



Theorizing glocalization: Three interpretations¹

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Abstract

This article presents three interpretations of glocalization in social-scientific literature as a means of reframing the terms of scholarly engagement with the concept. Although glocalization is relatively under-theorized, two key interpretations of the concept have been developed by Roland Robertson and George Ritzer. Through a critical and comparative overview, the article offers an assessment of the advances and weaknesses of each perspective. Both demonstrate awareness regarding the differences between globalization and glocalization, but this awareness is far from explicit. Both interpretations fail to draw a consistent analytical distinction between the two concepts and ultimately succumb to reductionism: either glocalization is subsumed under globalization or globalization is transformed into glocalization. Next, a third interpretation of glocalization as an analytically autonomous concept is presented. Working definitions of glocalization and of glocality as analytically autonomous from globalization and globality are developed and examples are offered. By addressing the key themes of power and temporality, this third interpretation transcends the limits of the other two interpretations.

Keywords

culture, diffusion, globalization, glocalization, theory

To date, there is no glocalization theory or theories as such. In spite of the growing popularity of ‘the glocal’, as evidenced in the literature (see Roudometof, 2015), there has not been any attempt at a distinct theorizing of glocalization on its own terms. Instead, there are relevant interpretations of theorists who have sought to creatively engage with globalization. This article presents key interpretations and offers a critical assessment of the

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advances and weaknesses of these theorists' perspectives. The first theorist is Roland Robertson, whose pioneer work helped introduce the concept of glocalization into the social-scientific vocabulary. Next is George Ritzer, whose work is a creative response to Robertson's ideas. These two theorists' perspectives have been formed under the influence of opposing meta-theoretical presuppositions. This general critical assessment of the two theorists' treatment of the glocal helps set the stage for the argument advanced in this article's third section – a view of glocalization as analytically distinct from globalization. This is yet a third interpretation of glocalization.

In the following discussion the aim is to offer a new view of the notion of glocalization and reframe the terms of scholarly engagement with the concept. By way of introduction, it is important to caution the reader that, in the following pages, the focus of the analysis is restricted to glocalization. That is, the discussion, overview and critical evaluation of various arguments presented here should not be seen as a comprehensive analysis or authoritative critique of the theorists' general frameworks or theories of globalization. Rather, the argument proceeds through a critical overview, the aim of which is to show that: (1) there is already a level of awareness regarding the difference between globalization and glocalization; (2) this awareness is not entirely self-reflexive or explicit; and (3) social theorists fail to draw a distinction between globalization and glocalization consistently, thereby leading to different forms of analytical reductionism (i.e., in some cases subsuming globalization under glocalization or vice versa). In effect, their engagement suggests a failure to grant analytical autonomy to the concept of the glocal. That is the task undertaken in the article's final section.

Globalization as glocalization

Robertson (1992: 173) introduced glocalization into the social-scientific discourse, and his image of glocalization has been elaborated in a series of articles, chapters and encyclopaedia entries (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2012; Robertson, 1994, 1995, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2013; Robertson and White, 2007). Overall, the central meta-theoretical image that governs his treatment of the glocal is that of *monism*. Monism suggests that a variety of existing things (the local and the glocal, in this case) can be explained in terms of a single reality or substance (the global, in this case). The global is not outside of the glocal or local but exists *within* them; for Robertson (1992), globalization entails the particularization of universalism and the universalization of particularism. The global interpenetrates the local; the result is an image akin to the Hindu conception of deities. These are seen as manifestations of a single entity, but can take multiple forms, and thousands of them exist. In Robertson's writings, globalization is realized in concrete forms that are local. It does not exist 'out there' and its articulation is not separate from that of the local. The local is never quite 'pure' or outside the global; it is always constructed in part in response to and through influences from the global.

Robertson's conceptualization appears irrefutable, but the real issue is its temporality – that is, the degree to which temporal variation shapes the relationship between the global and the local. In Robertson's (1995) interpretation, Radhakrishnan (2010: 27) notes:

We are confronted with the dilemmas of theorising a phenomenon that contains at once a spatial component ... but also a temporal one ... Yet, in ... attempts to reconcile the local and the global in a coherent theory of cultural globalisation, the opposition ... persists. How are 'local' and 'global' cultures to be identified as analytically separate if they are completely enmeshed in one another, as the same theories claim?

Radhakrishnan's (2010) solution is to look for theory constructed from the 'bottom up', an appealing yet highly bounded strategy for interpretation. Still, her criticism raises precisely the issue under consideration. Robertson's interpretation becomes a good approximation of social reality when time is infinite ($t \approx \infty$, where $t = \text{time}$) or non-existent (e.g., his statement holds true in snapshots of time, where time is effectively suspended). The vexing issue though is how to deal with shorter or meso-temporal levels of change (from t^1 to t^2), and it is in that particular time frame that Robertson's formulation is less helpful. To put it differently, there is no answer to the question of the specifics of interaction – of 'how' the global–local relationship is reconfigured within time intervals.

