well proclaim a sort of cultural relativism, but then each culture should stay in its place. As they are incommensurable, they must be spatially segregated. Such cultural fundamentalism has thus come to serve, not least in neonationalist European politics, as a discourse of exclusion. Indeed, in the 2014 Swedish national election campaign, speaking at the harbor of his southeast Swedish home town, the leader of the party of the Sweden Democrats, the main anti-immigration party, made reference to Huntington’s clash-of-civilizations thesis as if it were an established fact (Byström 2014).

Taking his critique in another direction, a prominent political commentator, William Pfaff (1997:96), found a streak of fatalism in Huntington’s scenario: “His argument that wars in the future will be conflicts of civilization shifts the responsibility for those wars from the realm of human volition and political decision to that of cultural predestination.” So here we have one critic expressing a general doubt about the analytical usefulness of the culture concept and a more specific one about Huntington’s understanding of cultures.

8. Huntington and Eric Wolf were more or less contemporaries; I find one sharply critical reference in Europe and the People Without History (Wolf 1982:7), where Wolf comments on Huntington’s Vietnam-era suggestion that the Americans and their allies could win the war through forced urbanization by way of aerial bombardment and defoliation of the countryside.

9. In a critique of Oswald Spengler, one of Huntington’s acknowledged predecessors, Kroeber (1952:154) a long time ago pointed to a neglect of “the interflow of cultural material between civilizations.” And with regard to Huntington’s argument that civilizations are “realities of the extreme langue dure,” we might also take into account Kroeber’s (1952:204) caution that one should examine civilizations “not as static objects but as limited processes of flow in time.” Incidentally, Eric Wolf (1981) wrote a particularly illuminating essay on the contribution of Alfred Kroeber to twentieth-century anthropology.

10. Probably most of the academic comments have indeed been critical, but when citations are merely counted, this may be one of those instances where a scholarly failure lurks behind a bibliometric triumph.

11. I have commented on this variety of “culturespeak” and Huntington’s affinity with it in a previous article (Hannerz 1999).
cisive rejection of possible political uses of the "Huntington thesis" and another critic placing culture in opposition to human agency.

Yet in a way the Huntington thesis was not really so much about culture in itself as about cultural identity—a distinction perhaps not so clear to him but one that might be more obvious to anthropologists. In 1969, another of my anthropological heroes, the Norwegian Fredrik Barth, distinguished sharply between culture, on the one hand, and ethnicity, on the other (Barth 1969). As I and many anthropologists now understand it, culture involves meanings and meaningful forms; ethnicity as a form of collective identity is a matter of social organization, ultimately a question of who goes with whom. And the same goes for civilizational identities as Huntington makes his argument: a question of who goes with whom in world politics. In another recent vocabulary, shared civilizational identity thus becomes social capital—contacts with other people can be resources.

We may recall that it was the British nineteenth-century statesman Lord Palmerston who said that, in international politics, "there are no permanent friends, only permanent interests." Since the clash-of-civilizations thesis basically suggests the opposite—that civilizations are clusters of permanent friends—this had Huntington standing Lord Palmerston on his head.

Whatever his critics said, Huntington found widespread interest in his argument. In the wake of the 1993 article, he notes in the book that followed, he not only became involved in innumerable meetings with academic, government, and business groups across the United States but also had the opportunity to participate in discussions of his thesis in "many other countries, including Argentina, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Korea, Japan, Luxembourg, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Taiwan" (Huntington 1996:13–14). So that included most of the civilizations he had enumerated. And after Samuel Huntington died, at Christmas 2008, one could learn from the obituary in the Daily Telegraph, the London newspaper, that The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order had been translated into more than three dozen languages.

Turning to our second scenario author, we find that he also could register some significant impact. Watching a television broadcast of a White House prayer breakfast one morning, Benjamin Barber (2001:240) was no doubt very pleased to find President Clinton praising the insights of the book Jihad vs. McWorld, and holding up a copy of it for everybody to see. Barber had a number of personal encounters with this president and was for some time in and out of various White House office rooms.

Jihad vs. McWorld (Barber 1996) was indeed a best seller. In that title, "McWorld" stands for a totalizing, dominant market; that much is fairly clear, even as Barber ties rather a lot of things together in that bundle. As he offers a satirical travesty of Karl Marx, it portrays the penetration of the market into all corners of social life: instead of "Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" there is now "Consumers of the world unite! We have everything you need in our chains!"

"Jihad," more surprisingly and more debatably, is made to stand for just about any more or less defensive assertion of difference: nationalism, nativism, xenophobia, parochialism, even "culture." This is not so much political science in a conventional sense but more of a cultural critique of contemporary and emergent consumer society. In the book, McWorld really gets much more space than whatever is jihad, and the factual accounting of it is heavily oriented toward its American power bases. Even as Barber recognizes the power of both his jihad and his McWorld, however, he is himself above all an advocate of a strong civil society, so far most safely based in the sovereign nation-state.

The scenario writers have a taste for striking book titles, but there may be some risk in this. While Jihad vs. McWorld offers vivid imagery, the title does not really stand up well to closer inspection. If "jihad" is made a metaphor for "the grim prospect of a retribalization of large swaths of human-kind" (Barber 1996:4), it follows that not only Muslims participate in jihad but also xenophobes, fundamentalists, and antimodernists from everywhere. It was probably not only Muslims who felt that Barber made their particular religious community carry too much of the burden, and so in the later paperback edition Barber added a new afterword, where he apologized. But one could further argue that jihad, as a movement with global aspirations, does not really stand well as a keyword for the kind of local isolationism he had in mind—any more than the term "crusade" would. Moreover, to be nitpicking, one could perhaps argue that his other central image, "McWorld," carries its own curious ambiguity. It does not refer to a global Scotlandization, after which everyone will wear kilts and eat haggis. The intended "Mac" reference is surely to the small California hamburger business that Ray Kroc took over from the founder brothers, Maurice and Richard McDonald, and built into a fast-food chain that brought "the golden arches" to most corners of the world. If one insists on sticking to the original Macs, however, the ancient feuding of clans like the MacLeods and the MacDonalds might seem to come closer to the "tribe-against-tribe" situations that Barber called "jihad." So this kind of critical scrutiny may leave Barber upside down.

We could note that the title of the German-language translation of his book, Coca Cola und Heiliger Krieg, avoids that particular risk and also, of course, that the soft drink and the hamburger are exchangeable metaphors for a consumer commodity globalization that in large part is Americaniza-

12. For more recent discussions of this distinction, now widely accepted, see, for example, Eriksen (1993) and Banks (1996).
While Barber’s major preoccupation is with the expanding power of the market, we might feel that with his notion of “jihad” he links up in a way with Samuel Huntington; and before moving on to my third main author, Joseph Nye, let me return briefly here to the debate over the “clash of civilizations” and introduce one more of Huntington’s critics. This is a prominent Muslim—former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

In a book published only after her assassination, Bhutto (2008) devoted a chapter to a response to the Huntington thesis and to those she labels “clashers” generally. For one thing, she foregrounded organized attempts to develop dialogue between civilizations. But she also reminisced about her own college years in the United States, formative years when she engaged with ideas of modernity that she would take back to Pakistan and find resonances for in Islamic thought as she scrutinized it. To Benazir Bhutto, the conflict was not between civilizations but within them, and not least in the wider Muslim ummah, between progressives and traditionalists. Democracy, freedom of speech, and gender equality had been among the ideas she had engaged with at that leading American university where she had been an undergraduate, and books by Germaine Greer and Kate Millett, leading feminist writers at the time, were among those that had mattered to her. So “our exposure to life at Harvard and life in the United States empowered us and fundamentally changed our lives” (Bhutto 2008:271).

Now that sounds precisely like evidence for Joseph Nye’s view of “soft power.” Indeed, you could say that at Harvard University, Benazir Bhutto, Samuel Huntington, and Joseph Nye had all been neighbors. Apart from that, Nye, like Huntington, had also spent time in Washington. His notion of “soft power” again seems a bit like those other scenario catch-phrases: paradoxical, counterintuitive. We may tend to think that real power is not so soft. So what is soft power? It is contrasted, of course, with hard power. The latter is political power in a narrower sense, not least military power, as well as economic power: all command power. Soft power rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others. It coopts rather than coerces: “if I want you to want to do what I want, I do not have to force you to do what you do not want to do” (Nye 2002:9; emphasis in original). This may sound much like a certain older concept, and Nye is clearly aware of this. He makes a nod of recognition toward the fact that “thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci have long understood the power that comes from setting the agenda and determining the framework of debate” (Nye 2002:9). In other words, soft power seems to have much to do with hegemony.

In large part, soft power involves culture. Nye cites values of democracy, personal freedom, openness, and upward mobility as characteristic of American soft power, projected in many ways, through higher education or through foreign policy, but not least through popular culture. In that area, the German publicist Josef Joffe (editor of Die Zeit), whom Nye quotes approvingly, concludes that what America has at present is a soft power that “rules over an empire on which the sun never sets” (Nye 2002:11).

Joseph Nye’s own concern with soft power has obviously been placed primarily in the context of changes in, and changing uses of, American power. By the early twenty-first century, Nye had evidently become disaffected with American foreign policy, as the government had increasingly used hard power in ways that had increased anti-Americanism and subverted the credibility of soft cultural assets.

