

# MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY IN THE DIGITALIZED WORLD: RESHAPING CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH GLOCAL INTERACTION

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<https://doi.org/10.29081/INTERSTUDIA.2025.39.12>

## *Abstract*

Mobility and connectivity have undergone unprecedented transformation with the advent and widespread adoption of digital technologies which allow physical and virtual interactions across the globe. As a result, individual identities are under the inevitable influence of these intensified forms of global mobility and connectivity fascinated by digital information flow and interaction. Ongoing developments in digital technologies further stimulate this dynamic reshaping of individual identities through a variety of digital platforms such as online communities, digital diasporas and international social networks. What seems to be common among various forms of digital networking is the intention to be a part of a global community while trying to present and preserve what is locally possessed, creating a context of glocal interaction blending local attributes with global perspectives through digital communication. This paper analyzes how global digital technologies, with their fluid and immersive network, enable world citizens to develop and renegotiate their social and cultural identities transcending physical and temporal boundaries. Setting out from the analysis of the presented cases, this paper also discusses the pros and cons of such digital networking and offers suggestions to effectively manage such worldwide mobility and connectivity fostering more respected, inclusive and immersive interactions across cultures which are the building blocks of a glocal world.

**Key-words:** *mobility, connectivity, glocal interaction, digitalism, cultural identity.*

## **Introduction**

The way people work, travel, communicate and even think has been transformed under the direct and indirect influence of digital technologies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The emergence and advent of digital technologies have paved new ways of thinking and interaction among world nations, expanding opportunities for worldwide mobility and connectivity (Tien & Talley, 2012: 125). Transcending physical, contextual and temporal boundaries, modern people can now have easy and direct access to informative and interactive platforms to engage in personal, educational, social and cultural interaction. Within this context of worldwide communication, individuals from various linguistic, educational,

social and cultural backgrounds present their unique attributes to others while being exposed to those of different nations by engaging themselves with digitalized global networks (Pantea, 2014: 10). Since these networks facilitate the combination of what is locally owned by different individuals and what is commonly formed through their interactions, such interactive environments are thought to construct a context of glocal interaction which can be described as a type of communication allowing people from various backgrounds to form new communities of interaction protecting their local peculiarities and simultaneously contributing to the formation of a global atmosphere (Takkaç Tulgar, 2018c: 542, 2019a: 101). Taking the unique sharing created in such environments into account, Pantea (2014: 7) states that glocal interaction fosters a deep level of bi-directional understanding and shared values through sociocultural engagement.

Glocal interaction defined, stimulated and partly directed by digital movement requires new considerations of people's social and cultural identities which are reshaped and transformed in complex manners. Attracting attention to the delicate connection between interaction and identity, Norton (2000: 5) explains identity as individuals understanding of their relationship with their surrounding and "how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future". Thus, creating hybridized cultural experience sharing and fostering multiple social and cultural affiliations, glocal interactions seem to demand renegotiations of individual identities with particular consideration of the nature and requirements of such interaction. This paper analyzes how globalized digital platforms stimulate worldwide mobility and connectivity, how this expansion paves the way to glocal interactions among world citizens and how this novel form of interaction directs and impacts individual identities across the globe from a social and cultural lens. For this purpose, introducing the nature of glocal interactions, the paper also provides specific examples of digital platforms facilitating glocal interaction and discusses advantages and disadvantages of such interactions in renegotiating individual identities.

### **1. Glocal Interaction in the Digitalized Era**

The modern era augmented with digital technologies has inevitably altered traditional understandings of interaction. People who were once able to connect only with the physically close ones are now able to enjoy connectivity and mobility without contextual and temporal constraints, expanding new interactive and developmental horizons. Facilitated by the participation and contributions of an increasing number of people across the globe, modern interaction has expanded borders and evolved from a local stance allowing people to maintain interaction in confined physical and temporal spaces to a more comprehensive stand enabling worldwide communication for various purposes. Such interaction that combines local and global stances necessitates redefinition and reconfiguration and, thus, can be referred as glocal interaction (Takkaç Tulgar, 2020: 605). The nature of interaction transforming into a glocal form supports the unity of what is locally possessed and what is globally constructed and allows interlocutors to preserve and reflect their locally developed social and

cultural characteristics and simultaneously appreciate those of others (Takkaç Tulgar, 2019b: 743). Being a hybrid form of communication, glocal interaction now offers world citizens a variety of chances to be representatives of their own peculiarities while contributing to the expansion of a broader socio-cultural community. And, the expansion in the contextual, temporal and content-related scope of interaction is, to a great extent, stimulated with the advent and widespread use of digital spaces in the contemporary world.

