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International Development and Globalization

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Abstract

The paper describes community development in rural Philippines in the context of rapid globalization. Globalization — here defined simply as a process of opening up and linking distant cultures, with both its positive and negative connotations — unleashes its material (economic, political, social) and symbolic (icons, messages) power on rural communities. Though largely unprepared for the consequent changes in their lifeways, these rural communities either disintegrate or develop their own ways of coping and discover effective strategies to fight back and rebuild solidarities, locally and beyond their borders.



International Development and Globalization



Defining community and globalization

A DICTIONARY MEANING OF COMMUNITY SPEAKS of people living in the same place. This is similar to what is sometimes referred to as 'community of place' by some authors (Barnet and Cavanagh 1994). Physical location is a primary political economic consideration.

But not all communities are a community of place. There is the academic community or the Muslim community, each defined by mutually supportive relations among members, regardless of residence. Identity comes from being an academic or being a Muslim. Members participate in shaping their respective communities and have a special sense of responsibility for fellow members. Usually, they are not constrained by physical boundaries or nationalist allegiance.

It is a feature of today to be part of multiple communities. A Filipino born in the Philippines works in the UN, resides in New Jersey, joins the Filipino-American Friendship Society, keeps his membership and connection through internet to a home fraternity, and so on. This reality need not contradict geographic communities which people sometimes find too parochial and constricting.

Nongeographical communities also operate within relatively small areas. We find, for example, religious, civic, labor, and business organizations at the town level. Their activities provide opportunities and spaces for interaction that make for social cohesion within the local community.

Globalization may be defined simply as a worldwide spread of ideas, goods, services, and people, though it means different things to different people. Good, bad, or a mix of both. To some, it's manna from heaven, to others, an apocalypse in the making. Or, it may just be a reality we're caught in and have to live with.

Human Development Report (1999) imaged globalization as shrinking space, shrinking time, and disappearing borders. But shrinking time, shrinking space, disappearing borders *for what and for whom?*

Much literature, especially those coming from international finance institutions, seems to suggest only the good side of globalization. Yet many are now beginning to question its promised benefits. The downsides of this process appear to be played down, if not entirely left out of the picture.

Mark Weisbrot, contributing author to *Global Backlash: Citizen Initiatives for A Just World Economy* (ed. Broad 2002) defines globalization as increase in international trade and investment. Then he questions whether this is necessarily beneficial to everyone involved or even for the majority of people in any given country, suggesting answers in the negative.

To Joseph Stiglitz, former World Bank chief economist and 2001 Nobel Prize winner for economics, globalization means the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies (Stiglitz 2002). According to him, he wrote *Globalization and Its Discontents* because he saw first hand, while still with the World Bank, the devastating effect that globalization can have on developing countries, and especially the poor within those countries. He believes, though, that globalization can be a force for good with the potential to enrich everyone in the world, particularly the poor. But to be so globalization needs a radical rethinking, considering how it has been managed so



far. He was quite emphatic that globalization today is not working, not for many of the world's poor, not for the environment, not for the stability of the global economy.

Globalization is new but not quite new. You might want to trace it back to when earliest humans roamed the world as nomads, when land bridges still linked continents. Or as Marx and Engels would track the development of capitalism in their 1848 Communist Manifesto. "Modern industry has established the world market. All old-established national industries have been destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that work up raw material drawn from the remotest zones, industries whose products are consumed, not only at home but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the product of distant lands and climes. All fixed, fast-frozen relations are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face, with sober senses, his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind."

Note that these words had been taken as call to arms, as it were, by more than half of humanity, and so seriously as to cause historic disintegration and reorganization of societies around the world. But these words could as well have been uttered by former World Bank president Wolfensohn or George Soros.

What's really new about today's globalization, according to HDR 1999, is new markets, new actors, new rules and norms, new (faster and cheaper) tools of communication. We may want to reduce all these to two symbols—finance capital and the Internet—which seem to drive all the so-called linking and shrinking, and the exponential growth of the global economy, among other things.

