

Conceptual and Definitional Polysemy of the Term of Culture in Contemporary Social Sciences

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the conceptual and definitional polysemy of the term 'culture', as well as to emphasize some of the contemporary sociological and interdisciplinary concepts, theories and understandings of culture. This is an important topic in social sciences, actualized by contemporary theories of globalization, glocalization and discussions concerning global culture, contemporary transnational anthropological approaches to culture, sociological theories of modernity and modernization, "post-colonial discourse", "strong program" in cultural sociology, contemporary postmodern theoretical turns such as "cultural turn", "spatial turn", "complexity turn". In this regard, various new scientific and theoretical concepts, notions and understandings of culture in the "global age" are developing. All of them have abandoned the traditional definition of culture as unique, homogeneous, closed, static, territorialized, national, and now emphasize the understanding of culture as a diverse, hybrid, heterogeneous, open, fluid, dynamic, deterritorialized and transnational. However, in contemporary debates concerning multiculturalism, identity politics, politicization of culture, and cultural rights, it remains unclear, and it is still an open question as to way the term of culture is be defined, whether the traditional concept of culture is used, or whether culture is understood in a new way, which again updates its conceptual and definitional polysemy. In that sense, this paper points out the importance of defining the term of culture and the need to explain different usages and concepts of culture in contemporary social sciences.

Keywords: *culture, globalization, post-modern theoretical turn.*

1. Introduction

According to Eagleton's (2002) sentence in his *The Idea of Culture*, culture is "one of two or three the most complicated words in the English language" (while the "most complex" is the word 'nature') (p. 7). In addition its complexity, the conceptual definitional ambiguity of the term is a prime issue because the notion of culture is at the center of all contemporary debates concerning multiculturalism, inter-culturalism, cultural pluralism, identity

politics, politicization of culture, and cultural rights. The definition and the conceptual image of culture define the way how these important issues of modern times are discussed. Furthermore, in the social sciences, the problem of culture is actualized with the contemporary theories of globalization, glocalization and discussions concerning global culture, contemporary transnational anthropological approaches to culture, sociological theories of modernity and modernization, “post-colonial discourse”, “strong program” in cultural sociology, contemporary postmodern theoretical turns such as “cultural turn”, “spatial turn”, “complexity turn”. At the same time, this “global age” is characterized by the development of various new scientific - theoretical concepts, terms and notions of culture which all share the abandonment of the traditional definition of culture as a unique, homogeneous, closed, static, territorialized, or national concept. The emphasis is now on the understanding of culture as a diverse, hybrid, heterogeneous, open, fluid, dynamic, de-territorialized and transnational. However, in contemporary debates about multiculturalism, identity politics, politicization of culture, and cultural rights, how to define the notion of culture remains unclear and unanswered. It is possible to use the traditional concept of culture or the culture can be reflected in a new way, which once again actualizes its conceptual-definitional ambiguity. Therefore, this paper emphasizes the importance of defining the concept of culture and the interpretation of various concepts and usages of culture in contemporary social sciences. What definition of culture we take as starting point and to which approaches to culture we refer is not irrelevant because “terms are not innocent; they imply a specific view of the problem” (Habermas, in: Čačić-Kumpes, 2004, p. 150).

Kalanj (2006) describes “complaints and disputes about definition of the concept of culture” which are associated with the great conceptual ambiguity of the term using expression that this ambiguity “qualifies as a family of bigoted words or as the actual conceptual jungle” (p. 197). Of course, this “jungle” must be put in order “by acknowledging the ambiguity of the term, but with the necessary reduction in its numerous formulations, without which it would be difficult to achieve a minimum consensus on what it is meant when the term *culture* is used” (Kalanj, 2006, p. 197-198). With this in mind, we will present and analyze some of the definitions of the concept of culture.