## **2. Glocal Interaction and Identity Renegotiation**

Rapid transformations in the realms of mobility and connectivity leading to glocal interaction, under significant facilitation of digital technologies, have inevitably raised the need to reconsider identity development in relation to changes in communication patterns. As interactive trajectories are among the most influential contexts in which individuals perceive their individual, social and cultural existence, people tend to re-define and reshape their senses of self through their interactions (Norton, 2010: 350). Within this stance, glocal interaction, combining local and global aspects of communication, necessitates a new understanding of individual identities.

Creating a harmonious communicative system in which “hybridity, locality and globality coexist and co-constitute each other” (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010: 252), glocal interaction makes room for the development and maintenance of both local and global identities. Within this hybrid system, individuals can maintain their original selves reflecting what they have locally accumulated in their socio-cultural communities while broadening their horizons through their interaction with diverse communities presenting variety of kinds. Thus, this belonging to and participation in local and global communities entail renegotiation of individual identities, potentially amalgamated into *glocal identity* (Takkaç Tulgar, 2024: 52).

Formed and developed through interaction in various educational, social and cultural contexts, glocal identity has attracted notice among contemporary research topics. Existing studies present the consideration of glocal identity development in learning communities, especially language learning communities hosting a vast variety of differences (Fuentes, 2016: 405; López-Deflory & Juan-Garau, 2017: 17; Takkaç Tulgar, 2019a:102, 2024: 51; Vasilopoulos, 2015: 65). Yet, there is scarcity in the discussion of glocal identity development under the great impact of expanding digital technologies promoting mobility and connectivity with specific references to interactive platforms facilitating glocal interaction. Setting out from this conclusion, the following section analyzes different digital spaces discussing their potential advantages, disadvantages and impact in shaping individuals’ glocal identities within the digitalized era.

## **3. The Role of Digital Platforms in Reshaping Identity through Glocal Interaction**

Modern technologies have changed the understanding of mobility and connectivity which were once confined with physical movement and distance interaction. With the expansion of virtual mobilities promoted by the internet and

developing communication technologies, people can now engage themselves in different layers of mobility and connectivity ranging from individual and collective to social and cultural mobility and connectivity. New moods of interaction inevitably demand novel perceptions and reconfiguration of individual identities, referred to as glocal identities in the previous section. This section intends to present different digital platforms discussing their possibility in shaping glocal identities.

The first group of digital platforms covers *digital storytelling* ones. Such platforms allow presentation, narration and discussion of different topics. Digital storytelling platforms such as blogs and vlogs as well as YouTube and TikTok create a socio-cultural sharing space -with audio, visual and interactive content- to foster understanding and empathy among participants. Among these platforms, *Refugee Populations* can be given as a specific example of documenting socio-cultural experiences and practices of different groups. This platform targets understanding of how those individuals preserve their cultural continuity while transforming their understanding of others in displacement. So, contributors and followers can encounter vivid examples of individual, social and cultural identity renegotiation stimulated in glocal atmospheres.

Music and film industries are also among the platforms promoting virtual mobility and global connectivity. Holding worldwide popularity, Korean Pop Culture (K-pop) enjoys a global increase in the number of fans who tend to expand their appreciation of Korean culture and integrate cultural elements into their daily lives. Another popular example from the music industry can be the spread of Afrobeats, originating from the Southern part and expanding to the rest of the globe. Afrobeats, once remaining as a local case, has now become a global phenomenon with cultural effects on youth identities. These two cases vividly illustrate how music culture can serve for cultural connectivity and impact popular youth culture transforming local identities into glocal ones. Examples from the film industry can be given from Hollywood, Bollywood and Japanese anime. Yet, another expansion in this industry is recently experienced in the Turkish context, which expands its national borders. Disseminating historic, social and cultural motifs, Turkish films and series are becoming more and more popular in different countries passing the physical borders. And, such popularity can exert its impact on linguistic, social and cultural change, which also fosters understanding and glocal identity transformation.

Glocal identities are also stimulated through online activism platforms which generate a context of racial, religious and cultural understanding, empathy and appreciation. These platforms, transforming local adaptations into global connectivity, target consciousness, awareness raising and justice regarding a wide range of issues. Such awareness and consciousness are thought to promote the development of individual identities into glocal ones as they integrate local identities into global frameworks.

