

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: Globalization can be associated with the increasing cultural interactions. Culture remains the most visible form of globalization in the current world, regardless of its variants - modern or traditional.

Culture, in all its dimensions, has probably become the strongest vector of globalization. In contemporary international relations, culture is one of the power factors (as a part of the so-called “soft power”). In this respect, we can notice a difference in the way the world’s states are using this power: there are states with an impressive cultural history but they do not know how to use correctly this power in the global world. On the other hand, there are states with extensive culture, other with less significant cultural traditions but who understand the efficiency of this power and they use it accordingly in international relations.

The proportion of cultural globalization is an indicator of global cultural integration and it is measured by ideas, beliefs and values transmitted beyond borders. This indicator represents a partial reflection of cultural globalization, given the fact that it does not take into consideration the entirety of fluxes (for instance, it does not include the fluxes that contain theatre production). Cultural globalization is enhanced by linguistically differentiating traces.

Keywords: culture, production, history, tradition, relation

Globalization is the top event in the contemporary age. We go about our daily business in a process of expansion, global connection, where the term “globalization” is perceived as a space-time continuum of change, extending the human activity over regions and continents. In fact, the analysis framework of any given process or phenomena, be it national, regional or international, includes an analysis of the impact of globalization over that particular issue.¹

To some, “globalization” is something that we have to accomplish if we want to be happy; others think that the source of our unhappiness resides exactly in “globalization”.

The term “globalization” is of Anglo-Saxon origin (*globalization*), a synonym for the French term *mondialisation* today is on everybody’s lips. It is an overused term, with multiple meanings. As stated by Zygmunt Bauman, „it has rapidly turned into a logo, magical incantation, door-opener of all present and future ministries”.² At the same time, Thomas Friedman stated that the term of “globalization” is “so frequently used in several environments that it has gained an ordinary status, used by many as a confusing term or as a general tendency. However, few can fully understand its meaning”³.

Several authors have tried to define the phenomena. Antony Giddens considers that „globalization can be defined as the intensification of social relations in the entire world, connecting remote locations so much that events that are taking place locally are perceived as other similar events, taking place far away and vice-versa”.⁴

The main aspects defining the process of globalization are:

¹ Silviu Neguț, *Geopolitica. Universul puterii*, Editura Meteor Press, București, 2008, p. 310.

² Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalizarea și efectele ei sociale*, Editura Antet, București, 2002, p.5

³ Thomas L. Friedman, *Lexus și măslinul*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2008, pp. 12-14.

⁴ Ioan Bari, *Globalizare și probleme globale*, Editura Economică, București, 2001, p.7

- Changing perceptions and concepts about space and time;
- *Increased cultural interaction*;
- The general character of the problems currently confronting the inhabitants of this planet;
- Increased inter-connecting and dependency;
- Formation of the network of actors and transnational organizations as well as their expansion;
- Synchronization of all elements involved in this process.⁵

Globalization has significant effects in the cultural area as well. John Tomlinson, stated that “at the core of modern culture is the globalization; at the core of globalization are the cultural practices”.⁶

Culture can be conceptualized as a connection between a person and a group of people, an organization and the environment in which it functions. He also stated that a person can establish its own identity „by relating to the significance of the surrounding world”⁷. In other words, the beliefs and practices that a group of people have in common constitutes the basis of the social identity of a person. This way, the culture endures being transmitted from generation to generation, flexible and able to adapt to the common interpretation and experiences of a social group, at a certain moment in time.

But what is culture in this globalized world? This concept of global culture has been perceived at the beginning of 2000 as the spreading of American values, goods and lifestyle. In his book, *Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman wrote: “Today, globalization has the years of Mickey Mouse, eats Big Macs, drinks Coke or Pepsi and works on an IBM laptop...in the majority of societies, people can’t make a difference between the American power, American exports, American cultural aggressions, American cultural exports and genuine globalization”.⁸

In support of this statement is the obvious convergence and standardization regarding cultural goods in the entire world. “Take any catalogue, from clothes to music, from movies to television, to architecture and you won’t be able to ignore the fact that some styles, brands, tastes and practices have now a global circulation and can be seen anywhere in the world.”⁹