Globalization cuts in many ways. Neither its good side nor its bad side is clear-cut and can pass without being contested. Positive globalization can be about coming together. A sharing of humanity's best across cultural divides. And negative globalization, just the opposite—a boundless spread of man's worst, threatening global solidarity to come apart. The first seems so scarce, the second we find so abundant in today's world.

Negative globalization speaks of the disastrous outcomes of globalized systems of production, trade, investment, finance, debt and ODA. Among these are growing world poverty, widening rich-poor divide,



intensifying wars and conflicts, international crimes, globalwarming, loss of biodiversity, loss of community.

I sometimes speak of globalization as the pace at which corn leaves your farm gate and comes back to you in corn chips. It is in large part a high-speed shrinking of space and time that benefits a few and drags us all down into a rat-race towards a very uncertain future. To borrow George Soros' metaphor for the crisis of global capitalism, it's like a wrecking ball creating havoc and bringing disaster after disaster everywhere.

America leads the developed world in the globalization process. The so-called American dream is the nation's number-one export. The dream is imbedded in a variety of cultural products—movies, TV programs, videos, records, cassettes, CDs, VCDs, DVDs, iPods. These 'soft' or cultural products now dominating erstwhile iconic "durables" like cars, washing machines, refrigerators, and electronic equipment look, feel, and sound American. As these products sweep the planet, you do not have to be American to sell American culture. The super rich and middle class living in the posh subdivisions of Manila have basically the same taste, style, habit, and outlook as their counterparts in Manhattan.

China, which is now driving the world economy like nothing we have seen before, is as much a globalizer as America. But while made-in-China products are now sweeping the planet, these same products have deep American thumbmarks on them. Perhaps, China is itself selling the American dream to its people and to the rest of the world.

Globalization and rural development

A world free of poverty is a rural world freed from this condition. Cities, despite their own share of poverty, will always represent progress and prosperity. It is the progress and prosperity of towns and villages outside of the metropolis that will help cities keep up to that prosperity symbol, and reduce urban poverty itself to insignificance.

Globalization helps to accelerate growth in the rural areas and to facilitate concentration of cheap rural products in the global marketplace. Wittingly or otherwise, international financial institutions become instruments for prying loose the world's countrysides for exploitation by global corporate monopolists in food, seeds, feeds, machineries, biotechnology, minerals.



Rural areas can be made an attractive place to venture, risk, and make money for anyone with money to invest. But this would suggest a policy of disincentives for public and private investors who naturally prefer the developed areas. This looks rather negative but it's a necessary tack to take alongside positive policies. Cities can and should finance any further urban improvement.

Why is it so easy to sink in money to further widen an already wide hi-way? Why is it so hard to spend for barrio roads, communal irrigation systems, post-harvest facilities, potable water, a rural clinic, a barrio school? Why must a highland dweller be made to pay for the amenities and convenience of the big city inhabitants? These questions need to be answered as they suggest lopsided priorities and distorted structure of public subsidies.

At bottom is the issue of inequality. Expressed in spatial terms, urban means disproportionate claims on food, education, health, shelter, communication, energy, opportunities for civic participation and cultural interactions, freedom of movement, amenities that make us happy and enjoy life. Rural means just the opposite, though romanticized by environmentalists as "refuge" from polluted brown jungles even as they themselves realize the transboundary nature of most ecological problems.

A closer look at the production pipeline should reveal to us that those who grow our food usually suffer a double whammy. They get screwed on both ends of the pipe, so to speak. At the head, there's the high costs of land, water, seeds, farm machineries, interests on credit, etc. At the end, there's the pricing down at the farm gate, the high costs of storage or bringing the produce to the market

On both ends, we see the trader. The trader, usually an outsider or local rich, does not only possess the capital and leverage to price up or price down the value of real production. More, he or she is benefiting from the value gained out of easy access to opportunities, mobility, much of which are subsidized by taxpayers' money in one form or another.

The 'cheapness' of the products of rural labor is neither friendly to the producer nor to the environment. To have, say a karaoke set, a poor farmer needs several harvest cycles in a one-hectare farm, assuming no crop failure and good price. Likewise, a poor municipal fisher would have to catch hundreds of kilos of fish from an already seriously depleted fishing ground. Once cell phones swarm the countryside, an even more intense exploitation of labor and natural resources will be triggered.



