SOCIAL-ECONOMIC THEORETICAL CONNECTIONS: THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Camelia Nicoleta Morariu
Mihaela Dana Ignat

Abstract
The problematic nature of social change is evidenced by the diversity of the conceptions held by the earliest sociologists as well as by the wide variety of theories they generated. The opinions expressed in specialist literature, including those aimed at clarifying concepts, do not overlap completely. On the contrary, beyond the areas of contact and interchange, there exist different points of view, ranging from nuanced positions on the same issue to contrasts that can overshadow the understanding of phenomena and processes at the core of social change.

Generally, we speak of social change when referring to modernisation, globalisation, regional development, and urbanisation and additionally when considering the human resources side, more exactly the behaviours and attitudes of groups of people. This article does not delve into the details of each theory, but rather aims to group them according to two perspectives, i.e. the systemic and the modern. The research has a documentation and theoretical intent, seeking to provide a summary of key views of social change. The method used relies on documentation and the theoretical analysis of the phenomenon in the social, economic and cultural fields.

Keywords: industrialisation, modernisation, globalisation, social inequalities

The concept of social change emerged and stood out as an autonomous body of theory as early as the age of the Enlightenment, with the launch of modern industrialised society models making its debut at the time of the industrial revolution and the political upheavals accompanying the rise of democracy.

As an introductory note, we would like to emphasise that the theories of social change have drawn the attention of a large number of sociologists, economics, philosophers, etc.
A typical feature of theorists’ definitions of the concept of change is the wide-ranging approach. The definitions of social change are highly diverse because their object is a social phenomenon, a social process that tends to have diverse dimensions and facets, unfolding at different levels of generality.

Social change encompasses any type of transformation in the demographic, structural, cultural or environmental characteristics of a social system (Johnson, 2007:302-303), designating the transition of the social system or object from one form to another (Ungureanu, 1990:212). Moore, for instance, defined change as a significant alteration of social structures, i.e. of patterns of social action and interaction (Moore, 1967:3). The author incorporated in his definition the many forms of expression of structures: norms, values and cultural phenomena. Agabrian argues that social change refers to permanent alterations, on a relatively long term, of the elements of culture, social structure and social behaviours (Agabrian, 2003:290).

1. The systemic perspective on social change

The study of social change gains meaning and fullness only by drawing on the links between sociological tradition and all those who, either individually or grouped in currents of thought, have ensured the continuity or minimal contingencies with the subsequent developments by scholars of social change, both sociologists and economists.

At present, in a reductionist framework, one may refer to two main views of social change (Rusu, 2008:19-33):
The systemic approach: evolutionary theories, functionalist (or equilibrium) theories, conflict theories, modernisation theories, etc. which place the emphasis on structures and their role in social change, highlighting possible changes in the following areas (Chiribucă, 2004:17): composition (inter-group migration), structure (the establishment of new institutions), and functions (specialisation of labour, of institutions, etc.);

The modern, process-oriented, dynamic – or constructivist – approach whose focus shifts to the intersection of structure and the capacity to act of the social actor, with social changes being continuous, process-based and sectoral (Vlăsceanu, 2011:115).

1.1. Evolutionary theory

Evolutionary theories (A. Comte, H. Spencer, S. Simon, E. Durkheim) account for the evolution of society based on determinations and laws with a naturalistic and universalist grounding, dealing with change in terms of the development stages of humankind and society.

Comte explained evolution through the law of the stages of development of humanity: the theological or fictional stage (subdivided into three stages: fetishism, polytheism and monotheism) when man accounts for things using the supernatural; the metaphysical or abstract stage; and the scientific or positive stage (man uses reason to formulate laws enabling the conquest of the world) (Mesure, 2009:44). Each stage composes and recomposes the spiritual unity and the order of society. Bădescu emphasises that each historical type of social unit is „underlain by a polarity between the forces of order (solidarity) and the forces of change (innovation) (Bădescu, 2005:48).

According to Comte, sociology contends with the static (as the sociology of order) and the dynamic (as the sociology of the development of human forces). Social change is viewed as normal and social investigation ought to ascertain the
determining factors of the rate of change and, based on this knowledge, sociologists are able to model the future of humankind.

