Social Quality Research in a Globalized World: An Introduction

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In the current globalized world, societal trends, problems, and challenges come not only from national states but also from beyond. These trends, problems, and challenges include international migration, human trafficking, pandemics such as HIV, environmental pollution, and terrorism, presenting risks for the progress of human society and for world peace. Therefore, they are, or should be, subject to forms of global governance. This issue of the *International Journal of Social Quality* includes several papers to discuss these issues as important topics in social quality studies. Social quality at local, regional, and national levels is highly influenced by economic, environmental, and other processes on global and international levels. These processes change the societal conditions of daily circumstances in innumerable ways. We can no longer treat the nation as the largely self-enclosed 'society' cum 'economy' cum 'polity' that was typically assumed in the social sciences in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The scale of flows of messages, ideas, hopes and values, commodities and finance, of short-term visitors, pathogens, weapons, and technologies, and of longer-term and permanent migrants and refugees, has massive implications for economic and social science perspectives, including for the social quality approach, and for public policy.

The social quality approach originally emerged in the 1990s in Western Europe to consider the requirements for cohesion and flourishing in a national 'society' facing the pressures of economic globalization and economic liberalization. One part of these processes was large-scale migration, which added to concerns about social cohesion. While the social quality approach squarely faces globalization and is inspired in part by the spirit of universal human rights, its main tools of conceptualization and theorization have until now been drawn from the traditions of Western political-economy and sociology. It has studied some of the results of globalization and migration into and within rich countries, rather than, as yet, the roles of migration in the emerging global economy and society. It has looked at issues of social inclusion and cohesion at national and sub-national scales, rather than at multi-national and global scales. It has explored questions of membership and belonging, empowerment and integration within a single polity and is only beginning to re-interpret these questions through the perspective of global interdependence and to highlight issues that cut across polities.

Globalization also provides conditions to facilitate the development of new forms of governance and policy dynamics. For instance, the role of international non-

governmental organizations in global processes has greatly increased. They can play an important role in limiting economic or political risks and may empower people to contribute more effectively in global development. Such civilian participation is essential to encourage new forms of global governance. This can provide new elements of democracy to enhance the social quality of daily circumstances, including by stimulating policies and innovation strategies to cope with the pressures of globalization.

This issue includes six papers that relate to two broad fields of global governance. The first set of three papers is concerned with civil participation, democracy, and social innovation, and the second set of three papers is focused on issues of migration and human rights.

In the first set of papers, On-Kwok Lai's work discusses the activism of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the global era. The author argues that NGOs play a function of "morality (ethics) checker" in protecting human rights, which has a vital function in global governance. With a focus on cyber-activism NGOs, the paper evaluates their meaning as a new form of international NGO, whose significance increases in the course of the technical development of new media. Lai argues that the cyber-advocacies strengthen the global communication networks in the promotion of human rights and the "shared awareness" among communication partners in their struggle for global justice and social quality.

The second paper, by Alex B. Brillantes and Maricel T. Fernandez, discusses civil movements and community development in the context of "good governance." The ideal of "good governance" is prevalent in many circles in the field of public administration. In this context, the authors discuss the reasons, the experience, and the implications of the Philippines's Gawad Kalinga movement with regard to civic participation. This movement has ventured on co-branding with partners of civil society, the market, and the state, and thus is an example of multi-stakeholdership. The paper evaluates this model as a model of reforming public administration to promote social quality, as citizens' active engagement is essential to create transformative governance. The movement champions imperatives of good citizenship coupled with transformational leadership and changed mindsets, which encourages people's participation in their political and economic life.

The third paper, by Peter R.A. Oeij, Steven Dhondt, and Ton Korver, reflects on the European Commission's strategy to cope with the pressure of globalization by emphasizing new innovation policies. This strategy supports sustainable growth in order to revive the European economy. The authors develop an analysis of the concept of social innovation, which links it to the popular discussion about innovation in the sense of technological and business innovation. Since workplace innovation involves elements of social innovation, business innovation, and technological innovation, it becomes an illuminating example through which to study various forms of innovation and their interrelations, as well as their societal functions. The study uses survey data to suggest a shift in European policy on innovation from technological and economic innovation into the direction of social innovation. But also in this case, the European Commission remains captured in the traditional approach to 'the social' as a ragbag of undefined purposes and topics. Therefore, the article connects innovation studies

to the social quality theory, in order to go beyond traditional orientations that prevent new politics and policies from coping with current challenges.

