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GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE: THE EXISTENCE OF A GLOBAL CULTURE AND THE FUTURE OF LOCAL CULTURES-

In recent years globalization has become an important issue and its impact on culture is a controversial point. The economic, social, media-technological or media-sciences developments, thus the combination of strong exchange- and communication relationship in economy, technique, politics and culture, have built the basis for the today's "cultural globalization" [15]. Furthermore globalization has led to cross-cultural alliances, knowledge sharing and technology transfer. Cross-cultural alliances are constructed at various levels such as multinational corporations, multinational teams and intergovernmental organizations [2]. The dynamics of globalization are, beside other effects, able to change perceptions, behavior and patterns of living.

In this paper we are going to find the answer on the controversial question about existense of global culture, its influence on local cultures and the opportunity of making a global society. First we defined the terms "Culture" and "Globalization". This is followed by the discussion of selected globalization aspects on culture and the role of local cultures in this sense. Lastly we will summarize the results.

Defining Culture and Globalization

Several studies have been conducted in order to define the concept of culture, including various definitions and different approaches to the topic.

Herkovits defines culture as the "human- made part of the environment", taking in account "both objective and subjective elements" [4]. As for Skinner [4] culture is a "set of reinforcement", while for Hofstede's [6] definition of culture

says it is the "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another."

We are not going to criticize the mentioned definitions, however, for the purpose of this paper they appear to be too theoretical. Therefore we are going to use Becker's more visual definition describing culture as "everything that people have, think and do as members of their society." According to the included verbs in this definition: to have, to think and to do, it will be assumed that culture is made up of (1) material objects, (2) ideas, values and attitudes and (3) normative or expected patterns of behavior.

What is more culture is never infinite and consequently it is continuously in the process of being made. Basically it is anything a person does in the course of its life [14]. Similarly Erez & Gati [2] describe the concept of culture as of dynamic and changing kind.

As mentioned by Mittelman globalization is connected to "the spatial reorganization of production, the interpenetration of industries across borders, the spread of financial markets, the diffusion of identical consumer goods to distant countries, massive transfers of population ... and an emerging world-wide preference for democracy." [8] Machida points out that globalization is a process of continuous worldwide interconnectedness, that affects all perspectives of human life, and consequently culture.

Deriving "Global culture"

Combining the definitions culture and globalization we are now going to derive the meaning of "Global Culture".

At the individual level, globalization transforms the sense of identity, changing the way in which people think themselves into the social environment [2]. Giulianotti & Robertson [5] give an explanation of this phenomena, mentioning that social actors involved in the process of globalization acquire a sense of "globality", that appears as the awareness of the world as a whole, or as "single place". Erez & Gati [2] introduced global culture as a new climatic level, pointing out specific

characterizations. A global culture is influenced by features as by values such as freedom of choices, free markets, individualism, innovation and change, tolerance to diversity and interdependence/connectedness.

What is more, defining the process of „cultural globalization“ we have chosen two main theories “homogenization” and “hybridization”. These describe the possible scenarios regarding the mutual interplay of globalization and culture. On the one hand the “homogenization thesis” explains that globalization forces can lead to the homogenization of diverse cultures, this means that globalization enhances the creation of a unique culture around the world. As a result local cultures can be undermined [8]. On the other hand “hybridization theory” draws cultures as not fixed facts, but as processes in continuous evolution and produced by the history. Interactions among cultures shape and reshape specific cultural features, creating new meaning into cultural understandings [11]. The process of spreading cultures around the globe is characterized as by inconsistent and complex styles, ranges and forms of expression, which lacks a clear characterization [15]. Globalization therefore is a sort of soil in which different elements of different cultures can be combined [10].

Globalization Processes and Their Influences on Culture

In this section we examined the influences of various selected globalization aspects. These aspects include the tendency to a “one-product-world” [15] and the influence of Multi-National-Companies (MNCs), the role of spiritual goods, arts and the media, international travel and migration as well as the spreading English language towards a “Global Culture”.

“One-product-world” and the role of MNCs

Even though cultural exchange has become a fundamental characteristic of human development, it has seen an enormous upturn due to the establishment of capitalistic production methods, which led humans around the world in order to seek for profits [15]. In this framework culture can be seen as a sort of globalized commodity culture [12]. It can be said that an important reason “cultural

globalization” occurs is that the global industry creates an alignment of cultural symbols and ways of living. This supports Wagner pointing out that the alignment of cultural life through universal visual-worlds, equal consumer goods and uniform patterns of popular cultures, transported through MNCs throughout all the world. Furthermore the author mentions that these universal pictures, culture- and consumption-worlds result in the linkage of different life-worlds. As many MNCs were established, and have their headquarters in the USA, the spreading of western consumption- and cultural patterns is often referred to as “Americanization” or “McDonaldisation” [15]. To wear Nike-shoes or Adidas- tracksuits, to drink Coca-Cola and to eat at McDonald’s can be seen as a cultural expression, thus it is able to symbolize a sort of a global lifestyle [15]. However, it is important to mention that this way of lifestyle is subject to interpretation. Also mergers and acquisitions of firms can be seen as an important factor towards a creating “Global Culture”.