Durkheim interprets social mechanisms and the evolution of society through the prism of the *evolutionary principle*, and social progress through *social differentiation*. The change processes are so rapid that they determine major social and economic problems, which he ascribes to *anomie* “a feeling of aimlessness or despair provoked by modern social life” (Giddens, 2010:17). The author does not denounce industrialisation or machinism for ruining the traditional society, viewing social change as normal. However, he draws on the scientific knowledge of society in order to find solutions to *the troubled states of society arising from natural changes* (Ionescu and Stan, 1999:256).

Simon explained evolution in terms of the shift from governance of people to the management of assets. The author contends that history has an evolutionary nature and that the dynamic of its change unfolds as the relationship between the forms of social organisation (e.g. industrialisation) and the new modes of thinking (positivism). Industrialists and scientists are regarded as the most apt to guide this particular social change.

Spencer opposes the military society to the industrial one and develops the *general law of evolution*, viewing social change as a “process oriented from heterogeneity and de-structuring to homogeneity and order” (Teodorescu, 2003:204) and condemning the idea that “planned change is a means to achieve social integration” (Mihu, 2008:83-84). According to Spencer, social evolution is divergent rather than linear, or in other terms, social change is gradual and cumulative (“evolution” vs. “revolution”) determined from within (“endogenous” vs. “exogenous”) and introduces the factors of stagnation and regression in the understanding of social progress. According to the author, the whole universe functions as a living organism.
1.2. Structural functionalist theory

A theoretical approach originally developed by Comte and Durkheim and rooted in anthropology, in the works of Bronislaw Malinowski and A. Radcliffe-Brown, functionalism reintegrated sociology owing to the studies of Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton. In the 20th century, functionalist theory was predicated on the emergence of change under the conditions of system disequilibrium.

In Parsons’ view, neither individual will, nor autonomously decided goals of individuals should prevail. The society as a whole is conceptualised into a system, constructed of four subsystems which interact to maintain social order, namely the social, economic (comprised of two levels: the primary or technical social system and the management-institutional system), political and cultural subsystems. Changes in each of the subsystems trigger effects and consequences in all the others. These equivalences enable Parsons to demonstrate that the self-regulation and equilibrium of the global social system are achieved by „transmission of legitimacy, authority, energy and information among the subsystems, similar to the transmission of information among stakeholders“ (Buzărnescu, 2007:237).

Kornai argues that economic reality constantly expresses the concept of system and rejects the assumption of a homo oeconomicus exclusively interested to secure maximum utility and pleasure, substituting it with the notion of homo sociologicus, asserting that „In reality, in most people rationality combines with irrationality“ (Kornai, 1974:39). In its behaviour, actions and decisions, the economic system constantly receives inputs and releases outputs, each system being founded on a real organisational component. The author contends that an economic system is organised into several hierarchies and is not based only on rationality, with a key role being played by institutions as a set of rules, norms and values, formal or informal, determining behavioural patterns.
The management of modern systems must monitor, control and „manage new risks and indeterminacies which give rise to major vulnerabilities, (…), to change radically, by reorienting from the quantitative dimensions of phenomena to the qualitative ones, from the hard dimensions to the soft dimensions of the system” (Brăilean: 2009:111), giving it more coherence and stability. The development of the social system involves, in keeping with the structural functionalist conception, a constant role differentiation, with the aim of guaranteeing social equilibrium.

His approach to this issue is not in line with the common orientation of other recognised sociologists. The peculiarity of his thinking and opinions place him in a particular position. Without delving into the analytics of his contribution to the issue, we would like to caution that his vision on the workings of the social system could be functional only through specific institutions:

- **rational** (aimed at stabilising the system and establishing statuses and roles);
- **regulatory** (regulate the interests of actors and the functional demands of the system);
- **cultural** (entail only acknowledgment by actors not necessarily their allegiance).

Along the same line, in the paper *Imagini instituționale ale tranziției* [Institutional images of transition], Pop highlights the most important institutions (Pop, 2003:100) which govern social life nowadays: the institution of rationality and rationalisation, the institution of scientificity, and the institution of the social actor.

