

## ***Globalization and the Philosophy of Community Development in Africa***

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*Abstract— Globalization has been used to describe the revolution that has taken place in information communication technology. This revolution is such that it has influenced and affected different people in different part of the world differently. The concept of community has long been examined by various disciplines such as geography, sociology, psychology and philosophy. The paper therefore takes a look at the philosophy of community development especially as it has evolved in the age of globalization, does the uncertainty and insecurity associated with modernization and globalization still give room to talk about a community even a global community? In essence globalization has brought about a new community philosophy. These new forms of community are based on cultural G attachments, rather than on the innate social orders. This new form distinguishes itself from the traditional concept through its position that the community ties are decreasingly organized within a place. It is a social network that goes beyond geographical boundaries, owing much to developments in the advancement of telecommunication and greater mobility. So, does this mean the end of a place-bound community? In this uncertain, globalized society has the traditional community lost its existence? This paper examines or explores the sense of community in contemporary African state in the age of globalization.*

**Keywords:** Globalization; Philosophy; Community Development; Africa.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of community has for long been discussed in various disciplines such as sociology, geography, psychology and philosophy, Its characteristics such as being bound to place, holding shared values and being tight-knitted, inevitably endow community with certain nostalgia. Based on these characteristics, some authors (e.g. Bauman 2001 a) use the concept of community to criticize symptoms of modern society such as certainty and insecurity. In this paper we take a look at both the philosophy of community development in African society, it adopts both the historical and philosophical analysis as it evolved over a long period of time. For the purpose of brevity we shall take a look at the philosophy of Consciencism, Negritude and Ujaama all of which are rallying for development in African society. It does examine this philosophy in the light of the challenges of globalization in the 21 century. The paper apart from the introduction is divided into four sections, the first examine or deals with the conceptual clarifications of pertinent terms employed. The second deals with the linkages existing within them, while the third examine community development in Africa. The fourth and final sections deal with globalization and the changing nature of community and then a conclusion.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **Globalization**

The basic underling element of globalization is said to be the economic suggesting a shift in the spatial form and extent of human organization and interaction to trans-national or inter-regional level. Hence, it portends a sense of compression of time-space relation and networking across traditional boundaries of culture and other territorial limits (Adejumobi 2003:3). However, as a process and practice whereby individual live and local communities are entangled into worldwide economic and cultural forces, globalization is said to have a history of attention dating from the last two decades of the last century. Its recent history notwithstanding, globalization might have been prefigured long before it was named. obtaining in a variety of guises including international relations and of Source imperialism, concepts which were the basis of major societal and social organizational patterns and relations specially in Europe (Ashcroft et al 2000) Functioning as a process of the generation and dissemination of knowledge and culture beyond the territorial boundaries of states, the operational mode of globalization, as well as those of its precursor forms as always attracted different approaches and perceptions in different part of the world. Indeed, the complex of the concept that is said to "ceaselessly confront us" (Aina 1997) the perception among scholars along globalization sometimes points to the good and sometimes to the bad ostensibly in reaction to its perceived effects on socio-political processes and social relation between and among different societies. Yet, there are scholars who prefer to adopt a mutual perception to issues of globalization as a process and practice.

Accordingly, for scholars who espouse the virtues of globalization, they envision through it a process whereby values social political and moral as the kernel of human civilization effects could be transformed as a matter of personal and collective responsibility (Ashcroft). They believe that globalization positively facilitates access to technology, information and services, hence its capacity for benefiting not only local communities but also transforming dominant forms of social organization (Albrow 1994). This way, it is thought that globalization will usher in prosperity, peace and freedom, factors essential for sustenance and advancement of the gains of human conversation and achievement without borders.

