BEYOND THE LAWS OF GRAVITY: EXPLORING THE ‘GLOCALIZATION’ OF GLOBALIZATION AND ACTIVISM

Introduction

Live Local

Think Global
Beyond the Laws of Gravity?

- ‘It has been said that arguing against globalization is like arguing against the laws of gravity’
  - Kofi Annan

- ‘When you have a culture where ideas are not treated as being connected to belief or action but are just commodity and just to be used and attach – “oh, diversity, let’s use that to sell Benetton sweaters, community, let’s use that for Starbucks” – the ideas themselves are devalued.’
  - Naomi Klein

Research Background

- The Contradictions of Globalization:
  - Hegemony and Crisis
  - Empowerment and Domination
  - Global and Local
Research Questions

- How are global economic discourses collectively shaping economic policies and desires internationally and locally?
- How are these globalized discourses evolving to reflect the political and cultural particularities of diverse national and regional contexts?
- How are local social movements and ideas of empowerment influenced by these global discourses?

Research Aims

- To reconsider and reframe ideas of ‘Glocalization’ for better understanding present day processes of globalization.
- Provide a critical framework for theoretically and empirically illuminating the importance of ‘global’ discourses locally.
Research Thesis

- ‘Glocalization’ represents the ‘globalization’ of ideology to adapt and shape local conditions.
- Local contexts share ‘glocaliztion fantasy’ based on common aspiration for economic prosperity and social harmony.
- ‘Glocalization’ provides the ‘capitalist cure’ to unique ‘local condition’
- ‘Glocalization’ ironically reinforces ideology of global capitalism through the production of ‘localized fantasies’.
Glocalization: History

- Derived from Japanese word *dochakuka* meaning global localization.
- Originated as an attempt to ‘bridge’ local – regional – national – global levels for economic and social management.
- Emphasis on local desires, culture and needs for marketing of products and implementation of global economic policies.

Globalization: Definitions

- The ‘meaningful integration of local and global forces’ (Brooks & Normore 2010)
- The mediation of local, national and global interrelationships by local, national and political dynamics (Roberts 2005).
- ‘Glocal development refers to the dialectic of the global and the local’ (Weber 2007).
Studying Glocalization

- Ideas of glocalization have applied to a range of issues and subjects:
  - City Management (Czarniawska, 2002)
    - Youth Culture (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006)
  - Education (Garcia, Skutnabb – Kangas and Torress – Guzman, 2006)

Glocalizing the World

- Walmart explains its global success in terms of ‘localization’:
  'because of its ability to transport the company’s unique culture and effective retailing concept to each country’
The Ideology of Glocalization?

From Glocalization to Cosmopolitanism?

- Glocalization is often trumpeted for enhancing trans-national and global co-operation and perspectives.
- ‘Glocalized Cosmopolitanism’: Individuals able to transcend local-global divide to live in a ‘glocal cultural universe’ (Tomlinson 1999).
- Operationalization of ‘glocalization’ can assess the degree to which local encounter with globalization results in either a more ‘open’ or ‘closed’ perspective (Roudometof, 2005).
Glocalization vs. Grobalization

  - *Glocalization*: The distinct result of the combining of the global and the local.
  - *Grobalization*: ‘the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas’

Glocalization and Neo-Liberalism

- Glocalization has been critiqued for strengthening a global and national ‘neo-liberal’ socio-political agenda.
- ‘... an emerging ‘glocalization’ of the world economy creates a labour market dynamic underpinned by neoliberal policies of the nation-state’ (Dundon, Gonzalez-Perez and Mc Donough, 2007)
Globalization for Some, Localization for others?

- Baumann (1998) notes that through globalization ‘geographical and social mobility are dichotomized.’
- People are either ‘tourists’ (rich enough to become a global citizen) or ‘vagabonds’ (the less advantaged must compete against each other locally).
- ‘The privileged walk, or fly away; the others take revenge upon each other.’
- ‘Glocalization involves the reallocation of poverty and stigma from above without even the residual responsibility of noblesse oblige.’

Reconsidering Glocalization, Reimagining Globalization

- These perspective raise new questions regarding the relationship between glocalization and globalization:
  - How does glocalization ideologically reinforce globalization?
  - How is global capitalism being translated into an ‘empowering’ and desirable ‘local’ identity?
Ideology, Fantasy and Glocalization

The drive for selfhood is both necessary and ultimately futile, symbolizing the “I’s mental permanence, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination” (Lacan, 2001: 5).

Fantasy functions by providing subjects a tenuous unity in its “covering over the lack in the Other, and consequently; as filling the lack in the subject.”

Lacan
Fantasizing Wholeness
The first thing to note about fantasy is that it literally teaches us how to desire...how do I know that I desire a strawberry cake in the first place? This is what fantasy tells me" (Zizek, 2006).

"In its fundamental use" according to Lacan fantasy allows an individual to forever "maintain himself at the level vanishing desire" (Lacan, 2001:259).

"what we have then, if we want to be precise and accurate, is not identity but identification, a series of failed identifications or rather a play between identification and its failure" (Stavrakakis, 1999)

The Fantasy of Glocalization?

How is 'glocalization' an emerging cultural fantasy reinforcing neo-liberal globalization?
The Global Creation of the Local

- The idea of the ‘local’ must be seen as a social construction of globalization (Handler, 1994).
- ‘We changed the way people live their lives, what they do when they get up in the morning, how they reward themselves, and where they meet.’ (Orin Smith, Starbucks CEO).