2. Definitional ambiguity of the term of culture

Most of the sociological considerations¹ and conceptual-theoretical debates about the ambiguity of the concept of culture are based on Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's article titled "Culture: a critical review of concepts and definitions" (1952), in which they conducted a review of 163 previously known definition of culture, and using the similarity issue, reduced them to eleven essential conceptual formulation concepts of culture (Kalanj, 2006, p. 199). These are: "1) cumulative way of life that the group of people has; 2) social heritage which was carried to the individual from the group to which he belongs; 3) the way of thinking, feeling, belief; 4) abstraction derived from the behavior; 5) theory of social anthropologist show how the group of people really behaves; 6) common storeroom of knowledge; 7) a series of standardized guidelines for the current problems; 8) adopted behavior; 9) mechanism of normative regulation of behavior; 10) a series of techniques of adaption to the environment and to other people; 11) the historical sediment, a folder, a sieve, matrix"² (Crespi, 2006, p. 9). In addition, they created a definition of culture according to which it is constituted of "explicit and implicit forms of behavior" and symbols, and stressed that the "essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and their associated values", and furthermore, they pointed out that the "cultural systems can, on the one hand, be considered as a product of action and on the other as an element required for the future action" (Kroeber, Kluckhohn, in: Katunarić, 2007, p. 5).

According to Kalanj (2006), some authors are trying to overcome conceptual definitional ambiguity³ with the "*inclusive* ('working') definition of cultural field", and involve the ideas, knowledge and forms of action, tools

¹ According to Kalanj (2000), in the "modern sociological dealing with culture, there are three main orientations that dominate: socio-logistical, socio-anthropological and socio-political" (p. 37).

² Additionally, Kroeber and Kluckhohn proposed six general types of definitions of culture: 1) definitions that enumerate; 2) historical definitions; 3) normative definitions; 4) psychological definitions; 5) structuralistic definitions, and 6) genetic definitions (Kłoskowska, 2003, p. 13).

³ According to the "Dictionary of Sociology" culture can be defined as: 1) the opposition to biological, 2) the opposition to nature, 3) the opposition to the structure, 4) the opposition to the material, 5) way of life, 6) difference between high and popular culture (Abercrombie, Hill, Turner, 2008, p. 180-181). We can also point out the following "typology definition of culture": 1) positivist, 2) normative, 3) metaphysical, 4) cultural, 5) naturalistic (Skledar, 2001, p. 169).

made by humans and products of social activity in the analysis (p. 200). Such a definition does not consider the “symbolic feature of culture”, but instead, “the traditional division between the material and spiritual dimensions of cultural areas prevails” (Kalanj, 2006, p. 200). Further, it even includes the forms of action, and action is according to Crespi (2006) one of the general categories of specific discourse of sociology of culture. Crespi (2006) particularly insists on the relationship between human action and the symbolic intermediation, and the distinction between the concepts of *meaning* and the concept of *purpose*. It is important to be aware of this difference between action and culture because it allows us “to understand how is action, on the one hand, the substantially influenced by culture and how is it, on the other, the active principle” which can “transform the forms of culture, denying objectified determination of meaning in order to create new ones”⁴ (Crespi, 2006, p. 20). This can be easily explained by the undisputed view that everyone is born into a social context, and into a culture where he is socialized. However, coming out from the socialization phase, “conscious individual” will acquire the ability to “give specific meaning to that which was transferred to him” and he can modify and create new meanings since he “acts as an actor aware of the meaning and significance of his actions” (Kalanj, 2006, p. 208). Furthermore, Crespi (2006) notes that the interpretation of complex processes of cultural changes taking place in modern societies must take into account the coexistence of two tendencies of cultural globalization: according to the first one, we can talk about the formation of a *global culture*, or *transnational culture* that is “open to the perspective of unique *homogeneous culture* as an expression of universally shared values”, while another tendency is to emphasize the “phenomena of cultural particularity” which advocates “the right to equal recognition of a multitude of *specific cultures*” (p. 158-161). Still, according to Featherstone (1990), we cannot talk about the “global culture” if we don't accept “a broader definition of culture and think more in terms of processes“ (p. 1). It is important to reject “the binary logic which seeks to comprehend culture via the mutually exclusive terms of homogeneity/ heterogeneity, integration/ disintegration, unity/ diversity” (Featherstone, 1990, p. 2). According to Featherstone (1990), it is necessary to move away from the interpretation of

⁴ Culture is “by definition, historical, social category that changes with changes in social conditions, which itself influences”, and therefore “the definition and theory of culture must include, in addition to relatively constant elements of culture, and dynamic cultural processes (acculturation, enculturation, innovation)” (Skledar, 2001, p. 350).

