

GLOCALIZATION AND EVERYDAY LIFE

EDITORIAL

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About thirty years after its introduction into the academic debate, the idea of glocalization continues to be acknowledged as a source of inspiration by many scholars across disciplinary boundaries. Within the social sciences and humanities, the most enduring influence remains the formulation of the glocal first presented by Roland Robertson in the early 1990s (Robertson 1995). However, as reminded by Robertson himself, the implications of glocality have also been discussed by scholars operating in different disciplinary fields – the geographer Erik Swyngedouw (1992, 2004) – and within alternative theoretical and conceptual frameworks (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996). At the general level, there would seem to be at present a large consensus on one of the conceptual premises upon which the discussion of the glocal was originally based, that is, the identification of the binary global-local as a relational and interpretive frame not objectifiable in terms of the simple opposition/tension between two spatial dimensions. From our perspective, too, this is probably the most productive way of using the glocal to interpret dynamics of social change in a globalizing context characterized by increasing interconnectedness.

Continuing in this direction, it should therefore be emphasized that the “global” and the “local” are defined in a reciprocal, positional way (Sedda 2005, 2014). Something is always “global” or “local” to something else. If a state is a globality

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with respect to the regions or communities it contains and which it tries to model according to its own civic-identity project, it can be a locality with respect to a supranational entity and the regulations belonging to it and to which it is more or less profoundly subjected, a church that exerts a particular influence on its policies or a corporation that determines its interests and strategies, albeit momentarily. Conversely, a belief of universal significance with its precepts and values, an international company with its practices and its products, a project of state homologation with its language and languages, all can be brought to localize themselves within the discursive practices, the worlds of life of specific communities that, by putting in place peculiar forms of agency, consciously struggle or almost involuntarily reaffirm that their locality is a universe of values, a globality of meaning capable of filtering and adapting what comes from some outside, from some otherness. On the whole, therefore, what results is a continuous process of glocalization. A process shaped by forms of homogenization and differentiation, by strategies of adaptation or resistance, by vectors of translatability and untranslatability, including the way in which the definitions of “global” and “local” – and more subtly the attribution of a value of “locality” or “globality” to the events, things and actors of the process – are involved in the definition of the process itself, the definition of the power and meaning of the relationships that it brings into play.

Based on this assumption, with this special issue we aim to call the attention to the factors that make possible, facilitate, obstruct, or prevent the unfolding of glocalization in various spheres of social life – an area of research that still needs to be thoroughly explored. In this connection, our reference to the intersection of “Glocalization and Everyday Life”, has different layers of meaning. In the most generic sense, “everyday life” refers to the broad dimension of partly routinized social practices and relationships. With reference to the issue of globalization, it comes close to the characterization provided by Larry Ray (2007) in his book *Globalization and Everyday Life*. In fact, despite his criticism of the concept of glocalization as an “ugly oxymoron [that] does not specify the relation and processes involved”, it should be acknowledged that Ray relates the

dimension of “everyday life” to the “everyday interactions” through which “social structures, cultures and forms of power [...] are enacted, summoned up, reproduced and, of course, transformed” within the process of “the localization of the global and globalization of the local” (Ray 2007: 154, 202). At the intersection of a socio-anthropological and network-based perspective of globalization, the specific relationship between glocalization and “everyday life” refers to the fact that at any given moment the global cannot but consist of connectivity and interactions (be they face-to-face, distanced, imagined, individual, collective, etc.) at the level of particular configurations of nodes. As Swyngedouw put it, “the flows that shape and define these networks are of course local at every moment” (Swyngedouw 2004: 31). This does not necessarily imply a full-fledged analytical conflation of globalization and glocalization, provided that the dynamics of globalization are approached at different levels (see Dessì 2017: 162-186).