Because the exercise of power is rendered visible in the context of temporality, it is not surprising that criticisms suggest that Robertson's perspective does not allow for the effective treatment of power – especially in the popular view of juxtaposing the local with the global and reading the local–global binary as a power relationship. Although the local is viewed as a depository of communal and social concerns, the global often is viewed as the purveyor of corporate or transnational capitalism (Korff, 2003; Thornton, 2000). Oppositional politics in particular tend to view the local–global binary relationship not as mutually constitutive but, rather, as redressing the exploitation–resistance binary. Ritzer and Ritzer (2012) echo this line of criticism when they argue that glocalization does not allow for a critical perspective.

Since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the popular understanding of globalization has privileged approaches that focus on political economy, whereby globalization often is viewed as an expression of 'global' or transnational capitalism. Robertson's invocation of the glocal was precisely an attempt to resist the temptation to postulate global integration as an end state (a *telos*) of globalization. Unlike Robertson's (1983) understanding of globality, contemporary trends suggest that globality is seen in terms of economic integration (Wilson, 2012). Glocalization offered the means to highlight Robertson's (1994, 1995) insistence that globalization involves *both* homogeneity and heterogeneity – and in this respect, the McDonaldisation (Ritzer, [1993] 2000) and cultural imperialism theses (Beck et al., 2003) or other similar arguments in favour of cultural homogenization fail to include a critically important aspect of global processes.

Increasingly, and as a result of growing research published in a variety of disciplines and fields, the glocalization thesis was extended to offer a more general treatment of globalization as such (see Khondker, 2004, 2005). According to Khondker (2005: 187), glocalization is similar to a sophisticated version of globalization. Its main elements are:

1. Diversity is the essence of social life.
2. Not all differences are erased.
3. History and culture operate autonomously to offer a sense of uniqueness to the experiences of groups (whether cultures, societies or nations).

4. Glocalization removes the fear that globalization resembles a tidal wave erasing all differences.
5. Glocalization does not promise a world free from conflict but offers a more historically grounded and pragmatic worldview.

Over time, Robertson (2013; Robertson and White, 2007) has also endorsed this view of globalization as self-limiting. This view adopts Turner's (2007) 'enclave society' thesis; it means that globalization does not translate into global integration but, instead, into the fragmentation and construction of various enclaves that cut off a neighbourhood or suburb or other unit from its surrounding environment while connecting it to other 'far-away' places.² Accordingly, globalization involves not only the construction of new units of integration but also the systematic fragmentation of pre-existing units and the construction of new units and groups that exist behind new barriers to unrestricted communication and movement. Globalization therefore delivers a multitude of fragmentation – hence, in effect, it is glocalization.

At its core, this interpretation looks upon 'globalisation as glocalisation'.³ Glocalization and globalization are analytically conflated, or to put it differently, glocalization is subsumed under globalization. This formula allows Robertson to maintain a unity throughout his corpus of work – which dates back several decades – without an explicit break. This turn has not gone unnoticed: Ritzer (2007: 6) points out that 'Robertson and White [(2007)] . . . imply that glocalisation *is* globalisation' – and that is precisely the point. By erasing the conceptual line between the two, Robertson can maintain continuity without a major revision.

However, that turns out to be highly problematic. Robertson's work has been developed in relationship to – and to a degree as a response to – the world polity or world society perspective developed since the 1970s by Stanford-based sociologist John W. Meyer and his collaborators.⁴ Initially, it focused on strong commonalities in international discourses but eventually covered a wide range of topics, ranging from human rights to environmentalism. Although variation in specifics is observed, these commonalities embody broadly shared assumptions that operate as common blueprints that generate conformity among countries. Extensive empirical research has documented the top-down process through which global models and discourses diffuse into nation-states – especially in those with strong organizational links internationally. This similarity across societies, or their isomorphism, is accounted for as conformity to dominant, legitimate views. Conventional ideas about governance, organizations, science or education are seen as cultural models: blueprints or recipes that define what 'normal' or appropriate nation-states, organizations or institutions look like. These models suffuse the international sphere and lead to a global diffusion of ideas and policy models. The world society perspective stresses the historical build-up of international organizations and structures that serve to institutionalize cultural models. The uniformity of these models is explained in terms of the institutional isomorphism responsible for the creation of contemporary world culture (Boli and Thomas, 1999; Drori et al., 2006; McNeely, 1995; Meyer, 2010; Meyer et al., 1997). Lechner and Boli (2005) suggest that, even though riddled with tensions and contradictions, this culture saturates social life through law, organizations, religion, national identity and even anti-globalization movements.