Now one can take the further consideration of soft power in several different directions. For one thing, I believe that Joseph Nye’s tendency to emphasize the global power of popular culture is rather too simple. Benazir Bhutto happily subjected herself to American soft power at Harvard Square; that might be a major site of it for many academics the world over. But for artists of various kinds the more important US location may be in Manhattan; for gay people it may be Castro Street, in San Francisco; for jazz lovers it may be New Orleans. The point is that precisely when a culture, even a civilization, is understood in terms of an “organization of diversity,” the most meaningful attachments to it may be variable, even for outsiders. And that, of course, may have its implications for potential soft power as well. Such attachments need not always be convertible to support for whatever happens to be the government at any one time.

Furthermore, one could recognize that as the notion of soft power has moved out in the world, commentators have appropriated it for other uses. Not least for countries that do not have quite so much choice between powers hard and soft, the idea that one can still have soft power turns out to be attractive. In different ways, Austria and Sweden can claim to have soft power, too. So now the concept tends to establish a link to the emergent field of “nation-branding.”

Views from Elsewhere

But then one could also note that the entire global-scenario genre, at least in its early exemplars, is a case of American soft power—most of the authors have been American, the

13. George Ritzer (1993), American sociologist, has been using the term “McDonaldization” more broadly to refer to a mode of standardization of production in contemporary life. For a set of ethnographic studies of how McDonald’s restaurants are integrated into local life in China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan—not necessarily in entirely Americanizing ways—see Watson (1997).

14. For an overview of this recent industry of nations fashioning themselves as commodities in a global marketplace, see Aronczyk (2013).
audiences more or less global. And here one might wish that the genre could open up, with more scenarios originating in different corners of the world and reaching everywhere, to allow a wider range of perspectives toward the shared global future. To some degree, I should say, that has been happening more lately, as additional American contributors have come from more varied cultural backgrounds and as at least some voices are heard from other countries, other continents. Even in a relatively early period, some of the critical comments on these texts came from members of Asian and African intellectual diasporas in North America: from Edward Said (2000), a Palestinian-American literary and cultural critic, for example, and from Amartya Sen (2006), a philosopher-economist of Indian origin. More recently, we have seen prominent books, as well, by authors with a somewhat different kind of curriculum vitae. A prominent instance is Fareed Zakaria, author of *The Post-American World* (2008). Zakaria is a Harvard PhD and was at one time Samuel Huntington’s student. He is also a former editor of the journal *Foreign Affairs* and is now a newspaper columnist who also has his own talk show on CNN every week; so again, here is someone straddling academic and media worlds. And President Obama has been photographed on vacation with Zakaria’s book in his hand. But Zakaria was born and grew up in Mumbai, and recurrently his readers and viewers may get a sense that his point of view toward both America and the world is not entirely that of a US native.

Moreover, there are now more contributions to the scenario genre from outside the United States. I would think of books like *Überpower* (2006) and *The Myth of America’s Decline* (2014) by Josef Joffe, senior editor of *Die Zeit* in Germany, and *The New Asian Hemisphere* (2008) by Kishore Mahbubani, a veteran Singapore diplomat and academic. Incidentally, Mahbubani and Zakaria were both on that *Prospect*(*Foreign Policy*) list of global public intellectuals that I mentioned above. Yet one may sense, too, that these are also texts that aim not least at American readers, and the authors are again well connected in the United States. I referred above to Joseph Nye citing Joffe on the soft power of American popular culture, and I have seen both Joffe and Mahbubani in conversation with Fareed Zakaria on his television show. So the network of scenarists seems to remain dense, and these conversations still take place within a global context of soft power. To make the world more flat, in Thomas Friedman’s terms, to get a more level playing field for global exchanges between different perspectives, competences, and sensitivities, probably we need to go farther yet. Perhaps, to begin to attend to more voices, we might at least promise ourselves that for each scenario originating in the United States that we read, we should also take in one comparable text from somewhere else?!

### Do Scenarios Succeed?

Anyway, let us now look at these global scenarios from another vantage point. By now, some time has passed since the first of them appeared, and we can have some sense of how well they did. The end of history? No, not really. The world is flat? Well, in global competition, the playing field is surely now more level in some places than in others, where the game may seem more like a roller-coaster ride. And as for Huntington’s state-centered variety of a “clash of civilizations”—no, civilizations are more complicated than that, and that is hardly the way wars are fought any more.

So we may be inclined to judge these scenarios as failures, but possibly it is not as simple as that. We need to give some thought to what goes into scenarios and to their passages through public life. What can happen to them on their way toward the future? These authors do not put together their texts and then file them away, in a top drawer of their desks as it were, to see later on whether their forecasts did come true. The scenarios are out there in the arenas of opinion making, intended to influence their audiences. One way this can work, for better or for worse, intentionally or unintentionally, is through self-fulfilling prophecies. In the case of Samuel Huntington’s clash-of-civilizations scenario, this was a risk raised by some number of commentators, including Benazir Bhutto. Probably more often than they are self-fulfilling, however, scenarios may be self-destructive prophecies, or may at least be so intended. The futures they outline are frequently dystopic; the scenarios are supposed to serve as early warnings, attempts at consciousness raising. They are at least as likely to be prescriptive as to be predictive. To the extent that the scenarios have actually been attended to and acted on (or have at least played some part, modest or not, in pushing public and strategic consciousness in a desirable direction), one may see them as successes rather than failures.

In other words, one reason why predicting what will happen in human society is very difficult is just that so many members of the species *Homo sapiens* can read and shake their heads. But it is certainly also difficult because human society has become so complex and so varied. Here I am back with Eric Wolf again and his view of the work of anthrop-

15. Note again Huntington’s comment, quoted above, on his global travels to discuss the clash-of-civilizations thesis. Both Benjamin Barber and Joseph Nye were among those scholars who in 2011 had to respond to queries about just what had been involved in their invited visits with Colonel Ghaddafi of Libya; so either he or someone in his vicinity apparently also felt that they mattered.

16. Yet the position of English as the dominant world language is obviously a soft-power factor here (cf. de Swaan 2001). It is striking that although it has much the largest number of speakers able to use it as their second language, many more translations are from English into other languages than vice versa. Consequently, beyond English, the world as a space of intellectual activity remains remarkably opaque, not only to Anglophones but to all others as well.
pologists and their part in the division of labor in knowledge production. To repeat, in that lecture to European anthropologists, Wolf noted that anthropology’s observational approach could lead to a skeptical view toward large generalizing schemes. In that way, again and again finding exceptions and contradictions somewhere in the world, anthropologists have offered to the scholarly world one of their services as contrarians. One leading anthropologist has indeed tersely noted that “anthropologists are not sociologists, nor political scientists, and therefore they do not even attempt to predict future developments” (Gingrich 2006:47).

Even so, I remain forever curious about what anthropologists can contribute to the Big Picture of the world. Again, the leading场景ists do not come out of anthropology, and their texts and footnotes mostly do not suggest that their sideways study has engaged with this discipline very much. What would a scenario look like that was more thoroughly grounded in the rich materials of world ethnography and in anthropological thought? And I would say that the Big Picture was also part of Eric Wolf’s agenda, even as he approached it critically and primarily in portraying the past, as in Europe and the People Without History (1982).

Taking this kind of anthropological enterprise onward, I think we may usefully look again at Wolf’s views of culture. If one accepts that processual view of culture as involving a multitude of sets of meanings, continuously constructed and reconstructed by human actors in social relationships, I believe that one has to approach it at the same time as a cultural anthropologist and a social anthropologist. There is no place here for any opposition between culture and human agency, as one of Huntington’s critics had it. People are not cultural robots: they select from their cultural repertoires and reshape ideas according to circumstances, thinking out of the box in small or large ways.

Frames of Cultural Organization

So how can we grasp the present and perhaps even the possible future of culture, as an organization of diversity, in an interconnected world? As fieldworkers, with a close-up view, anthropologists have been at work documenting that the diversity of human life is almost infinite, perhaps overwhelming. We may be reminded of that commentator on Huntington’s scheme who felt that the culture concept was rather like a snowflake in June. Perhaps one could just as well argue that in their entire shape-shifting complexity, its referents are about as transparent as a snowstorm in a Nordic midwinter.

Aiming at more of an overall, reasonably user-friendly view, however, I would argue that it can give us a first handle on the shape of contemporary culture, and even take us a fairly long way in sensing it works, to identify a limited, rather commonsense set of major organizational frames within which people now get together to handle meaning and meaningful forms. They involve different kinds of characteristic relationships within ongoing social life. Together, they may give us a sense of the task of anthropology, in its continuous exchanges with other scholarly fields.