Like the father of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud, who viewed culture as an *element internalised in personality*, Parsons seeks to persuade that the compliance with an institution „becomes a tendency – an obligation inherent in the structure of the actor’s personality” and becomes a tendency-obligation because the „institution is a synthesis of a culture”,

---

*JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ECONOMY*

Nr. 1/2011 31
the actor himself as a social entity acknowledging this cultural matrix (Pohoaţă, 2009:31).

The functionalist theory has the merit of highlighting the basic processes underlying stratification and of being flexible enough to be applied to the various types of society. One criticism levelled at the functionalist perspective is that it focuses less on social change and conflict.

1.3. Conflict theories

In the classical Marxist theory, typical of the conflict perspective, social change occurs exclusively through conflict, being fraught with ambiguities of an economic and social nature.

From the economic point of view, Marx traces the origin of social disruptions to the means of production and explores the contradiction between forces and production relations. He distinguishes several stages of economic evolution: the stage of the closed family economy; the stage of urban economy; the stage of national economy (Pohoaţă, 1993). The Marxist conception of the dynamics of the human society is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. The human society according to Marx


Marx and Engels demonstrated that the introduction and development of instruments of labour, the division of labour and private property divide people into social classes (i.e. the exploiting class and the exploited class). Alienation and contradiction – expressed through class struggles – are
oppressive and dehumanising, yet absolutely necessary for the general progress of the human society. Marx explains social change in endogenous terms, stressing the internal dynamics of the mode of production.

From the social point of view, processes are qualified as being *endogenous* when they occur within the social system, conflicts arising due to tensions between socially unequal groups and classes, inequality being fuelled by economically contradictions, which, ultimately, evolve into social contradictions calling for change. In this respect, we can point to labour and capital contradictions and, at the social level, contradictions between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, inevitably leading to class struggle, the Marxian framework being connected with an endogenous theory of social change (Valade, 2006:385).

Marx maintained that social inequalities typical of capitalism would end only when the working class had established the proletarian class. This, he argued, would bring in a classless, collectivist society, with distribution of social goods to each according to their individual needs. Marx’s model raises, but does not solve, the problem of the human factor, of the relationship between political events and social change, summarised by his famous assertion: „*Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances*“ (Burke, 1990:171). According to Marx the historical agent of change is the proletariat, while the principal agent of social order is the middle class.

The German sociologist Ralph Dahrendorf removed from the analysis the unequal distribution of wealth and class struggle, and explored class conflict under the conditions of industrial capitalism, which may be determined (as conditions for the variation of social conflicts), factoring in other types of social conflict as causes of social change (such as the conflicts between ethnic, racial and religious groups). The author asserts that in the social environment, people clash for
wellbeing and power, class struggle being primarily founded on the differences of authority within an organisation. „The functionalist paradigm of social conflicts, according to the German sociologist, is false as it is one-sided ..., emphasising only the integrating aspect of society“ (Ungureanu, 2002:155). He rejects the terms of „solution“ and „suppression“ of conflicts, arguing that the most fitting term would be regulation.

Conflict theory is centred on the role of social tensions, of dysfunctions of a predominantly economic nature, ignoring the role played by technological progress or external influences in the area of social dynamics.

2. The modern perspective on social change

Modernisation theories emerged in the 1950s, seeking to account for the development of industrial societies in North America and Western Europe, especially due to the rise of industrial capitalism since the 18th century. The theories assume that „societies develop in fairly predictable stages through which they become increasingly complex“ (Johnson, 2007:223). Modernisation means development: „the term ‘modernisation’ – a conceptual cousin of ‘economic development’ but more comprehensive in scope — refers to the fact that technical, economic, and ecological changes ramify through the whole social and cultural system“ (Smelser, 1966:111).