As a second dimension of challenges for national and global governance, three papers in this issue deal with international migration, including human trafficking, and specifically with female migration which is nowadays the majority of international migration. The social quality approach's classical sociological style has meant, so far, that it has not yet perhaps given much explicit emphasis to issues of gender. Yet gender constitutes a core dimension in social life; it is not a peripheral decorative feature. It has looked at the challenges faced by the disembodied (but perhaps implicitly male) citizen, in the course of his life-path through "society," for which journey he needs to be empowered, included, assisted, and embedded. As the approach grows, it needs to become further based in the realities of interconnected global systems and the lives of their diverse inhabitants.

In the paper of Philippe Doneys, issues of migration in Southeast Asia are discussed, with particular reference to female migration into Thailand. The paper reviews the difficulties of these migrants in their working conditions and everyday life, such as low payment, no access to health care systems, and the lack of social protection. In many cases, they become a special group of social exclusion, beyond that already assigned to illegal migrants. In particular, female migrants suffer unequal and unfair conditions of payment and employment in comparison with men. Local policies sometimes also further marginalize and socially exclude migrants from local life. The negative impacts are partly deliberately discriminatory but partly unintended. Doneys argues that a human security perspective helps to identify the human costs and dangerous "side-effects." His paper, like that of Huijsmans, shows stresses produced by migration induced by economic expansion in countries in which national identity is a product in the making or something that is in the process of being revived.

Roy Huijsmans' paper discusses human rights protection in reference to migration and human trafficking from Laos to Thailand. The paper shows a globalized discourse of human trafficking, which is also localized through a set of powerful relations and actors. As the paper reports, the Lao state has come to actively embrace the human trafficking discourse. This combination and interaction of international and local ideas and organizations has, Huijsmans argues, led to a particular local migration regime: a system of regulation of migration which covers far more than the formal laws and written regulations. For example, the Lao PDR formally prohibits recruitment of Lao workers to do unskilled work in Thailand, and yet all are aware that this is what the largest group of Lao international migrant workers do. A "migration regime" extends across borders, and interfaces with and links to other such regimes. Even "irregular" (in other words, illegal) Lao migrants in Thailand are part of a highly regulated system, regulated by the Thai state and Thai employers. Both those groups may find illegal unskilled foreign workers useful: cheaper, more flexible, and exploitable, and easier to dismiss and expel than are legal workers.

The last paper, by Bina Fernandez, discusses migration with particular reference to foreign domestic workers in the Middle East countries, and especially the deprivation and exclusion suffered by Ethiopian women migrants. She explores a possible ethical framework from Nancy Fraser to guide description, evaluation, and response in such

a situation. Fraser's theory distinguishes three aspects or types of justice: distribution (with reference to economic living and social protection), recognition (with reference to issues of culture), and representation (with reference to political rights); it places these issues in a global rather than solely national context, and elucidates different dimensions of citizenship. Fernandez gives special attention to how international migration forces reconsideration of relations in a country of in-migration: how far should immigrants (be able to) share in the arrangements of the national polity, society, culture, and economy? Fernandez provides an overview of the range of possible relevant policy directions beyond a present-day global "migration regime" that generates, exploits, and stresses cross-border workers in their tens of millions. The options include, first, gradual pragmatic negotiated agreements in various contexts; second, extending the international human rights regime; through to, third, steps in the longer-run towards elements of global citizenship that would match the emergent global economy and global society.

This second set of three papers discusses migration in the context of social protection for basic human rights. All of them focus on female migrants, and refer to non-Western societies, but their implications are much wider. The issues have implications for the discussion of social quality, as the protection of basic human rights is the foundation for human society to pursue a high level of social quality. The issues of social exclusion apply to male migrants too; and while these studies refer to Southeast Asia and the Middle East, similar problems can be observed in Western countries too. Accordingly, this issue covers social quality studies in various dimensions and aspects. It includes the exploration of these societal issues in terms of global governance and human rights, including responses to the challenge of developing forms of governance to cope with current trends that endanger human development (for example the problem of human trafficking) and the attempts by national and international agents to innovate effectively in the face of global pressures. Although most current discussion about social quality are focused on the local and national levels, to deal with these issues we need to broaden our view on global governance, global civil society, and global social policies in this globalized era. This issue makes an effort to bring in such a perspective, with a hope that the discussions will inspire researchers to both gain from, and enrich, the approach of social quality.