World society theorists argue that globalization produces cultural standardization. Robertson's key innovation and departure from the basic tenets of this neo-institutional perspective lie in suggesting that globalization is also difference-producing. And that argument in effect is directly linked to the introduction of glocalization into the social-scientific vocabulary. Globalization raises the problematic of global social integration or the old question of whether societies display convergence or divergence alongside their developmental pathways. But if globalization is self-limiting, then that is inherently incomplete and that implicitly questions the claims of the world society perspective.⁵ But the empirical record of world society scholarship offers a wealth of evidence that shows that institutional isomorphism is real. The result is an insoluble conundrum – one that exists only insofar as the globalization as glocalization thesis is accepted. The conundrum is immediately resolved if the proposition of glocalization's analytically autonomy is accepted – and that is discussed in the article's third section.

Glocalization as globalization

Ritzer's approach is a creative response to Robertson's insistence that heterogeneity and homogeneity are *both* facets of the global – and hence, the McDonaldization thesis (Ritzer, 1993) fails to account for cultural heterogeneity. In Ritzer's (2003, [2004] 2006) interpretation, glocalization and the related notion of cultural heterogeneity are explicitly acknowledged – at least in principle – as a viable theoretical alternative. Ritzer nevertheless concentrates upon the negative aspects of capitalism. Ritzer's conceptual opposite to glocalization is 'grobalisation', which he defines as the 'imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organisations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas' (Ritzer, [2004] 2006: 73). This process aims to overwhelm the local, and its ultimate goal is to see profits grow through unilateral homogenization, thus earning its name: *grobalization*.⁶

Ritzer argues that the broader idea of grobalization is implicit under different headings: capitalism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, Westernization, Americanization, McDonaldization, Disneyization, etc. In his view, globalization is used by transnational corporations as a means of promoting the grobalization of culture. For him, glocalization and grobalization are the two leading paradigms in the study of the globalization of culture. Ritzer ([2004] 2006: 141–61; see also Andrews and Ritzer, 2007) offers re-readings of work from the sociology of sport and McDonaldization, effectively turning the authors' interpretation on its head: scholarship and cases that are meant to demonstrate glocalization are reinterpreted as offering support for grobalization. This exercise reveals that the vexing issue involved in the glocalization–grobalization conceptualization has nothing to do with empirical reality⁷ – it has to do with the choice of theories. In other words, grobalization can also offer persuasive accounts of processes interpreted as glocalization. Ritzer ([2004] 2006: 140) summarizes his own perspective as follows:

1. Globalization is a broad process that encompasses major sub-processes. These form a continuum ranging from 'glocalization' on one end to 'grobalization' on the other. In fact, glocalization is threatened by grobalization (Ritzer and Ritzer, 2012: 803).

2. The idea of a continuum makes it clear that most of what is thought of as globalization lies somewhere between these two poles. Both glocalization and globalization are 'ideal types' with few, if any, actual processes being one or the other. Global phenomena should be assessed in terms of their mix of glocal and global elements.
3. The local is downplayed in this formulation largely because it has been, or is being, decimated by the global. Its remnants are integrated into the global.

Unlike Robertson's monistic perspective, Ritzer's perspective is shaped by dualism. The key concepts are pairs of binary concepts set in opposition to each other: glocalization–globalization is one of these pairs. By far the most interesting application of this dualism is in Ritzer's interpretation of the local–global binary relationship. In his view, the global and the local are mutually exclusive: one cannot exist within the other, as Robertson would have it. When the local is incorporated or subsumed under the global, then it morphs into the glocal. And the glocal is not 'really' local; something is irretrievably lost.

Ritzer's meta-theoretical view is exceedingly familiar to the Western audience because it employs deeply entrenched modalities of thinking in Western science and philosophy. It offers an image in which the global intersects with the local – that intersection is the glocal. Ultimately, because the global and the local are mutually exclusive, the spread of globalization means that the local disappears; all that is left is the glocal, and that is of course insufficient to challenge capitalism. The key point is simply that it becomes impossible to understand the glocal as *outside* the global, and once inside the global, then the system's logic prevails. Hence, Ritzer's interpretation is that of 'glocalization as globalization': glocalization is subsumed under globalization. Although Ritzer has taken an important step toward the analytical autonomy of the glocal, his 'systemic' perspective does not allow this autonomy to be fully realized. But Ritzer's achievement should not be minimized. Faced with the impossibility of intersecting power into Robertson's interpretation, Ritzer articulated through globalization a conceptual alternative that can accomplish this objective. In turn, that reveals the importance of intersecting power into the analysis of glocalization.

