

THE NEW FACES OF GLOBALIZATION. PERSPECTIVES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY [1]

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Abstract

Globalization is a broad phenomenon of economic, social, linguistic and cultural nature that has been going on for centuries, although some specialists emphasize the economic side of this "mammoth" phenomenon, considering that its most visible effects were not visible until after the 1980s. The 21st century is characterised by wide-ranging changes at the social level - an almost obsessive focus on digitalisation, including of administrations, the expansion of Asian markets, the loss of the main power pole of the USA, and above all the two belligerent situations at the European level, Russia-Ukraine and the war in Israel. In all this context, globalization has taken on new aspects which this article seeks to expose and analyse, without claiming to be an exhaustive study.

Keywords: *globalization, europeanisation, expansion, administrations.*

1. Introduction

Today globalism is perceived as the "current state of the global economy" but some specialists have recently considered this concept to be more related to the meanings of americanization and globalization [2].

This concept is derived from the macro-level expansion of the consumption of products such as Coca Cola, jeans (in all their variants), Mc Donald's, Starbucks, the idolized image of Santa Claus, the concept of "Secret Santa", the latter two leading to the massive sale of many products around Christmas, which is why we can assimilate them to the concept of consumerism specific to the American society and economy.

Based on the same concepts, namely those of globalization, americanization or europeanization, terms such as "anti-european, ethnic cleansing, global warming, transnational, etc." have also been taken over and then overused at the level of the various states [3].

In the sense given by Peter N. Stearns in his work, globalization is seen as a process of "transforming local phenomena into global ones" or as a unifying process whereby "there is one society" in which "people will function together" [4].

All of the above means the creation of an integrated economy, the emergence of foreign investors, including in small and less significant markets, the creation of new markets including in countries considered poor, labor migration, educational facilities (students access to the world's major universities much faster), the rapid spread of technology and the creation of huge networks between countries designed to positively affect all the issues outlined above [5].

In another version, globalization implies "international integration" which supposes "exchange of ideas, products or opinions" manifested at a macro, transnational level [6].

The first obvious rise of the idea of globalization took place before the First World War (e.g. the massive industrialization of the Victorian era), but its trend was downward after the world scourge of 1916-1918, precisely because of the negative effects from the economic and political perspective [7].

The paradox is that, in the view of some specialists, we can only talk about globalization around the 1940s, because that was when intergovernmental agreements such as NAFTA and organizations such as the World Trade Organization appeared, which lowered trade barriers between countries and tried to shape the so-called global market [8].

After World War II GATT was created, which lasted from 1948 to 1994, later being replaced by the WTO. GATT's defining role was to reduce tariffs globally, which stimulated trade between many countries and globalization took on new and large dimensions considered to be favorable [9].

The period between 1980-2000 has meant a development and a "very dynamic" manifestation of globalization, reaching an unprecedented level in terms of population of the globe thanks to international trade, the exchange of products between countries (including in the area of online trade), the penetration of foreign banks on the markets of various countries and the various currencies used at the global level [10].

Although most specialists see globalization as a phenomenon that involves several sides full of positivism, however, there are also many criticisms of this huge phenomenon related to the negative tendencies/paths of "westernization and globalization"- namely a loss of identities and the intervention of "uniformization and Americanization of cultures" [11]. Basically, as some specialists see it, globalization means, on the one hand, "freedom

and movement of goods and people or ideas" and on the other hand "local dependencies and traits" that identify with global ones [12].

2. Global trends of deglobalization

The COVID pandemic greatly changed the course of the world, including economic implications, with harmful effects being felt "both in the production and transportation of goods", which has raised a big question mark over the future of globalization in the form we already knew [13].

Against this backdrop of the pandemic and the impoverishment of some international companies and even states, a wave of hostility towards global structures that until yesterday were successful - WTO and NATO - has emerged, which has also led to the emergence of populist policies and the creation of an anti-European wave that has stimulated discussions about the exit of some states from the EU (for example, such discussions have emerged in Poland and Hungary). Also, international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have been severely damaged in terms of their image by what happened in the world, being accused of being "either too tough or too weak" in their attitude [14].

Moreover, this anti-globalist wave has shown, among other things, some of the negative aspects of globalism, many of them economic:

- Fear of the dissolution of the concepts of nation or nation state;
- Major job market problems, especially in the poorer countries that have been caught - willingly or unwillingly - in the great globalization avalanche;
- The emergence of polluting production activities in certain countries;
- The widening of economic gaps, as today 258 people are as rich as 2.5 billion people [15].

