

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary changes that occur in many dimensions of human activity attract the attention of scientists and casual observers – participants in the community life – for at least two reasons. Firstly, due to the intensity of the modern transitions, and their real and hypothetical consequences, and secondly because of their range, increasingly not so much local, regional or national, but global, implying a significant reconfiguration of the existing systems of sociocultural, economic, and political domains.¹

The history of civilization indicates that there are some fundamental, constitutive elements at each stage of this process. They include, among others, certain external circumstances and conditions like geo-climatic variables, migrations, and – in consequence – confrontations (peaceful or hostile) between groups with different genetic, biological, demographic, cultural, social and economic backgrounds, which translate into ways of managing and meeting the material and non-material needs of a community. Among these external conditions we can also find a diffusion process, understood as the time- and space-related transfer of cultural contents encompassing knowledge, competence, and skills.² These factors still maintain sufficient power and continue to co-determine civilizational development. They have been, however, supplemented with a significant new feature – an increased temporal dynamics, or pace. High pace of the ongoing changes in the social, political and economic dimensions has no precedence in human history.

¹ An example of such reconfigurations or changes may be the institution of the state, which loses its exclusive domination – until now recognized as primary and sole – in the formation of social, economic, political, and even – to some extent – cultural orders. See: M. Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. 3: *End of Millennium*, Oxford-Malden 2010; J. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier. Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World*, Cambridge-New York 1997.

² By broadly understood cultural contents I mean the knowledge, competence, and social skills, which together form a basis for the civilizational development of a group, a community, and – finally – of society.

Given the scale and scope of these transformations we get a picture of highly dynamic reconfigurations of the existing systems, which increasingly resemble integrated circuits. They consequently imply the emergence and existence of new, complex, multifaceted relationships. Such dependencies are often described and explained by reference to globalization, which as a term and a set of phenomena it relates to, which raise heterogeneous connotations of varying axiological load.

Globalization processes included in the ordinary meaning of the term and referred to collectively as globalization were already the subject of a number of descriptions, analyses, and attempts at deconstruction. These were to show the nature of that complex phenomenon, its causes, trajectories of development, and most importantly – its consequences for the various entities present in the international, national, regional, and local spheres. The complex and heterogeneous nature of the phenomenon discussed results in a multitude of interpretations: on the one hand, of similar and complementary character, but on the other – opposing, negating, or contradictory as to what the hypothetical effects of global transformations will be.

The resulting discourse often revolves around five issues: 1) the conceptualization of the phenomenon, 2) its historical development, 3) the determinants identifying the dynamics of globalization processes (development of science and research, technological progress, migration), 4) the socioeconomic consequences (cosmopolitanism, regionalism, localism), and 5) the effects on nation states, as – for now – still the main institutions which secure collective interests of society and maintain social order both in the internal and external, international context.

Among the multitude of descriptive and analytical perspectives we can distinguish three essentially dominant trends. The first of them, known as hyperglobalistic, emphasizes the importance and efficacy of economic mechanisms of unification, where market, as the impersonal *spiritus movens*, leads to a progressive unification of the conditions for a liberal, unfettered business. Thus, the convergence modes and forms of transfer of capital, information, goods and services often force the reconfiguration of the previously distinct, unequal economic structures. Following these modifications some other emerge, this time in a number of other areas: social, political, cultural (including religious, linguistic, and identity related).³ The supporters of this view include Ohmae, Strange and Cox, who point to four basic phenomena caused by globalization: 1) formation of a global market including the harmonization of rules, 2) neo-liberal politics in most of the highly developed countries, 3) increased competition enforced by the global market, and 4) denationalization – a process weakening the state's role of a major player on the international and national stage.⁴ From this perspective, entities operating at supranational level gradually

³ It should be emphasized that among the so-called four economic freedoms: capital, goods, services, and labour, the latter encounters greatest barriers and obstacles in terms of free movement.

⁴ K. Ohmae, *The Borderless World. Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*, London 1990; idem, *The End of the Nation State. The Rise of Regional Economies*, New York 1995; S. Strange, *The Retreat of the State. The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, New York 1996; R. Cox (ed.), *Approaches to World Order*, Cambridge-New York 1996.

come to the fore, successively exerting influence over further areas, hitherto reserved for the state. These include, for example, regulations on goods, services, and finance, which are often determined by the position of such institutions as the European Union, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The concept of a network state proposed by Manuel Castells does not seem, therefore, to be merely a hypothetical construct, but a real one, whose presence in the first decades of the twenty-first century becomes increasingly evident. Summing up the hyperglobalistic perspective, one could thus argue that globalization will lead to the emergence of a new, global, civil society through the proliferation of democratic and liberal values, supplemented by capitalist ways of management. Capital and technology will be the guiding forces behind further development, in which entities such as a nation-state could become the thing of the past, giving way to free trans-national actors, regional and local entities with high capacity for independent action and self-determination. This vision has not only its supporters, but also – for understandable reasons – its staunch opponents. The latter point to a unilateral way of drawing predictions, with no due regard for opposite trends, such as the strengthening of some of the world's authoritarian regimes based on undemocratic foundations, or those where social stratification is a norm, and deepening social inequality as a persistent feature (such as Brazil, India, or China). Thus, the contemporary transformations provide, as it turns out, the basis for different and contradictory interpretations, where, alongside the view of a unified world, there is also the view of the world divided into European, North American and Asian blocks, or the world of more or less opposing civilisations.⁵

