

first publication

»We witnessed more economic, social, cultural and technological changes during the last 50 years than during the whole previous history«, Kenneth Boulding, economist


1 Bauer, W.M.: Tyrannie blahobytu [The Tyranny of the Wealth]. Praha: Volvox Globator 1997. Bauer contemplates general trends and thinks that it is impossible to use merely positivistic approaches and shows that people are unable to grasp so big a number of stimuli from both real and virtual worlds, consequently lose their certainties and identities since they are unable to concentrate properly on everyday issues. Advertisements promote mostly money and power, so people take them as a certain model and are trying to accommodate mostly their own needs in the short run. Bauer underlines that his work is based on his research, which was done in Germany. Rather than on proofs or examples, he focuses on the description of trends. His work bears relativistic features.

2 Cf. <http://www.davidcoon.com/soc.htm>



1. Introduction

Globalisation has become a truly frequent notion of our times. Recent years witnessed its quick evolution and global processes shape the relations on our planet more and more. In combination with expressive influence of media they create an environment the world has never experienced before. Media represent the tool of transformation of global forces into the form that influence the human perception of reality and subsequently also human identities. More precisely, human identities are currently affected in an unprecedented way.

The massive impact of globalisation forces us to re-evaluate traditional approaches to everyday life. Our planet has become interconnected and complex in the widest sense and the present is increasingly penetrated by technocracy and bureaucracy. Bauer states that human beings consequently lose the interest, energy and will to participate actively in both private and public lives.¹ This leads to the gradual loss of individuality and the growth of conformity. People yield to the intensity, quantity and complexity of social, economic, cultural and other factors and relations in daily reality. Individuals finally strive just for the satisfaction of their own needs.

Such apparent crisis of identity and identification is closely related with the loss of responsibility for the society, nature, environment and last but not least, self. Several authors, such as Featherstone or Gergen² and others point out that the notion of the »core« of the self loses its significance. At the same time they clear the way to new definitions of identity as fluid, incoherent, unstable, constantly in flux and changing.

The first part of the paper is devoted to the clarification of growing conformity of individuals to the detriment of their individuality within the context of globalisation. While we are analysing the situation on the individual level, the explanation refers to the social, economic, political and cultural changes on the global level. This is a macro-micro problem but it is rarely stated as such and requires our special attention.

Globalisation as well as other major processes bear many pros and cons. Therefore, in the second part of this article, we will concentrate on one of the most relevant aspects of globalisation – the media – and closely related phenomenon of consumerism. We will attempt to examine mainly negative aspects of the relation media – human identity as society is traditionally more sensitive to the threats of various kinds. The article explains the changing notion of identity and closely interrelated degradation of values as well.

Thus, the overall aim of the paper is to examine the influence of media on individuals within the context of globalization. Finally, the proposals and hints how to cope with some unfavourable aspects of the relation media – individuals are suggested.

And why were only media and parallel consumerism chosen for the analysis? In democracies the media are often referred to as the fourth power. Media are now so persuasive and pervasive that they are able to erode national cultures and traditional values. Their news programmes are not merely reporting events but also helping to determine their course. Succinctly, the media have formed the virtual universe. They constitute a very efficient instrument for the formation of the phenomenon of consumerism and its spreading on a worldwide scale.

2. Social Aspects of Globalisation

Global processes have far-reaching social, economic and cultural implications. Until now they could not be carefully investigated because there is a wide consent that globalisation is at its very beginning. Moreover, the transformations of recent years have taken different forms in different places. Some states, but possibly even more so some companies and communities have been considerably more apt than others to crop potential transformation benefits from global processes. Other states, companies and communities have received little except increased marginalisation.

3 Castells, M.: European cities, the informational society, and the global economy. In: *TESG – Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 84/4 (1993), pp. 247-257.

4 Soros, G.: *The Crisis of Global Capitalism (Open Society Endangered)*. London: Little, Brown and Co. 1998.

5 The development of global processes might seem inevitable: a predictable form of technical or cultural evolution. On the other hand some authors stress that in practice this evolution has been strongly influenced by the economic and political agenda of advanced industrial countries. After all, this fact is not so surprising. However, this gives us more complex and objective picture of reality.

