

## **MASS CULTURE IN THE GLOBALISATION AND COSMOPOLITANISM ERA**

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### **Abstract**

The first steps of real globalisation are related to the navigation development and great geographic discoveries, times when material and spiritual value exchanges took place worldwide. Thus, great changes at the human society level took place, the most concrete form of globalisation is known as “Europeanisation”, a process unfolded over more centuries that succeeded in obtaining a cultural homogenisation in the mankind essential techniques plan.

The intent of our endeavour is to trace an overview of the changes known by culture in the globalisation and cosmopolitanism era. Being a complex and dynamic process, globalisation is a term which exceeded the academic sphere, being frequently used in mass-media and by the population.

**Keywords:** mass culture, globalisation, cosmopolitanism

## 1. GLOBALISATION AND CULTURE

The first decades of our century point out more and more the fact that humankind rapidly heads towards globalisation, towards a world seen as unity on planetary level, towards identities that will operate by mutual rules and standards. We frequently understand by *globalisation* the process of permanent integration of material, financial, informational, cultural flows worldwide in a unique structure, with specialised sectors.

As it worked in all eras, cultural development gains new dimensions with the economic, technical-scientific progress, giving birth to mass culture. This term is defined as a conception on life, as a form of valorisation of existence, as an assumed and lived, dominant ideology. Generally, culture is associated to certain spaces, by the changes that took place over the last years led to the deterritorialization of culture and its introduction in other territories, precisely as consequence of globalisation.

If one frequently speaks of a mass, global culture, that seems to be the American kind, due to the elements that compose it: the massive distribution of certain American products, like Coca-Cola, Nike, Burger King, Apple etc; the great action range of American TV stations, received in different parts of the world; the domination of the Hollywood American film studios: the restaurants and hotel chains. And the examples can go on.

Mass culture is a key phenomenon of postmodernity. People tend to eat the same, dress the same, listen to the same kind of music, have the same habits, believe in the same values and rules. Thus, are born the consumption global culture products that transcend the cultural spaces. The development of human society is an economic, but also a cultural process.

In this context, we shall try to outline the impact culture globalisation has on urban life, pointing out the main changes that take place at the level of the two basic parts of culture: the *artifactual* and the *mentifactual one*.

Among the first *artifactual culture*, namely material elements, we enumerate the clothing products, such as the jeans, for instance and the architectural ones. In this regard, we offer as example the aspect of the Triumphal Arch of Bucharest, built according to the architectonic model of the Arc de triomphe of Paris.

The mentifactual culture elements, as human mind products, are, among others, music and dance, jazz that acquired worldwide connotations.

## **2. GLOBAL CULTURE AND MASS-MEDIA**

Global culture became available and gradually extended because of the modern means of communication, because they became accessible to the largest lairs of the population. This new cultural type visually and audibly addresses the culture consumer, offering an environment where all these means are accessible to them and solicit their interests, preferences, passions. The modern means fulfil both the role of culture transmitter, cultural flow bearer, and also, the role to be, themselves, culture values, which organically integrate in masses. Thus, they become instruments of a product information, spread according to an industrial technique, being characteristic to the current stage of development of the society where we encounter mass production, mass consumption, mass broadcasting, mass auditory. One can say that the existence and action of mass communication means have effects on the content of the tradition culture, that is metamorphosing.

There are orientations according to which mass culture is seen as a standardised culture, a market culture, whose propelling factor is not the interest to form advance knowledge, but the material interest. From this perspective, it becomes a mediocre culture phenomenon, which is distinct from the superior culture, which is not accessible to common man, as a way of “democratisation” of values and “kitsch”. Therefore, mass culture is defined as a set of cultural myths, images, models spread by all broadcasting

means, as a type of culture that serves consumption, which spreads conformism.

In the current society people lean very much on the mass information and communication means, often with the purpose to find a balance between the multiple adherence relations. In order to build the individual and group identity, modern man that lives in the diaspora must be simultaneously connect to various spaces of reference, for instance, their country of origin, their host country, the neighbouring countries, and also faraway lands, and mass-media's role is to initiate and maintain such virtual contacts.

Therefore, mass-media plays a very important role in expanding the intensely debated "global village with cosmopolitan values"<sup>1</sup>. Public is encouraged to exceed the boundaries of their familiar universe, to set connections with the ones that are far and to develop the conscience of a world perceived as a single place. Consequently, due to their incontestable transnational range of action, the contemporary media has the capacity to make us think of ourselves as belonging to the "cosmopolis, to the global society"<sup>2</sup>. Naturally, the mass-media connections with the globalisation elements are many times achieved through a series of public relations techniques<sup>3</sup>.

### **3. COSMOPOLITANISM AND GLOBALISATION**

What is cosmopolitanism and how can we differentiate it from connected notions, such as globalisation and transnationalism?

As referred to cosmopolitanism and what it stands for, Rantanen<sup>4</sup> states that it is a moral concept that represents the manner in which people feel in relation to their fellow men that are far, whose life is affected by civil wars, genocides, massacres or natural disasters. Therefore, being cosmopolitan is not a fix identity, because at a certain point a person can feel like belonging to a place or on the contrary cosmopolitan, depending on the given context and circumstances. In relation to this concept, we can ask ourselves whether we

can speak, in fact, of cosmopolitanising without the existence of a catastrophe or if we can empathise with the ones far from us in case their life is threatened by a disaster. Since we cannot give accurate answers to such questions, one can deduce that cosmopolitanism is not a perfect concept, having both strong points, and also limitations. Beck and Sznaider equally define cosmopolitanism as an imperfect theoretical construct because “it comprises many contradictions”<sup>5</sup>. For Beck and Sznaider, cosmopolitanism is, therefore, another “contested term; there is no uniform interpretation of it in the growing literature”<sup>6</sup>. The two authors unfold next ideas according to which cosmopolitanism should not be wrongly interpreted as globalisation, transnationalism or glocalisation.

This point of view is also adopted by Rantanen who considers that limits should be set between cosmopolitanism, internationalisation and globalisation<sup>7</sup>. Internationalisation has become a dominant idea in the years after the second world war, when, out of fear of dealing with new conflagrations, the states funded the international organisations, hoping to prevent such conflagrations in the future.

Globalisation, however, gave the theoreticians the chance to study the changes that occur locally, regionally, nationally and internationally from the public’s point of view. At this moment, the relations between the nation-states, culture and mass-media started to weaken, the mass-media from the diaspora appeared with more force, and the concept of cultural homogenisation was replaced by the one of cultural heterogenization. If globalisation was a popular research current in the 90’s, cosmopolitanism is generally perceived as a long-debated topic as early as the beginning of our century.

## CONCLUSIONS

Beyond the contradictory talks, the private interpretations, what is important to remember is that all these terms: *internationalisation*,

*globalisation, transnationalism, glocalisation or cosmopolitanising*, have mutual features: each of them brought something new, each of them has its flaws and strong points. Just as important is that all these thinking currents keep on making themselves felt nowadays. More than that, these research areas, different but equally important, have shaped the universe of communication and information media, which, in their turn, have come to fulfil a central role within each ideologic stage. Global culture goes through the same steps of its discovery as the culture of organisations<sup>8</sup>.

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*Sciences and Education Research Review*, p.115-119, 3 (1), 2016, Online ISSN 2393-1264, ISSN-L 2392-9863, Print ISSN: 2392-9863, ISSN-L: 2392-9863, pp. 115-119.