

THE ROLE OF TRADITION AND THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE GLOBAL WORLD

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The present study debates the role of tradition for the economic performance in a world that is indisputable under the sign of globalization. A common ground is that globalization kills tradition and evens the world. Yet, a series of business indicate that success comes from uniqueness and the roots of such uniqueness lays in tradition. Such subject is of great actuality, because it may answer to the question regarding economic performance, but also reuniting two contraries: globalization and localization. The purpose of the paper is to explain the relationship between tradition, innovation and globalization – all of these related to economic performance. The research methods to be used are documentation and comparison – scientific methods that are specific to the International Relations and Compared Management research domains. The envisaged results are to send the message of not giving up goods produced in a traditional fashion and which represent the local culture.

Key words: traditional goods, economic performance, localization and globalization.

The role of tradition for the economic performance – traditional goods

If time proved a certain product / service to be bought on and on, appreciated by the public and requested by different generations, than it is a good product / service, but it is also become a traditional good, that might be willingly mistaken with a certain place and its people, and so, it becomes a label good, that might start to be requested abroad, at first from curiosity or for fashion and then because it covers a necessity.

Globalization encourages goods to travel: candies from Bucuria / Republic of Moldova, cider from Great Britain, banking services from Switzerland, yogurt from Greece, foie gras from France, pizza from Italy, caviar from Russia and so on. The request might get so high, as it is the case of pizza, that people all over the world started to produce it. One might get more pizza shops in its town than an Italian at home.

If something lasted it is because it is good and so, no doubtfully tradition sells. We may notice all the commercials that cover this particular point: German cars known for their traditional quality; Belgian beer made from ancient times by monks in a traditional fashion with local / traditional ingredients, Swiss watches that are handmade in a traditional way and so on.

So, tradition is an asset that leads to economic growth. It is also a card to be played by marketing in a global economy. It is a guarantee of something that was once of quality: natural, ecological, healthy, hearty...

Yet, this card of tradition has not always been played. It was a time when being traditional meant old and obsolete. So, some of the goods, preparation methods, recipes, ingredients that once were a pride, had been forgotten, and started nowadays to get to surface as an inspiration source for new business. Let's take for instance the food industry, and to get more specific, the bread making. British, for example, are keener of the traditional bread baking, starting with the wheat crops, their milling and up to the bread recipes and baking. Such trend leads to a crash between the big bread producers and the small entrepreneurs. We might associate big business with globalization, and it won't be false; but neither will be completely true, since the internet – a globalization vehicle and arena, will also be the biggest friend of the small entrepreneurs, since they can afford to promote their goods, and the whole world to get access to them.

So, we face a paradox situation, when tradition and localization is promoted and helped to survive by the biggest tool of globalization, the internet.

One might do the bread in a traditional way, but it can make it known in the most fashionable way: on socialization network; and it can also create a trend regarding a certain good: as it is the trend of repairing and putting back into operation a water mill to grind the wheat and to bake bread in a traditional wood oven using yeast instead of leavening agents. And we can make a whole debate on natural remedies versus medication (drugs) that would support our current theory.

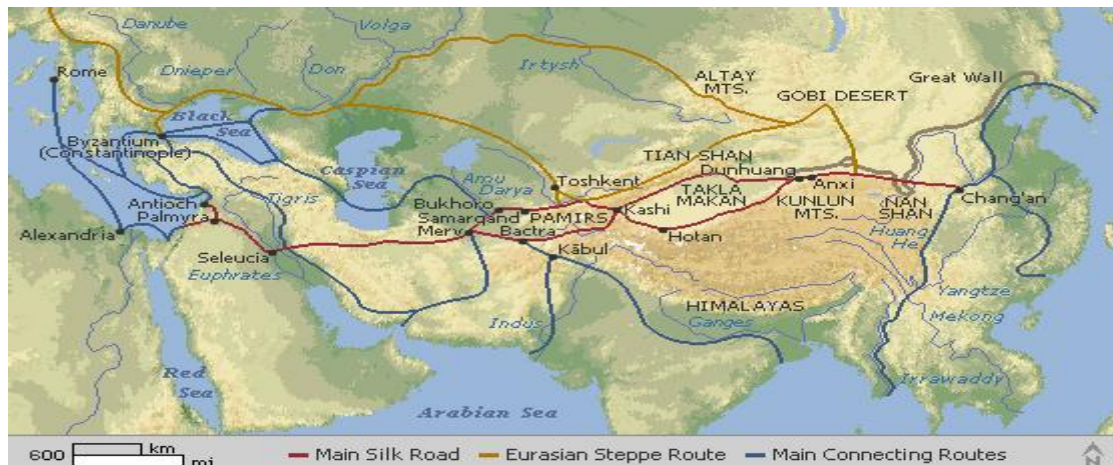
As we explained above, it seemed on the contrary, that the first wave of globalization – *the uniformization* – determined a counter-wave, the return to tradition, to local and handmade; but this counter-wave used the new technologies in order to promote itself, since the ITC is cheap, ecological and at a “click” distance.¹

When we mention globalization we implicitly think of McDonald² – the very exponent of the trend, with all its