In other words, development depends primarily on the import of technology and related knowledge and on a range of social changes of a political, economic, cultural, social, etc. nature. Ungureanu understands modernisation as a means of development, i.e. social development through the increase in rationality of the various sectors of society (Ungureanu: 2002:121). According to the author, a social development process entails the growth, accumulation, expansion of the initial state and the process is usually assessed by referring to
this particular state. Accordingly, social development is always specified:

*internally* (human, economic, political, etc. development);

*externally* (extensive, intensive, etc. development).

Historians of sociology regard the development theories as the first response of the science of social changes to the issue of transition from the traditional to the modern. *The modernists’ claim* is that traditional societies are static, resistant to change, reluctant to assimilate innovation, so that nothing new can emerge from within, therefore change can only occur from outside (exogenous factors). The *underlying assumption* of modernisation theories holds that even the most infrequent contact between *relatively modernised societies* and the *relatively non-modernised societies* acts as a trigger of social changes towards a single direction, shaped by the model of the modernised society. Modernisation emerges as a sort „universal solvent“ (So, 1990:24), founded on a set of economic features characteristic of defined historical, social and economic periods.

Walt Withman Rostow argued that in the course of development any society undergoes a sequence of five stages and ascribed the dominant role in development to technological progress (Popescu, 2009):

*The traditional society* – whose structured is developed within limited production functions;

*The preconditions for take-off* – a stage specific to the 17th and 18th centuries, when scientific breakthroughs began to be translated in industry and agriculture, capitalising on entrepreneurship;

*The take-off* – the stage marking the transition to industrialisation, lasts two, three decades and occurs when investment exceeds 10% of national income and is determined by the development of key sectors (expanding export market etc.). A process of *self-sustained development* accompanies this positive dynamics: profits are made and reinvested, capital, productivity and income per capita surge. *The virtuous*
cycle of development is underway (Samuleson and Nordhaus, 2001:840);

The drive to maturity – generally attained some six decades after take-off begins and four decades after it ends. It is established when 30% of national income is invested and the global output outstrips the increase in population. In this stage the living standards of the population increase;

The age of high mass-consumption – the phase reached in the 20th century, marked by two processes: the majority of urban population and the workforce are employed by the services sector and per capita incomes exceed the levels needed to meet basic needs.

Rostow’s theory stands out among the theories of social change in that it „stresses the importance of material and cultural factors” (Chiribucă, 2004:60).

On the other hand, authors such as Peer and Hartwick contend that development should not focus exclusively on the economic growth of a nation, but rather on the conditions of such growth and the consequences they generate. Due to social reasons, growth is justified only if it meets essential needs (Peer and Hartwick, 2009:2-15).

Industrialisation, it was argued, would lead to the modernisation of developing countries, and to the dissemination of accompanying rationality: „Training the workforce and adjusting to factory discipline would be the most effective means of utilising the great rural mass of underemployed and unemployed” (Seers, 1984:234).

In Durkheim’s Division of Labour, progress is linked to urbanisation (Durkheim, 2001). The large cities are the undeniable core of progress; it is there that the values, needs, ideas emerge, subsequently to spread to the rest of the country. Generally, change in society occurs owing to them and to imitating their experience (Valade, 2007:377). Durkheim identified two basic sources of cohesion: mechanical solidarity (the case of societies fragmented into family or geographical aggregates) and organic solidarity. The former results from the
association of individuals at an archaic level of society, which repeat previous structures and are incapable of structural innovation, as “uniform beliefs and norms imposed by oppressive laws are the rule” (Doise, 1996:123); the latter is characteristic of the maturing stage of interpersonal relations, marked by the transition from individual to personality, social organisation being comprised of various parts in close interdependence. “In order to become orderly and normal, societies were compelled to integrated their goals, interests, sub-systems and areas of activity” (Teodorescu, 2003:205). Whereas mechanical solidarity is viewed as a consensus on norms, values and beliefs, derived from socialisation and coexistence, relying on a community of culture and way of life, organic solidarity, in contrast, is based on a complex division of labour.

Social-economic restructuring and modernisation (Perrons 2004:128) is often associated with social changes, in particular with respect to the gender balance in employment, in particular in areas with high unemployment. The modernisation of societies triggers two contradictory processes: the need for specialisation of human resources and the need for cooperation to manufacture competitively. It is possible to restore cohesion by re-institutionalising the spirit of solidarity through national and international-level institutions.