6 Harvey, D.: *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1989.

7 Giddens, A.: *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1990.

8 Massey, D.: Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place. In: Bird, J.,/Curtis, B./Putnam, T./Robertson, G./Tickner, L. (Eds.): *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*. London: Routledge 1993, pp. 59-69.

However, globalisation can generally be comprehended as a dominant general trend that changes the organisation of the society on the world level. From the economic perspective, it is a process of change from national to global scale of integration of production, exchange and consumption. This process was enabled mainly by the technological informational revolution that provided the basic infrastructure for the formation of global economy.³ According to Soros, globalisation is not complete, because it includes only the economy, but not the democratic decision-making process.⁴ Nevertheless, in the literature there is a relatively strong accord that the process is natural, unavoidable, and to a certain extent predictable and an optimistic scenario assumes also its qualitative development.⁵

Globalisation has ample social impacts. One of the most serious aspects is the augmentation of uneven social and economic development. It is caused by the different power and abilities of firms, individuals and subsequently localities, cities, regions and states to participate actively in globalisation. The division of power is not mirrored merely in inequalities between people or enterprises. Key players of globalisation influence the character and priorities of the public sector. States find themselves under increasing influence of multinational and transnational corporations and world financial markets. Changing relations between public and private sectors attract growing attention as well.

One of the most relevant impacts of the informational revolution and accompanying phenomena of global character is the quickly advancing time-space compression. The concept of time-space compression describes increasing movement and communication in space, widening of social contacts in space and human perception of such changes. Growing spatial mobility and overcoming spatial barriers are enabled by technological progress in the field of production, transport, communication and information. According to Harvey, the world of the 1960's was one fiftieth of the size of the 16th century world.⁶ Increased functional integration made possible by time-space compression has, in turn, led to the emergence of a global scene of accumulation, consumption, distribution and production, and equally important, differentiation. The role of time and space in our everyday lives has changed dramatically over last few years. World is rapidly diminishing in our perception.

Time-space compression subsequently affects the character of the society. Giddens speaks about geographical expansion of social contacts.⁷ He uses the concept of time-space distancing that leads to the weakening of the integration of social relations in localities and their expansion in virtually global space. It is necessary to underline that possibilities of exerting the possibilities of informational technologies are rather uneven. Massey focuses on the formation of so-called power geometry of time-space compression.⁸ Various individuals and social groups play different roles in the framework of our contracting world. There is sharp discrepancy between those that act as parts of global communication network and the others that lack the access to global networks. Uneven distribution of the options of using the global information system (such as internet, for instance) stems from the differences between the industrial developed countries and the third world, cities and country, younger and older generations or wealth and poverty. This leads to the strengthening of already existing and the formation of new social inequalities.

Global processes involve various players – firms, institutions and organisations, households and individuals. In principle, they can be involved in globalisation in two ways:

1. Activities of some players can actively contribute to the formation of the process of globalisation. The typical example is when a transnational company directs its activities into a certain area; this has extensive socio-economic implications (from changes in the composition of jobs and consequent impacts on the individuals, to the connection of the territory with the global environment). Of course, the number of the processes that can more or less directly form the process of globalisation is quite limited. Another aspect has to be mentioned: globalisation processes induced by those players create global external environment in which such players operate. This group is relatively small and relatively powerful and can be succinctly called »transmitters« of global processes.
2. Most players, as well as their behaviour, are influenced by globalisation. They are »receivers« of global processes. (Cf. Fig. No. 1)

This conceptualisation draws us on the expression of the relation globalisation (changing global settings) – changing identity.

9 Bauer 1997, p. 29.

10 Cf. Keller, J.: Politika s ručením omezením (proměny moci na prahu 21. století). Praha: Nové směry 2001.

3. Globalisation as an Underlying Cause of the Shift from the Stable Conception of Identity to the Fluid One

Regarding the theme of this paper our attention should be focused on socio-cultural dimension of global processes as it entails direct implications for identity. »Interconnectedness« is the key notion that describes the relations in the contemporary world. As already stated, places become »closer« to each other because time and space tend to compress due to the advances of technology and mass media: the most distanted places are easy to access, and the world seems to be smaller. It is impossible to overlook such symbols of modern era as intercontinental flights or the internet.

