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METHODOLOGICAL GLOCALISM: THE SOCIAL SCIENCE OF THE GLOBAL AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

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In this intervention I deal with what has more than occasionally been called the global turn. In so doing I will look “backward,” in the sense of considering circumstances that have led up to the so-called modern period in a global respect; while I will look forward in the sense of advocating what could well be called a fully glocal turn. Specifically I will elaborate a relatively new approach to what might generally be called the global scene. However, I should add that I will from time to time consider extra-terrestrial matters. Although I will not interrogate the latter in any significant way they will still form an important background to the presentation of my thoughts. One final preliminary note: during the past few years, particularly since the prominence of the (problematically) related phenomenon of BREXIT and Trumpism, not to speak of the increasing power and influence of China, as well as the pandemonium in the Middle East, a very negative attitude towards global matters has arisen in many parts of the world. This is often called populism. The evidence for this is overwhelming and this rise of anti-global, more specifically anti-globalization sentiment, is a strong undercurrent in the following discussion.

With increasing intensity social scientific, particularly sociological and anthropological, interest in and focus upon *the global* has been increasing exponentially since the 1960s; although for much of this period “global” was conflated with or confused with “international.” One might add that this increase was to a large extent paralleled by developments within the discipline of history. In fact there is now much overlap between sociologists and historians in this regard. More on this relationship below. In any case, the sharp take-off with respect to globalization as a concept and associated themes began in the early 1990s with the publication of Roland Robertson’s *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (1992). See also Robertson (1990). In fact the early 1990s was a period when the highly influential contributions of books, chapters and articles by such people as Robertson himself, Ulf Hannerz (e.g.1996), Martin Albrow (e.g.1996), John Tomlinson (e.g. 1991) Arjun Appadurai (e.g.1990) and yet others were published. One should add at this point that much of what was previously studied under the rubric of globalization is now presented under the rubric of global studies (Robertson 2016; Steger and Wahlrab, 2014; cf. Cohen and Kennedy, (2013 ).

An important point to be made at this stage is a denial of what has been called the cult of *connectivity* (Robertson, 2011; James and Steger, 2014)*.* For far too long the global has been equated with the idea of increasing interconnectedness – or connectivity - to the great neglect of ideational themes. In other words it is here argued that globalization includes both increasing connectivity *as well as* increasing awareness of the context as a whole. In using the term context I am here referring to what in other ways may simply be called the global or, indeed, the cosmic. This strong commitment to inclusion of the ideational must be carefully borne in mind in what follows. Ideational includes such notions such as the imaginary and contextual culture, highlighting the significance of the imaginary being a central theme in the work of Manfred Steger (e.g. Steger, 2008; Steger, 2013; Steger and Wahlrad, 2017).

There is a somewhat disturbing tendency to think of the study of the global as of fairly recent origin, some academics thinking of it as having come into prominence as late as the early 2000s. The fact of the matter is that slowly but surely, through much of the twentieth century, the global focus and the term “global” became increasingly prominent, “globalization” making it into *Webster’s Dictionary* in 1961; although it must be emphasized that it had been more than occasionally used at least a hundred years before that. It gained strong purchase in the disciplines of sociology, business studies, anthropology and geography in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It is important at this relatively early stage to indicate that the intellectual concern with globalization and the global generally first made its most definite appearance in the work of students of American religion; one of the most prominent proponents of this theme being Max Stackhouse (cf. Stackhouse, 2000 see also McCoy, 1980). Thus it is more than worth pointing out that it is almost certainly the case that the emphasis upon the centrality of global matters was emphasized very strongly in the study of religion well before it became prominent in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, geography and business studies. The principal reason for the neglect of theologians and historians of religion with respect to what we may now call the global turn has much to do with the relative marginality of religion in the academy as a whole. It also has much to do with the long term “atheism” of many academics, particularly social scientists.