the global culture as homogenizing processes (e.g. theories which present cultural imperialism, Americanization and mass consumer culture), and understood it more in terms of the “diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices” (p. 2). Furthermore, according to Švob-Đokić (2010), it is necessary to distinguish the concepts of the „world culture”, “global culture” and “global multicultural”. In addition, “localization is always present when there is globalization” (Beck, 2003, p. 111). Robertson (2003) in particular pointed on the relationship between the local and the global, stating that „the local is globally - certainly translocally - produced and reproduced“ (p. 462). He has also developed „the concept of glocalization“. Robertson’s (2003) approach „to the practical implications of globalization teaches us that globalization is not an all-encompassing process of homogenization but a complex mixture of homogenization and heterogenization“ (p. 462).

Among the various ways to systematize the meaning of culture⁵ we emphasize Katunarić’s (2007) approach to the “confusion made by accumulation of different meanings of culture” which brings more clarity by distinguishing two wrong approaches to culture: the first consists of the “gatherer” fallacy, which consists of a collection of the various meanings of culture; another type of error is called “essentialist”, which equalizes people within particular culture with “a solid and unique set of rules valid for all members” (p. 5). Furthermore, according to Katunarić (2007), there are three basic meanings of modern culture arising from the general dynamics of western civilization: the Enlightenment, the national, and the intercultural. Enlightenment’s meaning of culture “is the closest to the common-sense understanding of the culture” because “to be cultured meant to be informed, have ‘fine manners’ of behavior, to be self-effacing and ‘cultivated’” (Katunarić, 2007, p. 149). Being “cultured” meant to be “civilized” and this understanding of culture is “elitist and exclusive” and eurocentric (Katunarić, 2007, p. 149). Second, the idea of national culture appears with the growth of the national movements in Europe. It is in socio-anthropological term made from “beliefs, customs, language, historical memory, identity and the way of life of the certain group of people: nations, social classes, professions, age groups etc.” (Katunarić, 2007, p. 155-156). All of these “elements are used, above all, to define boundaries between groups” and actually, in that way the culture becomes a “sign of recognition and differentiation of individual

⁵ According to Paić (2008), there are three fundamental concepts of culture: 1. humanistic and that of Enlightenment; 2. anthropological, and 3. semiotic concept of culture (p. 31).

nations” and it is guarded by a nation-state (Katunarić, 2007, p. 156). Culture is therefore, the “principle of division according to which certain social groups differ, but it also has the power of social integration, which is particularly used by national elite. The elite use common language, education, collective rituals and mass media in order to integrate citizens and ensure their loyalty to themselves” (Čačić-Kumpes, 2004, p. 146). Such “special manifestation of culture as a factor of integration is the national culture - a homogeneous norm most often created around a common language, religious practice, material and spiritual values, social norms etc.” (Čačić-Kumpes, 2004, p. 146). In contrast to the homogeneity which is associated with the concepts of cultural pattern, national character and national culture, “all cultures are, in reality, heterogeneous (hybrid, not monolithic, diverse etc.)” and “the strength of a culture is not in its purity, but in the power to transform” (Čačić-Kumpes, 2004, p. 146). The third meaning of culture is intercultural. It arose during 1970’s and refers to the relatively “new way of seeing the similarities and differences” between cultures emphasizing the same importance of different cultures and their dialogue (Katunarić, 2007, p. 161). By doing this, the culture is mainly determined “as a way of life that people have” which is, according to Katunarić (2007), similar to Taylor’s definition of culture⁶ (p. 155). This definition is exempted from the traditional anthropological eurocentric and evolutionary view of so-called “primitive cultures.” Instead of emphasizing the unity and homogeneity of culture, the focus is on “heterogeneity as a feature of cultural forms in the same social context” (Crespi, 2006, p. 21). In doing so, one can come to Said’s (2002) definition of culture according to which all cultures “exert influence on each other; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, highly differentiated and not monolithic” (p. 32).