To put it in a simple way, our idea is that as everyday life is the space where all interactions, formations, ideas are immersed, so glocalization is where globalization is immersed. If we consider globalization in a substantial way, we have to notice that it is just a level or layer of our planetary everyday life (Sedda 2012: ch. 6, 2021). If we consider globalization as a socio-historical process we can notice that it is just one among others: a trend, a project, a mythology – according to different points of view – that fall back inside a wider, more plural space of trends, projects, mythologies. The same obviously apply to localization too. So, glocalization exceeds and embeds both globalization and localization, just as well as the everyday life’s interactions exceed and embed the plurality of trends, projects, mythologies that mark our experience. The same idea of “glocal”, intended as a project, as a way to bring order into plurality, would fall back inside a wider, less homogeneous and more unpredictable space of glocalization. For this reason, the glocal might appear to some a social project that is too weak while to others the core of a true form of self-awareness or the best way for coming back down to earth (see also Latour 2018 [2017]) and finally coming into contact with the real essence of cultural processes.

Our focus on this area of enquiry is not meant to imply that some of the important factors underlying glocalization have not been already thematized within the debate. For that matter, one needs only to recall how the issue of power has been inextricably intermingled with glocality from the very beginning. How else could one make sense of, for example, Robertson’s discussion of glocalization in terms of the interplay of the universal and the particular, and the way this relates to the “search for fundamentals”? (Robertson 1992: 164-181); or, from another perspective, of Appadurai’s claim that the production of locality is inherently an “exercise of power”, in that “it involves the assertion of socially (often ritually) organized power over places and settings which are viewed as potentially chaotic or rebellious”? (Appadurai 1995: 213). More recent contributions to the debate, such as George Ritzer’s discussion on “grobalization” (e.g. Ritzer 2003) and Victor Roudometof’s attempt to map power relations within the sphere of the glocal in terms of their “ability to initiate or resist waves of globalization” (Roudometof 2016: 73-74), confirm that power continues to occupy an important place within glocalization theory. And yet, there is the need for more focused and organic approaches to the glocalization-power nexus, possibly with the aim to explore and establish connections with other potential factors of the glocal. In this respect, another obvious example is the issue of global consciousness, which is notoriously ingrained in Robertson’s very conception of globalization/glocalization. Building on the work already done in this area (e.g. Mansilla, Gardner 2007; Robertson, Buhari-Gulmez 2016; Dessì 2017; Steger, James 2019), there is the need to shed more light on the various ways in which changes in collective consciousness may affect the process of glocalization. Another factor that also relates to the cultural sphere (that from another point of view can be intended as a psychological sphere) is the prioritization of certain glocal formations based on perceived affinities between global and local culture, as if some global ideas were somehow “already envisaged” in local cultures (Sedda 2016).

In other words, glocalization is always the result (but from another temporal point of view, the origin!) of translation processes. Imperfect translations, at best. Very often, real

misunderstandings or cultural betrayals. These processes are rooted in the functioning of culture and the immediate planetary dimension of the processes favored by contemporary media only emphasizes them: both the comparison and dialogue with other cultures, as well as that within a certain world of life, generate networks of synonyms and homonyms, equivalences without identity or identity without equivalence (Sedda 2012, 2018). On one side, think of the many different flags that generate the translocal recognition of the state-national identity, thus providing a global recipe for the production and identification of the local (see Robertson 1992; Appadurai 1995); on the other side think of the same flag mobilized by different subjects, in discursive spheres and practices so varied to the point of breaking down into many objects full of local, incommensurable meaning, and offering its own identity as an opportunity for global misunderstanding (see Viveiros de Castro 2004). Or, taking another more fundamental example, think of the body, the glocal matrix par excellence (Sedda 2014: 50-57): always exposed to discourses and rituals that situate, define, categorize it – “the most local of globalized sites” (Appadurai 1998: 244) – but also constantly engaged in concrete forms of imagining communities, worlds, universes – the most global of the localized sites.

