



Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska\*

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

## Globalization: its complexity and critique – on the need to direct the society towards knowledge

### KEYWORDS

globalisation, alter-globalization, antiglobalization, knowledge orientation, development

### ABSTRACT

Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska, *Globalization: its complexity and critique – on the need to direct the society towards knowledge*. Culture – Society – Education no. 2(24) 2023, Poznań 2023, pp. 49–67, Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN (Online) 2719-2717, ISSN (Print) 2300-0422. <https://doi.org/10.14746/kse.2023.24.2.3>

Contemporary discourse on the quality of a globalising world of multiple opportunities, the factors determining shifts in the social configuration and the condition of the human being seeking their place in a reality in constant change is one of the most important orientations. The contemporary social configuration opens up a wide range of possibilities for individuals to construct their own biographies. Contemporary studies on the quality of the globalizing society necessitate considering the need to shape society based on knowledge and reflection on that knowledge, while also guarding the values upon which this knowledge depends. The immanent characteristic of the renewal of knowledge capital means continuous development. The variety, fragmentation, variability and complexity of the forms of organisation of social life in a globalising society determine changing perceptions of development and overcoming the tension between the experiences of the past and the possibilities of the future.

---

\* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7470-1473>.

## Introduction

Perspectives on the globalizing world are difficult to capture due to its dynamic and ever on-going nature, always in the process of becoming. This view finds contemporary confirmation in the reflections of Bauman, according to whom “the concept of globalization conveys the indeterminate, capricious and autonomous nature of the world and its affairs, the absence of a center, the absence of a desktop operator, a team of directors, a management office. Globalization is another name for «new world disorder»” (Bauman, 2000a, p. 71) and “refers directly to G.H. von Wright’s «anonymous forces»; forces operating in the void, on a foggy, sinuous, untameable and untraversable «no man’s land», extending beyond the reach of anyone’s ability to seriously plan and act” (Bauman, 2000a, pp. 72–73). The above considerations indicate that the essence of the concept of globalization is complex and it is difficult to determine its basic meaning.<sup>1</sup>

## The phenomenon of globalization in the modern world

Globalization of the modern world, which results from the development of global civilization, is approached as a final phase, advanced or declining, and certainly specific stage in the development of the culture of societies. Locating the humanist discourse on globalization in the “post-modern era”, which starts, according to Toynbee, in 1875 (Tobera, 2000, p. 9), we can observe that the new space of uncertainty and ambivalence of the transformation of the modern world is a consequence of the age of modernity, the age of liberated reason and the industrial revolution, whose heyday fell on the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Profound changes in social systems, which are constantly undergoing successive transformations, took place within a few decades of the new world order. The direction of transformations in the development of societies is reflected in the distinctions between pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial society by Bell (1975), agricultural, industrial and post-industrial society by Toffler (1997) and Cooper’s division of states into pre-modern, modern and post-modern (Cooper, 1997). Strictly global is the transition from industrial to information society, from power technology to ultratechnology, from national to global economy, from short-term to long-term thinking, from centralization to decentralization, from institutionalized aid to self-help,

---

<sup>1</sup> The issues addressed in the article represent an excerpt from reflections on the phenomenon of globalization covered (in a broad theoretical and empirical context) in the work *Tożsamość młodzieży w perspektywie globalnego świata. Studium socjopedagogiczne* (Cybal-Michalska, 2006).

from representative to participatory democracy, from hierarchy to network, from North to South, from an “either-or” scheme to multiple choices, as indicated by the characteristics of the most important megatrends and directions of modernity distinguished by Naisbitt (1997). Another noteworthy concept is the transition from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society) proposed by Tönnies and developed by Robertson, making a distinction between global *Gemeinschaft* and global *Gesellschaft* (Robertson, 1992, pp. 78–79). The civilization of the society of “late modernity” (Giddens) is the era of the “risk society” of Beck (1992), living in conditions of heightened global risk unlimited by time and space.

In the light of the new perspective capturing globalization as the “indigenization (local character) of modernity” and the formation of a “system of culture of cultures” (Sahlins, as cited in Burszta, 1998, p. 171), highlighting the breakthrough in exclusively homogeneous approach to this process, its essence consists in a system of dichotomous tendencies in thinking about the category of globalization as a tool for describing the socio-cultural and civilizational development of the world.

Today’s world has become a global ecumene. However, this does not mean a tendency to universalize cultural values that are replications of patterns that characterize Western societies. For the authors of the homogeneous view on globalization (Amin, Gunder, Wallerstein), “the dominance of these patterns manifests [...] the subordination of local particularities to the universal processes” (as cited in Kempny, 1998, p. 243). The theoretical basis for the discussed approach is found in the theory of world system developed by Wallerstein, referring to the process of integration and interaction of the world system in economic terms, characterized by the transition from the crisis of feudalism to the beginning of the geographic expansion of capitalism (from 1450 to 1640 – phase I) and then, through the phase of agrarian capitalism (until 1760), early capitalism (until 1917) and developed (1960) industrial capitalism, until the phase of post-industrial capitalism, typical for modern times (since 1970), and considered by Robertson as a phase of uncertainty (Starosta, 2000, p. 49).

The periodization of the development of economic relations (economism) with the dynamics of cultural development (culturalism) is pointed out, among others, by Bhabhe, Hall and Said. Thereby, they emphasize the heterogeneous nature of globalization, understood after Pieters as “hybridization, i.e. overlapping of phenomena, fragmentation and unification of social forms and cultural practices, resulting in a multiplicity of hybrid creations, taking the form of a global intercultural *mélange*” (as cited in Kempny, 1998, p. 243), in which breakthroughs in the economic and political spheres are determined by cultural factors.