3. Some contemporary sociological and interdisciplinary concepts and theories of culture

Conceptual and definitional ambiguity of the concept of culture is also present in the various contemporary theories of globalization, among which

⁶ Edward B. Taylor in his work „Primitive Culture“ (1871) defines culture as “a complex unity, which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Kalanj, 2006, p. 199; Kloskowska, 2003, p. 12). According to Kloskowska (2003), that is one of the most cited definitions of culture, and can be accepted as the “global anthropological definition of culture” (p. 12).

we single out “theories of cultural differentialism, hybridization and convergence“ (Ritzer, 2010, p. 244). According to Ritzer (2010), “the concept of cultural differentialism emphasizes lasting differences among and between cultures largely unaffected by globalization or any other bi-, inter-, multi-, and trans-cultural processes and flows“ (p. 245). According to such a concept „cultures are seen as basically closed not only to global processes, but also to the influences of other cultures“ (Ritzer, 2010, p. 245). The second is the concept of cultural hybridization that “emphasizes the mixing of cultures as a result of globalization and the production, out of the integration of the global and the local, of new and unique hybrid cultures that are not reducible to either local or global culture“ (Ritzer, 2010, p. 255). According to Ritzer (2010), “hybridization itself is one such term emphasizing increasing diversity associated with the unique mixtures of the global and the local as opposed to the tendency toward *uniformity* often associated with globalization“, namely, “a cultural hybrid involves the combination of two, or more, elements from different cultures and/or parts of the world“ (p. 255). Therefore in relation to this approach concepts of heterogenization, glocalization and creolization⁷ is developed (Ritzer, 2010, p. 255-256). The third is the concept of “cultural convergence“ that stresses homogeneity introduced by globalization, and “is based on the idea that globalization tends to lead to increasing sameness throughout the world“ (Ritzer, 2010, p. 258). Such understanding is recognizable in the idea of cultural imperialism, in the concept of world culture, the issue of deterritorialization, and McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2010).

Furthermore, the conceptual definitional ambiguity of the concept of culture is present in the various contemporary multicultural organizational studies⁸, as well as in contemporary anthropological approaches to culture as a flow. Among such theories we single out Appadurai’s (1996) analysis of the “global cultural flows”, as well as the disjunctures among them, and “between economy, culture, and politics” (p. 33). Appadurai (1996) proposed “that an

⁷ According to Ritzer (2010), the term ‘creolization’ refers to a “combination of languages and cultures previously unintelligible to one another“ (p. 256).

⁸ In the context of contemporary organizational anthropology and multicultural organizational studies today are unavoidable authors such as Hofstede and Lewis. Hofstede (2001) defines culture as the „collective programming of the mind“, or the „software of the mind“, formed by the dimensions of “power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term/short-term orientation”. Lewis (2006) analyzes cultural differences in international business and classifies the world’s cultures in three rough categories: “linear-active, multi-active, and reactive”.

elementary framework for exploring such disjunctures is to look at the relationship among five dimensions of global cultural flows that can be termed (a) *ethnoscapes*, (b) *mediascapes*, (c) *technoscapes*, (d) *financescapes*, and (e) *ideoscapes*" (p. 33). Appadurai's (1996) use of the word *scapes*⁹ is itself not accidental, because that "suffix *-scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital" and also indicate "that they are deeply perspectival constructs" (p. 33). Each of them has its own characteristics; they are interconnected and separated and we can visualize them as imaginary and as real. However, it is significant to emphasize that according to Paić (2005), in Appadurai's analysis "culture appears as an autonomous mental landscape (*scape*) where, as at the imaginary landscape, the signs of constant change can be seen all the time", and "such a landscape is not naturally given", nor is it "culturally definable only by the projection of economic, political and social events" (p. 60). According to Paić (2005), in Appadurai's analysis, an essential change is present in the "contents and functions of culture itself" because it is no longer seen as "a permanent, stable and unchanging mean of social integration of individuals and groups," nor is it defined by categories of *rootedness* or territory, but is understood as "*flow* and movement of cultural capital through space"; actually, it is not territorialized; it is dislocated, open, fluid, hybrid, multinational, cosmopolitan and thus we talk about dynamic understanding of culture "as the new identity of the global age" (p. 59-60). It is the modern anthropological approach to culture as a flow¹⁰ as well as unlimited movement and process, which corresponds to today's "transnational anthropology" in which, in the conceptual and semantic content, culture can no longer be viewed as "pure, homogeneous and timeless" as it was defined in the traditional anthropology (Hannerz, 1997, p. 14). In addition, there is development of new conceptual categories that indicate the "mixing of cultures" such as "hybridity, collage, *mélange*, hotchpotch, montage, synergy,

