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Sustainability in a glocalising world

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Abstract

Sustainability is dependent on the relationships of man with his natural and social environment. Without viable and stable relations within and between both orders there will be no (development of) sustainability. However, sustainability is hard to accomplish nowadays because of the interplay between globalisation and localisation. This interplay results in complex mixtures, new social hierarchies, changing cultural boundaries and multiple identities. We have to acknowledge we live in a world characterized by multiplicity, uncertainty, ambiguity and ambivalence. Accordingly, we have to learn to manage diversity.

Definition of Sustainability

Without maintaining the natural environment and without the realization of stable and acceptable relationships between (groups of) people, no sustainable developments are possible. With this view we link up with that of the Brundtland-Committee (1987): sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own demands (see also UNESCO 171 EX/7 Annex 2005). Sustainable development refers to a process of change in which the exploitation of useful sources, the directing of investments, the orientation of technological developments and institutional social organization must be in mutual harmony and able to extend both existing and future potential while satisfying human needs and aspirations¹. The definition is anthropocentric emphasizing the intergenerational aspects. During the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002) it is emphasized again that sustainable development rests on three pillars: ecological, social and economic. In this context culture has been defined sometimes as ‘an underlying dimension’, sometimes as ‘interlinking or interconnecting’ the three key areas or pillars (UNESCO 171 EX/7-Annex, p. 15, 2005; see also the Convention on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO, oct. 2005). Whether we emphasise the intergenerational or the ecological aspect of sustainable development, in both cases it is clear that some kind of cultural support is needed to allow for sustainable development. “Any approach which does no more than simply address strictly biophysical exchanges between societies and their environment – the impact of the environment on Man and vice versa – is incomplete and self-defeating. Instead, we need a culturally diversified approach which takes account of different attitudes to the environment and assesses whether these attitudes perpetuate views of actions that are beneficial or harmful to it” (see World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995)². On the basis of this definition we can only conclude that much needs to be improved.

The growing interdependence of relationships between ‘agents’ (individuals, groups and nation-states) in different parts of the world, including their technological skills and cultural values, is coupled with changes in the way the natural environment is used. What

¹ Another commonly used definition is: sustainable development is development improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems ” (World Conservation Strategy, 1980). This definition transcends the internationally recognised Brundtland definition emphasising the need for preservation of a number of natural components and systems.

² From such an approach the following questions are relevant: Which different roles are attributed to the use of natural resources in various cultures and how are these roles perceived? How is sustainable development conceived in these cultures? How is the problem of non-sustainability of existing processes and patterns of development understood and how do they experience the problems encountered in making these patterns and processes more sustainable?

emerges is that local issues and resources simultaneously become global threats and opportunities. This creates new possibilities but also problems for our world order. Of course, the articulation and management of these consequences depend very much on what we understand by 'sustainability' and 'development'. These container concepts raise a lot of questions (Opschoor 1996). We will sum up those, which, in our opinion, are most important. Should sustainability be seen from an ecocentric or anthropocentric point of view? Is development simply growth? But if this is the case, growth of what? For whom? In what areas? Should we see development primarily in economic terms or, on the contrary, describe it in terms of more all-embracing values such as level of education, development and suchlike? In what time scale should sustainability be placed in the light of man's accountability and responsibility towards coming generations? How does sustainability relate to uncertainty? Should man apply a point of view that involves taking risks or one in which precautions are taken³? What are indicators of sustainability? For example, is the internalization of the sustainability question, as reflected in environmental philosophies or cosmologies, also a component of the collective awareness? Making individuals aware of the unexpected and unintended effects of collective actions is perhaps a fundamental condition for and thus indirectly an important indicator of sustainability. Sustainability is also characterized by a lack of clarity and differences of opinion with regard to what is actually needed and how urgent it is. With the aid of what criteria and instruments can we measure the functioning of specific economies? How can we map the effects of policy on the future of the environment in specific countries? Do we have enough insight into the effects in the long term? Can we make a realistic estimate of the development of technology? We should, after all, not forget that sustainability is a relative concept. Sustainability is not only dependent of usage but also of technological possibilities. Who says that we cannot change the exhaustibility and re-use of scarce resources (minerals, basic raw materials such as land, water, plants and animals) within a few decades by means of crop breeding, new genetic manipulation techniques and suchlike fundamentally? We should point out that sustainability not only concerns analytical and empirical, but also ethical-normative arguments. These arguments have to do with our ways of defining the world, but also with the ways in which these arguments are embodied in our institutions and practices.

Conditions for Sustainability

To be effective and efficient these institutions and practices have to meet three interlocking conditions. The first condition refers to trust, as a form of bonding and bridging social capital⁴. Trust promotes predictability, the harmonization of behaviour and the involvement of actors. These are, and have always been, basic conditions for a sustainable society. Trust enables the good functioning of the world economy, smoothes organizations' operations, and allows for the successful co-operation of actors. Trust is, of course, never given just like that. People know that trust can be violated. Trust must be built up in concrete interactions.⁵ The second concerns transparency and legitimacy in social arrangements: the members of the community must know and understand its mechanisms, structures and basic processes. Knowledge and understanding are not sufficient, however, they must also be willing to approve these aspects. The existing

³ By the way, in Rio de Janeiro the so-called Precautionary Principle has been accepted.

⁴ See a.o. the special issue of the Journal *Revue Internationale de politique compaee*, 2003, dedicated to 'trust and social capital.

⁵ Trust presupposes the psychological condition of emotional and affective binding.

distribution of rights, obligations and positions must be morally acceptable, must be accepted as fair and just.

Efficient and effective relationships between social partners are, however, not only dependent on the degree of trust and solidarity which individuals in a social situation bring with them on the basis of earlier socialization and experiences. In a modern society with flexible connections between people and parties and anonymous client-system relationships, trust and solidarity should also be created by the setting up of institutions and schemes, whereby rationally acting egoists are stimulated to co-operate in stable and calculable connections. Here we touch on the third condition: the existence of mechanisms for co-ordination that allow for stability in relations. After all, it must be possible to harmonize activities with one another. The nature and degree of co-ordination are connected to the structural characteristics of the society concerned (that is, scale, complexity, openness, dynamics, stratification and suchlike), but also with cultural characteristics (the often implicit rules, opinions, values, norms and the repertoires of action related to them). Continuity and routines are required here. In short, trust and (efficient) co-ordination are mutual constitutive. These, in turn, raise the question of the conditions under which, and mechanisms by which, they can be brought about in the light of the differences in interests and positions of those involved. Dependence is accompanied by risks. Each of those involved - from individuals to organizations and nations - can act in a co-operative or competitive manner. This poses the question of social order or social cohesion in a nutshell. Social cohesion is described as efficient and effective connection between different units or actors in a system. As has been stated above, this connection includes functional co-ordination, trust or solidarity, transparency, stability and experienced fairness. It is precisely these conditions, which are under pressure in the current world because of deep, radical transformations.

