Managing Diversity in a Glocalizing World

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Managing Diversity in a Glocalizing World

Our daily lives are governed by products and images originating from all over the world, through the process of globalization. At the same time, however, globalization creates favourable conditions for all sorts of forms of particularization, localization and even fragmentation.

While individuals and groups acquire multiple identities, the resulting plurality gives rise to conflicts, controversies and variations, but also to attempts to live peacefully together, to co-ordinate activities, and to balance interests. In short, present-day society embodies the ongoing dialectical processes of globalization and localization, and a review and reassessment of our reality is thus required.

A necessary precondition for this review, however, is to promote dialogue between groups with different identities, without asking these groups to develop a shared system of basic values or a common worldview, i.e. commonality.

The paper thus suggests (1) a plea for compatibility – instead of commonality - with regard to cultural values and (2) a strong emphasis on the interaction model in decision making, i.e. a model which does not advocate uniformity, but the compatibility of views, and in particular, practices. It concerns the coordination and combination of the proper interests of the various actors who have to depend on one another for the satisfaction of their demands or the realization of their objectives.

Keywords: Managing diversity, globalization, localization, glocalization, compatibility, interaction model

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Managing Diversity in a glocalizing world

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Our daily lives are governed by products and images originating from all the corners of the world. This goes together with growth of mutual dependencies. This implies a condensation of relationships and interactions between steadily more actors (a.o. Appadurai 1990). A massive, global exchange of people, goods, services, ideas and images takes place by means of telecommunication and transport technology. Standardised time, money and expert systems are introduced everywhere. Multinationals have become global concerns.
Apart from the more rapid increase, the long-distance migration is also characterised by a greater distribution: steadily more countries and regions become involved in networks which span the globe. Lifestyles, consumption patterns and other forms of cultural expression are exchanged increasingly more rapidly between more and more locations. Developments of a political, ideological, religious or cultural nature which originally appear to be connected with a specific region, culture or period are being echoed in other parts of the world.
Although this process has been going on at least since the end of the Middle Ages, we feel that the current wave of globalization is unique in scope and impact. The most obvious reasons of this are " the growing capital-intensity of manufacture; the accelerating momentum of technologies; the emergence of a growing body of universal users; and the spreading of neoprotectionist pressures" (Brenner 1996:19). This globalisation, by the way, not only refers to processes, the world as a whole is adopting systemic properties in which characteristics of each particular entity have to be understood within the framework of the world as a whole (e.g. Robertson 1992, Friedman 1995).

What is interesting is that, at the same time, increasing globalisation creates favourable conditions for all sorts of forms of particularization, localization and even fragmentation (a.o. Featherstone 1990; Friedman 1995; Giddens 1990; Hannerz 1992, 1996; Latour 1994; Robertson 1992, 1995). Apparently the emergence of a transnational system implies the rebirth of nationalism, regionalism and ethnicity (Anderson 1992). Here we touch the other extreme, the localization. Globalization and localization constitute and feed each other. Distant localities are linked in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and *vice versa* Social relations become disembedded, that is, they are increasingly 'lifted out' of the context of local interaction (Giddens 1990:64). For instance, we see that transmigrants act, take decisions and develop identities while being embedded in networks of relationships which bind them with two or more nation states simultaneously. They develop new spheres of experiences and new kinds of social relations. A situation of 'in-betweenness' is created, resulting in the hybridization of institutions, as well as the particularization, sometimes even fragmentation, of world views and moral frames of reference (Bauman 1991). As a consequence, individuals and groups, confronted with the uprooting of many existing local identities, feel an increasing need to construe or 'invent' new identities. These 're-inventions of tradition' (a.o. Roosens 1989) can partly be interpreted as a new defensive orthodoxy, in which - paradoxically - the modern communication technology is intensively used. A result of this is that some group borders are fading, but that others are articulated and defended more strongly. So, although the geographical bond of identities has become less 'natural' because of globalisation processes - it is a case of 'deterritorialisation of