An excellent example that illustrates Ritzer's dualism can be found in an article by Hoogenboom et al. (2010). These authors' criticism of Ritzer's thesis prompted a response (Ritzer and Ritzer, 2012) that further clarifies matters and offers a reaffirmation of this interpretation. Hoogenboom et al. (2010) examined the case of Vlisco, the Dutch textile printing company that, since 1846, has produced batik cloth for the West African consumer market. Initially, the company used its market innovations to defeat competitors but, over time, batik cloth in West Africa became a local status symbol that in turn has shifted the relationship between the Dutch company, on the one hand, and its consumers and local trade partners, on the other hand. The authors hence concluded that, in the long term, globalization does not necessarily result in the transformation of authentic and locally conceived products into empty mass products – but rather it can generate new cultural forms of glocal 'authenticity'. Their article and critique of Ritzer's thesis prompted a reply by Ritzer and Ritzer (2012) who argue, among other criticisms, that the authors have completely misunderstood the basic notion of Ritzer's perspective:

In Ritzer's view, once a product or service has been touched by the global (and virtually everything has been by now touched in that way), it is better thought of as a mix of global and local, as glocal. In other words, it can never again be thought of as 'purely local' (if anything ever was purely local). A total cessation – impossible in the global age – of local interaction with global processes would be required for something to be considered 'purely local'. (Ritzer and Ritzer, 2012: 802)

In other words, the local exists *outside* the global: global and local are mutually opposite terms and cannot coexist. Once a product or service has been touched by the global, it can no longer claim to be local.

The fundamental problem that immediately arises from such an interpretation is that almost nothing remains in the world today that could claim the status of 'local' under this definition (Ritzer, 2003: 207–8). Ritzer's interpretation stands in stark contrast to Robertson's interpretation in terms of its treatment of temporality. Ritzer's scheme describes a process of social change within time intervals (from t^1 to t^2) – that is, it concerns precisely the time intervals in which Robertson's perspective is least helpful. It is, of course, far less effective in other temporalities, e.g. when time is infinite ($t \approx \infty$) or non-existent. In fact, his end state is that of a system whereby the local no longer exists; a highly problematic conclusion that effectively denies the possibility of introducing any meaningful social change. In short, Ritzer's and Robertson's perspectives are complementary; each is strong in those temporalities in which the other is weak.

Ritzer's interpretation suffers from positioning glocalization as the mere *opposite* of globalization – that is, it limits the term's applicability and ignores the multiple uses of the glocal across disciplines and fields (see Roudometof, 2015; forthcoming). Hence, his interpretation of glocalization lacks a trans-disciplinary perspective that could take into account the varied uses of the glocal across disciplines and fields of study. Whereas Robertson believes in the effervescence of (g)locality, Ritzer (2003) argues that locality disappears. Ritzer and Ritzer (2012) argue that this thesis is meant to sensitize people to this prospect in order to further oppositional politics. But Ritzer's argument, if correct, suggests the ultimate meaninglessness of such a quest. By arguing along these lines, Ritzer effectively denies the possibility of the glocal being anything other than an instrument of global capitalism.⁸

Glocalization: in favour of its analytical autonomy

The third interpretation of glocalization suggests that glocalization should be viewed as an analytically autonomous concept. This notion of analytical autonomy is adopted from Alexander's (2003) strong programme of cultural sociology, although its origins lie in the strong programme in the sociology of science. Alexander argues in favour of cultural autonomy, e.g. the autonomous status of culture as a factor that contributes to meaning-making and social life. In a similar fashion, the analytical autonomy of glocalization is meant to provide a foundation for using the concept to designate a process possessing analytical autonomy vis-à-vis other related concepts (local, global). This requires the specification of the process or mechanism that offers an explication of this autonomy. As shown in the preceding discussion, Robertson subsumes globalization under

glocalization whereas Ritzer subsumes glocalization under globalization. Both interpretations suffer from this conflation, as theorists fail to grant the glocal the analytical autonomy it deserves. To do so, it is necessary to look at the precise manner in which the relationship between the global and local is shaped. One way of doing this is to adopt a systemic view of the global, as Ritzer does. In such a case, the local is incorporated into the global and nothing is left of it; and vice versa, the global is by no means seriously affected or modified by the local.