One of these frames is the state, a second the market, and a third is movements. “States” should be understood with upward and downward derivations, from organizations within the United Nations family to local governments such as the Vienna city council. And state apparatuses as institutional actors are, of course, variously active and powerful in their handling of culture. Some states are strong, some are weak, some even failing. It may be that a conventional definition of the state centers on the idea that it monopolizes the legitimate use of force. But in fact, most of the time, we may be more touched by how the state handles meaning, for example, through schools, universities, radio, television, museums, or national celebrations. In the market frame, meanings and meaningful forms typically take the shape of commodities—there is, of course, a very large body of writings on this, from the Frankfurt School at home and in exile (e.g., Adorno 1991) onward. Movements are, in principle, on-and-off phenomena: they can last a long time in mobilizing people for a cause but can also be short-lived. Some of them are very local, but if one looks again at the late twentieth century, it will be clear that some have been more or less of global scope: the peace movement, the women’s movement, the green movement.

Basically the same kind of meaning can take quite different forms, depending on which frame it occurs in. Take religion: its ideas and expressions will be handled in different ways if they are in a state religion, part of a marketplace, as in recent varieties of American televangelism, or propagated by a movement seeking converts and changing their consciousness.

There is much more to be said about this, but I think it is striking that much of current scenario writing can actually be mapped by way of these frames. Samuel Huntington is above all preoccupied with how states manage cultural identifications that are primarily drawn from world religions. In Benjamin Barber’s terminology, “McWorld” stands for the market and “jihad” for certain varieties of movements. Joseph Nye’s ideal of soft power involves the state seeking to benefit, in large part, from the global spread of national products of popular culture; but here the problem arises, for one thing, that the state has, in large part, outsourced that production to the marketplace, Hollywood, or whatever, and so it is not

17. The methodological context of Gingrich’s statement, it should be noted, was a contrast between anthropological work and more or less quantitative, statistically based extrapolations and prognoses in some parts of these disciplines.
18. I am one among the relatively few who have occasionally used the term “macro-anthropology” to refer to that ambition; see also Gingrich (2002) on what may be done in this direction.
19. My earlier attempts to work with such organizational frames can be found in two of my earlier books (Hannerz 1992, 1996). See also note 20.
really in full control of what messages reach the world out there. What that shows is that the frames do not exist insulated from one another. Many of the most interesting cultural phenomena involve entanglements and hybrids between them and instances when cultural complexes move between frames—between states and markets or between movements and states.

But here is a main point: something is missing, something important. Ever since the species Homo sapiens emerged and before there were states, markets, and movements as we know them today, people developed and maintained culture simply by being around each other, watching each other, and listening to each other—forever engaged in learning, without necessarily so much deliberate teaching going on. This happens now within households, in neighborhoods, in workplaces, and in the streets. One curious thing is that, as far as I can tell, we have no really established, widely accepted and understood term for this most fundamental and ubiquitous frame of cultural process. I have looked for one, but I found most alternatives either too vague or already appropriated for other purposes.20 “Togetherness,” taken literally, might seem just right, but as it is usually understood, it tends to involve consensus and even intimacy, which is not what I have in mind. “Conviviality,” again understood literally, could also have been OK, but then it was prominently placed in circulation some 40 years ago for entirely different purposes by the anti-industrial futurist visionary Ivan Illich (1973), and the memory of his vision for the world could just possibly linger in some minds.21 (Incidentally, Illich, like Eric Wolf, was born in Vienna, although he, too, then spent his life mostly elsewhere.) In any case, we had better stay away from his term and find another word—even a new one if necessary, without such distracting associations. I come to this conclusion reluctantly, since the paths through the academic-industrial terrain are littered with failed neologisms. But I am helped here by the insight of another social thinker who also happens, like both Eric Wolf and Ivan Illich, to have been born in Vienna, someone who then, like Wolf, became an academic migrant to New York: the social philosopher Alfred Schutz.

Alfred Schutz has used the term “consociates” for people who are simply in each other’s presence, whether recurrently in situations of personal closeness or quite briefly in situations of anonymity.22 And so I derive from that the term “consociality,” as a label for that fourth, but actually first and most fundamental, frame for cultural process.

The Global Village Now

The term “conviviality” has tended to be used programatically, to refer to a vision, while “consociality” describes a reality. We can sense that sheer physical copresence is central to it. Yet here I also feel a need to update Schutz in one way. At the time when he wrote, and also in the periods and places that Eric Wolf mostly wrote about, media technologies may not have had the impact on social and cultural life that they have today and will conceivably have in the future. I find it intriguing, however, that in speaking to the Southern Anthropological Society in New Orleans in 1969, suggesting an agenda for the future of anthropology, Wolf indeed made reference to Marshall McLuhan—it was McLuhan’s writings in the 1960s that led to a breakthrough in public curiosity about the global cultural consequences of the media.23 And McLuhan, as Wolf (2001:21) saw it, had “made use of largely anthropological insights to project the outlines of the communication revolution of the present and the future.”

Yet what McLuhan wrote about, now a half-century ago, coining the term “the global village” (McLuhan 1964), was mostly the coming of electronic media into a world until then primarily used to writing and print technologies, and the major new electronic media in question would be television. This was basically mass communication, one-way traffic. So the “global-village” metaphor was not really so fitting at the time. But since then we have come a long way in diversifying media, and I would argue that what we now call “so-

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20. I have already used the notion “form of life” for this frame elsewhere, without really feeling satisﬁed with it, as it is too vague (Hannerz 1992, 1996). “Everyday life” is a widely used expression, but it is not sufﬁciently clearly bounded: certainly the market and the state are also involved in our everyday experiences. What Appadurai (1996) has termed “ethnoscape,” in his noted ﬁve-scape scheme accounting for the variety of cultural ﬂows in the contemporary world, may bear a certain resemblance to what I have in mind, but is not so focused on particular kinds of interaction and experience. Some readers may also be reminded of Bourdieu’s (e.g., 1977) concept of “habitus,” but that seems less focused on particular interactional forms. “Sociality” is a notion that has drawn considerable attention in anthropology in recent times (e.g., Long and Moore 2013), but it has been understood in rather varied ways and does not seem sufﬁciently clearly bounded analytically vis-à-vis the other frames discussed here.

21. Another prominent user of the term has been Paul Gilroy (2005), who employs it to describe an emergent open, tolerant coexistence in the context of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity. See also the special issue on “Convivial Cultures” of the journal Soundings (Davison 2006).

22. Schutz (1967:16) notes that he uses the term “consociates” to designate “a purely formal aspect of social relationship equally applicable to an intimate talk between friends and the co-presence of strangers in a railroad car.” Clifford Geertz (1973:365), one anthropologist who has drawn on Schutz, notes that consociates “are individuals who actually meet, persons who encounter one another somewhere in the course of daily life. They thus share, however brieﬂy or superﬁcially, not only a community of time but also of space. . . . Lovers, so long as love lasts, are consociates, as are spouses until they separate or friends until they fall out. So also are members of orchestras, players at games, strangers chatting on a train, haggles in a market, or inhabitants of a village: any set of persons who have an immediate, face-to-face relationship.”

23. Perhaps Eric Wolf’s materialist inclinations would not so readily lead him to an engagement with the signiﬁcance of media, but indeed another of his ﬁrst anthropology teachers, Hortense Powdermaker, was a pioneer in anthropological media studies.
cial media” also extend the power of consociality, with the kinds of relationships that have otherwise involved looking and listening in a context of physical copresence. (Parenthetically, I would add that I find the term “social media” a little unfortunate—since all media are really social, I would have preferred to call these “interpersonal.”)

With that update in place, we can see that media now play their part in all four of those frames of cultural process. We have heard recently how social media had a significant role in generating, out of consociality, those movements that for a time made up “the Arab Spring.” It is striking, too, that entanglements between frames often involve agents within other frames trying to monitor, in large part by way of various media, whatever may be the flow of meaning within consociality. Much market research and opinion polling would belong here. And again and again, there is scholarly or public concern over how the integrity of the relationships of consociality is threatened by invasions from other frames. Very recently, we have had the worldwide scandal over surveillance activities, where a state security apparatus can, in principle, inform itself about whatever we say to each other by way of media technologies.

If, as anthropologists, we look for the research sites most likely to contribute to that sense of the Big Picture of the world, or some part of it, we may indeed often find them on the shifting borders between the main frames of cultural process and not least between consociality and the others. Here the shared hopes or anxieties of the everyday may grow and be transformed into a movement. Here the playful experimentation with drums, guitars, and voices in some remote village square can turn into a commodity in a new popular culture and be transformed into a movement. Here the playful experimentation with drums, guitars, and voices in some remote village square can turn into a commodity in a new popular culture and may be discovered as part of a new “world music” that, as it is heard in the discos of global metropoles, suggests that McWorld is a bit more diverse in its origins than the scenario author had thought. In my view, these entanglements between frames are again and again where cultural history is made.

The Big Picture and “Being There”

But let me also note that I sense a particular affinity between the idea of a frame of consociality and our anthropological field practice of ethnographic observation, as emphasized by Eric Wolf. We are there in place, learning about people through immersion in their everyday. I return, finally, once more to Samuel Huntington, whose last book, Who Are We? (2004), was in a way a domestic follow-up on his concern with identity politics in his clash-of-civilizations argument. If under the circumstances it was important for that civilization called “the West” to stick together, there could be no room for multiculturalism within it. Here Huntington was particularly critical of the impact of the immigration of Mexicans—Hispanics—on the fabric of life in the United States. Clearly, he engaged at this point with another phase in an enduring debate over the shaping of a national culture with a more or less continuous influx of newcomers. What he saw as the last- ing, and open, American mainstream into which new groups should be absorbed was fundamentally an Anglo-Protestant culture. But the problem was that the multitude of migrants coming in from “south of the border” did not choose to fit into this scheme. So they were a threat to the national social fabric.