We see the world turning into a global village. We see growth of mutual dependencies as well as a condensation of relationships and interactions between steadily more actors. We see a massive acceleration of a global exchange of people, goods, services and images. Apart from this acceleration, we also see greater distribution: increasingly, more and more countries and regions become involved in networks that span the globe (Appadurai 1996). A worldwide web of interdependencies has been spun. People from practically all societies are confronted with aspects of other societies and cultures through tourism, the media and consumer goods. New styles of consumption (clothing, utilities, food) as well as standardized systems of time, money and expertise are introduced, produced, and distributed everywhere by transnational companies. Developments of a political, ideological, religious or cultural nature, originally connected with a specific region, culture or period, are being echoed in large parts of the world. Bound up with this, we see a transformation of the nation-state with the shifting of accents to above or below-state arrangements. The nation-state is losing its 'naturalness'. There is a transfer of formal state powers to continental 'power blocks' with, at the same time, a steady increase in regulations and effects on regional and local levels. In a period of 'open borders', migration, ongoing division of labour and advanced technology, society is becoming more pulled apart than ever before. This implies that networks (both formal and informal) are becoming increasingly important for the economic and social functioning of individuals and groups (Castells 2000). The influence of these networks can be presented both positively and negatively. For example, social networks can remove a feeling of insecurity and alienation, but at the same time they can have a coercive and restrictive effect by promoting conformism and smothering individual initiative. Further, the structural exclusion of particular groups from networks or the failure to intervene promptly to deal

with the negative influence of networks can result in tensions and social inequalities in society, and in extreme cases lead to instability and violence. The 'risk society' (Beck 1992) is something that many people have to come to terms with individually.⁶

Globalisation and localisation

No small wonder that since the mid-1970's we have witnessed movements challenging the globalisation of the economy. Groups of people all over the globe want to transform the world by violent or non-violent means. Although they depend heavily on the new information technology, the common objective of all 'protestors' is to retain their culture and to obtain more control over their own lives (Castells 1996; Keane 2003; Singer 2002). The rise of a global system is thus accompanied by a rebirth of nationalism, regionalism and ethnicity (Anderson 1992; Roosens 1989). Globalization creates favourable conditions for all sorts of particularization, localization and even fragmentation. Here we touch the other extreme, the localization. Apparently globalization and localization constitute and feed each other. The global and the local are two faces of the same process (Hall 1991, Robertson 1995). In this era of time-space compression, distant localities are linked in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Social relations become dis-embedded, that is, they are increasingly 'lifted out' of the context of local interaction to become re-embedded again in different forms and conditions (Giddens 1990)⁷. In other words, the culturally homogenizing tendencies of globalization imply continued or even reinforced cultural heterogeneity. "The paradox of the current world conjuncture is the increased production of cultural and political boundaries at the very same time when the world has become tightly bound together in a single economic system with instantaneous communication between different sectors of the globe" (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994: 29). This unrestricted movement of cultural forms and images contrasts with the growth of cultural boundaries. Although cross-boundary activities are increasing as a wide body of work in international relations and international political economy testifies, "there is much empirical evidence to support the fact that people's awareness of being involved in open-ended global flows seems to trigger a search for fixed orientation points and action frames, as well as determined efforts to affirm old and construct new boundaries" (Geschiere and Meyer: 1998: 602). This 'glocalization' (Robertson 1995) or hybridization, the recombination of existing forms and practices into new forms and practices⁸, offers new ways for cultural practices to become fused and new frameworks for the development of cultural identities. Hybridization implies that the social agents (people, organizations, governments) can rely steadily less on what already exists. Overall 'grand narratives' such as those of good

⁶ Within a differentiated world system, every region has developed its own specific profile, a profile built up of three types of risk. The first type of risk is of an ecological nature. The second type of risk is the so-called individualization danger. This emerges out of the tensions between the erosion of old socio-cultural traditions and the growth of the flexible society in which differentiation and heterogeneity are coming to the fore. The third type of risk is that of control which relates to the far-reaching developments in science and politics. It is notably the role of science and technology that is crucial here. Science and technology do, in fact, provide solutions and, at the same time, contribute to the creation of new risks.

⁷For instance, we see that transmigrants act, take decisions and develop identities while embedded in networks of relationships, which bind them with two or more nation-states simultaneously. They develop new spheres of experiences and new kinds of social relations. Because of this, a situation of 'in-betweenness' is created.

⁸ Instead of glocalization or hybridization we can use the term 'creolization' instead, if one wants to emphasize processes, which take place on the periphery of the world system. It is not a one-way traffic from the center to the periphery, because the periphery talks back.

society, progress, development and emancipation, which used to cluster and inspire the thinking and practice of large groups in large parts of the world, fostered by the state, are fragmenting and losing their credibility. Consequently, individuals are increasingly confronted with the task of selecting from a number of different elements and combining them to create a unity which is meaningful in their eyes. The outcome is a permanent patchwork of cultural material that happens to be available. This 'hybridization' matches a world of growing migration and cultural variation⁹, as is to be seen in Europe.

Cultural Differentiation and National Identity

Cultural variation within the European nation-states is rising. We witness a reinforcement of the production of 'localism'. This bucks the trend of the past two centuries in which newly formed national states tried through nationalistic programmes to homogenize their entire territory culturally and linguistically, as well as economically and socially (Gellner 1983; Brubaker 1992). The state and the political community came to be equated increasingly with 'the national culture'. Although ideas about what constitutes a nation differed between countries, the common view was that each nation possessed- or ought to have – a single specific culture. Culture was cast in a national context and turned into a political tool. "National consciousness in this sense consists of an overriding identification of the individual with a culture that is protected by the state" (Curtin 1997).

Culture is not the only thing thus captured in national contexts. The same applies for the individual: "With the French Revolution, the nation-state emerges as the form of political organization and nationality as the condition of membership in a polity. The Revolution codified individual rights and freedom as attributes of national citizenship, thus linking the individual and the nation-state" (Soysal 1994). Therefore, the nation-state became both a territorial unity and a membership organization (Brubaker 1992). Citizens are members of the nation and acquire equal rights through this membership. Anyone who wishes to have equal rights within a certain state must therefore also be equal to all others in that state: citizens must have the same identity.

In the identity-discourse nation-states were presented as having a 'natural history' of their own. The three elements of territory, people and culture were combined to form 'the country'. They converge in the nation-state concept. Almost everyone takes the central elements in this idea for granted (Clifford 1994: 302-338; Malkki 1992: 24-44; Stolcke 1993: 1-13). A map of the world thus depicts areas with clear boundaries without any overlap. Territory, culture and people are connected through natural links. People therefore belong to a single culture only. It is for this reason that words such as 'autochthonous' and, in relation to certain cultures, 'native' and 'indigenous' are used. They express the relationship between the territory and being born somewhere. They also function as we-they distinction: 'we' belong here, 'they' do not. Migrants may *be* here, but they do not come *from* here¹⁰. Significantly, this view of human beings,

⁹ "The process of hybridization may create such multiple identities as Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan, a London boy of Asian origin playing for a local Bengali cricket team and at the same time supporting the Arsenal football club, Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam and Native Americans celebrating Mardi Gras in the United States" (Hermans & Kempen 1998: 1113).