One of the undesirable effects of globalization has been the problem of well-paid jobs in rich countries where the labor market has been invaded by people from poor countries who accept the same job for a much lower salary than the citizens of the country where they work, which makes us think about the "costs" of globalization and not only its beneficial effects [16].

Also, different perceptions of the effects of globalization are also due to the way globalization is viewed by different interest groups or economic structures. Thus, some specialists consider that a change in prices can be seen as a direct consequence of globalization, but the direct links in this relationship have not been demonstrated, while others focus on the economic costs paid by less developed countries that were initially tempted to enter the great globalization vortex [17],[18].

3. Digitalization and interconnection of administrations - indirect evidence of globalization?

The broad phenomenon of globalization is represented, among others, in our conception, by everything that means technology, computerization, digitalization, since all these have the role of creating connections between states, societies, structures, institutions, collectivities, or this is precisely one of the initial roles pursued by globalization. One of the important projects in this regard and of late is Co-VAL, an EU-funded project that aims to find new ways of examining the co-creation of value and of a nature to improve and reshape public services across different states. Co-VAL is an online tool aiming to collect and map key initiatives on digital government, its synthesis being represented by Co-VAL Policy Brief „The 2021 State of Co-Creation: Delivering Services Together” [19].

Against this background, the Lisbon Council has launched a program called The 2021 State of Co-Creation: Delivering Services Together, with the aim of creating a powerful network of digitally-enabled actions to reform public services in the EU states, but also in the UKB and in six major cities - Amsterdam, Athens, Madrid, Milan, Paris, Madrid, Milan, Paris and Turin. The program itself is being launched as part of DigitALL Public, the European Commission's special event on the Digital Europe agenda and part of the 36-month research program Understanding Value Co-Creation in Public Services for Transforming European Public Administrations (Co-VAL), co-funded by the European Union [20].

How can cities assess how user-centered their services are? How well do local and regional governments succeed in meeting citizen's needs when designing digital services and where are the key areas where further progress is needed? To answer these

questions, the UserCentriCities consortium has launched a year-long initiative to develop indicators for measuring user-centeredness and data collection. In the same context, and to answer a complex range of questions related to how local and regional governments are succeeding in meeting citizen's needs when designing digital services and what are the core areas where further progress is needed, the UserCentriCities consortium has launched a year-long initiative to develop indicators for measuring user-centeredness and data collection [21]. [22].

In this sense, User Centri is intended to be a unique interactive online benchmarking tool for user-centeredness in local authorities, and its dashboard has been applied to collect data from 10 major cities and three regions in Europe: Barcelona, Catalonia region, Emilia Romagna region, Espoo, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Kiev, Kronoberg region, Madrid, Milan, Murcia, Rotterdam and Tallinn [23],[24].

While the 13 cities in the dashboard score 72% on the "enablers" pillar concerning "competences", "strategies" and "ecosystem" in the case of the 18 municipalities in the same sample this score drops to 54%. For example, smaller municipalities in the Emilia Romagna region find it more difficult to hire the right skills to design user-centered services.

On the co-creation aspect, it was noted that small municipalities placed little emphasis on co-creation and relied heavily on web analytics and other service data to improve digital services. In terms of online service delivery and ease of access, small municipalities are increasingly interested in using national eID authentication solutions and mobile apps for public service delivery. When it comes to proactive service delivery or the application of usability assessment tools that require advanced skills in user experience (UX) and data analytics, small municipalities are much slower adopter [25],[26].

3.1. Co-creation, a mark of digitalization

With regard to the co-creation mentioned as a focal point in the program, an important aspect of the development of user-centered services is that of coopting citizens also after the launch of online services. Only a few of the 13 cities and regions report that

they use service co-design or user research sessions as standard practice prior to the launch of each new digital service.

For example, the city of Milan reported that service co-design sessions are used when a local service is being redesigned to be digitized, and Helsinki is using Osallistu, a citizen participation portal where citizens are offered various opportunities to gradually participate in the design of services. In addition, through OmaStadi, a participatory budgeting service platform, Helsinki not only asks citizens to propose projects to be funded, but also uses co-creation to turn these ideas into valid and practical proposals together with citizens. Göteborg actively involves citizens in the design of all services, while Tallinn conducts research and user testing for the design of each service [27].

