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NEW YORK CITY'S
TWO GLOBAL GEOGRAPHIES OF TALK

Two 24-hour geographies. Both are actually rolling, but one is the same actors as they move across the globe, the other is a geography of countries of origin, a roving talk machine that moves across the globe.

They capture globalization in action – talking.

Global talk happens largely among those at the top of the economy and at its lower end. This point is one of the striking pieces of evidence coming out of the data analyzed here. The vast middle layers of our society are far less global; the middle talks mostly nationally and locally, albeit in highly variable geographies.

Occurring at the top is increasingly, though not fully, a permanent twenty-four hours of talking, with rapidly shrinking 'nights.' This is the network of the forty or so global cities around the world where financial instruments are traded, new accounting models devised, mergers and acquisitions executed, and new ways of extracting profit invented. Traders today start at 04.00 or go on until midnight in some parts of the world so as to catch the end or the beginning of the day on the other side of the globe. The idea of the 24-hour financial center, awake and ready to trade with the whole world, took much longer to take shape than forecasters expected. In fact, it is still only a partial reality. But night-time as downtime is definitely a much shorter part of the 24-hour cycle than it used to be. And daytime as the time when all systems are going is definitely a brutally extended part of the cycle.

At the lower end, the 24-hour geography of global talk emerges

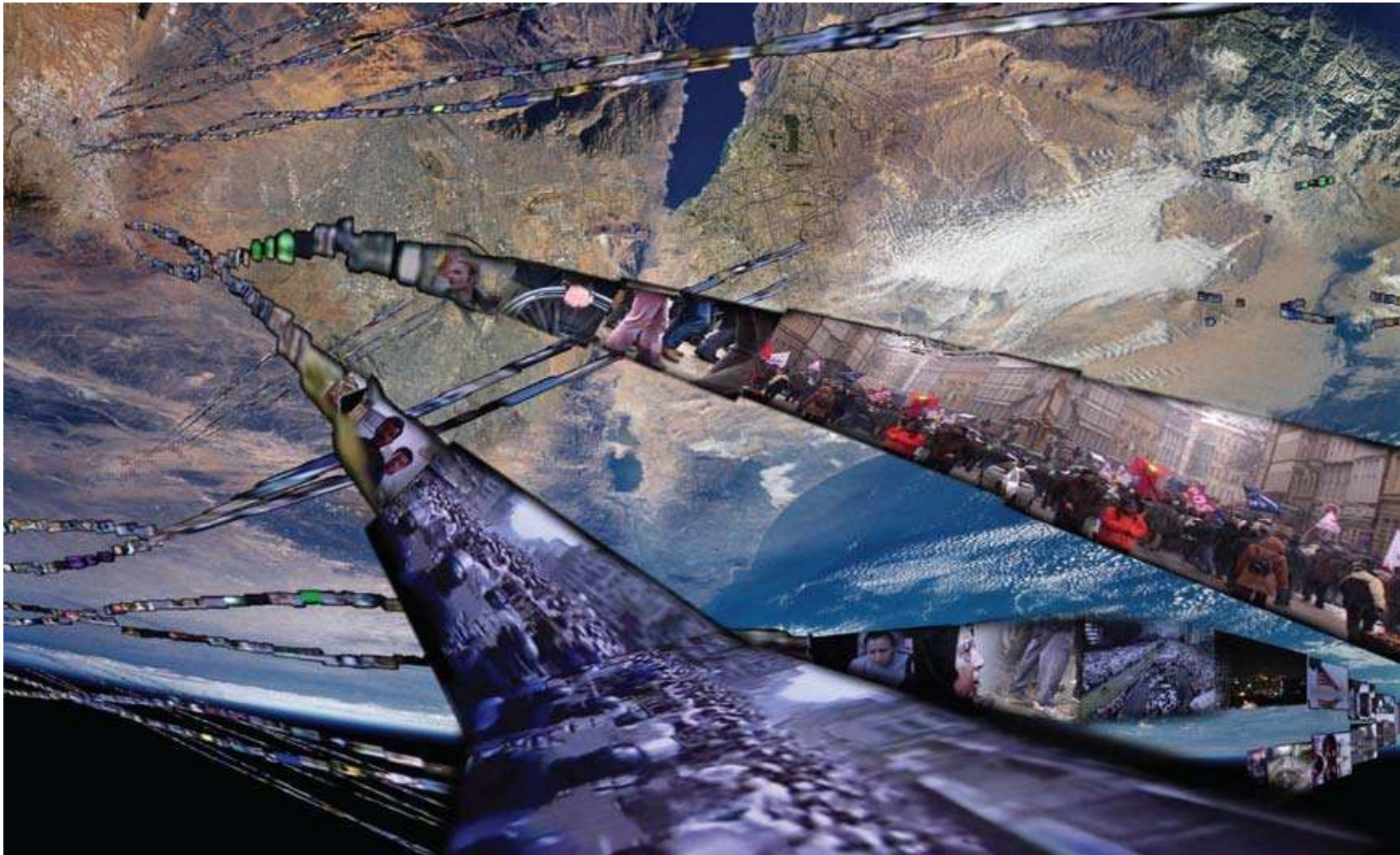
out of the fact that the countries sending immigrants to New York circle the globe. As the Dominican Republic goes to sleep, Italy is about to wake up and so on across India and then the Philippines and China. If you call Manila from New York at midnight on Monday you will find them having lunch on Tuesday.