The present author was one of the leading participants in the introduction of global work to the study of religion, and vice versa. Much of the early and most influential work on globalization and globality in general took place, as I have said, in the sphere of sociology of religion, particularly in the USA. It may be worth mentioning that when the present author spoke of globalization in the British context, specifically in the sociology of religion section of the British Sociological Association in the early 1990s, he was more or less ridiculed; although, ironically, it was around the same time that I became associated – as a founding member – with the journal, *Theory, Culture & Society*. It was in this context that I first developed my influential ideas on globalization and related topics.

One might well add to this some prominent features of religion in the large. The most significant of these include the considerable rise in ecumenicism from the late nineteenth century onward, not to speak of the importance of evangelicalism and proselytization in different parts of the world.

The present paper centers in large part on the argument that the master concept with respect to many of the features of the contemporary study of globalization is in fact *glocalization* (e.g. Robertson 1992, 1993b, 1994, 1995)*.* The latter term has been slow in coming into prominence but by now is widely accepted as an indispensable analytic term; in spite of it having often been ridiculed – at least until recently. The rationale for theses concerning glocalization, specifically the relationship between the global and the local, had become a major problematic in the study of globalization by the mid-1990s. The relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity constituted a parallel antinomy. The same applies to the connection between the particular and the general. Moreover, the relationship between comparative social science and global social science was found to be of similar complexity. An example of the latter is to be found in the piece by Byron Fox entitled “The Emerging International Sociology” (in Horowitz, 1964). In his otherwise adventurous chapter, at least for his time, Fox elides the pursuit of comparative work with efforts which involve transcending what he calls parochialism and nationalism. In effect this involves conflating ethnocentricity with comparison.

Before proceeding, however, we should consider the historical and genealogical background to the general subject of the global. Academic and intellectual interest in the global can be traced to three particular sources. The first of these is the topic of civilizations and their comparison. The second is what came to be known as world systems, for some academics the singular world-system. The third is the topic of global or world history. Each of these can be seen to be heavily related to the others (Sanderson, 1995); although special concern with world system in the singular is of the more recent origin. The distinction between the plural and singular versions will not detain us here however. Clearly the study of civilization in a general perspective has been closely linked for most of the present era to the study of world-nowadays sometimes called global-history. Moreover, the study of civilization(s) has frequently these days come to be known as civilizational analysis. Much of this came about through the pioneering work of Benjamin Nelson, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s (Huff, 1981). In Nelson’s work the study of civilization – or civilizational analysis – was frequently elaborated so as to encompass civilizational complexes and intercivilizational relations. Nelson had a number of colleagues who were instrumental in refounding The International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (US). Much of the work of this group traced its origins to the classical contributions of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee (Robertson, 1992: 150-156). In fact, during the 1990s the debate concerning the connection between globalization and the world-system(s), as well as conceptions of civilization, was of considerable significance; and many of those who were interested in these topics helped enormously to bring the subject of the global into academic view.

This cluster of topics was addressed by such authors as those represented in the book edited by Anthony King, entitled *Culture, Globalization And The World- System* (1991). Moreover it was also during the 1990s that *globality* as well as *the global* became increasingly prominent*,* most noticeably in the work of Robertson (e.g. Robertson, 1993a). During the same period the great debate began concerning Samuel Huntington’s highly controversial pieces on what he called the clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1993, 1996). I would argue that even though the topic of the global or globalization was not central to the debate about Huntington’s work it most certainly contributed in a highly significant way to the ongoing crystallization of global concerns. This concern with civilizations within the context of discussions of world politics or international relations was of great significance since it opened the way to the global, i.e. beyond the purely nation-centered theme of the international. In fact it is one of the central themes of the global turn. The issues of migration and immigration with their attendant cultural clashes, or at least problematics, are at the very center of world politics in general.

The general, overriding argument in the present paper is that the overcoming of the global-local problem is to found in the thorough interrogation of the themes of glocalism, glocality and glocalization; the relationship of the latter to globalization, as well as the globalization and glocalization of social science. Although it will be given little attention here one should also mention briefly at this point the increasing significance of cosmology, notably as it has a bearing on the study of the global (Dickens and Ormrod, 2007). The latter’s study of “cosmic society” is much concerned with space travel and colonisation.

