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Crossing Cultural Boundaries – The Impact of Intercultural Communication and Multiculturalism on Globalisation

The goal of this paper is to provide a new outlook on trendy concepts of intercultural communication and multiculturalism by interpreting them as basic concepts of understanding globalization, which can, in turn, be interpreted not only as the expansion of functionally diverse society through intercultural communication and multiculturalism but also as a creation of a hybrid multicultural society. According to the authors this overview will offer a new approach to globalization.

Keywords: intercultural communication, multiculturalism, globalization, intercultural dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a debate on the concepts of intercultural communication, multiculturalism and globalization. Each of the three concepts has been interpreted as either positive or negative and blamed for encouraging stere-

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otypes and all sorts of oppressions — linguistic, economic, business, literary etc. However, dichotomy remains about new ways of addressing these concepts intervening at the critical moments in history (such as present day) when so many countries are poised to abandon them for good.

MULTICULTURALISM OR HOW CAN ONE MELT IN THE POT?

To look at cultures from a versatile standpoint allows people to move beyond the horrors imposed by cultural hegemony and embrace different cultures. One way of doing this is by adopting a multicultural standpoint that reveals how the constant evolving and changing of cultures consistently maintains efforts to shun cultural hegemony. However, in reality, multiculturalism is directly related to global shifts of power, people and culture. In addition to this, some critics have made success in challenging the constantly growing Euro-centrism where they mostly concentrate on the influence of domineering European cultures and cringing *other* newly joined states. In that sense, a person may think of him/herself to be treated at one moment as a man/woman, at another moment as upper class – each time being helped or insulted by identification depending on the circumstances. Thus, when identities and cultures are analysed, they are broken up into numerous facets until it seems that Humpty Dumpty can never be put back together again. For instance, recent anti-multicultural events across Europe show anti-multicultural ideas proclaiming a world of *us* and *them* that makes it pretty clear that *our* values are superior to the multicultural ones proclaimed by the European Union. If this is what is emerging as the new paradigm of building a new national identity which is by all means anti-multicultural, it is deeply disturbing because it is not multicultural at all. This indicates a high level of cultural stereotyping which serves as the backdrop to this and helps secure such cultural rifts.

Insofar as it groups individuals and cultures into categories, multiculturalism, may overlook the practical reality that no one lives in just one box. That is most probably why some countries steadily embrace it as the foundation of diverse society while some refuse to accept it and call it the New Racism because of the infamous maxim: "Melt or get out of the pot!" Opponents of multiculturalism believe that in most cases one can only melt in the pot by assimilating into the dominant and/or hegemonic Western culture to avoid cultural and any other type of segregation.

On the contrary, multiculturalism seeks to preserve distinctly different ethnic, racial or cultural communities without melting them into one common or

dominating culture. Additionally, recent research considers multiculturalism as the route to a more tolerant and inclusive society because it recognises a diversity of cultures and rejects assimilation into the cultural traditions of the dominant group. Thus, multiculturalism appears as a cultural liberator and not as a cultural straitjacket, forcing members of minority cultural group(s) into authenticity, denying them the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves (Samovar and Porter, 2017, p. 250).

Differences in culture and religion are always seen as suggestive of profound differences. When this happens, theory of multiculturalism encourages, precisely the kind of cultural stereotyping it was designed to abolish. By contrast, the underlying assumption of this paper is that people are not very different from one another globally. This does not mean that everyone is liberal or supports equality between the sexes or gay population any more than everyone is kind to animals and nice to their parents. However, people differ enormously as individuals locally. They also differ in ways that reflect their gender, social class and culture. American anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod once recommended a term *the particular* that brings out the similarities in people's lives. "*The particulars*", as she puts it, "suggest that others live as we perceive ourselves living, not as robots programmed with cultural rules, but as people going through life agonising over decisions, making mistakes, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragedies and personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of happiness." (Abu-Lughod, 1994, p. 140)

Simply put, recognising similarities does not mean deducting differences: what one counts as tragedy, for example, is likely to be inflected by his/her cultural norms, as well as what they experience as moments of happiness. One of the ironies of multiculturalism is that in the name of equality and mutual respect between people it has encouraged people to view peoples and cultures as more systematically different than they are. In the process, it has also contributed to forms of cultural stereotyping that now help agitate opposition to multiculturalism.

CORRELATION BETWEEN MULTICULTURALISM, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GLOBALISATION

Today, in the world that is racially and nationalistically tense more than ever before both multiculturalism and intercultural communication have evolved considerably and have become interdependent on one another. In this way, they encourage people to see the world from a different perspective by offering con-

tinuous access to new experiences, new meanings and new understandings of different cultures, cultural spaces and worldviews. Simultaneously, intercultural communication in general has become the core concept in explaining globalisation because it seeks to identify, understand and adapt to communication differences across different cultures in the sense that communication between people can be negatively affected by ignoring the diverse cultural spaces and cultural realities of the culturally different others involved in communication.

In popular culture, globalisation often functions as little more than a synonym for one or more of the following phenomena: the pursuit of classical liberal (free market) policies in the world economy (economic liberal Westernisation), the growing dominance of Western forms of political, economic and cultural life (Westernisation or Americanisation), the proliferation of new information technologies (the Internet Revolution), as well as the notion that humanity stands at the threshold of realising one single unified community in which major sources of social conflict have vanished (global integration) (Baraldi, 2006, p. 60).

