The interplay between local and global culture.
Areas of conflict and areas of synergy

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Abstract: The processes of globalisation, which have accelerated since the last decade of the 20th century, have had an impact on the formation of both national and local culture. Their impact, however, has been very ambiguous and perceived in various ways. Local and national cultures have also had an impact on global processes: global culture is now shaped not only by dominant civilisations or great nations. To some extent, everyone participates in this process – all cultures. On the one hand, we can see the mutual reinforcement of local and global processes, and on the other hand, more noticeable today, we see tensions between what is local and what is global. These struggles permeate social reality in various spheres and at various levels. The aim of this article is to identify the most common areas of conflict and synergy, to determine their sources and nature, and then attempt to discuss and present a new perspective on these mutual relationships in order to eliminate as many areas of conflict as possible.
Keywords: globalisation, global culture, local culture, national culture, anthropology

Introduction

The tension between the local and the global permeates social reality in various spheres and at various levels. The processes of globalisation have accelerated since the second half of the 20th century, especially in its last decade. The concept of the "global village" was introduced into sociology as early as 1964 (McLuhan, 1964). These processes have continued to develop in the current century, but particular trends have come to the fore, associated with emphasising and appreciating what is national, regional, and local (Dudziak, 2010). The term glocalisation was coined and applied to social sciences by Roland Robertson (see Robertson, 1994 and 1995) with the intention of expressing the connection between these two trends. However, this connection is not as simple and obvious as the word 'glocalisation' itself. Many authors have introduced their own concepts regarding the coexistence of these realities and the changes that occur in society as a result. Many of these concepts can be introduced in the three most frequently cited scenarios: homogenisation, heterogenisation or hybridisation of culture (Hassi and Storti, 2012).

The aim of this article is to introduce a new approach to the relationship between the global and the local. It assumes not only the possibility of both dimensions of culture coexisting, but also their necessity for common proper development. It refers to what a human being is, as a creator of culture, and to the various dimensions of their existence and functioning in the world. The reference to anthropology results not only from the fact that a person is a creator of culture, but also because of the connection with their needs and spaces of development.

The concept of culture has many definitions (cf. Kłoskowska, 2007, 17-31). This article, unless indicated otherwise, explores the majority of its established interpretations, both broad and narrow, from every human work, including internal, to products that are referred to as 'high culture'. They concern both what Margaret Archer calls

the 'cultural system' and the 'socio-cultural system' (Archer, 1996). Culture, in its essence, is an expression of human life and serves the development of humanity: "A person's personal life–both individual and social, both private and public–constitutes the 'world of culture' in the most elementary sense of the term" (Rodziński, 1989, 207).

1. Development of global culture

The first step in avoiding unnecessary conflicts between global culture and local culture is to draw attention to the very understanding of the concept of globalisation, and consequently of global culture. Secondly, there is the problem of the use of globalisation processes by the main actors in the world, both political and economic, for their own interests. Globalisation has so far been discussed mainly in connection with processes that have accelerated rapidly thanks to new means of communication, especially the internet, but also including television (cf. Mcluhan, 1964, 1989), mobile phones, more sophisticated means of transport like aircraft and faster trains, , as well as economic processes leading to the standardisation of products and services provided (e.g. the so-called McDonaldisation process; Ritzer, 1993). The interests of large corporations, originating primarily from the most developed countries, are strongly connected with this last dimension in particular. Political issues are also inevitably connected with this, including the so-called Washington Consensus, i.e. the promotion of liberal democracy and the free market (Berger, 1997 and 2002, 1-16; Mirrlees, 2020, 117-133). A certain questioning of globalisation in relation to economic processes has been clearly visible recently, in connection with a change in the approach of the main economic world power.

