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Digital glocalization: theorizing the twenty-first-century ICT revolution

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This paper offers an overview and theorization of digital glocalization that transcends past interpretations concerning the effects of ICT on techno-social relationships. It outlines a general theoretical framework that uses glocalization as a bridge between global and local. Digital glocalization might lead to the reconstruction of “place” using digital means or, alternatively, to newly found “third” spaces of glocal hybridity. This framework conforms to empirical evidence on how ICT reshapes the social world of the twenty-first century. Concrete manifestations of digital glocalization are reviewed in order to provide readers with suitable examples of its application in work and leisure environments. These range from internet governance to the entertainment industry. The growth and spread of ICT across the globe has the potential to lead to the construction or reconstruction of local places, whereby “placeness” can be created (or recreated); it can also create glocal hybrids that creatively combine online/offline experiences, such as diverse forms of geomeia and augmented reality technologies.

KEYWORDS

globalization, glocalization, ICT, culture, techno-social

1. Introduction

While popular in academic and journalistic accounts, the vision of a single “global village” fails to do justice to the empirical complexities related to the twenty-first-century ICT (i.e., information and communication technology) revolution. This article offers a different viewpoint upon the broader problematic of “techno-social”—as [Fuchs \(2008\)](#) and [Chayko \(2018\)](#) call them—relationships. It argues that it is necessary to expand the meanings of the global, local, and glocal beyond popular academic accounts of “global modernity” in order to capture existing reality and future trends in ICT. In pursuit of such an endeavor, this paper outlines a general theoretical framework that uses glocalization as a bridge between global and local. Overall, the use of glocalization to interpret the ICT revolution has *not* been the conventional approach in the literature. To this day and in spite of the term’s occasional use in the specialist literature (see for example, [Wellman, 2004](#); [Boyd, 2005](#)), no theory-driven explication of glocalization exists with regard to techno-social relations (for a notable exception, see [Trivinho, 2022](#)). It is this lacuna in the literature that the following discussion means to address. The argument offers a trans-disciplinary synthesis of research intended for diverse audiences and fields of study.

The discussion opens with a primer on the general notion of glocalization and outlines the conceptual difference between glocal and hybrid, arguing that the former offers a considerably more nuanced and precise representation of ICT vis-à-vis the latter. Next, it moves into the more concrete domain of techno-social relations, contending that digital glocalization opens up possibilities for (a) the reconstruction of local places (some of which might be digital) as well as (b) for the proliferation of glocal hybridity. Specific examples

illustrate these two general options. What is conventionally referred to as “the internet” might not pivot toward a single “global village”—instead, a glocal internet might be a better description of twenty-first century realities.

2. Glocalization and communication

According to popular academic mythology, the term “glocalization” originated in the Japanese business sector. However, competing accounts indicate that its original employment could be related to pioneer work in the area of social ecology (for an overview, see Roudometof, 2015). In numerous fields of social sciences and humanities, glocalization has been received through the interpretation originally developed by Robertson (1994, 1995). Given the popularization of “globalization” after the 1989–1990 collapse of communism, a key research theme in the 1990’s concerned the problematic of global–local relations. Popular interpretations at the time advocated the withering away of the local and the advent of global social integration. Against such an interpretation, Robertson (1995, p. 35) has argued “the global is not in and of itself counterpoised to the local;” rather, “what is often referred to as the local is essentially included within the global” and “in this respect, globalization... involves the linking of localities [and] the ‘invention’ of locality, in the same general sense of the idea of the invention of tradition.”

The “linking of localities” and the “invention of locality” as partly an outcome of global forces have become widely popular ideas, quickly reproduced across disciplinary boundaries. This complementary or symbiotic reading of global–local relations features prominently in Asian-centered perspectives (Chan et al., 2007; Deng, 2012) that reject various streams of the cultural homogenization thesis. K-pop, or *Hallyu*, in particular has served as a major example of cultural glocalization (see Oh and Jang, 2022). Since the mid-1990’s, researchers have articulated diverse working definitions of glocalization, ranging from geography to organizations to arts to the study of media (for an overview, see Roudometof, 2021). The term has indisputably captured the scholarly community’s attention, and overviews of the state of the art in current scholarship solidify the important insights the concept has provided to various disciplines and fields of study (see Roudometof and Dessi, 2022b).