¹ But policy and technological developments of the past few decades have spurred increases in cross-border trade, investment, and migration so large that many observers believe the world has entered a qualitatively new phase in its economic development. Since 1950, for example, the volume of world trade has increased by 20 times, and from just 1997 to 1999 flows of foreign investment nearly doubled, from \$468 billion to \$827 billion. Distinguishing this current wave of globalization from earlier ones, author Thomas Friedman has said that today globalization is “farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper.” <http://www.globalization101.org/what-is-globalization/>

² **McDonaldization** is a term used by sociologist George Ritzer in his book *The McDonaldization of Society* (1993). He explains that it becomes manifested when a culture adopts the characteristics of a fast-food restaurant. McDonaldization is a reconceptualization of rationalization, or moving from traditional to rational modes of thought, and scientific management. In contemporary society, the concept of McDonaldization is gaining attention in different aspects such as culture. McDonaldization thesis in cultural version is a comparatively recent idea of the world wide homogenization of cultures.^[1] The process of McDonaldization can be summarized as the way in which “the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of

economic, cultural, and political connotations. Yet, we no longer eat at McDonald only the American hamburgers. From the past 10 years, such companies have started to inspire from the local tradition, culture, habits, goods and to accommodate them in their offer.



Globalization¹ kills tradition and evens the world
Image "Globalization is not new"²

Of course you won't go to McDonald to eat *mici* or *sarmale*, and maybe McDonald knows it, but they put *mici* in their offer as a token of their appreciation for the Romanian local values.

So if you happen to be in Romania, as a tourist let's say, you might eat *mici* at McDonald's for the first time in your life, or eat fish and chips in UK, and so on.

So, the exponent of globalization understands to change its traditional food offer in order to respond not actually to a public request or need, but to signalize that local resources, people, values and tradition are important. And even more, American tradition are important, but local are just as important.

We know that globalization did not manifested so when the phenomenon become obvious at a social scale, in the contemporary society, and it was analyzed in opposition with localization, traditions, local resources; but we should also take into consideration the economic aspect of globalization. If for a while it proved to be profitable to forget about traditions and to price only what was new; it seemed that the "new new" is now tradition and whatever it presents as "new".

And so, the unthinkable happened and based on the globalization's No1 penetration weapon – technology and the internet, tradition can be kept, and promoted on a global scale. The world is "evened" by all sorts of local currents and trends that are no longer by American origin. One may get surprised what a remote place that could be if it is not for the internet to put it on the map and make it so popular for whatever traditional it can offer.

Uniqueness may lay in tradition

On fashion is now tradition that proves to be profitable in a globalised world. In the 90's, most of the world was enchanted by the American dream. To live on such standard was all one could wish – and I mean not only economically, but socially and politically: freedom and happiness. But the dream came hand in hand with the Mcdonalization process: *rationalization, control, calculability and predictability* in the name of *efficiency*.³ And it seems that world was not prepared for it. And after taking the bitter medicine, in quite a short time related to human history, due to technology and internet; the

the rest of the world."^[2] In the current period, most countries have adapted to this concept because of globalization. In fact, it has been predicted that the Ritzer model will come to dominate in most cultures. (Hayes, Dennis and Wynyard, Robin, The McDonaldization of Higher Education, The Journal of Higher Education 75.3 (2004) 368-370)

1 "Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world." <http://www.globalization101.org/what-is-globalization/>

2 Globalization is not new, <http://www.globalization101.org/what-is-globalization/>

3 "According to Ritzer, the four main dimensions of McDonaldization are:

Efficiency - The optimum method of completing a task. The rational determination of the best mode of production. Individuality is not allowed.

Calculability - Assessment of outcomes based on quantifiable rather than subjective criteria. In other words, quantity over quality. They sell the *Big Mac*, not the *Good Mac*.

• Predictability - The production process is organized to guarantee uniformity of product and standardized outcomes. All shopping malls begin to look the same and all highway exits have the same assortment of businesses.

• Control - The substitution of more predictable non-human labor for human labor, either through automation or the deskilling of the work force." <http://www.mcdonaldization.com/whatisit.shtml>

world is getting back to tradition even for it seems so “new”. In this pseudo novelty may lay the uniqueness that tradition brings to a world that seems to have consumed the same all, in a very short time.

Most of the time local communities face with the sorrow that they have nothing new / interesting to offer since the world have seen, tasted and experienced all. And this supposition is made stronger by the simple glance on the street, where goods from all over the world (made in China) are in our reach; and whatever it might have been unique in one’s community it was made known by somebody, on the internet and now it is surly duplicated in the whole world – “nothing new under the sun”.

Yet, this could hardly be the truth. For each generation the world reveals / unveils, while passing on meanings, symbols, values and one could hardly have it all in a life time. But each generation has its own social, cultural and economic experience, perception, projection.

The relationship between tradition, innovation and globalization

I believe that globalization forced this “friendship’ between tradition and innovation. Tradition can survive due to the new technologies that are able to promote it, preserve it, make it popular, and present it as an alternative. There are countless websites where one can read / view about the most unexpected traditions and the necessary goods to be carried on, ordered / bought from and shared with others that lived or want to experience it.

So, even if somewhere in United Kingdom, as well as in China, there is somebody doing bread with wheat grind on a water mill and bakes bread after doing a leaven with yeast, in order to pay a homage to its own tradition – this does not diminishes the very experience for those living it. And from the rational perspective of making a profit, it only promotes local resources and gives a chance to small entrepreneurs to function on the global market.

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