In the debate on this book that followed, it became clear that many commentators did not agree with Huntington’s vision of what should be American culture. But there were also a number of critics suggesting that Huntington had some central facts wrong. The Mexican immigrants really were not so different from what earlier newcomers had been, and, given a chance, they made their way into American life, speaking English and all. And the reviewer of this book whom I want to quote, Andrew Hacker, another political scientist, noted that Huntington gives no sign that he has actually come to know any Hispanics well or has been willing to visit their families and hear their views about patriotism or any other subject. He seems to have little close knowledge of the people he writes about; perhaps that is why there seems an undercurrent of fear in his treatment of them. (Hacker 2004:29)

There I think we can join Eric Wolf again, as he engaged in his fieldwork in the South Tyrol. I think it is in that quotidian frame of consociality that much of human life takes place. It is life that needs to be understood in itself, and that is enough of a reason to make room for it in any future scenario. But again, much of what will later become conspicuous in another of those frames of cultural process actually begins there. Consequently, even if there is no way of really observing the future, it may be somewhere in that frame of consociality that we stand the best chance of actually spotting what is emergent.24 Here the observational science can indeed turn out to be the integrative science. “Being there” matters. And so we may hope that we can find future Huntington, Barbers, and Nyes out there, too, attending the dances and, like Eric Wolf, playing the accordion.

Acknowledgments

This paper was given as the ninth Eric Wolf Lecture, an annual event organized in a collaboration between the Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften (IFK), Vienna; the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna; and the Institute for Social Anthropology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, in Vienna on

24. I am reminded of one early contribution to the future-scenario genre, not yet so globally oriented: in his book Megatrends, John Naisbitt (1984) claimed that important new developments could first be spotted at a local level, even as they were, to begin with, rather inconspicuous. Therefore, a method for identifying them was to scrutinize small, local newspapers—their reporters and editors were likely to have their ears close to the ground. We might sense that much of what they listened to was part of the flow of meaning within consociality. That, one may have to add, was at a time before many local newspapers had died.
November 10, 2014. I am grateful to the hosts for thoughtful and generous arrangements and especially to Ayse Caglar and Andre Gingrich for valuable comments. Thanks also to the thoughtful anonymous reviewers for Current Anthropology.

Comments

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As I found myself nodding to Hannerz’s elegant exposition most of the time, I will concentrate on additional points. One is the fact that the global-scenario genre has a certain historical depth. The Apocalypse of St. John is rather global itself, but for something more similar to Huntington, many commentators have pointed out the similarities to Oswald Spengler’s Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West; 1919, 1926), which, at least in the German-speaking world, coined a catchphrase of similar distribution. Closer in time are the global scenarios of the 1960s and 1970s, including such best sellers as Future Shock, by Alvin Toffler (1970), or the many books by Herman Kahn (e.g., 1967, 1976), works that contributed to the rise of futurism or futurology as a transdisciplinary endeavor, institutionalized, for example, in the Association of Professional Futurists (http://www.profuturists.org) or in the journal Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning and Futures Studies, founded in 1968. Of a different political bent and probably the most influential global scenario to date, The Limits to Growth (Meadows et al. 1972), commissioned by the Club of Rome, became a landmark in the history of modern environmentalism. What most distinguishes the post–Cold War scenarios from these earlier ones (except for Spengler’s stand-alone work), then, is that the driving force is no longer technological development and its consequences but “culture,” understood in a roughly anthropological way, even if misconceived as too stable, too binding on the individual, and too synonymous with ethnic identity (Brumann 1999:S11–S12). Given Hannerz’s observations, more in-depth research into the scenario writers’ social networks and institutional environments might be rewarding, as also might be a look into what academic futurism does with “culture,” as against other factors.

As for impact, there is no doubt that the global-scenario literature includes best sellers that reached influential people. A Google Ngram search for “clash of civilizations” documents a considerable surge of the phrase in print after Huntington’s publications. As for academia, I am less sure. There is no reason to assume that political scientists, economists, or sociologists (who produce vastly more academic citations than anthropologists) would principally dismiss the work of what, after all, are often fellow academics, and indeed, Huntington’s Foreign Affairs article (1993) yields 10,564 citations on Google Scholar (searched May 15, 2015) and his book (Huntington 1996) 14,225. The End of History and the Last Man (Fukuyama 1992), with 13,094, and The World is Flat (Friedman 2005), with 10,522, follow closely, but Soft Power (Nye 2004), with 4,417, and Jihad vs. McWorld (Barber 1996), with 3,856, already fall back quite a bit. This is not spectacularly better than the figures for some of the anthropological and sociological work on globalization that many of us would more willingly consult, such as the 10,905 citations for the first volume of The Modern World-System (Wallerstein 1974), the 6,487 for Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture (Robertson 1992), the 6,056 for Wolf’s Europe and the People without History (1982), the 4,146 for Nations Unbound (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1993), the 3,798 for Hannerz’s own Transnational Connections (1996), or the 2,065 for as recent a book as Friction (Tsing 2005). More surprisingly, even, everyone—including Huntington and Fukuyama—is beaten by Modernity at Large (Appadurai 1996), which boasts 18,627 citations. Anthropologists, in particular, have liked to use Huntington as a kind of punching bag (e.g., Brumann 1999:S10, S12; Kuper 1999:3–4), but as Hannerz shows, it did not require our expertise in particular to question his claims, so I guess that many of the citations will in fact indicate disagreement, which may be the case also for others, such as Fukuyama. It could be that popularity goes hand in hand with a shortened intellectual half-life.

What I draw from the above figures is encouragement not to leave painting the big picture to others, such as political scientists alone. Compare the citations of your own work with those of the respectable anthropological and sociological work cited above, and you will see that using the wider angle can pay off in terms of scholarly attention.

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Ulf Hannerz begins his Eric Wolf Lecture by pointing out several distinguishing features of Wolf’s work, including his insistence on observation as unique to anthropology, the need for immersion in participant observation, and his processual and dynamic view of culture and its relationship to power and history as central anthropological concepts. While he shares Wolf’s view on culture and the centrality of observation, Hannerz defines his own task somewhat differently, choosing to focus “on the future and what people say about it.” Methodologically, his project is that of “studying sideways,” an approach he developed in his 2004 multisite field study of news media foreign correspondents (Hannerz 2004), whereby anthropologists study how knowledge is produced by practitioners of other disciplines on issues similar to those

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with which anthropologists are concerned. In his lecture, Hannerz concentrates on a particular genre of writing that he refers to as “global scenarios,” which refers to “the basically small-scale commentatorial enterprise of a handful of writers [that has] somehow worked itself through varied institutional contexts and across borders, to grow into a significant component of global public consciousness.” He selects to analyze three such writers of global scenarios, political scientists Samuel Huntington, Benjamin Barber, and Joseph Nye. Important to Hannerz’s approach is his critical positioning, his sideways situatedness that allows him to bring out central anthropological concepts and ways of thinking about the world to critically expose these global scenarios’ shortcomings. Through the anthropological understanding of culture, he discloses the cultural fundamentalism embedded in Huntington’s thesis in Clash of Civilizations, Barber’s reductionist and misleading concepts of the market and conservative movements in Jihad vs. McWorld, and the exaggerated global impact of popular culture of Nye’s Soft Power.

But beyond his insightful criticism, Hannerz’s real focus is on anthropology and its potential to “contribute to the Big Picture of the world.” In trying to answer the question of why none of the leading scenarios that recently entered into global public discourse came out of anthropology, he returns to Wolf. In conversation with Wolf’s concept of culture, Hannerz tries to imagine the possibility of such an anthropologically embedded global scenario. His proposition is to add to the cultural organization’s three general frames (the state, the market, and movements) a fourth one that he refers to as “consociality.” Consociality, as proposed by Hannerz, expands the understanding of the term originally proposed by Alfred Schutz to express being in each other’s presence in the mediated global reality. It is by working on the borders of the traditional cultural frames and consociality, the aspect of the cultural process to which anthropologists have privileged access through their ethnographic field observations, that anthropologists have a chance of “spotting what is emergent” and contributing to the drawing of the Big Picture of the world.

Hannerz offers an inspiring methodological intervention and ambitious proposition for anthropology’s expanded public role. His text is refreshing in the elegant interweaving of inspirations from Eric Wolf’s work and his own research to engage with current anthropological debates and offer an encouraging opening for imaging anthropology’s public futures.