Overall, the systemic models involve: the analysis of the emergence of inequalities, migration and depopulation, specialisation and differentiation of occupations, prevalence of politics over the economy, group union, incorporation of one group into others, etc. Allowing for the more or less nuanced distinctions, the „architects” of these theories embrace a set of assumptions that unify the theories of this type (Sztompka, 1991:131):

Developing societies will undergo the same stages and transformations as the developed ones before them;
Change is a gradual, irreversible and long-term process;
Change viewed as modernisation means progress.
Modernisation is a process of Europenisation or Americanisation, of transitioning from tradition to modernity (So, 1990:24); in this light, Western Europe and the United States of America are advanced societies, worthy of being emulated by lagging nations.

Furthermore, all theories incorporate a theory of history, which, in most cases, leads to “pitting traditional society against industrial society, regardless of whether in their study of change they emphasise the role of conflicts, the distribution processes or the general meaning of evolution” (Valade, 2007:374).

The new constructivist perspective has become increasingly popular in accounting for the processes of change, regionalisation, globalisation, as it provides an opportunity to examine the interaction between local or international structures and social actors. Social change is perceived not only as a result of „historical forces” but also of the actions and interactions of social actors.

A fundamental principle of this approach is therefore the acknowledgement of the actor and his potential to act and factoring the actor in the equation of change.

Until the 1990s, the World Bank through its grants and projects concentrated its efforts on social-economic reconstruction and raising the quality of life in developing nations and in particular in the countries of Latin America and South-East Asia. However, due to the proven ineffectiveness in eradicating poverty, on the one hand, and the deficient involvement in controlling the effects of allocated funds, the World Bank embarked on a vast restructuring process.

Following the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in the year 2000, the states raised the alarm about the considerable social-economic gaps between developed and poor nations, suggesting that the two institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, should be dismantled. Under immediate pressure and due to the unfavourable public opinion, the restructuring idea was put
forward (coming not from inside but from outside), the two institutions being required to reformulate their objectives and strategies for developing countries. The new approach involves the fight against poverty starting from a given set of principles (Lombardi, 2005):

**Poor and developing nations should have the role of designing the growth-enhancing and poverty-reducing strategies;**

**International institutions must work on partnerships to develop common guidelines, programmes, strategies, with quantifiable objectives;**

**Social and economic development is essential in combating social exclusion and poverty;**

**It is important that the governments of poor countries build the internal capacity to respond and adjust to the economic needs of their own citizens.**

Nevertheless, numerous authors (Kreuger, Stiglitz, Friedman, Giddens) have attacked the Bretton Woods institutions (i.e. the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), charging that they promote socialist policies and mercantile reforms (Giddens, 2010:401), that instead of solving the global social-economic crises, they further exacerbate them (Stiglitz, 2002) and that, most often, they do not factor in national differences in their policies targeting various countries and fail to adapt policies to the context of countries seeking aid (Stiglitz, 2002).

Finally, one final set of critiques is aimed at the instruments recommended by the World Bank to reduce poverty: „The focus on the privatisation of social services and on providing benefits targeting the poorest segment of the population is associated with the risk of social segregation between those who fund such benefits through taxes” (Urse-Pescaru, 2007:60-68).

In order to keep in check the consequences of the transition period, in Romania, after the year 2000, several development programs were implemented, with funding provided by
international bodies and the national government. At the time, the national intervention policies were focused on gradual layoffs and legally provided protection in case of unexpected downsizing, job placement and employment in public services, indexation of wages and prices, and the adoption of special laws in favour of areas affected by industrial decline.

Kideckel claims that in the case of Romania, although the programmes targeting vulnerable groups were well-intentioned considering their objectives, in reality, they were not aimed at effecting change in the disadvantaged communities, but rather at “preventing political activism, ending up by compounding the fears and uncertainty of the vulnerable and the sense that society does not care about them” (Kideckel, 2010:223). The author motivates his assertion by drawing attention to the perverse effects of the government’s emergency ordinance on the Regime of Disadvantaged Areas, which stimulates investment in mining areas, which are declared to be disadvantaged according to the following criteria:

- Mono-industrial character;
- Unemployment rate increasing by 25% the national unemployment rate (an advance indicator to investors seeking simultaneously available sufficient and cheap labour);
- Lack of communication means and poor infrastructure (a drawback for investors, as the costs and conditions of transportation and communication act a burden on business development).