identities' (Malkki 1992) - people cling to a geographical grid for the construction and experiencing of a cultural or ethnic identity. Various (corporate) agents, with their divergent histories, views and interests are thus engaged in ongoing negations to define reality and to get access to scarce resources. In the course of these 'exchanges and negotiations of meaning', the various identities are expressed, affirmed, commented on, externally imposed and adjusted in their mutual relations. Individuals and groups thus have multiple identities. This leads to diversity and ambiguity. It results in a drop in the acceptability of the certainties offered by local or national communities with their concomittant moral orientations. The resulting plurality of 'representations' and 'voices' gives rise to conflicts, controversies and variations, but also to attempts to live peacefully together, to co-ordinate activities, and to balance interests. In short, present-day society is 'nothing but 'a never ending story' of antagonistic cooperation. A such, it embodies the ongoing dialectical processes of globalisation and localisation.

Let me rephrase my argument. Although globalization may be much less new and comprehensive than often assumed by media and politicians, it is nevertheless powerful, pervasive and profound. Its ramifications (1) dynamize and complicate the received grids of social and cultural arrangements in all zones of the globe; (2) reconfigure existing territorial frameworks and issues of governance; and (3) include a set of unambiguously negative outcomes such as the continued marginalization and exclusion of broad categories of dependent populations. As a result, we have to envisage a world in which variety of and diversity in core-institutions will probably increase. These will partly follow old classical boundaries of region, socio-economic class, age, gender and religion, but will also run along new lines of ethnicity and lifestyle. Because the disadvantages of this variety - lack of consensus, increasing strife over scarce resources and provisions - can often rely on more public interest than the advantages, increasing demands for integration and decreasing tolerance for variety will become significant social powers. This creates a new paradox: the growing variety calls up powers which hinder the pursuit of integration. That is because the social fabric is built up of groups with different visions and interests. Societies at almost every level will be cleaved but also connected via processes and structures whereby distinction is continually made between inside and outside, between us and them. It must be clear that it is not just about the making of difference, drawing boundaries, creating a specific order, but also about the realisation of an inequality, yes even of marginalisation of specific groups by means of categorising groups of people and situations in specific ways. After all, categorisation intrinsically has a power dimension and is in many cases constitutive for the interpretation of the reality and the positions of different groups within it. Bourdieu (1991:221) described this as follows: "What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision", including the unequal access to and control of scarce resources which is connected to it. As a consequence, it is likely that specific groups are in danger of ending up on the sidelines of social life. We have to remember that opportunities for mobility and the availability of resources are highly differentiated. While the new processes of transnationalisation hold out new opportunities for some groups of the world population, the same processes are disadvantageous for other groups. We have to acknowledge that knowledge, social practices and identities are construed in a context of inequality of power and unequal access to scarce resources (Mohanty 1990). We have to acknowqledge that globalisation is accompanied by new patterns of inequality and polarization. We have to acknowledge that the global restructuring of production that is taking place favours a number of countries and ethnic groups but bypasses or even harms a considerably larger number. Poorer segments of the population are increasingly pushed towards degraded areas and are

forced to overexploit the natural resources, straining the adaptability of local cultures. The labour markets are characterized by numerous forms of fragmentation. Attempts at macro-economic stabilisation are accompanied by institutional reforms which emphasize liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation, all implying a withdrawal of the state in favour of the private sector. In a number of countries the 'separation' of state institutions from the internal dynamics of society has resulted in a complete collaps of the state and an absorbation of the state functions by an intricate network of legal and illegal transactions between patrons and clients. Sometimes this leads to the complete marginalization of a growing number of groups who increasingly resort to the informal sector as a means of survival. The related risk of social isolation is a fertile breeding-ground for racism, religious fundamentalism, ethnocen-trism, with all the disastrous consequences that entails, as ethnic violence in so many parts of the world clearly demonstrates.