The development of cultural processes (in the narrower sense) in a global perspective and the shaping of what is referred to as global culture or universal culture are of a different nature. Cultural processes generally develop more slowly than technological or economic processes. For these reasons, the experience of greater closeness, connectedness and economic integration at a global level does not automatically lead to the formation of a mature global culture. The emergence of a specific culture requires the appropriate integration of a given community that shares common values and adopts common norms of conduct that transform into specific practices, traditions or customs, also associated with specific material products (Rodziński, 1989, 205-236).

However, such processes have been taking place at a global level for a long time and in various dimensions, so undoubtedly require long development and shaping. It is worth mentioning here the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an expression of the sharing of certain common values by the entire international community, as well as various other international conventions that are sets of certain principles and norms of conduct established, for example, in times of war. Certain cultural products, even ancient ones, that have a general human character, can also be considered universal and therefore constitute part of global culture. All this precedes or develops in parallel with what has been identified as globalisation in a contemporary sense.

In this context, it is also necessary to discuss the processes relating to attempts at political unification of the entire world that have developed throughout human history. This is evidenced by the great empires that emerged in antiquity (the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman dominions) and in more modern times, although clearly the formation of nation states in recent centuries and the rapid growth of population on all continents have significantly limited the full realisation of such aspirations. On the other hand, the development of technology brings new tools that can once again provide opportunities to those so inclined to rule the entire world. History shows that such attempts were associated with the desire to impose the culture of the imperial power on those it had taken possession of, with the concomitant eradication of local systems of values, traditions, and even material achievements that were their expression. Great empires are one of the main factors in the formation of what is defined as a civilisation (cf. Mirrlees, 2020, 124-128). Such a drive for cultural homogenisation is most often the main reason for resistance to what is understood as universal or global culture.

2. Areas of conflict with local and national cultures

Culture, which is a product of a specific community, is shaped during the course of historical development, shows different stages of development within a given community, and exemplifies eras of its history. It defines the identity of a given community, its specificity and for this reason is the basis for its integration and unity.

Introducing culturally foreign elements, and even more, imposing them, can undermine the foundations of national unity, or at least threaten to do so. These processes occur as a result of the previously mentioned globalisation processes, together with which economic imperialism is often implemented, and is associated with the activities of large corporations and the largest economic powers (Chukwuemeka, Okpe and Adakwa, 2024; Kranz-Szurek, 2012, 17-22). The presence of these two trends can be seen in society (e.g. aversion to both foreigners and promotion of openness to people from other countries), in politics (nationalist parties and groups versus liberal, ecological parties), in economics (protectionism and liberalism) and art (national, local art and universal art).

Behind these different aspirations stand people who identify more either with the universal perspective or with the local perspective. Social tensions and conflicts arise, which are strongly manifested in the political life of individual countries. People's aspirations to be "citizens of the world", "universal" or "global" is present in the history of individual countries and nations. Such people, formerly termed 'cosmopolitans', expressed their contempt for what was local, parochial or narrow-minded. On the other hand, they were often treated by people attached to the national culture as traitors, ingrates, people without any values. It is worth noting that in the case of many cosmopolitans, there was no identification with a global culture, but usually with the culture dominant in a given area, and therefore identification with a larger and stronger one.

It seems, therefore, that in this case too, there was a frequent misunderstanding of the essence of global culture. Cosmopolitans, as people open to external influences, did not always move towards global culture, but only towards another culture or cultures, depending on the fashion (and strength of that culture). One can point to, for example, the historical influence of French, Italian, English, Russian or Chinese culture in various parts of the world. Their influence can be seen, for example, in language, including word borrowings from different cultures – a simple example concerning just Polish is the absorption of foreign-derived words like 'makaron' (macaroni, from Italian), 'koszmar' (nightmare – from the French 'cauchemar') or more latterly, the verb 'startować' (to start, from English). In art, this was expressed by the adoption of various trends in painting, sculpture and architecture, depending on the strength of a given culture and cultural trend. However, these were not products of the "entire community" of the world.

