DOI: https://doi.org/10.18485/fpn_ctes_mic.2023.ch5

Marina Simić
Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade

THE IDEA OF CULTURAL TRANSFER IN ANTHROPOLOGY*

Abstract: This paper focuses on the idea of cultural transfer in anthropology, while providing an overview of the main theoretical approaches to cultural transfer in this discipline. This overview starts with diffusionism and the cultural cycle approach, moving to the contemporary concepts of translation and plurality of modernity. Despite the current dismissal of diffusionism, some of its main ideas and premises became part of the lasting anthropological legacy incorporated in the contemporary concepts of cultural translation and multiple modernities. Finally, the paper discusses the postcolonial take on cultural transfer, including the idea of hybridity and the ways in which these ideas were appropriated in the anthropological understating of culture and cultural transfer.

Keywords: cultural transfer, diffusionism, cultural translation, plurality of modernity, hybridity

In this paper, I focus on the idea of cultural transfer in anthropology. Cultural transfer is one of the key issues in anthropology, and it is impossible to give an in-depth analysis of the various analytical and theoretical approaches dealing with it in a single paper. Thus, I will focus on the major ideas and give an overview of the main theoretical approaches to cultural transfer in this discipline.

The obvious starting point is diffusionism – a school of thought that attempted to "understand the distribution of culture in terms of the origin of culture traits and their spread from one society to another".[1] It came to prominence in Germany and Austria in so-called geographical anthropology at the end of the nineteenth century.[2] The central ques-

* This research has been supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, project No. 7747152, Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia from the 19th to the 21st century – CTES.

A shorter version of the paper was presented at the conference Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia: Methodological Issue and Challenges, The Centre for British Studies of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Belgrade (Program IDEAS, Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia), 8th of April 2022.

1 Gail King, Meghan Wright and Michael Goldstein, Diffusionism and Articulation, https://anthropology.ua.edu/theory/diffusionism-and-acculturation/

2 Early diffusionist ideas could be found in the "eighteenth-century philological tradition which posited historical connections between all the languages of the Indo-European language family." Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropol-*

tion of nineteenth-century anthropology, "how it was possible that a cultural manifestation (an object, a house, a religious concept) could occur in two separate parts of the earth in exactly the same form",[3] could be answered in two main ways that reflected the leading schools of thought of the time. The older of the two, the evolutionists, claimed that people at the "same level of civilization or culture" inevitably invent certain tools and come to similar spiritual ideas about the world, while the diffusionists stressed cultural contacts, which they claimed were pertinent among humans from the very beginning of humanity. Thus, they helped to propagate "both the essentially evolutionist idea of psychic unity or psychical identity (i.e., that all humankind shares the same mentality)"[4] and the diffusionist idea that cultural elements travel across cultures.

Diffusionism can be explained as research of "the process by which discrete culture traits are transferred from one society to another, through migration, trade, war, or other contact".[5] For example, Leo Frobenius, a German anthropologist and archeologist, one of the most prominent figures of the movement and an expert in African culture, proved "that not only isolated cultural items in areas separated by distance were of a similar shape, but that in certain regions numerous elements were alike".[6] He examined the similarities and dissimilarities between various cultural instruments, from housing and musical instruments to shields and knives, and by comparing the ranges of distribution of those elements, he "came to the first result of his new method: the culture cycles to which he assigned the African cultures".[7]

ogy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47. The most important authors of the time, Friedrich Max Müller and Adolf Bastian, were scholars who explored the use of languages in religion, focusing on their comparative qualities (Müller was an Indologist and a specialist in Sanskrit) instead of "evolution".

3 Jurgen Zwernemann, "Leo Frobenius and Cultural Research in Africa", *Research review-Institute of African studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1967), 6.

4 Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48. This concept is based on the ontology of naturalism, as it is called by Phillipe Descola, and can be summarised in the formula: one nature – many cultures (one world – many representations). Phillipe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013). As a philosophical concept and the basic anthropological premise of research, it has been questioned in recent years by Descola, Viveiros de Castro. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics: for a Poststructuralist Anthropology* (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal Publishing, 2014); Ibid, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds* (Chicago: Hau Books, 2015), and others (for an overview see Simić, 2020).