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14 V 15

In this paper, Ulf Hannerz highlights an influential genre of big future scenarios generated by global public intellectuals that is propelled by a mix of the media industry and politics. He proffers that anthropology has a role in opening up this genre by contributing scenarios from other parts of the world to allow for diverse perspectives toward a shared global future. I find Hannerz’s ideas appealing for the hope it renders to a shared future for humankind at a juncture of increasing global uncertainty and environmental unsustainability. A vision for anthropology to take the lead in bringing about better understanding of human diversity and interconnectedness in a fragmented world is timely. I say so as someone concerned by how the same progressive politics that has divided scholars and prevented them from agreeing on human commonalities has caught on in the political spheres of Southeast Asia—the region of my study and abode—but in the form of cultural and religious bigotties. I will first comment on the validity of the future as a unit of analysis and then turn to evidence from Southeast Asia as a means to expand on the starting points provided by Hannerz on how anthropologists can influence the public through their world scenarios.

To begin, if there is any doubt about the future as a valid analytical category, we should remember that time, in its flows and illusions, has long been a subject of study in many other disciplines. In fact, notable efforts to synthesize past, present, and future in recent continental philosophy, by scholars such as Alain Badiou (2005), are precisely aimed at reinstating philosophy’s relevance in the contemporary world. There is hence no reason why anthropology should be hesitant about fathoming the future. It may help if we think philosophically about our efforts to grasp the present, namely, about the inherent gap between phenomenon and representation. If reality itself can never fully be captured, then representing an unknown future may not be so different from our usual efforts to define the present. But, as suggested by Hannerz, scripting the future will require us to be imaginative in our methods and writing. Here, Fassin’s (2014) reflections on ethnographic imagination as requiring a combination of scientific and literary skills are pertinent. For Fassin, ethnographic writing shares traits similar to those of fiction writing, in that both give “attention to significant details of life” but with the exception that ethnography draws on the social sciences to make sense of the world created by subjects by connecting it to wider structures and events (Fassin 2014:54). All this is not to suggest that anthropology should become a science of the future. Rather, it is about using its wealth of established understandings of the now and the past of societies to anticipate long-term cultural circulations, entwinements, and consequences in the wider world.

Next, following Hannerz’s prescription that scenarios can be mapped at the shifting borders of organizational frames, let me discuss two phenomena from Southeast Asia that not only provide insights into but also compel the imagining of the future. I first refer to the problem of environmental destruction that looms large over the region as a result of overaccumulative activities and corruptive practices. Recoil from nature and social-political consequences are inevitable. All over the region there are already ominous signs in the form of
flash floods and air and water pollution, especially a recurring transboundary haze problem that has turned the air that humans breathe into a source of danger. There is urgency for scholars to engage the public with informed scenarios of consequences from environmental destruction so as to help spur the push for more-sustainable development. As a second case, hopelessly fractured public spheres have sowed seeds of new political expressions in many countries in the region. Movements, observable at the subterranean levels, produce clues to how resistant politics have to turn creative and carve new sites in the context of a thoroughly incapacitated traditional public sphere. Loose collectives of like-minded people, consisting largely of young, savvy social-media users, have noticeably come together for mass demonstrations and political action as and when the occasion requires. These actors do not display conventional political behavior and are not always collective; neither are they always radical. But their alternative imaginations about society, community, and humanity strike powerful chords with fellow members of their societies. There is a need to make overall sense of the traces of histories and human aspirations and their intersections with the internet and global flows over time that constitute these new politics and their long-term sustenance and impacts on the region.

There is clearly promise that anthropological narratives of the future may serve as moral instructives to spur people to take affirmative action. However, anthropological scenario writings are more likely to impact a specific rather than a global readership.

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Anthropologists have not been shy in providing commentaries on natural and man-made disasters. In fact, this is part of our trade, in which some of us are more capable than others. Calamities—and McDonaldization is not the most serious—have offered scholars ample grounds for testing their ideas and proposals. Hannerz is correct when he envisions that academic responses will not be declining. Are there any differences between Chernobyl in 1986, the recent killing of 147 Kenyans by al-Shabaab militants, the mayhem at Charlie Hebdo headquarters, and the tsunami of 2004? Obviously. The last was a natural cataclysm, the rest consequences of culture and society. To offer various scenarios such as these and others of similar nature, as Hannerz suggests, is not without political quagmires. This is what happened with racism when Franz Boas raised his objections against an ideology that soon turned official in Nazi Germany. Yet, despite his revolutionary thinking, Boas’s 1905 major proposal submitted to the Carnegie Foundation to conduct a comparative study of American Indian and Negro populations was not funded (Lewis 2001:454). A few years ago, I was involved with the European Commission’s sixth framework program as an evaluator to rank 160 proposals submitted to one of the programs, but only 30 received funding, even though most of us agreed that well over half of the projects were good enough to be funded (many were especially crucial to European and global social problems). Interestingly, some proposals were about either how to combat Islamic fundamentalism or, inversely, what to do about anti-Islamic backlash following 9/11. For a science to become a truly integrative one, as Wolf and now Hannerz suggest, other constituents must be present, not the least of which is to understand how diversity and uniformity contest, challenge, and complement each other. Importantly, positioning oneself in one of the global scenarios Hannerz describes may at times become crucial. In a recent edited collection, we have attempted to do exactly that by interrogating one aspect of the “end-of-history” scenarios—the collapse and reemergence of East Central Europe—by focusing on how native anthropologists view their societies and whether their perspectives offer an alternative to those of Western scenario anthropologists (to paraphrase Hannerz) concerning postsocialism (Kürti and Skalnik 2009). I do not think that we managed to forge definitive or unilateral answers, yet in a way we were somewhat optimistic that European integration must be seen with a healthy dose of imagination about the future from “your vantage point toward the present and, perhaps, the past,” as Hannerz emphasizes. I am not disclosing a secret now (although, after Wikileaks and Edward Snowden, one wonders), but Ulf Hannerz was one of the manuscript readers when we submitted our book proposal to Berghahn.

One of Hannerz’s last phrases is very telling. Being There is the title of an excellent 1979 movie with the exceptional actor Peter Sellers, who plays Chance, a simpleton gardener. Chance (pun intended), together with people’s eagerness to kowtow to politicians, almost becomes the American president. Despite Malinowski’s (2002:5) proviso that adventurousness and fortuitousness are not part of the fieldworker’s trade, I would like to believe that we do have a chance. So, as anthropologists we have unique possibilities of “being there,” through not only observation but contemplation, critical reflection, and scrutiny—actually “studying sideways,” as Hannerz writes. And this is where I would like to take Hannerz’s proposition a step farther, for while I agree that there are no anthropologists among the scenario writers, I would suggest other, more alternative scenario authors. Earlier, Franz Boas, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Margaret Mead, Victor Turner, Ernest Gellner, and Clifford Geertz certainly would qualify as such, with several best sellers to their credit. At the moment, there are scholars of exceptional repute and international standing who may just come close to being called that, revealing pathways from the past toward humanity’s future. I refrain from listing names, but Eric Wolf and Ulf Hannerz are surely among them, a German and a Swede who have looked at the world of global exchanges very differently. Hannerz’s article is a masterly survey of the various forms of panoptic observations, including the diverse anthropological ones, as they relate to others’ disciplines. I just love the reference to Eric Wolf playing accordion while conducting field-
work in the South Tyrol. The instrument was my father’s favored one. Now I understand better what Wolf wanted to say when he wrote about social and cultural connections.

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The highest praise my father, a theoretical physicist, had for a colleague was to say that he (there were no women among them) “had a picture,” meaning that he saw how the particular processes he was studying fit into the big picture of the physical universe. After I traded chemistry for anthropology, he once told my mother, by way of reassurance, that he realized I was engaged in the same quest—trying to get a picture of the world.

Ulf Hannerz is one of those anthropologists for whom “having a picture” matters. As we know from his previous writings, he also wishes that we, as a discipline, were better able to communicate that picture to others. In Foreign News, he lamented the inability of anthropologists to respond adequately to “one-big-thing” books such as Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations by presenting alternative visions that were clear and accessible (Hannerz 2004:219). Hence, perhaps, his interest in “global scenarios” that do capture public attention.

In this article, written with the careful language and understated humor that make his writing so enjoyable, Hannerz retains his optimism that anthropologists may make a dent in the armor of grand simplifiers like Huntington. He suggests, helpfully, that this can best be done through ethnographies that link the everyday interactions he calls “cosociality” to the dominant frames of cultural processes—the state, the market, and social movements—that translate relatively easily beyond the discipline’s borders. (Here, he shares common ground with legal scholar David Westbrook [2008], whose Navigators of the Contemporary is one of the most spirited arguments for anthropology’s public relevance.) He registers his disagreement but refrains from alarmism or contempt for the “global scenarios” he describes.

A number of anthropologists have watched with more open dismay as culture, or rather cultural difference, has since the demise of Cold War ideological divisions become a catch-all explanation for global conflict in a popular variety of global scenarios. Despite all that has happened in the past quarter-century, it seems to have held on to that role (although perhaps inequality as a concept is slowly catching up, buoyed not least by the fame of Thomas Piketty, one of the few successful global scenarioists based outside the United States, and climate change is another contender.) In the 2005 collection Why America’s Top Pundits Are Wrong: Anthropologists Talk Back (2005), editors Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson attempted to take on a number of such accounts, including Huntington’s, but in a way that rendered the attempt inaccessible to those pundits’ readers. Joana Breidenbach and I wrote Seeing Culture Everywhere (2009) with Huntington’s readers in mind, but we, too, failed to cross the chasm between the academic and trade markets. A much-shortened trade version was published in German and was a flop. Anthropologists have been understandably reluctant in coming up with alternative “one-big-thing” stories but also surprisingly ineffective at making simple explanations harder to believe.

