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## Understanding Social Structure in the Context of Global Uncertainties

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### Abstract

This article proposes a three-dimensional model to understand the complex dynamics inherent in the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes of current social structures, embedded in the context of global uncertainties. The socioeconomic, politico-institutional and symbolic-legitimizing dimensions of these social structures are analysed.

### Keywords

deterritorialization, glocalization, reterritorialization, social reflexivity, territorialization

### Introduction

A number of academic books and programmes on social structure lack a clearly based theoretical framework and carry out a seemingly unsystematic study of a series of elements. These elements may include demography, labour structure and social division of work, employment level, inequalities in the sharing of power and privilege, social stratification, class structure and status identities, family, social mobility, income distribution, quantity and quality of available housing, as well as health system, education or other public services, whose degree of development determines the existence of higher or lower welfare levels, and so on. Some authors are prone to emphasize the analysis of class structure when they investigate social structure, but class structure is only a component of social structure.

The complex body of numerous elements that make up social structure has to be systematically considered as the expression of the interrelated totality of society as a whole. This means that talking about social structure must be equivalent to speaking about both the overall organization and structure of a specific society and about its construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction apparatuses. In turn, the circumstance of bearing in

mind these apparatuses shows that social structure is viewed here as a social construction, in fact, as the social construction of society. This construction cannot be properly understood out of the specific historic situation embodied by the current globalization circumstances in which it occurs, which means that current globalization processes have a deep impact on local-social structures. Such impact is analysed here by means of a three-dimensional model aimed to show the dynamics affecting local-social structures in the current situation of uncertainties inherent in their growing glocalization.<sup>1</sup>

### **On the Uncertain Circumstances under Which Social Structures Currently Operate**

The social order built up by the structures of contemporary societies appears as specially complex and full of questions and uncertainties regarding its future. This, which exacerbates the feelings of crisis, is an outcome of the globalization phenomenon, which, while it is not exclusively recent, has acquired particular characteristics and reached a wide dissemination over the last two decades of the 20th century, especially throughout the 1990s following the Cold War's end. After that, globalization processes revealed a completely new stage that, in contrast with their former markedly Westernizing leaning from the Renaissance, may be epitomized as the 'whirl of globality', in which globalization basically runs as a pervasive and destabilizing spread of worldwide socioeconomic, politico-institutional and symbolic-cultural flows (Entrena-Durán, 2003a). As a result, though people's daily life is still developed from local-social structures, these are more and more glocalized or conditioned by what happens on a global scale. This entails a gradual undermining of the socio-cultural certainties that usually legitimize (namely, explain and/or justify) everyday life for most of the people involved in such structures. To a great extent, this undermining is caused because present-time globalization severely disrupts the spatial-temporal coordinates constituting the basic mainstays of the said certainties. Regarding the particular relevance of such coordinates, David Harvey asserts:

Space and time are basic categories of human existence. Yet we rarely debate their meanings; we tend to take them for granted, and give them common-sense or self-evident attributions. We record the passage of time in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years, decades, centuries, and eras, as if everything has its place upon a single objective time scale. Even though time in physics is a difficult and contentious concept, we do not usually let that interfere with the common-sense of time around which we organize daily routines. We recognize, of course, that our mental processes and perceptions can play tricks, make seconds feel like light years, or pleasurable hours pass by so fast we hardly notice. We may also learn to appreciate how different societies (or even different sub-groups) cultivate quite different senses of time. (1990: 201–2)

The aforesaid undermining of socio-cultural certainties legitimizing people's daily life is a consequence of the pervasive and disturbing worldwide circulation of socioeconomic,

politico-institutional and symbolic-cultural flows which characterize the 'whirl of globality' stage. This stage is prone to activate those processes typified by Harvey with the concept of 'time-space compression'. The term 'compression' is appropriate to conceptualize the current conditions of globalization, characterized by a technological development that makes a more and more intense worldwide interconnection possible. Actually, this interconnection has continually increased over the history of capitalism, and has entailed a steady speeding up in the pace of life. Regarding the particularly disruptive outcomes that time-space compression triggers, Harvey himself states:

As space appears to shrink to a 'global village' of telecommunications and a 'spaceship earth' of economic and ecological interdependencies – to use just two familiar and everyday images – and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is (the world of the schizophrenic), so we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of *compression* of our spatial and temporal worlds.

The experience of time-space compression is challenging, exciting, stressful, and sometimes deeply troubling, capable of sparking, therefore, a diversity of social, cultural and political responses. (Harvey, 1990: 240)

In the background of this global interconnection and the socioeconomic circumstances that it strengthens, transition from Fordism to post-Fordism has taken place starting from the 1980s in most advanced countries. This transition has involved the setting up of increasingly flexible ways of accumulation within capitalism, which emphasize the new, the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent in modern life, rather than the more solid values implanted in Fordism. Additionally, this flexible accumulation also means a shift towards longer working hours, together with a global reduction in living standards, either by the erosion of real wages or by the shift of corporate capital from high-wage to low-wage regions. Speed-up in production was attained by organizational mutations towards vertical disintegration – sub-contracting, outsourcing, etc. – that reversed the Fordist tendency towards vertical integration and caused a rising roundaboutness in production even in the face of increasing financial centralization (Harvey, 1990: 171, 186, 284).