Among other provisions, the law included certain facilities: a corporate tax deduction, preferential tax status for businesses hiring the unemployed, exemption from customs levies for the import of certain production means, special government financing and loans for approved investments. Most of the implemented programmes and described facilities were viewed as circumstantial, as they were focused on neutralising social conflicts or on mitigating the social costs of the restructuring of the mining sector. Unfortunately, the areas remained locked in a vicious cycle: on the one hand, the government dealt with the
issue of restructuring by transferring responsibilities from the institutional to the individual level, and on the other hand, the local communities affected by the restructuring succumbed to individualism and active disengagement. Social imbalances, rather than inciting the local communities to action, reduced their capacity to respond.

2.1. Dependency theory

Dependency theory emerged at the end of the 1960s in reaction to the modernisation theory, which could not account for the differences in development between developed countries and underdeveloped countries. It was predicated on the concept of deteriorating trade terms for the periphery in favour of countries belonging to the centre. Dependency theory argued that a marginal number of underdeveloped nations are dependent for their trade and investment on a core of industrialised countries, which maintain the advantages of trade for their own interest. The integration into an increasingly globalised capitalist economy has limited the potential for improvement in the living standards according to the culture of underdeveloped countries.

The proponents of the theory argue that poverty in low-income countries stems from their manipulation by wealthy countries and multinational corporations based in wealthy countries; in their view „global capitalism locked in a downward spiral of exploitation and poverty” (Giddens, 2010:396). Wealthy states established factories in the poor countries, using local cheap labour and raw materials in order to maximise the production costs without governmental interference. In turn, the low prices of labour and raw materials prevented poor countries from accumulating the profit necessary to pursue industrialisation. As a result, poor nations are forced to borrow from the wealthy ones, thus increasing their economic dependency.

An alternative reaction to the dependency theory is neopopulism, which contends that development at
microeconomic level should focus on establishing cooperatives operating as small states, using adequate technologies for intensive labour, instead of seeking urban development through western exploitation. Frequently, these initiatives failed due to governmental interference, weak management and conflicts with other forms of production (Payne, 2011:235-236).

2.2. World-systems theory

Based on dependency theory, Immanuel Wallerstein subsequently developed the world-systems theory, premised on the relations between developed countries (core nations) and less developed countries (peripheral nations), shaped by political, economic, historical and geographical factors. The author argues that the world capitalist economic system must be analysed as a single unit, comprising four overlapping elements:

A world market for goods and labour;

The division of the population into capitalists and workers;

An international system of formal and informal political relations among the most powerful countries, whose competition with one another helps shape the world economy;

The carving up of the world into three unequal economic zones (core, periphery and semi-periphery), with wealthier zones exploiting the poorer ones.

The core includes the most advanced industrial countries (US, Japan and Western European countries); peripheral countries comprise largely agricultural countries (in Africa, Asia and Latin America), with low incomes and strong dependence on a single export sector; semi-peripheral countries (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, etc.), which are semi-industrialised and possess technological capacities and have a significant internal market, insufficiently developed to wield decisive influence on global political and economic trends.

The dependency relation between peripheral countries and the core ones is clearly apparent, the overarching principle
being that development occurs from the core to the periphery. The core is fully aware of the application of this policy and is indirectly, politically and morally responsible for the underdevelopment of the periphery, to which it allocates funds without building on local resources. To overcome underdevelopment, the peripheral nations must mobilise their internal resources and take responsibility.

