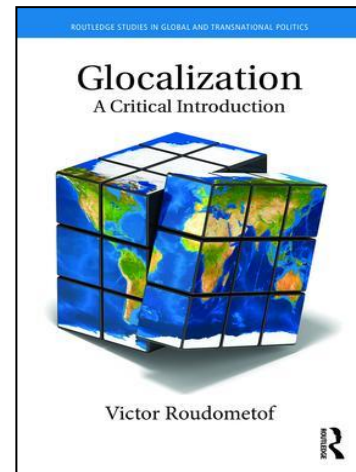


Victor Roudometof, **Glocalization: A Critical Introduction**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2016, 188 pp., \$35.85 (paperback).

Reviewed by  
Philemon Bantimaroudis  
University of the Aegean, Greece

What is the origin of the *glocalization* concept? Why is it significant? What do we learn from it?

In ***Glocalization: A Critical Introduction***, author Victor Roudometof offers an elaborate analysis of this relatively new construct while drawing from a diverse body of literature from different scientific fields. The current review is intended for readers with a primary background in media and cultural studies who maintain an interest in the evolution of the globalization phenomenon and the current turn toward hybrid, mediated, and local exchanges of symbols. In this context, the work of Roudometof addresses significant current changes while providing a thorough analysis of mediated global and local interactions.



His work constitutes a juxtaposition between the popular globalization construct in relation to glocalization—the former representing an older and widely used concept and the latter appearing relatively recently—capturing the multilayered interaction between the local and the global. This explicating endeavor describes social phenomena in globalized settings but also provides critical tools to social scientists who strive to understand our interconnected and mediated world.

Therefore, Roudometof's work can be described as a theory book that draws from commonly used, existing theoretical tools to establish a timely theoretical foundation. His effort can be described as elaborate, interdisciplinary, and critical in many respects. Although many research projects have been pursued on the topic of glocalization (see, e.g., Ritzer, 2011; Robertson, 1994), Roudometof's work deserves scholarly attention because of his effort to integrate different bodies of prior knowledge in a holistic way while comparing different concepts in globally mediated settings.

While globalization was a popular buzzword that was widely used in academic and lay discussions during the 1990s, its influence has receded since the start of the 21st century. The economic crisis of 2008, along with the advent of social movements like Occupy Wall Street, the *indignadas*, and the rise of right wing and populist political groups has influenced its demise. Glocalization, in contrast, is viewed by many intellectuals as an appropriate replacement. Although glocalization captures the dynamics of global and local interactions, the ideas it conveys are not novel by any standard. Various other terms express similar notions and, according to the author, are very likely contenders, such as "hybrid, syncretism, transcultural, mestizaje, and creole" (p. 13). The author presents the major differences among the aforementioned terms and effectively defends the distinctiveness of glocalization as a concept that captures modern realities, offering new layers of understanding.

The use of the concept has grown significantly, while its usage has been observed in a multitude of fields such as popular music, education, languages, cultural studies, geography, ethnography, urban studies, social movements, communication, and marketing. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it offers a glimpse of the usefulness of the emerging construct. The way glocalization is approached by different scholars varies a great deal. Some see it as a process of "integration and fragmentation" (p. 30) and others as a "Trojan horse" (p. 31). The most holistic and useful approach to glocalization captures, in a hierarchical and inclusive typology, the local, national, regional, *glocal*, and global levels of analysis.

In chapters 3 and 4, Roudometof moves beyond the definitional stage. For example, he examines Ulrich Beck's (2002) cosmopolitanization theory along with Meyer's (2010) world society perspective, which display strong affinity with his work. Furthermore, the work of Robertson (1994), in his metatheoretical treatment of glocalization, has significant explanatory ramifications for the construct. Ritzer's (2011) concept of "grobalization" is also interesting, intended as a response to Robertson, displaying a binary concept of glocalization versus grobalization. It generates a model that delineates each construct while overemphasizing the glocal over the local and the global. In chapter 3, the author highlights the relationship between cosmopolitanism and glocalization, acknowledging the ambiguity of such a comparison. Because theorists do not always agree with regard to the autonomy of the glocalization concept—especially in relation to globalization—Roudometof defends the thesis that glocalization should be treated as a distinct construct. Its autonomy, however, depends on clear definitions and delineations from other prevalent terminology. In chapter 4, he tackles the concept internally while schematizing some of its internal traits: glocality, glocalism, and glocalization.

An interesting portion of this work deals with the relationship of glocalization to media theory. After all, globalization has been recognized by the author as strongly connected to communication theory (p. 69). The same principle applies to glocalization. According to the author, "Perhaps the most evident instance of glocalization involves journalism. Researchers have noted glocalization of practices in India, where new ICTs, audience feedback, and professional training of journalism students have become globalized, whereas news content remains highly localized" (p. 69). Glocalization seems to be strongly associated with the use of digital media, the flow of information, digital gatekeeping, and the segmented consumption of media content that easily receive global attention while retaining local character. Roudometof describes this mediated social phenomenon as "digital glocalization." Online mapping is another example of merging "informational and territorial" attributes that can be described as "maps of localities" (p. 70). The Internet has encouraged various manifestations of locality, encouraging the preservation of languages, cultures, and histories in ways that traditional media were unable to sustain. Furthermore, ICTs encourage interactions among communities, strengthening local elements and empowering local forms of communication.

In the third section of the book, Roudometof examines glocal modernities, recognizing them more as projects than as identities. The construction of such social spaces elevates the capacity of locality to retain its character while negotiating the ways in which it will select, for example, Western traits into a glocal mixture. In the cultural studies literature, there are many examples of local cultures developing distinct reading modes for the consumption of popular media content, such as popular music, television series, and blockbuster films. In modern, capitalist settings, corporations understand well the glocalization

aspect of marketing. In fact, their understanding of glocalization can be measured in terms of market penetration, in particular, in local environments. Thus, maintaining an active consumer culture depends a great deal on developing an understanding of glocalization structures and processes.

In the last section of the book, Roudometof discusses the consequences of glocalization in terms of undermining the boundaries of nation-states. Furthermore, he recognizes that "structured relationships" go beyond national borders, focusing on those features that "can be observed in individual attitudes" (p. 124). In that sense, he revisits the established notions of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. In the concluding chapter, Roudometof provides a conceptual map of what he calls "the glocal turn," summarizing his most significant arguments. He insists that glocalism is a rising worldview, with significant repercussions of a global as well as local nature, while critically highlighting its limitations at various levels.

Roudometof's work offers an interesting framework for media scholars as they strive to conceptualize media influences of popular products on local receivers. Furthermore, this approach offers additional insights the other way around—from locally produced texts to global reception. As media and cultural scholars move away from traditional globalization-related approaches, glocalization can be approached as a significant alternative framework, recognizing modern capacities of local cultures to retain their distinctiveness while influencing global trends. Scrutinizing the role of digital media in such endeavors is crucial, as digital communication technologies have been recognized as significant gatekeepers for glocal interactions. To render this work even more useful to media researchers, it could have been enriched with examples of methods and techniques for assessing glocalization influences while displaying streams of information that clearly map glocalized effects. This last observation can be treated as having potential for further development of the glocalization construct.

### References

- Beck, U. (2002). The cosmopolitan society and its enemies. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19(1–2), 17–44.
- Meyer, J. (2010). World society, institutional theories and the actor. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 1–20.
- Ritzer, G. (2011). *Globalization: The essentials*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Robertson, R. (1994). Globalization or glocalization. *Journal of International Communication*, 1(1), 33–52.