Making the Global ‘Local’

- The ‘global’ is always being instituted as a ‘locally’ unique to a particular socio-cultural context.
- ‘Globalization has to be understood as a dialectical phenomenon, in which events at one pole of a distanciated relation often produce divergent or even contrary occurrences at another’ (Giddens 1991).
Transcending Globalization and Localization?

- Glocalization allows for a critical understanding of how the construction of the global and local are ‘mutually implicative’.
- ‘The debate about global homogenization versus heterogenization should be transcended. It is not a question of either of either homogenization or heterogenization...but spelling out the ways (these) tendencies are mutually implicative’ (Roberts, 1995).

The Fantasy of Glocalization
Perfecting Global Capitalism

- Glocalization linked to broader ideology associating neo-liberalism to ideas of ‘perfectability’.
- There is a dominant fantasy that through constant ‘perfection’ capitalism can bring shared prosperity and at a deeper level social/individual wholeness.
- ‘We recognize that these reforms will only be successful if grounded in a commitment to free market principles, including the rule of law, respect for private property, open trade and investment, competitive markets, and efficient, effectively regulated financial systems. These principles are essential to economic growth and prosperity and have lifted millions out of poverty, and have significantly raised the global standard of living’ (G20 Washington Summit).

Curing the Capitalist Patient

- This fantasy is based on paradoxical notion of capitalism as a ‘sick patient’ needing to be ‘cured’.
- Idea especially strong in wake of new challenges such as global inequality and financial crisis.
- ‘I think we applied the right medicine; I think the patient is stabilized; there's still wounds that have to heal and there's still emergencies that could arise, but I think that you've got some pretty good care being applied’ (President Barack Obama, 2009)
Fantasy of ‘Glocalization’

- Glocalization represents a fantasy where the global and local can be made ‘harmonious’.
- It is ‘curing’ capitalism so that it is both globally connected and dynamic as well as locally respectful and innovative.
- ‘This is where globalization enters the picture -- it's an answer to the problems of globalization. Just as the word itself is a melding of "global" and "local," glocalization involves the managed meeting of the growing global arena with localized, everyday life. Glocalization's goal is to ensure a globalized world is a stable and integrated place, while also protecting the cultural heritage of local areas’ (Lamb, 2012).

Global ‘Laws’, Local ‘Fantasies’

- ‘The social fantasy is particular, ‘pathological’ in the Kantian sense, personal...the unique way each of us tries to come to terms with the Thing, the impossible jouissance....The field of Law, of rights and duties, on the contrary, is not only universalizable but universal in its very nature’ (Zizek, 2006; also see Bloom, 2008).
- Glocalization reflects the construction of universal ‘global’ laws reinforced by individualized ‘local’ fantasies.
Thesis: The ‘Local’ Dream of Global Capitalism

- The main contention driving this research is that ideologies of neo-liberal globalization are increasingly being manifested and reproduced through ‘local’ fantasies.

The Beijing Consensus: ‘National Fantasy’ of Global Capitalism
‘Nationalizing’ Globalization

- A key fantasy reinforcing global fantasy revolves around ideas of ‘national empowerment’.
- A nation or region will produce a ‘unique capitalism’ reflecting its values and desires.
- Capitalism is ‘cured’ through its translation into a national project of development and cultural adaptation.

‘Beijing Consensus’

- The Chinese have promoted a discourse of a ‘Beijing Consensus’ to legitimize its transition toward marketization.
- Specifically, it is a fantasy of ‘national prosperity’ where capitalism can be ‘cured’ through proper national implementation (Bloom, Manuscript Under Review)
- ‘Under the correct leadership of and with great support from the Party, the private sector in China has been growing steadily and has made a positive contribution to the building of an affluent society and the advancement of socialist modernization’ (Jia Qingling)
A Culturally Specific Capitalism

- Represents the ‘localization’ of globalization.
- Notably, neo-liberals values are being justified as part of a ethno-national identity.
- ‘Chinese will not dream an “American Dream” but a Chinese one’ (Li Junru, 2005).

The Globalization of Glocalization

- This ‘localized’ fantasy of global capitalism plays into globalized strategies of national/regional imperialism.
- This ‘unique’ and ‘local’ capitalism can be exportable to other contexts.
- ‘The ideological differences between Washington and Beijing could spark genuine competition between American and Chinese models of economic management and societal development. Although many observers say China doesn't have ‘real soft power’ but instead is astutely ‘using its power softly,’ the stage is nevertheless set for a growing rivalry between the two giants’ (Japanese times, 2006).
Beyond the Laws of Gravity!?: Conclusions and Future Research

Conclusions

- Ideologies of neo-liberal globalization are increasingly being paradoxically manifested and reproduced through ‘local’ fantasies.
- The implications of this insight is that global capitalism is ideologically reinforced through making itself ‘localized’.
- More generally, all ‘innovation’ is linked to unique ‘localized’ fantasies of capitalist perfectability.
Future Directions

- This represents the very beginning of a broader research agenda.
- Future Research:
  - Cross comparative studies of competing ‘localized fantasies’ of capitalism.
  - Investigations of the ‘battle for hegemony’ between these ‘localized fantasies’ of capitalism.

The Glocalization of Activism and Empowerment?

- How is resistance being critically shaped by these ‘localized fantasies’.
- Corporate cultures create localized ‘anti-corporate’ identities as part of the cultural ‘hegemonic brandscape’. (Thompson and Arsel, 2004).
- ‘Empowerment Myths’: Autonomy and Employability.
- Glocalization of activism and empowerment?
Thank You and Questions