An individual becomes more and more involved in the process of increasing complexity and connectivity of the world and finds him- or herself submerged in a great number of various dialogues, debates and streams. The population is exposed to the widest variety of often contradictory factors and relations. The intensity, quantity and complexity of social, economic, cultural and other factors and relations in daily reality has a pervasive influence on human identities. Identity becomes more vulnerable to the influence of the external factors. We can contemplate that not only the relationships between people and happenings transform, but the identities of people also undergo dramatic changes.

In this article, we perceive the notion of identity in its essential sense, i.e. we concentrate on identity from the individual perspective. Therefore, identity is comprehended as the search for the meaning of the individual in relation to the self and to the society. This is about looking for inborn characteristics. In other words, this is the gradual process of uncovering nature. The same nature which provides us with the urge to live.

According to Bauer⁹ in case that the individual would live in a splendid isolation and out of the environment that reflects his or her existence and influences, the individual could exist without an identity. But an individual as a part of the whole is able to realise his or her own peculiarity, individuality. By acting we are realising the consciousness of the identity. Individual with his or her own identity is the basic building stone of the society. Societies possess their own identities as well and consequently we can differentiate between societies on the basis of their specific identities. Identity is quickly changing in time. Such alterations also mirror economic, social, cultural and political circumstances. Bauer underlines that identity of the individual is not formed and protected by the social order any more.

In history the overall number of already mentioned »disturbing forces« coming from the outer world was quite limited (at least in comparison with contemporary dynamism). This implies that drawing on the individual's nature was not as difficult as it is nowadays. Undoubtedly, there was a higher probability, that people will relatively easily identify themselves with their jobs, social relations etc. The world was quite unchangeable, the pace of life rather slow and the development somewhat sluggish. Not surprisingly, the particular individual identities of that time can generally be described as coherent and stable.¹⁰

With the globalisation drive the intellection of identity has undergone some significant shifts. It is commonly called »the crisis of identity«. Identity can no longer be fixed and this contradicts with the way identity was perceived before the development of globalisation. In contemporary socio-cultural conditions, it is asserted, an individual is forced to be in the constant search for identities, he or she cannot stay committed to one and the same identity for a long period of time. From the postmodern perspective, the notion of identity is not valid any more. Identification with someone or something is not the feature that characterizes the postmodern individual. In order to express the dynamics of »inner« human perceptions, it is pertinent to examine the »outer« changes of reality.

In essence, the entire problem of the individual's perception has two dimensions: Firstly, we examine the issue from the perspective of human reason. People created a complex and interconnected world, but they are unable to perceive the whole reality in its complexity. They are able to comprehend just segments or particularities of reality. Contemporary reality cannot be grasped by the reason of the individual.

Secondly, we should focus on the question of the sensational reflection of reality. Senses are unable to adjust not only to quicker pace of life, but also to often illogical and fast sequen-

11 Cf. Giddens, A.: *The consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

12 From the chronological perspective this transformation coincides with the massive distribution of classical clocks as we know them nowadays. Before their arrival the life of the society was determined by natural order, periodical changes of days and nights etc. The development was thus relatively static and rotated in a circle to a certain extent. After this period called »cock time« we witnessed the transformation to »clock time«, which enhanced the progressiveness of development. Currently, we are living in »time-space compression« or an increasing movement and communication in space, widening of social contacts in space. Growing spatial mobility and overcoming spatial barriers are enabled by technological progress in the field of production, transport, communication and information.

13 Turkle, S.: *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. <http://www.umsl.edu/~rkeel/280/turknote.html>, chapter I.

ces of pictures and noises produced both by real and virtual worlds. Our senses are not and cannot be prepared to cope with contemporary dynamism. The underlying cause is that they were not constructed from their nature to grasp so large a number of *stimuli* that actually »bombard« us at every moment. Those raids were enabled and supported by the quick pace of technological development.

