

LITHUANIAN MODERN CULTURE AND IMAGES UNDER GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Lilijana Astra

Lithuanian Culture Research Institute,
Saltoniškių g. 58, LT-08105 Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mail: adastrum7@gmail.com

The present day discourse of the postmodern European and national self-identification is closely related to a fundamental question, how to evaluate theoretically the essential cultural changes under global transformation. The global technological, political, economic and socio-cultural world powers are highlighted in recent years. These powers in the national and European space reveal a unique, multicultural and global process of new images and symbols. But so far there is no any theoretical model or paradigm, which could define peculiarities of postmodern culture under global transformation. Changing European and national cultural identity is an integral part of global modernity. Identity, that is undergoing changes in global modernity, becomes an inter-subjective cultural unity; an expression of that identity which is represented by new cultural images, beliefs, customs and a unique worldview. Lithuanian identity is still perceived as a unique cultural combination of European and national fundamental values, symbols and images.

Keywords: cultural images, global transformation, modernization, multicultural identity.

doi:10.3846/limes.2010.05

Introduction

The object of the article is closely related to a necessity to analyse and to define peculiarities of modern cultural changes under the global transformation which is inseparably related to dilemmas of modern European and Lithuanian self-identity. Nowadays world area reveals some unique multicultural images and symbols of globality. For this reason, European and national identities are experiencing major changes. They are not finite and static but changing, constantly shaped and reconstructed. It is completely unclear, how global transformations effect the processes of national culture, cultural images or identities. Global reality dictates new cultural features with respect to them in modernity or postmodernity. Virtual nature of the information and the new media culture has a significant influence on self-identity and manifestation of new cultural images. This means that in the modern world there are no longer any closed ethnic communities and cultures. All of them are running and associating with the global new media dictated images, forms of cultural production and the mass flows. The processes of globalization, changing the national culture, promote the emergence of multicultural process. Therefore, in the context of the global

transformation, European identity is a unique multicultural phenomenon just as a national cultural identification.

The aim of the article is to analyse theoretical approaches and to attempt to assess features of national cultural images under European integration and the worldwide process of global transformation. Integration processes of European cultural images will speed up searchings of Lithuanian self-identity. European identity is seen as the attribution of the European political community or the presence of European cultural feeling. Therefore, the current global developments remain the most pressing challenge in multicultural and multi-identity as well as in the formation of knowledge and theoretical approaches.

There are *several objectives* of the article: firstly, to identify features of modern cultural changes and to describe peculiarities of cultural images under global transformation. Secondly, to attempt to assess tendencies of dynamics of cultural images of Lithuanians in the discourse of global modernity.

The methods of the article are comparative and analytical due to necessity to analyse the most peculiar features of changing cultural images and, also, to identify modern tendencies of self-identity expression in modern European discourses.

Definition of the problem

Vytautas Kavolis, one of the most famous Lithuanian researchers in contemporary culture, analysing the cultural characteristics of modernization, identified several key criteria (Kavolis 1996: 239). In his view, cultural modernization can be associated with these key criteria and thinking orientations: individualism, rationality, universalism, history and moral standards of humanization.

However, the effects of globalization extensively interact with cultural systems, and the closed local cultures now have gone. Therefore, there is a need for new theoretical developments of these criteria and evaluations.

The global phenomenon of globalization has started a systematic study quite recently – the discourse has arisen over the last two decades of last century. Roland Robertson described this global change as “the world’s compression, which is accompanied by the emergence of multicultural identity” (Robertson 1992: 61). In fact, the process of global transformation is unstoppable because this global unity encompasses not only inter-relation of the national states and the worldwide economics, to the new technologies, but also to global media and electronic Web (which manifests through specific organization of different cultures). According to Anthony Giddens, we are witnessing a historically new phase of cultural globalization (Giddens 1992: 50). Global culture system identifies at least five new areas such as ethno-scapes, media-scapes, techno-scapes, finan-scapes, ideo-scapes. European and world history have not been on such a scale and at such scope level of cultural change process that is taking place in nowadays media, global telecommunications and broadcasting through a virtual space. Fredric Jameson points out, that the world reveals a unique multicultural space, there is a growth of the global movement of images and symbols (Jameson 1998: 121).