¹⁰ In this context, roots are an especially popular metaphor. People and cultures are rooted in the soil, just like trees. A nation is like a great family tree that is rooted in the ground. You can belong to only one tree and thus to only one culture. A multiplicity of daily practices sustains this symbolic logic.

culture, people and territory, which holds that people do not merely live somewhere but also belong there, asserts that the description of the 'natural' order also establishes a standard, namely a moral justification of the existing situation (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-23).

Assuming that today's national, regional and local boundaries enclose cultures and regulate cultural exchange, however, is a mistake. Largely transnational companies not bound to specific locations control production and distribution of mass culture. People construct their identities partly in this transnational mass culture. Aspects from other cultures increasingly permeate 'our' culture. As a result of the rapid technological changes of recent years, such as Internet, fax, mobile telephones and extensive and inexpensive air travel, today's migrants are better able to maintain links with their home countries, for example through temporary remigration. Consequently, migration leads to transnationalism, 'the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994: 7). They establish economic, social, organizational, religious, political and personal relationships that transcend geographic, cultural and political boundaries. We see that transmigrants act, take decisions and develop identities while embedded in networks of relationships that bind them with two or more nation-states simultaneously. They develop new spheres of experiences and new kinds of social relations. In their daily lives they link nation-states to each other, and they live their lives within these links. This situation enables new forms of transnational existence, or in other words 'long distance nationalism'.¹¹

Transnational communities arise, consisting of people who feel emotionally and culturally connected, who ignore - or at least try to ignore - the national boundaries that separate them. The traditional image of emigrants who start a new life in a new country, leaving their past far behind, is thus no longer current. "Much of the traffic in culture...is transnational rather than international. It ignores, subverts, and devalues rather than celebrates national boundaries" (Hannerz 1989: 69). As a consequence, we see a transformation of the nation-state involving the evaporation of the triad of territory, people and culture. The world, divided into separate national states, is yielding to a multicultural global society, sometimes slowly but more often with abrupt jolts. This new society is still organized, however, according to the principle of separate national states. Members of transnational communities cannot escape from the power of the nation-state as they try to create and maintain a collective identity. For the time being, the nation-state system continues to exert influence in a world that is becoming ever more transnational. The nation-state is still viewed as 'a key socio-psychological source of social cohesion' (Vertovec 1997). However, its role as the casing for social and cultural associations renders it subject to erosion. The nation-state is losing its naturalness. The '*national order of things*' – that has been viewed in modern Western culture as the '*natural order of things*' – has to be problematized (Gellner 1983; Malkki 1992: 24-44).

Of course, nature and degree of this 'problematization' are also related to specific geopolitical and historical circumstances. For instance, in Central Eastern Europe, the nation-state concept is still alive, much more than in Western Europe. Even though there is a trend in which the central eastern European countries developed along the

¹¹ This can also backfire, as Anderson (1992) indicates. The myriad means of communication have allowed various forms of crossborder nationalism to emerge. People in different countries maintain networks through which violent actions can be planned and implemented. Such forms of long distance nationalism exist among certain refugees as well. The violent attacks by various Kurdish groups in Western Europe are a case in point.

lines of a democratization process starting with the post-socialist period some 16 years ago, these countries face a quite different development. Some of them as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and former Yugoslavia, were caught up in the processes of the European enlargement and building new and independent nation-states. In these processes culture is still considered as nation-bound. In the wake of these processes and despite the entry of some nations to the European Community national identity constructions are formed through the idea of the nation-state¹².

Many people, confronted with this uprooting of many existing national borders and local identities, may feel anxiety, insecurity, and fear. From here two basic risks emerge that challenge existing conditions for institutional sustainability: fundamentalism and fragmentation.

Fundamentalism idealises the past, glorifies sameness and subordinates the multiple interests, understandings and identifications of individuals to one single dominant social category and identification. This fundamentalism may be underscored by regional or religious persuasion, but also by highlighting primordialism and, subsequently, turn into ethno-nationalist movements (Díez-Medrano 2002). The accounts of these movements and reactions tend to become sacralized within this process, i.e. positioned beyond any reasonable scrutiny (see also Spickard 1999). Especially in western countries, more and more groups of people ask for collective rights, in addition to – or instead of – individual rights. Consequently, we have to be careful in using concepts as ‘integration’. In a certain sense integration is a double-edged sword. Internal solidarity stimulates co-operation and reciprocity, as well as social control. At the same time, internal solidarity may lead to animosity towards the external, resulting in xenophobia in extreme cases. The spectrum ranges from feelings of identification (in which the distinction from the other is eliminated) through tolerance to indifference, ostracism and violence.

In many parts of the world fundamentalist reactions have been fuelled by the use of the concept of culture, both in its multicultural and in its mono-cultural version. The former feeds into the popular image of society as a mosaic of a number of “cultures” that exist side by side, narrowing down these problems and challenges to the question of how to create peaceful and cohesive relations between these “cultures”. Selectively drawing from anthropology, an answer to this question has been found highlighting the concept of cultural relativism. Cultures are supposed to be understood here only in their own particular terms, thus undermining any ground on which cultural comparison can take place (Siebers 2004b). If cultural comparison is ruled out, cultural critique will suffer the same fate. Of course, the concept of cultural relativism has played a crucial role in criticising and bringing down colonial, ethnocentric and hierarchical approaches to the “cultures” of non-Western or minority groups, but at the same time it has stipulated a discourse of political correctness in which any critical encounter with any practice of “the other” has become virtually impossible¹³. In this sense, cultural relativism is a political problem.

¹² A quotation of the leader of the Slovak National Party illustrates this: “Those who are not with us supporting sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, are against us, against the nation and against god”.

¹³ As a consequence, efforts by for example Norwegian state officials to intervene on behalf of migrants’ daughters who are forced into marriage against their will have thus become very difficult out of respect for “their culture” and out of fear of being accused of being racists, as Unna Wikan (2002) demonstrates. She discusses several cases in which the need for intervention to safeguard respect for human rights clashes with the requirement of political correctness to abstain from criticising “the other’s culture”.

Such clashes are not only due to the application of the concept of cultural relativism, but also to an unproblematic and uncritical use of the concept of “culture” as such. As the literature on glocalisation and fragmentation demonstrates, individual people cannot simply be understood as members or representatives of “cultures”. Current trends within anthropology (Kuper 1999) and sociology (Featherstone 1995) tell us that there are no (longer, if ever the case) such “things” as holistically, systemically and statically conceived “cultures” that nicely coincide with particular communities, groups or nations and that are able to flourish and develop within clearly circumscribed and delimited borders. By and large, the mosaic image of multiculturalism maintains such an outdated idea of “culture” and assumes such a notion of clearly circumscribed borders between them.¹⁴

Relativism, in its extreme form, may end up in fragmentation, i.e. atomisation of society and individual isolation. The atomisation of society may entail the emergence of internally conflictive individuals who find it very difficult to create any stable social relationship and to become involved in effective socialisation schemes. It may furthermore jeopardise basic institutions in society that guarantee its reproduction. Post-modern celebrations of short-lived kicks, sensations and sentimental rages are blind to exactly these problematic sides of heightened individuality with the continuously lurking dangers of individual burnout and social disarray.

