

Glocalization: Conceptual and Methodological Issues

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Abstract

The concept of glocalization was popularized in academic circles by Roland Robertson, reinforced by Keith Hampton and Banny William, and Zygmunt Bauman. For sometimes, the concept was confined to explain the economic dimension of the globalization but gradually it has been extended to cultural dimensions of the globalization. It is not only useful in explaining the process of globalization in local cultures but also enabled the social scientists to re-examine the very conceptual framework of globalization theory. Today, the concept of glocalization has been applied to different academic fields like mass media (including social media), educational leadership, cultural studies, and political analysis and so on. The present paper is aimed to analyze the conceptual and methodological issues emerged as a result of discourse on the phenomenon of glocalization in a critical fashion. It is argued that the current form of globalization is best described as glocalization. Moreover, the theoretical strands of glocalization posed a number of methodological challenges for social scientists which are yet to be addressed.

The present paper is aimed to analyze the conceptual and methodological issues emerged as a result of discourse on the phenomenon of glocalization in a critical fashion. The paper is divided in to two parts. First part delas with the concept of glocalization and its relationship with the theories of cultural globalization, while in the second part some methodological issues related to the study of cultural globalization and glocalization are raised.

The Concept of Glocalization

The notion of glocalization has its roots in Japanese business practices called '*dochauka*', (means global localization), originally referred to 'adopting farming techniques to local conditions', In academic circles, the term was coined in the Harvard Business Review, in 1980, by sociologist Roland Robertson. He wrote that glocalization meant "the simultaneity – the co-presence — of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies" (Robertson 1980). For sometimes, the concept was confined to explain the economic dimension of the globalization but gradually it has been extended

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to other dimensions of the globalization. It has generated a debate among the social scientists not only about its relevance in explaining the process of globalization in local cultures but also enabled the social scientists to reexamine the very conceptual framework of globalization theory. Today, the concept of glocalization has been applied to different academic fields like mass media (including social media), educational leadership, cultural studies, and political analysis and so on.

There are three different theories of cultural globalization: 1. Differentialism: Focuses on barriers that prevent flows which make the cultural alike and Nation States remain stubbornly different; 2. Convergence: Barriers are much weaker and global flows stronger and nation states are growing increasingly alike. In its extreme form local cultures can be overwhelmed by more powerful cultures. (global culture through cultural homogenization); 3. Hybridization: Involve more combination of various political forms drawn from many different parts of the world; *In hybridization perspective, external flows interact with internal flows in order to produce 'a unique cultural hybrid' that combines elements of the two. Barriers to external cultural flows exist in hybridization perspective, and while they are strong enough to prevent those flows from overwhelming local culture, they are not strong enough to block all external flows entirely. That which does succeed in gaining entry mixes with local local culture to produce unique cultural hybrids.*

Globalization and culture: Three Paradigms

Globalization or the trend of growing worldwide interconnectedness has been accompanied by several clashing notions of cultural difference. Three paradigms have emerged to explain the relationship between globalization and culture: 1. Clash of civilizations (Samuel Huntington)- With the end of Cold War, international politics moves out of its western phase and its centerpiece becomes interaction between West and non-western civilizations and among non-western civilizations; 2. McDonaldisation is a version of the recent idea of worldwide homogenization of societies through the impact of multinational corporations. It is a process whereby the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as rest of the world. The process through which this is taking place is 'rationalization' in Weber's sense, that is through formal rationality laid down in rules and regulations. McDonald's formula is successful because it is efficient (rapid service), calculable (fast and inexpensive), predictable (no surprise) and controls labour and customers (Westernization-modernization-Americanization)

But the studies suggest that it is not universal but it compromises with local cultures and does not represent to cultural homogenization but should be understood along the lines of global localization or glocalization or looking in both directions. Firms may be multinational but all business is local. 3. Hybridization - mixing elements of two cultures But it is only in superficial elements not the in the core elements (values and beliefs) of the different societies (conservative view). Midway position is – that new technologies are profound in themselves while each historically framed culture develops its own takes on the new spaces of commonality.

Conceptual Issues

The following theoretical issues require a focussed research for the understanding of glocalization:

1. Glocalization is a simulation of Hybridization
2. Glocalization is an essential process of a wider process i.e. globalization;
3. Glocalization is not just a cultural phenomenon but also a structural phenomenon and profoundly articulates with structural categories like caste, class, power structure, gender and occupational structure of different societies.
4. As globalization is related to transnational flow of commodities, people and activities, it has great impact on social and cultural life of the people moved to places having different cultures and articulate with local culture and structure.

There is a need to redefine concepts and theories in the light of changes taking place as a result of globalization and glocalization and to develop new concepts for understanding the emerging reality. Earlier theories and perspectives have become redundant in explaining the globalizing world. The conceptualizations like network society, risk society, information society, consumer society and so on present a partial view of the society emerging as a result of globalization and require further examination to decide the type of society coming out in recent past and to distinguish it with the modern society and postmodern society.

Methodological Issues

On methodological side, very first challenge is to develop appropriate methods and techniques of sociological research. As globalization and glocalization are planetary level processes, the existing techniques of social research are not much useful in conducting empirical research on globalization and glocalization. There is a need to adopt multi-disciplinary approach to understand globalization and glocalization. Cross-national and cross-cultural studies of transnational flows of people, commodities and activities and their impact on their behaviour and on local structure and culture has to be studied both at the micro as well as macro level. The techniques to map global and local networks of the individual and institutions pose a great methodological challenge and an appropriate methodology has yet to be developed.

To conclude, it can be said that the notion of glocalization is an important process along with the globalization process. Glocalization is a simulation of hybridization. In contrast to prevailing assumption that hybridization is an organic process the hybridization which represents the glocalization, in fact, is an inorganic way of change and evolution affecting various aspects of today's social life. The current form of globalization is best described as glocalization. However, we have to develop appropriate theoretical and conceptual and methodological tools for understanding the profound changes which are taking place both in the developing and developing societies.

References

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