Globalisation: a study of traditional communities in change

Globalisation: A Study of Traditional Communities in Change It has been argued that social changes in the contemporary world have resulted in local communities not being sustainable in its traditional form. Globalization has been a leading component of this social change that has accelerated in recent times. Hawkins (2006) has defined globalisation as a process by which the world's societies and cultures are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

Whilst this process has helped to narrow social hierarchies in certain respects, in other ways the process has widen structural gaps in life chances.

The very speed of these changes has been problematic for communities trying to adapt to and resist change. In this essay I will discuss three broad issues: first, the concept of globalization and its' consequence on community development; second, the challenges posed to community development practitioners; and third, and some characteristics of a successful community development policy that can be implemented locally.

Stafford & Furze (1997) states the German sociologist Tonnies developed the polarised positions of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft, which signify community before modernisation and society after modernisation and diversification; that the former is characterised by close relationships, ascribed rather than achieved status based on clear, specific and relatively unchanging roles without role conflict; strong faith in traditional institutions, values and sanctions.

The latter is seen as demonstrating the opposite of the features: it means large-scale, impersonal contractual relationships that encourage mobility and

heterogeneity; challenging traditional authority; and invoking rational-legal authority. Nostalgia is being expressed for the loss of community accompanying globalization and the resultant waves of immigrants. This divergence in social and cultural values is often the start and forms the basis of conflict.

The promotion of economic growth in the wake of globalisation translated into demand for skilled immigrants in the last few decades.

The increased demand came mainly from developed countries whose governments held the perception that skilled immigrants could easily assimilate into their new societies. Multiculturalist's policies were introduced as a means to address new citizenship issues, cross-cultural understanding, discourage racism, discrimination and violence. Amongst the most important rights that were at the forefront were the rights to private property and political freedom. It was seen as a manifestation of the commitment to diversity.

Education was used to initiate the naturalisation of immigrants and new citizens into communities while addressing the fears and grievances of the existing citizens. However by the late 80s multiculturalism was criticised by a new breed of conservatives called the neo-liberals who felt that multiculturalism was blocking a shared national identity and denounced it as a misguided. In many ways their philosophy was similar to that of Social Darwinism, which was underpinned by ideas of survival of the fittest.

Community service programmes that were provided by the state were remodelled and reduced to establish another form of state called the contract state. These philosophies were seen as antithetical to community development, which are based on community need, and not individual self-advancement resulting in fragmented communities. The terrorist attacks on September 11 further shaped the international order and today we question if the state is still able to build a community that is not completely dominated by consumerism or security interests.

Increasingly sophisticated technology and knowledge presents new ways of doing things and the less qualified are at greater risk at losing their jobs and their social standing. According to Giddens, (1990) as people begin to feel less secure, they are less likely to relinquish any unfair social advantage they might have, and communities start becoming more fragmented and less cohesive than ever before. Individuals tend to become more insular, tend to develop more selfish and conflicting attitudes, and less able to depend on one another.

Internal competition and a heightened sense of individualism reduce the social bonds and obligations within the same household. Mars (2007) notes that globalisation allows for multinational organizations to move capital and production around the world, another frequent source of job instability.

Skilled workers who seek employment abroad deprive their own country of human capital, as well as disrupt social hierarchies of the communities left behind. The end result is that ties and bases of mutual support that links extended families are weakened.

Cultural issues involving language have also created significant gaps as the dominance of western-based languages, in particular the English language, has severely disadvantaged the large majority of people who do not speak the language. Many people who feel that the growth of these trans-planetary connections threatens values that are precious to them look for ways to express their concerns and protect their way of life. Yet existing governance arrangements for global relations have provided severely limited possibilities for cultural pluralism and intercultural negotiation.

So how then practitioners work to instil localism and a sense of belonging to a community trying to adapt, or resist the change to the social milieu? Dempsey (1990) states people have a strong attachment to place and people even after processes of marginalisation and exclusion.

Dempsey goes on to say that community relationships may have both gemenschaft and gesellschaft elements as the multi-layered nature of network and relationships mean role overlap occurs. These roles could be contractual or non-contractual, personal or impersonal, calculative or caring.

With the overlap of these roles people begin forming coalitions with others who have similar interests at the same time begin to recognise and own their needs and problems. They should be guided to learn that empowerment comes from within them. Community leaders should be mindful that more vibrant civil societies could deter undemocratic policies associated with neo-liberal policies from occurring and protect the rights of the community from unwelcome state intrusion.

Public programmes must be planned to stimulate critical thinking while generating community cohesion, crossing boundaries of class, age, gender, ethnicity and religion, and increasing emotive as well as social ties.

Scholte (2006) sees that these communities become more international, the expectation is that the local power organizational structure becomes even more vital for sustained growth and evolution. Community development practitioners will need to " think global, act local" and focus on key imperatives: first, focus on strengthening the workforce to secure jobs in a local economy.

Not all job losses can be prevented but at the very least practitioners can begin to work on retraining plans for existing workers, boost calls for school leavers to commence and complete their university education, and internationalize the school curriculum and so on. Second, practitioners will also need to focus on strengthening businesses by working on tangible strategies that use international trade to create jobs. Third, focus on strengthening civic relationships with the community members that includes new migrants; build on market connections and knowledge of the stakeholders with international ties.

In conclusion, while globalization has brought about economic growth, it has also resulted in a general erosion of bonding and social hierarchy. Increased segmentation of of the global workforce and society into winners and losers, and leads to exclusion and impoverishment. From a community development perspective, practitioners will need to develop a local long-term plan which

not only includes the specific goals of the individual communities considering the needs of the immigrant newcomers.

Ishay (2004) points out those community members must be made to feel empowered to resist the increasingly unregulated intrusion of the state and commercial interests into their arenas of social and personal lives. A stronger civil society can in turn provide the state with the legitimacy to resist intrusions by self-interested economic forces, and practitioners may act as a more impersonal arbitrator between powerful entities and ordinary citizens.