Transition from Fordism to post-Fordism brought about an overall crisis in capitalism, 'interpreted as a crisis of governance' (Harvey, 2006: 16), which involved very intense economic deregulations and privatizations, pursued so zealously that they gave rise to a whole restructuring of the societies affected by them. The increasingly globalized economy of these societies is still regulated, but not democratically and in accordance with the general interests and necessities of most of the people in the world. A very significant example of this is the very serious socioeconomic and political crisis suffered by various South American countries during the last two decades of the 20th century in a context of growing neoliberal post-Fordist and allegedly deregulatory policies of globalization. These actually legitimized a redefinition of the state's economic role with disastrous socioeconomic results. Argentina is a particularly significant example of this redefinition. Intervention was legitimized by means of a deregulatory doctrine which really entailed

decisive state support of neoliberal post-Fordist globalization. So, as Olmedo and Murray (2002) argued, the state intervened in the labour market through legislation that promoted low wages and unstable, unprotected and informal work. By acting in this way, the Argentinian state was in fact contradicting the neoliberal discourse legitimating its policies, a discourse which officially trumpeted and suggested that the state had to minimize its interferences in the socioeconomic domain.

Actually, neoliberal strategies were designed to restore the class power of elites, at the same time as they involved sustained attacks on the incomes of the working class. Neoliberalism, which entailed the 'unholy alliance between big business and conservative Christians' (Harvey, 2006: 20), was very much favoured in the 1980s by the governments of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Its extremely negative outcomes are evident in the spheres of economic competition, production, organizations, labour, class affiliations, consumption, and so on. Especially significant consequences of neoliberal practices, legitimated by post-Fordist rhetoric, are the informal, unstable and unpredictable relationships interwoven by the companies among the multiple subsidiary firms and/or persons (for instance, those working at home) that the former sub-contract vertically so as to keep the control of and final results of the production line in their own hands.

During Fordism, the virtual totality of theoretical approaches formulated on social structures was closely linked to a nation state-centric viewpoint of society, whose inequalities and problems their analysis revealed. The main actors of socioeconomic and political processes were then nation states with specific territorial borders within which social structures used to be constructed, deconstructed and/or reconstructed more or less autonomously; that is, in a relative autarchy. Nonetheless, in the current circumstances of increasing globalization and the rising prevalence of post-Fordist neoliberal capitalism it activates, that situation has drastically changed. Nation states have less and less power to regulate socioeconomic processes and impose their authority on both the economy and society (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xi, xii). However, this does not mean at all that nation states' sovereignty as such has vanished completely, but what has happened is that it has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what Hardt and Negri call Empire. By Empire they mean something altogether different from the past types of 'imperialism', which was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation states outside their own boundaries.

Empire establishes no territorial centre of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentred* and *detritorializing* apparatus or rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xii, xiii).

Certainly, all structures of societies, regardless of their spatial-temporal context, have been and are reflexive.<sup>2</sup> But, as a result of the unstable and uncertain globalized context where societies run now, their present-day social structures show a remarkable increase in their reflexivity. This is narrowly linked to the conditions created by the unrelenting operation of the existing worldwide capitalist system itself, which:

perpetually strives ... to create a social and physical landscape in its own image and requisite to its own needs at a particular point in time, only just as certainly to undermine, disrupt and even destroy that landscape at a later point in time. The inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the relentless formation and re-formation of geographical landscapes. This is the tune to which the historical geography of capitalism dances without cease. (Harvey, 2001: 333)

As a result, present-day social structures undergo a constant restructuring of their socio-economic, politico-institutional and symbolic-cultural paradigms and rules, and they experience a growing glocalization as well. The great worldwide flows of people, ideas and commodities that globalization implies give rise to a continuous reformulation and rearticulation of preferences and expectations of the individuals or different local, regional, class or *status* groups. At the same time, and also as a consequence of globalization, these preferences and expectations become quite unstable, unforeseeable and frequently mutually exclusive. This situation brings about the above circumstances of uncertainty and nihilism, circumstances that are closely related to the growing difficulties for regulating, analysing and understanding the currently glocalised social structures of the 'whirl of globality', which subjects these structures to very rapid, complex, intense and unpredictable changes of pace.

In order to assess, methodically, such circumstances of uncertainty, I now turn to a systemic analysis of dimensions to be considered in the research on current social structures. This analysis provides a theoretical framework to grasp these structures by systematically tackling both the complexity and unpredictability of the glocalised contexts in which their construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes occur.

## A Systemic Analysis of Social Structures in the Globalization Landscape

The manifold processes that we identify as globalization are not unified or univocal. Hardt and Negri consider that our political duty is not only to oppose these processes, but also to reorganize them and redirect them toward new goals (2001: xv). Without doubt, the accomplishment of such political duty requires, as a first and unavoidable step, that we understand the key characteristics of the framework in which globalization processes operate. In this regard, this section aims to provide a systemic approach to this framework by analysing the local-global construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes involved in the performance of current social structures.

But, what do we understand by social structure here? Without a doubt, there is no easy answer to this question, since, due to its comprehensive nature, the concept of social structure is multilinear and polymorphous (Boudon, 1971: 9ff); it has a wide range of meanings, which, to a great extent, are related to the huge diversity of elements taken into account in the different studies regarding social structure. Particularly, social structure is understood here by means of a three-dimensional analytical model. In such a model it is possible to observe a series of processes that are displayed through the dialectical relationships between concrete social structures (as relatively micro-social local entities) and the

worldwide macro-social level. Relationships, thus, between the local and the global, which are considered from a perspective that encompasses macro-social and micro-social aspects and the subjective and objective socioeconomic, politico-institutional and symbolic-legitimizing dimensions of social structures. While these three dimensions have to be described separately (as I do next), they are actually interrelated and work interdependently as elements of a system.

### *The Socioeconomic Dimension*

The trend now is towards the search for development in specific local settings, a reaction to the current global processes of increasing competitiveness and transnationalization. These processes occur in a post-Fordist neoliberal context of socioeconomic deregulation, uncertainty and crisis, with the widespread belief of heteronomy all this brings about for the actors immersed in local-social structures. In this context, the search for local development can be viewed as an expression of the reflexive processes on a micro-social local level that, regardless of their explicit or conscious goals, are directed to give rise to ways of development led from and by individual or collective actors immersed in local-social structures. At the same time, inside these structures, class solidarities and antagonisms, which traditionally determined their conformation and dynamics, are changing due to the fact that they are suffering from maladaptive processes as a result of the current growing fragmentation, differentiation and diversification of class structures. A consequence of this is the re-emergence of group and community links. This reinforcement of communitarian social links, which were so typical of the traditional world, is also the answer of local communities who face the environmental risks or socioeconomic problems caused to their territory by certain rules or policies generally implemented far away and with worldwide effects.