Consequently, the integration issue, associated with striking a balance between this ‘diabolic dynamism of homogenization and heterogenization’ is classic and current, even urgent.

The need for coordination and stability

The interaction between globalisation and localisation puts traditional forms of social cohesion, to be defined as efficient and effective bonds between the various actors in the system, under pressure. Instances that spring to mind are (1) the transnationalization of government, economy and culture, (2) flexibilization of the course of life, (3) ongoing technological developments, but also (4) the credibility crisis involving local, regional, national and international authorities. This has resulted in a ‘risk society’ that is ambiguous, chaotic and confusing since the various social and cultural systems of logic exist side by side. This causes problems concerning, among other things, the legitimacy, activity and effectiveness of institutions responsible for societal coordination. There is an increasing awareness that society is subject to various paradoxical and contradictory forces. It is even more important that people learn to cope with insecurities. For in the present-day European societies it is no longer the viewpoints from the past and the guidelines for action linked to them that are at the basis of an order that can be taken for granted. The predetermined and prescribed life of past times has vanished with individualization and in return we have been given an indefinite future, an uncertain environment and a fragmented identity. Although actors learn to anticipate the demands of the system, the problem is that it is often a superficial adjustment. People behave in accordance with the rules but this does not mean that they believe in the purpose, effectiveness or legitimacy of the rules, let alone internalizing the rules as a compass for

¹⁴ As such it has laid the discursive groundwork for the emergence of fundamentalism as a monocultural variant of the same use of the culture concept. Thus “culture” may come to play a similar exclusionary and dividing role as “race” did in earlier epochs (Stolcke 1995 1993??).

future action. Does this not all lead to a drop in the effectiveness of policy and to an increase in the complexity and the accumulation of waves of policy. Do we not see more and more partial adjustments within the system, which can almost without exception be characterized as detailed elaborations, additional rules, intensified control and so on? Are we not bound to conclude that this ‘involution’ - as this imprisonment within the same body of principles and procedures can also be called – no longer works today and that a review and reassessment of our reality is called for? Is it not better to realize that we have to operate in various settings with diverse structural arrangements and cultural orientations?

In this context a number of politicians and public administrators increasingly deploy the concept of culture in the struggle against ‘limited control’ of open, modern, multiform society. They maintain that the government should put a brake on growing diversity through a targeted cultural policy. The basic question underpinning this cultural policy is: in a social situation characterized by differences in resources, norms, lifestyles and identities, how is it still possible to bring about solidarity, cooperation and trust, or in other words: how can social institutions under such conditions succeed in binding individual actors? The issue, however, is that not only social relations are ‘under pressure’ or in transition. Cohesion addresses a more fundamental question. Cohesion brings home to us the fact that humans as social beings are dependent on others. The others are both a means and a hindrance to self-realization. The others are also the object of care, compassion and involvement. Reciprocal affection and dependence require sustained cooperation and sustainable structures. In their turn, they raise questions concerning the conditions of their genesis, the differing interests, views and positions of those involved. Dependence also entails risks. Each of the partners involved can, of course, take a cooperative or a competitive attitude.

In the context of social relations under pressure and diverging attitudes, cohesion and coordination no longer seem to be provided for by the simple continuity of existing institutions. Therefore, institutional reform is on the agenda of public debate, policy makers, politicians, advocates, citizens and academics in many parts of the world and one way or the other this need for institutional reform is underscored by using terms like globalisation and glocalisation. In line with these concepts it is claimed that dramatic transformations have taken place in the conditions in which institutions exercise their role of social reproduction and, consequently, that these transformations call for institutional reform. First, there is the argument that economic restructuring, increasing global competition, the emergence of large companies on an unprecedented scale and projects of regional integration have altered the economic foundations on the basis of which institutions thrive and receive their resources. As economic input into societal institutions is affected by globalisation or glocalisation, these institutions themselves need to be reformed. In turn, it is claimed that institutional reform is required to boost economic growth and to solve pressing economic and social challenges. For example, legal reform often is a necessary prerequisite to attract international investment and to encourage streams of capital to settle and localise in specific conditions. Reform of labour market institutions is often claimed to be necessary to maintain a (privileged) positions within the international division of labour and respond to unemployment rates. Second, social and political conditions for institutional dynamics have also changed in a dramatic way as a consequence of glocalisation. The sovereign state-society model that provided the framework for modern institutional development and reproduction has become seriously eroded by global flows of people, capital, goods, information etc. that no longer halt at any frontier or border. As a consequence, not only the above

mentioned concept of “culture” as a circumscribed and integrated entity of meanings, practices and behaviour has become outdated as a tool to describe existing realities to subsequently become a regressive and reactionary arm in the hands of fundamentalist interests. The same holds true for concepts such as society and state as their institutional components dissolve and lose their interconnected and integrated nature within global flows and networks (Urry 2003).

Partly as an alternative to concepts like state and centralised government, the concept of governance has emerged pointing to an assumed shift away from the state organised society model towards differentiated governance networks crossing conventional boundaries between societies, levels and sectors, including public and private agencies (cf. Kersbergen and Van Waarden 2001). These governance networks seem to be the result of two parallel shifts taking place in many parts of the world. First, there is a vertical shift in which national authority and competences become transferred to regional and local governance units and structures on the one hand and to transnational organizations and networks on the other. The latter include an ever-denser network of organizations like the EU, NAFTA, the UN, the International Criminal Court, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, UNHCR, or NATO. Second, there is a similar shift taking place from governmental to non-governmental and private organizations. They include for example QUANGOs (Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations)¹⁵. They also include NGOs that especially in international arenas have managed to develop significant tasks, roles and influence. Also private companies have come into the picture here. Thus the emphasis is on governance arrangements of e.g. “public-private partnership” within which for example road construction is financed or health care policies are defined and implemented. The emphasis is also on “governing at a distance” through output financing and accountability mechanisms supervising (semi)autonomous organisations that are supposed to deliver a socially relevant service.

Institutional development and social sustainability

These arguments, trends and new concepts are not without risks for institutional development and social sustainability. To make this point it is useful to return to the ways Durkheim discussed issues like social cohesion and what we now phrase as social sustainability. He saw two basic sources of such social sustainability and cohesion. First, he sketched the shift from mechanic to organic solidarity leading to a stage in which the division of labour has made individuals dependent on each other’s activities. The baker buys meat from the butcher and the latter purchases bread from the former. Each has an interest in the other to live and work. However, to a significant extent, organic solidarity has lost its embeddedness within the same community and society¹⁶. Flows of production and consumption are ever more situated at a global level and are increasingly disconnected at a local or even national or societal level thus causing

¹⁵ In the Netherlands QUANGO’s employ more civil servants than official governmental organisations do.

