

**GROWTH OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION IMPACT OVER ROMANIAN
CULTURE FOLLOWING
THE ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Abstract

At present, the world has become a network of social relations and, between its different regions; there is a circulation of directions similar to the circulation of people and goods. In the whole world, this context of integrating in the network cultural practices and experience can be understood to represent a world culture. Certainly, the idea of a global culture was not possible only during global modernity. At the same time with the world development, facilitated by media and contemporary transport means, the circulation of texts (religious, political, literary, scientific ideas) shows a quick acceleration. Political, cultural and religious powers prove to be unable to stay against people circulation and communication development, therefore ideas and opinions. In conclusion, we can state for sure that Romania enters faster and faster in the epoch of culture and civilization mixture, speeches and passions.

Keywords: globalization, culture, intercultural, communication, modernity, westernization

Preliminary considerations

We can state from the beginning that today globalization is placed in the centre of modern culture, while cultural practices are placed in the centre of globalization. Therefore, we pass from a world prevailed by cultural isolation to a world prevailed by intercultural factors, from an era characterized by cultural autonomy of traditional isolated groups to an era generalizing interrelations and communications. Our epoch has the great historical privilege to pass from a world of isolated civilizations, based to a certain extent on different spaces and times, to a small world characterized by the same space (world market) and the same time (synchronicity of all events), birth of a communication and of a world community. At present, we notice a passage from a planet of closed civilizations to a world open to all people through travel and media, where there is a very close relation

between globalization, history and culture. Language, schooling, transport and communication systems, liturgical practice and identity, all of them were defined to a greater extent from the perspective of nation territorially limited. As a whole, nationalism was to become the most powerful cultural force, partly because it was systematically financially supported, set out by modern states. According to this interpretation, top of cultural globalization is found in the past, while the most powerful and significant cultural flows and relations were developed inside the borders of modern nation-states.

Globalization changes the way of Romanian culture concept, because culture was for a very long time, related to the idea of a fixed zone. Does global modernity promise to provide a global culture? To a certain extent we can state that such a culture already exists. At present, the world has become a network of social relations and, among its different regions, there is a circulation of directions similar to the circulation of people and goods. We can state that now it is a globalization of Romanian culture meaning complex connection. In the whole world, this context of integrating in the network of cultural practices and experiences can be understood to represent a world culture. Global culture "is equivalent to the appearance of a single culture, including all inhabitants of the world and replacing the diversity of cultural systems up to now"(Tomlinson, 2002:105). Obviously, such a culture has not appeared yet.

Certainly, the idea of a global culture was not possible only during global modernity. At the same time with the development of the world, facilitated by media and contemporary transport means, the circulation of texts (religious, political, literary, scientific ideas) points out a quick acceleration. Political, cultural and religious powers prove to be unable to stay against people circulation and communication development (parabolic TV antennas, video cassettes, internet), therefore ideas and opinions. In conclusion, we can state for sure that Romania enters faster and faster in the epoch of culture and civilization mixture, speeches and passions.

Amplifying the westernization of Romanian culture under the impact of cultural globalization

Cultural globalization supposes, not only empiric human contacts among civilizations (transporter revolution), but also intellectual instruments of understanding among contact groups in a more or less brutal manner. Let us call humanist sciences those intellectual instruments, having a wide enough meaning: history, philology, linguistics, archeology, sociology, philosophy.

Trying to create a global culture, an important role is played by foreign languages. English is undoubtedly placed in the top of hierarchy, being used both in Romania and in the whole world in all its types: written, spoken, formal, informal as well as registers specialized for economy, law, technique, journalism etc. It has become

lingua franca by excellence and keeps on strengthening this domination through a process of self consolidation. It also reached Romania as the main language of international communication in the field of business, policy, administration, science and academic world, being as well the dominant language of global publications and popular culture. The main language in the field of computers is English, being the written language for Windows and Internet protocols. At the same time, English is the language used in safety procedures, such as air traffic control. "Over two thirds of total scientists in the world write in English, three quarters of international correspondence is written in English and 80% of information in recovery systems of world electronic data is stocked in English"(Crystal, 1987:358). Another aspect of English domination is book translation. Thus, object of translations into other languages is held in a higher ratio by books written in English in original. "At a certain extent, this domination does not surprise at all. As the destiny of other languages points out, using a language is closely related with the power rates. English is mother language of those two modern hegemonic powers, United Kingdom and USA. Moreover, this power is exercised in all the fields of Romanian life: economic, political, military and finally cultural"(Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, Perraton, 2004:391).