Conversely, the underlying perception among the opponents of globalization is to conceive it as another form of domination of the third world by the first world. They see globalization as an instrument of cultural imperialism that function to diminish and erase individual distinction of culture and society via the incorporation of local cultures into global system. By far, however, a greater criticism of globalization in the view of its opponents is the fact that although it claims to unite the globe in a homogeneous process, neither are its impacts felt in the same way, to the same degree nor equally beneficially upon different communities (Ashcroft 2000), yet for the middle couriers, the so called proponents of critical globalization they see in it a means of critical engagement and hence adopt a neutral perspective that neither seeks to block out the demerits of globalization nor to celebrate its virtue.

Whatever may be the perception, the evidence about the more recent trends of globalization indicates that it is more inherently a Western rather than a universal phenomenon. This is perhaps because globalization in all aspects of its manifestation has remained essentially a form of cultural capital that does of itself but operates through other economic and political elite (Ashcroft 2000). Taken together as philosophical insights into globalization, the different perception and approaches have implications for the survival of local socio-cultural processes and identities, especially given the particular ways that these are facilitated by advances in communication technology. Significantly, although the production and dissemination of knowledge across borders is designed to facilitate the inter-penetration of global and local socio-cultural processes, its consequences, so far, betray the effects of domination by the powerful; centers of global culture and media technology.

### **Community**

The concept of community can be defined from various perspectives, first from the point view of various disciplines, that is, from the various academic point or specific area of research interest such as sociology, geography, psychology and philosophy. Its characteristics include being bound to a place, holding shared values and being tight-knitted these inevitably endow a community with certain nostalgia. Based on these

characteristics, Bauman (2001) use the concept of community to criticize symptoms of modern society such as uncertainty and insecurity. He lists the characteristics of a community to include:

First, it concerns a group of people who clearly distinguish themselves from others. Secondly, such a group is relatively small. Thirdly, a community is autonomous or self-sufficient; it exists without too much intervention from the outside world and is relatively isolated.

For him, a community protects itself through physical distance, to keep outsiders really outside. His conception of a community is closely aligned with the idea of traditional village life, which evokes an almost universal image of a certain mode of co-existence. Richard Critchfield (1981) carried out a study of several remotely located villages across different continents and identified common characteristics of traditional village life. According to him, village culture is oriented towards the present, but with traditions held in high esteem. Villagers are generally straightforward, conservative and hospitable and respect old age. They do not travel much, nor are they often visited by strangers; their daily lives centre on family and neighbours. Individual privacy is usually limited. The opinions of family members and neighbours are very important. He thus compares the concept of community from this perspective with the modern notion of it and concludes that the morals of this conception of community more distinct and appears to be more superior to those of modern conception. This modern conception is influenced by the information communication technologies. This for him is riddled with violence; stealing, adultery and prostitution. That is, the gradual erosion of community ethos as a result of globalization.

### **Development**

Development is a multi-attributed phenomenon, the precise meaning of which remains an interesting subject of debate. Olumola (1997) broadly defines development as advancement through progressive changes in economic social and cultural technological and political conditions leading to an improvement in the welfare of citizens. In the same light Benedict and Iworkwaph (2008), posited that no society could be regarded as developed if there is high level of poverty, employment, illiteracy malnutrition, child mortality, political instability and inequality in income distribution. Bello Imam (2001) view development as a process by which continuous increase in a system of efficiency produces the condition which result to general progress, which is measured by general improvement in man's living conditions. These progress could be material and quantitative, could also be psychological and hence qualitative. These physical and psychological elements of development mutually reinforce each other to bring about a desired general upliftment which is measured by general improvement in man's living conditions. This view was re-echoed by Robert (2001) He believed that development can only be conceived only within an ideological framework. It is the reason why Uche (1991) sees development as a continues process of harnessing all the available human and material resource of a society in a way that is compatible with

cultural expressions of its people, with the final goal of achieving a quality in living standard that is based on satisfaction, justice, equality, liberty happiness, freedom, and progress.