The theory of globalization, as approached by Robertson refers to the conceptualization of the world, assuming the reduction of the tension between the tendencies distinguished in the dichotomous system. The essence of the development of societies in global conditions “does not imply a process of eliminating locality; moreover, there is no contradiction between the universal and the local, between the logic of the world system and the search for «domesticity» by individuals functioning locally” (as cited in Kempny, 1998, p. 244). Consequently, a critical issue for emphasizing the absence of one-dimensional globalization involves Giddens’ distinction between two co-evolving, intertwining and determining processes: globalization and glocalization. Thus, as Robertson notes, globalization, defined as the intensification of social relations with a global scope, refers to “shrinking” of the world, on the one hand, and on the other, to the raising awareness of this “wholeness” of the world (Bauman, 2000a, p. 6). While, as Bauman emphasizes, “what some perceive as globalization, others may understand as localization” (Bauman, 2000a, p. 6). After all, Borges reminds us that “the world is a sphere whose center is everywhere, while the boundaries are nowhere” (Golka, 1999, p. 165).

A different attempt to organize the conceptual apparatus is revealed by introducing two categories: “glocalization” and “grobalization”. Glocalization can be defined as the intertwining of the global and the local, having its effects in different geographic zones. The concept of grobalization, as a desirable companion to the term glocalization, focuses on the imperialist ambitions of states, corporations, organizations and the like, and their desire, and indeed the need, to expand into different geographic zones. Their main goal is to see the growth (hence, the term grobalization – from *grow*) of their power, their influence and in many cases their profits around the world. There is no unnecessary judgement implied here – there can be negatives associated with the glocal (e.g. lack of openness to some useful grobal aspects) and positives associated with the grobal (e.g., providing new drugs and medical technologies) (Ritzer & Ryan, 2004, pp. 300–301).

Unification and diversification are complementary processes, interacting with each other and crucial to the modern phase of development of global society. The paradigm of globalization in the socio-cultural plane, is revealed in a binary arrangement of the following extremes: decontextualization vs. recontextualization (existence in isolation from the context vs. the search for a new contextual quality), decomposition vs. recomposition (decomposition of the cultural structure vs. the formation of new cultural constellations from abstracted fragments of cultural reality), deterritorialization vs. reterritorialization (detachment from the local context of cultural content and form vs. the search for “domestication” in another culture), transculturation vs. internalization (culture, as a set of interrelated, con-

ditioned and interacting phenomena, undergoing hybrid displacement of cultural content and forms vs. the desire to internalize it by the individual, who processes the cultural material, endows it with meaning, specific individual significance and expresses it in behavior) (Korporowicz, 1999, pp. 90–92). Consequently, the analytical value of the phenomenon of globalization points to the need to distinguish the dichotomous processes of socio-cultural transformation that characterize the experience of the modern world.

In view of the dynamics behind the development of the “new locality” and the explosion of cultural diversity phenomena, their universality and intensity, globalization is the result of the processes of diversification and cultural pluralization of today’s world, hence it implies the “heterogeneity of intercultural dialogues” (Aparadurai) at the local and national levels and reveals the progressive “organization of diversity” (Smith) rather than the replication of unification (see: Korporowicz, 1999, pp. 90). In this perspective, globalization embodies a broad spectrum of global world issues, in a situation of diversity, ambivalence and ambiguity, which is not without influence on the formation of a new socio-cultural quality of life, revealing the primacy of individualism over collectivism in the post-modern era.

Worldview references, which differentiate the quality of the multithreaded discourse on the phenomenon of globalization, are reflected in the social orientations and attitudes represented by “neoliberal globalization enthusiasts”, “moderate reformers” with different orientations: social-democratic, social-liberal, Christian or conservative, as well as antiglobalists and malcontents (Morawski, as cited in Tarkowska, 2004, p. 204). The heterogeneous nature of the phenomenon of globalization, as well as the multifaceted nature of its appraisal on the axiological and evaluative level, prompts reflection on the deepening problems with its interpretation and evaluation. These dilemmas arise, among other things, from the fact that understanding the transformations of the global world (which have a spontaneous rather than institutionally planned nature) is determined mainly by their evaluation and appraisal on a micro-scale and a one-dimensional way of approaching globalization, pointing, for example, to economic, political, social or cultural globalization (Robertson, 1992, p. 80). The usefulness of the micro-perspective for the presentation of globalization in terms of a general, holistic description, is difficult to specify, because, as Golka (1999) points out, in the analysis of the phenomenon of globalization “we see the trees, but we do not see the forest, we see some of its manifestations, but we do not see the whole, and who knows whether we will ever create such tools of observation that will make it possible to understand it” (p. 112). Drawing attention to the need for a holistic perception of globalization as a phenomenon (pointing to its processes, structure and function), which would

be most fertile for describing the peculiarity of the processes taking place in the world (their interdependence and interconnectedness) and the difficulty of grasping globalization due to its dynamic nature, prompt a permanent reflection on the quality of globalization in the modern world and a more comprehensive answer to the question “how to make the transition from a «series of detailed relations» to a «general description»?” (Tarkowska, 2004, p. 201).