As a result of IT development, we are also more and more witnesses of an avalanche of scientific and technical terms, which are used in many languages in English alternatives. Such terms as: *businessman, barter, broker, dealer, computer, marketing, management, manager, dumping, know-how, trend* – are used today in Romania without translating them. This invasion of English and American terms can be called *vocabulary globalization*.

The issue of one language domination and threat to linguistic diversity is related to another more general issue, that of *cultural imperialism*: the idea that one culture can be a hegemonic culture. This pessimistic construction of global culture idea prevailed at the end of the 20th century. Indeed, the theory of cultural imperialism can be considered one of the earliest theories of cultural globalization. As Jonathan Friedman wrote, the speech of cultural imperialism at the end of the sixties tended to prepare the ground for critical reception of globalization in the cultural field, presenting the process as an "aspect of hierarchical imperialism, namely higher and higher hegemony of certain central cultures, diffusion of values, consumer goods and American life style"(Friedman, 1994:195).

This concept of global culture is perceived today in Romania as the spreading of values, goods and American life style. In fact, the most visible sign of globalization seems to be spreading American coke and hamburgers in almost every country of the world. In "Lexus and the Olive Tree", Thomas Friedman wrote: "Today, globalization has Mickey Mouse ears, eats Big Macs, drinks Coke or Pepsi and works on IBM laptop... In most of the companies, people cannot distinguish among American power, American exports, American cultural assaults, American

cultural exports and globalization”(Friedman, 2001:400). The best proof supporting this statement is the convergence and obvious standardization of cultural goods worldwide. If we take any catalogue, from clothes to music, movie to TV, architecture, we cannot ignore that in Romania too certain styles, brands, tastes and practices nowadays have global circulation and can be met almost everywhere in the world. Certain marks and symbols of global mass culture have become already clichés: Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Calvin Klein, Microsoft, Levis, IBM, Nike, CNN, MTV – some of them becoming even synonymous of western cultural hegemony: Mc World, Coca-colonization, Mc Donaldsization and even Mc Disneyization.

What else does this uniform distribution of cultural goods mean in Romania as well, if not power of certain capitalist companies to control wide markets anywhere in the world? Global presence of these goods is a symbol of convergence towards capitalist monoculture, but it does not mean that we reduce culture to its material goods. Mc World is an experience of purchases as amusement, putting together commercial centers, multiplex cinemas, thematic parks, stadiums, chains of hypermarkets and TV (with flourishing channels of teleshopping) which changes human beings to increase profit.

Thinking about global culture means to point out the need for historical recovery of these Romanian non-western cultural traditions. We can accuse seriously the westernization as a trend towards planet uniformity and international standardization of life styles. When we speak about westernization, we certainly refer to spreading European languages, especially English and consumer culture as well as clothing styles, cooking customs, musical and architectural types, to a print of cultural expression dominated by media, a group of philosophical ideas and a range of cultural values and attitudes more and more present in Romania.

Romanian culture westernization represents the global spreading of social and cultural totality, materialized in certain elements of western life – its technology, industrial economic background, urbanization trend, ethical, philosophic and religious systems. None of them separately contains the western essence regarded as a synthetic unit of these different manifestations, as a cultural entity, a civilization phenomenon. For Romania westernization essentially represents a cultural phenomenon. Western civilization is therefore, paradoxically against culture, because it stands against, through its universal trend, the survival of a varied group of specific local cultures. This “westernization” of Romanian culture is determined by three factors: first, the expansion of transnational companies having their own culture; second it refers to urbanization processes related to rural community destruction, third is the process of building up rootless states. Critics against Western life could be interpreted as critics of modernity. Thus, we can wonder if social and cultural modernity is identical, necessarily, as western modernity, if becoming modern supposes compulsorily becoming western. We

believe that Romania cannot access to modernity only by following its own way, marked by its religion, history and civilization.

The beginnings of a global culture in Romania can be noticed in the presence of a certain number of distinct elements from an analytical viewpoint: consumer goods efficiently popularized, a collage of folk or ethnic styles taken out of the context, a few general ideological speeches about human values and rights and a quantitative standardized and scientific language of communication and appreciation, all of them relying on the new information and telecommunication systems as well as their computerized technologies.

