

INTRODUCTION

FIVE YEARS OF GLOCALISM

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Five years is a long time – a reasonable amount of time in which to make an account of a given activity. In this particular case, it has to do with an intellectual undertaking that involves numerous individuals spread around the world, both authors and readers. Through *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation*, it has become possible to generate ideas, encouraging scientific research from various disciplinary perspectives, giving more or less young authors public visibility through the internet.

In fact, *Glocalism* is a peer-reviewed, open access and cross-disciplinary journal that was established at the end of 2013 with the goal of stimulating an increased awareness and knowledge surrounding the new dynamics characterizing “glocal” reality. Nowadays, a journal on “glocalism” seeking to be recognized in the cultural-academic context and, at the same time, aiming to correspond with the very concept of being “glocal”, must be available online. This availability refers to the ease with which it can be consulted and used by a potentially broad base of users on a global scale, the simplified editorial management as well as the possibility it affords to

generate debate and discussion far more easily on the questions that will be dealt with in each issue of the Journal.

With the passage of time, the editorial board's work practice was fine-tuned and the structure of the journal is now – more than ever – authoritative and efficient. Even in this case, numbers alone offer both a quantitative and concise idea of what we are talking about. The Direction Committee consists of sixteen members, the process of peer review is handled by twenty-seven coordinators, more than 200 referees have been involved during these past years, more than 150 articles have been published in English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian; eleven international databases have registered the publication of the journal, and there are active profiles on Facebook, Twitter, and Academia.edu, which have obtained about 18.000 visits in total. The potential of the internet has been well-explored and the difficult balance between scientific production and its circulation at the worldwide level seems to have been realized with good ability.

The challenge encountered has only been partially met for now, though. The *Editorial* from the first issue ambitiously stated the will “to create a bridge between the theoretical reflection on glocalism and the practical aspects that draw inspiration from it”, an approach has always characterized the activity undertaken by *Globus et Locus*. This association is the think tank that has been publishing *Glocalism* since 2013 and that was first established at the end of the nineties “with the intention of supporting the managerial class to meet the challenges of glocalization with a new political culture and value system that was in step with the dynamics of the globalized world”. In part, the capacity to connect theoretical reflection with political action has been demonstrated, thanks to the relations that were established with several political institutions and several diplomatic representatives on both the European and world stages.

If we would like to be tough on ourselves, we could refer, as another reason for partial dissatisfaction, to the area of cul-

tural production. The editorial from the first issue maintained that “the major challenge in the post-modern era is to propose new paradigms in order to understand the dynamics of a world that has become glocalized”. The studies elicited by the “call for papers” and produced by both young scholars and more expert analysts, find one or more syntheses with difficulty, producing a condensed version of innovative categories that, hopefully, are useful in understanding new ideas and realities. There remains an urgent need for adequate cultural tools to interpret the new scenarios proposed by globalization.

Until now, *Glocalism* has continually enriched the frame of understanding globalization’s process, both discovering and helping in the discovery that social and political networks offer unpredictable and truly complex formulations. In the future, however, what is necessary is a more ordered and direct theoretical work process capable of producing innovative intellectual tools, concepts and social-political categories. These concepts and categories should be, in turn, able to provide new names for new things and be able to explain if it is only useful to change the form or if with this there is a real change occurring which effects the very essence of these social-political processes.

The role of this brief introduction is not to address the problem and much less to find a solution by sketching a “general theory of globalization”. This, remains, however a goal that must be followed, within other time frames and in different ways, trusting in the collaboration of the international scientific community that is now vastly interconnected and easily reachable.

After five years of *Glocalism*, we have decided to select, collect and publish on paper some articles that are more representative than others, in order to summarize and show the richness and the depth which has distinguished the activity of this journal until now, and which will hopefully mark its future issues.