Some consider culture as partly an artistic creation, the interpretation and dissemination of art pieces. Others also add science and technology. They see culture as an ensemble of spiritual and material expressions of a society.¹⁰

An important aspect of the cultural structure can be seen in the cultural production referring to music, theater, choreography, conferences and lessons, when they are directly the product of producers, books and publications - books, newspapers, posters and touristic handouts, manuscripts, typed documents and other copied documents, paintings and drawings,

⁵ Robiri Cohen, *Migration and its enemies. Global Capital, Migrant Labour and the Nation-State*, Ashgate, London, 2006, p. 177.

⁶ John Tomlinson, *Globalizare și cultură*, Editura Armarcord Timișoara, 2002, p.9.

⁷ Kegan, Robert, *The Evolving Self: Problems and Process in Human Development*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

⁸ Th.L. Friedman *,Lexus și măslinul, Cum să înțelegem globalizarea*, Editura Fundației PRO, București, 2001, p. 400.

⁹ J. Tomlinson, *Globalizare și cultură*, Editura Amarcord, Timișoara, 2002, p. 120.

¹⁰ Ilie Rotariu, *Globalizare și turism: cazul României*, Editura Continent, Sibiu:2004, pp.45-46.

lithography, gravures, sculptures, statues, antiques, scientific collections (anatomic pieces, zoological specimens etc.), handmade objects, movies, cinematographic materials (films, microfilms, photographic material, slides), recordings, other than music, radio and TV sets, written music or recorded, musical instruments, models and mockups, maps and graphics, plans and architectural drawings with industrial or ethnic character, philatelic objects, architecture (architecture and historical monuments) etc.

In the immaterial production of culture, the objects of art can be created. The main reasons of existence of the art objective are:

- Stimulates and feeds sensibility, suggests a certain vision of humankind in the universe, enhances and deepens the effective parts of nature chosen by the artist;
- Use and price of the object of art has certain peculiarities, given mainly by the specific nature of the utility value they satisfy;
- The objects of art have a clear property, in a gallery or in a storehouse, they are recognized as art objects because they have one and only one utility: to influence the human sensibility.
- The art object, as any other product, creates a public with artistic sense and capable to enjoy beauty. “Production” not only produces an object for the subject but also a subject for the object.
- As a rule, using art objects comes after we have satisfied other basic human needs. Today, however, we see that art is intrinsically connected to any other good or action of the humankind¹¹.

Globalization offers several possibilities of production, distribution and access to culture.

The almost endless possibilities of communication - rapidly, comfortably and in real time using the Internet, mobile phones, as well as the impact of radio and TV make the world to participate simultaneously in the same events, phenomena, and processes or cultural activities.

However, globalization has a serious impact over culture regarding cultural exchanges among countries, as well as keeping cultural identities, freedom of productions, goods and cultural services. From here derives a great diversity of opinions regarding the dangers of homogenization of cultures, seen by some as an imminent threat. Others consider that it is no more than the beginning of a world culture that will accompany for a long time the national cultures, revived by the challenges of globalization.

Therefore, the lifestyle, the way of thinking, the way of acting and even the way of being of people all over the world seems to be harmonizing at the planetary level, due to the development of technologies in the communication and informatics. We tend to believe that the danger of this tendency is the disappearance of cultural diversity. This diversity is so necessary to the up going evolution of this world, on one side, and the imposition of the Western cultural model as the best one there is, on the other side.

At the same time, we have to accept that we can not limit the cultural development of the poor countries that need to preserve their traditions and folklore and not follow blindly Discovery shows or other shows offered to foreign tourists. Traditions are dying slowly under

¹¹ Ilie Rotariu *Globalizare și turism: cazul României*, Sibiu, Editura Continent, 2004, pp.45-46.

the pressure of imitating the habits of Western countries. Folklore begins to become obsolete that “comes out” on different occasions for foreign tourists.¹²