“Survivor of old printing technologies, books become more and more relics of a word culture which slowly disappear – indispensable currency of democracy and a more and more fragile stick in front of the new world of images and sounds on the screen with a speed which makes useless any attempt to think out” (Barber, 2002:116). In Romania, TV and computers are more and more rapid nowadays. If TV is considered to be educational, what is the place of books? Nowhere, if we agree to become some type in the service of information entertainment TV sector of Romanian culture, this type we can call *TV literature*.

Assimilating the new by Romanian publishers involves change, the book format being vulnerable to computer technology. Technology threatens to destroy the world of college handbooks. If course book publishers do not wake up and do not learn how to bring out, sell and distribute other products in addition to books, computer technology will pull the carpet from their feet. The Romanian publishing technology is quickly changing and an author book can be now available in several formats – database, CD-ROM disk and interactive CD. New technologies facilitate the combination of journalistic, literary, plastic art, photo, music, film and video papers in multimedia and interactive formats. It is a little more complicated than opening a book, but when you have the equipment, you can open the wide literature directly on CD. When books become subordinated to multimedia projects and words are associated to attracting images, printed culture is jeopardized. “Books’ status in our days Mc World teaches us gloomy lessons about corrupting power of image creators in the print world and in the democracy world through this world”(Barber, 2002:117).

In today’s Romania, the TV and cinema do not replace completely books for sure. Moreover, they keep up with them a parasitic relation. Instead of raising the cultural level by means of books, the TV does not promote printed books. Reading becomes a new type of gossip. Due to the lack of readers, everything means printing books which are bought however by people, no matter if they read them or not: because in the McWorld, consumption requires only to buy and not to use the products, many of which are not necessary. Undoubtedly, thriller and mystery novels corresponding to cinema scripts have been bestsellers. The essential role

of writers in the McWorld is to feed the hungry appetite for stories and scripts for TV and cinema, intrigues and characters, perverse personalities and scandalous real events, which is more and more obvious in our country too.

At the same time American books raid upon the world publishing industry with the stories of movies and TV. Today, bestsellers in Russia, Switzerland, Brazil, United Kingdom, Netherlands inspired from successful movies, are strictly American. Pirate translations of science fiction stories, thrillers and erotic stories are flooding the Romanian bookshop shelves pushing out local products. Reading is wandering off and the tastes of the Romanian readers fall down rapidly, as the market is booming. Nowadays, literature aims at competing for money, meeting popular tastes and guaranteeing the publishers' profit.

Growth of globalization influence over virtual communication in Romania

Globalization represents a multi-dimensional phenomenon, an apparent non-problematic description, but on a closer examination it presents serious difficulties. It can provide an incredible power through knowledge and can be incredibly compulsive; it can homogenize cultures, but at the same time it enables many people to share their individuality in higher and farther zones.

The positive understanding of globalization is related to progress, through an exchange of information and a borderless economy, through a free game of powers present on the market. Consequently, among other aspects of globalization in Romania, an increasing role is played by modern information and communication means, especially internet. If the 20th century was the technology century, culminating in the last decades with a spectacular development of the IT field, the 21st century will be a communication century for sure.

Very few people could forecast the deep-going impact of IT revolution on Romania 18 years ago. Most of the experts agree that IT revolution represents the most important global change since industrial revolution at the middle of the 18th century. This rapid spreading of IT is determined by lower equipment cost and higher demand. Up to 2015, IT will register a very big progress, both in urban area and in Romanian rural area. However, some countries will not take advantage completely of this technology, among them being developing countries. The information society in Romania supposes the existence of an extended market, in which all citizens should have access to information. Only when the access to information is mass access, can we speak about an information society, and not when only elites have access. From this point of view, a major difference between the information age and the industrial age is that in the new economy, information consumers are also its producers. Now it has become more important *to know than*

to have. In the last two decades, the capacity to send information has multiplied thousand times.