Fortunately, recent social theory has formulated a more precise concept of globalisation than those typically offered by the critics. This concept can be observed as the worldwide expansion of a functionally differentiated multicultural European society and globalisation can be interpreted only through intercultural communication theory that legitimises its cultural interpretation (Baraldi, 2006, p. 60). Hence, globalisation is a process creating interdependence among societies and cultures that were previously separated. Interdependence and intensity of relations in the world are the key terms in understanding how globalisation has been observed by sociologists. Robertson (1992), for instance, defines globalisation as the structure of the world and unique set of meanings. Giddens (1990), on the other hand, observes that globalisation gives an extraordinary intensity to social tensions at a world level, resulting from different types of processes and creating interdependence in the world.

Even if the expansion of economic markets and capitalism in the world has been the primary aspect underlined in globalisation, it has quickly become clear that this aspect is combined with other processes, without linear causal relationships. Thus, globalisation can mean openness to cultural change that creates new opportunities for dialogue, but it also threatens the survival of cultural traditions. Openness and closure to different cultures alike create the value of diversity but at the same time they threaten the source of diversity. That is why theorists of globalisation disagree that recent expansion of economy, trade and language has brought about the new type of colonisation — a linguistic one — as

well as a construction of a hybrid multicultural society and culture at the expense of a national culture (Samovar et al., 2017, p. 353; Baraldi, 2006, p. 62).

MIXED CODING AS COORDINATION OF GLOBALISATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

In recent decades, coordination of both globalisation and multiculturalism has been promoted by mixed coding. In Wieviorka's view, mixed coding is based on hybridisation which produces *métissage* which is "a fusion of different cultures, each one with its own history and tradition and the unity of differences; however, this unity is embodied in individual actions and consequently it varies according to the individual case" (Wieviorka 2000 *apud* Baraldi, 2006, p. 61). Mixed coding is an intrinsically contingent and unstable solution to intercultural problems, a result of continuous negotiation — which requires intercultural communication. For this reason the only way to promote mixed coding is to find forms of intercultural communication that embody it in specific social situations.

In 1994, formulating a similar idea Pearce (p. 50) observed that any communication is intercultural as each individual is culturally different from any other. From this perspective, in functionally differentiated societies, métissage means empowerment of personal diversity as the embodiment of cultural diversity. Instead, mètissage and hybridisation produce cultural diversity in society and create intercultural sensitivity in promoting a new cultural form. Thus, cultural diversity is not the product of differences between stable groups and societies but the consequence of a continuous production of hybridisation through intercultural communication.

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AS A MEDIUM OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The high contingency of this variety also produces a search for cultural stability and sensitivity to all cultural forms which can lead to harmonious polyphony, as well as to cultural and any other fundamentalism. In order to promote the former and avoid the latter, a successful intercultural communication is necessary (Baraldi 2006, p 61). As Jorgenson and Steiner (1994, p. 65) postulate, in the absence of such form of communication, risks of intercultural conflicts are very high. The best way to reduce this risk is through intercultural dialogue. Dialogue is the cultural form intended to abolish ethnocentric boundaries and stimulate cross-cultural adaptation, define the conditions of openness, exchange between

cultural forms and cultural encounters and create new cultural symbols. It is a form of communication requiring expression and acknowledgement of diversity. It promotes cross-cultural adaptation through intercultural learning which is defined as learning *from* other cultures, not *about* other cultures.

Lastly, as Baraldi (2006, p. 62-3) points out a multicultural society cannot be stable and last long without developing a common sense of belonging among its citizens. The sense of belonging cannot be ethnic and based on shared cultural and other characteristics, because a multicultural society is too diverse for that, but must be political and based on a shared commitment to the political community. Its members do not directly belong to each other as in an ethnic group but through their mediating membership of a shared community and they are committed to each other because they are all in their own different ways committed to a common political community. They do and should matter to each other because they are bonded together by the ties of common interest and attachment. This is why, although they might personally dislike some of their fellow-members or find their lifestyles, views and values unacceptable, their mutual commitment and concern as members of a shared community remains unaffected (Samovar et al., 2017, p. 390-413).

Conclusion

Today, more than ever before the concepts of intercultural communication, multiculturalism and globalisation guide the process of exchanging meaningful and unambiguous information across cultural boundaries in a way that preserves mutual respect and minimises discord. For such purpose, culture is perceived as a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations and norms of behaviour. In that sense understanding multiculturalism is something more important than a lifestyle choice, but something less preordained than the DNA. Finally, globalisation should be perceived as a catalyst for the future where the world will be unified into a cultural, multicultural and every other synergy.

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Превазилажење културолошких граница – Утицај интеркултуралне комуникације и мултикултурализма на глобализацију

Сажетак

Циљ овог рада јесте да представи једно ново тумачење концепта интеркултуралне комуникације, мултикулутрализма и глобализације у коме комуникација постаје основни принцип разумевања глобализације која се, такође, може посматрати и као експанзија функционално различитог друштва кроз интеркултуралну комуникацију и мултикултурализам, али и као стварање хибридног мултикултуралног друштва. По мишљењу аутора, овај рад би требало да пружи један нови приступ тумачењу концепта глобализације.

Кључне речи: интеркултурална комуникација, мултикултурализам, глобализација, интеркултурални дијалог.