

How do communities in different parts of the world govern the negative effects of globalisation?

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Abstract

In recent decades, globalisation has become accelerated around the world and this has left many impacts, both positive and negative on communities and people's way of life. This essay discusses how communities in different parts of the world have developed strategies to govern and mitigate the negative effects of globalisation. These methods include negotiations made by the self-governed Fort McKay first nation with the Oil Sands industries in Canada, with the aim to protect the health and safe-keeping of their land. The establishments of transition towns which have increased localism and self-sufficiency to gain economic stability and environmental sustainability. The Keep Britain Tidy organisation, employed by communities over Britain to help reduce plastic and waste pollution, as well as decreasing chains of carbon footprints and increasing environmental awareness.

Globalisation is an ongoing process in which people, cultures, goods, money, and information can be transferred between countries on a global scale. Organisations and businesses are given the opportunity to expand internationally and therefore develop international influence, through this exchange of trade and culture the world becomes increasingly interconnected. Globalisation has had many positive effects, in particular on the global economy and people via the growth of transnational corporations (TNCs). TNCs have become one of the main drivers of globalisation through developing new markets, offshoring and outsourcing, where they move part of their business overseas. This has led to an increased spread of foreign direct investment, trade, and has not only increased employment but also boosted local economies around the globe. However, despite some of the economic and social successes, the effect of rising industries and TNCs around the globe has left a degrading impact on many communities. Due to increased connectivity and the exchange of cultures there has been a dramatic rise in consumerism over recent decades; this has led to increased resource consumption through exploiting the natural environment. Many multinational corporations that have spread to different parts of the world have also forced numerous local businesses out of business. Manufacturing industries and TNCs have often created environmental problems such as water pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. In addition, globalisation's increased spread of consumer culture can contribute to problems like increased global warming as carbon footprints are rising across the globe. As a result of these impacts, many communities have developed methods to combat and mitigate the problems caused by increased globalisation. The case studies discussed in the essay specifically portray how the methods used work for communities of different scales. The Fort McKay First nation operates on a small community scale, Transition town Totnes works on a slighter larger town scale in comparison. Finally the Keep Britain Tidy organisation functions on a national scale, perhaps making it the most influential of them all.

One of the methods used to combat the environmental impacts of globalisation is self-governance of local communities such as the Fort McKay First Nation Canada. The first nations refer to the predominant indigenous people of Canada and Fort McKay's self-governance is a framework which allows indigenous communities to have a say in the control and management of their land, resources, people, and policies through agreements that have been made with the federal government. Fort McKay is situated in the centre of the Canadian oil sands industry; the oil sands in Alberta harbour large quantities of bitumen and crude oil and aim to start a new Moose Lake project on Fort McKay's reserve lands. This globalised industry have increased the resources and revenue for Canada on a national scale and they are expanding their territory year on year. Studies show that 'of the 1.9 million barrels per day bitumen production in 2012 approximately 60% was from oil sands development within Fort McKay's territory' (Government of Alberta, 2013, n.p), and this is forecasted to increase to over 80% by 2030. Therefore this gives Fort McKay 'both an existing and future interest in oil sands development and the regulation and management of its environmental impacts', (Spink, 2015)

The presence of the globalised oil sands industry surrounding Fort McKay's territory has created numerous environmental problems for the indigenous communities. The rivers of the Athabasca region are being polluted by toxic chemicals from the industry, which have affected the fish locals eat as well as other wildlife. Due to this pollution, the banks of the Athabasca river have become one of the largest collections of tailings waste ponds in the world, able to fill the equivalent of 500,000 Olympic swimming pools. In addition the communities have seen an increase in deaths from cancers, chronic lung diseases and skin disorders, which have been linked to the chemicals used in the oil industry. Air pollutants have reached such high levels the Royal society of Canada have concluded that due to being located among the several major oil sands developments Fort McKay 'is the community most vulnerable to air impacts from current oil sands developments', (n.p).