In contrast, for Robertson and White (2007: 62), the answer to the issue of the mechanism of glocalization lies in the concept of diffusion, insofar as they suggest that 'diffusion has involved concentration upon the ways in which ideas and practices spread (or do not spread) from one locale to another', and, generally speaking, 'diffusion theory ... anticipated what we now call glocalisation in very important respects'. But framing the problematic of glocalization in terms of world culture's diffusion is counterproductive.⁹ According to world society theory, diffusion and institutional isomorphism result in worldwide uniformity with regard to numerous cultural items. If diffusion leads to cultural homogenization, then one is left without an empirical mechanism that could capture the reality of how glocalization works. It is necessary to highlight that world society theorists *assume* the presence of cultural linkages that render exchanges among 'actors' (states, organizations, individuals) not merely relational but also cultural. Diffusion for world society theorists occurs through its 'theorization' by those who adopt items – and is effective insofar as *the adopters have strong relations to the models they adopt*. When such relations are absent, then this theorization of diffusion in effect helps innovation masquerade as diffusion (Strang and Meyer, 1993). That is an excellent entry point for introducing glocalization. But unlike the neo-institutionalists' strong Durkheimian interpretation of culture, glocalization can be effectively theorized by considering interactions that occur within the world stage but without making assumptions about the presence or absence of a shared 'culture' (in the world society's understanding of the word).

At their core, both Ritzer (Ritzer and Ray, 2010) and Robertson accept the conceptual metaphors of liquidity or diffusion as ways of thinking about the spread of globalization. Alternatively, it is possible to view globalization as spreading in a wave-like manner (Therborn, 2000).¹⁰ If conceived in such a fashion, then globalization's relationship with the local can be seen differently. The notion of the wave as a conceptual metaphor has been popular in historical descriptions of globalization.¹¹ It is particularly well suited for analysing the general notion of globalization, i.e. the 'globalization of X', whereby X can be a specific topic, process, condition, artefact, etc. (see Albrow, 1997: 88). A plethora of articles and books exists that examine the globalization of X – that is, the relationship between globalization and some facet of human behaviour. By definition, the *general* notion of globalization implies that: (1) globalization logically precedes glocalization;¹² and (2) globalization refers only to those instances where a locally instigated wave spreads throughout the globe or close to it – in contrast to transnationalization, which refers to a relatively small number of cross-border connections.

It is therefore necessary to complement the age-old conceptual metaphor of diffusion with the conceptual metaphor of refraction. Refraction refers to the fact or phenomenon of light or radio waves being deflected when passing through the interface between one

medium and another or through a medium of varying density. Refraction offers a conceptual metaphor that allows the reinterpretation of the relationship between globalization and glocalization. The strategy rests on: (1) conceiving of globalization as a generic process in terms of waves spreading around the globe; and (2) using the notion of refraction of waves as a means of understanding the global–local binary.¹³

In the case of the globalization of X, what actually takes place is the migration and spread of X into different localities. If one further views these localities as having varying degrees of density or ‘thickness’, or to put it differently, as having different wave-resistance capacities, the process can then operate in two different ways. First, the wave-like properties can be absorbed and amplified by the local and then reflected back onto the world stage. That process of reflection is rather accurately described by world society theorists – and in many respects it is the very mechanism through which institutional isomorphism comes into existence. Second, it is possible for a wave to pass through the local and to be refracted by it. And that is precisely what happens in some instances: *glocalization is globalization refracted through the local*. That is a yet third interpretation of glocalization – one that explicitly allows its analytical autonomy from globalization. The local is not annihilated or absorbed or destroyed by globalization but, rather, operates symbiotically with globalization and shapes the *telos* or end state or result.

The above allows the clarification of a mechanism or process that shows the manner in which globalization is responsible both for homogeneity and heterogeneity (as both Robertson (1995) and Ritzer suggest). In glocalization, the global and the local shape the end state. The result is heterogeneity; just like light that passes through glass radiates an entire spectrum, so does globalization passing through locales radiate a spectrum of differences. In this sense heterogeneity becomes the end state of globalization. Strictly speaking, glocalization (and globalization) as such are an abstraction: in real life, the globalization of any single cultural item or form or object or another property (for example, pop music or organizational technique or religion, and so on) leads to various glocal formations constructed through this refraction. Variation is systematically produced. Whether such variation amounts to ‘real’ authenticity is beside the point here – for it is not claimed that this variation is characteristic of the local but rather that it is constitutive of the glocal.

