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GLOBALISATION AS A PRECONDITION FOR INDIVIDUALISM

Abstract: Globalisation includes processes that enable individuals to transcend various boundaries in ways that were unimaginable even decades ago, or at least to become aware of these boundaries. Man has become truly a being of information, and information knows no national or regional boundaries. Education has changed its face in line with the newly available resources, primarily the Internet. Nowadays, one can instantly learn of most recent scientific discoveries such as those that much of that progress rests on, in most remote areas of the world. In that regard, globalisation entails loosening of cultural identities, and the growing awareness of the possibilities of building an individual role such as career on a transnational scale. In other words, globalisation involves provision of tools for individuals to disregard the narrow determinations given by primary enculturation. A downside of that process is alienation, and one probably much more certain and much more worth considering than the loss of cultural identities that many are fighting against.

Key words: *globalisation, individual, Internet, education, enculturation, alienation*

"In our time, from the highest to the lowest class of society, everyone lives as if under the gaze of a hostile and feared censor ... [E]ven in what people do for pleasure, conformity is the first thing that they consider; they like en masse; they limit their choices to things that they can do commonly; they avoid as a crime all singularity in taste."

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859)

Introduction

Globalisation includes processes that enable individuals to transcend various boundaries in ways that were unimaginable even decades ago, or at least to become aware of these boundaries. Man has become truly a being of information, and information knows no national or regional boundaries.

Individualisation

What is meant by the individualisation of the lifestyle of an individual? The notion of socialization signifies social development and experience in two meanings. First, it stands for a disintegration of the existing social norms, classes, layers, gender roles, family roles, where the question emerges concerning what is the *new* model of life that is gradually replacing the old one: is it conditioned by religion, tradition, state?

The characteristic of these new modern regulatives is that we ourselves have to apply them to our own biographies through our own activity.

Individualisation

"[T]he social and historical process in which values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour are increasingly based on personal choice and are less dependent on tradition and social institutions.... Values are no longer dominated by institutional religion, but are based on personal choice. Self- development and personal happiness are leading principles for individual actions" .

Ester, Halman and De Moor 1993, quoted in van Elteren 1998

"Elective biography"

"The normal biography thus becomes the 'elective biography", the "reflexive biography', the 'do-it-yourself biography". This does not necessarily happen by choice, neither does it necessarily succeed. The do-it-yourself biography is always a 'risk biography', indeed a 'tightrope biography', a state of permanent (partly overt, partly concealed) endangerment."

"Individualization is a compulsion, albeit a paradoxical one, to create, to stage manage, not only one's own biography but the bonds and networks surrounding it and to do this amid changing preferences and at successive stages of life, while constantly adapting to the conditions of the labour market, the education system, the welfare state, and so on."

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, quoted in Zorc-Maver 2002.

Individual as active agent

Today an individual has to be able to plan, adapt to the changes, able to organize and improvize, set objectives, recognize the obstacles, accept defeats and start anew. For all of this, one needs initiative, tenacity, flexibility and a high frustration tolerance:

"Opportunities, dangers, biographical uncertainties that were earlier predefined within the family association, the village community, or by recourse to the rules of social estates or classes, must now be perceived, interpreted, decided and processed by individuals themselves."

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, quoted in Zorc-Maver 2002.

Individualisation and decisions

"Individualization … means that each person's biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions. The proportion of life opportunities which are fundamentally closed to decision-making is decreasing and the proportion of the biography which is open and must be construed personally is increasing. Individualization of life situations and processes become self-reflexive; socially prescribed biography is transformed into biography that is self-produced and continues to be produced. Decisions on education, profession, job, place of residence, spouse, number of children and so forth, with all the secondary decisions implied, no longer can be, they must be made. Even where the word 'decisions' is too grandiose, because neither consciousness nor alternatives are present, the individual will have to 'pay for' the consequences of decisions not taken."

Beck 1992[1986], quoted in McGuigan 2010.

Characteristics of individualisation

"The processes of individualization are characterized, first, by the dismantlement of social identity on the basis of class adherence: second, inequalities are not disappearing but social crises appear as individual crises, i.e. as an individualization of social risks. This causes a *new* immediacy between an individual and society, a direct relation between a crisis and a disease: third, people associate into political and social organizations to cope with the social problems; fourth, permanent conflicts that appear along with these characteristics result also in discrimination. Race, skin colour, gender, ethnicity, age. homosexuality, psychic disability are the main 'ascribed' characteristics."