In a sense, the problems of the crumbling away of social cohesion converge in our metropolises. One of the most remarkable, impressive and probing features of today's globalization is rapid urbanization. Currently, half of the world's population – around three billion people – is living in cities; their numbers are increasing fast. Besides, more than ever before a high percentage of the urban population lives in large cities of one million or more inhabitants and in mega-cities with ten million or more people (Scott 1998). The functioning of as wells as the interconnections between these cities command our attention. As a consequence of technological innovations, in particular with regard to information technology, physical distances are becoming less important, thus creating more opportunities for international interaction. The resulting network is composed of linkages between large urban areas (Scott et al. 1999). The key nodal points hereof are the global cities that are strongly integrated into the world economy. These cities are points of transmission and transformation between the local and the global. On the one hand, they channel local and national resources to the global level and on the other hand transmit the global back to the national and regional centres (Knox 1996). Together they form a global urban system with world cities (Friedman 1986), the major sites for the concentration, accumulation and redistribution of international capital. Where the headquartes of the transnational companies and the major financial markets are located. Related to this is the changing spatial form of cities that reflects the dynamics of a new urban network economy. "The global city is multi-nodal and polycentric. It cannot be managed from one bureaucratic centre but needs to be guided from a point which can co-ordinate a flexible network. The same applies at regional and higher levels where global cities are not mere competitors but also interrelate, since they need each other and are often also complementary. Thus they need to work toegether " (Van Naerssen 2000: 181-182).

Global cities are also major sites for the creation of a new global culture. It is particularly in the world cities that new cultural and political identities are being constructed. Globalization and information technology have contributed to a new experience of time and place in what Castells (2000) calls the network society of the age of information.
According to Van Naerssen (2000: 184) two outstanding features of global cities are vital to an understanding of global culture. In the first place, global cities are receivers of both domestic and international migrants. In the second place, thanks to liberalization and privatization, socio-economic polarization has taken place during recent decades in all global cities, creating new problems. Global cities reflect "the contradictions of industrial capitalism, among them spatial and class polarisation" (Friedman 1986). This is where the new rich, as well as the labour force of the services sector lives. They can be considered as the leaders and consumers of a sophisticated global culture. However, it is also in the global cities that

mass culture has appeared, a process usually referred to as the McDonaldization of the world. This suggests the creation of a global culture consisting of two components, more or less parallel to the socio-economic polarization.
But let us be careful, the picture is more complicated than that. Next to processes contributing to the emergence of an homogeneous world culture, cultural differentiation processes also occur. Local cultures, different from the dominant one, flourish as for example in the ethnic neighbourhoods of our metropolises. The latter relates to what Short and Kim (1998) call the reterritorialization of cultures, whereby large groups of migrants cling to their original cultures in other environments and at the same time changing it in specific ways.
If cultural differences are representative of global cities, so are striking socio-economic disparities We have already seen that there is an increasing demand for a highly skilled specialized labour force and for unskilled personnel. Even where the labour market provides ample opportunities , the contrasts between rich and poor have increased. For instance, in the eighties of the 20th century the number of well to do households in Los Angelos increased from 10 to 25 percent. During the same years, the percentage of poor households increased from 30 to 40 percent.The middle class thus became less important and social polarization occurred (Van Naerssen 2000: 185). Here the concept of the dual city comes to mind, the city where a part of the population benefits from the age of information, while other parts experience the disadvantages or are even excluded from the fruits of 'progress' (Sassen 1991). There is an increasing realization that poverty is not only a lack of income, it also concerns a matter of social exclusion, that is to say of insufficient access to economic resources, social networks and the political process of decision-making (Mingione 1996). Social insecurity, instability and alienation – the urban stress - characterize the dark site of life in all cities of the world. Throughout the whole world, the culture of poverty (Lewis 1965) is back on the urban agenda.

This shifting pattern of hybridization in large parts of the world, with a clear concentration in large metropolises, goes together with an increasing loss of control. It is as if our knowledge about 'society', despite the enormous corpus of social scientific research, is ever decreasing. The course of social processes is growing more and more unpredictable (e.g. Van Gunsteren 1993). Governments and their apparatuses do not operate as society's control room and reception desk. No one has a comprehensive and readily-available knowledge of the changes that are in progress. Policy measures have insufficient effect; they have a shorter life span and lead to a welter of new measures intended to correct the previous ones. This leads in turn to a questioning of many components of policy and management in terms of responsibility, operation, effectiveness, feasibility, accountability and even legitimacy. It is as if reality has become too complex, too pluralistic, too open, too unpredictable and thus too unmanageable. Calibrated certainties and existing factors which are taken for granted are disappearing (e.g. Breuer 1992). The Enlightenment idea of direction and steering through knowledge as well as the related bureaucratic procedures and techniques is under strong pressure. It has become tarnished. The ideology of social engineering has been exposed as a myth. In this connection, paradoxically, there is a growing need for direction and consensus as a basis for meaningful social action between a growing number of mutually related actors, while the possibility of doing so is diminishing. There is a risk of the absence of common or mutually attuned interests and representations, as well as of too much diversity. All the same, this 'absence' has become a genuine problem for governments because of the growth of dependencies and the compression of interactions. After all, the paradox pointed out above - the growing need for 'consensus' and the diminishing prospects of its realization-raises major questions about our ability to manage and to gain insight into social processes and institutions of any kind.