## **Illustrations of worldview contestation and ideological alternatives to globalization**

In an attempt to understand the essence of the hybridization of the modern world, inherent in the polyphonic discourse becomes a focus on conceptual, ideological, political and ethical alternatives to globalization, which are revealed by advocates of **alter-globalization** and **antiglobalization** initiatives and movements. Globalization, as a phenomenon determined by the diversification and the cultural pluralism in the modern world, reveals, according to Bauman, the progressive polarization of positions within individual societies, as well as between societies on a global scale. “Globalization divides and unites in equal measure, and the reasons for the division of the world are the same as the factors stimulating its uniformity” (Bauman, 2000a, p. 6). The rhetoric presented above, characterizes mainly economic (neoliberal) globalization as the primary source of polarization and growing disparities between different countries, resulting in the deepening dependence of the world’s periphery on its center and the underdevelopment of the former (Nowak, 2001, p. 158). The above considerations are situated in the context of Falk’s insights. According to the said political scientist, two different visions of globalization should be distinguished: “globalization from above, generated by huge and often invisible forces, and globalization from below”, which can be referred to a number of grassroots initiatives of a contesting nature. “Globalization from below”, which is characterized by the subjective sense of globalization phenomena (micro-perspective), is a response to “globalization from above”, identified with the inevitability, complexity and unpredictability of globalization trends based on neoliberal principles (Falk, as cited in Głowacki, 2004, p. 345). An interesting illustration of worldview contestation (which consists of a wide range of resistance movements – *globalization from below*) is found in the contemporary antiglobalization movement (Klejsa, 2004, pp. 315–335), which, according to Cohen, succumbs to a strong temptation “to attribute to globalization the source of the difficulties encountered, including those situations where more depends on internal changes

in society than on external factors” (Cohen, as cited in Tarkowska, 2004, p. 208). Contestants of globalization want to manifest the sense of injustice, exploitation, frustration, exclusion and marginalization of individuals, groups, societies that has been growing in the world for several years (the widening “gap” between developed countries and poor Third World countries) (Weede, 1990, pp. 174–175). Also they point to the risk associated with terrorism used by separatist and fundamentalist groups (“war of civilizations” – S. Huntington), progressive and deepening economic inequality, the consequences of which include a shrinking labor market (“the end of work” – Rifkin), mass unemployment, instability of employment, as well as the emergence of “homo economicus” (Zybala), a “caste of global people” (Bauman) who are juxtaposed to those trapped in localism (see: Tarkowska, 2004, pp. 206–207), i.e. the so-called *underclass* (a subclass of people who are permanently marginalized by society – Zybala). The antiglobalization is not focused on solving the dilemma whether negative effects or aspects of globalization are solely derived from the phenomenon per se, but on emphasizing the slogans that “globalization is responsible for the evils in the modern world” (Dylus, 2001, p. 17), and “the world is not a commodity” (Prejs, 2004, p. 16). It is stressed that “globalization is not global” (Tarkowska), reasoning that it affects only 1/3 of the globe’s population, which indicates that globalization is identified mainly with international economic integration, which by offering a vision of a “better world” (economic prosperity) contributes to the division between the center and the periphery of the globe. A number of controversies, centered around the essence and effects of neoliberal globalization, in practice lead to polarization of positions in the discourse of antiglobalists themselves over the global aura of the modern world. In addition, the “ideology of globalization” (Pankowski), referring to a general statement on the inevitability of the qualitative development of civilization processes in terms of neoliberal globalization, consistently marginalizes paradigms alternative to globalization, discrediting its opponents (Wielgosz, 2001, p. 131) who keep asking: “if it’s so good, why is it so bad?” (Klejsa, 2004, p. 326). Consequently, the inevitability, complexity and unpredictability of the processes of globalization, also contribute to the qualitative differentiation of the antiglobalization movement, or rather, antiglobalization movements, which, as Pankowski notes, “in their diversity face dilemmas of choosing the further path” of moving towards “global solidarity” or xenophobia (Pankowski, 2004, p. 97).

Social movements, being a constructive element of socio-cultural reality, are an integral part in the processual nature of global social change and stimulate it. Global society – highly urbanized and industrialized – contributes to the atomization of communities. The internally diverse antiglobalization movement, which is

a response to the “lost community” is becoming an expression of “social capital” (Putnam), meaning a network of spontaneous ties, mutual self-organization of people, formation of numerous structures which are established to free themselves from the constraints that prevent the fulfillment of human aspirations or achievement of important tasks for current or future generations. The isolated individual, living in a society of global change, increasingly dominated by the abstract forces of the world economy, begins to feel a “void of values”, experiences a “Lilliputian complex” (Ossowski) and manifests dreams of reviving groups that would provide substitutes for the personal closeness characteristic for primordial groups. “Learning through a community of experience” (Goodwyn) can also be manifested in numerous grassroots activities and initiatives that vary in form, methods and levels (e.g. massive and global development of NGOs [Pankowski, 2004, pp. 92–94] or various associations), reflecting the fluidity of the structures of the antiglobalization movement and expressing the birth of the global consciousness among the opposition. The new semantic quality within the culture of resistance, protest and contestation towards globalization, born in the wake of global transformations, makes it possible to label the globalization contestants as an “antiglobalization movement” located in the area of counterculture and even alternative culture, as a non-institutionalized actor of social change. An illustration of the distinguished definitional parameter of the movement is the formulation of Eyerman and Jamison, according to whom “a social movement is a more or less organized form of collective action [...] undertaken by groups or individuals whose common goal is the public expression of subjectively felt dissatisfaction, and the change of what is the social and political cause of this dissatisfaction” (Misztal, 1998, p. 344). The heterogeneity of the phenomenon of globalization contributes to interpretative, definitional and methodological arbitrariness in the debate on the antiglobalization movement. Klejsa stresses that the constitutive feature of the antiglobalization movement can be considered voluntarism, self-governance, as well as the presence of “ethnocentric” tendencies, which in practice can contribute to the emergence of new varieties of “iron curtains” (Klejsa, 2004, p. 333).