Global popular culture has become such new symbols as *Coca-Cola*, Madonna, CNN News, *Spide Man*, *Da Vinci Code*, etc. Usually new media concept is associated with the sophisticated electronic information and communication technologies. In a broad sense the media means a worldwide set of communication, transmitting information. The media under global transformation can be any media. Media can be photography, film, video-technology, the Internet. Virtual reality resolution is absolutely new philosophical and cultural phenomenon. Virtualities radically transform space and time as the fundamental human living dimensions. Virtual reality has accelerated through television, radio, newspapers and other information transfer rates, by including the user and converting him to a creator. Everything is *here and now*. The user becomes a member of the global information society, and virtual reality in its turn – a universal space where there are not any constraints and limits. In many contexts virtual reality is perceived as a chip or the cyber-reality, where users interact with technology. Therefore, the new media or information, communication technology in the context of virtual reality is becoming a much broader concept. So, the virtualities are deeply rooted in human consciousness.

Virtual reality takes place in the real world. Reality, that seemed to be indisputable and objective fact, is no longer so obvious. For example, the Internet helps to move to another part of the world of another time, another cultural space or in another field of interests. In this way a new global communication space emerges, where there are intersection of the multiple digits code information. Just when you press *Enter*, you are in another space, another step. Each click of *Enter* or *Okay* is a step, opening global cyber access. For example, magnetic bank and store cards, online payment of taxes, kindness and support division, a telephone which is free at games, which makes photographs and films, plays music, broadcasts and gives you an access to the Web. The users of these technologies, passing the real space distance, the dimensions of time, realize their dreams since they never dreamed of entering the real life. Thus virtual reality is a complex of multicultural and almost uncertain interactive phenomenon. The new magic word *interactivity* for technical translation is a feedback from the consumer side, storage, and digital synthesis. When all of this we integrate into the formula, we get: TV + phone + computer = interactive media. And while this means that virtual reality can interact with all other realities, including its generating reality, it remains ontologically independent of them.

Jean Baudrillard suggestively revealed that in new media society different meanings occur and they move into the generally growing diversity, that is sensitive to its own open access (Baudrillard 1988: 65). Various options neutralize each other and merge the “white noise”, so that is why our culture become a machinery giant. Indeed, the sociability is changing in the face of globalization. Therefore, new interactive media era authorship belongs to all the involved knowledge or information chain, and the limits of the original and the copy are deleted. The distinction between the virtual and the real worlds disappears because clarification is no longer actually true. Here should be remembered Baudrillard’s assertion, that the consumer is isolated in the world of simulacres where the illusion is no longer possible because we cannot

distinguish, what is real and what it is not. In this way the difference between reality and image loss vanishes. If these symptoms are similar or identical to the reality, then it is difficult to distinguish where the “real” and where the simulating reality emerge. Baudrillard examines the problem of realism. The reality, which does not have any origins, he calls as hyper-reality. Here the image “has no connection with reality”. This “virtual reality” or “hyper-reality” is nothing more than its own image. New media have designed a virtual hyperreality.

Today, in theory, it can still be argued that there is such a phenomenon as a global culture. After all, culture is defined and based on its core function – to ensure national identity and historical memory and the viability of the transfer. However, the global consumer culture certainly has its new features, which in their turn, affect the national culture. Immanuel Wallerstein considers, that there is a traditional culture which has an additional feature, counteracting the process of globalization and raising the objections (Wallerstein 1998: 32).

Dimensions of Lithuanian cultural images and identity

Modern European space and time reveal unique multicultural images and symbols of a globality. For this reason, European and national identities experience some major changes. They are not finite and static, but changing, constantly shaped and re-constructed. For several centuries, Poland and Lithuania were considered to be a part of European Christian civilization. In addition, this part should be treated as the protector and representative of true values of this civilization. At the beginning of the 20th century the identity of Lithuanian nation was formed by the reputable image of the past of Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL).

The inter-war period has formed new Lithuanian cultural and political elite, which gradually played the increasingly European rather than the parish part of thinking and cultural characteristics. After the restoration of independence in 1991 it was no longer possible to form the basis of Lithuanian identity in inter-war Lithuania, GDL and in the more traditional form. There was a necessity to decide or whether to seek for political neutrality or membership in Western security and economic structures. Lithuania's foreign policy has become a priority for the Euro-Atlantic membership, which also expressed a determination to be identified with Europe and, more specifically, to a single Western Europe. Identity is constructed not only in the objective existence of commonalities such as common language, religion, traditions and historical experience, but also as *we* and the *other*. European identity has become self-separated from the Eastern base. In addition, an effective political system and the high standards of living have become potential sources of European identity formation. Thus, Europe has acquired identity not only in Lithuania or the admission of the geographical sense, but also it became the standard of living indicator. The Lithuanian relationship with Europe is based on the historical and ideological reasons. On the other hand, it also highlights the state of Lithuania as a European advantage against Russia, located outside of Europe. Lithuanian identity was formed in ethno-cultural, political and historical consciousnesses, in the common historical destiny of the basis, while the presence

of the Europeans is much more perceived as a political imperative. The geographical center of Lithuania had the assignment of symbolic meaning in shaping a European dimension in Lithuanian identity. As being geographically in Europe, Lithuanians are necessarily Europeans.