Ideas about the possibility of finding some kind of communitarian solution to the troubles that people's everyday lives often suffer within their territorialized local structures are both attractive and powerful. And this is so not only due to the nostalgia for some long lost mythical world of intimate village life, ignoring the reality that most of the populist migrations out of villages occurred precisely because they were too oppressive to the human spirit and too otiose as a form of socio-political organization. Such communitarian inclination, so frequent in both the rural environments of today and in the urban tourists occasionally visiting these environments, also tempts us to think we can recreate some mythical social entity named 'community' where both the 'community spirit' and 'community solidarity' will rescue us from a series of problems and worries, such as, for example, social dissolution, materialism, individualism, mercantilism and other 'ills' of the present urban and globalized world (Harvey, 2004: 425).

Otherwise, according to Giddens (1999: 32ff), globalization brings with it what he calls the disembedding of social systems. In these, there is a growing detachment of social relationships from their local interaction contexts. Respecting the purpose of this article, Giddens' idea is appropriate if we consider that the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction of concrete social structures is increasingly globalized and it is not limited

to what happens in some specific local spaces. However, the term disembedding is not completely appropriate to explain all the effects and implications of current globalization circumstances on social structures, among other reasons, because it suggests a wrong dichotomy: the contrast between embedding and disembedding, between tying up and untying or between immobility and movement. And, the ideas of motionlessness, raised by the antonym of the term disembedding, give rise to its inadequacy to reflect the dynamic nature of the social landscape, where social structures develop, and whose changing character is revealed by the fact that, even in the quietest and most traditional social structures, it is possible to observe certain movement and disembedding examples; that is, some social relationships going (or trying to go) beyond their daily local contexts of social interaction.

Due to these causes, instead of focusing on the growing universalization of social relationships and processes supporting the embedding/disembedding dichotomy, the attention is concentrated here on how globalization affects social structures, whose production and reproduction processes occur in the majority of cases within specific local places, which are the social landscapes where most people's daily lives continue to unfold. Therefore, these places are the backgrounds of the complex social interactions inherent in the formation and running of social structures; what is more, as Harvey appropriately states, they are social constructs (2004: 293), which he summarizes as follows:

Places are constructed and experienced as material ecological artifacts and intricate networks of social relations. They are the focus of the imaginary, of beliefs, longings and desires (most particularly with respect to the psychological pull and push of the idea of 'home'). They are an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and they are a distinctive product of institutionalized social and political-economic power. The dialectical interplay across these different moments of the social process is intricate and confusing. But it is precisely the way in which all of these moments are caught up in the common flow of the social process that in the end determines the conflictual (and oftentimes internally contradictory) processes of place construction, sustenance, and deconstruction. This may all seem rather daunting, but it is the only way to attach the rich complexity of social processes of place construction in a coherent way. (Harvey, 2004: 316)

Among other things, the previous quotation suggests that the socioeconomic dynamics generated within local places is complex. And, to show this degree of complexity, which is related, to a large extent, to the fact that such places are increasingly globalized or linked to what happens on a global scale, I suggest the concepts of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization in this work.

First, I understand the concept of territorialization here as the process by means of which a series of socioeconomic, politico-institutional and/or symbolic-legitimizing practices, aimed at constituting a mere geographical or physical space in a territory, are carried out. These practices 'are never neutral in social affairs. They always express some kind of class or other social content, and are more often than not the focus of intense social



struggle' (Harvey, 1990: 239). By keeping this conflictual view in mind, the use of the concept of territorialization involves the assumption of a relational view on territorial space, which, unlike the absolute perspectives on this matter, considers it from a relative-relational standpoint as a social construction; that is, such construction comes about in a specific temporal-social context.<sup>3</sup> And, according to this constructionist standpoint, territory is considered as an historic-temporal spatial product resulting from the socio-economic, politico-institutional and/or symbolic-legitimizing practices, by means of which it works as a habitat – to be precise, as a particular social landscape where the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction of a social structure can take place in a specific historic time (Entrena-Durán, 2001: 247–9).

Second, deterritorialization is viewed as an outcome of the impact that globalization has on local-social structures. Hence, deterritorialization means that the shape and dynamics of these structures are usually conditioned, more and more each time, by agreements and interests coming from foreign socio-spatial areas, which are generally located far away. In other words, the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes of local-social structures have weaker associations with the territory in which they are developed; associations that used to be stronger during the historic time of the traditional world.

Contemporary deterritorialization of the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes of social structures also involves the deterritorialization of both the symbolic-cultural references of life and collective and individual identity. Thus, feelings or experiences with an apparent link to the more distant, and feelings of detachment or indifference toward the surrounding local area originate. Examples of this deterritorialization are: the growing impact, on a local scale, of some global political or economic decisions taken by a very restricted number of powerful nations and/or worldwide decision-making entities (for instance, by the International Monetary Fund), the high spatial mobility of populations because of increasingly frequent trips or from massive migrations,<sup>4</sup> as well as the wide-reaching communication and social relationship networks that the internet makes possible. These networks are a clear paradigm of deterritorialization since they constitute a sort of flowing space without a specific territory, in the geographical or physical sense of this term.