Today, some people identify the development of global culture–or at least some of its elements – with so-called 'mass culture' (Krzysztof Wielecki questions the definition of this human production as culture; see Wielecki, 2024). It brings about a certain unification, although this is often associated with the promotion – or even imposition – of certain trends and behaviours by specific interest groups. This kind of behaviour also causes resistance and thenceforth the creation of cultural niches within local communities. The extent to which a given element of localised mass culture will actually become a part of global culture depends on whether it is accepted as such by the world community as a whole (Mirrlees, 2020, 128-130).

The progress of integration, mutual exchange and interpenetration of ideas and ways of expressing them in material culture will gradually and inevitably lead to the increasingly widespread production of elements of global culture. This may, therefore, pose a potential threat to local and national cultures. Examples can be given of the destruction of such unique local cultures, even in recent decades (Vincent, 2006).

In addition to the disappearance of small local cultures, attention should also be paid to what has been referred to as the "clash of civilisations" (Huntington, 1996). When cultures meet and converge, specific conflicts and tensions arise between entire civilisa-

tions that are based on different values. An example here are Christian and Muslim civilisations, which are largely based on religious values. Religions play an important role in creating culture and integrating communities, but additional tensions can also arise between individual cultures in the creation of which different religions play a key role.

Some hermetic national cultures can also be a source of conflict and tension, by excluding a broader opening up to other cultures and hindering the progress of interpersonal integration and the development of a universal culture, and, as a result, stymying the creation of universal interpersonal bonds (Francis, 2020). However, it should be added that these attitudes often result from the reasons mentioned above, namely, from a sense of threat from a stronger, larger culture or even the dominance of so-called mass culture.

3. Areas of synergy – proper perception and cooperation

Does the development of global culture therefore have to pose a threat to national and local cultures? Not necessarily, or at least not when this development is properly understood and shaped in full mutual respect. The development of global culture does not have to, and even should not, proceed in a way that will lead to it becoming increasingly important in the lives of individual people. It seems entirely possible that, should the current gradual increase in the integration of the world community persist, it would necessarily lead to the accelerated development of global culture to the detriment of local culture. As a result, it would gain an increasing advantage over national culture, until the latter completely disappeared.

However, local or national culture has its own power of influence and significance. It is the product of a specific local community, which is necessary for the proper development of the humanity of every person. According to the principle of subsidiarity, it allows for better development, gives a sense of closeness, greater durability of relationships, security, belonging, a sense of rootedness and is the basis

for building one's own identity, especially its social dimension (Kłoskowska, 2005; Korporowicz, 2024, 158-159; Pius XII, 1939, n. 39-40). It therefore satisfies important basic human needs.

On the other hand, one can find in a person a desire–expressed in an extreme or exclusive way by cosmopolitans – to be a citizen of the world. One has a sense of connection, brotherhood and solidarity with other people who do not necessarily belonging to the same nation or culture. Many common elements can be identified, despite existing differences (Francis, 2020, Pius XII, 1939). Mutual contempt often results from extreme attitudes, which is closely connected with a lack of respect for the dignity of every person and every nation, and therefore also for its culture.

The development of global culture does not have to eliminate or even limit the development of national culture. Sometimes, this contact can lead to new mutual inspirations. Already today, we can see a certain shift towards developing cultural life within narrower, specific communities (Taptiani et al., 2024, 96-97). This orientation also results from practical considerations that are important for optimising the conditions for human development, such as the issue of limited possibilities for establishing contact with others (limited by the number and availability of contacts), as well as issues related to moving over different distances and the nature of the relationships created.

At the same time, it should be noted that, to a greater or lesser extent, in every culture there are universal elements, proving that human beings are the same everywhere – having the same dignity, focused on goodness, truth and beauty, having similar aspirations and ideals (cf. Wysocki, 2014). This also suggests a person is a creator of culture, and not only its recipient or shaped by it. Human beings are the authors (agents) of the entire cultural system (cf. Archer, 1996). Universal elements present in every culture indicate that we have been witnessing the development of a universal or global culture from the very beginning of human activity.