Awareness has grown that society is in the grip of divergent paradoxical and contradictory forces. Accordingly, it is becoming more and more important to learn how to cope with the uncertainties which people create in and through their own actions. In the current post-traditional society, the views held in the past and the related guidelines for action no longer form the basis for a 'natural' social order. It is not just that more and more individuals and bodies are establishing more and more contacts of various kinds with distant actors; more and more they (re)arrange and reflect on these contacts as well. Life in a post-traditional society in which regular patterns of behaviour and stable institutions are declining means that we all have to conntemplate and reflect on our own specific situation in order to be able to give it meaning. As a result of this reflexivity, the relations - and the concomitant routines and institutions-are made explicit, called into question, and adjusted. This naturally leads in turn to a further growth of reflexive knowledge in particular. Actors learn to anticipate the demands of the system. The problem is that it is often only a superficial adjustment. People behave in accordance with the rules, but this does not mean that they believe in the purpose, effectiveness or legitimacy of the rules, let alone internalizing the rules as a compass for future action. But how can you find out what they really believe when more and more actors have become streetwise? Does this not all lead to a drop in the effectiveness of policy with an increase in the complexity and the rapid accumulation of waves of policy? Do we not see more and more partial adjustments within the system, which can almost without exception be characterized as detailed elaborations, additional rules, intensified control and so on? Are we not bound to conclude that this 'involution', as this imprisonment within the same body of principles and procedures can also be called, no longer works today, and that a review and reassessment of our reality is called for? I do not claim to have a detailed vision of this issue - far from it! I have not got any further than a few suggestions, but I would like to share them with you. These suggestions boil down to (1) a plea for compatibility – instead of commonality - with regard to cultural values, and (2) a strong emphasis on the interaction model in decision making.

Due to glocalization contemporary people are increasingly facing and experiencing cultural difference whereas fragmentation undermines their idea of relatively safe and stable embeddedness in cultural, economic, social and political instututions. The combined effects of both trends create uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety and identity challenges.
Confronted with the question of how to deal with uncertainty and diversity I would like to suggest that we are bound to become hybrids in a hybrid world if we are to survive. Is it not better to realize that we have to operate in various settings with diverse structural arrangements and cultural orientations? Should we not aim at plurality, at a palette of combinations in which existing and historically conditioned boundaries are transgressed, such as that between the private and the public sphere, and between all kinds of policy sectors such as health care, housing, law enforcement and (public) security? In short, the challenge posed to managers and citizens by the present time is the development of skills which can be labelled 'management of diversity'.

These skills should first of all include the ability to deal with uncertainty, unknown situations, limited means, and one's own shortcomings. After all, in a global world and a plural society the citizen will inevitably have to associate with people who have different ways of thinking and acting. The citizen does not find his freedom in blindly observing rules nor in a self-evident orientation towards the general interest, nor in the possiblity of doing everything he wants to do, but in the ability to act judiciously under different specific conditions (Van Gunsteren 1992).