The usefulness of the discourse on globalization for interpreting the antiglobalization movement in the face of new challenges, both local and global, consists in the possibility to show its activities by attempting to describe and interpret the diversity of contestation thoughts having a pragmatic orientation, mainly focused on criticizing the dominant neoliberal economic model. In the criticism of neoliberal globalization, the following tendencies should be mentioned: (a) a culture of protest against the globalization of the world economy, where local and national contexts are losing relevance, contributing to the erosion of the state institutions;

(b) a culture of protest against the cultural expansion of the Western world, aiming to homogenize the world, which is a replica of Western European lifestyles, values, rules, norms, beliefs; (c) a culture of protest against globalization, which is an “exclusion machine” driven by a broadly understood turbo-capitalism that contributes to the social division into the center and periphery; and (d) a culture of alternative thinking about the need to replace neoliberal globalization with globalization in a different sense – alternative globalization (Kiely, 2004, p. 298).

The culture of protest against neoliberal globalization, determined by economic processes, represents a reaction to “market expansion, based on free, not subject to state regulation (or dependent on it to a small extent) transfers of transnational capital, which led to labor markets in individual countries being almost entirely at the mercy of corporations, ready at any time to move production to another region of the globe” (Kiely, 2004, p. 324). The starting point for the reflection and practice in the antiglobalist movement is “whistle blowing about the ideology represented by neoliberal globalization and social-economic processes implied or legitimized by it” (Pankowski, 2004, p. 86), which identifies it with “irrational rationality” (Klejsa). An interesting illustration of global capitalism as a certain ideological proposition for the world are the hallmarks of global capitalism as defined by antiglobalists, namely: “the strong can do more”, “the strong do not have to reckon with the expectations of the local community”, “a strong transnational corporation can impose conditions on the local government”, “strong investors often disregard the rights of the worker”, “the strong do not care about protecting the environment”, “the strong do not count with the rights of local communities” (Domosławski, 2004, p. 73). The current phase of restructuring the global market economy and the internationalization of capital not only contributes to the growing interdependence of national economies, but imposes deep and multifaceted social transformations.

The warp of contestational thinking is to accentuate the contradiction revealed by equating the answer to the question “What is good for man?” with the answer to the question “What contributes to the growth of the system?”. The assumption that “whatever serves the growth of the system (or even one large corporation; Korten, 2002, p. 85) serves also human development” (Klejsa, 2004, p. 327), was negatively received by many antiglobalist formations, who perceived it as the adoption of a particular vision of human nature, according to which man is inherently selfish, greedy and anti-social. If man is perceived as selfish, then the anti-social nature of their behavior appears as a “natural” consequence rather than a response to capitalist globalization. All that matters to *homo economicus* is profit. If anything is worth doing, it is only on the condition that it brings tangible, calculated benefits

“here and now” (Zybała, 2004, p. 22). The way antiglobalists interpret the “technologization of the mentality the modern man” (Lefebvre) is radically different and emphasizes the pro-social, pro-normative nature of man, only that the world, arranged according to neoliberal principles, does not meet their expectations (Klejsa, 2004, pp. 327–328) and takes away the hope for a better tomorrow. While the globalization advocates claim that “things are better than they used to be”, the opponents, interpreting the effects of omnipotent liberalization, ask: “why is it so bad?” (Klejsa, 2004, p. 326), and remind that “the world can be different” (Grefe et al., 2004, p. 13). The epidemic of selfishness and “ego fever” (Beck) are the manifestations of personality regression. Mental illness, as seen in Fromm, can “reach not only an individual, but can also affect the social structure” (Zybała, 2004, p. 26). The author warns that this happens when the latter hinders the inspiration of a human individual to reveal the best human qualities and aspirations. He considers the overwhelming desire to rule over others – the lust for power – as the most destructive force. While it is true that an individual wants to rule over others and strives to own more and more possessions, the essence of this attitude is by no means clear. Underlying what Fromm calls “economic religion”, which normalizes the individual’s worldview, a second bottom can be discovered, which manifests “in the form of a constant and nagging fear of losing the power one possesses”. The context of values, the search for the meaning of life, is an important element in the debate on the neoliberal economy. Handy’s reflections exemplify the said cognitive inquiry into the world of non-obviousness of economic prosperity. The author of *The Hungry Spirit* gives the impression that humanity looks with mixed feelings at the world that Western European civilization has created. “We are surprised by the consequences of capitalism, because while its role in creating prosperity cannot be questioned [...] as we can see, it does not always lead to a world better off; [...] this new fashion of turning everything – even one’s own life – into a business is probably not a good solution” (Handy, 1999, p. 8). Basing social life solely on the determinants of economic efficiency contributes to a “civilizational collapse” (Zybała), from which it is possible to recover, as John Paul II emphasizes, by activating control mechanisms over the logic ruling the market (Jan Paweł II, 2001, pp. 48–51).

The criticism of globalization, as defined by antiglobalists, also applies to turbo-capitalism, identified with the capitalism of the stock market, speculation and instant success (Kiely, 2004, pp. 280–287). According to the contestants, “the clenched fist of turbo-capitalism” (Klejsa) contributes to a sharp division “into a few speedsters and a long peloton of turtles” (Domosławski), “into the Silicon Valley heroes and an abyss of despair” (Luttwak) (Domosławski, 2004, p. 82). The

modern model of capitalism is distinguished by the principle “the winner takes it all” (Domaslawski). Consequently, the antiglobalization discourse points to the negative consequences of globalization, posing the risk of exacerbating the adverse phenomena on global scope (not only within Third World countries), such as poverty, social exclusion and self-exclusion, marginalization or unemployment. Quasi-peripheral states, defined as transitional economies, engage peripheral states through strategies of ‘colonial’ dependency, in the same way that center states engage quasi-peripheral states. This hierarchical arrangement leads to a global division of labor in which workers from quasi-peripheral and peripheral states contribute to the production process with unequal results. Given the dependence of the distinguished states on the center states for access to global markets, it is not surprising to have a significant advantage over them for the center states and their multinational corporations (Chirayath, 2004, pp. 153–156). The polarization of global society refers to two levels of widening inequality, namely within a country, between countries, and across the globe between the richest among civilized countries (the center) and the poorest among deprived countries (the periphery) (Balcerowicz, 2004, pp. 33–34). Arguments raised by antiglobalists most often concern the last tier of grasping the economic inequality.