So, we can conclude that the substantial difference between history and the modern global era is as follows: while formerly people found their identity (or more precisely approached their identity) with higher likelihood and exerted their reason and nature, nowadays a majority of people are resigned to the excessive and intensive stimuli of both real and virtual worlds. The attention of people is too disturbed with many emotions stemming from daily reality. They are unable to conceive the world and often not even their closest surroundings.¹¹ The way of thinking as well as behaviour could not be transformed so substantially in the course of history. Our spiritual perception is thus lagging behind the real material development. Overall orientation in the world becomes difficult and more and more and human beings are embarrassed to express their own opinion (which is not easy to create, after all). (Cf. Fig. No. 2.)

From the wider societal perspective, the relation between society and the environment has undergone a very important historical transformation. At the beginning, society in relation to its environment was relatively static and externally directed by the natural conditions. But together with the emergence of the industrial revolution the relation of society to the environment has altered and nowadays is relatively dynamic and internally actively conditioned. Society thus influences and forms the environment and orients itself towards the material and technical components of the expansion of civilisation.¹²

Globalisation is accompanied also by the transition from modernism to postmodernism essentially comparable to the previous transformation. While rational orientation and discovery of meaning through the investigation of the underlying structures of the world around us are typical for modernism, postmodernism is about a world of shifting surface. There is nothing as »real«, no ultimate meanings can be ascribed to the things and phenomena and reality is fluid.¹³

4. Media and Their Involvement in Globalisation

In order to give a particular and appropriate example that would confirm the previous paragraphs it is useful to focus on the media. Basically, media can be involved in globalisation in two ways: either by their being themselves transnational corporations or just by distributing messages and pictures. Furtheron, we will concentrate mainly on the latter.

Media play an increasingly important role in altering our perceptions of space, time, and social identity. These changes have been discussed in a number of ways by journalists, scholars, and policy makers. For some, the new media environment offers the exciting prospect of a »global village«. For others, new modes of communication threaten existing socio-cultural relations. However, there is a relatively strong accord that media as already stated are so persuasive and pervasive that they are not mere observers of events (very often world-wide) but also their »fashioners«.

Media can influence the behaviour of the population substantially. Media determine the topics we will think about in the future. This is accomplished by simple but persistent repetition of a particular theme. In that way our attention and subsequently our thinking are directed in a »desirable« way. Our thinking then affects our behaviour. Media are becoming one-way mediators of the information from élite groups towards the public.

There is only little doubt that media have formed a virtual universe which differs substantially from reality. For example, one of the most important features of the original mission of the media can be characterised as an objective, accurate and unbiased reporting including complete information. Reporting should bring a certain informational value. It is questionable whether media were once able to draw on such a desirable state. Nevertheless there are no doubts about a formidable increase in the quantity of information. Information and reports are getting increasingly compressed and shortened. The number of the pieces of information in media is growing substantially. Not surprisingly, they become shallow but very easy to swallow. Their informational value on average diminishes as media are penetrated by the trend called infotainment when form supercedes content. People are drowning in the floods of aggressive, noisy advertisements as well.



This development deepens the general passivity of people who are not required to use their own opinion, their own reason. They just perceive pieces or splinters of information without any connecting link. The mediation of experience by the means of mass communication is enormous, and its pervasive influence causes the substitution of the real world for the world of images, signs, and representation, when an individual is no longer involved in a relationship with reality.

14 Cf. Keller 2001; Lubbers, R.: *International Relations 1: Globalization*. London: Tilburgh 1998.

5. TV reporting as a Powerful Instrument of the Formation of Virtual Reality

Information needs time to be put into the appropriate context and to be comprehended. Only in that way does it bring real informational value and fulfil its mission. TV has moved old borders and formed a new ones with regard to the speed of information and considering the relations with the other informational resources. Apparently, the press is lagging behind from this point of view. From the economic or market perspective it deteriorates its own value. Internet as a relatively new medium is drawing on the speed of TV reporting but is not so persuasive.

TV constitutes a powerful medium of globalizing trends and is often viewed as representing a simplified field of superficial images functioning without reference and meaning. Events are assembled as a collage that underlines their heterogeneity and the absence of a common base. News, for instance, can serve as an example of the collage: the events reported in a single short news program might have nothing in common but their date. This radical view that basically renders media as being the leading factor in the dissolution of identity emphasizes its negative role in this process. Globalisation (or more precisely, media as a manifestation of globalisation), contributes to the dissolution of any stable identities or to the dissolution of the sense of self of the individual. As mentioned, globalization processes in combination with the expressive influence of the media create an environment the world has never experienced before. Media represent the instrument of transformation of global forces into the form that influence the human perception of the reality and subsequently also human identities.

