GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract: We can understand the impressive contemporary processes of transformation that globalization refers to, only if we approach them with the help of the conceptual vocabulary that belongs to culture, and these transformations modify the cultural experience and affect the way in which we understand what culture means in the modern world. Culture and globalization are extremely general concepts, with very controversial significations. We tried to include here the main elements of globalization in a cultural background, to show why culture and globalization are so important to each other. The debates regarding globalization often consider culture something different, by replacing it with the audio-visual technologies and globalized communications, through which the cultural representations are transmitted. This tendency is evidenced in the journalistic discourse, widely spread after globalization and that sometimes seems obsessive, by the ingenuity of the new communication technologies: the internet, the global informational line etc. Although the communicational technologies are absolutely essential for the process of globalization, their development is not identical with the cultural globalization. The implications involved by their impact are both ample and restrained. They are ample because they have a significant role, technology representing the transmitters or the instrumental symbols in all the dimensions in which globalization is manifested.

Keyworlds: globalization, modern culture, technology, education, instrumental symbols

Introduction

Discussions on globalization often view the culture as somewhat else, replacing it with the audio-visual technologies and the globalizing communications, which transmit the cultural representations. This trend is highlighted in the journalistic discourse, which is considered widespread after globalization, which sometimes seems to be obsessed by the ingenuity of new the communication technologies: the Internet, the global information thoroughfare etc.

1. Why culture is important for globalization

Culture is important for globalization in the sense that it is clear that it represents the intrinsic aspect of the whole complex connections process. The problem of understanding culture as a part of globalization depends on how we conceive culture and its consequences. "Culture is not a power that can be the cause of social events" (Clifford Geertz, 1973, p. 102), if we

believe that cultural processes are equivalent with the construction of meanings. If we think strictly in causal terms, it means we confuse culture with its technologies. Cultural meaning and interpretation guides individuals toward certain actions, individually and collectively. Often, our actions, even if they are relatively instrumental, obeying the logic of practical or economic necessity, take place in the context of a broader cultural understanding. Even the elementary instrumental actions that meet the cultural needs are not from this point of view, outside the culture: in certain circumstances (a diet, religious fasting, hunger strikes, etc.), the decision to eat or to hunger it is a cultural decision.

We can understand the culture's ability to have an impact on globalization watching how the local actions of cultural inspiration can have globalizing consequences. The complex connection represents not only the tighter integration of social institutions, but requires the integration of individual and collective actions in the way effectively work of the institutions. The cultural connection introduces the idea of global reflexivity of modern life.

The social entities act indirectly on their own, in different ways, to adapt to the information received in relation to their own behavior and their own operation. This idea is based on reflexivity inherent in the human being: the ability of all people to be aware constantly, that works even during the action.

The modern institutions become increasingly "learning entities" like the human beings. It is this reflexive sensitivity of the institutions towards the human agents that specifically mark the dynamism of modern social life and defines the connection between the many individual local actions and social structures and processes at the highest level.

2. Why globalization is important for culture

Globalization changes the way we conceptualize "culture" because culture was, for a long time, about the idea of a fixed locality. The idea of "culture" links the building of the direction and location feature. As Eade noticed (1997, p. 98), "the sociological approach to the idea of culture has been traditionally dominated by emphasizing the limited and consistency." In particular, the collective construction of meaning was largely treated as serving the purpose of the social integration in the functionalist tradition. Thus, the "culture" notion is identical with the "society" notion, as a limited entity (Mann, 1986, p. 201), occupying a physical territory, mapped as a public area (predominantly as a nation state) and linking the individual constructions of meaning within the social and the political space. The globalization connection is certainly a threat to this kind of conceptualization, not only because penetration, in several forms, of the localities reflects on the relationship between meaning and place, but because it undermines the culture thinking through which culture reached to be associated with a fixed location.

In anthropology, the works of James Clifford (1988, p. 83) on cultures focuses on assessing a location independent culture. Referring to "the intersection and interaction practices that have changed the local character of a large number of theories of culture", he believes that establishing a local home was considered the foundation of collective life. Culture supports that "it is more mobile than static and movement practices generate cultural meanings." With this statement, he is very close to the conceptual challenge posed by globalization for culture. We cannot believe that culture has inevitable conceptual links with the location, as the meanings are created equally, people moving in the exchanges and links between cultures.

Understanding the nature and the significance of this global awareness is an important cultural analysis of globalization. The awareness of our interdependence, combined with remote media gives rise to new forms of alliance and solidarity between culture and politics. The globalization of culture is important in that it makes the negotiation of cultural experience to reach the center of intervention strategies on other areas of connectivity: political, economic or environmental ones.