Both of these dimensions, the particular and the universal, are necessary for the development of true culture, which is "human", and therefore must

be related to what a human being is. The development of a locally conditioned culture, related to the functioning of a narrower community, a nation, is something that constitutes the identity of a given group and distinguishes it from others, just as an individual person has their own characteristics and needs to distinguish themselves from others, being also aware of community and closeness to others, having similar properties and spiritual powers. For this reason, a true national culture, even if it were completely hermetic, could not develop properly (Francis, 2020, n. 146). It needs participation in this universal dimension – a human dimension – common to all people and for this reason, universal.

The development of each person requires the following: an awareness of their own distinctiveness, a recognition of the uniqueness of their personality, the shaping of their own identity, the defining of a personal hierarchy of values and the specificity of the relationships they establish – people and communities with whom they enter into relationships and taking into account the nature of the historical and cultural conditions in which they live. All this translates into the culture a given person participates in creating and which also shapes them.

On the other hand, each person gradually recognises and becomes aware of the existential, spiritual and physical constitution common to all, having the same spiritual powers, the need for relationality and sharing common values referred to as universally human. This dimension of human existence is the basis for creating a common, universal culture, which also affects the formation of a person and his social relations.

In this dynamic of changes (morphogenesis) related to the relationship between human agency and the impact of culture, priority, according to Archer's concept, falls to a person as the creator of culture, as well as the subject constantly developing the socio-cultural system and leading to the elaboration of the cultural system (Archer, 1996, chapt. 7 and 8). The universal dimension of culture is not only an expression of a certain common state of humanity for all people, but also the effect of the development of the potential inscribed in each person, a common striving to create a more humane world, humanise

the living environment and subjectively shape the reality surrounding them (Wielecki, 2024). From the considerations above, it can also be concluded that in the relationship between universal (global) culture and particular (local) culture, particular culture has the primary character. For this reason, it is not possible to completely eliminate it.

The development of a true global culture is therefore based on the community of values referring to humanity, namely, who a person is. Its basis is a common human nature, a common origin, including problems that unite everyone and are understandable, which we define as universally human. Artists who refer to these are usually more easily recognized and understood by others. Humanity is connected by interpersonal relationships, common to all people and experienced similarly, which include aspects such as love, heroism, honesty, loyalty and forgiveness, but also jealousy, hatred, betrayal, greed and the struggle for power. The harmony and beauty of the human body depicted by ancient Greek sculptors is something that can be understood and admired by everyone. What Virgil wrote in the *Aeneid* about the Trojan trap, and Homer in the *Odyssey* about Odysseus' return to his family contained attitudes and feelings familiar to everyone.

The coexistence of global and local culture is therefore not only possible but essential for the proper development of individuals and entire societies.
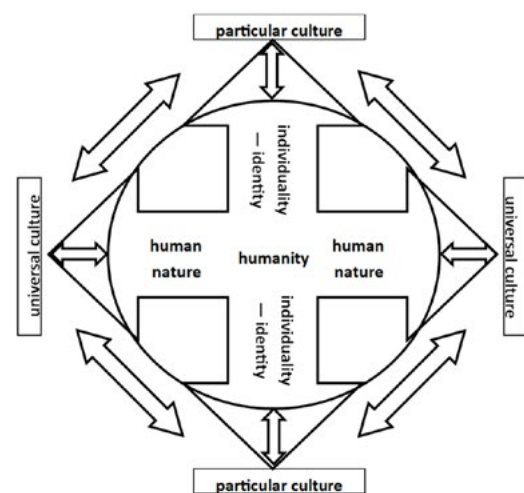

Diagram 1. Relationships between local and global culture from an anthropological perspective. Source: Author.