For certain, the globalization of culture is a long term process, involving multiplication, acceleration and strengthening of societies and their interaction with each other. Petre Duțu, considers that this process will not affect negatively on the evolution of national cultures, because there are factors and means that help preserve national cultures. Acceptance, resigning or defensive actions are not adequate answers to this unusual challenge. Neither power nor force or international rules can bring the expected answers for this challenge. In fact, culture will be more and more complex, due to its capacity to integrate elements and deeds separated in a coherence that can be reintegrated in human life and activity.”¹³

Globalization changes the way in which we conceptualize culture, because culture has been , for a very long time connected to the idea of a fixed location. The idea of a global culture has become possible only in our modern days. Cultural statements, great texts, can overpass political and linguistically borders, provided that they are translated into the languages of the interested cultural communities. For centuries, the process has been slowed down by geographic distances, by the slow pace of people and by technical difficulties. After the globalization process gained pace, facilitated by the media and by contemporary transportation, the spreading of texts (religious ideas, political, literary, scientific) has rapidly accelerated.

More and more people are free to travel all over the world, being able to borrow and transmit cultural deeds. Artists, scientists, all of those whom we call cultural people, have the possibility to reach in different parts of the globe, hold conferences anywhere in the world, facilitating thus the inter-cultural exchange. And, even if they belong to a certain nation they are claimed by culture as a whole.

The world of intellectuals is now an international community. The books, magazines, mass-media, personal contacts (letters, visits, seminars) they all lead towards inter-connecting the members of this community. “The intellectual comes from one country, he is from that country, but he also belongs to an invisible group and he is the embodiment of the world citizen ”.¹⁴

Researchers go to seminars and meetings in different locations on the globe: Paris, London, Berlin, New York, and Tokyo. The majority of those who have passed the cultural borders, following an apparent global pattern, vital and irreversible, did not do it completely and one sided. They have rather become mediators and facilitators. „To cross cultural borders does not mean that you have to leave your own culture without possibility of return. It means accepting it as a contingency, accepting to become a partial stranger and/or temporary one.”¹⁵

The access to culture as well as the opening towards another culture, accomplished either by direct contact or by way of technology that disseminates the culture of another group, will increase in the period 2020-2030. Therefore, we have to understand certain

¹² Ilie Rotariu *op.cit.* pp.51-52.

¹³ Mihai-Ștefan Dinu, *Etnie, religie, cultură, interrelaționări în domeniul securității*, în vol. *Perspective ale securității și apărării în Europa*, București, UNAp „Carol I”, 2009, pp.78-85.

¹⁴ G. Leclerc, *Mondializarea culturală . Civilizațiile puse la încercare*, Editura Știința, Chișinău, 2003, p. 336.

¹⁵ G. Leclerc, *op.cit.* p. 342.

phenomena like *aculturation*, *enculturation* and *deculturation*. These processes refer to the modality by which a certain culture is transmitted /borrowed or rejected by certain social groups.

Aculturation is the modality of borrowing certain ways of behavior, group values from one group to another, all this due to the cultural mix¹⁶. In history, we have the example of the aculturation that has taken place in the Roman Empire at the time of its maximum expansion, when it conquered the territories inhabited by the Greeks. However, they could impose their cultural, material and spiritual values only in a limited way. In exchange, they supported a huge absorption of values from the Greek culture.

The most important factors of this process are:

- The level and characteristics of formal education (level of education of the persons involved, education policy regarding minorities, philosophy of education);
- Social relationships - community interaction, social and professional area;
- Age when a certain person has come into contact with another culture;
- Social and economic status of the respective person etc¹⁷.

Even if this process is considered to be a positive one, there are situations in which it can have negative connotations, especially when the person is between two cultures and it feels rejected by the new culture who is supposed to integrate him (and obviously, where he feels that he is not always accepted), but rather in his own culture.

Enculturation is the process of internalization by the person of the norms and values of the group (community, society) in which it is born, it lives. Such phrases as „cultural transmission” or „acquire of culture” can be used.

Deculturation describes the process by which a person or a group rejects its own culture but also any other form of culture, following another vision on the world or the contact with other elements considered to be opposed /supreme/relevant. J. W. Berry considers that deculturația results when the members of a minority culture become alienated because of a dominant culture or because of their own minority society. One possible consequence of deculturației is high level of stress of the individuals¹⁸.