Glocalization is very much a part of the broader, high-profile problematic of the relationship between media and globalization (see relevant overviews in Iwabuchi, 2018; Russell and Boromisza-Habashi, 2020). Interpretations of ICT’s influence upon contemporary culture are traditionally split between arguments in favor of cultural homogenization vs. arguments stressing cultural hybridity or heterogeneity (Tomlinson, 1991; Ritzer, 2004; Marling, 2006). The dominant interpretation focuses on the extent to which hybridity operates as a cultural logic for contemporary globalization (Pieterse, 1995; Kraidy, 2005). Accordingly, the never-ending personalization, portability, and ubiquitous connectivity of ICTs enable greater levels of interpersonal connectivity. In principle—although not always in practice—these remain contingent upon individual preferences (Bakardjieva, 2005, p. 177–98). The explosion of participatory media has further amplified

these trends (Jenkins, 2013) and has contributed to a complex transformation in the understanding of “community,” whereby physically located groups become online social networks (Wellman, 2004). In Meyrowitz’s (2005, p. 22–23) words, these trends lead toward the “generalized elsewhere.”

While popular as well as academic accounts of globalization often insinuate that digital media’s impact on social life is a phenomenon related to global or globalized modernity, the ill-conceived idea that twenty-first century media-based globalization is totally unprecedented has been thoroughly debunked (Hafez, 2007; Lule, 2012). In contrast, historical interpretations of the relationship between media and globalization highlight the important role technologies of communication have played in humanity’s long history (Briggs and Burke, 2009; Poe, 2010; Kovarik, 2016). From within these lenses, various forms of media (such as writing, oral traditions, newspapers and TV broadcasting) have each been instrumental in the flow of human history. As De Mooij’s (2013) overview of cross-cultural media research demonstrates, while ICTs might amplify cultural effects, their use does not necessarily obliterate differences among national cultures.

Contemporary debates on twenty-first-century ICT, however, often ignore the close intertwining between twentieth-century communications technologies (radio, TV, and satellite broadcasting) and social theorizing. These technologies have been the subject of several interpretations, ranging from a suggested “hyper-reality” produced by artificial simulacra, as well as real-life conditions (Baudrillard, 1987), to criticisms of post-modern society (Bell, 1976) to the invocation of post-industrial society (Touraine, 1971). All of these predate the emergence of the internet in the 1990’s or what in the twenty-first century is referred to as “information-communication technology” (ICT). Consequently, ICT’s role in assisting to diffusion and hybridization processes is less novel than it may appear at first glance. In fact, the growth of audiovisual media long predates the development of computer networks. As Wheeler (2019) contends, the rather recent “shotgun wedding” between audiovisual media and the internet is what enabled ICT to have such a widespread effect.

The notion of glocalization clearly reflects the idea of ICT-related hybridity, but introducing the glocal into the domain of digital media or techno-social life requires revising and altering the hitherto dominant hybridity thesis. That is because hybridity is a broader concept than glocality. While a hybrid results from the fusion of two cultural streams, it does not specify the origin of the streams. Historically, cultural hybridity (García Canclini, 2005; Cohen, 2007; Burke, 2009, p. 34–65) has existed in the guise of different blueprints or forms: for example, “transculturalism,” “*mestizaje*,” and “creole” are all related terms that have emerged from the Latin American milieu. *Métissage* (e.g., interculturally mixed peoples) and its culture were seen as providing a means for legitimizing Latin American identity/-ties. But that is not the sole historical instance where hybridity has received extensive attention. Emblematically, “syncretism,” an early term used to designate cultural hybridity, was originally employed by the historian Plutarch (46–120 AD) in order to interpret fusions of different religions (Burke, 2009, p. 48).