Providing simple explanations—the promise of “distinguishing what is important from what is unimportant,” in Huntington’s (1996:36) words, quoted by Hannerz—is, of course, the core appeal of the “global-scenario” genre. Much of this is achieved through cultural reductionism, as in the work of Huntington, Francis Fukuyama, Benjamin Barber, and Robert Kaplan, mentioned by Hannerz, or the historian David Landes (The Wealth and Poverty of Nations) and the management scholar Geert Hofstede (Culture’s Consequences). Hofstede is to business what Huntington is to politicians: he orders the world into national cultures and measures the values they hold on scales, allowing managers to use these as a market compass. Like Huntington, he regards cultural change as superficial and hybridity as best avoided.

Hofstede’s global popularity is outstanding even within the genre: according to Google Scholar, nearly 124,000 publications refer to his oeuvre, five times as many as to the two versions of The Clash of Civilizations. We know that global scenarios travel well across language borders, but some do so better than others. Huntington, Hofstede, Nye, and Friedman—I once saw a Mongolian model read a Cyrillic copy of The World is Flat at a Singapore poolside—seem to have more global appeal than Fukuyama, Kaplan, or Barber. It would be interesting to explore the reasons.

We know for a fact that the cultural reductionism of these authors is wrong. We know because we have “been there.” But while I too wish that anthropologists had more impact on the genre of global scenarios, I am increasingly worried not only that the scenarios based on false premises may become self-fulfilling. I am also worried that we as a discipline are so keen to find complexity—and so successful at finding it—that we blind ourselves to the global wave of barbarism that, though not for the reasons outlined by Huntington, is real (Rapport and Stade 2014). We do so at our own peril.

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Ulf Hannerz offers an evocative review of writings by significant public intellectuals in the 1990s about humanity’s future trajectories into the twenty-first century. Hannerz
treads familiar ground here. His own work, which in the 1990s began drifting away from bounded ethnographic projects, remains a major contribution to anthropology’s quest to grasp “globalization” and the spectrum of processes it entails (Hannerz 1996). His early influential theorizing on the subject was supplemented later by an ethnography of foreign correspondents—people who write from expatriate micro-niches abroad, shaping attitudes and policies in the metropolis (Hannerz 2004). The project in hand, a self-conscious exercise in armchair anthropology and in many ways a direct continuation of the foreign-correspondents book, is as ambitious and perhaps more daring.

Hannerz’s essay, written for his 2014 Eric Wolf memorial lecture, begins with an affectionate homage to Wolf’s preoccupation with power. But it soon becomes apparent that Hannerz is less concerned with power than with culture—that boundless, nebulous idiom Wolf had been so skeptical about. It is at that point in the essay that the intratribal, Ulf-on-Wolf exchange gives way to Hannerz’s main thrust: an extraverted look, from anthropology toward other spheres of knowledge, at how the C-word was mobilized, interpreted, and reintegrated into a discourse designed to fathom “who we are” and to predict where “we” are heading. Hannerz suggests that “global scenarios,” as a genre, includes a good number of items, and then picks three for further scrutiny: Samuel Huntington’s 1993 Clash of Civilizations, Benjamin Barber’s Jihad vs. McWorld, published 2 years later, and Joseph Nye’s notion of Soft Power, which first appeared in 1990.

In Hannerz’s essay, it appears that this genre has three main characteristics. First is the object of inquiry. Global scenarios attempt to capture, analyze, and predict the macro processes that creep across continents, spheres of influence, and global institutions, redefining and remodeling our lives. For me, one of the compelling things about them—Huntington’s, Barber’s, and Nye’s no exception—is the impression they create that the trajectories they analyze and index are under way even at the time of writing. So, contrary to Hannerz’s suggestion that global scenarios are fundamentally about the future, I see them as bringing the future into the present. It is a powerful trope, one that instills the reader with a sense of urgency and persuasion. After all, failing to recognize a current already in flow might imply that one already lags behind it. These predictions, in other words, can hardly be ignored. Convincing or not—and some of them seemed very real upon first reading—their claim to represent systemic aspects of a fast-moving reality was irresistible. No wonder some of them soon became indispensable for a correct anticipation of the future.

Second is delivery. Writers in the genre, Hannerz says, may have been leading academics in their respective fields. But all of them chose to place their early musings on their new scenarios in nonacademic periodicals, like Foreign Policy, Prospect, or The National Interest. Unrestricted by academic peer review, these outlets facilitate detail and correspondence with earlier ideas by using quotes and references but reach larger, more varied and influential audiences. Later, once a piece had become iconic, it was expanded into book form, assuming a presence of its own.

Third is the ease with which global scenarios traverse disciplinary boundaries. Writers in the genre, Hannerz implies, maneuver between political theory, history, philosophy, international relations, economics, sociology, and more. And hovering above them, like a soothing, integrating harmony from an invisible accordion, is “culture.”

Hannerz seems to accept—a tad wryly perhaps—that you do not have to be an anthropologist to embrace culture. Huntington, Barber, and Nye produce deep play with it, covering the four frames whereby, Hannerz asserts, “people now get together to handle meaning and meaningful forms”: the state, the market, movements, and “consociality”—contexts in which space, ideas, and presence are being shared, including, recently, social media.

The Clash of Civilizations, Jihad vs. McWorld, and Soft Power are, no doubt, influential fin de siècle texts that appeared at a significant juncture in world history. But their preoccupation with culture is also somewhat anachronistic. It echoes the dichotomy that once defined modernity but now is often doubted, between culture (diverse yet ubiquitous and fateful for all civilizations) and nature (archaic and irrelevant, hence justifiably absent from global scenarios).

Two decades on, however, with climate change becoming the defining feature of our time, the absence of the biosphere from global scenarios is disturbing. Suddenly, 1990s scenarios that ignore the physical limitations of the planet seem inapt. The term “Anthropocene,” a significant and troubling global scenario in its own right (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), opened a floodgate of predictions that seem to shed new light on the texts reviewed by Hannerz and on the genre generally. Latour’s exposure of the fallacies of the nature-culture divide (Latour 2004), Chakrabarti’s call for a “species history” (Chakrabarti 2009), Davis’s quest for those who might build the ark (Davis 2010), and my own suggestion that we have evolved to Homo sapiens combustans (Rabinowitz 2009) are all reminders that culture in itself can no longer encompass the drama awaiting the human race as postnormal climate conditions are upon us. Our complex relationship with the biosphere, hitherto subserved under the sociocultural idioms of “the world,” “the globe,” or “history,” must take central place as we attempt to prophesy the future.

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7 V 15

The late Gerald Berreman once wisecracked to a senior administrator of the University of California at Berkeley, who had remarked that social scientists had no impact on the
world whatsoever, “How about Karl Marx, for starters?” Eric Wolf would have certainly nodded in agreement, and I think Ulf Hannerz, too. Hannerz makes an insightful analysis of the work of public intellectuals who reduce the world’s complexities to global scenarios that can become self-fulfilling prophecies when they suit the foreign-policy objectives of world leaders and resonate with people’s anxieties about the future.

The American sociologist Robert Merton (1957:436) argued that such scenarios translate fears into reality. Merton based his conceptualization of the term “self-fulfilling prophecy” on the W. I. Thomas theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (cited in Merton 1957:421). A self-fulfilling prophecy is, then, “a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true” (Merton 1957:423; emphasis in original). Whether false, true, imagined, or constructed, the definition of the situation creates a meaningful reality because, according to Alfred Schutz (1967:230), “it is the meaning of our experiences and not the ontological structure of the objects which constitutes reality. Hence we call a certain set of our experiences a finite province of meaning if all of them show a specific cognitive style.” Our social universe consists thus of many realities (the world of everyday life, of dreams, of science), each with its own experiences, meanings, and cognitive style. Hannerz examines one particular province of meaning: future scenarios that may become self-fulfilling or self-destructive prophecies of presaging dystopic futures. In a critical move, he tries his hand at a future scenario of the world’s globalized culture that is “more thoroughly grounded in the rich materials of world ethnography and in anthropological thought.”

Hannerz conceptualizes four organizational frames that allow people to deal with the world’s cultural diversity and its multiple meanings, frames that also guide influential scenario writers like Huntington, Barber, and Nye. Three frames were elaborated in his seminal book Cultural Complexity (Hannerz 1992), namely, states, markets, and movements. Here, he replaces the earlier frame “form of life” with “con-sociality” as the “first and most fundamental frame for cultural process.” The neologism is inspired by Alfred Schutz’s term “consociates,” which applies to contemporaries “with whom I share, as long as the relation lasts, not only a community of time but also of space” (Schutz 1967:16).

I have no one quarrel with this, were it not that consociality reveals only part of the equation. The term consociality implies a deep interpersonal affinity with other human beings that is genetically wired into people and manifested in culturally shaped bonds. Yet consociality requires a complementary concept that contrasts people’s “sheer physical copresence” and mediated communication with people’s fear of “the touch of the unknown . . . a human propensity as deep-seated as it is alert and insidious” (Canetti 1963:15).