Now we can approach this problem of dealing with uncertainty from at least two different angles: an integrative and a coordinative point of view. In the integrative point of view of society or nation-state uniformity is advocated. It is transferred, although indirectly and often camouflaged, as an appeal to promote common aspects. The advocates of this view adhere to the conviction that society will disintegrate if its members are not strung more or less like beads along a string of common motives, cognitions and values. They think that a plural society can only function adequately if there is commonality of fundamental values and standards between the various groups in society. The ultimate goal seems to be the abolition of differences. For instance, the principle of a uniform law for every citizen implies that members of society cannot be distinguished before the law, and should not be. The qualities according to which a group or individual can be distinguished are placed outside the law. In a certain sense this principle therefore reflects an attempt by the dominant segment of society to define other segments and features as 'foreign', as misplaced, as illegitimate. In addition it is a confirmation and reinforcement of the social hierarchy. In essence it assumes the superiority of one form of life - and its corresponding legal system - in relation to the other. It makes it possible for individuals to accept and internalize the dominant form of life. The offer to switch over to 'the enlightened' position, in general that of the autochthonous population, is presented as an example of tolerance, but actually confirms the rigidity of the distinguishing values, as Bauman argues in his article 'Modernity and Ambivalence' (1990).

At the same time, tolerance with respect to individuals expresses an intolerance towards collectivities and their values. Cultural conformity becomes a condition and a vehicle for obtaining full citizenship. In particular, the ambitious segments of the allochthonous population groups adapt themselves. Also, as a result of their participation in the social practices and related exposure to the values embedded in these practices, they adapt themselves to the dominant cultural patterns. They are the so-called 'progressive' people, the others are traditionalists with whom the Western civilization offensive has not yet had the desired result. From this viewpoint the various assimilation programmes focus on breaking down and transforming ethnic identity. They intend to build up and mobilize a link with an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). The ideal of this community is an ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural homogeneity. If the nation-state were to to achieve its goal, no aliens would be left in the perception of the 'residents-turned authochthonous-turned patriots' (Bauman 1990). This has not been realized anywhere. 'Melting pots' are either myths or failed projects.

This experience leads to the conclusion that a coordinative model is to be preferred. This model does not deal with commonality (as is the case in the integrative model) but with compatibility of views, and in particular, practices (Wallace 1962). From a normative point of view this model places less stringent and hence more realistic demands on the groups living together within the nation-state. In this way people also avoid the problem with which tolerant 'integrationists' are struggling. Based on the conviction that the (re)production of commonality is necessary, these tolerant 'integrationists' demand that everybody mentally supports and internalizes uniform key values. At the same time they recognize, however, the right of minorities to experience their own culture. Their solution consists of the analytically acceptable, but empirically contestable, distinction between public and domestic or private domain. In daily practice, these two domains are interchangeable.

However, the problems are not solved by advocating the coordinative model. After all, integration and coordination have one common element: the demand of non-conflict of principles, criteria and (legal) rules. Incompatibilities should be banned. The conditions, however, under which and the way in which the 'process of banning' should occur are not easy to indicate. Choices are inevitable when it concerns conflicting views, for example concerning

the granting of equal rights of men and women, the integrity of the human body and the relation between the citizen and the state. I do not have the answer to this issue. However, I am convinced that a necessary precondition is to promote dialogue between groups with different identities though without asking these groups to develop a shared system of basic values, or a common worldview. Such an appeal is not only unnecessary, it is also dangerous because minorities may regard this as an invitation to renounce or forsake their own culture. So please, do not adhere to the mainstream view on culture as a common set of values, standards and practices.

Let me turn now to my second argument: the interaction model of decision making. It should be clear that the concept of governance is of great importance to an open perspective on the future. My thesis is that the success of governance will depend not just on the content of decisions, but mainly on the quality of the decision-making process.

Time and again I have the feeling that two models of decision-making are being confused: in many cases the norm is a classical rational model of decision-making, while in everyday practice it is a strategic interaction model which is followed. The classical model distinguishes the clearly demarcated successive stages in the process of decision-making. We are familiar with these stages: preparation, determination, execution, evaluation and adjustment of policy. These stages call for strong management and rational bureaucratic procedures with obedient actors who are ideally guided by 'the common good' and who observe the prescribed 'rules of the game', which lay down exactly who may take part in this process, when and how. It is common knowledge that some of them do not stick to the rules of the game, that some perhaps many engage in shopping, intriguing and manipulating outside official channels. Really these 'cheats' ought to be dismissed, but that does not happen. They are not only tolerated, they are often positively appreciated. Practice shows that they are the successful ones. In other words, are not the 'cheats' in terms of the classical model the strategic actors in terms of the interaction model? This model assumes that solutions and problems only become relevant in a process of decision-making if they are represented by an actor. This implies that the definitions of reality adhered to by the various parties are an important basis for the course of the decision-making, which can be described as a bundle of series of decisions taken by various actors (Teisman 1992). Note that the interaction model has a structure and rules too, though they are fundamentally different from the classical model (In 't Veld 1995). There are no stages, but decision rounds. The results of each round affect the following round. However, the process can start up again each time with different positions, different definitions, and to some extent, different actors and weapons in different arenas. Those involved are thus reasonably free to take initiatives, adjust others' proposals, or to run off with them whenever they feel the need. So it seems that chaos reigns.