¹⁶ The complementarity of the activities of the baker and butcher presupposes that both are members of the same community or society within which their exchanges take place. Perhaps in the case of these butcher and baker these exchanges still largely take place at a local level, but these integrative frameworks are lost in the case of e.g. a worker in an automobile factory in The Netherlands paying for a Swedish owned pay TV-channel that allows him to see a football match between AC Milan and Boca Juniors.

serious obstacles to efforts to establish such complementarity of economic activities (Siebers 2004a).

Durkheim identified the rise of a *conscience collective*, shared by all members of society, as a second source of social cohesion. Such shared ideas and values regulate behaviour in function of the common interest and social integration of society. However, due to global flows of ideas and communication, the position of any single discourse claiming a monopoly of explanation regarding any single topic has to give way to a situation of plurality of discourses with the loosening up of what Foucault (1991: 58) called interdiscursive dependencies. The subsequent discursive pluralism may allow individual persons to make choices, but at the same time it may add to uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity.

Several questions have to be addressed. First, how can basic institutions of an open and democratic social condition be reformed when the resources that fuel such institutions are questioned? Second, how can these institutions be made viable without being able to rest upon a stable foundation of economic complementarity or organic solidarity? Third, in what way can they be conceived and reformed in terms of networks and governance structures without the support of overall frameworks such as community, society and the nation-state? Fourth, to what extent can they do without regulating impact of societal discourses and public opinion and the relative autonomy of the political sphere that allow for interventions taking care of common interests?

These questions touch the heart of the construction and sustainability of institutions, defined as combinations of normative routines, expectations and patterns of sanctions and rewards (cf. Gössling 2003; North 1990; Scott 1995).¹⁷

The need for recognition

The plurality of 'representations' and 'voices', resulting from the ongoing dialectical processes of globalization and localization, gives rise to conflicts, controversies and variations, but also to attempts to live peacefully together, to coordinate activities, and to balance interests. In short, present-day society is nothing but 'a never ending story' of antagonistic cooperation.

In order for such antagonistic cooperation to become compatible with basic elements of institutional sustainability, the acceptance of stakeholders and the conception of 'significant others' as legitimate is vital. Almost implicitly it has become common sense that such acceptance and legitimacy would require some kind of common "culture". Of course, in his concept of *conscience collective* Durkheim pointed out the need for some degree of shared meanings and ethnic definitions of institutions can provide for a stable basis for cohesion and legitimacy, but that does not mean that overall, encompassing and integrated meaningful framework are required. The required commonality in terms of sense making is not so much framed in substantive terms of "culture" or "identity" but rather in terms of recognition. What is vital here is that all stakeholders are

¹⁷ First, institutions contain a normative regularity that indicates action possibilities and constraints in given situations. Such regularity is valid for every actor who is incorporated into an institutional environment. Second, stemming from this normative regularity, institutions provide expectations about one's behaviour. To those who already belong to the same institutional environment, these expectations render interactions predictable to some extent. Third, institutions provide a sanction potential for those who fail to conform to such expectations as well as the possibility to reward conformist behaviour.

identified in terms of recognition instead of rejection, whatever their overall frames of references and meaningful universe. Such recognition is vital for the emergence of trust and legitimacy that, in turn, provide the groundwork for institutional sustainability.

Recognition entails first of all the confirmation of stakeholders to be eligible and entitled to institutional participation, irrespective of their “cultural characteristics” in terms of their overall meaningful frameworks. This is entrenched in the modern principle of e.g. equality before the law that recognises each citizen’s right to participate in society. Such modern principles deny the feudal distinction between those who are – based on personal, traditional, cultural or otherwise irrelevant characteristics – and those who are not entitled – those lacking such “assets”.

Recognition goes beyond such formal aspects, though. It includes mutual respect for one another’s life-style, ways of living, the things one considers to be important, one’s priorities in life, one’s ways of ordering, etc. Hence, it calls for respect, discretion, good will and empathy towards other stakeholders as basic trademarks of both individual attitudes and stakeholders’ policies and political action. It does not call for sympathy or conversion, though.¹⁸

Consequently, recognition does not require an overall “cultural” consensus nor the erection of a separate “sub-culture” or “community”. Here communitarist writers such as Charles Taylor (1994) go astray when trying to base their politics of recognition on “cultural” grounds, i.e. making a plea for granting special rights (privileges) to minorities based on a positive substantive evaluation of their “cultures” as good or right. After all, on what “cultural” grounds would it be possible to decide who is a member of a “community” and who is not? How can one judge a “culture” to be “good” if the basic principle behind making such “cultural distinctions” is cultural relativism? Trapped in his concepts of “culture” and “community” Taylor cannot define recognition in the middle ground between identification with and differentiation from, the tandem process of identity construction.

Identity can be understood as the way (groups of) people define themselves and are defined by others. Identity thus expresses a relationship, even if the people involved might experience it as an essence. We construe boundaries by drawing imaginary lines between ‘same’ and ‘different’ between ‘them’ and ‘us’, between ‘me’ and ‘others’. We include and exclude. These processes of inclusion and exclusion are both the source and the product of collective behaviour (Turner et al. 1987). People simultaneously want to distinguish themselves from others by means of separation and individuation, and to identify with others through a process of identification. They want to be unique, but at the same time to be part of a larger whole. As a process, the construction of identity reflects both how ‘significant others’ are constructed as well as how and where these others are identified with or differentiated from. In this context, ‘the power to define a situation’ is very important. The power to categorize people, to distinguish

¹⁸ Recognition means, for example, that as a stakeholder in the well being of the social condition I live in, I may approve of the construction of a mosque in my neighbourhood without the need to become a Muslim. For the creation of trust and confidence in my neighbourhood such recognition is indispensable, but such identification of recognition does not require me to convert to Islam. It does not force me to sympathise with or to approve of the overall meaning-making framework of the persons, group or organisation I recognise. In this sense the identification of recognition strikes a delicate but vital balance between overall differentiation from and overall identification with the other.

between 'we' and 'they' is a resource – or strategy – that individuals and groups employ to maximize their interests (Cohen 1969). This game of making differences is played in the context of an ideology to legitimize power and privilege. The claim to identity has served as part of a claim to power. “What is at stake here is the power of imposing a *vision* of the social world through principles of *division*” (Bourdieu 1991: 221). This vision determines the way in which in concrete everyday practice the construction of identities in terms of relationships takes place. The labelling of individuals and groups in terms of ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender and class are striking examples of social categorization, either internalised or strategically advocated by individuals themselves or imposed by others.¹⁹