The rich and urban consumers, the non-agricultural sectors, enjoy cheap prices that discount both rural labor and the land, water, forest resources. Some ways should be found and articulated in any rural development strategy to deal with these negative externalities.

Poverty seems easier to reproduce than reduce. The 1997 Asian crisis proved that on a grand scale. This is also proved every day at the micro level. From experience livelihoods are hard to create and sustain but easy to lose, especially when the macroeconomic situation is choppy and unstable. Cash incomes are hard to come by and easy to flow out of communities that buy from the outside most of the means to live and enjoy life. Cash income is one's passport to inclusion in today's world. You need it to get you a c-phone and get connected to globalization.

One way of understanding our present predicament is to look at the dynamics of the so-called money game (Korten 1995). Today, billions of dollars move in and out of an economy in seconds. Round the clock about \$1.3 trillion (total of world's official foreign exchange reserves in 1995 is about \$1.2 trillion) move around the global economy as computer bytes with hardly any connection to the real economy. This cyberspace operation has little or nothing at all to do with the production and trade of real goods like grains, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables, building materials, television, cars, etc. or doing a service like local resources management, community education and spiritual healing.

Wealth in money form can be created without creating value. There are two common ways to do this: [a] borrowing or creating debt; and [b] bidding up asset values. A hundred pesos representing a real chicken can be multiplied several times within a day through a series of borrowing that eventually ends up in a debt pyramid far removed from the value of the original real chicken. A piece of land may cost nothing if no one wants to buy it but can cost one a fortune if many want it so badly for themselves. This is the casino economy (coined by Keynes) which now rules the greater part, if not the whole, of the global economy. But it is not just about gambling, it is about hot money making claims on real resources.

An experience in community development

Neither democracy nor development is inclusive enough to have a space for every poor rural village in the Philippines. But democracy and development *for all* is attainable and worth striving for. And it's not an impossible goal.



Such was the view and vision of the founders of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) when they organized this mass movement in 1952. These founders—mostly prominent citizens from non-poor, from the upperclass of society, in other words, the “included”—believed there were potentials out there, innate among the poor themselves, waiting to be released. All that was needed was a movement that could trigger and assist the liberating process. And so they set out on an ambitious mission of mobilizing the non-poor to help the poor help themselves learn their way out of social exclusion.

Since its founding PRRM has been into the process of building community and habitat. A child of war and reconstruction, PRRM's life story parallels a new era of modernization that has produced not only unprecedented material wealth for humanity but also a monumental legacy of wasted human and natural capacity. The strivings have revolved around people's struggles for equality and human dignity addressing the two outstanding victims of modernization—community and living space.

More than half a century down the road, PRRM has been doing just that—helping the poor to develop themselves in their chosen ways and become important actors in building inclusive rural societies. The hope was to make democracy work at the grassroots and become a voice of influence in public policy.

In the local communities where it has taken deep roots over time PRRM has enabled the organization of village organizations among poor farmers, municipal fishers, and indigenous peoples, women, and youth. These primary organizations have now formed themselves into federations to leverage their strength and voice. They have achieved a level of capacity for self-governance, for addressing poverty on site and for asserting their right to participate in shaping policies that affect their own communities and the larger society.

The programs revolve around the four-fold approach of education, health, livelihood and self-government combined with community-based natural resources management or CB-NRM. Projects range from municipal fish sanctuaries to baywide co-management of coastal resources; from advocacy of budget allocation for reproductive health to setting up a primary health care system in a number of villages; from organizing savings and credit groups to establishing a rural bank; from installing potable water systems, solar energy and micro-hydro units to watershed management.

The four fold approach is a legacy of Dr. Yen, the founder of rural reconstruction movement. This approach was designed to address the



interlocking problems of ignorance, poverty, disease, and civic inertia seen as endemic to all agrarian societies throughout the developing world.