On the fringes of antiglobalization inquiries there is also opposition to the cultural expansion of the Western world, seeking to unify the globe so that it becomes a replica of the Western European civilization, and the emergence of a single global society of cultural ambiguity.<sup>2</sup> Opponents of globalization see in it, first of all, some uniformizing tendencies, i.e., “humanity [...] said goodbye to a world in which it was possible [...] to see a cultural mosaic, made up of separate fragments with clearly defined edges. Cultural ties increasingly densely crisscross the world” (Hannesz, as cited in Mathews, 2005, p. 17). The antiglobalist debate on cultural globalization is therefore one-sided and does not provide for reflection on cultural deformation or amalgamation. The understanding of globalization as a permanent tension between the local and the global is passed over by its contestants, and the issue of intensifying multiculturalism and its accompanying cultural diversity is marginalized. Only noticing, emphasizing and exploring the various dimensions of multiculturalism brings a qualitative change in the way we perceive the degree of universalization of culture and the experience of “otherness” and “foreignness”. Multiculturalism on a global scale – as Golka emphasizes – “is far from a homogeneous *global village*, and closer to a heterogeneous *global city*, with a great mul-

---

<sup>2</sup> It can be taken for granted that culture can be understood in its distributive sense, indicating the culture of a particular collective, taken either specifically or typologically.

tiplicity of cultural components” (Golka, 1997, p. 53). In addition, the problem of the lack of a multifaceted antiglobalist discourse on globalization in the cultural plane stems from the semantic and pragmatic identification of two concepts: “culture” and “popular culture” (see Burszta, 2004, pp. 41–48). It is the proliferation of popular forms of dominant culture (especially American culture, which can be described as “donor culture”), available to almost all members of the global society, that is being contested.

Criticism of globalization is in direct connection with the revival of discussion on alternatives to globalization. A significant source of inspiration for alter-globalists provides the view, and even the conviction, that globalization is driven not by the “invisible hand of the market”, but by turbo-capitalism in the broadest sense, and that this train, called neoliberal globalization, can and should be stopped, because there is no telling where it might take us. In addition, it is not true that the train depot has no conductor (or perhaps even a train manager), on the contrary, these are mainly the following institutions: World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Klejsa, 2004, p. 325). The quasi-ideology or “ideological myth” (Pieter) of antiglobalism makes it impossible to articulate globalization as a logically and historically grounded process, linked to the socio-cultural transformations of modern times, where the inevitability of neoliberal transformations on a global scale makes it comparable to a speeding train, which must be boarded, as it is heading towards universal prosperity. And if someone does not take the risk, they will remain stranded at a deserted station, thus becoming the basis for constructing alternative visions of globalization (Klejsa, 2004, p. 325). The internal axiology of alter-globalization assumptions is embedded in the conviction that economic and political aspects should be balanced by “global respect for human rights and a high degree of global sensitivity with an empathic nature” (Pankowski, 2004, p. 91). The source of the alterglobalists’ quasi-ideal inspiration is the slogan “think globally – act locally”, often evoked in the discourse on globalization. Alterglobalists propose strengthening local self-governance, while strongly emphasizing shared (i.e., global) priorities and aspirations (Kiely, 2004, p. 273). This unifying and differentiating point of view is reflected in the statement that “one should not fear that the particular interests of individual communities will prevail, since overcoming ethnocentric thinking is feasible, provided that the overriding adopted principle is *unitas multiplex* – the unity in diversity” (Morin, as cited in Klejsa, 2004, p. 334). The spectacular slogans promulgated by alterglobalists, suggesting the reconstruction of the world economy and the world of parliamentary democracy, are utopian in their

nature. The crystallization of the new alter-globalist thought is associated with the belief that “the world has not grown up to its utopia”, so its realization should be postponed indefinitely, believing that “sooner or later it will become the crowning achievement of the inevitable progress of History” (Klejsa, 2004, p. 335). This in no way means acceptance of the economic and socio-cultural *status-quo* and abandonment of sensitivity to the existing inequality, injustice in the distribution of global power, imposed by the mighty of this world: the group of G8 countries<sup>3</sup>, international financial institutions and multinational and transnational corporations. The main effort of alterglobalists is focused on expanding and even changing social consciousness (planetary consciousness – Korten), and, above all, on raising public awareness of the ongoing globalization processes, while pointing out to the need to critically assess the current (neoliberal) shape of globalization. This framing of alter-globalist thought provokes a search for answers to questions about the meaning of the world order, and thus puts pressure on the mighty in this world to take the most optimum measures to combat the multifaceted marginalization and exclusion that alterglobalists believe are solely the consequences connected with the globalization of neoliberal economics. Concluding – the inevitable progress towards a “better world” will result from alterglobalists’ and antiglobalists’ maintaining the sensitivity of public opinion to the globalization processes taking place.