Gothenburg gives citizens the chance to get information and give feedback at one of the three service centers available in the city. Citizens of this city can also access different civic offices and get information about the services offered, ask questions related to associations, consumers or housing and have access to documents and minutes. Citizens can also send comments and complaints about the city's activities [28].

Tallinn is the only local authority in the Scoreboard that routinely carries out usability assessments of its online services using standard tools. Usability is measured on the basis of feedback received from users (both on a scale of one to five and on the basis of comments added [29].

In turn, the European Commission had in July 2021 a proposal for the digital interconnection of European cities under the title (EIF4SCC)-the Proposal for a European Interoperability Framework for Smart Cities and Communities. The aim of EIF4SCC is to provide EU local government leaders with definitions, principles, recommendations, practical use cases drawn from the experience of cities and communities across Europe and beyond, and a common model for ensuring easy service delivery to the citizen across cities, regions and regions [30],[31].

The present challenges and the technical/digital remedies to them make it useful to improve interoperability. Lack of interoperability leads to a lack of integration of services provided locally or a lack of communication between different platforms and/or technologies. Lack of interoperability is also a major hindrance to fostering the progress of innovation in cities and communities. It can delay the contribution to the goals set in

the Digital Future of Europe and the EU's Green Deal. Advancing interoperability will help to fully address the challenges facing cities and communities through digital solutions and technological advances. In addition, interoperability avoids technology lock-in and helps to create a market where a level playing field prevails and where there can be a growth of smart cities. Here, cities and communities benefit from varied standards-based solutions that are interoperable and much easier to access, reducing the time to deploy and deliver services to the communities concerned [32, [33].

Another useful project in this respect is The Intelligent Cities Challenge (ICC), which is intended to be one of the European Commission's largest initiatives to support European cities in both their green and digital transitions. The ICC supports cities and their local economies by facilitating state-of-the-art knowledge and advisory services to address two major challenges: transitioning to a net zero emission economic model and, at the same time, facilitating sustainable development for EU citizens. To this end, the ICC offers a tailor-made support program of advice and networking to help cities launch local green business partnerships [34].

Being a member of the ICC, cities gain the chance to benefit from an energetic and powerful network, have access to customized advisory services and sustainability management techniques, and above all they are provided with connections to "mentor cities". Building on the success of the previous edition of the ICC program (2020-2022) and the Digital Cities Challenge (2017-19), the ICC has now strengthened its offerings and provides an extensive high quality network, a solid methodological framework and well-developed support mechanisms [35].

Today, we can say that both at the European and global level, local authorities are on the threshold of a significant transformation, partly driven by the harnessing of digital capabilities to increase their capacity and that there is a huge capacity to stimulate digitization led and facilitated by local governments. This, in turn, can stimulate economic growth, transparency, improved governance, efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain and Digital Twins are at the forefront of this digital revolution as they deliver smart cities and sustainable urban systems, improve governance and facilitate inclusive service delivery. The huge impact of digitization dramatically restructures (for

the better) local governance, strengthens the resilience of communities and creates new pathways to sustainable societies, which puts the game-changing power of digitization and how local governments and communities can use it to its full potential in a favorable light.[36],[37].

4. Conclusions

Regardless of the trend regarding the pluses or minuses of globalization, we note that this phenomenon has united as many countries, cultures, economies, firms, creating unprecedented structures and reformulating principles of operation of all the above, influencing without any doubt religions, national languages, the development of certain regions, the impoverishment of other nations, leading from gastronomic to linguistic loans (in many countries many English terms have entered the English language without which today dialog seems almost difficult to realize – week-end, job, sandwich, must have, management, part time, assistant manager etc).

The trends related to the phenomenon of deglobalization are largely based on the economic impediments felt by certain countries - the rejection of certain products on international markets, the conditioning of production, dependence on products from certain markets (e.g. China, Japan, USA etc.), excessive borrowing, consumerism (obsessive consumerism in some cases), the spread of obesity among adults, but especially among young people/teenagers as a result of the consumption of junk food, also borrowed.

Also, the unprecedented development of technology, the boom in digitalization have done nothing but show us that there is the possibility of creating huge networks, not only of an economic nature, designed to link cities, communities or administrations in Europe or the whole world. The examples of European programs given above, in our article show just some of the unprecedented possibilities currently available to citizens of communities located at a great distance from each other. These facilities, such as obtaining documentation, certificates or information of interest, are ensured precisely through the digitalization of administration, a broad phenomenon designed to ensure interoperability and interconnectivity between companies/communities or individuals located thousands of kilometers away.

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