The CB NRM is an emerging approach to the conservation of coastal, lowland, and upland habitats. Informed by sustainable development discourses and lessons from community organizing practices, the CB NRM approach emphasizes the central role of local communities in the management of ecological systems.

Around these programs and projects PRRM has built partnerships with local communities and, together, they have demonstrated a different way of doing development. Based on project experience they engage government, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, and private corporate interests in dialogs on poverty reduction, social and environmental justice, citizen participation and good governance.

But building inclusive societies and realizing sustainable development in a rapidly globalizing world is a far more complex story. The PRRM story is but one small episode in a complex web of strivings to find clues and learn the ways out of social exclusion and unsustainability.

Rethinking community, development, and globalization

If we look back to the first settled societies or the more recent enlightened feudal societies in the middle ages when there was less created wealth but more caring, our modern society is way, way beyond recognition. The process of creating a one-world, particularly during the last decade, seems to be leading nowhere near that goal. Rather, globalization is leading us to where no sane person wants to be—to the brink of global systems collapse.

The process of globalization has brought us within touching or wrecking distance of each other, literally and figuratively. We now have before us a modern world that has more than enough accumulated wealth to sustain us even if we work less hours and spend longer time for leisure and making love. We have more than enough to feed, to clothe, to house, to educate, lengthen the life, expand the freedom of movement and choices of every man, woman and child now living and yet to be born. We can use this accumulated wealth to pay back social dues and start off the greatest ever social leveling process. And probably there will be more left to clean up the mess we have caused our environment.



The current human crisis should be a wake-up call. It should make us realize how so tightly connected we are, how a minor glitch in one part could trigger a breakdown in the whole system. The world we live in has become so small that we can hardly avoid each other. We live in this closely interconnected world where we have just seen how at one point a country like Russia that does not trade with Latin America and is located on the other side of the globe could crash and bring down Latin America and threaten the collapse of the world economy.

The civilized world has come this far, but continues to be so divided. The civic and friendly world we all desire is yet to be and there may not be enough time to build it. The writing on the wall is so clear and compelling. British economist Paul Ekins (Daly & Cobb 1989) sees our current development dilemma in this way: "To those people not completely entranced by the cascade of consumer goods which pour from the modern industrial economy, it is becoming increasingly clear that this cascade has been made possible through the progressive sacrifice of two of humanity's most treasured traditional assets: a supportive local community and a healthy, productive natural environment."

Closing the equality gaps within our societies is a prior basic concern. Policies and programs must help accelerate the social leveling process. This goes beyond the rhetoric of making poverty the all-encompassing theme, as in the Millennium Development Goals and vision statements of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In Asia we have seen the most dramatic reduction in poverty in the last three decades. But we cannot say that we have a more just, a more equal Asia now than before this happened.

More, the world community has failed to arrest the decline of the natural systems on which all of us depend for our survival. And for all we care, humanity might perish not because of cataclysmic terrorism or world revolution but because of climate change.

To illustrate the stark inequality in this world let us recall a 1990 baseline assessment. That time an interagency panel of scientists suggested that if we are to succeed in stabilizing the global climate system each individual then living would be entitled to only 1,500 kilograms of CO₂ emission, our right to shit the environment, if you like. Around then an American was already doing 20,000 while a poor Afghan or Zairean about 100 or so. More, the 1,500 kg-norm assumed (1) no further cutting of existing forest stands and (2) no more addition to the then 5.3 billion inhabitants of this planet.



One obvious implication is, an American must give up so much to enable an Afghan or Zairean to live in dignity. Now, you and I can see why we are in this present mess. None of the two assumptions worked, to begin with. While 200 million Asians were lifted out of poverty there has been little progress in closing the rich-poor divide. There has been virtually no change in the per capita CO2 emission level of the US, for example. It's so amazing how so little has changed.

What went wrong? Back in 1992 Earth Summit in Rio we thought we had the answer—sustainable development—defined basically as justice and fairness between and within nations, women and men, across generations, and payback to our degraded environment.

We also had a global plan, some kind of 'global deal'. The 'deal' is about human survival. It's not about the rich and powerful setting conditions for sharing, especially ones that are burdensome and humiliating to the poor and less powerful. Rich and poor alike stand to lose in a global system collapse. What each side is expected to do, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, is but a just and fair share based on differing accountability for what happened and continues to happen.