Social allocation and individual appropriation of characteristics go hand in hand, the result of which is that most people themselves speak, think and act in terms of the categories, put forward by 'society'. The social conceptions are then actually embedded in the personality, the 'self' of individuals. These are in first instance attributed conceptions and characteristics and then start to belong to someone: they determine 'where he fits in', what his authenticity is. In short, conceptualization and identification are the result of meaning-attributing processes in which the power to define a situation is an essential variable. Needless to say this power is hardly ever totally hegemonic. Even those in marginal positions have instruments to offer resistance. One such weapon is strongly emphasizing a common identity or culture postulated in the past, which may or may not be fictitious. Identity helps to determine the position occupied by a group in society. The members of a group are constantly (re)socialized into the culture of that group through the cultivation of traditions, the creation of myths and ideologies, and the performance of (secular and religious) rituals. Group identities are thus by definition constituted in terms of relations which contrast one's own identity with significant other identities. The ensuing ethnocentrism is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it is necessary for group formation; on the other hand, it is a fundamental problem because it leads to the creation of negative stereotypes and to exclusions.²⁰ Identification processes always imply the risk of suffocation, especially if people remain trapped in the 'prejudices' of the group orientation despite changing circumstances.

The subsequent 're-inventions of tradition' (a.o. Roosens 1989) can partly be interpreted as a new defensive orthodoxy, in which - paradoxically - the modern communication technology is intensively used. A result of this is that some group borders are fading, but that others are articulated and defended more strongly. Various (corporate) agents, with their divergent histories, views and interests are thus engaged in ongoing negotiations to define reality and to get access to scarce resources. In the course of these 'exchanges and negotiations of meaning', the various identities are expressed, affirmed, commented on, externally imposed and adjusted in their mutual relations. Individuals and groups thus have

¹⁹ In the words of Bell (1975: 24): “Ethnicity is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities have to emerge, but as a strategic choice by individuals who in other circumstances would choose other group memberships as means of gaining some power and privilege”.

²⁰This, by the way, applies to all status boundaries, not just to those of nation, ethnicity or race. “Status requires boundaries and with boundaries comes boundary policing. For instance, all the episodes of 'ethnic cleansing', genocide and civil war have been based on the militant suppression of hybridity, the elimination of the in-between. Thus, one third of the population in Bosnia was hybrid – intermarried, of mixed parentage – but none of the wartime accounts of Bosnian Moslems, Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs acknowledged this” (Nederveen Pieterse 2000).

multiple identities. This leads to diversity and ambiguity, sometimes even fragmentation, especially when almost everything is in flux and has not gelled into institutions. These are the moments when identity is called into question. "Identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Mercer 1990: 4). It results in a drop in the acceptability of the certainties offered by local or national communities with their concomitant moral orientations.

The need for legitimacy and participation

Institutional and social sustainability not only require trust and recognition, they must also be conceived as legitimate, equitable and fair. Such conception will only be made possible when existing distribution of rights, obligations and positions are morally acceptable and provide for participation and inclusion. However, the effects of the increasing plurality are highly differentiated. After all, plurality has a power dimension, resulting in unequal access to and control of scarce resources that are connected to it.

Although multiculturalism as an ideology holds that cultural diversity is tolerated, valued and accommodated in society, within a set of overarching principles based on the values normally associated with a liberal democracy – e.g. the civic unity and equality of all people within the nation-state, and individual rights – we know that the practice of multiculturalism effectively reinforces domination by one specific ethnic group. Diversity is domesticated, shaped and harnessed to the yoke of the dominant socio-cultural order and economy. New inequalities arise. We have to remember that opportunities for mobility and the availability of resources are highly differentiated. We have to acknowledge that knowledge, social practices and identities are construed in a context of inequality of power and unequal access to scarce resources. We have to acknowledge that the global restructuring of production that is taking place favours a number of countries and ethnic groups but bypasses or even harms a considerably larger number. Poorer segments of the world population are increasingly pushed towards degraded areas and are forced to overexploit the natural resources, straining the adaptability of local cultures. The commercialization of agricultural production and the processes of migration accompanying industrialization have had all kinds of ecological effects and 'gender-effects'. Besides, these processes have deepened the interactive patterns between rural and urban areas. Numerous forms of fragmentation characterize the labour markets. Attempts at macro-economic stabilization are accompanied by institutional reforms, which emphasize liberalization, deregulation and privatization, all implying a withdrawal of the state in favour of the private sector. In a number of countries the 'separation' of state institutions from the internal dynamics of society has resulted in a complete collapse of the state and absorption of the state-functions by an intricate network of legal and illegal transactions between patrons and clients. Sometimes this leads to the complete marginalization of a growing number of groups who increasingly resort to the informal sector as a means of survival. The related risk of social isolation is a fertile breeding-ground for racism and ethnocentrism, with all the disastrous consequences that entails, as ethnic violence in so many parts of the world clearly demonstrates.

We envisage a world in which inequality between (groups of) people will probably increase. These will partly follow old classical boundaries of region, socio-economic class, age, gender and religion, but will also run along new lines of ethnicity and lifestyle. Because the disadvantages of this variety - lack of consensus, increasing strife over scarce

provisions - can often rely on more public interest than the advantages, increasing demands for integration and decreasing tolerance for variety will become significant social powers. This creates a new problem: the growing variety calls up powers, which hinder the pursuit of integration. Differences between and within nations and groups are large, so that a common global or national culture is an illusion.

Policy perspectives

Generally speaking the question we are concerned with probes the mechanisms and conditions that generate, maintain, promote or undermine solidarity, trust and bonding between social actors, or to put it differently, the conditions and mechanisms which influence social sustainability. Until the middle of the 1990's these mechanisms and conditions were sought mainly in the area of social structure, especially in the field of social and economic relations. Policies were specifically aimed at the improvement of the labour market positions of groups so that their social participation and emancipation would be promoted by these means (including supporting arrangements such as social security systems and educational programs). Over the last few years there has been a shift in the approach. Increasingly culture has been promoted as the basis of social sustainability (social cohesion and social participation). Two main schools of thought can be distinguished: the integration and the coordination viewpoint. Although both viewpoints concur in regarding multicultural society as an adequate description of the present-day social situation - in which culture is taken in the meaning of a model of reality - there is a fundamental difference in the evaluation of cultural variation. From the point of view of integration, multiculturalism is defined as a threat to sustainable relationships. In other words, multiculturalism certainly is not a model for reality, not a desirable aim. The adherents of the coordination viewpoint on the other hand, take a much more positive view of cultural variation. They accept or even welcome it as a source of freedom of choice in the organization of society. They refer to processes such as individualization and flexibilisation of the course of life.