Next to these extreme options, we can also find a more balanced one, indicating a possibility that the transformation processes take place gradually, with different intensity and at uneven pace, and not in all – but only in some regions, areas, or spheres.⁶ Contemporary transformations resulting from globalization processes take place in many dimensions, at various levels, and with different intensity. They become thus an interesting and important topic for public debates dedicated to diagnosing the current state of affairs, as well as to predict further civilizational development of societies, and perhaps even of a future global society (?).

This volume opens with the text by Joseph Hughes, entitled *Seven Revolutions, One Classroom: Discussing Global Culture Globally*. The author presents the basis of an educational college programme, developed by the U.S. Center for Strategic and International Studies. The programme's curriculum consists of elements dedicated to global education in aspects such as demography, technology, economic integra-

⁵ S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996; R. Boyer, D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets. The Limits of Globalization*, London-New York 1996.

⁶ T. Nierop, *Systems and Regions in Global Politics. An Empirical Study of Diplomacy, International Organization, and Trade, 1950-1991*, Chichester-New York 1994; A. Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World. The New Political Economy of Development*, London 1997.

tion, management, and security. The aim of this project is to promote intercultural dialogue, based on 1) knowledge and learning, 2) understanding, and, consequently, 3) utilizing the potential offered by the Internet and intercultural communication.

The issue of communication, this time in a slightly narrower, national dimension, appears in Garry Robson's text *Britain in Transition: Diversity, Therapy Culture and the Legacy of New Labour*. The author proposes to look at the British sociopolitical arena with particular focus on actions taken by the main actors of that political stage, operating in a multicultural "scenography". Cultural diversity, which has long been inscribed in the British context, provides valuable reflection on how to interpret the phenomena present in the collective and individual life (of society and of the individual). The author draws attention to the patterns of interpretation provided by the media, which attempt to impose specific interpretation paradigms of social, political, and economic phenomena. For obvious reasons, it raises critical reflection and mobilizes a search for better forms of organizing the interactions in the society-media-state networks.

Another text: *EU Citizens or Eastern European Labour Migrants? The Peculiar Case of Central Eastern Europeans in Britain* by Zinovijus Ciupijus, was developed on the basis of research conducted among immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Interviews with immigrants provided valuable information on the perception of immigrants by the host society and on the degree of access to tangible and symbolic goods, resulting from the immigrants' status as citizens of the European Union member states.

The Schengen Agreement introduced free movement of persons between most, but not all, states of the EU. Effectively, free movement has not been available to all. Depending on the country of origin, it resulted in differentiation between migrants who can move freely and those who are denied such unrestricted movement across the EU. Such divisions can be seen not only in the sphere of freedom of movement, but also in the sphere of other broadly understood goods – tangible and intangible.

Barbara Czarnecka of the University of Bedfordshire addresses the problem of the transformation of identity and worldview among women who migrated with their families to the UK after 2004. *Polish Plumber's Wife in England – Changes in Attitudes of Polish Women towards British Culture* is an interesting analysis based on empirical evidence, utilizing the Internet (and specifically instant messaging services) as a research tool. Through her study, Barbara Czarnecka provides valuable insight into the changes that occur with respect to the self-identity of an individual (in this particular case, of Polish women), and sheds some light on the pace of these transformations. It turns out that although the changes affect identity, they also strongly influence the migrants' perception of the surrounding environment, and result in a re-evaluation of earlier ideological, philosophical, religious, and cultural paradigms.

A work by Cornelia Caseau, *The Power of Migrants, or How Turkish Immigrants Influence the Austrian Economy*, places itself somewhere on the boundary between sociological and economic analysis. The author discusses Turkish immigrant work force settled in Austria. The role these immigrants play and the place they occupy

in the local social and economic structure reflect on the subjectivity of an individual and on their capability to directly and indirectly impact their environment. Conclusions presented by Cornelia Caseau may be a surprise to some readers, as it turns out that a long tradition of migration, as well as extensive historical and cultural links do not translate into a strong position on the labour market. The question *why* is subsequently answered in the article when the author attempts to explain such state of affairs.

Some issues of labour market and the associated presence of migrants as workers are addressed by Tatiana Ignatova of the North-Caucasus Academy of Public Administration of Rostov-on-Don in Russia. The text entitled *Globalization: Challenges for Russia in Post-Crisis World* goes beyond the previously outlined Euro-American context, directing our attention towards Russia and, to some extent (by proximity to Russia), towards the Far East markets. When trying to outline the global framework of transformations, one cannot overlook Russia as one of the major players in terms of both economic and political influence. Globalization processes that bring along unification/uniformity of goods and services provide also some evidence for the opposite phenomenon – i.e. for diversification and “closure” on what is forcefully proposed by transnational capital, transnational institutions and organizations. As seen in the article, the place and role of Russia, or more precisely – Russian migrants (including professionals) – on the global labour market is an interesting and important topic in the debate on the potential consequences of the current changes.