People’s face-to-face and mediated copresence is marred by this fundamental frame that makes people, communities, and states live apart together. Let me propose the neologism “dissociality” to describe this cultural organization of diversity. The We of consociality corresponds to the They of dissociality because people exist as consociates by the grace of being dissociates. Dissociality is not the antithesis of consociality, but the two constitute an ambidextrous frame. Consociality cannot exist without a counterpart that accommodates conflict and diversity. This conceptual ambidexterity may help explain why people were so attracted to the post–Cold War scenarios analyzed by Hannerz.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union made public intellectuals imagine the end of history, the hegemony of the market, and a homogenizing process of globalization. These visions were appealing after the collapse of totalitarian communist regimes and the thaw of a mutually assured destruction between the United States and the Soviet Union. Soon, however, doom scenarios appeared about unregulated flows of people, capital, and ideas from and to a Western world that claimed a global political and economic hegemony. The dynamic of consociality and dissociality fed into these post–Cold War fears, and future scenarios came to play a constitutive role, as when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke in 2006 about the violent conflict between Lebanon and Israel as the birth pangs of the new Middle East. A global scenario about the inevitable march of capitalism and democracy across the globe was hiding behind her remark. It added yet another future scenario to a province of meaning whose specific cognitive style is the presentation of scripts as reality. As Ulf Hannerz shows here convincingly, anthropology should contribute its own ethnographically informed scenario to public debates about the future and help demystify self-fulfilling prophecies that oversimplify the world’s cultural diversity.

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The Dangers of the Global Genre

If I was asked to name the top 10 anthropological texts that fundamentally influenced my view of the world as a graduate student some two-and-a-half decades ago, Eric Wolf’s Europe and the People without History (1982) would certainly count among them. Together with William Roseberry, June Nash, Gerald Sider, and others doing anthropological political economy, he offered a view of culture as shaped by history, power, and economic processes that simultaneously involved human agency. This was a direct challenge to what Wolf described as a “billiard-ball” theory of civilizations: “a world of sociocultural billiard balls, coursing on a global billiard table”
(Wolf 1982:17). Ulf Hannerz’s meditation on a certain genre of global scenarios is not just entirely apposite for the 2014 Eric Wolf Lecture but helps us to critique their version of cultural billiard-ball theory through significantly fresh lenses.

Hannerz’s “natives” are a small, incestuous group of mostly Anglo-American commentators—endorsed by the establishment of their country—who are engaged in writing visions of the global future. The “field” includes airport bookshop displays of bestselling titles, media lists of the top 10 nonfiction works, and television broadcasts that show what President Obama is reading. These are enormously influential natives, whose belief system rests on an enduring clash of cultures. Because of US soft power, they have been more or less successful in converting large sections of the middle classes and elites across the globe to this worldview.

As an alternative, Hannerz invokes a group of subalterns, namely, anthropologists, whose ethnographic practices potentially offer different ways of imagining global scenarios. Their main contribution, Hannerz argues, will come from “being there” and observing what he calls “consociality,” the everyday interactions of people, whether through the “connective media” (van Dijck 2013) or through more embodied encounters in the diverse contexts enabled by the “main frames” of market, state, and society. Culture as the product of this consociality, Hannerz argues, is always in the process of being made—as against something that is solid and ascriptive.

I welcome Hannerz’s suggestions on how ethnography might be done to map emergent processes, but I am less convinced about the ambition to write futures. Some projections may be necessary—such as those by climate-change scientists—but these explicitly call for action in the present rather than claiming simply to forecast the future. With other forms of social description, the fear that the future may obliterate the present is a concern that Wolf voiced early on, when he cautioned against turning history into a “moral success story,” teleological accounts that do not allow us to imagine that things could have been different and that prevent us from attending to “social and cultural processes at work in their own time and place” (Wolf 1982:5–6). Global histories, at the very least, force us to face the role of contingencies.

The need to make sense of where life is heading may tell us more about the shape of current anxieties than help us plot anything useful for the future. Writings on global scenarios are perhaps driven by the same sort of desire and apprehension that underlie the more personal quotidian resort to astrology and fortune tellers or that propel the popularity of Hollywood films like World War Z.

In the end, however, the issue may not be the value of writing global pasts or presents versus global futures or the enabling eye provided by anthropology versus other disciplines. Apart from the conservative global scenarios of Huntington and the rest, we also have radical political economists who can pull together vast swathes of history and geography to predict the future, such as Andre Gunder-Frank (1998). And while some may see cultural continuities and solidity through the centuries, others—take Amin Maalouf (1994) or Sanjay Subramaniam (2011) as exemplars—write global histories in order to show how ancient “globalization” is, how “cultures” have been put together by people in conversation with their own histories and geographies and those of others, through trade routes, pilgrimages, and diverse modes of circulation. But accounts of consociality—past, present, or future—have less purchase under capitalism and security-driven regimes than accounts of conflict and, therefore, are less likely to make it to the best-seller list.

Moreover, the ambition to write “global” accounts is one that is not equally available to everyone across the globe. It requires access to research funding, libraries, and search engines on a scale that is rarely available outside of Europe or North America. Even as anthropologists advocate writing on a global scale, they must keep in mind that these create new hierarchies of knowledge, in which scholars in most parts of the world are confined to writing about their own regions, leaving the synthesis to the North.

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The Anthropology of Togetherness in the Globalized World

As this paper was given at the 2014 Annual Eric Wolf Lecture in Vienna, Ulf Hannerz begins his address with an examination of Wolf’s works. Hannerz found three key points sustained across Wolf’s writings: (1) anthropology is an “observational science”; (2) South Tyrol is a place of “consociality” for Wolf where he engaged in his fieldwork, immersing himself in participant observation; and (3) the concept of “culture” itself is on the move. While Wolf was a distinguished scholar of the anthropology of history, Hannerz turns his attention to the contemporary world in a different direction: the future. According to Hannerz, this examination of the future is an attempt to inquire “into the work and thought of people who are on tracks more or less parallel to that of anthropologists in trying to depict the world.” Playing off of Laura Nader’s concept of “studying up,” he calls this endeavor “studying sideways.”

To this end, Hannerz examines three “Big Pictures” of the future world given by three leading political scientists: “the clash of civilizations” by Samuel Huntington, “jihad versus McWorld” by Benjamin Berber, and “soft power” by Joseph Nye. These global scenarios are critically examined from an anthropological point of view, centering on culture, civilization, state, identity politics, consumer society, and so on. He concludes by judging these Big-Picture scenarios to be fail-
ures; or, at the very least, the world is not as simple as these authors suggest.

Hannerz then examines three fundamental frames of the present and possible future of cultural organization: the state, the market, and social movements. But he believes that something important is missing: “togetherness.” In actuality, the current social condition increasingly reveals the importance of togetherness through contemporary media technologies, or “social media,” which Hannerz would prefer to call “interpersonal media.” This is a social arena that can be characterized by dynamics similar to Ivan Illich’s “conviviality” or Alfred Schütz’s “consociality.” Togetherness is also an area of social life with which anthropologists have been traditionally concerned through the study of so-called primitive society. Responding to claims that modern life is “un-authentic,” Claude Lévi-Strauss once wrote, “Modern societies are, of course, not completely ‘un-authentic.’ On the contrary, . . . we note that in its increasing intensive study of modern societies, anthropology has endeavored to identify levels of authenticity within them” (Lévi-Strauss 1967:364–365; emphasis in original). Hannerz’s conceptualization of togetherness is a level of authenticity in our contemporary social life, a level where anthropologists conduct fieldwork through participant observation, just as Wolf did in South Tyrol.

We could add a recent example from Japan as well. On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake was followed by a massive tsunami and the meltdown of several nuclear reactors in Fukushima. The most important lesson the disaster taught us, with a heavy price, is the importance of kizuna, or “social ties”—what Hannerz would call “togetherness”—between the devastated communities and the rest of the world. In this case, millions of volunteers, domestic as well as international, came to support the affected people. This volunteer civic movement goes back to the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, which was discussed then as a “new public.” In distinction from the “old public” that was dominated by the state, this new public emerged through the disaster as a sphere of public-ness. And I think that this is an area in which we could practice a public anthropology in Japan (Yamashita 2014).

Let us return to Hannerz. In the conclusion of his book Anthropology’s World, Hannerz discusses the future of anthropology. He believes, against the discourse of “the end of anthropology,” that anthropology will still exist in 2050. But as to the way in which anthropology is practiced, he writes that anthropologists outside academia, such as those in research institutes, think tanks, consulting firms, media organizations, branches of government, and NGOs, may in one way or other practice anthropology (Hannerz 2010a:165–166). Discussing the future of anthropology in the context of the changing relationship between academia and society, James Peacock too has already stressed, “Focus outward. Seek vital ways that anthropology can contribute beyond the discipline and beyond the academy, to society and thought” (Peacock 1997:14; emphasis in original). In pursuit of togetherness with public sectors, the emerging form of public anthropology after 9/11 in the United States and 3/11 in Japan seems to indicate an increasing shift in this direction.