We can approach this issue from two different angles: integration and coordination. The first considers society and culture to be vehicles for the replication of uniformity, the latter for the organization of diversity. In the integrative view on the modern nation-state uniformity is advocated. It is transferred, although indirectly and often camouflaged, as an appeal to promote common aspects. The advocates of this view adhere to the conviction that society will disintegrate if its members are not strung more or less like beads on a string of common motives, cognitions and values. They think that a plural society can only function adequately if there is a shared culture or in other words commonality of fundamental values and standards between the various groups in society. The ultimate goal seems to be the abolition of differences. For instance, the principle of a uniform law for every citizen stipulates that members of society cannot be distinguished according to the law, and should not be treated in this way. The qualities according to which a group or individual can be distinguished are placed outside the law. In a certain sense this principle therefore reflects an attempt by a segment of society to define other segments and features as 'foreign', as misplaced, as illegitimate. In addition it is a confirmation and reinforcement of the social hierarchy. In essence it assumes the superiority of one way of life - and its corresponding legal system - in relation to the other. It makes it possible for individuals to accept and internalize the dominant way of life. The offer to switch over to 'the enlightened', in general the autochthonous population, is presented as tolerance, but actually confirms the rigidity of the distinguishing values (Bauman 1991).

At the same time tolerance with respect to individuals expresses intolerance towards collectivities and their values. Cultural conformity becomes a condition and a vehicle for obtaining full citizenship. In particular the ambitious segments of the allochthonous population groups adapt themselves. Also, as a result of their participation in the social practices and related exposure to the values embedded in these practices, they adapt themselves to the dominant cultural patterns. They are the so-called progressive people, the others are traditionalists on whom the western civilization offensive has not yet had the result. From this viewpoint the various assimilation programs focus on breaking down and transforming ethnic identity. They intend to build up and mobilize a link with an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991). The ideal of this community is an ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural homogeneity. Culture is thus turned into a political tool: it is presented as a modern solution for a classic social problem: the resolution of the tension between the individual and the group. This makes 'culture' into one of the most important power formation concepts available to political actors in local, national and worldwide arenas today.

However, it should be clear that in the light of social reality with its waves of migration of people, goods and ideas, a call for a sense of community on the basis of a common (national) culture must be regarded as obsolete. Each and every society is composed of a number of differing groups and the differences between those groups are important, so that a common culture is illusionary. People will have to learn to live with diversity. Culture does not exist in the holistic, totalizing and essentialist meaning that many politicians and citizens give to it. There are only cultural orientations, separate combinations of opinions and practices, changing more or less from situation to situation. In the course of our lives we are all faced with many of them, and we familiarize ourselves with many of them. So, the 'culture' of one person or collectivity is always a hybrid, always in flux, always ambiguous. This experience leads to the conclusion that a coordination model is to be preferred.

The coordinative point of view accepts heterogeneity in values, norms and practices within and between groups. Culture is characterized internally not by uniformity, but by diversity of both individuals and groups, many of whom are in continuous and overt conflict in one subsystem and in active co-operation in another. The coordination model does not deal with commonality (as is the case in the integration model) but with compatibility of views, and in particular, practices. From a normative point of view this model places less stringent and hence more realistic demands on the groups living together within the nation-state. In this way people also avoid the problem with which tolerant 'integrationists' are struggling. Based on the conviction that the (re)production of commonality is necessary, these tolerant 'integrationists' demand that everybody mentally supports and internalizes uniform key values. At the same time they recognize, however, the right of minorities to experience their own culture. Their solution consists of the analytically acceptable, but empirically contestable, distinction between public and domestic or private domain. In daily practice, these two domains are interrelated.

Unfortunately, advocating the coordination model does not solve the problems. Although the issue is not to abolish differences, but to regulate, recognize and appreciate them, the integration and coordination approaches have one common element: the demand of non-conflict of principles, criteria and (legal) rules. Incompatibilities should be banned. The conditions, however, under which and the way in which the 'process of banning' should occur are not easy to indicate. Choices are inevitable when it concerns conflicting views,

for example concerning the granting of equal rights of men and women, the integrity of the human body and the relation between the citizen and the state. But who shall have the authority of making choices? We do not have the answers to these questions. All we know is that this promotion of compatibility cannot just be left to the free interchange of powers. There is a role to play for 'authorities' on all levels. They should cultivate compatibility. The problem – or if preferred: the mission – of modern, open, democratic and thus multicultural society is the development of the ability of citizens to deal with ever changing surroundings. This may have the result that the 'other' is not denied, excluded or banned, but is treated and respected precisely as the 'other'. In short, the authorities – and of course, this also holds true for other relevant and significant actors – should promote the development of competences that enable all parties to deal adequately with difference. This implies among other things promoting not just learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be, but especially 'learning to live together' as described by Jacques Delors in "Education - un tresor est caché dedans."

Global cities and cultural hybridisation

The questions relating to the above mentioned 'wave of glocalisation', of cultural and social pluralism, social (un)certainly, informalisation and segregation manifest themselves together particularly in the metropolis. Cities are points of transmission and transformation between the local and the global. On the one hand they channel local and national resources to the global level and on the other hand transmit the global back to the national and regional centres (Knox 1996). Together they form a global urban system with world cities (Friedman 1986), the major sites for the concentration, accumulation and redistribution of international capital and the headquarters of the transnational companies and the major financial markets. Global cities are also major sites for the creation of a new global culture. It is particularly in the world cities that new cultural and political identities are being construed.

According to Van Naerssen (2000: 184) two outstanding features of global cities are vital to an understanding of global culture. Firstly, global cities are receivers of both domestic and international migrants. Partly, this results in the emergence of a homogeneous world culture, partly this promotes cultural differentiation processes. Local cultures, different from the dominant one, flourish as for example in the ethnic neighbourhoods of the metropolises. Here we see a 'reterritorialisation' of cultures whereby large groups of migrants cling to their 'original' cultures in other environments and at the same time changing it in specific ways (Short and Kim 1998). Secondly, thanks to liberalization and privatisation, socio-economic polarisation has taken place. Global cities reflect the 'contradictions of industrial capitalism, among them spatial and class polarisation'. In the cities, the new rich, as well as the labour force of the services sector live. In other words, the world's metropolises are not just places where cultural and economic-technological wealth is displayed. They are also the stage for poverty, loneliness and crime. Social insecurity, instability and alienation – 'the urban stress' – characterize the dark side of life in the cities of the world. Metropolises form what we might call a broken or dual landscape. This laborious co-existence of the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is expressed by the use of such terms as dual or divided city (Sassen 1994). There is here a transformation from the urban economy with an industrial basis to an economy based on the provision of business services. According to various researchers, this leads primarily to a dual labour market in metropolises. Just as the restructuring of the urban economy creates new opportunities for young, well-trained employees in the services and trade sectors, it simultaneously

eradicates suitable work for the older workers with a history of labour in industry, as well as those with little training. All these developments hit minority groups severely.