5 Robert H. Winthrop, *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Greenwood, 1991), 82.

6 Jurgen Zwernemann, op. cit., 6.

7 Ibid, 6.

The cultural cycles approach was enthusiastically embraced in German anthropology, but also in the United States and Great Britain. At a meeting of the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory in 1904, Fritz Graebner read a paper on "Cultural cycles and *cultural* strata in Oceania", and Bernhard Ankermann lectured on "Cultural cycles and cultural strata in Africa".[8] The main idea of these approaches was that the cultural complex named "African", "Oceanian", or any other is a "complex layers of cultural elements" (cultural elements being, for example, hunting and gathering, or certain spiritual beliefs, types of arrows, etc.), "whose historical relations" can be traced through comparative studies of various regions.[9] However, those processes were seldom explored according to the research principles of modern social/cultural anthropology; instead, they were usually deducted from similarities in material culture or other "cultural traits" (like monotheism or totemism in comparative religion studies). In other words, what was missing was the crucial anthropological concept of context (social, cultural), which would become the focus of future anthropological research.

Frobenius stresses the dangers of this method, warning his contemporaries that "it was not enough to look merely at the outer forms of certain cultural elements, one had *to* determine their content".[10] In that sense, although some diffusionists stress the "content" of cultural elements and the ways they fit together (anticipating British anthropological structural functionalism), many studies focused on similarities in material culture. A prominent example is the work of Fritz Graebner, whose interest in material culture led him to merge Ratzel's and Frobenius' approaches into the idea of cultural circles understood as the result of interaction and migration, but which could be arranged on the classical evolutionary scale of early anthropology.[11] Thus, for example, American anthropologist Clark Wissler's cultural area methodology was closely connected to the idea of cultural hierarchy, with the Nordic "race" and western European culture understood as the highest form of civilization.[12] Still, many prominent

8 Ibid.

9 Alan Barnard, op. cit. Jurgen Zwernemann considers these works the beginnings of research in cultural history.

10 Jurgen Zwernemann, op. cit., 6.

11 Graebner was a specialist in Oceania, and he identified several cultural circles with specific cultural traits (material or social), such as "Tasmanian" (considered the earliest and most primitive), "Melanesian bow" or "Polynesian patrilineal", which "he believed represented advanced cultural waves" flowing through the Pacific (Alan Barnard, op. cit., p. 51).

12 Jerry Gershenhorn, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). Unlike Wissler, Frobenius was an ardent critic of colonialism.

anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century, including Frantz Boas and Melville Herskovits, used the cultural area theory introduced by Graebner and others and developed it further in a clearly anti-racist direction that pushed anthropology away from evolutionism towards more synchronistic approaches.

There are probably no contemporary anthropologists who would identify as diffusionists. Still, diffusionism was not a coherent school of thought or theory (as they seldom are, at least in anthropology), and there are some important legacies of diffusionism, which are usually more tacitly than openly acknowledged. They include the ideas of "cultural areas", "cultural complex" and the regional approach in general. The modern appropriation of the concepts of "cultural areas" and "cultural complex" made them staples of anthropology, which later developed as a specific approach in contemporary history and geography.[13] In American anthropology, Franz Boas, sympathetic yet critical of the German school, insisted on comprehensive empirical research to support the identification of culture areas. Other American anthropologists, many of whom spoke German, such as Alfred Lewis Kreober, Clyde Kluckhohn and Abram Kardiner, picked up on those ideas and searched for cultural traits that can be lumped together, which soon resulted in the idea of culture as a bounded and integrated whole, which basically reproduced the idea of personhood at the time, albeit writ large (the work of Ruth Benedict is probably the most famous example).[14] Still, Alan Bernard argues, some Boasians "turned to history and to conjecture, and with some success".[15] One of them was Melville Herskovits, an economic anthropologist, who developed the idea of "West African culture" and the "cattle complex of East Africa", arguing that certain cultural features go together. He collected evidence from the literature that suggested that cattle was the main organizational principle of East African culture, which brought together