The very omnipresence of hybridity throughout human history exposes its limited value when considering the impact of globalization onto human affairs. These limits become self-evident when the notion of glocal is introduced into discourse. Glocality necessitates the presence of two streams, one of which must be local (Khondker, 2005). In practice, numerous cases of hybridity exist that do not necessarily entail a local–global binary relationship. For example, Khondker (2005) mentions the case of the educational system in Singapore as a hybrid between US and British systems; it is hybrid, but not glocal. In contrast, Chander (2013) in *The Electronic Silk Road: How the Web Binds the World Together in Commerce*, which explores a series of high-profile cases ranging from online casinos to the (in)famous Pirate Bay website. These examples support the author’s argument in favor of legal glocalization, which requires “the creation or distribution of products or services intended for a global market but customized to conform to local laws—within the bounds of international law” (Chander, 2013, p. 169). These examples make it clear that the difference between the notions of glocal and hybrid is both significant and consequential. While invoking hybridity can attract criticism because of its omnipresence in human history, that criticism does not apply to the neologism “glocal.” In contrast, glocalization implies a far more nuanced understanding than that offered by the general notion of cultural hybridity.

3. Glocalization and ICT

While early research on globalization and communication equated digital globalization with sociocultural homogenization, more recent scholarship recognizes the reality of digital glocalization (see, for example, Ochs, 2016). The image of a “global goliath” overturning local media offers a poor guide to the realities of the twenty-first century. In fact, the notion of glocalization is enshrined at the heart of the very inception of what is currently referred to as digital media. In the classic pioneering statement about the advent of Web 2.0 Boyd (2005, paragraph 8) observes that “glocalized structures and networks are the backbone” of the new participatory media. These new ICTs no longer conceptualize the world in geographical terms, but instead employ a networked model in order to understand the interrelations between people and culture. In Boyd’s (2005) own words, we are now called “to think about localizing in terms of social structures not in terms of location... [T]he complexity of society just went up an order of magnitude” (Boyd, 2005, paragraph 8).

The relationship between the proliferation of digital media and the growing importance of glocalization is therefore far from accidental. Applying the notion of glocal to ICT is not just an issue of adaptation to externally imposed reality. The relationship is actually the reverse. But that is by no means a novelty. The 1990’s internet was shaped by historically embedded cultural discourses and different political constituencies that fused rebellious romanticism with capitalist spirit (Streeter, 2011). The major changes of that era “were very much *anticipatory*, changes based on what people *imagined could happen*, not what had already happened” (emphasis in the original; Streeter, 2011, p. 135).

Similarly, invoking glocalization in ICT discourse has significantly contributed to the framing of current and future developments. While glocalization was early on connected to the notions of heterogeneity, difference and cultural fusion (see Robertson, 1994, 1995), ambiguity has persisted concerning the conceptual difference between globalization and glocalization. Robertson’s (2020) later endorsement of the latter term at the expense of the former has compounded this issue. In contrast, Roudometof (2016a,b) argues that globalization operates in terms of translocal waves emanating from one locality and spreading to others. When such waves pass through other localities, they are refracted, thus constructing new forms of glocal heterogeneity. The glocal hybrids that result from this refraction are not necessarily recognized as such. Their cultural heterogeneity can take two different forms depending upon (a) the degree to which hybridity or fusion becomes the foundation for a third distinct culture, and (b) the degree to which such hybridity is manifested as mere eclecticism and/or as a *bricolage* (as opposed to forming a distinct new culture).

The first form of heterogeneity is the making of a new “third culture” or a seemingly original cultural form, whatever the actual specifics of a material or immaterial item. In this case, social actors recognize these forms as local, as belonging to their place or being “in place.” For an outsider or a third-party observer, the difference between these two forms of heterogeneity might seem spurious. In effect, speaking from the historical perspective of the *longue durée*, such a difference is unfounded: in most cases, “authenticity” is in fact constructed, not translated into parthenogenesis. The difference between a new third culture and personalized bricolage is, however, quite significant and apparently real in the interpretations and/or “definition of the situation” formulated by individuals; this is the level at which the validity of the distinction between the two forms is grounded (for additional discussion, see Roudometof, 2019, 2023).