In the same way, Dodley Sears (Uche, 1991) sees development as the creation of opportunities for the realization of human potentials. This Definition sees development at the individual level; here development implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-freedom, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. The achievement of these aspects of personal development is very much tied with the state of society as a whole. This is in turn is tied with national development. Development itself is a directed and widely participatory process of deep and accelerated socio-political changes in the producing substantial changes in the economy, the technology, the ecology and the overall culture of, and the overall culture of a country, such that the moral and material advancement of the majority of its population can be obtained within conditions of generalized quality, dignity, justice and liberty. That is, development could be seen both from the material and non-material perspective. Material in terms of the physical structure and the non-physical structure is the belief, value, and ideal in that society, which is said to be endogenous within the society. This is inturn based on the structural transformation of economy, society gender and power relation. Thus development is based on self-reliant, the ability to harness human, natural and cultural resources. In essence, development and culture go hand in hand.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: A HISTORICAL VIEW**

The rallying point for community development in Africa was based on the concept of African socialism. A concept that was introduced by earliest African political leaders, these concepts varied from one philosopher to the other. They however had one underlying tone the call for the introduction of socialism for instance, that of Kwame Nkrumah was known as Consciencism. Consciencism was an ideology that was meant to bridge the gap and division that existed between Africans as a consequence of colonialism. These divide as he identified them include Islamic tradition, the traditional African culture and the Euro-Christian tradition. According to Nkrumah (1959), there is a great need for Africa to recognize and utilize the dialectical contradiction. It will motivate the Africans and thereby contribute to the process of decolonization, libration and development. This he believe that this was so because consciencism was rooted in the social milieu of the people.

The most interesting of the African political philosophers was Julius Nyerere, Nyerere's conception of African socialism was more explicit and incisive, rather than see socialism as purely an ideology, socialism was for him more than an ideology. We shall examine his socialism first from his disagreement with capitalism, for capitalism was an ideology that seeks to build a happy society the basis of exploitation. He also opposed Marxist philosophy on the ground that it seeks to build a happy society on the belief of the inevitable conflict between person and persons, and between society and

society. According to him, capitalism generates social evils, it fosters individualism; it promotes competitive rather than corporative instinct in a person and it exploits the weak. He further contended that it divides the society between the have and have not, and that it regards inequality as a natural, necessary and permanent feature of the society as it encourages inequality.

After dismissing capitalism Nyerere proceeded to establish the fundamental principle on which African society can be built. He called this principle the UJAAMA or 'familyhood' principle. The foundation and objective of this principle was the extended family system. According to him, a true African socialist does not look upon one class of people as their kin and at another class as their natural enemy. He regards all of them brothers and sisters. Nyerere (1973) gave three reasons to justify his claims: First, it was his belief that society. That is, the traditional African society was socialist and it was held and practiced in African traditional society. That is, the traditional African was socialist and communistic.

Second, that modern African society can benefit by borrowing relevant elements of the family spirit. Thirdly, socialism unlike religion can be acquired and maintained freely and spontaneously. The sense of community and social solidarity that characterizes the social relations of African peoples stems from such communal social structures. This sense of community, observed Dickson (1974) is a characteristic of African life to which attention has been drawn again and again by both Africans and non-African writers. Indeed, to many this characteristic defines Africanness. Edwin Smith (1927) observed more than half a century ago: The African have hitherto lived in the collectivist stages: the community has been the unit, every individual interest has been subordinated to the general welfare. In many respects this excites our admiration-even envy. There is solidarity that civilized communities find it hard to attain. The corporate sentiment that trade unions create their members is but a faint reflection of the brotherhood found within the African clan.

Writing on the Bantu, Molema (1920) observed "individualism, as understood in the western world, could not thrive. Collectivism was the civil law, communism and a true form of socialism and the dominating principle and ruling spirit. According to Senghor (1964:124), the African society puts more stress on the group than on the individual, more on solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. And concluded that, "ours is a community society". This communalistic undertone was also echoed by African novelists such as Camara Laye's *The African Child* evokes a sense of community. Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* refers to the fellow feelings neighborliness in African societies.