After World War II, at the same time with the technical-scientific revolution, technical inventions represented the main factor of production function. After 1990, as the concept of information society was to get consistency, other important factors were added: information, management, R&D, professional training. The basis of Romanian information society is the new economy, this concept being formulated in the nineties. The creation and development of the new economy relies on the infrastructure built by electronic networks, with beneficial results for the economic growth and labour market. The information society relies on the information (or informational) market and informational goods. A controversial term is that of informational market, whose definition is given by Michael Dertouzos: "Informational market is composed of people, computers, communications, software and services, all these elements being involved in information transactions among organizations and persons. These transactions have the same economic motivation of traditional markets of goods, materials and services" (Dertouzos, 2000:56). Information goods are considered those products and services which can be distributed digitally, for instance, a book, a movie, a phone conversation.

The increase in the access to information actually enhances the opportunities of selling information goods to many segments of customers. Although in the first stage of its main development, the main use of internet network in Romania was electronic mail, today IT development has allowed the appearance of much more complex services. As the security measures developed to send information, internet has become one of the most important channels of distributing services, the financial-banking field included.

Unifying the technology in local and public computer networks, the possibility of market globalization was also founded in Romania. After creating the needed legislative environment, trading goods and services in virtual environment included more and more fields of activity, reaching the notion of electronic trade. The two basic elements which activated the electronic trade are electronic currency (card pay) and internet development. At first sight, electronic trade dimension in one country is directly proportional with the living standards. However, the studies done in USA, where electronic trade reached maturity, pointed out that the profile of electronic trade users via Internet was not that of rich people, sometimes users being even lower income persons. One of the most important reasons to buy via Internet is for Romanians the lowest price of products from a virtual shop, the companies using the technology to get optimal costs and higher efficiency.

Electronic trade relies on the motivation of Romanian customer, the most obvious advantages of virtual shops being the following: non stop access; customer

possibility to be informed completely before the purchase; rapid location and no move of several sources for the same object, finally purchasing at the lowest price; in order to meet actual demand, the supply changes more quickly. Via Internet, the consumption is evaluated in real time, therefore, market demand can be immediately determined leading to a higher efficiency for the seller and lower prices for the customer, representing a profit business for both of them.

The development of electronic trade in Romania depends a lot on the banking system, the electronic currency allowing the creation of virtual commercial space. Using the Internet, the transactions can be concluded at much lower costs than by any other means, no matter the geographical location of those involved. However, on line banking operations appeared in Romania relatively late. Although a standardization of the term used for this was not reached, there is a term which is to be imposed called *e-banking*, coming from *e-commerce*, but other terms are also used such as *on line banking* and *Internet banking*. The most important aspect related to virtual banks is the fact that they will not replace traditional banks, but appear as a complementary result created besides an already known bank, representing an alternative for banking transactions.

Regarding e-banking, the security aspects of sending information and the specific legal framework are very important for our country. Most banks, in their fight against electronic frauds invest great amounts of money in their own security systems. Today, we cannot imagine an economy without information systems of administration, no database at national level, ensuring, both the fluid development of services and the citizen comfort and safety.

IT brings the economy very close to an ideal model of competition, but governments in Romania still play an important role in ensuring the possibilities of exploring the opportunities created by technology. At the same time, education investments will be crucial, in order to provide both the manpower for the new economy and the training of consumers of informational goods. Due to the decrease in information and communication costs IT contributed to the globalization of production and capital markets. In its turn, globalization amplifies the income from IT. That is the reason why the most important role of governments in Romania is to keep the markets open.

The changes taking place in our country in the last 18 years opened the borders to information. Although without an experience in market economy practices, transition countries (ex-communist) should rapidly integrate, without passing through all the stages. We speak more and more about an electronic Europe, without borders from the viewpoint of communications and information. For Romania, those three directions needed to develop informational society are set up: infrastructure, legislative framework and digital literature (represented by specialized publications, as information source). At international level, investment

in infrastructure is much lower in East-European countries in comparison to western countries, which, at their turn, are much behind USA. Although, related to the number of inhabitants, the country with the highest development in e-banking is Sweden, much above the US level.

In our country, as in other transition countries, the main obstacle to developing the new economy is the weak infrastructure of telecommunication and lack of connectivity. At the same time with the adoption of the legal framework and a greater number of card users, the development of electronic trade and banking services will witness an important evolution in our country too. For Romania, the transition to the information society relies not only on the aspects related to the economic reform, but also on the fundamental change from the organization specific to industrial society, enterprises, to information society, which means education and research institution. This new organization will need social changes supporting and promoting intellectual elites, which cannot be caused by laws, but by fundamental changes in decision making at all levels and by changing mentalities.