Indeed, throughout the time of the predominance of traditional social structures, more localist and clearly connected to a geographical territory, there were also practices of deterritorialized social relationships, since there were people whose relationships (through written means, by messengers or as a result of trips) went considerably beyond the physical area in which they resided. Two examples of past deterritorialization are the Spanish America conquest and the subsequent settlements of large parts of Africa, Asia and Oceania during the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. So, both such conquest and settlements involved a deterritorialization and reorganization of the dominated territories, in which new administrations and new names were imposed, at the same time that new cities were set up and new crops and ways of development and use of the soil developed.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, to carry out all this, they needed to take their administration to the dominated territories, to establish in them authorities exercising that administration by delegation of authority.

However, in contrast with the need, in the past, to exercise authority and administration directly in the territory, or to locate delegated authorities and/or administrations

there, today the effects of diverse socioeconomic policies, administrations, actions or organizations over other local-social structures can come from far-flung places. Thus, for instance, the agrarian policies affecting the southern Spanish region of Andalusia are set up in Brussels. Also, Andalusian farmers can observe an increase in their production costs caused by a rise in oil price as a result of a conflict in the Middle East. In short, decisions of policies and/or economic regulations regarding concrete local structures are often taking place very far away from the territories where the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes of such structures happen; that is, the said processes occur in a deterritorialized way.

This is one of the main causes behind the aforementioned strong intensification of reflexivity in current local-social structures, which explains, to a great extent, the uncertainties frequently aroused by globalization in the minds of individual and collective actors involved in them. But, the deterritorialization inherent in any glocalization process of local-social structures has not always had negative connotations for these structures. In fact, for social structures of the traditional world, their deterritorialization had, often, emancipatory consequences over the social and productive limits imposed by the relatively autarchic and closed local context in which their existence developed. Thus, we cannot ignore the fact that, for those structures, their deterritorialization happened at the same time as their growing modernization and insertion into increasingly global areas and, therefore, as deep changes in their socioeconomic organization took place. These changes, depending upon the position of the different groups involved in them, gave rise to those frequent uncertainties and threats that are so distinctive of the evolution of modernity which not only has entailed 'a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterized by a never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself' (Harvey, 1990: 12). As a result, modernity, from its enlightened origins, fuelled the rise of abundant socioeconomic changes and expectations about them,<sup>6</sup> which gave rise to optimistic illusions of progress for humankind, especially among the thinkers that were the intellectual architects of the Enlightenment.

Enlightenment thinkers welcomed the maelstrom of change and saw the transitoriness, the fleeting, and the fragmentary as a necessary condition through which the modernizing project could be achieved. Doctrines of equality, liberty, faith in human intelligence (once allowed the benefits of education), and universal reason abounded. 'A good law must be good for everyone', pronounced Condorcet in the throes of the French Revolution, 'in exactly the same way that a true proposition is true for all'. Such a vision was incredibly optimistic. Writers like Condorcet, Habermas notes, were possessed 'of the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces, but also understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings'. (Harvey, 1990: 13)<sup>7</sup>

This expectation is one of the main reasons behind the frequent enthusiasm raised by the deterritorializing processes of globalization, which happened hand-in-hand with the transition from the traditional agrarian world to modernity. This enthusiasm can be particularly

explained because deterritorialization did not bring only negative consequences to agrarian traditional social structures, but entailed the opportunity of exceeding the socio-geographical barriers and increasing contacts abroad.

As well, the rupture of such limits, at the same time that it made possible an advance in economic, commercial and information or technological dissemination flows, favoured a rise in productive efficiency and major economic developments. As a consequence of these, a rising labour diversification and growth in the employment opportunities occurred inside and outside those traditional social structures. The result was a progressive breakdown of those domination and class relationships of landowner social groups, whose hegemonic position was based on the fact of owning or controlling the organization and sharing of land property.

Deterritorialization appears today as a consequence of almost complete glocalization of local-social structures in which the majority of people still live. As a result, the situation of these people is increasingly conditioned by socioeconomic and cultural processes that are generally determined very far away and that either they do not control, or tend to make people feel a progressive lessening of their control capacity.

As opposed to these deterritorialization trends, attempts at reterritorialization emerge and tend to be intensified at the local level. These trends can be understood as reflexive reactions of those actors belonging to local-social structures in order to tackle a series of global macro-social processes, whose impact affects their everyday life and local socioeconomic, politico-institutional and symbolic-legitimizing conditions. In this context, by reflexively reacting to these processes, local actors try to counteract the gradual decrease in their capacity to determine or control the global circumstances affecting the organization and management of the social structures in which their daily life occurs, whether these structures run on the territorial scale of a region or nation state-wide.

Usually, the attempts at reterritorialization do not entail a strengthening of nation state autonomy and competencies. Such attempts frequently give rise to an upward erosion of the sovereignty and state manoeuvring capacity because the regional local governments, in many cases, as an adaptive reaction facing globalization, carry to the states demands for a wider capacity to legislate and negotiate directly with large transnational corporations. As well, regional local governments demand the autonomy to put into practice policies aimed to improve and/or optimize the possibilities of control and management of their social structures by attracting investments and generating development and employment in their respective territories.

Other expressions of these reterritorialization attempts at the local-social structures are the present trends of fragmentation, emphasis on diversity and, consequently, the emergence of localisms (or strengthening or restructuring of the existing ones) with a political or socio-cultural leaning in certain local territories or regions. On this matter, current trends towards the reinforcement of local structures are caused, undoubtedly, by the rising disillusion in regard to the increasing homogenization brought about by globalization, which brings with it a spread of Western industrial-urban paradigms across the entire planet; that is, a sort of worldwide dissemination of what might be typified by the expression 'monolithic thought'.<sup>8</sup>

To sum up, reterritorialization attempts have very different expressions and consequences, even contradictory ones; the same can be said about the reactions to such phenomena. The empirical evidence from the great multiplicity of these reactions clearly contradicts any tentative thoughts of imagining the possibility of a sort of global confluence among the multiplicity of probable or existent social protests. This kind of confluence is, for instance, what is suggested by Hardt and Negri's expression of 'multitude'. On this matter, they concentrate on the multitude's *swarm intelligence*, its aptitude to make *swarm music* without a conductor or a centre that commands (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 91–3). These authors understand the multitude and its attitudes or potentialities as 'an orchestra with no conductor'. This orchestra, by means of constant communication, establishes 'its own beat and would be thrown off and silenced only by the imposition of a conductor's central authority' (2004: 242, 338).