Both forms are present in the material content produced by ICT. As Axford (2016, p. 26) notes, while media outlets and platforms carry what is conventionally labeled “global content,” they also define themselves as resolutely “local.” The combination between the two is precisely the terrain where glocality comes into play. Instead of considering the global as an autonomous cultural field Axford (2016) suggests that it is best to think of a glocal synthesis of global and local (cultural) conditions and practices. Although ICT-based social interactions tend to be glocal, the general tendency has been toward augmentation of pre-existing community interactions. ICT not only fills in the gaps between in-person get-togethers, it also assists in preserving weak ties and contributes to their reinforcement (Papacharissi, 2010; Rainie and Wellman, 2012). The final outcome is a strengthening of locality, not its disappearance. Similarly, in India and China, two major global markets, internet users display a strong preference for locally produced online material—a preference that mirrors long-observed trends among local audiences in favor of local broadcast content (Xu et al., 2013; Taneja and Wu, 2014; see also De Mooij, 2013).

The popularization of such “locative” media (Evans, 2015) and/or digital places (Horan, 2000; Wilken and Goggin, 2015) has been noted as a major effect of the ICT revolution. These offer new formats for articulating placeness. While cyberspace was

not initially seen as capable of creating place (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465), the aforementioned forms of place making have transformed the scholarly understanding of ICT's capacities. Mobile media in particular has enabled the transformation of "placing" into a dynamic process. Place-making has become something people *do* in the context of labor as well as leisure, and through the use of ICT (for examples, see Flecker, 2016; Hjorth and Richardson, 2017; Özkul, 2017). Place-making has also become a central feature of the twenty-first-century cultural economy (Lash and Lury, 2007; Govers and Go, 2009). Localities, cities, and regions have used branding for their international and national advertising. International marketing specialists have promoted the branding of cities, regions, and even entire nations, often through the use of online resources (for Dubai in particular, see Salama and Fawzy, 2023). In these instances, new identifiable "third" cultural forms are constructed around ICT-mediated notions of place, or ICT helps to re-articulate places. In such cases, cultural hybridity is often perceived as local or belonging to a particular place.

In a short but insightful overview, Tomitsch (2016) has distinguished three categories of digital place-making. The first is "community place-making," whereby meaningful places are designed around the needs and desires of citizens, in contrast to so-called "smart city" initiatives. The second is "spectacle place-making," which deploys large-scale digital media in the creation of new temporary urban destinations. Such spectacles are often aligned with the idea of creative place-making and constructed in the context of festivals, exhibitions, or seasonal events, often through urban media art installations. And the third is "infrastructural place-making," which entails the use of digital media to transform existing urban infrastructure (McQuire, 2016), for example, to improve safety in public spaces.

In contrast to the aforementioned form of heterogeneity stands another form that is conventionally referred to as "cultural mélange" (Pieterse, 2009), "bricolage" or "glocal hybridity" (Roudometof, 2016a). In this case, social actors reflexively recognize these glocal hybrids as such, viewing them as "new" additions or forms that relate to non-local forces. This notion has been introduced in direct relation to the intellectual conversation about new types of ICT. As Meyrowitz (2005, p. 23) argued, in the twenty-first century, "the evolutions of communication and travel have placed an interconnected global matrix over local experience," so that "we now live in 'glocalities'" (see also Chin, 2016 for some additional cases). Although each glocal "bubble" may be unique in many ways, it is also influenced by global trends and the growth of awareness of globality as such.

Contrary to popular journalistic accounts, such glocal bubbles may have positive effects, and the actors' employment of ICT does not necessarily cause angst or distress. In a major study carried out between 2005 and 2007, Willmott and Flatters (2010) obtained data from 35,000 people; subsequent analysis revealed a positive correlation (for both individuals and countries) between frequency and intensity of internet use on the one hand and psychological indicators of personal happiness on the other. Even controlling for other factors, internet use contributed to an increase in individual feelings of security, freedom, and influence.

Actor-driven ICT is a prime motor of digital glocalization. Online mapping is perhaps the most ubiquitous case, as its

technologies have shifted since 2005 from geographic information systems (GIS) to ICT retrieval (Behar, 2009), which in turn operates through the user's consent (Gordon and de Souza e Silva, 2011, p. 19–39). Unlike conventional search engines, online maps offer a way of looking at the world that transforms the very object itself into a form of information. Unlike GIS, online mapping involves a correlation of informational with territorial mapping that creates "maps of glocalities" (Behar, 2009, p. 3); in Google Maps, for example, the hybrid view is a fusion of geographical (satellite) and informational contexts (Behar, 2009, p. 10).