Subsequently, the end condition produced by glocalization or to be accurate, by multiple glocalizations, is *glocality*, or again, to be accurate, it is a *multitude of glocalities*. Just like glocalization, glocality is an abstraction; it exists in multitudes produced empirically in various contexts through local–global interaction. Although glocalization designates a process of refraction through the local, glocality designates a condition whereby the end state of glocalization is glocally experienced. Perhaps the best way to define it is by contrasting glocality to globality. Globality is experienced through the possibility of living parallel lives or through the awareness of the physically absent but communicatively present ‘other’. This leads to simultaneity, e.g. doing things ‘together’ at the same time while physically apart from each other. Globality further involves the ability of synchronous comparison. This means that people can compare their own situation vis-à-vis others in real time – and then they can use this knowledge to re-formulate their own projects, policies, strategies, and so on. Examples abound: From the 1989

revolutions in Eastern Europe to the May of 1968 to the revolutions of 1848, synchronicity is an important facet of global historical developments. Both simultaneity and synchronicity pose particularly difficult challenges when making meaningful comparisons; their presence does not allow one to consider specific historical cases as truly independent of each other. For example, the sheer awareness and experience of the 1776 American Revolution or the 1789 French Revolution or the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution contributed to their employment as a reference point or a model for other revolutionaries to emulate (or at least try to emulate). Conservatives tried to avoid the duplication of what they considered to be these revolutions' causal factors in their own contemporary settings and have also used past or present historical examples as a reference point (Bayly, 2004; Johnson, 1991).

Globality, however, is not by itself sufficient to capture the complexity of social relations. Rather, one has to acknowledge and incorporate into one's theoretical vocabulary the fact that the phenomenological encoding and decoding of global events do not necessarily negate or obliterate the local lenses that can be used to decode or interpret an event or determine the local level of participation. That is not merely a theoretical argument but, rather, one derived from Norris and Inglehart's (2009) conclusions, in which the authors confirm that the national filter remains an important factor shaping the impact of cross-cultural communication.

To put it simply, there is a systematic delay in the experience of globality: one's life is a little out of sync with those who are communicatively connected but physically absent, and one's simultaneity is mediated by one's locale. Perhaps the most straightforward example is the time delay in the operation of the world's financial markets: on a daily basis, the brokers in the New York Stock Exchange can anticipate at least in part the shape of events based on prior knowledge of what already has already happened in the world's other financial markets the very same day. That is the consequence of the fact that a '24-hour day' begins in Asia and, by the time it is morning in New York, the day will have run its course in the major financial markets in Europe and Asia. The result is that brokers can anticipate the markets' reactions based on their knowledge of what has already happened elsewhere on the same day. This example shows how location fractures global synchronicity and that simultaneity is not immediate but time-delayed.

Moreover, the local perception of the global is often determined by agency, and agency makes a difference. The ABC News television broadcast of the 2000 Millennium celebrations made this point forcefully by contrasting the regions of the globe where successive celebrations were taking place to those regions where poverty or cultural tradition excluded them from participation in what was deemed a 'global' event. The Millennium celebrations of Tokyo and Peking contrasted to the silence of Jerusalem, hence reflecting not only differences in calendar alone but also the ultimately political projects behind the construction and observance of calendars. Another example concerns the television coverage of the Olympic Games, whereby stations 'glocalize' their coverage – that is, they cater to their own national audiences by playing close attention to the athletes representing their nation, sometimes even at the expense of adequately covering the games as such. In mass communication, an entire research programme exists that explores the extent to which media reception and decoding of broadcasting do not lead to the viewers' 'cultural doping' (Fiske, 1998; Griswold, 2008; Sigismondi, 2012).

Simultaneity, synchronous comparison and the living of parallel lives do not necessarily obliterate the difference of a distinct geographical location.

It is precisely the realization that 'global' events, such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup, can be decoded from within very different lenses that leads to the notion of glocality. *Glocality is defined as experiencing the global locally or through local lenses* (which can include local power relations, geopolitical and geographical factors, cultural distinctiveness, and so on). In this regard, most global events have a highly relevant glocal dimension: Witness, for example, the contrasting reactions by different publics when the news of 9/11 circulated around the globe. Glocality is a source of problems when constructing narratives intended for global consumption: In 2004, NBC was threatened with a lawsuit because of its coverage of the opening ceremony of the Athens Olympics. The ceremony involved a possession of replica statues from classical antiquity, whose nudity was deemed scandalous by U.S. conservatives. These examples can be multiplied ad infinitum: readers can conduct their own thought experiments and come up with their own examples. In the twenty-first century, 'the evolutions of communication and travel have placed an interconnected global matrix over local experience', and, as a result, 'we now live in "glocalities"'. Each glocality is unique in many ways, and yet each is also influenced by global trends and global consciousness' (Meyrowitz, 2005: 23). The more exposed one is to how others experience the same events, the more aware one becomes of glocality.