A proper understanding of the place of these different dimensions of culture allows for mutual support and strengthening of development, which are synergistic in nature. Most universal cultural resources first developed within local culture, forming part of it. Their adoption as part of world heritage makes them a special element of a region's identity, something that, being widely known and appreciated, is displayed in a given region or country as its achievements and a part of its identity. These elements are easy in a cultural communication and have a strong unifying effect. Global culture brings a wide flow of information and knowledge, which can also become an inspiration for local culture. It also offers new and broader opportunities for the legal protection of local cultures and traditions, as well as greater financial support from international institutions. Support for local culture is also clearly visible in the development of global tourism, which increases interest in local cultures, as well as in the development of modern global media, which bring out the richness of local cultures, thus strengthening local traditions (cf. Taptiani et al., 2024, 93-94; Tai, 2024).

Local culture is not "worse" because it is less understandable to people living outside it. Most often it simply requires an introduction, an explanation of the context, so that it can be well understood. It is directly understood by those who are raised in it and who co-create it. However, universal elements, common to all, are always woven into this local context.

Religions have had – and continue to have – a significant influence on individual cultural systems and their development. They are often a fundamental element of individual nations' identities. Great religions, which cross state borders, also have a universalising dimension. A common religion can also unite different societies and nations by spreading certain common elements of culture associated with it. In the case of the largest ones, such as Christianity, which has permeated all national and local cultures in the world, we can already speak of a significant universalisation of the culture associated with it. Nevertheless, we should also remember what has been said in relation to civilisations, namely, that differing religions can also be a source of tension between each other if the values they carry are significantly dissimilar.

Conclusions

Culture demands a community of values, otherwise there is no true culture. For this reason, global culture also requires common values, though these cannot be values imposed by dominant empires or large corporations – cannot even be the culture of the majority. The basis of true global culture is one that is common to all people. In this, it finds a proper basis, but at the same time also a limitation – there should be no striving for artificial unification or homogenisation. What is common to the human spirit has a chance to develop and spread quickly, to be received and accepted as the heritage of world culture, due to the community of human nature and common personal dignity. It is necessary to identify inappropriate approaches in past history, relating to the imposition of cultural elements on other nations, often involving religion (here, unfortunately, Christian states have also been at fault).

In the development of culture understood in this way, there is room for the development of local and national cultures. Similarly to a particular country, the development of national culture and respect for it does not have to negate the development of local culture, which emphasises local identity and its specificity. A person who participates and functions in various communities and societies also needs smaller ones that provide a sense of closeness, emotional security and familiarity, as well as the wider space that opens up to them with the ever-growing technical possibilities related to communication and transport.

The movement that will support the development of both global and national cultures is the building of unity in diversity. This is a model of mutual enrichment and complementarity. Each of these dimensions has its own space in which to develop. Therefore, one can and should try to avoid unnecessary conflicts, thanks to proper understanding and mutual respect. However, there is a certain assumption in this of what constitutes 'proper understanding' and 'proper attitudes' for everyone, which in practice is difficult to implement, so it must be acknowledged that avoiding conflict is not wholly achievable. On the other hand, one should strive to reduce tensions and use emerging conflicts to create new spaces of

the common good. Tensions can also have a positive impact on the development of of what is global and what is local. Of course, too much tension, leading to conflict, is inappropriate and destructive, but a little can mobilise and force greater creativity and faster development.

The slogan "Think globally, act locally", one of the key ideas from Agenda 21 in Rio de Janeiro, also showed one direction for action in building relationships between the global and the local. What is created locally can have universal significance, because the range of influence of even small cultures is difficult to define. As Rodziński wrote: "When it comes to different environmental cultures, geographically and historically placed, it is easier to point out individual foci from which these cultures radiate, than to outline the boundaries beyond which their influence does not reach" (Rodziński, 1989, 231). In turn, contemporary tools of globalisation provide the opportunity to spread the wealth of local traditions and cultures faster, making them more common. Sometimes, they also allow them to be saved and developed. (Tai, 2024; Taptiani et al., 2024, 96-97).

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