In this type of virtual communication, an essential role is played by the English language. Due to this universal language, communication via Internet has become in our days modern society the main way to convey thoughts, feelings, ideas or opinions. New communication technologies more and more integrate the world whether we like it or not. Theoretically, these technologies could be removed, but only at a too higher price for the society development and only raising some higher and thicker walls. Knowing foreign languages is helpful for Romanians to improve their knowledge because now they can enter any library in the world only by a single click. We can be helped also by a better understanding of one language or culture beauty, customs and traditions of that country. Foreign languages facilitate this virtual communication a lot. From any point in the world, you can communicate via internet, any time of the day and night. Is this super-connectivity beneficial for us? In this super-connected world, each day we become paradoxically more solitary, more uncertain of who we are and how we should react. Now we do not attach to people, but we make teams with them, we have no friends, only contacts; we become unreal, virtual, dehumanized. This virtual super-communication causes a loss of marks, of individual identity, far away from our own ego. But people should be aware that this system of communication is built for human beings, not for machinery.

Europenization of American culture and Americanization of European culture

Europe's inhabitants have thought and acted for centuries as if Europe were the center of the world. For five centuries, the smallest of the continents is the most important of them, historically and culturally speaking. The United States of America were created as a nation and great power starting from mass emigrations of European peoples in the 19th and 20th centuries. The main destinations of world intellectual exile have become New York and then Los Angeles. USA has become Mecca, New Jerusalem of intellectuals. This fact means the end of intellectual hegemony of Paris, the end of cultural supremacy of Europe.

The leaving of European intellectuals (Romanians included) for the USA began in the thirties and marked a great change in the western world: dominant civilization of the Western is not in Europe but in the USA. Exile movement of intellectuals distinguishes by European general emigration, of anonymous emigrants who left Europe mostly for economic reasons. Generally, the exile of Romanian intellectuals had and has political, ideological, cultural causes: not privations send off people, but intolerance and oppression. According to the estimations of Laura Fermi, 1933 - 1944, the great wave included 25 000 persons. A small figure (at that time millions of emigrants crossed the Atlantic), but qualitatively important, because it affected a significant part of European intellectual elite (Fermi, 1968:67).

Although the group who dominates by far European intellectual emigration to USA comes from Germany, Austria and Hungary, it also includes a great number of Romanian intellectuals. They cover almost totally the range of intellectual and artistic professions. The intellectual revolution and the mutations caused by the progress made in the international communications (especially between Europe and USA) have become a phenomenon characteristic of the whole western civilization. The intellectual world is now an international community. The intellectual comes from one country, is born in that country, but belongs maybe more to an invisible college, is one of the first embodiments of the world citizen, therefore the Romanian one.

The wave of intellectual emigrations from Europe to America is an unprecedented event. During 1930-1940 world focused turned from great European capitals to other regions, more often than not to America. One of the European intellectual emigration effects was Europenization of American culture, to which the Romanian intellectuals also greatly contributed. By this formula we understand the US culturalization, a young nation somehow illiterate, who came into contact with the highly sophisticated culture of Europe, and assimilated the latest cultural and technological innovations of Europe (psychoanalysis, linguistics and logic, nuclear

physics). Another effect had lots of obvious and important results at historical level: At the end of the World War II, the cultural supremacy passed at least temporarily from Europe to America. The cultural distance between Europe and the USA slightly reduced, following the Europeanization of American culture after the flood of immigrants in the thirties, but also due to the return to Europe of a part of European intellectuals temporarily exiled in the USA during the war. Briefly, Europeanization of American culture was counter-balanced by an Americanization of European culture.

Far from being a realm of intellectual emigration, USA represents the convergence point and the rally center of intellectuals from all over the world. Now it is more about travel, exchanges, visits but also emigration and exile ones. Rapid transatlantic and intercontinental voyages make travel much easier, takes their irreversible character. In an age of reaction, the place where a researcher lives at one moment of his career, is often temporary and less important. Romanian researchers can easily take part in seminars and conferences in New York, Tokyo, Cairo, Paris, London and Berlin.

Conclusions

Most of the Romanians who crossed the cultural borders, in an apparently global, vital and irreversible manner, did it not completely and univocally. They have rather become mediators, go-between. Crossing a cultural border does not mean leaving your own culture without any possibility to return. It means accepting it as contingent, accepting to become a partial and/ or a provisional foreigner.

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