Just as the multitude produces in common, just as it produces the common, it can produce political decisions ... What the multitude produces is not just goods and services; the multitude also and most importantly produces co-operation, communication, forms of life, and social relationships. The economic production of the multitude, in other words, is not only a *model* for political decision-making but also tends itself to *become* political decision-making. (2004: 339)

In my opinion, this image of multitude is a rather militant theoretical construction, a sort of heuristic tool built with the aim of getting the necessary unitary worldwide mobilization in order to make possible the materialization of that alternative idea of global revolution so rooted in Marxist tradition. In truth, Negri himself maintains the same viewpoint as me, as a newspaper interview with him reveals. In this interview he declares that the idea of the multitude is not a utopia, but a hypothesis, and adds:

When Marx spoke on class he did not speak of something politically constituted. When we say 'multitude' we mean 'produce multitude', that is, to build a moment, that device, that project which encompasses all the aspects, minorities and singularities of the world. For us, the project of constructing the multitude entails exactly the building of the common. When we speak of the common, we refer to the language, to the conditions that determine the life of the individuals together. (Negri, 2004, extract translated by the author)

Hardt and Negri embrace a militant-political stance, based on their belief that it is possible to articulate a common project of multitude understood as a kind of global entity resistant to what they call the Empire. And, their assumption of such a stance is precisely what predisposes them to think that our political duty is not simply to understand and oppose globalization processes, but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends. As a result of this reorganization and redirection:

The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges. (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xv).

Regardless of its indubitable usefulness for militant-revolutionary purposes, the fact remains that this concept of multitude is not an analytical paradigm that is fit to address the multifaceted context over which globalization processes empirically act. This is because the said context shows an especially complex range of local responses, and social attitudes in the face of such processes depend upon their very diverse geographical and socioeconomic expressions. When responses and attitudes have dissimilar foundations, consequent expectations are far from being unified and commonly aimed like those presupposed to, or wished by, the multitude.

In the circumstance of such diversity of behaviours and answers in the context of globalization, I would like to particularly emphasize here how reterritorialization attempts are local reactions that not only have as effects the search for local development, the reasonable claim of personal and collective identity that constitutes a sort of local autochthony,<sup>9</sup> or the demands of a higher manoeuvring capacity in the face of globalization challenges. But, such attempts sometimes elaborate ideologies or articulate social movements with a more or less violent, dogmatic and exclusive nationalist character. An example of this is the huge intensity of autonomist feelings in some Spanish-autonomous communities, such as Catalonia or the Basque Country. In particular, the case of the Basque Country is especially significant, given the gut reactions and violence brought about by the irrational exacerbation of these feelings among the extremist socio-political sectors belonging to ETA or the supporters of this terrorist organization (Entrena-Durán, 2003b: 137).

In those cases in which they show a more or less violent, dogmatic and exclusive nationalist character, reterritorialization attempts often point to isolation and exclusion of local-social structures, to the negation of their unavoidable link with the global. Although this can raise the idea of an increase in the autonomy level of these structures, it actually hinders possibilities for progress and development inside them, possibilities that are easier to achieve when, instead of being closed to globalization, local-social structures search for strategies to be linked in a more advantageous way.

In short, the term reterritorialization, similarly to its opposite, deterritorialization, has been seen before as having, according to the cases, positive or negative consequences and meanings. On one hand, the expression reterritorialization alludes to processes tending to favour development in a local territory by gaining autonomy in the socioeconomic, politico-institutional or cultural management of its social structure. In this case, the term reterritorialization often has a positive connotation. But, on the other hand, cases of reterritorialization can include different facts such as fundamentalisms, visceral nationalisms, trends to the social grouping or re-tribalism and other similar phenomena, which are examples of thick-headed local reactions facing the disastrous and erosive socioeconomic effects caused by post-Fordist neoliberal globalization.<sup>10</sup> In this way, globalization brings about a worrying social situation of worldwide aggravation at the levels of unemployment, precarious work, poverty, inequality and social exclusion over certain local extensive areas or regions on the planet. This situation, though worse in the less developed countries, is widely generalized to the entire world and, to a great extent, is fuelling widespread problems, such as fundamentalist and terrorist violence, which is so cruelly impacting countries like Iraq or Afghanistan, but from whose effect no one of the more

developed countries is safe, as, for instance, the fearful terrorist attacks suffered in 2001 and 2004, respectively in New York and in Madrid, have revealed.

Of course, terrorist violence is not only motivated by the aforementioned negative consequences and existential uncertainties linked to the current post-Fordist neoliberal way of globalization, since it has many other origins whose detailed explanation would require a thorough study. However, the fact is that these consequences contribute to feed both fundamentalist and terrorist behaviours and/or feelings more or less favourable to them, at the same time that they legitimize the so-called 'war against terror', which often reproduces the worst brutalities of terrorism and so somehow rebounds in fuelling it.