As in a prism, we should therefore always turn the objects we have in our hands, so as to realize that we are constantly faced with glocal connections of similarity and differences: connections that allow the meaning to circulate and be shared while at the same time it is dispersed, confused, distorted – and vice versa.

We are in front of a paradoxical mechanism that forces subjects to change doubly through contact with otherness: acquiring figures or structures, using that same contact to reaffirm their own otherness in the making. The history of cultural relations never ceases to offer us cases of cultures that the more they seemed to be homologated in practice, the more they differed in terms of self-perception. Or, conversely, we can recover cases of cultures led to perceive their everyday life under the sign of reprise, repetition, imitation or commonalty with other cultures, faraway both in time and space. Specters of comparison (Anderson 1998), dynamic mixtures of practical and ideological



identities (Clifford 2003), varied stratifications of forms of being and believing (Geninasca 1997), which one cannot avoid taking into account when, for example, current politics is analyzed: reduced into fragments by those same posts and tweets that are the cause and effect of forms of planetary contagions of ideas and trends.

Establishing when and to what extent these processes of production of locality implying a ceaseless and multiform global repositioning (Dessì 2017) take place intentionally or unintentionally – in a strategic or tactical form, in de Certeau’s terms (1980) – is a complex matter that can be addressed by different perspectives. However, if glocalism has translation as its starting and ending point, then it will be useful to identify the translation operators (de Certeau 1994) – be they human or non-human, discourses or rites – who implement it; and it will be useful to trace the translation networks – horizontal or vertical, explosive or implosive (Greimas 1970; Geertz 1983; Clifford 1997; Latour 2005; Appadurai 1996, 2006; Lotman 2009 [1993]; Sedda 2018) – which in the course of history or in the most unrestrained contingency upset and recreate the hierarchies of meaning that fashion the space of everyday life.

Grasping glocality in the space of everyday life therefore means knowing how to see this complex structural plot. A plot made up of *mixtures* – as in hybridizations and creolizations (Hall 2009 [2000]; Burke 2009), perhaps already naturalized – as well as overlapping and connections – as in the forms of dialogism in progress (Fabbri 2000; Amselle 2001) – and assemblages and embedding – with the implicit dimensions of dominance, more or less consensual or contested, that every isomorphism carries with it (Lotman 2005 [1984]; Sahlins 1993, 2000; Sassen 2006). All this, once again, without forgetting that within these structures acts that meta-structure which is self-description, that is, the selection of differences (more or less imaginary) which aims to make a synthesis of the dynamic plurality that constitutes each collective and seeks to orient the collective’s identifications and conflicts.

If the relational nature of the global-local binary is taken seriously, the analysis of this mechanism, rather than simply revolving around the inherent qualities of some specific ideas

circulating in global flows, has to take into account the interactional nature of glocalization, and its implications in terms of power, meaning, self-definition for its different players. The comprehensive analysis of these and other potential factors of glocalization and their mutual interactions is certainly an ambitious project, which most probably needs a multidisciplinary approach and the collaboration of scholars working in different areas and world regions. And yet, at this stage of the debate, this would certainly give additional strength and depth to glocalization theory, contribute to its operationalization, and provide a more nuanced explanation of the practical and everyday implications of the glocal.

Needless to say, this is an endeavor that could rely on a wide range of conceptual strategies and resources, and here we cannot but provide just a few examples of theoretical frameworks potentially suitable to this task, on which we have elaborated in our own contributions to this special issue. From a semiotic perspective, for example, an advantage point could be offered by a Lotmanian perspective (see Franciscu Sedda's contribution), which seems to allow a productive approach to the dynamics of the glocal in terms of the translation of communications/signs from one semiosphere to another, with particular attention to the function of semiotic borders as bilingual mechanisms (Lotman 2005 [1984]; Sedda 2015). From a perspective closer to the social sciences, a pragmatist approach (see Ugo Dessì's contribution) seems to offer another promising starting point for the combined analysis of cultural resonance and other factors underlying glocal processes, not least for its insistence that these dynamics are always the product of social relations and interactions (see McDonnell et al. 2017).