We have to take into account the fact that the spiritual structure of a people or, to be more exact, of an ethnic group, as well as the individual spiritual structure is determined, mainly, by the existence of capacity to make a choice on behalf of the individual, a background that becomes obvious since birth; This background includes on one hand elements that never change (somatic inheritance, including race and family background, as well as spiritual inheritance, the whole array of traditions, beliefs and civilization), and on the other side, the totality of the modifiable objects, that can be altered randomly by the individual. However, that will fundamentally determine its spiritual and psychological structure - name, religion, language, nationality or the place to live.

These cornerstones of human spirituality have been defined by Gabriel Liiceanu with the term intimate-foreign background: „Everything that has been decided by me appears to

¹⁶ Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Windows on Humanity*, New York, McGraw Hill, 2005, pp. 209-423

¹⁷ F.W. Rudmin, *Debate in science: The case of acculturation*. în: „AnthroGlobe Journal”, Retrieved march 17, 2007, http://malinowski.kent.ac.uk/docs/_rudminf_acculturation_061204.pdf, accesat la 04.05.2014

¹⁸ J.W. Berry, *Social and cultural change*. în: H.C. Triandis & R.W. Brislin (Eds.), „Handbook of cross-cultural psychology: Social psychology”, voi. 5, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1980, pp. 211-279

me simultaneously as intimate and foreign: as intimate, because it is part of my endowment, part of my most intimate self; as foreign, because although it is part of me, it appeared in me without my participation and without my knowledge. So it explains the fact that our intimate is our most foreign. The supreme harmonization is with ourselves, with our intimate-foreign background, with the many ways that has been decided for us without being asked"¹⁹. What we have to remember is the fact that these elements take action under the form of the cultural typology at the level of personal conscience and at the level of the collective conscience. In short, without the possibility to be entirely controlled rationally, the attempt to minimize, discredit or replacement in a certain culture with the values of a different culture there is the risk of tensions because the ethnic community feels aggressed by this civilization that is imposed. Consequently, it feels denied of its own ethnic and social identity.

In the context of globalization, promotion of cultural values that define a nation and their knowledge on a wide scale becomes one of the most suitable instruments, able to contribute to the building of respect and tolerance, cultural and religious diversity, among the people of the world. Multi cultural societies represent the harmonious coexistence of several cultures that tolerate each other, helping each other in order to promote new values using diversity as an added value for the society and determine the respect on a daily basis.²⁰

Conclusions

The most profound meaning of the idea of globalization is the indefinite, disorganized and self-propelled character of the world problems: the lack of a center point, of a command point, the lack of a decision-making council. Globalization can not be defined as a negative element of modern society. Cultural diversity can not be presented as major obstacles of cooperation or integration of different communities, such as – for instance – the case of European integration. But they can also be perceived as necessary elements, as factors that favor cooperation and inter communitarian communication. There is always a common background; there are general reasons, beyond national, ethnic and cultural differences etc.

I would like to introduce here, for the beauty of the idea, one of the Romanian statements: “In fact, the world is the dream of our soul. There is no time, no space – they are only in our soul. Past and future is in my soul, like the forest in an acorn, and the infinity the same, as the reflection of a starry night in a drop of dew”²¹. A dilemma that is worth meditating on...

Finally, I appreciate that it is very important for the national and cultural background to remain unaltered by its ignorance towards the educational aspect. This is the fundamental spring of the evolution of the young generation to consolidate its roots in history, not only the national one but also the international one, in which profound roots can give force to the past in order to support future developments of personalities knowing their place in the world thus relating with other nations from a correct and dignified position.

¹⁹ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre limită*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1997, pp. 14-15.

²⁰ Iulian Chifu, *Coeziunea societală, scena construcției naționale și drumul către integrarea europeană*, www.cpc-ew.ro/publications/studies/coeziunea_socie-kila.pdf accesat la 04.05.2014

²¹ Mihai Eminescu, *Sărmanul Dionis*, în *Proza literară*, București, Minevra, 1975, p.61.

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