The idea of a global culture has become possible only in the current phase, accelerated, of the global modernity. There have been various dreams and speculation about the emergence of a global culture throughout the modern era, and can be interpreted in relation to the emergence of globalization and may explain, to some extent, the problem as we present it today.

If we want to take a very broad approach, we should include these cultural projections that a certain culture has simply shifted the center of things and was said to be in all respects "the entire world".

The 90s is characterized by a number of technological revolution comparable to those that inspired the thinkers' visions of the ninth century. Indeed, the general expectation of the emergence of new technological miracles, especially in the area of communications, computers and information technology seems to be, at present, an important element in the texture of modern culture. This modern "techno-utopianism" is most clearly linked to "the global information thoroughfare" discourse. No matter how cynical we are regarding this issue, we cannot say that it is simply just the megalomania of the corporate capitalism.

It is tempting to abolish this statement, saying it was naive and non-critical- as it is, quite obviously, in some ways. Also, it's probably true that the center of gravity of popular cultural aspirations, which is what most people expect from all of the transformative impact of technology, is far from visionary and utopian, new technologies are considered sources of increasing social comfort or new forms of entertainment. However, it is equally clear that we cannot ignore the immense transformative potential of these globalizing technologies-the way that they dramatically change our lives.

How can we understand these contradictory trends? Or rather tempting to tackle the global culture in the late twentieth century would be to say it is an example of bad timing: the technical possibilities' insertion manifest where the political and cultural confidence is low. These contradictions are at the heart of the global modernity. Unlike nineteenth-century thinkers "while enthusiasts and enemies of modern life, facing its ambiguities and contradictions" (Berman, 1983), our reactions oscillates between two poles: that of glorification and that of the apocalyptic vision. The world is really more complex at the end of this century than in the last century and forces us to confront the political, cultural and moral dilemmas. These dilemmas are not reserved for intellectuals: under the reflexivity increasingly larger conditions of modern and social life, they have come to form a part of everyday life for most people easier than in any earlier period. Living with the involved ambiguities, for example, in the current use of the globalizing communicative technologies, we all find complex and nuanced answers, even if they are not always articulated as such.

One explanation for the existence of the opposite tendencies towards uniqueness and fragmentation might be just the complexity of the immediate and mediated cultural experience.

Analyzing however, more closely one of the main sources of contemporary skepticism about the possibility of a global culture, it is the attraction the national identity exercises on the cultural imagination.

Anthony Smith has a strong articulated position in the current debates about the possibilities of a global culture (1995), a sociologist who is known significantly for his work on ethnicity and national cultures. Smith places at the center of his discussion a picture of the type of "cosmopolitan" global culture that we can reach, he says, based on the one hand, on the development of communication technologies, information and information and on the other hand, on the "postmodern cultural experience".

"A global culture should consist of a number of distinct elements: consumer goods effectively popularized a collage of folk and ethnic styles plucked out of context, some general ideological discourses of rights and human values and a standardized quantitative scientific communication and appreciation language, all leaning by the new information and telecommunications systems and their computer technologies" (Smith, 1991, p. 86).

Clearly, Smith is not excited about the image they present. He describes further potential global culture as "fundamentally artificial", "narrow", "whimsical and ironic", "fluid and formless" and "devoid of any emotional involvement". One of the reasons of the negativism seems to be that Smith overlaps somewhat with the postmodern category of any potential global culture. It consists of two charges related to one another: that of a global culture which is necessarily a built, timeless and "devoid of memory" culture.

We can understand what Smith means when he calls this culture built from the description made to its content. Nothing really binds the features that he describes, for example, the global consumer promotion and the discourse of rights and the universal values- apart from the fact that the global problems seem to exist simultaneously. Therefore, it is an understanding of the global culture as being deliberately constructed from various different features and consequences of globalization, without having something concrete as the integrated cultural experiences have.

Smith admits that we should not be surprised by the need to build a global culture "with the political and the global institutions". Although the national cultures are also built from, therefore, Smith claims that these resolutely remain "specific, temporal and expressive". By this he means that, necessarily, the deliberate construction of national the identity was parasitic of deeper consciousness of collective identity shared by people located in a particular place and involving "feelings and values related to the sense of continuity, shared memories and a sense common destiny" (1990, p. 302). These attachments- which Smith associates them with the pre-modern ethnic identity, "the ethno-history of the community"- form the core subjects that, he believes, could be the basis of modern national identity.