Spiritual goods, arts and the media

Not only material goods are available worldwide but also spiritual goods and arts have become common heritage [15]. Historically, the invention of different kinds of “storage mediums” no longer restricted it to certain groups of people or regions but opened it to be fairly available [15]. Especially the Media including its media environment with multinational media empires, is of vital importance for a cultural globalization. The media today is a condition for the connection of cultures and arts. Radio and television have created a new stage of cross-border communication of cultures.

International travel and migration

Social and cultural “connections”, have been intensified due to the instrument of international travel. Also Wagner mentions that capital and goods move around the world nearly boarder-less, which not only supports the dependence of cultures originally but also brought up a new mobility for people around the world [15]. In this context employees working in MNCs are mentioned. Working abroad, or even if not, they are inserted in a macro-level of culture, thus work and behave in a

global work environment. This leads to a, or requires, a global mindset [2]. People that are not abroad for work reasons and their qualifications have the possibility to travel around the world as tourists. As a result people from different countries and regions get in contact with business travelers and other travelers, therefore get in touch with various cultures and vice versa [15]. Moreover, as regards mobility and “Global Culture” an important factor is migration and immigration. The movement of people from one country to another for a longer period or even for their whole life considerably contributes to “cultural globalization” and the mixing of cultures [15].

“One-world-language”

English has become “the” world language. To mention just a few examples: movies are translated into English, scientific studies are published in English and it has become the prevailing language in cross-border business. This is supported by Sun Yifeng who mentions the diffusion of English as a global common language as an example towards a “Global Culture” [12]. Modebadze examined the language image of the world in the light of “cultural globalization” [9]. The author points out that the evolutionary dissolution process of language boundaries is closely related to the concept of globalization. This is able to reflect the basic tendencies of a changing value system in the world society.

The Role of Local Cultures

In the previous section we have identified various aspects of globalization that are in strong relationship with culture and are able to lead to a unified world culture. Now we are going to analyze the role of local cultures in the regarded topic. A “Global Culture” or the process of “cultural globalization” can lead to the elimination of local cultures, to “bi-polarity” or an adaption of global and local aspects resulting in “Glocality”.

As in the sociology of consumerism critics have argued that “modern societies” are pressured towards cultural standardization resulting in the loss of local or national distinction [14]. This is supported by the homogenization thesis that asserts that globalization eliminates the diversity of local cultures [8]. According to Turner [14]

societies that lack a strong community as well as effective political leadership are not able to offer much resistance to a “globalized culture” and their local traditions are quickly destroyed.

Contrary, according to Arnett global environment has changed the sense of belongingness towards a worldwide culture, through the adaptation of global practices [1]. However, at the same time, people continue to carry on their local identity, characterizing themselves with a sort of “bi-cultural” identity. The “bi-cultural” identity depends primarily on the proximity of the global and local culture.

But what about the concepts of “Americanization” or “McDonaldisation”, in a local aspect? Looking especially at MCDonald's it can be said that the MNC is a perfect example of how local aspects become marginal. Every nation receives its own cultural stamp e.g. McDonald's devotees can get McArabia's in the Middle East (grilled chicken in Arabic bread), Bubur Ayam in Malaysia (chicken porridge), McPaltas in Chile (a burger with avocado paste), and many more [13]. Turner calls this type of local adaption “Glocalization”, mentioning that local and global aspects are always fused [14]. In other words features of cultures interact at local and global contexts. Sun Yifeng says that the relation between globalization and localization can be explained with the process of translation, that consists in the transfer of the “Global Culture”, and results in the creation of a “glocal” [12].

Conclusion

The various globalization factors, as defined and shown on examples, have a strong tendency to lead towards a “Global Culture”. We came to the result that universal or uniform consumer goods, values, visual-worlds and uniform patterns of popular culture can be created. Furthermore globalization originally increases the connectedness of cultures.

However, in order to answer the research question about the existence of a “Global Culture”, we don't see that globalization has led to a “Global Culture”. The multidimensional globalization process rather goes hand in hand with a “cultural globalization” process.

Due to globalization, cultures are partly adapting to other cultures. As Wagner points out there are no cultures in a “pure form” [15]. They mostly develop in the encounter and the exchange with other cultures. But to say that there is a “Global Culture” is generalizing main cultural aspects. We see all cultural products as ambiguous even those of mass-culture, thus it can be said that they can be interpreted in several different ways.

Furthermore local cultures aren't becoming marginal and in future they willn't disappear. Rather they play an important role in the globalization process. Even if they are adapting to worldwide uniform cultural aspects they are unlikely to be subordinated. What is more we identified a strong exchange between these uniform cultural aspects and local cultures.

To summarize this article we cite Turner, who appropriately illustrates the “cultural globalization” process mentioning France and England as examples. He says that, “despite of centuries of cultural diversity, migration, globalization and social changes there is still something very French about France and something very English about the English” [14].

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