TV reporting and news seemingly inform accurately and objectively. By means of the pictures on the TV screen they are very convincing.¹⁴ Consequently, a high proportion of people take the presented information seriously. Only some of them are able to realize that such a kind of reporting means just the display of quick and if possible amusing and shocking icons and assertions in fast sequence. Reporting is rather compressed in order to keep viewer's attention. The TV screen must not be boring, therefore information follows information or advertising at considerably fast pace. The viewer as customer represents an important element for television from a commercial point of view. Market relations are the principal ones.

Fast changes of pieces of information presented on TV virtually eliminate the possibility of saying something more serious. There remains no space for any deeper, serious, objective and accurate analysis in such a short time span. If someone wants to be informed more deeply, seriously, accurately or detachedly, he or she is compelled to search for more detailed information in libraries or with the help of an interview with witnesses of the event or from some other »less quick« sources. But what is the number of people who possess sufficient time and energy to exert the proposed approach?

TV reporting thus represents a mere notice of the event. But such a type of TV reality is hardly legible. As mentioned, the quest for the truth or decoding of this TV universe takes some hunting down. Not surprisingly, advertising very often goes under the name of information. If one is not professional, really important information is hardly distinguishable in the infinite flows of notices, advertisings or amusing shots. To what extent are people able to evaluate the measure of the truth of pictures from TV? As it is argued at the end of the article, media and the ways of their »reading« should constitute an inseparable part of compulsory education.

The next feature of TV reporting is its propensity to misuse extraordinary and very often tragic events. Such events are transformed to semi-amusing and almost attractive TV serial stories. Events are labelled by the slogan and inscription on the TV screen which is very often accompanied by sonnet in order to increase overall impression. Consequently, wars, earthquakes, floods, murders and other catastrophes of a greater or lesser extent are eagerly expected and passively consumed. Moral questions are silently swept under the carpet. Rather than text, people tend to consume pictures. And media are well aware of this fact:

15 Lubbers 1998, p. 73.

Information is available in vast quantities, but its very abundance is confusing and real quality lacking. Some scholars call it »the inflation of words«. The processes of economisation and rationalisation have penetrated the media. Media no longer function as information carriers, but serve as the space for advertisements or mass-products that are very often shallow, but very easy to swallow. Their real informational value is practically negligible. All this just deepens the general passivity of people who are not required to use their own opinion, their own reason.

This results in the sad but true rule that form supersedes content. People from public as well as private spheres are confronted with that consumerist ethic, rationalisation and media hungry for superficial, but selling events. Politicians, economists and many other people working in serious businesses consequently adapt to media and consumerist rules and needs. Serious matters become drama, fun to look at, soap operas acted out passionately, consumed passively.¹⁵

The above-mentioned features of media cause that for instance terrorism is one of the most efficient activities. There are practically no fields or lines that could reach such huge effects with such small costs. Taking into consideration the pace of events in case of terrorist attack, reports finally bring just several facts and huge heaps of emotions and conjectures. And the logic of terrorist acts misuses just the inevitable character of the reporting of those tragic events. Media are able to multiply the impact of every unusual or tragic event and made them more impressive. Terrorism would be much more useless without the engagement of the media.

16 Ibid., p. 72.

6. Media and Consumerism

As mentioned, media represent a very efficient tool for the spreading of consumerism. It is easy to agree with Lubbers¹⁶ that there is more and more encompassing consumerist behaviour or directly consumerist ethic. In such a society the notion of identity depends on the amount of money one can bring into the market. Status is defined by the brands and products one uses. Shopping, buying and consuming is the main way of expressing oneself and one's identity. But consumption is not only about needs. Brand symbolism, newness, appearance, fun and enjoyment are the norms that are exerted for the evaluation of commodities, people and interactions. This attitude is not in compliance with the rules of democracy and pluralism. Consumerist ethic and life-style are in sharp discord with the will to inform oneself and to think over information critically. Value-oriented action is replaced by a certain kind of passivity. According to Bauman:

