

[▲ Home](#)[◀ Contents](#)**The NGO-ization of Community Colleges: One (More) Manifestation of Globalization.***by Mia Quint-Rapoport*

In this essay I discuss the effects of globalization on Canadian community colleges. I apply contemporary social theories culled from the fields of feminism, geography and political science to understand one hidden manifestation of globalization in community colleges: involvement in global civil society via participation in international development projects. I begin by discussing the history of community colleges, highlighting their flexible missions, as a way of understanding how they have changed within the current socio-economic climate. I then present evidence of community colleges participating in international development projects, and provide an analysis of what participation might signify on the broader social level. I end with a call to understand more about these somewhat overlooked activities in order to ensure that they are carried out effectively whilst keeping in mind the needs of both 'local' communities.

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is a national organization that was formed in 1972 in order to, as its mission statement expresses "represent community colleges and institutes to government, business and industry, both in Canada and internationally" (www.accc.ca/english/about/). While membership within the organization is voluntary, it is fair to say that this organization is a substantial advocate that coagulates the initiatives, activities and various functions of Canada's incredibly diverse community college sector. In the 'what's new' section of the ACCC's web site, its 'front page', is a link to news about the Canada- Senegal partnership in technical and vocational training. Click on the link, and we are taken to a web page with several pictures of the conference which took place in Dakar, Senegal (www.accc.ca/english/). Another portion of the ACCC web site describes an ongoing partnership with schools and institutes within Brazil. While the precise parameters of these partnerships are ambiguous, the message is clear that international development work is becoming, more and more, an important part of the activities of community colleges. While, these involvements are not applicable to all Canadian community colleges to the same degree, there are certainly a significant number development projects and partnerships underway at many Canadian colleges. Indeed, there are enough to merit analysis of what these partnerships signify on a broader analytical level.

Theoretical framework:

Globalization has effected many social and political contradictions. As such, it can be cited as one of the most contentious and confusing forces since the industrial revolution. Indeed, many of these contradictions are manifested on the discursive level and many

believe that globalization has become a catchphrase that glosses over contextual realities. As another example of the contradictions of the discourse of globalization is the concept of the global citizen which is so often talked about in contemporary discussions of higher education. Within the classical definition, a citizen is a member of a state, an entity bound by land, in many cases with a common history and language. A global citizen then, seems like a contradiction in terms; its ambiguous meaning is part of the lexicon of globalization. At the same time, however, it resonates in a world of imagined communities, multiple diaspora and multi-national corporations.

One of the most incongruous issues that has developed in the global context is the definition of what is local, and the expansion of the traditional understanding of community. Indeed, the bifurcation of the global and the local on both the discursive and 'lived' levels is undergoing a transformation as it becomes less clear where one ends and the other begins. This change is being played out within Canada's community colleges. Within the Canadian community college system what constituted 'the local' was in fact the national and to a greater extent, the provincial, the regional, and the municipal. That is, community colleges played an integral part in meeting the social, cultural and importantly, the economic needs of the above entities. Within the lexicon of globalization, community has come to mean something new and different. It involves training students for a global workplace, and even educating the global citizen.

In this essay, I argue that community colleges have become important institutions in global civil society and participate in the new project-oriented 'NGO culture' in which they take on roles similar to non-governmental organizations. Because of the colleges' short history, along with their orientation towards educating for the workforce, community colleges have been especially influenced by the changes and shifts of globalization. While it is obvious that globalization has affected community colleges in terms of student constituency and curricular reform, I argue that colleges have fundamentally changed by participating in new funding opportunities that ultimately transform them into social service institutions which participate in global civil society.

In recent years, an entire body of critical literature has developed around the concept of globalization. Such work, coming from a range of fields including political science, geography, anthropology, sociology, and most notably from gender and women's studies, begins with contesting and deconstructing assumptions around the concept of globalization. These theories provide an incredibly salient perspective for analyzing the impact of globalization on community colleges. Furthermore, in a review of the literature there were few extensive discussions that integrated this critical theory into a discussion of community colleges. This is not because such theories are not relevant. As I shall argue in further depth below, community colleges are service-oriented social institutions which represent and reflect state policy and behaviour – more so even than universities which are in theory autonomous from the government. As such, community colleges are excellent indicators of how political, social

and economic policies affect society. The underlying question that I wish to address is how, particularly on the rhetorical and discursive levels, are these state-driven institutions affected by globalization? How does extreme time-space compression change community colleges?