List of issue titles of the first five years

Issue 2013, 1: Hybridity

Issue 2014, 1-2: Feeding the planet. Energy for life

Issue 2014, 3: Global cities

Issue 2015, 1: Global polity and policies

Issue 2015, 2: Glocal social capital

Issue 2015, 3: On Global Risks

Issue 2016, 1: Networks and New Media

Issue 2016, 2: Local and Global Democracy

Issue 2016, 3: Territories, Borders and The New Geography

Issue 2017, 1: The Glocal Political Power

Issue 2017, 2: Global Identities and Communities

Issue 2017, 3: Beyond Democracy: Innovation as Politics

Issue 2018, 1: Towards Global Citizenships

Issue 2018, 2: Globalization and Federations

Issue 2018, 3: Sustainability

Starting from the sixth year, the following issues have been published or will be published:

Issue 2019, 1: Civilizations and Globalizations

Issue 2019, 2: State, Nationalism and Globalization

Issue 2019, 3: Globalization and Gender Implications

Issue 2020, 1: Geopolitics and Glocalism

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DOAJ – *Directory of Open Access Journals*
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 ROAD – *Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources*
 ACNP – *Catalogo Italiano dei Periodici*

BASE – Bielefeld Academic Search Engine
WorldCat – The World’s Largest Network of Library
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JournalSeek – The Largest Completely Categorized Data-
base of Freely Available Journal
MIAR – Information Matrix for the Analysis of Journals
G-Gate – The Largest e-Journal Gateway

It is recognized as a scientific journal by ANVUR (Italy) for ASN in the following fields:

- 08 – Ingegneria civile ed Architettura
- 10 – Scienze dell’antichità, filologico-letterarie e storico-artistiche
- 11 – Scienze storiche, filosofiche, pedagogiche e psicologiche
- 12 – Scienze giuridiche
- 13 – Scienze economiche e statistiche
- 14 – Scienze politiche e sociali

Editorial Note

The articles collected in this book were previously published in the issues mentioned between brackets:

- S. Sassen, *The City: Today’s Frontier Zone* (2014, no. 3).
- P.J. Taylor, B. Derudder, *Tales of Two Cities: Political Capitals and Economic Centres in the World City Network* (2014, no. 3).
- P. Perulli, *Milan in the Age of Global Contract* (2014, no. 3).
- R. Robertson, *Beyond the Discourse of Globalization* (2015, no. 1).

- D. Held, *Elements of a Theory of Global Governance* (2017, no. 2).
- L. Levi, *Federalism: A Way to Govern Globalization* (2018, no. 2).
- Z. Bauman, *Glocalization and Hybridity* (2013, no. 1).
- F. Dallmayr, *Beyond Globalization: Reflections on Glocalism* (2017, no. 1).
- L. Ornaghi, *Does Glocal Political Power Already Exist?* (2017, no. 1).
- A. Martinelli, *The European Identity: Some Notes* – short version of *The European Identity* (2017, no. 2).

LOCAL

THE CITY: TODAY'S FRONTIER ZONE

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Cities are complex systems. But they are incomplete systems. In this mix lies the possibility of making – making the urban, the political, the civic, a history, an economy. Further, this mix of complexity and incompleteness has allowed cities to outlive more formal and closed systems, such as republics, kingdoms, corporations. The urban may not be alone in having these characteristics, but these characteristics are a necessary part of the DNA of the urban.

Conceiving of cities in these terms means that much of today's dense built up terrain is not marked by cityness and its capabilities. It is mere built density, and it is often simply repetitive in form and in content: endless rows of office buildings or of high rise housing. The common practice – especially among politicians! – today is to take all this built density as constituting cities and urbanization. Differentiation becomes critical confronted with such superficial generics. Most importantly, this generic built density lacks the enablements that cities can give even to the weaker segments of their population¹. The city is a space where those

¹ These can then become the types of dense destructive environments

without power can make a history, a neighborhood economy and culture, and more².

As I discuss in this piece, incompleteness, complexity, and the possibility of making take on urbanized formats that vary enormously across time and place. They are often features of a city that come out of deep histories of place; this also explains why every city is distinct, something we can hardly say about office parks.

And yet, the growing standardization of many components of the built environment has generated much confusion when it comes to what I think of as the specialized differences among cities. A brief detour on this question might help.

URBAN BUILT ENVIRONMENTS AS INFRASTRUCTURE: NECESSARY BUT INDETERMINATE

The strong impulse to confuse cityness with built density can easily lead to a simplified understanding of what is a city. This confusion is further fed by the fact that cities have more and more standardized built environments, something that is often taken as a given. In fact, it should be examined and decoded.