One reaction to the international structural changes, in particular the persistent underdevelopment of Third-World regions, has been the emergence of a Marxist perspective. Martin and Sunley argue that development and underdevelopment are episodic (Martin and Sunley 1998:201-227). In other words, capitalist accumulation experiences spasmodic, irregular progressions, driven by specific crises, which in turn encourage capitalists to search for new means of production on the spatial level. Studies in the Marxist tradition also focus on the spatial dimension of the division of labour. The separation between the headquarters and the branches serving as production sites can lead to a substantial diversion of profits from the branches to the region where the headquarters is located (Massey, 1984).

Modernisation and dependency theories, which emphasised imitation and dependence on foreign aid, largely ignored the indigenous reality and local history only mattered to the extent that it blocked the process of reducing gaps in development (Vlăsceanu, 2001:36).

2.3. Globalisation theories

Globalisation theory has emerged as a reaction to modernisation theory (being derived from world-systems theory) and is the most recent theory seeking to account for present-day development. It stresses the global integration of complex social systems, with a strong emphasis on the globalisation of economic and cultural transactions as drivers of globalisation. However, there are authors who argue that globalisation can be considered to be neutral in terms of its
spatial effects (Capello şi Resmini, 2011:1): its opportunities and threats can be viewed as equivalent.

Global communication and the increased access to information are now transforming the complex social systems and generate visible consequences on the social, economic, political and cultural level, in each country, creating the premises of the emergence of a global culture.

Baltasiu in Antropologia globalizării [The Anthropology of Globalisation] analyses globalisation from two perspectives (Baltasiu, 2009:12):

Horizontal globalisation, as an external process, dealing with the geographical expansion of the modern world system;

Vertical globalisation, referring to the unification of spaces, determined by the spiritual integration of societies, in other words the spiritual fulfilment of man.

Currently, globalisation is increasingly relevant in accounting for social-economic gaps among countries and regions of the globe, for gender inequality, the level of democracy etc. Globalisation refers to “the global diffusion of certain practices, the expansion beyond the boundaries of continents and regions, the organisation of social life at a global scale and the development of a common global consciousness” (Lehner, 2009:15). The key elements of the theory of globalisation are glocalisation and grobalisation.

Glocalisation has been defined as representing “some measure of hope (…) important vestiges of the local remain in the glocal”, an “interaction of the grobal and the local”, with unique results in different geographical areas (Ritzer, 2010:52). Based on this author’s framework, the theory of glocalisation incorporates two essential elements: the world is increasingly pluralistic – glocalisation theory is increasingly sensitive to differences in and among geographical areas; in a glocalised world, individuals and groups have a high capacity to adapt and innovate. According to glocalisation theory, individuals and groups are major creative agents.
Grobalisation (derived to grow) illustrates the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organisations, etc. and their desire, if not the need, to impose themselves in various geographical areas. Their primary interest is to increase their power, influence and, in many cases, profits around the globe (an opinion held by Max Weber too – rationalisation and capitalism are the products of the Western world, being exported to the rest of the globe, sometimes aggressively). By contrast, post-modern thinkers are particularly interested in the local. This orientation corresponds to the notion of glocalisation. The driving forces of grobalisation are Americanisation, McDonaldisation and capitalism (Ritzer, 2010:33).

Whereas the modern theories inspired by Marx and Weber support the idea of grobalisation, glocalisation is connected instead to post-modern social theory.

Table 1. Essential characteristics of globalisation theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grobalisation theory</th>
<th>Grobalisation theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members of the community and local groups are creative agents, with a high capacity to adapt and innovate</td>
<td>Members of the community and local groups have a low capacity to adapt and innovate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and relational processes are contingent</td>
<td>Social processes are largely unidirectional and deterministic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The world becomes increasingly pluralistic</td>
<td>The world becomes increasingly uniform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key concepts: hybridisation, creolisation and heterogenisation</td>
<td>Key concepts: Americanisation and McDonaldisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glocalisation is correlated with the notion of implosion</td>
<td>Grobalisation is correlated with the notion of explosion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although researchers interested in social-economic issues place the emphasis on grobalisation, the existence of glocalisation is acknowledged. Examples (Ritzer, 2010:33-40) of glocalisation include turning the products of local culture into merchandise and the emergence of flexible specialisation,
which enables the adaptation of numerous products to the specific needs of an area.

References