13 See Matthia Middel (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

14 In the so-called Culture and Personality School, culture and society used to be understood largely in Frobenius' tradition, as a person writ large. Frobenius compared cultures to living beings that live and die and resemble traces of other cultures they assimilated (much as children assimilate their parents' characteristics). Jurgen Zwernemann, op. cit. His American successors also understood culture as a more or less coherent category that could be compared to a living being. In other words, the same model of personhood was used to describe both groups and individuals. This model enabled the dichotomy between the two and remained one of the basic premises of western thought, albeit a frequently questioned one (cf. Marina Simić, Žil Delez, Feliks Gatari i antropologija: zaboravljeni slučaj Gregorija Bejtsona, *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (2021).

15 Alan Barnard, op. cit., 55.

various cultural features, including the cult of the ancestors related to cattle, patrilineal descent, age-based stratification and nomadism. That means that "cultural elements" are not distributed randomly but make a more or less coherent whole.[16]

After the critique that the concept of culture was subjected to in anthropology in the mid-1980s, the idea of cultural elements faded away, but the idea of "culture" as a set of various elements blended together remained commonplace in the discipline. Thus, for example, Adam Kuper, in his monograph on bridewealth and cattle in South Africa, uses "a method of structural comparison which focuses on a set of related cultures".[17] His regional approach enables the study of variations, "structural transformation and historical change while imposing a sense of the context and meaning of cultural practices".[18]

Kuper was well aware that cultures do not make coherent and timeless organic units and that boundaries between cultures are not clear-cut. Focusing on "migration, local adaptation, borrowing and innovation",[19] Kuper looks at cattle payments in terms of a general theory of marriage exchange, heavily relying on Levi-Strauss' theory of marriage and kinship, which blended politics, economy and ideology. In that sense, further development of diffusionism anticipated the contemporary anthropological ideas of articulation and "glocalization",[20] which stress the ways in which various "cultural elements" that seem to be separated blend together, as well as the research style of classical anthropological ethnography that later came to be celebrated by Latour in his critique of modernity.[21]

16 Ibid, 55.

17 Adam Kuper, *Wives for Cattle* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 4. He develops this method throughout his work: Adam Kuper, "Regional comparison in African anthropology", *African Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 310 (Jan. 1979); Adam Kuper, "The man in the field and the man in the study: Ethnography, theory and comparison in social anthropology", *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1980).

18 Adam Kuper, *Wives for Cattle* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 4.

19 Adam Kuper, op. cit., 5.

20 The term glocalization was introduced by Roland Robertson, who uses it to explain "*the construction* of increasingly differentiated consumers, the 'invention' of 'consumer traditions'": Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 29. But its use in social theory has the much wider meaning of the appropriation of global products in local settings.

21 For Latour, the Modern Constitution provided the false dichotomy between the worlds of nature and humanity, science and politics. For Latour, anthropologists (ethnologists) are the only ones "capable of including within a single monograph the definition of the forces in play; the distribution of powers among human be-

Translation, globalization and the plurality of modernity

The legacy of diffusionism can be found in the studies of "colonialism and its cultural and social consequences," as well as in the research of "the impact of trade liberalization and the spread of development interventions"[22] and globalization in general. The idea of translation emerged in the studies of globalization in a bid to show how various ideas and practices were articulated in various local settings (every setting is local if you look close enough).

The problem of cultural transfer as translation can be found in the wider, non-anthropological literature on cultural transfer. Jørgensen and Lüsebrink, for example, recently wrote that "any cultural artefact transferred between different cultures (or cultural systems) undergoes a process of transformation, of re-semanticization, re-interpretation".[23] "Cultural elements", just like policy, media programs, or popular culture, are never simply transferred from one setting to another, but rather translated – "revised, inflected, appropriated and bent in encounters of different kinds"[24], which makes culture more of an assemblage than a finished object or a product.[25] In that sense, every transfer is also a "translation" that requires

---

ings, gods, and procedures for reaching agreements; the connections between religion and power; ancestors; cosmology; property rights; plant and animal taxonomies": Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14. As an example, Latour mentions Phillipe Descola's book on Amazonia, but Adam Kuper's book is an equally good example.