Thus I have long argued that we need to recognize that today much standardized building in cities is functioning as infrastructure. I use infrastructure here to refer to an entity that is necessary but indeterminate; thus train tracks can be used for trains carrying food or bombs, so to speak. And a standard high-rise building in a city can contain offices, or

well described by Sophie Body-Gendrot, *Globalization, Fear and Insecurity: The Challenges for Cities North and South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²*Urban Capabilities: An Essay on our Challenges and Differences*, in "Journal of International Affairs", Spring/Summer 2012, Vol. 65, No. 2, pp. 85-95.

dance studios, or designers' showrooms, or what I describe as "urban manufacturing" (such as craftworkers making designer lamps for galleries, and so on).

In short, how we use a given building provides it with meaning, and thereby marks it. We must find out how a standard building is used before we assume that what it contains is also standardized – for instance, the notion that an office building is full of office workers. It may not. More generally, how a city's buildings, whether standardized or not, are used can partly shape the urbanity of a city, and it can also mark its specialized difference. Thus the warehouses of Soho and Tribeca in New York City have become major loft-housing and studios, a critical part of the city's art and style sectors.

Why does this effort at differentiation and specificity matter? The fact that more and more buildings in many cities have become standardized easily leads to the notion that the economies and cultures of cities have also become standardized; and this is mostly wrong, even if we see much standardization in consumer cultures.

If all cities are becoming the same, then all cities are competing with each other. This, in turn, promotes the far too common fear among urban leaderships that they have to accept all conditions demanded by powerful global firms that claim they can move to any city – even if this is not quite true³.

THE CITY AS A FRONTIER SPACE

The large complex city, especially if global, is a new frontier zone. Actors from different worlds meet there, but there

³I have developed these various issues at length with multiple illustrations of several cities in *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012, 4th ed.).

are no clear rules of engagement. Where the historic frontier, as seen from imperial centers, was in the far stretches of the “colonies”, today it is deep inside those imperial centers. These cities, whether in the global north or south have become a strategic frontier zone for global corporate capital. Much of the work of forcing deregulation, privatization, and new fiscal and monetary policies on the host governments had to do with creating the formal instruments to construct their equivalent of the old military “fort” of the historic frontier: the regulatory environment they need in city after city worldwide to ensure a global space of operations.

But these cities have also become a strategic frontier zone for those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities. The disadvantaged and excluded can gain *presence* in such cities, presence *vis-à-vis* power and presence *vis-à-vis* each other. This signals the possibility of a new type of politics, centered in new types of political actors. It is not simply a matter of having or not having power. These are new hybrid bases from which to act, spaces where the powerless can make history even when they do not get empowered.

One outcome we are seeing in city after city is the making of informal politics by actors-with-a-project – whether these actors are with power or without. It is particularly the work of making the public and making the political in urban space that become critical at a time when national political space is increasingly dominated by powerful actors, both private and public, that are basically not accountable to the larger public.

The city, unlike office parks, enables a kind of public-making work that can produce disruptive narratives, and make legible the local and the silenced. The large complex global cities are one key space for this making⁴. These cities

⁴Elsewhere (*The Global Street: Making the Political*, in “Globaliza-

are, I argue, one of the few frontier spaces – with all the inequities, conflicts and potentials for making such a space entails. It is the possibility of *making* that matters here, given the ascendance of increasingly parallel bordered spaces for respectively those whose advantage grows and those who lose ground.

This emergent frontier-space function arises in a context of increasingly hardwired borderings inside cities and across cities. Gated communities are but the most visible moment of these borderings. The uses that global corporate capital makes of 'our' cities are part of that hard bordering. The common assertion that we are a far less bordered world than 30 years ago only holds if we consider the traditional borders of the interstate system, and then only for the cross border flow of capital, information and particular population groups. Far from moving towards a borderless world, let me argue that even as we lift some of these barriers for some sectors of our economies and society, these same sectors are actively making new types of borderings that are transversal and impenetrable⁵. It is in this context that the complex global city becomes a frontier space with political consequences.

tions", October 2011, Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 565-571) I have examined a particular angle of this disjuncture by focusing on the importance of indeterminate space in cities – another major difference with office parks. By the global street I intend to capture space that recurs in city after city but is indeterminate and hence gets marked by the specific cultural, social and built features of that city.

⁵To this regard, see also *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

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Abstract

Cities are complex systems, but they are incomplete systems. All cities are becoming the same, but all cities are competing with each other. Here actors from different worlds meet, but there are no clear rules of engagement. It is in this context that the complex global city becomes a frontier space with political consequences. Here we can find new hybrid bases from which to act, spaces where the powerless can make history even when they do not get empowered.

Keywords

Frontiers, global city, powerless, standardization, making history.