

1. Introduction:

The recognition of diversity among cultures, as an integral part of their identity and the very element that promotes intercultural communication and cooperation, is a phenomenon of our time. Globalization processes, marked especially by the market expansion, new and more dynamic ways of mobility of people and goods, as well as ICT innovations, introduced new possibilities for the inclusion of individuals, institutions, communities and regions in intercultural and international communication. The new possibilities opened up by ICT, global connectivity and the rise of networks challenge our traditional ways of understanding culture extending it to digital culture as well (Byford, A, 2012).

UNESCO world report (2009) noted that Digital culture is a new complex notion: digital trends are increasingly interlaping with the world of culture and arts, involving different aspects of convergence of cultures, media and information technologies, and influencing new forms of communication and dialogue. Different existing definitions of the term intercultural dialogue indicate the complexity of this concept. Today such densely interconnected society, marked by globalization processes and widely available communication systems such as the Internet, have created situations where space and time have been compressed, where so many sources of information and services have become instantly available (here and now). People can get in contact not only with people in their immediate communities, but throughout the globe. They are becoming more aware of existing differences, thus putting into focus questions of pluralism and tolerance as a shared concern on an international level.

This paper aims to discuss and share knowledge about the possibilities that digital culture provides for an intercultural dialogue and to identify examples of existing good practices that allow the participation of users in virtual cultural projects, thus enabling democratic participation of citizens in the building of virtual/digital culture. This paper also aims to answer the following questions; whether digital culture offers new perspectives for cultural development and how much the interdependence of cultural diversity, intercultural communication and digital culture contributes to the new concepts of progressive cultural policies and strategies.

2. Cultural Diversity

The new millennium is known of the elaborated debate about the nature of culture and whether any individuals' identity is marked by the one's culture. There exists a consensus among sociologists that the shared values, beliefs, norms, the spoken language and the lifestyle within the same society are different norms that shape us and make of us different from other societies. These are the premises of culture. Among any community, people are related to each other through sharing characteristics like the culture of the group (Jandt, F, 2010). The term Cultural Diversity is interchangeably used with multiculturalism which means "*... a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within organization or society.*" (Jandt, F, 2010, 49)

According to Jandt, F (2010), the definition of cultural diversity is related to four important behaviours:

- Recognition and respect to the diversity of cultures.
- Valuing the different cultures' distinctions and contributions.

- Encouraging diverse groups' engagements.
- Calling for unity through diversity.

UNESCO world report (2009) noted that the human being perceives life by referring to his/her culture. Through our culture, we make judgments about others behaviours validity. Therefore, cultural clash may occur when there is no tolerance towards different cultures. Cultural diversity is a fact we are living at school, university and work. Our societies are getting crowded of people from different ethnic groups. Thus, it is imperative to develop the sense of multiculturalism within individuals to increase the mutual intelligibility while interacting and get disposed of any kind of cultural conflict. Collaboration and cooperation will not take place unless sufficient knowledge about other cultures is available in order to help dispel negative stereo-types about culturally distinct groups.

Cultural diversity is becoming a current issue amongst a globalized world. Preserving the cultural heritage of societies has been approached by the international community by introducing monuments and natural sites, tangible and intangible heritage. The maintenance of such cultural diversity needs an intelligible cultural dialogue which is the ultimate challenge of cultural diversity.

2.1 Cultural Diversity and Globalization

As a matter of fact, globalization is imposed worldwide by a western dominant market economy where its threat is meant to the local cultural products. A globalized consumer is influenced by television and internet video productions. The effects reside in how traditional music is vanishing in front of modern music or how junk food is invading the traditional cuisine. The spread of English language as an international language endangers the minority languages. Vernacular languages are witnessing a considerable risk from the advance of many languages for economic, educational and other reasons (Byford, A. 2012).

A considerable number of local communities are affected by globalization regardless their culture, religion or the language they speak. The effect reveals in the individuals' social practices typical to the western paradigm. Lifestyles are changing leading to cultural erosion at a disturbing extent. This is mainly due to the widespread of globalization leading to cultural homogenization (UNESCO world report 2009).

2.2 The Migration Factor

The connection between a particular cultural event and its geographical location is weakening as a result of de-territorialization caused by globalization. Information and communication technologies have helped in overcoming physical boundaries to hear about immediate events around the world. Watching cultural manifestations brings new experiences into peoples' everyday lives which has a high impact on cultural identities (Byford, A. 2012).