22 Marta Rohatynskyj, "Diffusionism", in Hilary Callan (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2018), DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1642

23 Steen Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, "Introduction: Reframing the Cultural Transfer Approach", in Steen Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink (eds.), *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: Transnational Perspectives, Translation Processes, Scandinavian and Postcolonial Challenges* (Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021), 2.

24 Clarke et al., *Making Policy Move: Towards a Politics of Translation and Assemblage* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 15. Although Clarke et al., write about policy, the same could be said of any cultural element (policy included).

25 Here assemblage should be understood in Deleuzian terms, as "complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning": Graham Livesey, "Assemblage", in Adrian Parr (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 18. It emerges from the arranging of heterogeneous elements into a productive entity that are never truly integrated into a coherent whole, even as bricolage. Deleuzian theory, as well as his work with Felix Guattari, has heavily influenced contemporary anthropology,

both decontextualisation and recontexutalisation, as Peter Burk famously put it.[26]

This applies equally to public policy and popular culture and to the project of anthropology itself. Translation is fundamental for the discipline of anthropology more broadly, and, as such, it was widely theorized, the most recent effort being Viveiros de Castro's call for "controlled equivocation".[27] Controlled equivocation serves to undermine the usual anthropological translation policy that understands translation as a transfer from one cultural context to another and to open up space for ontological transformation that should "subvert and replace"[28] our own theoretical premises both in anthropology and Western theory more broadly.[29] In that way, the very idea of translation is radically transformed in order to accommodate "various forms of otherness – 'different worlds'" (and not only worldviews) that may determine themselves by "generative alliances that are in constant processes of becoming".[30] Its aim is to open up room for the "*possibility* that reality itself (not just the multiplicity of ways in which it is represented) might be found or made to operate according to principles other than those with which we are familiar".[31]

This radical reflexivity that applies to anthropological theory and anthropological project in general is reflected in the research that focuses on appropriation and transformation of cultural elements. Thus, in anthropological studies of cultural transfer, the usual focus on particularities is used to demonstrate how different groups of people cope and transform capitalism in its various forms (from ideologies to popular culture). In this body of research, media are those that usually become "the locale of localities" that "creates context as an object of knowledge".[32] Media

but one should be wary of superficially transplanting his work outside its original philosophical context.

26 Peter Burke, "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38.

27 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation," *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America,* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2004).

28 Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge), 22.

29 See Marina Simić, *Ontološki obrt: uvod u kulturnu teoriju alteriteta* (Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing, 2020).

30 Amiria J. M. Salmond, "Transforming Translations (part 2)", *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2014), 178.

31 Amiria J. M. Salmond, op. cit., 178–179.

32 Marilyn Strathern, "The Nice Thing About Culture is That Everyone has It", in Marilyn Strathern (ed.), *Shifting Context: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 159.

programs are made for wide audiences that do not share any specific characteristics with the protagonists, but nonetheless recognize "program settings, even if they get the place, time or class wrong".[33] In a sense, the consumer became "delocalised" – someone who can take in products from anywhere, while the act of consumption became localized, transforming global culture into "almost incommensurable specificities".[34] In cultural and media studies, this idea was put forward in various forms from the mid-1980s when the notion of *media text* as different from *media program* was developed.[35] The focus was on the consumption[36] and appropriation of popular culture and media in general. Consumption is always local – it transforms any product, however global it may be, in its spread into a text – a cultural artefact whose meaning has to be produced in a local context.

Context is a crucial anthropological magic word that can transform just about everything into an anthropological object of knowledge, one of the most important being the concept of modernity itself. Not unlike globalization, modernity is also an important anthropological topic when it comes to cultural transfer. The usual anthropological strategy to explore "how the ideas and practices of modernity are themselves appropriated and re-embedded in locally-situated practices"[37] led to the development of various concepts,[38] such as those of "alternative"[39], "vernacular"[40],

33 Marilyn Strathern, op. cit., p. 159.

34 Ibid, 160.

35 Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); John Fiske, *Television Culture: Popular Pleasures and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

36 Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, *The Export of Meaning, Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); J. Paige Macdougall, "Transnational Commodities as Local Cultural Icons: Barbie Dolls in Mexico", *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2003); Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 1997).