⁹ According to Ritzer (2010), „the use of the suffix *-scape* allows Appadurai to communicate the idea that these processes have fluid, irregular, and variable shapes and are therefore consistent with the idea of heterogenization and not homogenization“ (p. 257). Furthermore, according to Ritzer (2010), Appadurai's analysis is in line with the idea of hybridization, because these „flows and disjunctures serve to produce unique cultural realities around the world; they tend to produce cultural hybrids“ (p. 257-258).

¹⁰ Castells (2000) also talked about the flows analyzing the "area of flows" (which replaces "the area of place") and "timeless time" as the material basis of a new culture which he calls "the culture of real virtually" (p. 402).

bricolage, creolization, mestizaje, mongrelization, syncretism, transculturation, third cultures” (Hannerz, 1997, p. 13). Thus, the traditional anthropological understanding by which “cultures are static, closed, self-contained systems, related to a specific area, which treat each other like impinging billiard balls (Herder)” are abandoned and the culture is “increasingly understood as a dynamic, open, never completed process, with constant changes and cross-fertilization, which cannot be reduced to a general (universal characteristics)” (Mesić, 2006, p. 242).

In addition, Wallerstein’s (1990) critical approach of the “culture as an ideological battleground of the modern world system” should be emphasized, and his analysis of the two concepts or usages of culture. Wallerstein (1990) defines culture as “the set of characteristics which distinguish one group from another“ (*usage 1*), and “some set of phenomena which are different from (and *higher* than) some other set of phenomena within any one group“ (*usage 2*) (p. 33). Furthermore, he concludes that “culture (usage 1) seems not to get us very far in our historical analyses”, while “culture (usage 2) is suspect as an ideological cover to justify the interests of some persons (obviously the upper strata) within any given *group* or *social system* against the interests of other persons within this same group” (Wallerstein, 1990, p. 34). For that reason he traces “the actual development of the *culture* (in either or both usages) over time within the historical system which has given birth to this extensive and confusing use of the concept of culture” (Wallerstein, 1990, p. 35). In fact, culture as “the idea-system, of this capitalist world-economy is the outcome of our collective historical attempts to come to terms with the contradictions, the ambiguities, the complexities of the socio-political realities of this particular system” (Wallerstein, 1990, p. 38). Wallerstein (1990) illustrated this “by creating the concept of *culture* (usage 1) as the assertion of unchanging realities amidst a world that is in fact ceaselessly changing”, while he done it also “by creating the concept of *culture* (usage 2) as the justification of the inequities of the system, as the attempt to keep them unchanging in a world which is ceaselessly threatened by change” (p. 39). Therefore, according to Wallerstein (1990) “the very construction of culture becomes a battleground, the key ideological battleground in fact of the opposing interests within this historical system“, and the essence of this debate is about “the ways in which the presumed antinomies of unity and diversity, universalism and particularism, humanity and race, world and nation, person and men/ women have been manipulated”, because “two principal ideological doctrines that have emerged in the history of the capitalist world-economy – that is, universalism on the one hand and racism

and sexism on the other – are not opposites but a symbiotic pair”, and their “*right dosage* has made possible the functioning of the system, one which takes the form of a continuing ideological zigzag” that is “at the base of the deliberate confusions inherent in the two usages of the concepts of culture“ (p. 39).

