

GLOBALISATION AND TRUST
CSGR Workshop
1st – 3rd July 2004

Outline of the Workshop

Trust, co-operation and social capital are now seen as key resources for a socio-economic system to progress, as championed by some of the most accomplished scholars in the social sciences in recent years¹. Thus far, the unit of analysis for most of these studies has generally been local communities or nation-states. However, the rise of interest in the notion of global public goods, i.e. those public goods that transcend the national borders, such as the environment, international justice, international financial stability, has brought to centre stage the relevance of trans-national co-operation as means to increase global prosperity. This position has, for instance, been strongly advocated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which sees the provision of global public goods as key in the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals, that is, the so-defined “*compact among nations to end human poverty*”².

The aim of this Workshop is to study the impact of globalisation on both local and international co-operation and trust. As for the former aspect, globalisation impinges upon the very nature of social relations, transforming what were personal, small-scale and frequent interactions within close-knit “traditional” communities into anonymous, large-scale and rare social exchanges³. This may have contrasting effects on the sustainability of trust and co-operation, as this transformation may lead to a decline of those moral systems grounded on reciprocity. On the other hand, though, the spread of this type of relationships may be leading to a form of generalised universal trust - vis-à-vis particular and local form of trust typical of “traditional” communities – and this may be conducive to faster socio-economic development.

As for the latter aspect, that is, international co-operation, even in this case it is not a priori clear whether globalisation may have an overall positive or negative effect. A pessimistic view is grounded on the observation that – building on a merely “theoretical” argument – the enlargement of the scale of a public goods problem makes co-operation more difficult, because of the increased incentive in free-riding. In addition, the combination of different national identities may make the problem even more complicated, because of the lack of a common system of shared beliefs on mutual behaviour. However, on the other hand, a more optimistic view on the possibility of international trust may be based on the view that globalisation itself should help make national identity less relevant, as may be

¹ See Fukuyama (1996), Hardin (1982), Putnam (2000).

² See the UN web site: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

³ See for instance North (1990).

inferred by the notion of “creolisation” of culture⁴. Indeed, the intermingling of cultures triggered by globalisation may be expected to reduce substantial cultural differences across countries and foster the recognition by individuals of a similar - or common - cultural framework for interpreting the environment. Underlying both issues, is obviously individuals’ perception of globalisation, i.e. the extent in which their identities, ideologies, mental and cultural models become shaped by global-related sources of values, rather than by non-global ones.

The Workshop aims to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of different contributions to these and related issues. Since its constitution, one of the goals of CSGR has always been to elicit interdisciplinary dialogue, thus it is hoped that scholars active in any discipline within the social sciences will take part in the Workshop.

References:

- Fukuyama, Francis (1996). *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, Free Press.
- Hannerz, U. (1992). *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Cultural Organization of Meaning*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hardin, Russell (1982). *Collective action*, Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- North, Douglass (1990) *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, Robert (2000). *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

⁴ See Hannerz (1992).