37 Alberto Arce and Norman Long, "Reconfiguring Modernity and Development from an Anthropological Perspective", in Alberto Arce and Norman Long (eds), *Anthropology, Development and Modernities: Exploring Discourses, Counter-Tendencies and Violence* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 2.

38 Bjørn Thomassen identifies twenty-one current ways of pluralizing the concept of modernity: Bjørn Thomassen, "Anthropology and Its Many Modernities: When Concepts Matter", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 18, No. (1) (2012).

39 Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities", in Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (ed.), *Alternative Modernities* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

40 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Theory from the South: Or, how Europe is Evolving Toward Africa", *Anthropological Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2012).

"global"[41], or "multiple" modernities[42]. This does not mean that people everywhere strive to abolish modern institutions, but that there are alternative forms of modernity that might not come from and in the single form. Those alternative modernities that might seem "incomplete" or "captured" (as in "captured state") might have little to do with tradition or "backwardness", but quite a lot with the modernity (or capitalism) itself that produced practices that are in the peripheries or semi-peripheries deemed pre-modern or backward.[43] In that sense, modernity cannot be finished, and there are no incomplete modernities.

The concept of alternative modernities became particularly important in the studies of globalization and development, creating a powerful counter-tendency to Western-centric models that created a naïve and simplified opposition between modernity and tradition.[44] Anthropological studies of modernity and globalization primarily aim to avoid "analytical Eurocentrism" and debunk the idea of singularity and "unilineality of modernization process"[45] and single-directness of globalization. Appadurai develops the idea of "scapes" (the term is derived from the word "landscape") in order to develop the theory of "global cultural flow" and avoid simplistic binaries of Global North vs. Global South, East vs. West, First World vs. Third World, etc.. He identified five specific "scapes" or flows: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes, financescapes, and mediascapes, which describe the flow of people, technology, ideas, money and media across national boundaries.[46]

---

41 Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, "Globalization, Modernity and the Spatialization of Social Theory: An Introduction", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

42 Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). Eisenstadt's ideas are not well known in anthropology and even when the term "multiple modernites" has been used, it was usually not in the way that Eisenstadt intended, but it is important to mention them here, as he was among the first to point out the processes of *longue durée* that enabled the spread of European modernity.

43 Anthropological works on postsocialist transformation in Europe is a good example of this kind of work, for Serbia see, in particular, Čarna Brković, *Managing Ambiguity: How Clientelism, Citizenship, and Power Shape Personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017); Slobodan Naumović, *Fields of Paradox: Three Case Studies on the Europeanisation of Agriculture in Serbia* (Belgrade: Srpski geneološki centar, 2013).

44 Alberto Arce and Norman Long, op. cit.

45 Bjørn Thomassen, op. cit., 165.

46 Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 7, No. (2–3) (Jun., 1990), 295–210. However, that does not mean that people or capital freely roam the globe. Cf. Dipesh

Bjørn Thomassen argues that recent debates in anthropology around globalization and modernity have much in common with the older debate between evolutionists and diffusionists about the origin of "civilization".[47] Early cultural evolutionists took Western civilization as the natural and self-evident starting point of human civilization in general and the ending point of history, while those who came later rejected the very concept of civilization as "ethnocentric, politically biased, and/or analytically useless".[48] Civilization became another word for culture or the cultural complex, and the only meaningful contemporary usage of the term came from historically oriented or Marxist sociologists and anthropologists like Immanuel Wallerstein[49] and Eric Wolf.[50] Wallerstein strongly opposes Eurocentric ideas, especially those of "anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism", which rely on neo-evolutionist premises, and argues for the acknowledgment of the uniqueness of modernist and capitalist development as well as of its manifestations and appropriations. That does not mean that "Western modernity was progressive, inevitable or desirable", as Wallerstein[51] put it himself, or that it was equal with "Western ideals, ideas, and institutions" across various spaces and times.[52] Still, that does not mean that the Western world and its development of modernity was not unique, but that this was a development that also unfolded in the rest of the world, too. Wallerstein's ideas, close to the theories of neo-colonialism and decolonization, seem to be one of the few universalistic positions acceptable in anthropology.