Because of this conception about the nature of collective identity, Smith's skepticism about the possibility of a global cultural identity crystallizes the argument that a global culture lacks the necessary vital ingredients: the common historical experience, the continuity of time and, most important, the common memories. He claims that "the global memory" opposed to the global communications must seem premature"(1990, p. 76). Smith also recognizes that, from the point of view of the global security and the highest ideals of coexistence and the cultural reciprocity, the cultural assertion of ethno-national division that involves the project global culture is a "gloomy conclusion". The antithesis that is between the length of the establishment of the national identities and the notion of a global identity as a rapid, immediate construct is hard to refute. Smith emphasizes the contribution of time and the popular memory at "rooting" them. He argues that the national identity has a special power over other forms of identity, that "provides unique vision and rationale of political solidarity today, solidarity requires consent popular and popular enthusiasm sparks. By comparison, all these visions, all those reasons to be deleted appear blurry. They do not give the feeling of being chosen, provide a unique history and no special destiny". (Smith, 1991, p. 204)

This argument supports the continuing strength of the national cultural identity in a globalized world, an idea that normally would be foolish to argue about. A corollary of it would be the idea that the continued existence of the national identities inhibits the emergence of a cosmopolitan, global identity, even if concerning the cultural imagination of the people towards defining its horizons. In addition, it could be argued that the whole cultural-ideological effort by member states developing and maintaining the

national identification does not compare at all with the deliberate symbolic construction of a home for the community.

The globalization seems not to be turned to open the way to a global culture after the model of the distinct national cultures, from a historical point of view. However, once we recognize the distinct character, other ways of thinking regarding the idea of cultural identity crisis arise.

For every argument there are others which suggest that we should not allow the nation-state to overshadow everything else.

The first situation regards the influence on the nation-state within the cultural imaginary on the wider debate on "centered around the state" conceptualizations in the social sciences in general. For example, recent critical geographer Peter Taylor criticized "the default state control" that, as he says, characterizes the current focus of the social sciences which had the effect of "social rationalization of knowing" (Taylor, 1996, p. 70). Taylor argues that disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics failed to recognize until recently (and even less to rise the problem) that they are actually "the state creatures" and that they rely, even for the concepts of "social", "political", "economic", on a particular historical configuration, which accompanied their emergence in the late nineteenth century.

The alternative ways of understanding the global culture, that does not always keep us in the shadow of the national cultures, must be viewed in this wide context. We must consider those factors related to the globalization that reduce or compromise the attraction exercised by the nation's cultural imagination of its people. These factors include the influence of what might be called global "cultural industry"- "commercialized consumer goods". The current practice experience includes the daily use of the communication and media technologies, the "transnational" dependency of people in terms of work (work in an abroad multinational company), the increasing awareness that, due to the globalization processes, the nation state is no longer able to "deliver the goods" to the population in economic terms (no unemployment, stable currency and interest) or in terms of the quality control of the physical environment. The experience styles and the cultural identification is bound to be affected by the interconnections, penetration and multi-faceted and complex cultural changes that characterize the current state of the modern globalization.

The globalization, as it is lived in everyday experience, fundamentally transforms the relationship between the places where we live and the practice experiences and our cultural identities.

"The places", Morley and Robins said (1995, p. 93) "are no longer a clear support of our identity".

Modernity releases the social relationships by the face-to-face interactions' constraints from the pre-modern societies, allowing the relations' expansion in time and space, which is the core of globalization. In terms of cultural experience, what is important is how these widening social

relations affect its communities in which we normally live. Ghiddens captures this transformation describing the modern places as becoming more "phantasmagoric". The familiar, soothing character of the cultural scenery through which we usually move, hides the influences and the social processes.

Some sociologists argue that the contemporary capitalist modernity creates a localized specifically practical experience, which he describes as "super-modernity", defining our interactions increasingly powerful with these non-places. He cites the waiting rooms of the airports, the shopping centers, the highways and the gas stations, the ATMs on the street corner, the high-speed trains. He called these super-modern places "non-places", they are different by the "anthropological places" that "creates the organic social". (Auge, 1995, p. 98)

He gives the example of an "anthropological place" - a place that provides identity and cultural memory, linking its inhabitants by the local history through daily rehearsals of the "organic" social interactions-by the general description of the typical provincial French town centers, so "as outlined in the Third Republic, with hotels, cafes and shops mainly concentrated in the city center, not far from where the fair takes place."(Auge, 1995, 102)