Original mission and social function of community colleges:

One way to understand the effects of social development projects on the function and mission of community colleges, is to review their general history. In contrast to universities, whose traditions can be traced back over the course of centuries, community colleges were created as a response to a particular need at a particular point in time. Community colleges, or Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology as they are called in Ontario, and CEGEPs in Quebec, were devised to meet the needs of that part of the population for whom university was not accessible but who still needed and desired a post-secondary education. In other words, the history of community colleges cannot be categorized as an organic evolution but rather as reactionary construction. In their essay describing the diversity of Canada's community college sector, Dennison and Gallagher cite three contextual reasons behind why the colleges were created. They show that the concept of the community college was a centralized response to the intellectual and economic climate of the time. As they explain:

The first was the influence of human capital theory, which persuaded governments that investment in people could be key to economic growth. The second was a disturbing prediction by a number of social scientists that an unprecedented wave of students would soon demand access to post-secondary education. The third factor was the popular acceptance of the view that Canada's prosperity would now increasingly depend on the technical skill of its work force. Manpower training was seen as crucial to fueling the economic engine, particularly when the longstanding policy of importing technically skilled individuals from other countries would be a less practical course of action (Gallagher and Dennison, 1995, 383).

The community college system in Canada, while different to some extent in every province, was created largely as a measure to address the social and economic circumstances of the 1960's. These circumstances were characterized not only by economic growth, but by interest from the government in skills training via education, otherwise known as an interest in human capital, a concept that was in vogue at the time. The question is, if the colleges were created in response to a particular social and economic context, what happens to the objective of the colleges when these circumstances change? The 1960's were characterized by the American higher education innovator Clark Kerr as "the Golden Age" for higher education in both the United States and Canada (Kerr, 1991, 109). But as economic factors and conditions in North America and throughout world changed, so did the amount of intervention and spending by the state.

The three factors cited above by Dennison and Gallagher thus evolved into new and different needs and as a result affected the purpose and structure of the community colleges. It almost goes without saying that the economic demands of globalization have become a high priority of the current socio-economic era. It follows then that community colleges must answer to these demands. The question is: how?

The college's flexible mission is often discussed in the literature of higher education. As of late it has come to the fore in discussions pertaining to widening the transfer functions from colleges to universities, as well as around the creation of applied baccalaureate programs, particularly within the province of Ontario. In the first issue, colleges and universities are in discussion to create more programs and processes which will allow college students to ultimately transfer into universities and put their community college credits towards to receive a university degree. Some provinces already support this function to a great extent, such as British Columbia, and so transfer has become an integral part of the community college mandate. In other provinces, such as Ontario, however, while transfer occurs as part of the college's function, there are questions around whether community colleges should be educating students to unblock their paths to university. As Henry Decock shows in his study on transfer rates between universities and CAATS, transfer rates in Ontario are on the rise (Decock, 2004). Although it is risky to make a generalized statement regarding the wider meaning of this phenomenon, it is safe to say that the heating up of discussion amongst policy makers regarding the university-college transfer issue points to wider socio-economic issues that are impacting Canada's community colleges, and colleges in turn are attempting to respond. These wider issues relate to the credentials that students need in order to participate in a highly specialized knowledge economy.

The creation of applied baccalaureate programs also demonstrates the flexibility of the community college mission and mandate. Indeed, it could even point to a sort of community college identity crisis. Applied bachelor degrees are currently being offered at many community colleges in Canada and the United States. These degrees are mostly four-year programs within applied and professional fields. While community colleges are traditionally those institutions that were created to meet the needs of applied fields of practice, they have not, in their history, confer degrees or offer programs drawn out over four years. These four-year degrees are useful for providing training in underserved areas such as nursing and education. They are, however, also expensive for the traditional cadre of community college students, and create competition for other post-secondary education institutions. Most notably, whether 'good' or 'bad', they are a far cry from their more traditional offerings of diplomas and certificates. As Skolnik and Floyd explain: "this is a hot and somewhat controversial topic, not only among community college and university leadership, but also among politicians, business leaders, students and policy makers; all of whom are concerned with addressing issues of access, costs, relevant curricular needs, and purposes of post-secondary education (3)". The community college baccalaureate is symbolic of the many changes occurring within post-

secondary education as well as to the general conception of the community college.

