

Summary by Gabriela Tejada

Robertson proposes, in skeletal terms, that the temporal-historical path to the present situation of a very high degree of global density and complexity can be delineated in five phases. His model puts the accent on the major constraining tendencies in relatively recent history and does not make any grand assertions about primary factors and the major mechanisms of globalisation. The phases are characterised as follows:

Phase I: The Germinal Phase. Lasting from the early 15th until the mid 18th century. The incipient growth of national communities displaced the medieval 'transnational' system. The expanding scope of the Catholic Church (and the spread of the Gregorian calendar), as well as the accentuation of concepts of the individual and of ideas about humanity, the acceptance of the heliocentric theory and the beginning of modern geography can be considered as the beginning of globalisation.

Phase II: the Incipient Phase. Lasting from the mid 18th century until the 1870s. There is a sharp shift towards the idea of the homogeneous, unitary state and a crystallisation of conceptions of formalised international relations, of standardised citizenly individuals and a more concrete conception of humankind. There is also a sharp increase in the number of legal conventions and agencies concerned with national and transnational relations and communications, giving rise to debates on issues of **nationalism** vs. **internationalism**. Moreover, industrialisation gives rise to a fundamental reconstruction of production and transportation processes.

Phase III: The Take-Off Phase. Lasting from the 1870s until the 1920s. Development of national societies, generic individuals (but with a masculine bias) and an increasingly singular, but non-unified conception of humankind. A single 'international society' emerges; it has a strong Eurocentric imprint, including just a few non-European societies, and these communicate through the institutions of the national state. There is a very sharp increase in the number and the speed of global forms of communication; however, many countries remain excluded. There is a development of global competition, exemplified in the Olympics and Nobel prizes.

Phase IV: The Struggle-for-Hegemony Phase. Lasting from the mid-1920s until the late-1960s. This phase is marked by disputes and wars over the fragile terms of the dominant globalisation process (Second World War), conflicting conceptions of **modernity** (Allies v. the Axis), followed by the Cold War and the crystallisation of the Third World. The United Nations and the principle of national independence are established.

Phase V: The Uncertainty Phase. Lasting from the late-1960s into the early-1990s. This phase sees a heightening of global consciousness (moon landing) in the 1960s and an accentuation of '**post-materialist**' values. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, one form of globalisation process seems to have prevailed, namely the capitalist economic system. The number of global institutions and movements increases considerably and there is a sharp

acceleration in global communications. Societies increasingly face problems of **multiculturalism** and polyethnicity. Conceptions of the individual are rendered more complex by gender, sexual, ethnic and racial considerations, and civil rights become a global issue. Interest also emerges in a world civil society and world citizenship, in spite of 'the ethnic revolution'.

Backhaus added a sixth phase, which he calls *The Consolidation Phase* and which chronologically overlaps the Uncertainty Phase. There is more deregulation and privatisation and more intensive communication activities, as well as a consolidation of the global media system.

References

Robertson, Roland (1992): *Globalization – Social Theory and Global Culture*. Sage. London. (57-60)

Backhaus, Norman (2003): *Zugänge zur Globalisierung – Konzepte, Prozesse, Visionen*. 2. Aufl. Zürich. (51-54)