Furthermore, conceptual definitional ambiguity of the concept of culture is present in the various contemporary theories of modernity and modernization, among which we single out Beck’s (2001) interpretation of culture in the context of the theory of “reflexive modernization” that distinguishes between “the two epochs of modernity - simple, industrial and reflexive modernity, which is outlined and calls for finding political issues” (p. 19). Specifically, Beck (2003) distinguishes between two cultural terms (*culture 1* and *culture 2*) and relates them to an analysis of first and second modernity. “Culture 1” corresponds to the concept of culture in the period of the first modernity, and culture is then tied to a specific territory and society or social group, and that understanding considers culture as homogeneous and complete, what corresponds to the classical anthropological definition of culture of the 19th century and the cultural relativism where “culture is understood as a *Gestalt* or configuration” (Beck, 2003, p. 159). “Culture 2” corresponds to the concept of culture in the period of the second modernity, and it is a more comprehensive concept where culture is understood as a “universal human *software*”; it implies “cultures in the plural as mandatory”, and it is thinks “of them as of a non-integrated, non-limited diversity without unity” (Beck, 2003, p. 160). According to Beck (2003), in contemporary debates about cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, it remains unclear whether one is referring to “one closed culture (1) or open cultures (2)”, and also, it is not clear whether the connection between cultures is analyzed according to “static mode (wherein the cultures retain their specificity in contact with one another) or according to the flow mode (in which cultures penetrate into each other)” and this corresponds to the distinction between concepts of culture in the first and second modernity (p. 160-161).

The ambiguity of the concept of culture is actualized even with “post-colonial discourse”. It challenges the colonialist view of the world which is based on the “binary divisions” and points out that the world is not “divided into mere duality” and “segmented into opposing camps (center/ periphery, traditional/ modern, rational/ irrational, developed/ developing/ undeveloped parts of the world), and instead, it is created by numerous individual and changing differences” (Kalanj, 2004, p. 37). In doing so, we can single out Said’s (2002) distinction between two definitions of the term culture. According to the first definition, the culture “covers all those areas, such as

the skills of description, communication and representation which are, to some extent, independent of the economic, social and political areas, and mainly exist in aesthetic forms and have a pleasure as one of the main objectives” (Said, 2002, p. 10). Another definition of the concept of culture includes the “sublime element” as a “warehouse of the best knowledge and opinions of any society” (Said, 2002, p. 12). Over time, culture becomes a link with a nation or state, and separates “us” from “them” and when understood in this way, it becomes a source of identity. Said (2002) associates that with various intolerant, xenophobic, nationalistic “returns to tradition” by which culture becomes “some kind of stage on which various political and ideological objectives oppose each other” (p. 12).

The notion of culture is actualized with the issue of “cultural autonomy“. The fault line at the center of these debates lies between “cultural sociology” and the “sociology of culture“, whereby the “traditional sociology of culture approach treats culture as a dependent variable, whereas in cultural sociology it is an *independent variable* that possesses a relative autonomy in shaping actions and institutions, providing inputs every bit as vital as more material or instrumental forces“ (Alexander, Smith, 2003, p. 12). According to Alexander and Smith (2003), *cultural sociology* and the *sociology of culture* have “a common conceptual repertoire of terms like values, codes, and discourses“, and “both traditions argue that culture is something important in society, something that repays careful sociological study“ (p. 12). But “these resemblances are only superficial“, and at the “structural level we find deep antinomies“ because “to speak of the sociology of culture is to suggest that culture is something to be explained, by something else entirely separated from the domain of meaning itself“, and that “explanatory power lies in the study of the *hard* variables of social structure, such that structured sets of meanings become superstructures and ideologies driven by these more *real* and tangible social forces“ (Alexander, Smith, 2003, p. 12-13). According to Alexander and Smith (2003), in this approach “culture becomes defined as a *soft*, not really independent variable: it is more or less confined to participating in the reproduction of social relations“, while the opposite approach to culture is “sociologically inspired idea of the strong program” influenced by the “cultural turn“ (p. 13).