Postcolonial take on cultural transfer, hybridity and culture

Postcolonial theory shares with anthropology a focus on the decentralization of knowledge, questioning the universals, and a focus on de-Eurocentrisation. Postcolonial and cultural studies were particularly interested in questions of globalization and cultural contact, developing

Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

47 Bjørn Thomassen, op. cit.

48 Ibid, 168.

49 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-system II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California, 2011).

50 Eric. R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

51 Immanuel Wallerstein, "Eurocentrism and Its Avatars: the Dilemmas of Social Sciences", *Sociological Bulletin* Vo. 46, No. 1 (March 1997).

52 Bjørn Thomassen, op. cit., 171.

several concepts that aim to explain unequal power relations as well as the theoretical inadequacy of classical cultural transfer theories. Those concepts include ideas of creolization, mestijazetion and hybridity. The first two apply to the processes of "intermixing and cultural change" that produce the Creole societies in the Caribbean and South America.[53] In that sense, "transferred cultural artefacts produce not only effects, reactions and re-interpretations in the 'target cultures', but also, in return, in the producing cultures".[54] The core anthropological principle of "indinegenization" means that externalities are acculturated into the existing system that gives them meaning.

The term hybridity is one of the mostly widely used and disputed terms in postcolonial theory that "refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization".[55] But hybridity is not simply cultural exchange. Homi Bhabha, the best known scholar of hybridity, argues that the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is one of mutual dependency (through mimicry, ambivalence and difference). However, that does not mean that those identities are fixed entities that simply came into contact. For Bhabha, there is no pure culture, as no culture is discrete a phenomenon. Furthermore, hybridity poses the important question of the perspective that serves as "the sign of productivity of colonial power"[56]. Something is a hybrid only from the point of view of the classifier – the colonizer who might declare something to be a more or less odd combination of tradition and modernity.[57] As Bhabha argues, colonial hybridity "is not a *problem* of genealogy or identity between two *different* cultures which can then be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism", but it serves as "a problematic of colo-

53 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Hellen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 51.

54 Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, op. cit., 4.

55 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Hellen Tiffin, op. cit., 108.

56 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 112.

57 For example, Jonathan Friedman, a prominent critic of the concept of hybridity, analyses James Clifford's study of the Paradise exhibition about contemporary Papua New Guinea, particularly a battle-shield which was "traditional in all respects except that it has an advertisement for a local beer painted on its surface": Jonathan Friedman, "Carlos Capelàn: Our Modernity not Theirs", in Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright (eds.) *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), p. 176. For anthropologists (but not for locals; and presumably not for all anthropologists either) that was a 'hybrid', an odd combination of tradition and modernity. Friedman asks who classified the shield as such, "whose reason is it", "what is the act of classifying something as hybrid": Friedman, op. cit., 176.

nial representation"[58] – hybridity is grotesque only for the Westerners. In that sense, hybridity can serve to destroy the usual "negative polarities" between "knowledge and its objects"[59] and those between local identities and the dominant culture, the "Inside and Outside"[60] that rests on traditional anthropological ideas of cultures as discrete units on the one hand and the dialectics between the individual and the group on the other. Thus, Bhabha, following the philosopher Charles Taylor, advocates for "partial cultural milieux", which should enable minority cultural rights that are "assigned to 'hybrid' subjects who stand somewhere in-between individual needs and obligations, and collective claims and choices, in partial cultural milieux".[61] Hybridity does not mean inauthenticity, but it is rather produced through the "structure of difference".[62]

Similarly, Marshall Sahlins explains that "hybridity is a genealogy, not a structure. It is an analytic construal of a people's history, not an ethnographic description of their way of life".[63] The stress is more on the process of hybridization than on hybrid entities. This was not unknown to the early generations of anthropologists who took up diffusionist ideas, especially in the United States, and who, like Boas and Kroeber, argue that "all cultures are hybrid".[64] It is not only that cultures are not isolated, but because the theoretical model of culture as a homogenous unit[65] or a "thing" cannot be sustained (together with the essentialised idea of race), there is no culture that is *sui generis*, as Marshall Sahlins argues,[66] in an absolute sense and isolated from others.