From the foregoing analysis it becomes very clear that human beings are not regarded as individuals but as groups of created beings inevitably and naturally interrelated and interdependent. This does not lead to the submerging of the initiative or personality of the individuals. This is because the wellbeing and success of the community depends on the unique qualities of the individuals in the communities. This conception of

African communalist ethos has been challenged by various concepts especially with the advent of globalization.

### **GLOBALIZATION AND CHANGING NATURE OF COMMUNITY**

With the advent of globalization the perception of community has come to change or taken a new dimension. Recent literature has added wider perspectives to this view of community, suggesting that community is now taking new forms (e.g. Amin and Thrift, 2002; Lash, 1994). These new forms of community are based on their cultural attachments, rather than on their innate social orders. The new form distinguishes itself from the traditional concept through its position that community ties are decreasingly organized within a place. It is a social network that goes beyond geographical boundaries, owing much to developments in the advancement of telecommunication and greater mobility. So, does this mean the end of a place-bound community? In this uncertain, globalized society has the traditional community lost its existence? The concept of community particularly the archetypical view of the village community continues to be utilized in an attempt to create social cohesion and harmony in urban areas in the course of radical changes in urbanization. Whether in the form of garden villages, new towns, satellite towns, modernist urban districts or post-modern neo-historical neighbourhoods the idea of community has been persistent in modern urbanism (Amin and Thrift, 2002).

The planning theorist Leonie Sandercock (1998) argues that community has acquired an almost religious aura. It is characterized by direct contact and physical presence in the same geographical space, with a connection to the past, and therefore, traditional values and shared histories (Amin and Thrift, 2002). The notion of community is described in such terms as participatory planning and of community development. It is opposed to planning initiated by a (repressive) state and to spatial patterns that evolve from (unfair) market mechanisms. In Africa example, the concept of community has been central to urban policy and planning for the last few decades. In particular, use of area-based initiatives has been an essential part of the approach to urban renaissance which sees the locality as "the subject rather than the object of development" (Eisenschitz and Gough, 1993, p.11, quoted in Imrie and Raco, 2003, p.19). As placeless, virtual communities are not accessible to the entire populations, place-bound communities remain the agenda in Africa urban policy (Imrie and Raco, 2003). The popularity of the notion coheres with the positive character of being a collective, whose members have common values and interdependency.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century serves as the century when the disintegration of the notion of community ties, and also disintegration of the traditional community seems to have occurred in the social reality. Ferdinand Tönnies (1974[1887]) pointed to a profound change in social life. Modern city life produced greater freedom in a positive sense, but also resulted in more neutral and rational relationships between people who increasingly were strangers to one another (Simmel, 1950[1903]). The predominant the

belief of the urbanite is radically different from that of the villager. In the city, such things as punctuality and distance became important, and were accompanied by blasé attitudes, artificiality and individual behaviour. City life did not provide connectedness or strong ties, but offered other possibilities, individual freedoms and adventure. The relative rationality and anonymity enabled exaggerated manifestations of individuality through 'typical metropolitan caprices'. According to Simmel, this changing society was no longer harmonious, but the conflicts in urban life provided an arena in which "opposing streams unfold, as well as join one another with equal right" (Simmel, 1950). The extending city and its changing social forms are interesting phenomena, whose complexity should be understood, not negatively judged.

Although urbanization and individualization have accelerated since Simmel's time to the extent that it is difficult to find 'real' communities: (Bauman, 2001a), the idea of community has maintained its attraction. As community evolves it becomes a more rationally organized society, an intense desire for the relative peace and warmth seen as (Bauman, 2001a). However, despite the desire for cohesion, stability and security, the concept of community has been criticized as outdated, *passé*, in the literature in professional fields. For example, Amin and Thrift (2002) argue that community is now used to symbolise a way of life that bypasses the actual past, and represents a criticism of the present.