Ultimately, the debate surrounding transfer and degree programs is indicative of the malleability of community colleges. In his article "Evolution of Relations Between Community Colleges and Universities in Ontario" Michael Skolnik discusses the debate around the transfer functions. Regarding the identity of community colleges he asserts that: "one of the most central and powerful elements of its identity was that it was not a university and did not aspire to be one" (Skolnik, 1995, 441). Furthermore, in his 2002 address to the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, Skolnik draws from John Dennison's five characteristics of community colleges. These five characteristics are, as he states: "open door access; community orientation; emphasis on teaching; comprehensiveness; and responsiveness to societal needs" (Skolnik, 2002, 9). Going through the list, Skolnik finds reasons as to why these characteristics do not capture the "essence" of the college. Instead, he argues pragmatically, "the biggest part of what a community college does has been preparing people for jobs in the mid-range of the occupational structure without which the modern economy would grind to a halt" (Skolnik, 2002, 12). According to Dennison, to add a more theoretical point, "... colleges are meant to respond to, rather than be critics of, their society..." (Dennison, J.D. Gallagher, P, 1991, 154). Precisely because of these two characteristics, combined with the general flexibility of their formal mandate, the community college is that social institution, unhampered by tradition and geared towards meeting the demands of a changing society, that is most adept at responding to meeting the demands of what is referred to as globalization. It is also the most vulnerable to these demands, and as such must be protected from its more destructive tendencies.

Globalization, Neo-liberalism and NGO-ization

In the popular imagination, the 'globalized' world looks like millions of connections, nodes and networks, with people, culture, information and currency flowing reciprocally from location to location. This is the aestheticized version of globalization. While still a relatively new term, the common definition of globalization relates to the notion of 'time-space compression' and refers largely to changes in the modern economic system. Indeed, as David Harvey explains, globalization was ushered in by the emergence of new informational and technological capabilities that permitted a shift from a centralized form of manufacturing to more flexible manufacturing conditions. "Globalization", as he explains,

[Is] characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all greatly intensified rates of commercial technological, and organizational innovation. It has entrained rapid shifts in the patterning of uneven development, both between sectors and between geographical regions, giving rise, for example, to a vast surge in so-called service sector employment as well as to new industrial ensembles in hitherto

underdeveloped regions ... It has also entailed a new round of what I shall call 'time-space compression in the capitalist world – the time horizons of both private and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider variegated space (Harvey, 1989, 147).

New technology and communication innovations have led to new economic practices and patterns, new spatial relations, and ultimately new relations of power. In the face of intensified global competition, governments, corporations and other forms of organizations in advanced industrialized countries, have reconsidered political-economic policies, agendas and possibilities. Governments across the board have reduced spending within the social service sector relative to the 1960's, and have promoted new forms of governmentality and management within public institutions. Theorists of higher education argue that these new forms of governmentality are also forms of academic capitalism and entrepreneurialism ((Rhoades 2005), and promote neo-liberal ethics and values (Olssen 2005). The question is whether these modes of organization and institutional behavior are present within community colleges. If so, how are they manifested?

Neo-liberalism is as an economic theory that has become a political ideology. It stands practically in direct contrast against what is now referred to as 'Keynesianism'. As Andrew Gamble explains "[Keynesianism] legitimated an active state to stabilize demand and maintain the economy close to full employment through the use of automatic stabilizers and high levels of public spending on welfare and defense programmes. [...] By the end of the 1990's the triumphalism of US capitalism was back at full volume and neo-liberalism had become the dominant ideology of the new world order proclaimed by the Americans and also of the discourse of globalization. Many now argued against the idea of national capitalisms, in favour of analyzing capitalism as a global system of accumulation" (2001, 129-130). According to Gamble, the effects of neo-liberalism are not only the reduction of state spending within the social realm, but also the reduction of state intervention in general and a promotion of advanced capitalistic values. Keynesianism was a major contributor to the educational expansion of the 1960's and consequently, the creation of the community college system. The move from the Keynesian welfare state, with its considerable nationalistic leanings and belief in the notion of the modern welfare state, to neo-liberalism has inevitably affected the mission and structure of the community college.

Non-profit organizations and international governmental organizations have gained great strength within this system partially as a result of the decline of Keynesian economics and the rise of neo-liberal principals. Countries that have only begun to modernize and develop a sense of statehood have been undermined by this political and economic context. Not only are their social service mechanisms relatively under-developed, relative that is, to advanced capitalist

countries such as Canada and the U.S who had the opportunity to experience Keynesianism, but these countries, as a result of global competition and time/space compression, have been pulled into the global economic system via the mechanisms described by Harvey above. As a result, as Suzanne Bergeron explains: "national governments have abandoned their commitments to the poor and vulnerable and to maintaining national economic stability, and whatever actions they might frequently place the needs of transnational capital above all others" (Bergeron, 2001, 987). In response, NGO's and international institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the United Nations have, in a sense, stepped in to provide these services. Technical education, which is often considered a social service, has been taken up as a primary tool to make up for the inequalities that globalization imposes upon developing countries. This, in turn, has led to the development of what is known as a project-oriented NGO culture. Increasingly community colleges are participating in this culture.