Regardless, whatever their nature and outcome, both fundamentalisms and the other thick-headed reactions to post-Fordist neoliberal globalization are strengthened together with an increase in frustration, socioeconomic uncertainties and other harmful cultural-institutional consequences for everyday life on certain local-social structures affected by such globalization. However, attempts to find shelter in that atmosphere of certitude provided by fundamentalisms, or by returning to the primary group, to the tribe or to the local territory as nationalistic and/or regionalist identification space, though helpful in terms of finding the necessary and identifying sensations of security and rooting, can also have a boomerang effect. These attempts can provide a favourable breeding ground for the emergence and expansion of fanaticisms, the neo-dominance of local party bosses and patronage systems, which persist and tend to increase in many aspects of social life due to the growing socioeconomic uncertainty and labour precariousness brought about by post-Fordism in the context of neoliberal globalization. Two very representative examples of this are the increasing presence of some fanatic religious sects in some more developed societies or the persistence and strengthening in the socio-political or labour relations of these societies of some forms of *clientelismo*,<sup>11</sup> whose patronage system was so characteristic in the traditional world.

At this point, the reader should have noticed that, when the words reterritorialization and deterritorialization have been used above, they alluded to different and even mutually contradictory phenomena. The relationship that has been established between these two phenomena is not an opposition between the negative and the positive. On the contrary, it has been shown that both deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes can have positive and/or negative consequences and meanings, according to the cases. Additionally, such processes have been seen as the expressions of two dialectically contradictory and complementary logics. As well, the combined consideration of both logics is here deemed as a very appropriate analytical strategy in order to understand the dynamics operating in the increasingly glocalized territorial settings where the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction of the local-social structures is now taking place.

Some of the outcomes and/or manifestations the socioeconomic dimension has on the politico-institutional and symbolic-legitimizing dimensions have been discussed above. I now turn to a discussion of the politico-institutional dimension, and the symbolic-legitimizing dimension. The reader must not forget that, even though the socioeconomic, politico-institutional and symbolic-legitimizing dimensions of social structures are analysed separately in this article, they obviously run together by mutually interfering with and influencing each other.

*The Politico-Institutional Dimension*

In the current context of increasing globalization, new forms of the politico-institutional dimension of social structures tend to be articulated. To a great extent, this is due to the fact that the manoeuvring capacity of states is being eroded from top to bottom (Entrena-Durán, 1998). From the top, because of the gradual expansion of supranational organizations and institutions, and from the bottom, at a micro-social local level, because, in a situation in which, due to globalization, many regions have entered into crisis, as a reflexive reaction facing it, there is a re-emergence or strengthening of local or regional territories' powers. These local or regional territories are claiming wider domains or increasing them, which, at the same time, helps to increase their possibilities with regard to the management of the processes determining the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction of their social structures. Within these territories, new social movements tend to emerge or to become stronger too, and try to articulate ways of more open, alive and dynamic social solidarities than those favoured by the bureaucratic arrangements of political parties or large supranational organizations or corporations predominant in the globalized current world, that, due to these arrangements, are more or less centralized, impervious and rigid.

As a general guideline to understanding these new social movements, one can point out that in them, rather than class or ideological reasons, those communitarian social links mentioned in the preceding section tend to be determinant. This is because all the inhabitants of those communities, which are often the local landscapes where social structures materialize and operate, can feel globalization's consequences to a greater or lesser extent. As a result of this, in these landscapes, class disagreements or antagonisms are repeatedly pushed to the background, at the same time that some occasional new territorial identifications and/or solidarities appear, which consist of, on the whole, a combination of inter-class social movements of protest or claims.<sup>12</sup>

These inter-class alliances on a regional or local scale are, repeatedly, the temporary expression of a decisive and unavoidable answer to the need to safeguard identity values already embodied, and a structured regional or local coherence already attained. Additionally, the inter-class coalition can also actively encourage conditions favourable to further accumulation within the local territory where it happens. In any case, this provisory alliance cannot restrain the fundamental forces underlying crises while it occasionally brings together potentially explosive class and factional divisions. To a great extent, this is due to the fact that any social structure constitutes a more or less unstable blend of different and contradictory factions of capital and labour that have different stakes within the local-regional territory where such a structure runs, depending upon the character of the assets they control and their privileges. As a result, some of the factions are more easily engaged in a regional class alliance than others, depending upon the profits or losses they expect to gain from this engagement. With regard to the motives encouraging the supporters of these types of inter-class alliances, the following remark by Harvey is particularly illuminating:

Land and property owners, developers and builders, those who hold the mortgage debt, and the state functionaries have most to gain. Those sectors of production which cannot



easily move (by virtue of the fixed capital they employ or other spatial constraints) will tend to support an alliance and be tempted or forced to buy local labour peace and skills to compromise over wages and work conditions. Factions of labour that have through struggle or out of scarcity managed to create islands of privilege within a sea of exploitation will also just as surely rally to the cause of the alliance to preserve their gains. (Harvey, 2001: 333–4)

### *The Symbolic-Legitimizing Dimension*

Processes considered in this third dimension are those properly subjective, since through them people try to legitimize, at a micro-social local level, the global macro-social situation in which they are and feel immersed; that is, they try to explain and/or justify that situation, making it symbolically meaningful for them. Nevertheless, it is not the goal of this article to differentiate or clearly oppose the objective and the subjective, since different processes operate and are perceived as objective or subjective realities according to the cases and circumstances. What is more, these processes are external objective facts that are subjectively internalized by concrete subjects, who are conditioned by them, and, simultaneously, contribute to their modification or reproduction.