Nobody's a beggar here. If poor peasants shifted to organic farming or if municipal fishers manage their coastal resources right, they're doing it not only for their own sake, but for all of us. If a poor country takes care of their biodiversity, that country is doing a great service for humanity. These efforts deserve to be reciprocated somehow, through untied ODA, unconditional debt relief, fairer trade terms, and other forms of resource transfer. And yet we know, real net transfers from the rich to the poor imply deep cuts and possible only if the rich themselves begin to dramatically change in the way they see the world, in how they produce and consume things.

We are witness to a modern paradox. Along with the interlinking of national economies we find nations and communities breaking up in many different ways. Globalization brings wealth beyond measure on one part of the world and extreme poverty on the other. We see how traditional communities disappear, how ancient cultures are eroded by dominating cultures. Billions of human beings are losing the sense of place and sense of self that give life meaning. Some predict that future conflicts will probably be less between nations but between the forces of globalization and territorially based forces of local survival seeking to preserve and to redefine community (Barnet and Cavanagh 1994).



The challenges of inclusion

The ways of social exclusion are many—poverty, color, sex, faith and belief, language, ethnicity, culture, destruction of living environments, even advances in information technology. We have to overcome all these barriers to build an inclusive society.

But how inclusive is an inclusive society or community? Could it be that an inclusive and sustainable society or community is as much a dream as a world without poverty?

To poet Emily Dickinson *“The soul selects her own society/ then shuts the door.”* This suggests that any society can be inclusive only to the extent that individuals choose and are chosen to belong there. It makes a strong case for freedom of expression and sovereignty of the person. More, it implies that the moment we begin to select based on any set of criteria or values we already begin to exclude.

Is there any historical parallel for the kind of inclusive society we are looking for? Herman Daly and Rev. John Cobb alluded to some bygone era of enlightened feudalism. Under that system, every member of the community enjoyed work, there was more sharing and caring than in either capitalism or socialism. One need not worry about joblessness and lack of old-age security and everyone was assured the basic needs and means to live in dignity.

Today's world has strayed far too much away from that medieval society. Yet current discourses on sustainable development have again brought back on the table the concept of community. This seems motivated less by a romantic return to the past than by a strong revulsion to the pervasive breakdown of social consensus and social cohesion. The primary driving forces are the civics—individuals and associations of high civic consciousness and civic activism—which include NGOs and social movements, and other concerned actors in society, in government, in the corporate world. They have proved to be the critical elements against negative globalization and for redirecting this seemingly inexorable process away from the race to the edge.

The notion of community is far from being clear-cut and uncontested. It cannot be assumed as self-evidently good. A racist or fascist community is also a product of choice of some kind. Or it could be the case that a community whose expression of their right to be left alone might be as absurd as exercising their right to clear cut their communal forests or even commit collective suicide.



The positive meaning of community needs stressing here. In PRRM discourse and practice, bias and focus of programs on the poor is deliberate and meant to achieve inclusiveness in divided communities. Efforts to help the poor reclaim their power to decide on their own is balanced by education for solidarity. People are being helped to realize that self-governing and self-sufficient communities are a pipedream if not linked to many other similar strivings to bring about greater social cohesion and well-being for all.

Community participation is now widely recognized as a critical element in the success of any development project. The MDBs (World Bank and ADB in particular), among other UN agencies like the UNDP and FAO, have it as a matter of policy to ensure people's participation at all levels throughout the project cycle.

But how can you participate if you know not how. Communities at project site may be assumed to know what they want and to tell a good or bad project when they see one. But it cannot be taken for granted, for example, that they can effectively hold donors and governments to account for their commitment to participatory processes and outcomes. They need to be smarter than they already are to be taken seriously and their inputs considered in improving project performance.

Daly and Cobb recommends what they call an economics for community in contrast to economics as we know it. An economics for community is the reverse of endless growth of production and consumption. Rather it aims at sufficiency of goods for the sake of community well-being.