What is 'NGO' Culture?

The concept of an 'NGO culture' was coined originally by feminists who observed and participated in feminist initiatives on the global stage. It describes the process of applying for grants and funding, narrating funded experiences via accountability measures, and professionalizing social issues. Over the course of the past few decades, the status of women throughout the world has been a primary social issue for NGOs and international institutions. Feminists from all over the world found themselves applying for funding to participate in international feminist conventions and movements (Alvarez, 2002). Many found the process both confusing and alienating, and worried that it would co-opt and change their final intentions, even though, soon enough, they became adept at it. In a discussion concerning the problems associated with NGO-ization, Richa Nagar and Saraswati Raju discuss the culture's characteristics. Nagar asks: "is documentation purely for glossy brochures, or is it actually helping marginalized communities on the ground?" (Nagar, R. Raju, S, 2003, 9). And Raju states: "I feel that, fraught with contradictions and caught between commitments to social change and market compulsions of the changing times, grassroots activism cannot be free from the baggage that neo-liberalism and pro-market policies bring with them. Also, NGOs' response to professionalization, including underplaying and/or shifts in their agenda for social change, is part of what is happening elsewhere in other domains in response to processes of globalization" (Nagar, R. Raju, S, 2003, 12). NGO culture is a product of globalization as NGOs and International organizations attempt to create a global civil society. Many different types of social organizations have begun to pursue funding opportunities within this system. Community colleges, with their emphasis on vocational and skills training, are also pursuing such opportunities. This, I argue, is the most potent manner in which community colleges participate in globalization precisely because of how they become implicated within the new and evolving global civil society.

The Globalization of Community Colleges

Curricular and program changes within community colleges are the palpable representation of the manifestation of globalization. Community colleges are now gearing up to educate students to become marketable global citizens who will become a vital part of the global economy and are changing their curricular objectives to accomplish this goal. Michael Hatton, for example, describes the push to “enhance and update curricula, making it more global in its perspective so that students, on graduation, will have a wider view of the world, including its resources and markets” (Hatton, 1995, 455) Paula Zeszotarski focuses on the notion of global competencies and how they have changed curricula in community colleges. “From the perspective of community college leaders,” she explains, “curricular issues are a high priority in addressing the changes brought about by globalization. Not only will graduates be required to have higher technological skills but also a greater awareness of global cultural and historical issue” (Zeszotarski, 2001, 69). According to Zeszotarski, community colleges are charged not only with training students in a particular skill, but also in transforming students into global citizens to meet the needs of an increasingly global market economy. Global citizens must be equipped to work within a variety of cultural circumstances. Global competencies describe a set of skills ranging from communication skills to knowledge about the environment (a global issue), which prepare students for the global workplace. Zeszotarski compares the global competency framework to its predecessor – multi-cultural education. She argues that “even though many of the tenets of global education, such as intercultural competence and valuing diversity, are similar to those of multi-culturalism, globalism may be diffused more widely than multi-culturalism because of its direct application in the marketplace” (Zeszotarski, 2001,76). But while this new curricular orientation does signal globalization in the community colleges, it does not really reflect a difference in mission and function. Such curricular changes are, in truth, in line with the traditional function of educating students for vocational purposes. This then subscribes to Skolnik’s understanding of the colleges’ essence, which is to educate for the middle workforce.

In contrast to curricular transformation, participating in international projects is a more powerful representation of the impact of globalization for two reasons. The first operates on the financial level. Winning grants to participate in projects provides an additional revenue stream. In his detailed study of globalization in seven community colleges across the U.S. and Canada, John Levin describes how colleges were forced to become more entrepreneurial in terms of funding. He states that they “were more decidedly instruments of government, particularly economic interests, than in the past and yet less dependant for their total revenues upon government. At the extreme, colleges became several institutions structured within one institution. They were multi-institutions, combining an entrepreneurial college with a work –force training center ... Tuition fees, contract service revenues, and temporary, non-base budget, and often competitive government grants comprised a greater share of institutional revenues...” (Levin, 2001, 17-18). The entrepreneurial attitude that Levin invokes underscores one of the ways in which community colleges maintained their open access policies under fiscal