Moreover, processes included in this dimension on a micro-social local level can be viewed as reflexive reactions in front of their equivalents at a macro-social level. Thus, tolerance is one of the possible valued-cultural reactions raised before global trends towards the generalization of relativist pluralism, which comes, basically, as a result of the uncertainties and crises inherent in globalization. At the same time, fundamentalisms tend to be originated or radicalized by appearing to search for certitude as a visceral reaction to the uncertainties and crises, which intensify as a consequence of both the increasing socioeconomic and labour instabilities aroused by neoliberal post-Fordism and the current expansion of relativism. Otherwise, processes aimed at increasing the heterogeneity and affirmation of the so-called lifestyles, on a micro-social local level, can be understood as search attempts at self-realization, singularity or genuineness, that is, of distinctiveness in a global framework characterized by its growing socio-cultural homogenization.<sup>13</sup> Some particularly representative examples of these lifestyles are obvious in the current post-Fordist consumerist attitudes, since they provide their practitioners with a chance for individualization, and so seem to them very suitable when attaining such distinctiveness by means of acquiring quality and/or singularity sought by the post-Fordist economy for its products.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the search for distinctiveness is not only expressed through consumption practices, but it is also displayed by means of those particularisms rooted in current circumstances of growing universalism. In these circumstances, such particularisms could be understood as reflexive reactions to universalism that are prone to become stronger on the micro-social level of concrete local-social structures.<sup>15</sup> This is so because universalism propels many people to feel nostalgia for their 'own', which frequently gives rise to the generation or revival of phenomena such as nationalisms or different local ethnicities (Giddens, 1996: 88). Both the considerable spread of these phenomena and the radicalism or irrationality that



sometimes their excessively localist identities show can be interpreted as the expression of reflexive attitudes of particularism and visceral rejection of the universalizing trends of globalization. Additionally, the revival of nationalisms and/or local ethnicities is often legitimized on the pretext of safeguarding what may be considered the specific tradition and socio-cultural roots of a particular local territory. Nevertheless, that tradition is, paradoxically, often preserved by being reinvented, commodified and marketed as such. Consequently, the search for roots ends up, at worst, being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche (Harvey, 1990: 303). This is particularly evident in some European rural zones as they are deeply affected by rural tourism coming from the urban settings, such as is the case of La Alpujarra, a mountainous and traditionally very isolated territory, which encompasses a group of municipalities located in the south of the Spanish-Andalusian city of Granada (Entrena-Durán, 2006). Important areas of such territory, from being secularly anchored in socioeconomic lag and subsistence farming, are now undergoing major social changes due to the impact of rural tourism on them. And, as a result of these changes, we are witnessing an increasing socioeconomic and cultural functional redefinition of such areas, which become spaces marketed for the consumption of tourists coming both from Spain and from abroad (Hadjimichalis, 2003).<sup>16</sup> These areas often retain their outdoor architectural image only, since their interiors have been gutted, and the traditional dwelling house now has electricity, running hot water, heating, new furniture and all the other facilities that characterize modern homes. Tourists living in these houses now have the possibility of enjoying a supposedly traditional and rustic home, without having to renounce the accustomed practices of their daily urban lives. They do not suffer the limitations and shortages that the former dwellers had to bear regularly. In short, what these rural tourists get is an imitation or simulacrum of the traditional home they inhabit.

## Concluding Remarks

As Dorothy Smith (1987) reminds us, social structures cannot be understood out of the day-to-day world. As I have argued, the majority of processes determining local-social structures, which today support most people's everyday lifeworld, have definitively lost their localist character. Thus, in the current circumstances, where post-Fordist socioeconomic flexibility and its attached socio-cultural and labour uncertainties prevail, processes of growing globalization imply that many individual or collective actors are undergoing a progressive fall in their possibilities for control over the construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes of social structures at a local level. The magnitude of the impact brought about by this is closely related to the fact that the micro-social local level has traditionally been, and remains to be, the basic setting where the daily socio-vital activity of most people takes place. What is more, we can assert that people's everyday existence always happens in spatially and/or socially easy-to-locate places. I say 'and/or' because, even though in the majority of cases people develop their sociality in the territorial environment where they live, there are some people who often travel across the world and so have a transnational daily life which is virtually deterritorialized from concrete local spaces. Nonetheless,

even these people are normally moving around some networks that have relatively limited and identifiable relational meshes and social structures. What is really important is that whether in the case of interaction microstructures of these transnational networks or when we consider microstructures placed in concrete local spaces, the social actions and relations constituting these structures are increasingly linked to what happens on a global level and influenced by it; namely, they are increasingly glocalized.

On a global macro-social level, the shaping processes and dynamics of social structures appear as determinant; that is, they operate according to some inner codes whose working logic is often developed out of the will, interests, purposes and intentions of the individual or collective local subjects upon whom they have an impact. These subjects, as a result of these processes, suffer a deep affectation in the micro-interaction sphere of social structures in which their daily life develops. However, processes giving rise to globalization are also the result of a series of the present and past human actions developed or developing inside the micro-social structures of day-to-day life and that, from economy, policy, science or culture, have contributed or still contribute to generate or reproduce them. This does not mean that globalization is the expression of the conscious or explicit purposes of human beings from whose action it has been produced or reproduced, but it repeatedly appears as a non-intentional effect of the reflexive and creative reactions of social actors immersed in specific local or micro-social areas, which, at the same time, globalization affects.

Those different processes which are happening at a micro-social local level have been interpreted here as reflexive reactions facing globalization. However, subjective and objective dimensions of these processes not only refer to the reflexive reactions from the bottom of local societies, but also to those reflexive reactions coming from actors located at the highest social levels. The remarkable influence and decision capacity of the latter place them in some more favourable conditions so that the idea that they are the subjects or social protagonists of globalization is possible. Thus, these highly worldwide influencing actors, or globalizers, might see globalization, instead of as a series of determinant processes, as a result of socio-economic processes, which are endowed with content by human decisions and socioeconomic choices. However, this is a fallacious idea, since, obviously, nobody has complete control of social processes, and still less of those that globalization implies. Nevertheless, it is at the local levels in which most of society lives that the determinant impact of the worldwide macro-social is more evident. The population of these levels tends to be more prone to feel impotent before globalization, which is considered as a set of processes lying outside of their will, and to whose socioeconomic, politico-institutional and symbolic-legitimizing challenges and requirements they are unavoidably pushed to adapt. But, even in this case, a considerable amount of creativity can be observed, such as is shown when we observe the transforming effects, over the local or micro-social structures, which usually have the reflexive reactions facing globalization of social actors involved in these structures.