Boyford, (2012) pinpointed that the international migration has become a significant factor in cultural diversity. Migrants need to adapt their cultural system to the host country values, beliefs and customs which are often very different; when in Rome do as Romans do. Most immigrants do not fully melt in the new culture but rather partially get adapted with the new ethnographic environment. The connection to their culture is preserved through family contact or the media.

Globalization has increased international immigration. According to UNESCO world report (2009), the world migrants' numbers were estimated at 190 million people. This movement has led cultures and societies to transform creating Diasporas and developing international identities and even the belonging sensation to different societies at once. Social relations are being created between people across the globe which facilitates further migration. Many cities around the world are experiencing multiculturalism, religion, languages and cultural practices. Migration is not always by choice. According to the United Nations, 14.3 million refugees are counted so far in different countries because of wars seeking peaceful conditions of life. Climate change and global warming is causing the erosion of many isles, so people will be forced to migrate. Cultural diversity is potentially influenced, also, by international tourism. According to statistics, provided by UNESCO report world (2009), in few decades, the number of international tourists has increased in 2005 to 800 million compared to 1950 which was estimated at 25.3 million tourists. The world tourism organization's forecasted of global tourist flow of almost 1 billion in 2010. The cultural diversity services are led by the globalization of international exchange.

2.2.1 Globalization and Indigenous Population:

Árpád, R. (2007) pinpointed that globalization has led to the violation of rights to ancestral lands and resources. Displacement of people by governments is continuous over territories; this fact leads to the destruction of indigenous traditional livelihood. He proceeds describing the influence of a globalized world onto the cultural homogenization and the disappearance of indigenous languages, governance and political system.

2.2.2 Globalization and Identity:

Hobsbawn and Ranger (as cited in Árpád, R.2007) mentioned that national identity is among the essential markers of belonging to a certain community. In addition to religion, ethnicity, gender ... etc. National identity is not a monolith but rather a multitude of differences such as race, class, references and gender. The nation is a key principle of identification. Identity survival is related to cultural perspectives inflected in traditions and repetitive practices. Yet, the reality is that cultures are changing and transforming. It is even suggested that we need to perceive culture as a verb not as a noun for its consistent change. In brief, cultural identity is seen as a process and a kind of a creative growth. Human interactions in the contemporary world are so intensive and immediate that national identity no more represents the cultural identity. National belonging is marked by a number of other markers. We get defined as individuals and societies in terms of multiple identities. Due to globalization, people do not only belong to one group. We get identified according to our belonging to many groups. This flexibility in cultural identity reflects the increasing interdependence of the globalized flows of people.

All in all, globalization is often set as a threat to cultural diversity. Its impact can vary from depleting cultural diversity to reconstructing some of its forms. This cannot be ignored in a digital world. In this regard, it is important to get control over the negative effects of globalization upon societies and indigenous cultures. It is also essential to admit the distinction between national identity and cultural identity. No culture is totally isolated or fixed, and national identity is the result of the continuous evolution and interaction. In this regard, the individual's identity is getting more and more complex. Thus, multiple identities are a modern feature in our globalized world. It is an emergency to take safeguards measures to some struggling cultural minorities manage any

cultural change within a context of intercultural dialogue. For “*cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are essentially linked, diversity is being both the product and precondition of dialogue.*” (UNESCO world report 2009).

3. Intercultural Dialogue

The fact of culture, that we are living in the 21st century, is highly determined by cultural diversity. Our lifestyles are becoming diversified economically, socially and politically which brings new social and political challenges. Cultural diversity might be a source of fear and many kinds of social troubles such as stereotyping, racism, intolerance, violence and discrimination among citizens with distinct cultures; that are also known by cultural clash. This fast change in culture is brought by migration, tourism, the effects of globalization and the information and communication technologies. Thus, the modern life is characterized by multiculturalism and issues of cultural identity (Byford, A. 2012).

3.1 Dialogue

The simplest definition of the word *dialogue* is a rational conversation between two parties or more. J.Tarnowski, (as cited in Byford, A. 2012) defines dialogue as a mutual confrontation conversation which aims at understanding views. He pinpoints that dialogue is considered to be successful when the different parties are discussing ideas beyond their opening views. Seeking an agreement between participants through discussions is the main objective of dialogue. Dialogue between cultures is not a modern issue; it is against violence and rejection among parties. The essential goal among cultural dialogue is to bring people to live in a peaceful world featured by multi-culturalism.