The expansion of literary platforms is also worth considering within the discussion of digital platforms in transforming global identities. Particularly expanding physical borders, online spaces such as blogs, forums or even printed books can reach into hearts and minds of millions of people around the world.

Each literary content, representing different genres, creates an amalgamation of local and global features and transcends linguistic, social and cultural boundaries. Such representation can potentially encourage people to understand socio-cultural nuances in different places and develop appreciation and respect.

One can infer from the above-presented popular cases that today various digital technologies blur physical, contextual and temporal boundaries promoting mobility and connectivity among people around the world. The ease and flexibility of mobility and connectivity generate hybrid communities and give people an opportunity to come out of their local shelves and become world citizens negotiating hybrid selves. Challenging the adoption of a singular local identity, glocal identities blend local identities keeping original values and global identities with the appreciation and appropriation of differences in other societies. Thus, glocal identities embody hybrid communities enjoying multiple socio-cultural affiliations.

Though new spaces for socio-cultural sharing stimulate glocal identities with expended horizons, the expansion in mobility and connectivity through digital technologies still poses some drawbacks needing attention. Identity transformation can be much more delicate than perceived as it entails a variety of components from locally established values to globally exposed ones. The richness in variety can encourage people to develop new perspectives; yet, it may simultaneously confuse their minds in terms of adopting values and notions that they can follow and reflect in their local communities. In other words, the clash between globally developed perspectives and their local practice may discourage people from participating in such hybrid communities. Identity fragmentation is also among the serious challenges in the transformation of local identities into glocal ones. Identity fragmentation can be triggered by the confusion resulting from unsuccessful transition into glocal identities. Under the effects of their participation in multiple communities through digital technologies, individuals may either lose their local selves or develop prejudice against global identities. The occurrence of either case would challenge successful blend of local and global identities. Possible prejudice developed against global varieties raises serious concerns, as well. Experience sharing promoted by different digital platforms also hold the likelihood of linguistic, social and cultural favoritism, which can lead to cultural homogenization. A case of favoritism on different grounds would definitely conflict with the original purpose of expanding horizons and developing adaptable identities.

### **Conclusions**

This paper aimed to present and discuss the possibilities of identity renegotiation under the constant and inevitable effects of worldwide interactions made possible through the advent and spread of digital platforms. Increasing participation in and contribution to various digital communities have necessitated the transition from local communities of interaction to more hybrid forms of interaction requiring a glocal stance. Within such glocal interactive patterns, participants of glocal digital communities have naturally undergone direct and indirect identity shifts from local members of particular nations to glocal citizens

of a broader interactive community where they can reflect their local selves and simultaneously appreciate varieties of sorts.

It is clear that digital technologies have created spaces for global interaction encouraging world citizens to go through new configurations of their selves in hybrid communities. As discussed in the previous sections, the positive effects and outcomes of the expansion of glocal interaction can be observed and experienced within the practice of different digital platforms. Yet, as things usually run, mobility and connectivity promoted by digital platforms hold advantages and drawbacks to be considered with care. Thus, some major steps to boost effectiveness of communication and eliminate potential problems can be suggested as follows:

- The first cautious step can be establishing regular mechanisms following commonly agreed directions and rules. To accomplish this, platforms sharing similar purposes for establishment can form a common ground open to their users so that participants can share their ideas and suggestions to run and control the platform.
- Another practical step can involve carefully designed instructions and practices integrated into such platforms to raise awareness regarding appreciation of diversity. Since such platforms offer participation in and contribution to hybrid communities, raising awareness regarding varieties and appreciation is essential to the sound formation of glocal interaction and development of glocal identities.
- Such digital platforms should also pay attention to promoting equal chances for participation and contribution to prevent the possibility of majority groups surpassing minorities. Following such basic steps can stimulate the efficiency of digital platforms in encouraging socio-cultural sharing and can serve as a tool encouraging individuals to renegotiate their identities into glocal ones.

To exploit benefits of digital mobility and connectivity and to attain effective outcomes, understanding the interplay between identity transformation and global interaction is essential. It should be kept in mind that as digital technologies evolve, the ways in which we use such technologies and through which we define our individual, social and cultural selves in connection with the rest of the world will also continue to evolve. Thus, it is a global responsibility with the participation of local selves to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of adaptive and respectful glocal interaction to empower glocal identities in the contemporary times.

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