There is undoubtedly something nostalgic in the description given by the author of these real places. But, interestingly, he does not see them as part of a traditional, endangered life, but as a characteristic of the earlier periods of modernity itself-what it is called "Baudelaire" modernity where the connection between past and present, old and new is still visible, and the relationship between place, memory and identity are kept in the current interactions. The Baudelaire modernity, as he says, is still alive in the contemporary France, but it is threatened by the super-modernity incursions. In these non-places, the organic "talkative" interactions are replaced by the mute signs and by interactions from the bank machine: "Please remove the card", "Thank you"-or bright signs on the highway- "Car string of two miles on A3". In a supermarket, the buyer engages in a solitary conference with labels, instructions and automatic scales.

Even the real "anthropological places" may turn into non-places for outsiders as their history is truly "textualized". To illustrate it, this describes the experience of going through the highways passing through the cities of the province, which, however, through billboards, advertise to their points of attraction, presented as historical places "drivers driving south are drawn attention to a fortified village dating from the thirteenth century on a famous vineyard" (Auge, 1995, 134). Non-highway location is characterized, for the author, by its itinerary around real places, which fixes the signs meant to transform them into merchandise.

We may wonder how much this world output differs from the church or the City Hall meetings. The idea is that non-places can be considered particular "deterritorialized" instances, embodying spaced relationships,

which does not make them necessarily, sterile from a social and cultural point of view.

The deterritorialization concept should therefore be able to capture the novelty of the contemporary transformation of its features so spot-positive and negative-without succumbing to the temptation to interpret it as a mere poverty or dissolution of the cultural interaction.

The global events relate to the cultural deterritorialization experience in at least two ways. First, some will have direct effects on the environment and the immediate people's material conditions. For example, EU regulations may have an (positive or negative) impact on the working practices of small local business, or stock of EU regional development could turn the local built areas in stagnant urban areas. How the local people feel these interventions (either as a mixture or unreasonable threat to our way of life or the British promise of a new and rather vague European identity and a community project) will largely depend on the extent to benefiting from them or are disadvantaged by them.

But there is certainly an increased awareness of the importance of forces far beyond that, to a very fundamental and over an extended period of historical time, we have come to regard as natural and valid our political organization: territorial boundaries of our national state. In the impact of the European legislation, the experience of the remote measurements may be related to certain international well defined processes (although mistrial), political / economic, to agents and to identifiable power centers (the Eurocrats of Brussels).

But other events have a dramatic impact- for example the effects of fluctuations in the global capitalist market on the private economies. The most spectacular fluctuations are the market international stock crises or the periodic monetary crises. But in a broader sense, such events may participate in the expansion of the individual phenomenal world: people probably include distant events and processes in the perception of what is meaningful to their own personal life. One aspect that could involve deterritorialization is continuously broadening the horizon of relevance to the people cultural experience, removing not only the "cultural awareness" but, crucially, the individual planning processes life in a self-sufficient context focused on physical locality or politically defined territory.

Thus, such effects will have an unevenly impact –the distant wars, for example, which may not have the same direct impact on the practical experience of people as the economic crises have. But, in a sense, the conflicts are more immediate, appear much stronger in the everyday experience than in any previous period and this is because of the way the globalizing media technologies, especially television, are seen at home. Mass media plays an important role in the territorialization process, taking into consideration the mediated experience that overlaps the immediate experience.

The various uncertainties which accompany the boundary disappearance of places have the capacity to generate national and ethnical hostile withdrawal in the imaginary communities, rather than to generate the cosmopolism. However, these reactions have temporary reactions in a stronger cultural process. The complex hybrid nature of today's global youth culture, organized around music, dance and fashion, is significant in this case. Although they are clearly commercial cultures, they are also cosmopolitan ones, valuing the exclusive nature of ethnic and national divisions.

Conclusions

The complex connection idea is closely related to the multi-dimensionality, because the complexity of connections established by globalization extends to phenomena that sociologists categorized them currently defining the human life: economic, political, social, technological, environmental, interpersonal, cultural etc.

The globalizing phenomena are complex and multifaceted, exerting pressure on the conceptual frameworks through which we are accustomed to perceive the social world. Because the simultaneous treatment of such phenomena issues is very difficult, and that academic discipline has a significant power in the organization of knowledge, it is going to be explained in terms of one-dimensional globalization. People address this issue coming from different traditions of thought and having different priorities and principles of information which leads them to reject complexity and seek the relative simplicity of basic concepts such as capitalism, the nation-state, etc.

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