Since the interaction model recognizes an antagonistic cooperation between the actors, whether they are representatives of political parties, trade unions, sects, government bodies or whatever, it is not concerned with the common good. In fact, this model immediately exposes the common good as the proper interest of an actor who is attempting to impose his or her definition of the situation on others. What is at stake is the location and realization of a shared interest, consisting of the combination of the well-understood proper interests of the participants. The interaction model is partly based on mutual dependencies and well-understood proper interest: in essence it concerns the coordination and combination of the proper interests of the various actors who have to depend on one another for the satisfaction of their demands or the realization of their objectives. I am deliberately using the term 'well-understood proper interest'. Otherwise, there would probably be a permanent situation of short-term profit-seeking without an awareness of the need to create long-term allies, while

the fact that scale and diversity can be important dimensions of survival may be overlooked. The combination of resources which imply this scale and breadth makes it possible to deal more adequately with fluctuations arising from certain changes in the surroundings. From this perspective, the preservation and organization of variety is essential for the maintenance of resilience.
Of course, this 'awareness' of mutual dependence as part of proper interest is not a prior given; it is a difficult task to formulate a shared interest from the range of proper interests. To achieve it, the parties have to submit - though they may do so hesitantly and reluctantly out of necessity -to an arbiter, a 'games master', a process architect (In 't Veld 1995). This 'impartial third party' -who is not necessarily neutral - has to ensure a rich, interactive environment which takes into account a multi-actor perspective in which as many potentially interested parties as possible take part on a particular issue. In this way, the process architect can contribute to obtaining the most satisfactory solution for the interested parties. After all, the only way to 'learn' is to act, to take part 'in a larger public process in which public meanings are negotiated' (Bruner 1990: 13). The attribution of meaning as a social process is dialogical by nature (Bakhtin 1981). Process architects act as monitors or brokers. They do not direct, but they inform and mediate, they bring parties together by articulating and coordinating their well-understood proper interests, they supervise the process, and check to see whether the agreements made by the parties (such as goals to be realized, tasks to be carried out, or resources to be reserved) are observed and carried out. Process architects of this kind have to win confidence not on the basis of cultivating a management ideal aimed at or based on an idealized image of consensus (the 'corporate identity myth'), but by expressing the Janus-like character of solidarity and exploitation between members of the same organizational unit. This calls for recognition of the antagonistic character of the cooperation between actors. It requires learning to handle uncertainty and diversity, a skill which can be acquired.

By the way, it is not just the embedding in systems of norms and protocols that counts, but the actual practices of implementation are of great importance as well. Lipsky (1978, 1980) has rightly pointed out that it is often the base-level practical implementers who have the most influence on management and policy processes. Executive officers at the grassroots level are not the end of the policy chain. They are primary actors. The ways in which these officers take decisions must be seen within their specific everyday working situation. It is at the level of executive practices that the actors equipped with diverse frames of reference learn to speak one another's language. This is the level which determines to what extent abstract, official, more or less objectified and available definitions of the situation (for example, the definition of a person as a recipient of unemployment benefit, an offender, someone who is incapacitated for work, or a partner) correspond to the meaning and content which those directly involved in the actual interaction assign to it. It is precisely in the practices of implementation that the direct link between the creation of meaning and the construction of identity can be seen. The degree to which this 'mutual translation process' is a success or a failure partly determines the extent to which the definitions of reality entertained by those engaged in the interaction are shared or reconcilable. This in turn lays the basis for the degree of 'responsive' governance or harmonious living together.

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