The preceding discussion clearly enables the theorization of meso-temporal levels of change (from t^1 to t^2) without necessarily accepting the proposition of a total integration as the final outcome (e.g., a *telos* whereby the local disappears completely). The local can alter the final outcome, and it ultimately implies that resistance to globalization is *not* (theoretically) futile. In the framework outlined above, it is possible to map power relations and therefore to analyse the local–global relationship in terms of power differentials. Power relations are not conceived as one-sided, that is, as emanating from a single source or as flowing exclusively in a single direction (from the global to the local) but, rather, as involving the ability to project or resist waves of globalization. In other words, power emanates and potentially can reside in all actors participating in global–local interactions. The theoretical *a priori* is that power does not necessarily rest in a single container. Specifically, power intersects in the following circuits:

- The ability of a locale to originate waves consistently and persistently across the world stage or the cultural, political, economic and military power that enables a configuration of power to play a critically important role as a source. This could be described as a locale 'globalizing' itself from within (Beck, 2000) but this notion is meaningful only by excluding relationships with other localities. The West used to be the main 'globalizing' historical actor. In past centuries, it served as the origin of modernist influences. In the twenty-first century, that is rapidly changing both with the 're-orienting' toward Asia (and more specifically China) and through the rise of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) group. The proposed framework does not assume that all power rests inherently with the West – and that in turn means that it can examine shifts in the global balance of power.

- The ability of a locale to be wave-resistant (or what is referred to above as its thickness), the ability to insulate itself from waves of ‘undesirable’ outside influences. Some famous examples here include North Korea or Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Of course, the degree of thickness in most cases does not assume such extremes. But thickness, whether cultural, institutional, political or military, is a powerful means through which a locale (a nation, a region, etc.) can enable a process of selective appropriation of global influences. This allows the possibility of allomorphy through concept-borrowing without the assumption of a shared cultural model and effectively suggests that the world society’s isomorphism is not the only outcome of global–local interaction.
- The ability of a locale to modify or alter the waves that pass through it, a well-known and often evoked ability to cause mutations, alterations or fractures into whatever is introduced from ‘outside’. Glocality entails the construction and proliferation of hybridity and the experience of cultural pluralism and ethnic or religious difference in everyday life. In post-colonial theory and cultural studies, hybridity, creolization, syncretism and *mestizaje* have all been used to capture a notion akin to glocality (see Canclini, 1995; Cohen, 2007; Kraidy, 2005). It is undeniable that this glocal hybridity represents perhaps the most important visible consequence of this process of continuing and intensifying cultural refraction experienced in the twenty-first century (Pieterse, 2009).

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to offer an overview of three interpretations of glocalization in the social-scientific literature. While arguing in favour of the third interpretation – that of glocalization as analytically autonomous – the objective is a broader one: to present three different ways of conceiving and theorizing the glocal. In light of the growing engagement with glocalization across disciplines and fields, the argument set forth here aims to present, compare and criticize existing interpretations.

Robertson’s and Ritzer’s respective interpretations of glocalization operate under different meta-theoretical assumptions but are in some ways complementary to each other. Although Robertson’s perspective offers a comprehensive or general view, it is less helpful with meso-temporal levels of change and, as a result, it does not offer the means to address issues of power. Ritzer’s perspective offers a dynamic view that directly addresses issues of power and social change, but it is less helpful in the overall view, as it denies the ability of agency to make a difference. Instead, it postulates the disappearance of the local and views the glocal as a mere appendage of global capitalism. Both theorists ultimately do not recognize glocalization as analytically autonomous. In Robertson’s framework, globalization is ultimately transformed into glocalization, whereas in Ritzer’s framework, glocalization is ultimately seen as a facet of globalization – as the way in which global capitalism incorporates the local.

Beneath these choices lies the employment of the conceptual metaphors of liquidity or diffusion as central ways of thinking about the spread of globalization. I have introduced a third interpretation that is predicated upon shifting from the conceptual metaphors of

liquidity or diffusion to a conceptual metaphor of wave transmission. The bare essence of my argument is that it is possible to view the general process of globalization (the globalization of X) as involving waves (of X) that pass through the local in a way similar to that of light passing through glass. The result is not only a reflection of its qualities back onto the world stage but also refraction through the local. Glocalization is therefore defined as the refraction of globalization through the local. The result is glocality – a blend of the local and the global. In the article's third section, examples were offered to clarify the conceptual differences between globality and glocality. This mechanism enables a view of glocalization as analytically autonomous from globalization. That is a key departure from the interpretations of Robertson (globalization as glocalization) and Ritzer (glocalization as globalization).