The articles collected here approach the issue of the glocalization and everyday life with attention to different spheres of social interaction. We have the privilege to open this special issue of "Glocalism" with a keynote contribution by Roland Robertson, in which he offers a reflection on his long-time engagement with the concept of glocalization. In this "extra-autobiographical" article, Robertson starts by acknowledging the bearing that binaries such as cosmopolitanism-localism and transcendence-immanence had on his early conceptualizations of



globalization and glocalization. He further illustrates how these concepts entered the academic debate in the 1990s – often accompanied by some degree of hostility – and highlights more recent developments related to issues such as climate change and the Anthropocene, also touching upon the ongoing the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the other most welcome keynote article, Barrie Axford approaches the topic of this special issue with reference to aspects of global politics, with attention to the interplay of populism and localism, and, more specifically, to the possibility of identifying populism as a form of “pathological localism”. He starts by emphasizing the reflexive nexus between globality and consciousness, with the specification that global awareness does not necessarily lead to empathy but can provide context and meaning to conflict and agonistic politics such as those manifested by contemporary populism. For Axford, whereas from a general perspective populism, with its exclusivism and essentialism, can be seen as a reaction to globalization, it should also be acknowledged as a peculiar contribution to the hybridization of social forms and as a “glocal praxis”.

Building on the sophisticated theoretical framework developed in their recent book *Globalization Matters: Engaging the Global in Unsettled Times*, Manfred Steger and Paul James explore the subjective processes linked to what they term the “Great Unsettling”, that is, the instability and volatility that characterizes the present phase of globalization. Specifically, Steger and James focus on the “unhappy consciousness” related to the domain of ontological security/insecurity, which emerges at the crossroads of the worldwide spread and fruition of digital mobility and the enduring attachment to the local, with examples from contemporary populist politics (e.g. Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán) and some interesting reflections on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on these dynamics.

Christian Karner takes his cue from recent developments in Austrian society and politics to examine competing forms of glocalization. With examples ranging from the Black Lives Matter movement to the revisiting of public monuments, Karner aptly shows how local concerns are articulated against the backdrop of global contents and contexts and can at the same time



take on different ideological conformations. Expanding on his previous work, Karner places emphasis on the role that multiple power structures play in such public debates, whose analysis, he argues, requires “ethnographic sensitivity, local knowledge and careful historical contextualization”.

In his paper, Paolo Demuru focuses on the glocal dimension of populist conspiracy theories in contemporary Brazilian political context. The author shows how the global populist narrative of “the people against the élites” is adapted by Jair Bolsonaro within the local Brazilian context. In particular, Demuru demonstrates that shapes and tones of this narrative are directly related to the local religious semiosphere, especially the Neo-Pentecostal evangelical messianism, whose main traits – mysticism, eschatology and aesthetic load – are transposed on and exploited to construct the image of Bolsonaro as a national messiah. The glocal dimension of Brazilian politics is also related to the role of social media use, in particular WhatsApp groups. Here, everyday banalities and global conspiracy theories are constantly mixed to feed consensus in favor of Bolsonaro. The analysis aims at demonstrating that we face here a true glocal meaning-making process.

In his ethnographic study of the Patua indigenous group in West Bengal, Vincenzo Matera shows that their scroll paintings (*patachitra*) and related singing performances provide a vivid example of how the new can be inserted within a local framework. Although, as Matera acknowledges, not all villages necessarily produce *patachitra* “contaminated” by external cultural themes: as a whole they can be understood as cultural hybridizations resulting from the articulation between the local and the global world. This is especially apparent, he notes, in their elaboration of current events (e.g. violence against women, ecology, the 9/11 terrorist attacks) in addition to the traditional themes linked to the Hindu mythology or the Islamic heritage.