Intercultural dialogue emphasizes the connections between language, social interaction and intercultural communication. Intercultural dialogue differs from other forms of interaction in the cultural aspect; that is, participants are supposed to be from distinct cultures, ethnic, linguistic and religious identities are distinct among the speakers which leads to distinct rules of interaction. Intercultural dialogue focuses on a particular type of dialogue that is intercultural which requires both language and intent. Since dialogue is a verbal exchange of views, intercultural dialogue seeks cultural mutual understanding as a primary goal in order to reach agreement, cooperation, respect and tolerance among different cultures. Therefore, intercultural dialogue is seen as a practical tool to prevent conflict and foster peace around the world (UNESCO world report 2009). The council of Europe, (2008) p.10 (as cited in Byford, A. 2012) has revealed an influential definition of intercultural dialogue:

“Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organizations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are; to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes.”

4. Digital Culture as a New Cultural Diversity

The wide spread of the world globalization, via the advances in information and communication technologies, has broadened the scope of interactions among distinct cultural

varieties. Statistics revealed by Nielson/Net Ratings showed that 100 million videos are daily viewed around the world; in addition, a huge number of daily uploaded videos estimated at 65000 video. Teenagers are the most digital category with an average of 20 million surfers every month. Besides, the huge numbers of social networks users everyday which indulged people in a virtual life where people with different identities get involved in totally varied experiences of self-expression (Árpád, R. 2007).

Sun Stein, (as cited in Árpád, R. 2007) pinpointed that the over exposure to the virtual world through internet will stimulate a form of cultural shift and acceptance of the cultural distinctions. He adds; digital culture is increasingly exploited among youth who are surfing through social media and different internet web sites. This fact is creating a new homogenized form of culture known as digital culture where indigenous cultures are vulnerable in state. It is, then, compulsory to think about crucial initiatives towards revitalizing endangered cultures and creating new strategies so as to save cultural identity within a changing world due to the so called digital culture.

Digital culture has altered our lives into forms of interactions and multimedia stored information which can be referred to wherever and whenever we want. The development in the communication and information technologies has created a transformation into the digital world features. These latter reside in interactivity, interconnectivity, complexity, the merging of oral and written communication, speed, intangibility, convergence, unpredictability and multitasking (UNESCO world report 2009).

Contact between users of the virtual environment is increasing in different forms when the one responds to the other users' responses or via getting involved in online games where many players are playing the same game in an interactive virtual environment. Additionally, interconnection is usually available amidst other activities while surfing the internet or doing some homework because we are always surrounded by digital instruments varying from computer to the cell phones. This process of interconnectedness between people around the world is of a complex morphology for the allowance of such huge amount of information transformed at a glance is a complex process, too. Language contact can take place either orally or in a written form since the oral self expression can be overwhelmed with written forms such as images, documents and multimedia items (sounds and videos). Thus, oral and written communication is merging in a digital environment. The digital world, nowadays, is marked by an important marker of the fast pace in dealing with information. It resides in the fast transmission of letters, photos, videos and all sorts of documents regardless how far the receivers are. In other words, people have an instant connection with each other. The crucial assistant in this immediate contact is the technological advances where the user of a cell phone can convert its use from answering calls, taking photos to surfing the net. This varied use of technology has helped to cope with the unpredictable events that may occur which has changed the peoples' thoughts and strategies in acting and reacting vis à vis any event taking place in a culturally varied context they may witness (Árpád Rab, 2007).

5. Conclusion

Culture is the lens with which we perceive things around us, evaluate them whether proper or improper. Cultural diversity exists everywhere; workplaces, schools and different organizations consist of different racial ethnic groups. Thus, the openness to other cultures is of a paramount

importance to avoid any kind of cultural clash and to facilitate collaboration and cooperation among group works with distinct ethnic identities.

Cultural diversity clarifies the different perspectives that exist in the world and helps get disposed of any stereotypes or misleading thoughts about the other. A culturally diverse place is a destination to many people for being a good platform for people to build new lives among varied cultures, manners and languages where people get acquainted with new knowledge and different experiences. Henceforth, cultural diversity is a reward rather than a curse. It is a must to acknowledge and value the various cultural ideas, encourage contributions from all groups.

Differences should be celebrated because they are the only true thing that we have in common. However, the technological advances and the excessive need and use of the internet made of the world a small village where all people get into contact with each other in an incredible pace. The so called globalization has depleted some forms of cultures, reconfigured others and threatened the minor ones. Hence, major safeguards should be built against the effect of globalization to better manage cultural change within a context of intercultural dialogue, for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are essentially liked.

6. References

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