Zorc-Maver 2002.

Poverty

"[U]nemployment and poverty are not distributed according to groups or periods in a personal life. The conflict connected with social inequality emerges as a conflict between the parts of an individual biography, which means that an increasingly large part of the population is at least temporarily exposed to unemployment and poverty – in many areas of breakdown individualization (the former East Germany) and poverty individualization (mass unemployment), this situation already seems to have gone beyond a critical threshold'."

Zorc-Maver 2002.

Individualisation and capitalism

"Whereas individualism is a little-realised value of bourgeois society – and at best confined to the privileged few – under late-modern conditions individualisation is a necessity, experienced as liberating yet simultaneously an obligation, increasingly so for the many. The person becomes responsible for what they do and, therefore, personally culpable for their own failures. Individualisation is not just rewarding; it is also penalising. The individual is left without excuse and becomes eminently expendable: 'Unfortunately, we'll have to let you go [and, as it happens, employ someone cheaper but more driven by necessity]'."

McGuigan 2010.

"After the reunification of Germany, many women in the east had themselves sterilized, so that they would be in a position to compete in the job market."

Moltmann 2011.

Environmental challenges – inevitably global

Think of the global environmental challenges. We used to have group actions of children planting trees, with little awareness of what it all meant. Nowadays, so many people are aware of the global significance of ecological problems, but the response has become more and more *individual* and typically *consumer-based* (buy a tree and plant it!).

The role of education and the individualization of responsibility

"[…] knotty issues of consumption, consumerism, power and responsibility can be resolved neatly and cleanly through enlightened, uncoordinated consumer choice. Education is a critical ingredient in this view—smart consumers will make choices, it's thought, with the larger public good in mind. Accordingly, this dominant response emphasizes […] the need to speak politely, and individually, armed only with facts. For the lack of a better term, call this response the individualization of responsibility."

Maniates 2001.

Individual vs. institutional solutions

The individually responsible consumer is encouraged to purchase a vast array of "green" or "eco-friendly" products on the promise that the more such products are purchased and consumed, the healthier the planet's ecological processes will become. "Living lightly on the planet" and "reducing your environmental impact" becomes, paradoxically, a consumer-product growth industry. Instead of planting trees, riding a bicycle, or recycling , solutions that entail broader changes in policy and institutions, seem to everyone to be fuzzy, mysterious, messy, and idealistic.

Citizenship

Many social scientists today claim that the nation-state is at the same time too small and too big: too small as its political power and legitimacy are undermined by global economic forces, and as increasing human mobility reduces the importance of national belonging and national identification; too big as it cannot adequately represent the ethnic, cultural and regional diversity often present within national boundaries. These claims raise questions about the role of national citizenship.

On the one hand, several social and political scientists suggest that national citizenship is losing importance because of globalisation, and that citizenship needs to be rethought on a global or transnational level. On the other hand, the past decade has shown that nationalisms and national identities may still be strong political and cultural forces, and recent changes in national citizenship legislation have in fact given rise to much debate in a number of countries.

Dual citizenship in Sweden

"A common starting-point for those in favour of dual citizenship was to argue that contemporary society was characterised by globalisation or internationalisation, and by increasing international migration. In consequence it was suggested, firstly, that Sweden was becoming an increasingly multi-ethnic or multicultural society and, secondly, that individuals often developed strong and durable ties to several different countries. [...]the proposed acceptance of dual citizenship was described as a <u>necessary `modernisation'</u> of the old citizenship legislation, in order to adapt it to a new national and international situation."

Gustafson 2002.

The role of education

Education has changed its face in line with the newly available resources, primarily the Internet. Nowadays, one can instantly learn of most recent scientific discoveries such as those that much of that progress rests on, in most remote areas of the world. In that regard, globalisation entails loosening of cultural identities, and the growing awareness of the possibilities of building an individual role such as career on a transnational scale.

Conclusion

Globalisation involves provision of tools for individuals to disregard the narrow determinations given by primary enculturation. A downside of that process is alienation, and one probably much more certain and much more worth considering than the loss of cultural identities that many are fighting against.

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