A number of myths have coalesced around the contesting antiglobalization movement, with a rather pragmatic attitude (focused mainly on criticizing the dominance of the neoliberal social model), reflecting, as some believe, general social discontent, or, as others claim, the need to create a “community of experience” (after the communist era, this gap is filled by anti-Americanism). On the horizon of the above considerations, which constitute a sketch for a portrait of the phenomenon of antiglobalism, the question arises about the future of the movement<sup>4</sup> and its internal axiology. Futuristic quandaries about the evolution of the antiglobalization movement in the face of new challenges at the local and global level, allow us to conclude that changes of a qualitative nature will depend on “whether the primary role will be played by youthful perversity and commercialized fashion for «fighting the system», or whether it will be more self-conscious and emancipatory, i.e.: able to transform the social mentality in the way that the counterculture of the

---

<sup>3</sup> The G8 group includes such countries as: the USA, Japan, Great Britain, Fran, Germany, Italy, Canada and Russia.

<sup>4</sup> According to Klein, the antiglobalization movement “wins the arguments, but loses the entire war,” because it is unable to create a counterbalance against multinational financial and trade corporations (as cited in Głowacki, 2004, p. 357).

1960s did” (Klejsa, 2004, p. 335). The heterogeneous nature of the phenomenon of antiglobalism is a response to “future shock” (Toffler) and is an expression of the search for a new vision of the world, stemming from the conviction that the ideal of harmonious development of all societies of the global world should be instilled in the minds of people. We are witnessing the birth of “international solidarity”, a community that Ramonet, one of the main ideologists of the movement to contest the modern “tyranny of the market”, the initiator of the ATTAC organization<sup>5</sup>, calls a new form of the “United Nations”, the formation of “united civil societies”. “Something” is being born on the world stage, but what, as Ramonet concludes, we do not know yet<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps this is the birth of a new utopia? Perhaps a new political doctrine? Certainly, it is a step toward humanizing global market mechanisms and a manifestation of the emerging hope for shaping global responsibility. This movement of movements, as Klein claims, emphasizes the development of many worlds, because the global world, as the Zapatistas claim, includes many worlds. “History is not over yet”, the alterglobalists and antiglobalists exhort, because “we are making it” (Klien, 2004, p. 472).

## Orientation towards knowledge as a response to overcoming the information inertia

Addressing the issue regarding the shape of the future society, not only leads to the question “what is contemporary society?”, but also “what can society be like?”, pointing to a number of possible scenarios of social development, which are difficult to adopt *a priori* (Giddens, 2001, p. 5), and additionally “what society should be like?”, based on the axio-normative nature of the narrative. The development of humanistic reflection on the permanent self-creation of modern society indicates an attempt to define a more or less coherent set of orientations of society towards the surrounding world. Orientations (both at the social and individual level) represent generalized tendencies to perceive, value, feel and respond to globalizing changes in the world, based on realized and semi-conscious beliefs about the socio-cultural environment on the one hand, and the subject of action and possibilities inherent within, on the other (see: Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 1991; Skarzyńska, 1990; Ziółkowski, 1990). The interpretation of orientations as elements inherent

---

<sup>5</sup> Association pour la Taxe Tobin l'aide aux Citoyens – NGO founded in 1998, referring in the spirit of universal solidarity to the introduction of the Tobin tax, beneficial to citizens. (See: Martin & Schumann, 1999, p. 288).

<sup>6</sup> The interview with Ramonet, see: Domośłowski, 2004, p. 77–88.

in the mentality of modern society, with an indication towards cultural, social and individual determinants of their optimization, allows us to outline the characteristics of the globalizing society. Between the distinguished orientations, characterizing the overall social attitude to the expansiveness of socio-cultural changes in the world, there are interrelationships that constitute a syndrome (the formed features of society support, strengthen or weaken others) rather than a set of features depicting the subtleties of the society of late modernity.

The peculiar quality of the global cultural ecumene indicates the need to form and improve **orientation towards knowledge**. The phenomenon of modern times consists in cognitive globalization, distinguished by the extraterritoriality of knowledge reducing the globe to the size of a “global village” (McLuhan). The new status of knowledge, the sources of which are “everywhere and almost nowhere, as there are no privileged places with a monopoly on trusted knowledge which is reliable and worth having” (Wenta, as cited in Bauman, 2000b, p. 62), results from the explosion of information and the subordination of the quality of knowledge to the demands of the global market, which is primarily related to the efficiency and use of information in action, for production, innovation and management. “We are entering a period that entails a shift from author to audience in the name of «authority over a text» [...] Now, with new technologies at our disposal, we ourselves will create our own packets” (Naisbitt, 1997, p. 47) of knowledge. The new quality of the information society, which has become a reality rather than an intellectual abstraction, results from the accelerated pace in the development of advanced information, computer and telecommunications technologies, quickening the pace of change and overcoming the inertia of information (Naisbitt, 1997, p. 39). An essential attribute of the information society is the accumulation, processing, reconstruction and use of knowledge to actively cope with the socio-cultural change and to shape the future. The global society “must be organized according to the criterion of specialized knowledge and according to the human resources that have knowledge and are specialists” (Drucker, 1999, p. 44). Living and functioning in two cultures: the culture of the “intellectual” and the culture of a “managerial person”, indicate a dichotomous arrangement between “intellectuals” (interested in science as the most perfect form of knowledge) and specialized managers (interested in the revolution of productivity and management) that demands transformation into a new synthesis of organizing the diversity of knowledge and represents the central challenge for the information society, which is a society based on many different fields of knowledge and capable of understanding the multifaceted application of knowledge and its constructive use (Drucker, 1999, pp. 13–15). Orientation to lifelong learning and continuous