Another perspective that is a rival to – or better, relativizes -- the global is that of the anthropocene (Davies, 2016). The latter is a basically geological concept, one that has been deployed in recognition of the damaging impact on the planet of human activity. In fact, the damaging effect of human activity is the present major focus of students of the anthropocene. This obviously clashes with the idea of the cosmic society, since the latter is much more optimistic. One should also note, more importantly, that history as a discipline has been tremendously influenced by the global approach, including some glocal moves. It is more than important here to state that in this presentation the word global will often be used in such a way as to encompass the glocal.

Another basic ingredient of the present contribution is the emphasis upon transdisciplinarity, a concept which is very different from the much used notion of interdisciplinarity that, in effect, “celebrates” disciplines, if unintentionally. In fact the study of globalization and related issues is best called transdisciplinarity since the study of the global and indeed the extra-global literally transcends, goes beyond, what is normally studied by disciplines. The relatively new concern with intersectionality may be relevant here but space precludes any significant discussion of it (cf. Walker, 2010: 296).

This is the most appropriate point at which to indicate what has become something of a “territorial” problem in the study of the global. This concerns the insistence by some historians who claim to be more global than the average student of the global. The best way to illustrate this issue is by invoking the words of an advocate of global history – namely John Darwin (in Belich, Darwin, Frenz, Wickham, 2016: 178). “The naivety with which prognostications” concerning most conceptions of what Darwin calls a “globalized” world were largely due to “the absence of any historical dimension to the ways in which globalization was conceived. In our crudely ahistorical culture, globalization had no past – and we lacked any perspective in which to locate our current, but all too transient situation.” Obviously, Darwin’s insistence upon the ahistorical nature of globalization studies is well off the mark; although other contributors to the book in which his comment appears are much more in line with reality.

Let us now turn directly to the issue of glocalism, more specifically, methodological glocalism. In so far as one can trace the origin of the term glocalization it can be seen that it almost certainly relates to the Japanese word, *dochakuka*. This term basically means to “indigenize” or in the Japanese context to grow rice on one’s own land. In other words the thesis contained therein is that nothing can be done more than once in the same way and nothing can be done in the same way by two or more people.

In fact, this kind of circumstance has occurred very frequently in many forms of social analyses although outwith the Japanese context. In the case of the concept of globalization it can be found that there are a variety of meanings of this concept: words make worlds and worlds make words (Gluck and Tsing, 2009; Robertson, 1996). It is in this way that it can be seen that there are a variety of uses of the actual term globalization and the use of the concept of glocalization enables us to see how glocalization has spread. In fact it can be seen that the spread – or flow – of globalization and the global approach generally had inevitably involved glocalization. Put another way, the spread of globalization as a term or idea can only be explained with respect to its having been glocalized.

The concern with the issue of *localization* began to gain steam toward the end of the twentieth century, even though ideas such as those composed in the highly influential book *Small is Beautiful* (Schumacher, 1973), had much influence well before this. In any case the idea of protecting the local by global means (Hines, 2000) became particularly evident at the time of the massive protests in Seattle against World Trade Organization (WTO). In fact, these demonstrations that took place in Seattle in 1999 constituted the beginning of what has often subsequently been called globalization from below (Portes, 2000). The very idea that the local has to be promoted or protected in a global manner in and of itself demonstrates the need for the conception of the theme of glocalization.

The crucial link between what we have usually called the local and the global can be expressed as follows. Insofar as “items” flow from one “place” to another it is obvious that conditions must obtain in the latter that facilitate reception of the former. It so happens that this kind of thinking first originated most explicitly in work in American rural sociology where a particular concern was how innovations spread. I have attempted in my own work to connect the local and the global by stating that the latter is “self-undoing” By this I mean that globalization cannot continue ad infinitum. Every global move involves a shift of one locale to another locale. My main argument here is that this way of thinking should inform all of our analyses of what we have up to now called globalization. I argue that this is a particularly parsimonious manner of dealing with the kind of issue which has plagued much of the analysis of globalization and, indeed, overcome much of the negative involved in the use of the term globalization. We have witnessed over the last thirty years or so the concurrence of homogenization and heterogenization as well as the particularization of universalism and the universalization of particularism. Put simply, globalization, far from standardizing everything in actual fact encourages diversification. My own conception of glocalization surely catches these antinomies rather neatly.