Our postmodern society is a consumer society. When we call it a consumer society, we have in mind something more than the trivial and sedate circumstance that all members of that society are consumers – all human beings, and not just human beings, have been consumers since time immemorial. What we do have in mind is that ours is a »consumer society« in the similarly profound and fundamental sense in which the society of our predecessors, modern society in its industrial phase, used to be a »producer society«. That older type of modern society once engaged its members primarily as producers and soldiers; society shaped its members by dictating the need to play those two roles, and the norm that society held up to its members was the ability and the willingness to play them. In its present late-modern (Giddens), second-modern (Beck), or post-modern stage, modern society has little need for mass industrial labor and conscript armies, but it needs – and engages – its members in their capacity as consumers.

The role that our present-day society holds up to its members is the role of the consumer, and the members of our society are likewise judged by their ability and willingness to play that role. The difference between our present-day society and its immediate predecessor is not as radical as abandoning one role and picking up another instead. In neither of its two stages could modern societies do without its members producing things to be consumed, and members of both societies do, of course, consume. The consumer of a consumer society, however, is a sharply different creature from the consumer of any other society thus far. The difference is one of emphasis and priorities – a shift of emphasis that makes an enormous difference to virtually every aspect of society, culture, and individual life. The differences are so deep and multiform that they fully justify speaking of our society as a society of a separate and distinct kind – a consumer society.¹⁷

Market in connection with media stimulates people to act and think in a consumerist way. People are required and expected to act in a consumerist way in almost every social relation-

18 Ibid.

19 Taylor, M.C./Saarinen, E.:
Telerotics, Imagologies: Media Philo-
sophy. London: Routledge 1994, p. 11.

20 Bauman 1999.

21 Lubbers 1998, p. 72.

22 Bauer 1997.

ship. They are apt to satisfy only their own needs and yearn for products or services offered by advertisement in media. Natural desire recedes.

As Bauman¹⁸ wisely points out, consumption takes time and thus represents the bane of the consumer society and a major trouble for the merchandisers of consumer goods. The problem is that the consumer's satisfaction ought to be immediate. Consumed goods should bring satisfaction instantly, requiring no learning of skills and no lengthy groundwork. The satisfaction of the consumer should be finished at the moment of the termination of the period for consuming. Moreover, this time should be reduced to the minimum. And such diminishing is best achieved if the consumers cannot hold their attention nor focus their desire on any object for longer time.

In other words, impatience and impetuosity are »desirable« characteristics of consumers. If consumers are easily excitable and predisposed to quickly lose interest, they are ideal. Waiting should be removed from wanting and vice versa. As a consequence of this, the consumptive capacity of consumers can be extended far beyond the boundaries set by any natural needs or determined by the durability of the goods. The usual relationship between the needs and the act of satisfying is consequently put into the opposite order. The promise (and hope) of satisfaction precedes the need promised to be satisfied and is higher than an existing need. The existing requirement is not great enough to hinder the desire for the goods labelled by the promise of satisfaction.

But what is the relation between the need and the promise? The promise is all the more attractive the less the need in question is familiar. Rather than about gathering and possessing the material wealth and property we are talking about excitement stemming from a new and unprecedented sensation. Succinctly, consumers are hunting for sensations. Things as such constitute just necessary supplement to the consumer game. Taylor and Saarinen expressed it as follows: »Desire does not desire satisfaction. To the contrary, desire desires desire.«¹⁹

Human beings are thus forced to consume more than their real needs are. This takes place in a sometimes more, sometimes less sophisticated way. The power of advertisement is enormous. It is necessary to sell the service or product. Advertising artificially creates the demand for products and services. Subsequently, one can speak about forcing the needs. After the formation of the hunger for certain products or services media protect themselves and refer to the needs of the population.

Bauman states that

To increase their capacity for consumption, consumers must never be left to rest. They need to be constantly exposed to new temptations to keep them in the state of perpetual suspicion and steady disaffection. The bait commanding them to shift attention needs to confirm the suspicion while offering a way out of disaffection: »You reckoned you'd seen it all? You ain't seen nothing yet!«²⁰

It is also often claimed that the consumer market seduces its customers. But in order to do so, it needs customers who are not strong enough to prevent themselves from this temptation. For customers, it is quite easy to follow and obey advertising. It does require his or her own opinion or use of reason. In other words, weak identities constitute a true blessing for the run of the consumer society. The above-mentioned ease of listening to advertising acts as a fuel of the efficiency of the activities accomplished by media.