self-improvement is both individually and more broadly, socially, a response to the widespread and prevailing tendencies to constantly revise the image of reality and the development of abstract systems, which foster the emergence of modern forms of expertise and narrow specializations (Giddens, 2001, pp. 44–45). The formal-abstract systems of analysis contribute to the devaluation of skills relating to almost all planes of human existence. The expropriating effect of abstract systems, which contributes to the alienation and fragmentation of individual identity, is revealed in the creation of new foundations for individual and collective action and changes in the objectified, symbolic and mental world, as a result of the internalization, recontextualization and externalization of knowledge. The postmodern concept of innovative learning is distinguished by an epistemological assumption about the learning subject. It is about the belief that the subject should be able in his or her cognitive endeavors to “use the knowledge that he or she has already acquired, while being aware that this is not yet sufficient knowledge” (Mead, 2000, p. 16). The framework for articulating different interpretations of the concept of “learning” as a typically human characteristic corresponds to a broad understanding of this category as an attitude towards knowledge, as well as towards life in general, which emphasizes the importance of human initiative to acquire knowledge in the conviction of its usefulness as a necessary value for living in a world of permanent change. The slogan “learn or perish” sounds like a challenge and a warning (Botkin i in., 1982), and it is a manifesto calling for an effort to bridge the “human gap” (there is a growing discord between humanity and the civilization it has created) through the requirement of innovative, anticipatory learning, not devoid of reflexivity. Reflexivity as an essential component of social consciousness means “the ability to think critically about oneself, to recognize negative, pathological phenomena, to define future threats and to take preventive countermeasures stopping or reversing unfavorable trends” (Sztompka, 2002, pp. 579–580), the impact of which, after all, can be subject to self-correction mechanisms. The prospective orientation towards knowledge and the desire to constantly acquire it, determine the need for orientation towards responsible participation and interaction in the changing, interdependent global society. While anticipation contributes to a multifaceted understanding of the autonomy of other individuals, societies, cultures, as it is an action of the mind and creates social solidarity in time, having a temporal dimension, participation is a social action and stimulates solidarity in space, having a geographical dimension (Botkin i in., 1982, pp. 82–85). The extent of innovative global action depends on the degree of active, effective and responsible social participation and interaction at the local, national, international and transnational, global levels.

## **Final note**

At the root of the above statements was not the resolution of whether the term globalization refers to global consequences or global undertakings. The answer to this question is provided by Bauman, emphasizing that the ubiquitous term globalization is most often referred to global consequences, “constantly unintended and unforeseen” (Bauman, 2000a, p. 71), not global initiatives and endeavors. A consequence of the above-mentioned view is the recognition of globalization as a largely uncontrollable, spontaneous and also irreversible process, where it is difficult to determine at the same time the stage of globalization of the modern world, the fate of which depends largely on chance at the level of global activities, interdependencies and interests.

The main reference point for the society of risk and global change lies not in the present, but in the future. The essence of the transition from short-term and micro-scale thinking to long-term and macro-scale thinking is to undertake qualitative analysis over the ever-changing global reality, fraught with trends without precedent. A citizen of a global society is not only an individual capable of anticipation, but first and foremost the one who perceives socio-cultural reality in “terms of a dynamic whole and in macro scale” (Melosik, 1989, p. 167). The processes of reconceptualization and reinterpretation of social reality, and reorientation of values and cultural norms, should take on an innovative rather than conservative character, and resonate with the vision of “alternative futures” (Melosik) of global society. Anticipation is not only the ability to predict and select desirable trends or prevent undesirable situations, but also a predisposition to create new variants of participation and action (Botkin i in., 1982, p. 77). The depth of dissonance, i.e. the structural difference between modern society and postmodern society, creates a tension that prompts innovative endeavors, which, in the context of human existence in a world of permanent transformation, are identified with purposeful change, valued positively as progress, advancement, improvement, modernization, and are expected to contribute to the development of knowledge and to change social practice. A multifaceted understanding of the dynamics of global socio-cultural change is revealed in “the ability to find, explore and create new contexts” (Botkin i in., 1982, p. 75). With an apparent understanding, when new situations are considered in isolation, detached from the social context in which they are embedded, there is a risk of narrowing the perception of socio-cultural diversity, the lack of ability to construct alternative systems of reference, and a false sense of security based on “suicidal, rapidly aging local truths”. Under the circumstances of the post-traditional order of late modernity, today’s obvious

things become tomorrow's absurdities (Drucker, 1999, pp. 51–54). The essence of an innovative grasp on the global world is to enrich the reservoir of contexts, to be able to compare them and reconcile the conflicts that exist between them.