Generally speaking, we see three interconnected processes. The first is the process of impoverishment of significant segments of the population who transmit their 'culture of poverty' to the next generation. The second has arisen from and grown out of a dualistic system, one component of which can be characterized as informatization and the other as informalization. Here we see both the demand for a highly trained new middle class and also a growing 'informal' services proletariat in the advanced services economy of the Western countries in particular. The third is the social exclusion process, which is expressed in the transgenerational consolidation of the second-class citizenship of minority groups. This phenomenon is clearly taking on an international or transnational dimension. Metropolises in the non-western and Western world (with their dismantling of the -- welfare state) will come to resemble one another more in their dualization and in the informalization of the most deprived sector of their population. The main difference is that informalization in a developed welfare state leads much more rapidly to problems of an administrative, juridical and moral kind. In a wider context, the two aspects of informalization can be found here: creativity in survival strategies, and exploitation. We think that a comparison between North and South - with all the caution it requires - may provide insight into tried and tested 'practices' in the non-western urban context where the process of informalization has progressed much further and which has a much longer history.

Glocalization has placed identity, particularly in its cultural and ethnic manifestation, on the agenda of politicians. Variety in and levels of identity construction, both above and below the state level, urgently question the cultural role of the nation-state. Until recently, the ultimate objective of the modern nation state appeared to be the abolition of differences. How can people otherwise interpret the propagation of uniformity, which is incidentally indirect and often masked as a call to promote the common aspects. The principle of a uniform law for every citizen lays down that, in the eyes of the law, there is no distinction between the members of the society, or at least must be treated as such. The distinctive group characteristics are placed outside the law. In brief, there are three main types of reactions. First, there is the indulgence in indifference in the face of extrapolated difference, cynically taking care of one's short-term self-interests leaving society or the social condition in a state of anomie. Second, there is the fundamentalist strategy in which the retaining, emphasizing and glorifying of the value of these 'traditional' characteristics at the same time imply that external influences and elements are being rejected. Cultural consciousness, mobilization and conflict are explained as arising out of the existence of common origins, religious convictions, language or even biological 'facts'. Alongside of this there is the third or hybridization strategy with an emphasis on the selective incorporation of external influences. The products of such 'selective incorporation' cannot be reduced to their original categories. As such they contribute to the cultivation of further differences. In this respect both strategies deal with difference: the first by rejecting and the second by embracing difference.

Glocalisation and Governance

Today the problem of governance has become wedged between the forces of globalisation and localization. Current global competitive conditions have created considerable opportunities as well as threats for countries and groups of people to acquire new

technologies. International commodity markets are unstable. The role of international private capital in economic development has grown rapidly since the eighties and is likely to increase further in the wake of changes in the transnational (new) economy. As a consequence there is the confrontation of state organized stability with disintegration, insecurity and growing inequality between 'citizens'. The transnationalization of the 'market' undermines the conventional centrality of the national state for policies and strategies aimed at the inclusion of specific social segments. We see that economic liberalization, global integration and the permanent revolutionizing of production and distribution of goods and services go together with the exclusion of many individuals and groups from basic needs and resources such as land, education, housing and health care. This exclusion affects the functioning of politics and the state, altering patterns of social mobilization, organization and legitimacy, and the status of what are called 'vulnerable' categories such as poor women, children and refugees.

No small wonder that society – as a layered configuration of arenas in which groups try to realize their often conflicting objectives and to satisfy their needs by cooperating and competing according to changing procedures and rules of the game - demands a government which is powerful in the sense of democratic representation of all groups, according to culturally accepted criteria and procedures. Often that is lacking. This applies regionally and nationally, but also at the global level. Despite the coining of terms such as 'the new global order', there are serious problems because of a lack or rather weakness of global governance.

The shifting pattern of hybridisation in large parts of the world, with a clear concentration in the metropolises, goes together with the increasing loss of control of processes and phenomena by policy and government. It is as if our knowledge about 'society', despite the enormous corpus of social scientific research, is ever decreasing, let alone our ability to run it. The course of social processes is growing more and more unpredictable. Governments and their apparatuses do not operate as society's control room and reception desk. No one has a comprehensive and readily available knowledge of the changes that are in progress. Policy measures have insufficient effect; they have a shorter life span, leading to a welter of new measures intended to correct the previous ones. This leads in turn to a questioning of many components of policy and management in terms of responsibility, operation, effectiveness, feasibility and even legitimacy. It is as if reality has become too complex, too plural, too open, too unpredictable and thus too unmanageable.

The need for a new narrative?

The recognition of the interwovenness between components of a reality, which we do not know sufficiently well, has far-reaching consequences for founding our interventions, as institutionalised in applied social sciences. Nowadays, social engineering, representing at the same time the Enlightenment idea of governance through knowledge, operationalized in functional, rational, bureaucratic procedures and the ideal of socio-cultural consensus, is under pressure. A new narrative has emerged in which multiplicity, diversity, specificity, ambiguity and ambivalence are key-terms. Paradoxically, there is a growing need for consensus as a basis for meaningful social action between a growing numbers of mutually related actors, while the possibility of doing so is diminishing, no matter what the mass media say. There is a risk of the absence of common or mutually attuned interests and representations, as well as of too much diversity. All the same, this 'absence' has become a genuine problem for the making and implementing of policy measures. After all, the

paradox of the growing need for 'consensus' and the diminishing prospects of its realization raise serious questions about our ability to deal with and to gain insight into social processes and institutions of any kind. We do not yet know what is necessary to increase our insight and to strengthen our capacity for managing these problems, let alone solving them. We no longer even know whether this is within our power.

Awareness has grown that society is in the grip of divergent paradoxical and contradictory forces. Accordingly, it is becoming more and more important to learn how to cope with the uncertainties, which people create in and through their own actions. In the current post-traditional society, the views held in the past and the related guidelines for action no longer form the basis for a 'natural' social order. Confronted with the question how to deal with uncertainty and diversity, provoked by interactions and negotiations in a globalizing world, we would like to suggest that it is sensible to experiment with transgressions of the existing, partly self-imposed boundaries. Are we not bound to become hybrids in a hybrid world if we are to survive? The challenge posed to politicians, administrators, managers and citizens by the present time is the development of skills, which can be labelled 'management of diversity'.

It is difficult to lay down the competence to deal with socio-cultural diversity in formal rules. It has to do with the ability to deal with uncertainty, with unknown situations, with limited means, with one's own shortcomings. After all, in a global world and a plural society the citizen will inevitably have to associate with people who have different ways of thinking and acting. The citizen does not find his freedom in blindly observing rules nor in a self-evident orientation towards the general interest, nor in the possibility to do everything he wants to do, but in the ability to act judiciously under different specific conditions (Van Gunsteren 1998).

Recognition as such remains of utmost importance, especially when facing diversity as a basic characteristic of current social conditions due to globalisation. It requires discourses legitimising such recognition calling upon stakeholders' discursive consciousness (Giddens 1984), but also disciplining and normalising practices (Foucault 1971) regulating their practical consciousness. The pressing question is: how can such legitimising discourses come about? How can these discourses be constructed, distributed and become accepted by stakeholders? On what basis can such recognition be legitimised? How can recognition take the place of anxiety, fear and uncertainty?

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