There are clearly also specific geographies that fit into neither one of the two major ones focused on here. For instance, calls between Jerusalem and Brooklyn and Queens are part of a more classic diasporic geography of communication. Secondly, calls between New York City and Geneva are part of the supranational system, with the United Nations headquartered in New York and the largest single concentration of U.N. agencies in Geneva. As with the major geographies of global talk focused on here, the AT&T data is a partial representation of all communication, given the proliferation of carriers in both originating and destination countries.

Even though global talk going out of and into New York City connects the city to multiple places worldwide, there is clear dominance of a few places. The AT&T data, only one of several carriers handling NYC's telephony, shows that London, Santo Domingo, Toronto and Kingston (Jamaica) are the main destinations for calls out of Manhattan. And the first three are also the largest originators of calls into Manhattan. Interestingly these top four already contain both global geographies of talk – one the world of transnational professionals (London and Toronto) and the other largely the world of immigrants.

Calls between Manhattan and London, Toronto, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Luxemburg, Singapore, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Shanghai, Madrid and Bangalore all constitute mostly the transnational professional global geography of talk, consisting of both foreign-born and native-born. There is a set of cities, notably São Paulo, Mexico City, Dublin and Mumbai which are likely to contain both this world and that of immigrants.

New York City's total foreign-born population stood at almost 2.9 million according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The largest single groups were 370,000 Dominicans, 262,000 Chinese and 179,000 Jamaicans. While their numbers may be small, they do a lot of the



The Paraculture, 2003
credit Hilary Koob-Sassen. T+2 Gallery, London

global talking out of and into New York City: they are the new high-level transnational professional class. Immigrants and transnational professionals, both foreign-born and native-born, are the two main global talking groups in NYC.

Each of these aggregated geographies of talk includes multiple differences and particularities. Returning to the case of cities that mix both our geographies of talk, it might be worthwhile to focus on Mumbai. The Indian population grew by thirty-three percent from 2000 to 2005 in the New York region (which includes New Jersey and Connecticut). This is one of the fastest growth rates; it now stands at well over 300,000. About a third of these reside in New York City proper. It is a very diverse population: there is an older professional class that includes university professors, a new professional class linked to global finance, a high-tech workforce and a very large group of small shopkeepers. Some of this can be caught from the talk data, but much cannot. The largest share of AT&T calls to India in NYC are between Mumbai and Manhattan; each of the major segments of the Indian population is probably included in these data. Yet Mumbai ranks 24th as a destination and 11th as an originator of calls into Manhattan; Mumbai is 32nd in calls into Brooklyn and 11th in calls into Queens. The exception to Mumbai's dominance among Indian cities is in Staten Island, where most calls to India are to Hyderabad. But let me also note that the top fifty cities worldwide calling into Staten Island do not include any from India. Given the size of the Indian presence in New York City, including many commuters from the suburbs outside NYC, this would seem to indicate that a good part of the calling is happening through other carriers. India has rapidly growing capabilities and a competitive market position to provide these global services.

Some of the AT&T data capture with astounding clarity particular geographies of talk. Thus on November 1, 2007, Kingston (Jamaica) accounted for about ten percent of all calls out of Brooklyn. Together, Kingston, Santo Domingo and Haiti (no city specified) account for seventeen percent of all calls out of Brooklyn. In the Bronx there is a symmetry between incoming and outgoing calls. Kingston and Santo Domingo accounted for thirty percent

of all calls out of the Bronx. Santo Domingo and Santiago (the second major city in the Dominican Republic) accounted for almost twenty percent of the calls going into the Bronx. But there are also notable asymmetries: Toronto accounted for almost five percent of AT&T calls coming into the Bronx but only one percent of calls from the Bronx. Part of this asymmetry may have to do with different carriers. Both of these global geographies of talk never stop – it is 24-hour talking. But how that round-the-clock talk is constituted varies sharply. In one case it is a single articulated space, embedded largely in the new global economy. In the other it is a rolling wave that moves from one country to the other as one wakes and the other goes to sleep.

Saskia Sassen is the Lynd Professor of Sociology and Member of The Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University. Her recent books are *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press 2006) and *A Sociology of Globalization* (Norton 2007). She wrote a lead essay in the 2006 *Venice Biennale of Architecture Catalog*.