4. Conclusion

The concept of culture is also actualized with contemporary postmodern theoretical turns such as “cultural turn”, “spatial turn”¹¹, “complexity turn”¹² etc. These various theoretical turns of the scientific explanation of the term culture that are happening in the age of globalization have in common the abandonment of the preceding paradigm and the review of traditional concept of culture. They create new access to culture, as well as “understanding of global culture as the space - time of text, structure and communication instead of previous modern concept, which understood culture as a subsystem of social transformation” (Paić, 2008, p. 41-42). However, among the various postmodern theoretical turns, “cultural turn” is emphasized below because during the “cultural turn”, starting in the 1990’s, the culture is being considered “not only as important, but as a fundamental issue of the construction of social reality” (Kalanj, 2006, p. 194). It is “no longer being only considered as the subsystem of a larger social system, but also as an autonomous area of its own logic of sense”, and it “takes the primacy in social

¹¹ This turn points to the increasing orientation towards the subject of space (places, mapping, geography, territory) in a variety of scientific disciplines, and within a “new social science called cultural geography” was created, and the terms such as “relocation of culture” and “reconfiguration of identity” came out from that theoretical framework (Paić, 2008, p. 48). According to Paić (2008), the importance of “global/glocal synchrony of space”, can be recognized in Castells' analysis of the rule of *networks*, while the fragmentation of the integrity of the space is recognized in a variety of Appadurai's *scapes*, and in that way, these theoretical approaches are connected since they “equalize space-time of events of fundamental social structures in the global age” (p. 48).

¹² According to Urry (2005), this turn derives from developments over the past two decades within different scientific disciplines because “an array of transformations took place, loosely known as chaos, complexity, non-linearity and dynamical systems analysis“ (p. 1). According to Paić (2008), within “complexity turn”, culture comes down to “the self-organizing order of chaotic discourse and imaginative practices” and “global culture” (if it exists) is primarily a ‘complex mobility’ of various social connections (p. 38). It can be said in the shorter way that “all is complex, including a new concept of culture” (Paić, 2008, p. 39). Paić (2008) will even link that with Castells' theory of the network society, because in his theory of globalization the culture is “brought down to a new information-communication technology” (p. 39). Therefore, these approaches have in common the view that “culture is technologized and technology is culturalised”, which opens the possibility of “a different approach to culture in a global age“ (Paić, 2008, p. 39).

researches” (Paić, 2008, p. 30-31). As Paić (2008) explains, “the difference between the social constitution of culture and the cultural construction of social is decided on the character of change of paradigm”, and while in the earlier periods “culture meant the purpose of social development, in the global era it became the means of a new ideology of neo liberal capitalism”, and the only change is “that culture is re-politicized in different ways”, and “it is becoming an instrument/purpose of new national identities, particular social group, or lifestyle of subculture” (p. 31). During “cultural turn”, almost all social processes are interpreted as culturally determined”, and in that way, “instead of becoming the mean of social integration, culture becomes an instrument/reason of identity” (Paić, 2005, p. 6). In addition all “conflicts, relationships of trust and tolerance (ethnic, regional, international, conflicts between different social identities) are determined by cultural determinants”¹³ (Paić, 2005, p. 5).

Eagleton (2002) also wrote about that and concluded that culture “has ceased to be part of the solution and has become part of the problem”, i.e., instead of connecting and unifying us, “it divides” and “is no longer a means by which political conflicts are resolved, nor is it a higher and deeper dimension where we can meet each other simply as fellow humans”, on the contrary, “it often become used in political conflicts”, and cultural differences allowed the access to “political struggles” and “cultural wars” (p. 51). Politicization of culture does not anticipate “the fact that all political contents are not always the contents of culture, not even that all cultural differences are

¹³ According to Touraine (2000), the central conflict of our time is cultural conflict, as “economic conflict was to industrial society, and as political conflict was to the first centuries of our modernity”, and in that conflict, the central role is “by a Subject struggling against the triumph of the market and technologies, on the one hand, and communitarian authoritarian powers, on the other“ (p. 89). Namely, “as a society increasingly begins to resemble a market where there are no ideological or even political problems, all that remains is to fight for money or search for identity” (Touraine, 2007, p. 148). Here we can emphasize two similarities between Castells and Touraine. The first one is in terms of identity (*legitimizing identity*, *resistance identity* and *project identity* that creates *Subjects*) (Castells, 2002). The second one is in emphasizing “high importance of culture in the social universe”, because in the Touraine’s “programmed society” a central conflict is a “clash between the apparatus of cultural production and personal Subject”, while Castells sees in a culture the main generator of power in the *network society*, which necessarily leads him to the conclusion that the battles in the field of culture have the main role in the redistribution of power in information age” (Zeman, 2004, p. 441).