restraint as more students sought admission. International projects can be seen as an entrepreneurial strategy. Michael Hatton further explains: "the most pragmatic reason for internationalizing the community college, and perhaps the least talked about, is the increased revenue generation that stems from international activities. For community colleges in all jurisdictions, the issue of revenue is one of the most consequential facing them today. For some it is more critical than others, but rare is the publicly funded community college on this continent that does not feel the pinch of years of underfunding" (Hatton, 1995, 455). It is true, as Hatton explains, that such activities take different forms including international recruiting and faculty trades. However non-profit grant driven activities have become a prominent part of colleges' international presence. Hatton states: "during the past decade, the delivery of technical assistance has blossomed as community colleges on both sides of the border have seen increased opportunities to deliver their expertise to groups throughout the world. Projects of these types are funded through third-party agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the U.S. Agency for International Development, and a host of international financial institutions. This latter group includes the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter- American Development Bank, and the Caribbean Development Bank" (Hatton, 1995, 459). The community college, in this era of intense global competition, increased migration and government cutbacks, has faced near terminal financial difficulties. Participation in international development projects provides an additional revenue stream and points toward the entrepreneurial character of these institutions under globalized conditions.

There is no shortage of examples of how colleges are involved in development projects. The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), for example, is involved in six projects funded by various international organizations including CIDA, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to deliver educational assistance to a variety of stakeholder groups in a number of countries. These countries include Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Gambia, Mexico, the Caribbean and Romania. Funded by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (AUCC) and ADB, the project in Malaysia revolves around the provision of training in partnership with the Central Regional School Board (CCRSB) in the following areas: "contextual learning, technology for use in secondary and technical schools, and management training for principals (www.nsc.ca/International/NSCC_CIA_2a.htm, 2004). The stated rationale for participating in this projects is, as the NSCC web site states "to develop the capacity [for NSCC] to respond to its mandate to provide programming that imbues students with global competencies and skills that meet and exceed international standards. It is the internationalization of Nova Scotia's human capital that will enable the province to participate effectively in the global economy" (www.nsc.ca/internationalization, 2004). No doubt as well, these projects provide an additional source of revenue.

As another example, the ACCC in partnership with CIDA has created the Canadian College Partnership Program (ccpp.acc.ca/english/index.cfm, 2004). The stated goal of this

program is, as the web site states: "to increase the capacity of developing country education and training organizations to address their country's sustainable development priorities" (ccpp.accc.ca/english/program/goals.cfm, 2004). This program matches community colleges from all over Canada with learning institutions in countries ranging from Rwanda, to Vietnam, Chile, Jamaica, Benin, China and more to provide skills oriented training in a wide range of areas. Projects are funded by CIDA along with other international and national funding institutions.

Participation in these development projects, and this is the second reason why this issue is so powerful, draws community colleges into global civil society and ultimately changes their mission. Global civil society, is in essence, the influence of non-state or non-governmental actors on the development of a more just world order that is both equitable and representative (Murphy, Mundy, 2001, 87). As colleges provide assistance to developing countries through these projects, they defacto become involved and implicated in the political situation of the country, as well as in the system of relations that comprises global civil society, even if the boundaries of college projects are well articulated. As such, community colleges take on a new role, a role that is far beyond their original mission. As Levin explains: both missions and structures of colleges alter as a consequence of globalization. Colleges are coerced by government policies and funding behaviors to become more efficient, less reliant upon government funds, and more responsive to public taste and marketplace requirements " (Levin, 1999, 379). In his work on globalization, Levin emphasizes that community colleges have become more corporatized and marketized. By this he means that in contrast to earlier periods when colleges prepared students for careers, they now prepare students for the market. He states: "student learning priorities shifted from an acclaimed focus upon individual development and career and educational preparation to skills development and work force training" (Levin, 2001, 17). This might, to some extent, seem to contradict my argument concerning how colleges have NGO-ized, however considering the concept of NGO culture, my commentary is in line with Levin's viewpoints; NGO culture has created its own economy in which projects and funding have become a combination of social justice and commodity, and community colleges have become participants in this system.

Conclusion:

In this essay I attempted to bring together a variety of theories to scratch beneath the surface of globalization and community colleges. When I think of globalization in terms of my own context, I think of the ever-encroaching knowledge economy in which universities are automatic key players because of their power and expertise. Community colleges, I learned, are in fact great players in relation to globalization because of their vocational orientation, their flexible missions, and their historical relationship as service providers for the state. In the current political, social and economic context, the more entrepreneurial and marketized colleges have also become agents of global civil society as they partner with non-profit, non-governmental and international funding institutions. Clearly the mission of these

institutions has changed dramatically. It has certainly moved away from training for middle sector employment. More research, I believe, must be done looking into the effects of these projects in a number of ways. The first is in terms of the impact of these projects on developing countries, especially in relation to emerging forms neo-colonialism. I also believe that student, staff and faculty experiences and intentions should be recorded, and that the college's relationship to the government should be reconsidered. Last, this emerging function of the community college should continue to be assessed to a greater extent within the discourse of global civil society.

End Notes

CCPP/PPCC Phase II

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