This aforementioned case is emblematic of what eventually became a broader range of applications collectively referred to as "geomedia"—a hybrid term in itself, indicating combinations of GIS and media-driven applications. Following the introduction of internet access onto cell phones, geomedia was introduced in the fields of communication and media, GIS, and geography (Fast et al., 2017; Jansson, 2022). The rise of geomedia is a key consequence of "net locality" (Gordon and de Souza e Silva, 2011), whereby the entire web of available information becomes aligned with the perceived realities of everyday life. Instead of "logging into the web," the localization of internet access turns geography into the organizational logic of the new media. This is in itself a techno-social adaptation whereby a cultural approach is applied to ICT.

The central feature of geomedia concerns its capacity to incorporate different perspectives into a single representation. This representation is not an imperfect copy of the world, but instead an image of an entire network of places that link local and global. While a variety of broad and narrow definitions exist in the literature (see Fast et al., 2017; Gryl et al., 2017), geomedia, for the most part, includes all forms of mediated communication that involve the spatial localization of information. Hennig and Vogler (2013, p. 359) point out that geomedia is accompanied by explanations and multimedia elements in order to clarify the presented content, give context, and provide examples—such as the various web mapping tools that allow for collaborative mapping. Examples of such collaborative tools include Google Maps, Bing Maps, Scribble Maps, ArcGIS Online, OpenStreetMap, and PPGIS (Public Participation GIS; PPGIS.net, n.d.).

Geomedia illustrates the digital glocalization of perspectives, experiences, representations, and interpretations. Contemporary life has become saturated with them: they offer the means for the construction of in-between spaces simultaneously linked to the actors' life-worlds and partly free from conventional spatial restrictions. Geomedia allows marginalized groups (as defined by age, class, race, and/or gender) to increase their chances for inclusion. The fluid communities that form within them offer the possibility of shifting power beyond formal participation by facilitating new processes of participation such as grassroots movements or even a post-digital sense of place (Jansson, 2022, p. 151–167). While geomedia can be easily viewed as offering fluid, communicative, and flexible spaces that are free from classical power relations, it is important to also highlight the extent to which these also operate as a regime that structures the types and kinds of interactions that take place.

Mobile media uses geomedia extensively and that in turn has rendered glocal hybridity omnipresent. The original ancestor of mobile media is the Sony Walkman, which offered individuals

the ability to control and customize their experience of place (du Gay et al., 1997). The introduction of smartphones as locative media (Frith, 2015; Wilken and Goggin, 2015) has prompted a shift toward the use of mobile devices for active engagement with glocal hybridity. This form of glocality was made famous by the Pokémon Go game in 2016. It combines site-specific digital information to transform or augment the users' experience of physical space. This form of augmented reality blends IoT ("internet of things") technologies with everyday physical space (Pinchuk, 2016; Hjorth and Richardson, 2017). The fusion of global templates and local scenery facilitates a new "third space" that is simultaneously local and global.

It should be noted that augmented reality has been easier to adopt into everyday life than virtual reality; and in this connection the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated preexisting trends. For example, the emergence of the so-called "shut-in" economy (Smiley, 2015) pre-dates the pandemic. However, what used to be an isolationist trend exercised by a privileged minority has been turned into a "new (ab)normal" under conditions of lockdown and quarantine. This "new (ab)normal" of intermittently applied closedowns, curfews, social distancing, and remote social interactions is a factor contributing to a habit-forming reliance upon ICT (Lichfield, 2020).

In this regard, the avatars routinely in use in news rooms across the globe offer some commonplace and routinized examples of augmented reality witnessed daily by thousands of people. More broadly, the recognition that glocalization is a major facet in globalized news production is far from accidental. Such recognition is partly due to marketplace players realizing that they could not afford to ignore local news (examples in Firdaus, 2016; Roberts, 2019; Ilan, 2022). The contemporary quest to maximize audience share and profits has propelled international as well as national and local news organizations into adopting a strategy of glocal news production. Analyzing World Values Survey data covering ninety nations worldwide from 1981 to 2007, Norris and Inglehart (2009) have examined the factors responsible for the interplay between global communication and cultural diversity. Norris and Inglehart (2009, p. 300) conclude that, contrary to popular opinion, transnational and national broadcasting actually coexist, while simplistic arguments about the "withering away" of the "national filter" in broadcasting greatly miss the mark. In other words, the dominant strategy has been to maintain a national filter by selectively incorporating both global and local segments into news broadcasts.