58 Homi K. Bhabha, op. cit., 114.

59 Ibid, 25.

60 J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1993), 1.

61 Homi K. Bhabha, "On Minorities: Cultural Rights", *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 100, (March/April, 2000), 3.

62 Ibid, 53.

63 Marshall Sahlins, "Two or Three Things that I Know about Culture", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999), 412.

64 Ibid, 411.

65 It should be stressed that the problem was not only that cultures were understood as coherent wholes, which was already disputed from the 1960s onwards, but that modernist anthropology "worked under the realist illusion that societies could be described as actually existing entities in time in space": Bjørn Thomassen, op. cit., 61. That could be related to particular cultures. In contemporary sociology and anthropology, this idea was seriously questioned in recent years. Cf., for example, Alain Touraine, "Sociology without Societies," *Current Sociology*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Mar. 2003); Marilyn Strathern et al., "The Concept of Society is Theoretical Obsolete", in Tim Ingold (ed.), *Key debates in Anthropology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

66 Marshall Sahlins, op. cit., 411.

Conclusion

Basically, diffusionism was very much about cultural contact and the ability to accommodate and translate various "cultural elements". The reflexive turn in anthropology and the American movement of anthropology as cultural critique in the late 1990s tend to turn previous anthropological work into a straw man for the usual charges of understanding culture as timeless and clearly bounded. However, American anthropologists from the days of Frantz Boas spent "a good part of their lives studying historical diffusion", sometimes accusing "their own predecessors of the same prejudices" that they themselves were prone to have.[67] Ruth Benedict, for example, famously wrote that Frazier had created a "Frankenstein's monster, with a right eye from Fiji, a left from Europe, one leg from Tierra del Fuego, and one from Tahiti", and failed to investigate both the integration of various cultural elements and the cultural processes of living cultures.[68] Contemporary anthropology approaches the idea of cultural transfer through the concept of "frictions"[69] and translation "between the foreign and the domestic, the structural and the affective" that form a hybridity which "shapes local dramas of "'globalization'".[70] Going back to classical diffusionism with which I started this paper, it could be said, as Alan Barnard argues, that "if a connection exists between classic diffusionism" and more current theoretical trends, "it is precisely at a level of high theory or analogy".[71] Although Barnard argues that the idea of diffusionism did not spread to contemporary anthropology, there is a strong legacy of some of its most important ideas and premises that were articulated in contemporary anthropology as its continued legacy.

Bibliography

Appadurai, Arjun, "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy", *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 7, No. 2–3 (June 1990), 295–210.

Ang, Ien, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

Alberto, Arce and Norman Long, "Reconfiguring modernity and development from an anthropological perspective", in Alberto Arce and Norman Long (eds), *Anthro-*

67 Ibid, 404.

68 Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960), 55. To be fair, it is important to say that Frazier belongs to the evolutionist school, which was equally based on comparative principles as the diffusionist theories of his time.

69 Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005)

70 Ivan Rajković, "Balkanizing Sahlins: National Humiliation and Stranger Capitalism in a Semiperiphery", in press.

71 Alan Barnard, op. cit., 54.

pology, Development and Modernities: Exploring Discourses, Counter-Tendencies and Violence (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–30.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Hellen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

Barnard, Alan, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Bhabha, Homi K, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

Bhabha, Homi K, "On Minorities: Cultural Rights", *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 100 (March/April, 2000).

Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960).

Blaut, J. M, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1993).

Brković, Čarna, *Managing Ambiguity: How Clientelism, Citizenship, and Power Shape Personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017).

Burke, Peter "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Clarke et al., *Making Policy Move. Towards a Politics of Translation and Assemblage* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015).