Europe has been attributed to the specific political, cultural and economic values and standards which are not inherent in the Lithuanian community, but which in their turn represent Lithuanian community in the basic movement direction“. Multiple identities can coexist only if the European and national identities are not contradicted and are not perceived as a formed constant once and for all. The main instrument is the European way of thinking from one generation to the next One, which has created a European self-identity. Changing European culture is an integral part of the globalization of immediate perception and of the experience of the forms. National cultural diversity and cultural unity manifest themselves in a modern Europe. The European Union (EU) and deeper integration processes not only change the EU member states and politicians, the internal dynamics and nature, but also affect the identities. Accelerating the processes of integration of European identity searchings in Lithuania, when the answer to the question of Lithuania’s accession to the EU, we, Lithuanians, have become „pure“ Europeans. Modern European image is seen as the attribution of a European political and cultural community, new media, communications and the presence of European self-identity feeling.

Conclusions

European and world cultural history has not yet been such a large cultural change as the result of modern telecommunications, media and broadcasting. This means that in the modern world there are no longer closed ethnic communities and cultures. All of them are running and associate with a global new media dictated images, forms of cultural production and mass flows. The processes of globalization, are changing the national culture, promoting the emergence of multicultural process. Changes in the context of the global media promote European identity and it is a unique combination of multiple culture, based on multiple and different identification. Multiple identities can exist only where the European and national identity is not contradicted and is not perceived as a once and for all formed constant. A European or a European identity is seen as the attribution of the European political community or the presence of the common European self-identification feeling. Therefore, the current global developments in multicultural and multi-identity reality, new theoretical approaches remain the most important tasks in the creating process of new multicultural models and paradigms.

References

- Baudrillard, J. 1988. *Simulacra and Simulations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A. 1992. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jameson, F. 1998. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998*. London, New York: Verso.

Kavolis, V. 1996. *Kultūros dirbtuvė*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.

Robertson, R. 1992. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.

Wallerstein, I. 1998. *Utopistics: Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century*. New York: The New Press.

MODERNIOJI LIETUVIŠKOJI KULTŪRA IR ĮVAIZDŽIAI FLOBALIOSIOS TRANSFORMACIJOS SĄLYGOMIS

Lilijana Astra

Santrauka

Europietiškojoje ir pasaulinėje kultūros istorijoje dar nebuvo tokio masto ir tokios apimties kultūros vertybių kaitos, kokia vyksta dėl šiuolaikinių telekomunikacijų, medijų ir transliacijų. Europos erdvėje išryškėja unikalūs, daugiakultūris ir vis labiau intensyvėjantis naujųjų medijų diktuojamas globaliųjų įvaizdžių bei simbolių judėjimas. Dėl šiuolaikinio globaliojo daugiakultūriškumo poveikio europietiškieji ir nacionaliniai tapatumai patiria milžinišką perkaitą, nes jie nėra baigtiniai ir statiški, bet, atvirkščiai, kintantys, nuolat formuojami ir rekonstruojami. Šiuolaikinėje globalybėje didelį poveikį tapatumui daro virtualiosios informacijos pobūdis ir naujoji medijų kultūra, diktuojanti masinės sąmonės įvaizdžius, formas. Kultūrinės kaitos požiūriu tai reiškia, kad šiuolaikiniame pasaulyje jau nebelieka uždarų etninių bendruomenių ir kultūrų. Visas jas veikia ir susieja naujųjų medijų diktuojamų globaliųjų įvaizdžių, formų ir masinės kultūros produkcijos srautai. Globalizacijos procesai, keisdami nacionalines kultūras, skatina daugiakultūrių procesų savikūrą. Globaliųjų pokyčių kontekste europietiškoji tapatybė tampa unikaliu daugiakomponenčiu kultūriniu junginiu, grindžiamu daugialype ir skirtinga savęs identifikacija. Daugialypis identitetas gali egzistuoti tik tada, kai europietiškas ir tautinis identitetas nėra supriešinamas, nėra suvokiamas kaip kartą ir visiems laikams susiformavusi konstanta. Europietiškas arba europiečio identitetas savo ruožtu suvokiamas kaip buvimo europietiškosios kultūros dalimi jausmas. Todėl šiandien globalių daugiakultūrių pokyčių ir daugialypio identiteto pažinimas bei teorinių priegių formavimas išlieka aktualiausiu teoriniu uždaviniu.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: daugiakultūris tapatumas, globalieji pokyčiai, kultūros įvaizdžiai, kultūros modernizacija.

Received 7 January 2010, accepted 1 February 2010