4. A glocal internet?

The ICT revolution has erased the traditional dividing line between the cultural and economic domains, as cultural and creative industries have become the biggest revenue source for the digital economy (Ernst and Young, 2015). Following the 2008 Great Recession, flows of goods and finance lost momentum but use of cross-border bandwidth increased 450% between 2005 and 2016 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). Digital platforms have enhanced cross-border business through cost reductions in international interactions and transactions. It is estimated that

more than a billion people are connected through social media, and 360+ million participate in cross-border e-commerce (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly enhanced online options for remote work; in this regard, the pandemic has been an accelerating factor on pre-existing trends. By 2050, continued improvements in technology-driven productivity are expected to help emerging economies overtake developed economies—with India, China, and Indonesia becoming leading markets (see PwC, 2017). As Steger and James (2019) remark, the widespread use of ICT has contributed to a "disembodied" globalization, whereby physical mobility and interconnectedness are disjoined.

Digitization has contributed heavily to international trade. Cross-border data flows grew 80 times larger in volume between 2005 and 2016 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). Although much of this commerce is predicated upon much-heralded free and unrestricted communication, the efforts of regional interests to curtail it cannot be ignored or dismissed (Goldstein, 2014). The widely debated topic of "net neutrality" is among a multitude of issues shaped by state and non-state actors. There are three major categories of policies designed to restrict cross-national data flows: data localization requirements, general barriers to the free cross-border flow of data, and national data privacy standards (Lund and Manyika, 2017). Protectionism remains a strong global tendency, attested by the highly visible cases of China and Russia (Flew, 2016). However, in addition to the more visible protectionist policies, numerous, more subtle forms of digital protectionism exist. These range from blocking websites with controversial content to banning instant-messaging services to conducting national digital surveillance. In fact, it is the very inception of net locality that inexorably leads to the segmentation of globalization—with Japan and China offering major examples (Gordon and de Souza e Silva, 2011, p. 155–168; for additional examples, see De Mooij, 2013).

"Internet governance" Flew (2018, p. 107) notes, has "evolved around a complex mix of international laws and binding agreements, national regulations, legal judgments, industry self-regulation and self-governance within the large digital platform companies." Consequently, the application of international norms and agreements remains conditioned on local regulations. No wholesale transfer of sovereign powers from nation-states to international institutions has been made. Flew (2018) argues that in case there is active movement away from the multilateralism implicit in the structures of global media governance the result might lead to users across national jurisdictions experiencing the internet differently. To a degree, it might be possible to argue that this is already the case in several regions around the globe. Global internet players then encounter a complex array of diverse, conflicting, and possibly contradictory regulations across territorial boundaries. This experience reinforces a reflexive balance between global networks and state regulation. But this balance is filled with considerable tensions.

The glocalization of international law has emerged as a major perspective that can contribute to the harmonization of the tension between these opposing trends. This "glocal situation," Birnhack (2022) argues, necessitates the formation of an ideal that would "encompass both the local and global dimensions simultaneously,"

and that “the Glocal Net can serve as a vision.” Birnhack accepts that translating the vision of a glocal Internet into practice is not a foregone conclusion. But some countries offer potentially suitable models to emulate. In the concluding chapter of their volume on *Global Internet Governance*, Leong and Lee (2021) observe, “a hybrid model of Internet governance that embodies the discourse of glocalization needs to emerge in order to weaken the binary that Internet governance has been premised upon.” In their view, such a glocal model is the one practiced by Singapore and Malaysia since the advent of the internet. Global internet governance needs to stay flexible—and also neutral—notwithstanding the pressures from the opposed tendencies of libertarianism and authoritarianism. The operation of firms under glocalized conditions exposes the limits of transnational connectivity (Green, 2019). The case of Zoom, which became an influential application during the COVID-19 pandemic, offers a characteristic example. The company was founded in 2011 by a Chinese-born entrepreneur and found itself caught up in the geopolitical and technological rivalry between US and China. As Chen’s (2022) insightful analysis shows, the operation of Zoom in a glocal context forced the company to readjust accordingly in order to comply with pressures coming from the US and China.