political” and in this way, “state or class elements, political organization, and everything else is subordinated when compared to cultural issues¹⁴” (Eagleton, 2002, p. 56). Thus, culture has “gained new political importance” and it became a means of political mobilization and “rejection of the Other” (Katunarić, 2007; Eagleton, 2002). On this track, Vrcan (2001) concludes that “the concept of culture, because of its potential social effects, gains the features of a *socially dangerous concept*” (p. 108). Those cultural meanings became popular within the framework of “contemporary wide shift from politics of interest that dominated for decades towards the politics of identity, which becomes dominant in recent times”, and “cultural diversity is becoming a decisive factor in shaping politically relevant identities, and therefore, culture is necessarily being drawn into the present so-called identity struggles” (Vrcan, 2001, p. 108-109). Such notions warn that “the definition of culture ceases to be a harmless conceptual game when it is directly transferred into the appropriate political action and when it serves to that action as the basis of legitimacy”, and this was in the most relevant way said by Eagleton in his assertion that culture can represent that for which you are ready to kill¹⁵ (Vrcan, 2001, p. 111). Furthermore, we emphasize Eagleton’s (2002) analysis of *postmodern culturalism*, which is defined as “the doctrine according to which everything that is related to human issues is the question of culture” (p. 105). However, Eagleton (2002) asks: “Why is it all about culture, not about something else”? (p. 113). Eagleton (2005) also asks: “Why is it all right to talk about gender and ethnicity” but “not all right to talk about totalitarianism and economy of capitalism?” (p. 52). Hence, Eagleton (2005) openly speaks precisely about capitalism, about Marxism as the most inclusive critique of capitalism, about “how no culture is more diverse than capitalism”, and about neo-liberal globalization as about one “Great story of capitalist globalization”, which practically replaced earlier “Great story” called Marxism (p. 67). This ultimately raises the question about the position

¹⁴ In this sense, Said (1999) raises the question, whether the “cultural, religious and racial differences are more real than socio-economic categories, or politico-historical categories?” (p. 405).

¹⁵ According to Eagleton (2005), culture is “a slippery concept: it can be trivial or significant... In Belfast or in the Basque country, the culture can mean that for which you are ready to kill, or if you are less fervent - for which you are willing to die... In a sense, this is how we live, the actual act of creation, the social air we breathe; in another sense, it is very far from the significant things that shape our lives” (p. 49).

of the previously mentioned new concept of culture. We can extract Paic' (2008) conclusion that we cannot speak of "culture as something separate, as a sector or sphere of social development if the culture in a global age is returned to being political (politicization of the content of culture) or even more radically returned to being economical (economizing political forms of culture) in order to fulfill realistically the reason for identifying the culture" (p. 64).

Finally, this brief overview of the different definitions and approaches to culture does not try to show all conceptual definitional ambiguities, but while showing some of its different meanings, we sought to point out the importance of selection of a certain concept of culture in the context of contemporary debates in social sciences. Namely, we have distinguished two different concepts and usages of culture: the traditional and the new concept of culture. The traditional concept defines culture as unique, homogeneous, closed, completed, static, territorialized and national, while the new concept of culture have abandoned the traditional notion of culture and defines culture as a diverse, hybrid, heterogeneous, open, never completed process, fluid, dynamic, de-territorialized and transnational. However, in contemporary debates about culture, although completely different, both concepts of culture are used indicating that the construction of culture becomes the key ideological battleground of the modern world system (Wallerstein, 1990). Specifically, traditional concept of culture is still used in contemporary theories of cultural globalization among which we emphasized theories of "cultural differentialism", and especially in the context of the "cultural turn" and contemporary debates concerning culture as a source of identity, identity politics and politicization of culture. At the same time, new concept of culture is also used in contemporary theories of cultural globalization and discussions concerning global culture, in the contemporary transnational anthropological approaches to culture as a flow and as a process indicating the "mixing of cultures", in the contemporary sociological theories of modernity according to which distinction between the traditional and the new concept of culture corresponds to distinction between the first and second modernity, and various contemporary postmodern theoretical turns that have in common precisely the abandonment and the review of traditional concept of culture.

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