Globalisation also brought the intensification of economic competition. Rationalisation strategies pursued especially by big companies caused people to be compelled to work more hours and with higher efficiency. Their leisure time is diminishing, which results in striving for the satisfaction of their own needs. Lubbers²¹ underlines that from this point of view consumerist ethic can be seen as the ethic of tired and energyless people, and Bauer²² asserts that the number of working hours is not increasing so much, however in strictly rationalised world there is not sufficient space for really creative work. People can hardly identify themselves with their work. The final result is essentially the same as in the previous case: passive and tired people. However, it is plausible to assume that limited leisure forms the conditions for the »production« of consumers.

²³ Herman, E.S./McChesney R.W.:
 The Global Media. London, Cassell
 1997, p. 195.

²⁴ Ibid.

7. Some Geographical Aspects of the Media's Incidence on Reality

So, there are only few doubts that human identities are currently affected in an unprecedented and rather uniformising way. One could argue that there is always the issue of the active audience and that not all people have the same reading of the same images but Herman and McChesney counter this view by saying that:

[...] active audience analysis does not reach for a broader and more global frame of reference – that would involve ›meta-narratives‹, which are rejected as unscientific, in favour of micro-analyses which focus on textual analysis and comparisons. This methodology imparts a strong apologetic thrust, as analyses of the readings of individual texts can only yield local conclusions and are almost certain to find variations among individuals and groups, hence reader ›freedom‹.²³

But it would be a mistake to overlook some other important implications of globalisation for identity formation. For instance, by placing the emphasis on the unifying mediating effect of the media, another side of its work is neglected – their selective reproduction and representation of the events based on the cultural and national peculiarities of the concrete locales.

Thus, many of events that obviously seem to be of primary relevance in Australia will probably not be noticed in France and *vice versa*; most news programs on local television stresses the representation of local events over international ones; and when presenting foreign events, their interpretation will, again, be based on a whole number of factors: starting from the kind of relationship maintained with the place represented and up to the overall ideological reference frame officially endorsed within this concrete society.

Nevertheless, taking into consideration the commercial advertising, unified patterns of consumption in the whole world provide us with rather clear answer. Unlike news programmes, commercial advertising is not so often reproduced in a selective way. Moreover, the style of advertising seems to be rather similar almost everywhere in the world and it does not bring many new qualities.

Herman and McChesney²⁴ underline that there are a few companies controlling most of the media flow and production in the world. Consequently, the question of accurate reporting and representation arises rather urgently. The authors identify as the five largest media firms in the world (in terms of sales) *Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom, and News Corporation*. Each of these are most fully integrated global media giants. Second come *TCI, PolyGram, Seagram, Sony and General Electric*.

One succinct look at the holdings of each of those companies reveals that what they actually control is more than the general public can realise. They have already created strategic alliances and embarked in common ventures, thus making the market even smaller as they operate in an oligopolistic setting with high barriers of entry which makes it difficult for new entrants to get in the arena. There are just few doubts that they represent a truly global power both in terms of geographical distances and their influence.

²⁵ Bauer 1997, p. 34.

8. General Consequences

Not surprisingly, less stable human identities have become one of the underlying causes of the degradation of values. Values gradually become empty shells, we are lacking the capacity to renew values, to reformulate them in a new circumstances or to revitalise them. The veracity of marketisation and mediasation is mirrored by a world with less culture, fewer values, less reflexivity, fewer opinions. People lose their individuality and identity and hide themselves under the seemingly safe shelter of conformity.