Undoubtedly, the extent to which the suggested solution sufficiently solves the theoretical dilemmas and related issues in the respective frameworks remains an issue for further debate. The main objective here was to merely introduce this problematic. Due to space restrictions, I did not address two issues of paramount importance. First, I did not address the issue of glocalism as a specific point of view, outlook or world-view that aims to offer flexible solutions to policy-making. Suffice it to say that a general presentation of the glocal as analytically autonomous requires a tri-faceted explication of the glocal as a process (glocalization), social condition (glocality) and world-view, ideology or blueprint for action (glocalism). Second, my argument is restricted in merely introducing the analytical autonomy of glocalization. I do not trace the consequences of its analytical autonomy upon related concepts. If glocalization is analytically autonomous from globalization, that requires reframing globalization. The preceding discussion has implicitly attempted to take an initial step toward such a task, but there is considerable theoretical terrain left untouched. Also, if globalization and glocalization are analytically autonomous from each other, that in turn raises the question of the local as possessing similar analytical autonomy. Finally, this article has been confined to theory and does not refer to the growing body of empirical work on glocalization (on this, see Roudometof, forthcoming).

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 12th conference of the European Sociological Association (Prague, the Czech Republic, Aug. 25–28, 2015). The author would like to thank the journal's reviewers for their constructive remarks.
2. This view is also shared by a multitude of perspectives that highlight the significance of the new geographical relations that are inscribed by globalization and which can reconfigure prior units of analysis, such as nations, cities or places (Barber, 2013; Sassen, 2006).
3. It can be (and has been) argued that this is a view of 'glocalisation as globalisation' (Khondker, 2004). This phrase more accurately characterizes Ritzer's treatment of the concept, discussed later in the text. The contrast between the two approaches is made more explicit by the formulation adopted here.
4. The initial impulse for the world society tradition came out of comparative research on education and governance in the 1970s. Education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, seemed surprisingly like those of Western societies despite differences in their respective

labour markets (Schofer et al., 2012). Krücken and Drori (2010) have edited a splendid collection of Meyer's writings.

5. Drori et al. (2013) have put forward a reinterpretation of glocalization as basically identical to the process of 'loose coupling' that is part of the world society perspective. This interpretation seemingly aligns the two notions, but only insofar as the assumptions of world society theory are maintained. That is in turn problematic, as explained in the text.
6. In Ritzer's (2004: 175) view, US textbooks are an example of grobalization: although 'oriented to rationalizing, McDonaldizing, the communication of information', these books are sold out worldwide and students absorb the information given to them. Ironically, Ritzer's work has been criticized as a 'Ritzerisation of knowledge' (Roberts, 2005) that applies market-driven promotion techniques to knowledge production as a means of offering simplistic accounts of complex processes that are easily consumed under the disguise of knowledge.
7. And of course McDonald's can be seen as a case of glocalization (see Turner, 2003). However, Ritzer's binary opposition might not be the best means of capturing social complexity. For example, in his study of McDonald's in Israel, Ram (2004) argues that homogeneity occurs at the structural-institutional level, whereas heterogeneity emerges at the expressive-symbolic level. Caldwell (2004) also argues that Russians conceive of McDonald's as an indigenized brand. Marling (2006) further suggests that appearance and reality are often at variance when discussing the extent of homogeneity and heterogeneity.
8. In contrast, it is possible to suggest (for example, see Fasenfest, 2010) that the glocal can provide the means for organizing resistance and developing solutions that reconcile local action and global goals.
9. The heavy emphasis on diffusion can lead to the impression that world society theory suggests the diffusion of everything. But world society theory is as much a theory of non-diffusion as diffusion (see Meyer, 2010). Models that fail to assert collective goods over private interests, models that fail to articulate with prevailing global institutions, and models that lack international organizational carriers are unlikely to diffuse, regardless of support from powerful and interested actors.
10. The conceptual metaphor of the wave is distinct from the popular notion of liquid modernity and of thinking about social relationships using the metaphor of fluidity (Bauman, 2000; Urry, 2002). Liquidity does not necessarily alter the foundations of modernist narratives, as it is famously derived from Marx's description of modernity as a condition in which 'all that is solid melts into the air' (Bergman, 1982).
11. For specific examples, see Therborn (2000), Robertson (2003) and Roudometof (2013). The voluminous literature on the historicity of globalization cannot be cited here. For general discussions on the varieties of historical approaches to globalization, see Pieterse (2012) and Roudometof (2014).
12. From the perspective of methodological glocalism, the glocal could be seen as the 'natural' state of affairs; with globalization as one possible derivative of this condition (Holton, 2007). Such a reading of Holton's (2007) proposition equates the glocal with the hybrid. But the two are far from synonymous (for further discussion, see Roudometof, forthcoming).
13. There is a multitude of definitions of globalization, and these embody different sets of assumptions. That issue is not addressed here (see Axford, 2013). Suffice it to say, the wave concept metaphor is not necessarily inconsistent with several other views on globalization.

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