The interaction of the global and traditional everyday life in West Bengal is also featured in Arnav Debnath’s contribution to this special issue, which focuses on the Bauls. In particular, he distinguishes between the *sadbok* ascetic minstrels, related to tantric practices, and the *silpi* artists who have become in several instances globally famous as singers/performers. For

Debnath, the former can be broadly characterized as local Bauls, and the latter as global Bauls. The two categories, however, are not fixed, since the impact of global dynamics can turn a *sadbok* Baul into a *silpi* one, or, otherwise, those very forces can occasionally urge a *silpi* Baul to return to tradition.

Simona Stano's essay deals with contemporary glocalized foodscapes. According to the author migratory flows, travels and the development of media systems has weakened the distinction between the global and the local, making established meanings and identities of food and dishes no longer clearly defined, but rather expressed through several and multiple interpretations. This process is described and demonstrated through the analysis of two main trends of the Peruvian foodsphere: Nikkei and Novo Andean cuisine. Tackling the complex histories of the two cuisines – as well as the role that chefs, local and migrant communities, gastronomy associations, reviews, books, documentaries, TV series has played in their definition – Stano shows that food acts as a *frontier* where different forms of translation – from inventions to adaptations, from contaminations to domestications – take place. So, glocalization appears as a silent force that reshape continuously meanings and identities, even at the table.

In his essay, Dario Mangano considers food as an effective symbol capable of strongly evoking a cultural identity. In the case of Sicily, this role is mainly played by pastry, and in particular by two sweets: *cannolo* (the singular of *cannoli*) and *cassata*. The author focuses on the fact the two desserts, from their very sensible and gustative level, activate specific histories and values, related to global and local actors and events (the Arabs and Christianity, Carnival and Easter and so on). Yet *cannolo* and *cassata* act as complementary parts of an autonomous gastronomical system and their symbolic efficacy can be translated into other discourses and contexts. It is the case of *cannoli* in Francis Ford Coppola's Mafia saga, *The Godfather*, where playing a changing key role inside the saga, connecting Sicily with the United States, Palermo with New York, the sweet reveals itself as a glocal device.

In their paper Meghana Eswar and Sunil Santha reflect on the interaction between a global phenomenon such as



urbanization and local agrarian communities with their livelihood practices. Taking the periphery of Bangalore as a case study, the authors examine how people mediate and negotiate with the forces of periurbanization in their everyday life. More in particular, the essay aims at demonstrating how people construct and narrate these experiences across intersectional contexts of class, caste, gender, and age while dealing with more global forces such as the market and the State. To deal with such a complex matter, the authors make reference to glocalization as intended and developed by Robertson and Swyngedouw, as well as to the “everyday life” as a concept that bridges the particular with the general, the agency with structure, resistance with power, the global with the local.

The last two contributions are authored by the co-editors of this special issue. Ugo Dessì’s article on religion is an attempt to articulate the issue of the constraints and incentives underlying glocalization from a pragmatist perspective. Working within the framework of his theory of religious globalization, Dessì expands on suggestions coming from other disciplines including the work of Terence McDonnell and his colleagues on resonance. With examples ranging from the greening of religion in Japan and Japanese religions’ overseas activities, he shows how specific ideas circulating in the global cultural network can become relevant to local religious players to the extent that they can be used to solve specific religious problems. In his work, Franciscu Sedda explores the reactions that the sudden appearance of Covid-19 has caused. More precisely, the author’s attempt is to grasp the re-articulation of the semiopolitical relations in the first two months of the spread of the virus (or at least of awareness of its circulation). At the heart of this process are the states and the way they managed the risk represented by the virus. According to Sedda, to this core relation others are linked and have to be added: on the one hand, the interactions between states and between them and the planetary dimension; on the other hand, the relationship between rulers and governed, central government and territories, that within each individual state reshaped the form of the collective. What results, according to the author, is the need for abandoning static

definitions of the local and the global in order to trace the multiple glocal relationships that constitute the fabric of reality.

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