Additionally, digital glocalization has reconfigured business practices and modified the content and delivery of entertainment products. It has prompted the creation of mediascapes in which the role of traditional distribution intermediaries has receded, with producers gaining greater influence in tailoring their globally available products to specific audiences (for particular examples, see Musa, 2019, on Nollywood; Sigismondi, 2012 for an overview of the general trends; see also Sigismondi and Ciofalo, 2022 on Netflix in Italy). The explosion of non-scripted entertainment is closely related to the actors’ desire to maximize profits and prevent internet-based piracy of their own commercial products. That, in turn, has offered various newcomer companies the ability to become global players. But the consequences of digitization extend further than the classic TV format *as such*. Chalaby (2015, p. 187) sums it up in the conclusions of his book, *The Format Age: Television’s Entertainment Revolution*, as follows: “the TV format chain may be global, the adaptation process and transfer of expertise may be transnational, but TV formats begin and end their lives as local shows.” Chalaby’s remarks echo precisely the broader point of this discussion—being local remains the necessary ingredient for glocalization.

It is relevant to note here that a twenty-first-century glocal internet might actually be a return to an initial popular impulse that was already present in the 1980’s. In *The Modern World: A Prehistory of Social Media*, Driscoll (2022) narrates the organization of the 1980’s bulletin board systems (BBSs) and the formation of like-minded online communities segmented according to cultural predispositions (ranging from Christian groups to LGBT+ communities). Driscoll suggests that this popular propensity to find like-minded souls was later overtaken by the spectacular rise of corporate media giants (such as Facebook). The subsequent thorny issue of content moderation is the unintended consequence of these giants’ successful integration of different groups into a single platform—as opposed to prior trends that entailed greater levels of audience segmentation (for a relevant discussion regarding the after-life of such location-based networks following their take-over by corporate actors, see Frith, 2022).

5. Conclusion

This discussion has expanded previous engagements (Roudometof, 2016a, 2023; Roudometof and Dessi, 2022a) into a full thesis regarding digital glocalization. To introduce the general problematic of digital glocalization, a broader overview of the introduction of glocal into social-scientific discourse is offered. “Glocal” appeared as a new term around 1990; and its use in communications research and business suggests that it has been adopted as a suitable model for imagining the world that ICT has begun and continues to construct. Once the glocal is added to social-scientific vocabulary, it becomes possible to construct a phenomenological genealogy that traces its roots to the nineteenth century (see Trivinho, 2022).

When it comes to cultural theory, techno-social relations have been conventionally understood in terms of the traditional debate between proponents of homogeneity and heterogeneity. Glocalization has introduced the notion that such opposition is far from necessary, and in doing so, opened up theoretical horizons. As argued here, glocalization leads both to the construction of new digital or ICT-dependent local places that anchor human bonds in newly found connections, and to new forms of glocal hybridity, of which the most widespread example may be the various forms of augmented reality or geomeia that have become ubiquitous. In addition to outlining these avenues of digital glocalization, this discussion has featured examples and applications that render these different forms of glocalization concrete.

A telling indication of the use of glocal lenses is the 2021 rebranding of Facebook as Meta, a fully-fledged corporation involved in exploiting a “hyper-reality” constituted by both the real and the virtual worlds. The announcement has generated sufficient popular interest to turn Ball’s *The Metaverse: And How It Will Revolutionize Everything* (Ball, 2022) into a best-selling book. In fact, Ball makes special reference to the hyper-reality already referenced in this article—and correctly credits the late Jean Baudrillard for some of the initial ideas about the new and increasingly mundane forms of augmented reality that have already become incorporated into the fabric of twenty-first-century techno-social life.

In conclusion, the current post-pandemic or “post-globalization” (Flew, 2018, 2021) or post-Great-Recession era has several features that require more nuanced and careful analysis of existing complexities. Glocalization offers a conceptual means for understanding the consequences of the twenty-first-century ICT revolution; in this respect, it is a valuable intellectual resource with considerable potential for the study of techno-social life.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships

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