Contemporary researchers describe the present state as a decrease in 'rootedness' in a place. Don Mitchell (2000) argues that contemporary culture is becoming increasingly 'deterritorial, less attached to geographical location than before. The new cultural identities are constructed out of flows of people, goods, media and information rather than being rooted in local territories. The identity of the migrant or the stranger seems to Mitchell the most common and shared aspect in current urban culture. To 'belong somewhere' is no longer self-evident. In post-modern philosophy, the concepts of dwelling and belonging are seen as problematic, and are being displaced by the notion of lodging. A permanent place of residence, to which one is tied from birth to death, has for many of us been replaced by a series of temporary stays. According to Massimo Cacciari (1998), the idea of dwelling is now in a feeble state and that dwelling is only possible as 'natural being'. For him, this naturalness has lost ground and 'non-dwelling' is the essential characteristic of life in the metropolis. With the extension of urban networks and the increased possibilities of displacement and communication over large distances, the tight, place-rooted community is no longer a self-evident spatial reference point. Also, in a cultural sense, the community that occupies a specific area is no longer seen as a coherent and tightly-knit whole, but as a heterogeneous and changeable mix. Gianni Vattimo (1998) refers to it as an irreversible pluralization of a wide variety of cultures, subcultures and hybrid blends of these have become visible; and this is also related to the ever increasing reach of mass-communication.

In sociology, the discussion on community has devolved into two arguments: one on the loss of community due to the influence of globalization, and its subsequent and its



subsequent replacement by modern structures of society, and the other that community could restore or save (Wellman and Leighton, 1979). In post-modern philosophy, geography and society, and the other that community could be replacement sociology, the tradition of community lost seems to argued by Bauman's (2001a). He believed that in the anarchy of (post)modern life, the survival of community needs reconsidering. For him, the word describes a world that is no longer available but at the same time, the desire for community is defensive, and the term 'we' represents self-protection in this light and fluid environment (Bauman, 2000; Sennett, 1998).

Bauman adopts the perspective that individuals are now obliged to cope with the deeply felt insecurity that life in a constantly changing world brings about. Despite different starting points, this view is close to Simmel's as a cause of changes in urban ways of life. For Bauman, insecurity is no longer a side effect, but is more a permanent burden of post-modernity: he further asserted that "the image of the world... is now devoid of genuine or assumed solidity and continuity which used to be the trademark of modern structures". The dominant sentiment is the feeling of uncertainty as to the future shape of the world, as to the right way of living in it, and of the criteria by which to judge the rights and wrongs of the way of living (Bauman, 2001b. p.204).

Bauman (2001c, p.195) further argues that a diversity of people and cultures was melted into a larger form of 'modern' community: "people are not born into their places: they had to be trained, drilled or goaded into finding the place that fitted them and which they fitted." This view ironically provided a solution to the planning professional desire for order and avoidance of conflict (Sennett, 1970). It is the idea of the enlarged community of national order, an 'unpolluted' restoration of community with sovereignty and artificial visualized orders of the straight geometry of streets and public spaces. This vision does not contain winding roads, cul-de-sacs and unattended sites providing no place for Vagabonds or drifters (Bauman, 2000c). For Bauman (2000), however, the most promising type of unity between people is not to be created by avoiding differences and conflicts, but through negotiation and compromise between different values and ways of life.

While scholars like Simmels have argued that the world must not lament the loss of community as argued by Bauman. Such loss according to him must not be lamented but be considered necessary and inevitable, globalization according to him, decrease the overdependence on the community and that there is more in the adventure in the world characterized by uncertainty and changeability and this must be recognized.

## CONCLUSION

The paper examined the concept of community development in Africa in view of the growing influence of globalization. We traced the history of the philosophy of community development in Africa to the cultural values of the people as indicated in

the works of Nkrumah, Senghor and Nyerere. The argument is that with the advent of globalization, most community ethos will be lost. This ethos includes identity and a sense of attachment, security and familiarity including moral identity, which most scholars have argued no longer, seems to be relevant. With the advent of globalization people long for freedom in such a manner that community has become that which is observed and not necessarily participated. It is light and liberated sociality with weak and overlapping ties: people relate to each other on different levels. People live in the community, but they are not entirely of the community; they belong to other communities, too.

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