Reply

I find myself in fundamental agreement with my commentators on many points. If my article fails to make some of these or does not develop them sufficiently, it may to some extent be due to the fact that as an Eric Wolf Lecture, it had a 45-minute time frame; preferring piously to stick to the format of the original as far as possible in the published form, I could cover certain ground only quite selectively. And now again, within the space of a Current Anthropology response, I have to concentrate on a few topics.

One is the delimitation of the genre of global-future scenarios. I see it as emerging at the end of the Cold War, with the crumbling of one scenario that had long been dominant and the increasing awareness of something identified as “globalization.” Then I use three writers, all political scientists, as examples. Christoph Brumann, in particular, performs the useful service of scrutinizing the borderlands of the genre. Indeed, some of its contributors point to predecessors—Huntington, for example, for better or for worse, to Oswald Spengler and an assortment of other writers on civilizations (including Alfred Kroeber, although he hardly appears in Huntington’s continued text). Brumann also notes the entire scholarly community of futurists/futurologists. I cannot claim any deep and wide familiarity with all its accomplishments, but in the case of Alvin Toffler, with his 1970s Future Shock, I am really more inclined to contrast it with the work I am considering. Toffler seems to me more concerned with a sort of generalized modernity; his few references to world regions outside the West seem to be largely decorations, rather than engaging with a world that is both interconnected and diverse.

Of course, Brumann’s citation figures are in some ways encouraging—but as I understand it, Google Scholar will not tell us so much about impact outside academia. It would not deal with the Mongolian model reading a Cyrillic-script copy of Thomas Friedman’s The World is Flat at a Singaporean swimming pool, as observed by Pål Nyiri. And when I hear of the leader of the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrat party citing Samuel Huntington at his campaign meeting, I could only wish that he had referred to my (wonderfully oft-cited) friend Arjun Appadurai instead (clearly with very different implications). But even as that politician has a university degree, his interdisciplinary academic reading seems unimpressive. The global-scenario writers I focus on, whether professors or journalists, have a way of reaching out that most of us do not have.

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At the same time, one of the facts that turn their work into an identifiable, somewhat distinct genre is that it is in some ways rather inward-turning. Nandini Sundar makes that point most pithily: “a small, incestuous group of mostly Anglo-American commentators.”

They do often seem more inclined to refer to each other rather than to anybody else. An issue this gives me an opportunity to raise (once more) is that of the center-periphery structure in global public debate in general as well as in the international scholarly community. László Kürti refers to his experience in working to draw the attention of Western anthropologists to studies of postsocialist (i.e., post–Iron Curtain) society by their East and Central European colleagues. Sundar notes the more general material inequalities of access to funding and research facilities that make it difficult to reach global audiences from large parts of the world. With a dash of optimism, I would discern some potential for change here. In the United States, in the scenario genre, not all contributors are now as Anglo-American as they used to be: some, like Fareed Zakaria, whom I mentioned above, are counterparts of what in American anthropology have been contributors who are now as Anglo-American as they used to be: some, like Fareed Zakaria, for whom I mentioned above, are counterparts of what in American anthropology have been (self-)described as “halfies”: “people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (Abu-Lughod 1991:137). As in anthropology, these people may to an extent bring other experiences and perspectives. Outside the US scene, too, there are at least some noteworthy contributions to the genre from people such as Amin Maalouf (from Beirut, although now in Paris), whom Sundar mentions, and Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean diplomat and public figure. Some of these scenarists have their own connections to Harvard Square, but their vantage point toward the world is to an extent different.

Still, one would want more of fair exchange in the global public sphere as well as in the international scholarly community. It would be intellectually beneficial for everybody. Internet connections, “open access,” and other recent related developments may to a degree offer new possibilities of collaborative relationships here, but they will best be realized if accompanied by changes in attitudes and attention structures.

I note that several commentators (particularly Beng-Lan Goh, Dan Rabinowitz, and Shinji Yamashita) focus on environmental issues. These have indeed been somewhat disregarded by the scenario writers I have been most concerned with—while they have, of course, generated much commentary elsewhere. I would suppose that political scientists (such as the three writers on which I dwell in the article) have been rather slow in including the environment as a central concern, and historians (among whom numerous other scenarists are recruited), often finding their points of departure in the past, have not been so readily drawn to present and future environmental risks either. The most prominent among my set of scenarists to take on such questions reasonably quickly would appear to have been Thomas Friedman, with *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* (2008)—and he is a journalist.

Would it make some sense to relate this present, growing interest in the environment among anthropologists to their enduring engagement with what, in the article, I identify as “consociality,” the massive, unfocused, in large part everyday copresence of people seeing, hearing, and learning while engaging mostly in practical matters? I would expect that it is in this frame of cultural process that environmental changes—creeping or in dramatic crises—will be noticed most quickly. They may indeed have very varied local forms to be discovered and closely examined, at the same time as collaborative efforts can feed effectively into a Big Picture.

With regard to the notion of consociality, I should perhaps note that Antonius Robben takes it somewhat in a direction I did not intend to go, contrasting it with a “disconsociality.” For me, consociality is sheer copresence, whether friendly, unfriendly, or neutral. There may well be a preference to be copresent with people more or less in your comfort zone, but that is not how things always work out. Robben’s conception of “deep interpersonal affinity” sounds to me rather more like what some writers have labeled “conviviality.” As that term was already in use for more specific purposes, I decided not to take it on.

Inspecting ways of “writing futures,” we are of course dealing with notions of time—our own and those of the writers involved and other people. Rabinowitz notes that the scenario authors are in large part engaged in bringing the future into the present. Indeed, we can see that playing with maps is one characteristic of the genre, and playing with time perspectives is another. The present and the future, and indeed also the past, continuously interweave, analytically or rhetorically (and this is where the blurred border between nonfiction and fiction is also crossed). Anthropologists, of course, have known at least since the days of Malinowski that the distance from myth to charter need not be great. Since the three scenarists I have dwelt on here are political scientists, the retrospective view is a little less conspicuous than with those who are historians—for example, Paul Kennedy and Niall Ferguson. But the uses of the past may turn out rather differently. I find it practical here to draw on Fernand Braudel’s (1980, in English translation) old distinction between event history, conjunctural (medium-term) history, and the *longue durée*. Huntington, with his view of fairly timeless civilizations, finds support for his view in the idea of the *longue durée*. I see Kennedy (1993) as more inclined toward conjunctural history, which may be what scenarists ought to be most comfortable with. (And when I was engaged in a study of the work of news media foreign correspondents, I found that their favorite sense of being there to “write the first draft of history” was very much an identification with event history; see Hannerz 2010c).

Much of the concern of scenario writers, however, is with getting from the present to the future. I understand my commentators to agree that we should not give up on the future and trying to understand it, come to grips with it. The future is good to think with, as long as we do it critically. The passage
of the first batch of global-future scenarios into the present, and even into the recent past, shows how difficult it is to predict more complex human life. In large part, they did not come true. But then, prediction is, strictly speaking, not always what is intended. As Robben reminds us, the contrast between self-fulfilling and self-destructive prophecies is certainly useful here. The first of these may involve some undesirable and unnecessary risk, as in the case of Huntington’s “clash” imagery—a number of critics of his scenario have pointed that out—but unless we have early warnings of what may be going wrong, think and talk about them, and act on them, we may fail to avert some troubles.

What can anthropologists contribute, then, to understandings of the future? And, more generally, how can they reach out with their knowledge to publics outside their own circle? I see possibilities, and challenges, of different kinds. Several commentators (especially Brumann, Nyiri, and Rabinowitz) point to the prominence of “culture” in the scenario genre. Here there are undoubtedly different views within the discipline. In some uses, there is a conservative, even fatalist bias in conceptions of culture, and in “cultural fundamentalism” there are even openings to xenophobia. Under such circumstances we see some anthropologists distancing themselves from the culture concept. I will only repeat the view I have articulated intellectual authority we may have in public life, in conceptions of culture, and in family structures is very relevant and can at the same time have large-scale implications. For one example of this, consider the short book by Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd with the notably un-Huntingtonian title A Convergence of Civilizations (2011); despite his name, Todd is French, and his more full-scale, controversial scenario attempt After the Empire (Todd 2003) is rather un-American as well. Keeping in mind the growing concern with environmental issues referred to above, varieties of environmental anthropology and political ecology presumably likewise offer attractive sideways engagements.

Finally, there is one more (perhaps slightly utopian) possibility that I want to point to, with regard to what the global community of anthropologists could do together. Many of us are probably from time to time irritated at the treatment of places and regions we know well in international news coverage. That reporting may not be getting any better, considering the present financial and organizational problems and tendencies of many conventional media organizations. Their correspondents are very unevenly distributed over the world and cannot possibly be well informed about everywhere. But now there are anthropologists just about everywhere, whether “at home” or “in the field.” And again, they have the advantage of “being there” or “having been there.” Using today’s tools of communication, could we develop a genre of “rapid ethnography,” a collaborative world watch of accessible commentary drawing on our combined local knowledge, continued access, and informed interpretation? This could be a public resource hardly any news organization could match. It could ground future scenarios more solidly in a real present, and it may do justice to the knowledge and perspectives of colleagues in all regions, not so constrained by structures of center and periphery.

—Ulf Hannerz

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