Although the term glocal and related concepts largely arose explicitly in the early 1990s, for the most part this development occurred within the much more widespread discourse of globalization. Generally speaking the latter notion encapsulated such phenomena as marketization, free trade and deregulation; while it was also linked, at least for a while, with the idea of the Third Way (Rodrik, 2018). In fact the latter concept was prominent in the policies of left-centre academics and politicians of the 1990s. In any case, for many intellectuals and politicians in the 1990s globalization largely implied economic processes.

Unfortunately, in recent years, particularly since the rise of BREXIT and Trumpism globalization has come to convey almost solely economic, negative processes, although economic changes that have strong cultural consequences. In other words, from having been in the 1990s largely a multidimensional conception, with little ideological significance it has become a highly ideological, polemical term. For many, even in the 1990s, globalization had as its central theme the idea of economic change, it should be noted that even in a purely economic sense the cultural element was strongly evident. This is to be seen particularly with respect to the advertising and consumerist aspects of the latter.

In light of the above it should come as no surprise to recognize fully that glocalization has strong cultural connotations. Specifically, taken very seriously, glocalization is a term that runs against the grain of the economic-political meaning largely conveyed by the present connotation of globalization. Insofar as globalization has acquired a cultural content it surely and only superficially conveys a sense of homogenization. Close interrogation of this problematic suggests that it more than facilitates heterogeneity. Even more specifically, *difference sells* and, needless to, say glocalization produces difference in and of itself.

At this point it might well be stated that a rather recent but major participant in the general debate about glocalization has been George Ritzer. His early publications on McDonaldization however, never mention the words globalization or glocalization at all. The insertion of the name Ritzer into the glocalization debate is, it should be stressed, largely but *not* only due to the arguments presented in the book published recently by Victor Roudometof (2016). This cannot be the place for a meaningful critique of Roudometof’s interesting work. What is important to note here is his portrayal of Ritzer’s conception of glocalization and his comparison of this with that of Robertson as if they were clear cut rivals. A crucial fact is that Ritzer only developed his idea of grobalization from 2003 onwards in direct response to Robertson’s idea of glocalization in an article in *Sociological Theory* (2003).

Conclusion

Upon my last visit to Japan in the early 2000s I purchased at Narita Airport a copy of *The Japan Times* and was, indeed, surprised to see on the front page an article announcing that a new word had arrived in Japan. This word was *glocalization*! Obviously this word had travelled around much of the world, having started in Japan itself as *dochakuka* (Robertson, 1992; Swyngedouw, 1992). The announcement stated that this word would facilitate the defence of Japanese culture. It might be said in this respect that occasionally anthropologists have spoken of strategic essentialism – meaning making a claim to authenticity for mainly strategic reasons.

The strategic use of the local in relation to the global is but one of the ways in which the glocal comes into play. However, there are other uses of the local-in-relation-to-the-global. Among these are various aspects of comparative analysis. One among many others is the manner in which the issue of time has been glocally treated (Ogle, 2015). It is worth saying here that Ogle does not mention the word glocal as such but her book is certainly about this theme. It is extremely important in the present context because it rests on the argument that “time is what made the global imagination possible in the first place. Time was ubiquitous: in the second half of the nineteenth century, time became an object of display and inquiry in a staggeringly wide range of fields” (Ogle, 2015: 7). In fact her entire book is about the intersection, or the interpenetration, of the local and the global, even though she rests most of her case linguistically on the latter. She insists throughout her work that the nation – as indicated by time zones and calendars – is globally situated and positioned in historical time. It is very important to state that hers is among many books published in recent years along the same lines; although hers is particularly outstanding. And all of it without even mentioning such words as glocal or glocalization. This comment is not by any means a criticism. It simply illustrates how what I call *glocal analysis* is becoming the methodology of our time.

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