## Bibliography

- Balcerowicz, L. (2004). Globalizacja rynków. In S. Amsterdamski (ed.), *Globalizacja i co dalej?* Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Bauman, Z. (2000a). *Globalizacja*. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Bauman, Z. (2000b). *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpienia*. Wydawnictwo Sic!
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society. Towards a new modernity*. Sage.
- Bell, D. (1975). *Nadejście społeczeństwa postindustrialnego. Próba prognozowania społecznego*. Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu.
- Botkin, J.W., Elmandjra M., & Malitza M. (1982). *Uczyć się bez granic. Jak zewrzeć „lukę ludzką”?* Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Burszta, W.J. (1998). *Antropologia kultury. Tematy, teorie, interpretacje*. Zysk i S-ka.
- Burszta, W.J. (2004). *Różnorodność i tożsamość. Antropologia jako kulturowa refleksyjność*. Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.
- Chirayath, V., & De Zolt, E. (2004). Globalization, multinational corporations and white-collar crime: Cases and consequences for transitional economies. In S. Dasgupta (ed.), *The changing face of globalization*. Sage.
- Cooper, R. (1997). *The post-modern state and world order*. Demos.
- Cybal-Michalska, A. (2006). *Tożsamość młodzieży w perspektywie globalnego świata. Studium socjopedagogiczne*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Domosławski, A. (2004). Globalizacja i kontestacja. In S. Amsterdamski (ed.), *Globalizacja i co dalej?* Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Drucker, P.F. (1999). *Społeczeństwo pokapitalistyczne* (G. Kranas, trans.). Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Dylus, A. (2001). *Globalny rynek i jego granice*. Centrum im. Adama Smitha: Instytut Politologii Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- Giddens, A. (2001). *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. „Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności* (A. Szulżycka, trans.). Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Głowacki, B. (2004). Za fasadą niezrozumienia. Fakty i mity o współczesnym ruchu antyglobalizacyjnym. In M. Jacyno, A. Jawłowska, M. Kempny (eds.), *Kultura w czasach globalizacji*. Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Golka, M. (1997). Oblicza wielokulturowości. In M. Kempny, A. Kapciak, S. Łodziński, *U progu wielokulturowości. Nowe oblicza społeczeństwa polskiego*. Oficyna Naukowa.
- Golka, M. (1999). *Cywilizacja. Europa. Globalizacja*. Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora.
- Grefe, Ch., Greffrath, M., & Schumann, H. (2004). *Czego chcą krytycy globalizacji* (M. Labiś, trans.). Wydawnictwo WAM.
- Handy, Ch. (1999). *Głód ducha. Poza kapitalizm: poszukiwanie sensu w nowoczesnym świecie* (J. Pięńkiewicz, trans.). Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.
- Hejnicka-Bezwińska, T. (1991). *Orientacje życiowe młodzieży*. Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP.

- Jan Paweł II. (2001). Globalizacja będzie tym, co uczynią z niej ludzie. *Więź*, (10), 17–22.
- Kempny, M. (1998). Globalizacja. In *Encyklopedia socjologii* (vol. 1, p. 243). Oficyna Naukowa.
- Kiely, R. (2004). Neo-Liberal Globalization Meets Global Resistance: The Significance of “Antiglobalization” Protest. In S. Dasgupta (ed.), *The changing face of globalization*. Sage.
- Klein, N. (2004). *No Logo* (H. Jankowska, K. Makaruk, M. Halaba, trans.). Wydawnictwo Muza.
- Klejsa, K. (2004). Ruchy antyglobalizacyjne – druga fala kontestacji? In M. Jacyno, A. Jawłowska, M. Kempny (eds.), *Kultura w czasach globalizacji*. Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Korporowicz, L. (1999). Tożsamość wyobrażona. In A. Tyszka (ed.), *Róża wiatrów Europy. O środkowoeuropejskiej tożsamości kulturowej*. Instytut Socjologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Korten, D.C. (2002). *Świat po kapitalizmie. Alternatywy dla globalizacji* (H. Goworowska-Adamska, trans.). Stowarzyszenie “Obywatel”.
- Martin, H.P., & Schumann, H. (1999). *Pułapka globalizacji. Atak na demokrację i dobrobyt* (M. Zybuła, trans.). Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.
- Mathews, G. (2005). *Supermarket kultury. Kultura globalna a tożsamość jednostki* (E. Klekot, trans.). Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy
- Mead, M. (2000). *Kultura i tożsamość. Studium dystansu międzypokoleniowego* (J. Hołówka, trans.). Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Melosik, Z. (1989). Edukacja skierowana na świat – ideał wychowawczy XXI wieku. *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, (3), 159–173.
- Misztal, B. (1998). Ruch społeczny. In *Encyklopedia socjologii* (vol. 3, p. 344). Oficyna Naukowa.
- Naisbitt, J. (1997). *Megatrendy. Dziesięć nowych kierunków zmieniających nasze życie* (P. Kwiatkowski, trans.). Zysk i S-ka.
- Nowak, A.W. (2001). Wobec systemu – wokół teorii Wallersteina. *Lewą Nogą*, (13).
- Pankowski, R. (2004). Dylematy antyglobalizmu. In S. Amsterdamski (ed.), *Globalizacja i co dalej?* Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Prejs, B. (2004). *Bunt nie przemija. Bardzo podręczny słownik subkultur młodzieżowych*. “Śląsk”.
- Ritzer, G., & Ryan, M. (2004). The globalization of nothing. In S. Dasgupta (ed.), *The changing face of globalization*. Sage.
- Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization. Social theory and global culture*. Sage.
- Skarżyńska, K. (1990). Orientacja egalitarna i nieegalitarna. In J. Reykowski, K. Skarżyńska, M. Ziółkowski (eds.), *Orientacje społeczne jako element mentalności* (s. 139–158). Wydawnictwo NAKOM.
- Starosta, P. (2000). Globalizacja i nowy komunitaryzm. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 44(3), 47–67.
- Sztompka, P. (2002). *Socjologia*. Wydawnictwo Znak.
- Tarkowska, E. (2004). Globalizacja i ubóstwo. In S. Amsterdamski (ed.), *Globalizacja i co dalej?* Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Tobera, P. (2000). Niepokojąca nowoczesność. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 44(3), 3–21.
- Toffler, A. (1997). *Trzecia fala*. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Weede, E. (1990). Rent-seeking or dependency as explanations of why poor people stay poor. In M. Albrow, E. King (eds.), *Globalization, knowledge and society*. Sage.
- Wielgosz, P. (2001). Opium globalizacji. *Lewą Nogą*, (13).
- Ziółkowski, M. (1990). Orientacje indywidualne a system społeczny. In J. Reykowski, K. Skarżyńska, M. Ziółkowski (eds.), *Orientacje społeczne jako element mentalności* (s. 53–76). Wydawnictwo NAKOM.
- Zybała, A. (2004). *Globalna korekta*. Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.