A slightly different way of analysis than presented in this volume so far is proposed by Áron Telegdi-Csetri. This author presents a philosophical and ethical concept of cosmopolitanism, realized, in this case, in line with the thought of Immanuel Kant. *Kantian Politics and Methodological Cosmopolitanism* presents a theoretical study of cosmopolitanism derived from the postmodern critique of contemporary anthropology. According to the author, cosmopolitanism should be seen as one of the types, dimensions, or forms of globalization. It is a set of values, attitudes, and identities, which are universal, apolitical and transnational. If so, would this really mean that the only common source of these values is culture? A universal culture? The text by Áron Telegdi-Csetri is an attempt to explain this dilemma.

The next article, co-authored by three scholars: Jiří Horák, Ingeborg Němcová and Barbora Vondrušková, proposes a look at the occurring changes from an ecological and legal-institutional perspective. This interesting and original approach, in contrast to the previous articles, shows an institutional dimension which shapes individual and collective activities. Increasingly sophisticated, more structurally complex, some institutions acquire more and more power, and this takes place at the expense of other entities and individuals, communities, and societies. Complicated rules, regulations, and restrictions usually unintelligible to an average individual form an increasingly regulated space, and thus are increasingly restraining the freedom of activities. This is visible in the text entitled *The EU Emission Trading System – the Aftermath*, where the authors offer a reflection on the dangers of globalization, manifested in the form of the increasing institutionalization.

The problem of institutionalization and of the impact of institutions on individual and collective action is discussed by Attila György in his article *Public Sector's Principal-Agent Theory in a Global World*. The text contains an aspect important to cultural theorists (researchers of cultures) concerning communication processes that take place at various levels of government, including the very basic level of individuals and so called 'street level' officials. The forms of such processes, participants' behaviour, and administrative and legal regulations affect the quality and effectiveness of communication between the state and society. The analysis of this aspect is trying to identify the factors determining the model of power distribution, and consequently to identify a paradigm of interaction between individuals and institutions.

Iva Bankova Moneva of the Varna Free University in Bulgaria, the author of the next text, *Fair Value in Financial Statements of Bulgarian Enterprises*, examines a very important issue related to the axiology of activities (individual and collective) incorporated in the Bulgarian financial and economic practice. Moneva points to phenomena which favour corruption and reinforce the patterns of illegal conduct and practices very distant from what has been recognized in liberal democracies of the West as correct and recommended. The lack of clarity and transparency of power, lack of public oversight over state institutions and officials and, above all, the lack of civil society allow for the persistence of pathological and *de facto* destructive phenomena. Is there a remedy? According to the author – yes, there is. The article outlines one such proposal.

A related topic, in terms of its focus on economy and finance (including transparency), is considered in a text by Nikolina Grozeva of the Varna Free University, entitled *Representing Development Costs of Application Software in Financial Statements: a Study on How Bulgarian Accounting Culture Needs to be Changed*. The author emphasizes the context of globalization in terms of information technology and directs readers' attention towards the transformations of material culture, economy, and the effects caused by intensified circulation of increasingly less tangible and more "independent" forms of money. The virtual world in which it all takes place requires more sophisticated tools and a highly specialized competence, available in some regions of the world, but not in others. A divide between "creators" and "producers-contractors" still persists – and similarly to the race to become an inventor rather than an imitator, contractor or subcontractor, it still continues. This article sheds some light on how national economies, including Bulgaria, participate in this global competition.

The author of the last text presented in this publication is José G. Vargas-Hernández, who represents the Center for Economy and Administrative Science at the Department of Marketing and International Business of the University of Guadalajara in Mexico. His article, *The Transfer of Governance from the Nation State to a Corporate Global Economy*, is an interesting study of the mechanisms of transformation operating in the global economy. The author describes how transnational corporations, as well as international organizations and supranational institutions, play an increasingly important role in this process. The complex array of relationships involves political actors – states and their associations, as well as market enti-

ties, which – by getting stronger – enter into competition for dominance in the global market with states. So where is the place for society? Is society able to effectively exert influence on these entities? With no definitive answers, these questions point to problems that arise from global contemporary changes.

This volume is not meant to provide a comprehensive examination of global transformations. It is meant, however, to provide an input into the discourse reflecting the state of mind and the ways of recognizing and interpreting certain global contemporary changes by researchers representing different disciplines, schools, traditions, and cultures. It offers evidence and track record of the multiplicity of views and thoughts on the processes related to globalization, which accompany individuals in their search for meanings attributed to phenomena that determine the human condition in its whole, complex spectrum.

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