Nature as a historical environment was replaced by institutions. In fact, once nature and natural conditions determined the development of society. In the course of history, both parties exchanged their roles. Institutionalised and rationalised society does not provide any fastening points to individuals searching for their own identities. People as natural entities are missing fastening points in the darkly abstract, institutionalised and dehumanised world. The convulsive and desperate endeavour for finding our identity often leads to membership in small groups of an extreme character. People are becoming aimless and disorientated without identity.²⁵

26 Bauman, Z.: *Tekutá modernita* [The Liquid Modernity]. Praha: Mladá Fronta 2002. (Myšlenky)

27 Chuchma, J. (2002), 17. listopad 1989? A koho to vlastně zajímá? [November 17, 1989? Is it of interest to anybody?], Mladá Fronta Dnes, Vol. 14, November 16, pp. B3.

28 Bauer 1997, p. 87.

Subsequently, the majority surrender to the attacks of reality. Masses get increasingly tired, energyless and passive. They act to a certain extent in unified manner, lose their individuality in the sense of ›peculiarity‹ and adjust to the general atmosphere. Such adjusting isolates concrete persons from their nature. By adjusting and resignation we suppress our nature, our abilities. That is why the individuals are receding and behave in a conformist way. Conformity means in this sense acting in the way that most other people do. The former heterogeneity expressed in the plurality of behaviour of individuals is replaced by the homogeneity of behavioural conformity.

Formidable global raid dramatically changes the perception of the world and constitutes further important features, which complete the picture of individuals and exist alongside already mentioned conformity. Our traditional living customs undergo considerable alterations just in view of time-space compression and increased pace of life. Events everywhere in the world grow older as never before. No matter whether something happened a year ago, a week ago or yesterday – everything is far away, unimportant and we are indifferent to it. Henry Ford claimed already in 1916 that ›history is essentially nonsense. We do not need tradition. We want to live at present and only history that is worth is what we are creating today and now.‹ Bauman²⁶ calls it liquid modernity. Everyone who wants to be competitive enough in a contemporary world, must be ›fluid‹, mobile, flexible, variable and not bound by tradition.²⁷

Bauer²⁸ concludes that such circumstances lead to the chain of causes and consequences resulting in the vicious circle of living without responsibility. Decisions are often short-sighted and aim to the mere satisfaction of the needs in a short run. The measure of utility determines behaviour. Deliberate concentration of this paper on the reflection of certain, let us say less favourable aspects of the present could spread the pessimism. Sooner or later we should ask ourselves, what is the strategy for the future successful development of our planet. The general answer is the communication of various entities. This does mean among others the participation in the decision-making. Communication is a substantial part of well-running communities.

It seems to be absurd that in the era of high technologies and modern communication systems the real communication becomes increasingly difficult. Different interest groups pursue their own objectives. They are responsible just in the small territory bordered by their spheres of interest. Although in recent years we can contemplate the growing number of so-called ›win-win‹ situations that provided real qualitative move, it is not sufficient. Moreover, the way of thinking and acting remained essentially the same.

29 Lubbers 1998, p. 64.

9. How Should we Cope with the Unfavourable Impacts of Globalisation?

Globalisation gives rise to countereffects in. They can be comprehended as reactions to frictions induced by globalisation processes. These reactions can be divided into political/administrative reactions and societal countereffects. One should bear in mind that this feedback is not merely about countereffects to media that serve just as an instrument of the diffusion of global forces that subsequently affect individual identities, but about countereffects against more general global processes. (Cf. Fig. No. 3)

According to Lubbers,²⁹ the following phenomena can be observed and classified as countereffects: a revival of a national and cultural sense of identity, reactions against the surfeit of political thinking at a great distance from the citizens, reactions against market-oriented thinking, the emergence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and New Social Movements (NSMs), a religious revival (for example, sects, fundamentalism, new age, etc.), communitarism, i.e. thinking in terms of communities, a revival in science, of institution-oriented and holistic thinking.

What these phenomena have in common is a shift from ›I-thinking‹ to ›we-thinking‹; from globalisation to delimitation; from rationality to emotion; and from the present surfeit of efficiency to more equity, also intergenerationally.

Although this may sound somewhat strange, there is the strong temptation to add the following: It is necessary to advertise the elementary human values as a supplement to traditional commercial advertising. Promotion of basic human values should be one of the primary functions of all governments. This should become as natural as for instance compulsory education at school age. Such a promotion should work as an equivalent of taxation. People pay taxes and have a right to claim the creation of harmonic conditions for development. This is