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff, "Theory from the South: Or, how Europe is Evolving Toward Africa", *Anthropological Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2012), pp. 113–131.

Descola, Phillipe, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N, *Multiple Modernities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

Featherstone, Mike and Scott Lash, "Globalization, Modernity and the Spatialization of Social Theory: An Introduction", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 1–14.

Fiske, John, *Television Culture: Popular Pleasures and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

Friedman, Jonathan. "Carlos Capelàn: Our Modernity not theirs", in Arnd Schneider and Cristopher Wright (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), pp. 157–168.

Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar "On Alternative Modernities", in Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (ed.), *Alternative Modernities* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

Gershenhorn, Jerry, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

Jørgensen, Steen Bille and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, "Introduction: Reframing the Cultural Transfer Approach", in Steen Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink (eds.), *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: Transnational Perspectives, Translation Processes, Scandinavian and Postcolonial Challenges* (Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021), 1–20.

Kuper, Adam, "Regional Comparison in African Anthropology," *African Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 310 (Jan. 1979), 103–113.

Idem, "The Man in the Field and the Man in the Study: Ethnography, Theory and Comparison in Social Anthropology," *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1980), 14–39.

Idem, *Wives for Cattle* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

Latour, Bruno, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Livesey, Graham, "Assemblage," in Adiran Parr (ed.) *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 18–19.

Katz, Elihu and Tamar Liebes, *The Export of Meaning, Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

King, Gail, Meghan Wright and Michael Goldstein, Diffusionism and Articulation, https://anthropology.ua.edu/theory/diffusionism-and-acculturation/

Macdougall, J. Paige, "Transnational Commodities as Local Cultural Icons: Barbie Dolls in Mexico", *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2003), 257–275.

Middell, Matthias (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

Miller, Daniel, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 1997).

Naumović, Slobodan. *Fields of Paradox: Three Case Studies on the Europeanisation of Agriculture in Serbia* (Beograd: Srpski geneološki centar, 2013).

Rajković, Ivan. "Balkanizing Sahlins: National Humiliation and Stranger Capitalism in a Semiperiphery," in press.

Robertson, Roland, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 25–44.

Rohatynskyj, Marta, "Diffusionism," in Hilary Callan (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2018), DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1642

Sahlins, Marshal, "Two or Three Things that I Know about Culture", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999), 399–421.

Salmond, Amiria J. M., "Transforming Translations (part 2)", *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2014), 155–187.

Simić, Marina, *Ontološki obrt: uvod u kulturnu teoriju relativiteta* (Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing, 2020).

Симић, Марина, "Жил Делез, Феликс Гатари и антропологија: заборављени случај Грегорија Бејтсона", *Гласник Етнографског Института САНУ*, Vol 69, No. 2 (2021), pp. 413–431.

Strathern, Marilyn, "The Nice Thing About Culture is That Everyone has It", in Marilyn Strathern (ed.), *Shifting Context: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 153–176.

Strathern, Marilyn et all., "The Concept of Society is Theoretical Obsolete", in Tim Ingold (ed.), *Key debates in Anthropology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

Thomassen, Bjørn, "Anthropology and its Many Modernities: When Concepts Matter", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2012), 160–178.

Touraine, Alain, "Sociology without Societies", *Current Sociology* Vol. 51, No. 2 (March 2003), 123–131.

Tsing, Anna, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation," *Tipiti. Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2004), 3–22.

Idem, *Cannibal Metaphysics: for a Poststructuralist Anthropology* (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal Publishing, 2014).

Idem, Eduardo, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds* (Chicago: Hau Books, 2015).

Wallerstein, Immanuel, "Eurocentrism and Its Avatars: the Dilemmas of Social Sciences," *Sociological Bulletin* Vol. 46, No. 1 (March 1997), pp. 21–39.

Idem, *The Modern World-system II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California, 2011).

Winthrop, Robert H., *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Greenwood, 1991).

Wolf, Eric. R., *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

Zwernemann, Jurgen, "Leo Frobenius and Cultural Research in Africa", *Research Review--Institute of African Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1967).