To them, the larger community should be viewed as community of communities. The local community would be the primary basis for self-identification. Participation in community affairs is more direct. Representation is more grounded on local decisions. Representatives chosen locally would participate in important decisions at higher levels and in the selection of representatives to still higher levels. Personal identification would continue to operate at several levels to varying degrees.

The point is precisely to avoid concentration of political power at the global level following the concentration of economic power there. Decentralization of the economy will allow decentralization of political power. But considering what has become of the planet because of unrestrained exploitation of natural resources and sinks for waste global action by the whole community of nations, eg the UN, will be necessary to prevent systemic disaster.



Viewing the world as a community of communities suggests diminution of sovereignty. Daly and Cobb asserts that there are no sovereign states, nations, or global government. Today's sovereign nation-states would retain important roles but must devolve others on smaller units and surrender still others to the United Nations. All communities would exercise some "sovereignty," but none would be sovereign in the sense of modern political theory.

Deglobalization: fast backward to the future

Another world is possible. Worldwide, alternative voices and movements among ordinary citizens are saying enough to globalization, as we know it.

Deglobalize — a word we coined in a statement of Asian NGOs in Bangkok in 2000 preparing for the World Food Summit+5—seems to capture this anti-globalization sentiment. Deglobalization, by extension, would thus mean a process of reversal of negative globalization.

It can be taken to mean promoting positive globalization—the global sharing of ideas, know-how, resources, goodwill and hospitality, the free movement of people and mutual learning among different cultures. It means building more inclusive, sustainable societies in a highly unequal and environmentally-damaged world.

Deglobalization need not suggest a return to protection regimes of old, if not outright autarky. In Asia, for example, given the five-year experience with WTO, and considering the lessons of the 1997 Asian crisis, deglobalization might entail setting up region-specific systems around trade, investment, debt, ODA, and financing, building on or even diverging from existing arrangements. As well, this might mean getting WTO out of agriculture and preventing it from deciding the fate of small farmers and hungry millions, from determining whether and how these farmers will exercise their rights to be secure in food.

Deglobalization must aim to strengthen local community action. As well, it must help build the local economies that serve the needs and aspirations of people in their communities and living environments.

In building a deglobalized one-world the first tall order is a fundamental change in our thinking and value system. Some would say that the root of everything that's going wrong today comes down to mindset and values. And they may be right. But what sort of thinking and values



must change? We are talking here of modern society or societies of 6 billion people believing, thinking, valuing, doing, enjoying different things.

True, but some ideas happened to be more hegemonic than others and thus more decisive in guiding and shaping human actions. The dominant institutions that we see today have been built around them. Until they are questioned and changed it will be development-as-usual.

Deglobalization may be the right word for communicating the need to turn the clock backward, and fast backward, as it were, toward a more secure common future. But what about doing something we never ever thought of and tried?

Donella Meadows has something to offer to those of us who think the world needs saving. She says there's one solution to the world's problems that she never heard the frenzied activists suggest—*slowing down*. According to her, slowing down could be the single most effective action to save the world.

She suggest a bundle of what if's. "Suppose we weren't in such a hurry. We could take time to walk instead of drive, to sail instead of fly. To clean up our messes. To discuss our plans throughout the whole community before we send in bulldozers to make irreversible changes. To figure out how many fish the ocean can produce before boats race out to beat other boats to whatever fish are left...Suppose we went at a slow enough pace not only to smell the flowers, but to feel our bodies, play with children, look openly without agenda or timetable into the faces of loved ones. Suppose we stopped gulping fast food and started savoring slow food, grown, cooked, served and eaten with care. Suppose we took time each day to sit in silence...I think, if we did those things, the world wouldn't need much saving."

If we did all these she thinks we could be spared from consumption headaches, from things we think we have to buy but don't really need. We could be spared from making so many mistakes. We could listen more and hurt each other less. We could take time to justify our favorite solutions, test them, and learn what their actual effects are.

What if we do all that first and then, quietly, carefully, think about what else might need to be done?

She concludes, "Good advice. Too bad I don't have time to take it. I have to go save the world."



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