Therefore, each process of social structure happening on a global macro-social level has its reflexive correlation among those happening on a micro-social local level. There is then a dialectical relationship of mutual inter-influence and complementariness between the former and the latter level; a relationship that we have to take into account if we want to properly understand the operation of current social structures, more and more glocalized.

## Notes

- 1 The term 'glocalization' is a neologism made up by the words globalization and location with which Roland Robertson (1995) tries to show the idea that the local and the global are not mutually exclusive, but, on the contrary, the local must be understood as an *aspect* of the global. Particularly, regarding social structures, the idea of their increasing glocalization alludes here to the rising insertion of their construction, deconstruction and/or reconstruction processes into globality.
- 2 In fact, reflexivity is a distinctive feature of human beings. So, as Emilio Lamo de Espinosa states, human individuals 'have the pernicious ability of being intelligent, that is, they have the double capacity of thinking about themselves and their situation (i.e. giving rise to ethno-science) and of learning what about them and their situations other people say (i.e. speaking and reading)' (1990: 166).
- 3 On this matter, I basically agree with Harvey, who has maybe provided the more perceptive differentiations between the notions of absolute and relative space. So, Harvey remarks that 'absolute space is fixed and we record or plan events within its frame. This is the space of Newton and Descartes and it is usually represented as a pre-existing and immovable grid amenable to standardized measurement and open to calculation. Geometrically it is the space of Euclid and therefore the space of all manner of cadastral mapping and engineering practices ... The relative notion of space is mainly associated with the name of Einstein and the non-Euclidean geometries that began to be constructed most systematically in the 19th century ... The relational concept of space is most often associated with the name of Leibniz who ... objected vociferously to the absolute view of space and time so central to Newton's theories ... By extension, the relational view of space holds there is no such thing as space or time outside of the processes that define them ... Processes do not occur *in* space but define their own spatial frame' (Harvey, 2006: 121–3).
- 4 Until the end of the 19th century, when massive migrations of population began, it used to be common for most people to be born, live and die in the same house or local community in which their parents did and their children would. Large population movements, that have always existed, were not so frequent in time or as extensive in space as they are now; among other reasons, because the existing development and technology conditions imposed a quiet pace of life in contrast with what is happening today.
- 5 On this matter, I am referring to Harvey, who asserts that the 'vast expansion of foreign trade and investment after 1850 put the major capitalist powers on the path of globalism, but did so through imperial conquest and inter-imperialist rivalry that was to reach its apogee in World War I – the first global war. En route, the world's spaces were deterritorialized, stripped of their preceding significations, and then reterritorialized according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration' (Harvey, 1990: 264).
- 6 With regard to these changes, to their differentiated effects according to social classes and the resistances to or supports of these effects, the reader can consult Wolf (1979) or Moore (1991). Moreover, I have studied these resistances and supports, with respect to Mexico and Spain, in Entrena-Durán (1986, 1987, 1994, 1997a).
- 7 See Habermas (1983: 9) for Harvey's reference to Habermas in this quotation.
- 8 This expression refers to what has been epitomized in the Spanish and Latin-American contexts as the *pensamiento único*. On this matter, neoliberal policies are often criticized as being responsible for the dissemination of *pensamiento único* or what has been here 'translated' as 'monolithic thought'. A monolithism that is completely censurable because neoliberalism is actually only a specific way of carrying out globalization, a reductionist and markedly economic manner of putting it into practice among other diverse alternatives.
- 9 Actually, this claim for personal or collective identity is a sign of the search for secure moorings in a shifting world where place-identity 'becomes an important issue, because everyone occupies a space of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate

- ourselves shapes identity. Furthermore, if no one “knows their place” in this shifting collage world, then how can a secure social order be fashioned or sustained?’ (Harvey, 1990: 302).
- 10 With reference to this matter Hardt and Negri assert: ‘Today’s celebrations of the local can be regressive and even fascistic when they oppose circulation and mixture, and thus reinforce the walls of nation, ethnicity, race, people, and the like. The concept of the local, however, need not be defined by isolation and purity. In fact, if one breaks down the walls that surround the local (and thereby separate the concept from race, religion, ethnicity, nation, and people), one can link it directly to the universal’ (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 362).
  - 11 Spanish expression alluding to the practice of obtaining votes with promises of government jobs etc. This practice has spread in the socio-political and labour relations of diverse Latin American countries. What is more, in these countries important shows of *clientelismo* remain still in force with notable intensity as a result of the tremendously erosive impacts of post-Fordist neoliberal globalization on their current social structures.
  - 12 An example of this is provided by José Luis Villanueva-Pérez when he studied the social protests and mobilizations in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia, a few years ago, against the proposals of the European Union Agricultural Policy (CAP) in order to modify, and so adapt to globalization’s requirements of competitiveness, the Common Organization of Markets (COM) regarding the olive oil sector (Villanueva-Pérez, 2003).
  - 13 I follow Pérez de Guzmán (1998: 9) in these observations, though not literally.
  - 14 For instance, much of current Spanish food consumption practices represent very well the said post-Fordist consumerist attitudes, which, of course, is a common tendency in other similarly developed societies (Entrena-Durán, 1997b).
  - 15 As Robertson (1993: chapter 6) has stated, a sort of expansion or universalization of particularism is experienced in our times.
  - 16 These areas are often highly valued, as they are associated with contact with nature, finding long-established and peculiar cultures, and the like. In this context, rural spaces are increasingly sought by urban dwellers, who often feel disenchanted with their hectic and hyper-rationalized everyday lives. These people want to ‘run away’ from their daily routines and yearn for territories that promise contact with nature and the ‘exotic’ (Urry, 1995).

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