Due to the increasing harmful impacts the industry has had on the health of their people and environment, Fort McKay have established ways to address these impacts of globalisation. For instance Treaty 8 was a contract signed between the Canadian government and Fort McKay, which Spink explains 'promised First Nations in the region the ability to continue with their traditional way of life (...) within its traditional territory'. The treaty also 'established Reserve Lands which are tracts of land set aside for the inclusive use and benefit of a first Nation', (p.231). This gave Fort McKay the power to negotiate a 20km exclusion zone between the oil industry and their Moose Lake reserve lands. In addition, Fort McKay negotiated contracts to provide services for the industry from their own companies, which ensures the services they provide are eco-friendly, as their sustainability department is committed to practice responsible resource development. This is beneficial which is why Fort McKay 'encourages companies to enter into a partnership agreement under which financial support is provided to the community for it to be able to review project planning documents, but more importantly to establish some guiding principles', (p.237). This therefore allows Fort McKay to have more control over the management of their land and resources.

The establishment of transition towns is also one of the methods developed by local communities in response to reducing the negative effects of globalisation. A transition town is a community project that aims to build resilience to issues of climate change, peak oil and economic instability. Communities like Totnes (UK) have realised that they have become more tied to the global world which makes them more vulnerable to economic and environmental impacts. Totnes Transition town stated 'without cheap fossil fuels, many of the things we take for granted become impossible, and our dependency makes us vulnerable', (n.p). Therefore, one of the key purposes of a transition town is to increase awareness of sustainable living and create ecological resilience in the future, (this is the ability for a natural area of land to keep its natural processes without the disturbance of any damage) so that they can increase their own self-sufficiency and reduce the effects of globalised industries.

The ties communities have developed to the globalised world have left many negative impacts on local communities. In recent decades, the spread of western culture has increased fast food consumer culture which has proved to be very wasteful of resources, as packaging and fashion are easily disregarded. The environmental issues that arise due to this include water and air pollution, increased landfills, deforestation, and excessive water use. Furthermore the presence of globalised TNCs and brands increasingly strips local communities of their identity. (Harris, 2012) explains in Totnes there is an 'ongoing battle between places that pride themselves on their local character, and the great stomping boot of multinational capitalism', (n.p). This is because independent businesses who struggle to make business get put at stake by multi-national corporations, for example Totnes has been involved in an ongoing battle about the presence of a new Costa coffee shops. Totnes has 42 independently owned coffee outlets, and locals state 'if you bring in a retail unity with the buying power and familiarity of Costa (...) you're damaging not only those independent businesses, but their supply chains: growers, producers, drink suppliers', (n.p). This demonstrates how the globalised world can have a chain of negative impacts both environmentally and economically on local communities on a large scale.

In order to combat issues like peak oil, the communities' aims are to limit their reliance on large supply chains dependent of fossil fuels. One way they do this is through their 'Totnes food link' project. This ties local producers and processors of food within a 30 mile radius of the town to the community's restaurants, shops, and retailers. This has built a strong system of connections and trade within the community. Moreover, as food products are made locally the community pay more attention to how their products can be made sustainably with little waste and impact on their environment. In addition, Totnes has its own currency called the 'Totnes pound', this boosts their local economy because it means the money that the community spends doesn't leak out through globalised TNCs and businesses – which have their economic connections outside the community. Instead, having their own currency means what the community spends goes back into their local economy, which consequently is used to strengthen their own independent, sustainable production and businesses. Transition town Totnes explains how 'The global financial crash of 2008 made it clear that thriving communities need flourishing local economies to weather large local events', (n.p).

Finally, another strategy that has been deployed to govern the negative effects of globalisation is the Keep Britain Tidy organisation. This is an independent environmental charity founded in 1960 and funded by the work of partners and supporters. Around Britain western consumer culture has become increasingly embraced which has meant people have larger carbon footprints, and TNCs and businesses produce a lot more wastage. To combat the environmental impacts that stem down from the globalised world, the organisation works alongside businesses, people, local authorities and the government with the aims to reduce litter, prevent waste and bring improvements to local places through sustainable and eco-friendly living.

A huge problem in Britain is that over recent decades 'cheap manufacturing of plastic goods and wrapping has accelerated' in many multi-national supermarket chains and retail corporations, 'partly due to globalisation and the global shift of manufacturing to low wage economies. This has encouraged a 'throwaway mentality', (Royal Geographical Society with IBG, p.4), which has increased the volume of plastic waste produced by companies and consumers. 'Britain's leading supermarkets create more than 800,000 tons of plastic packaging waste every year (Taylor and Laville, 2018); given that a large majority of the population tend to buy from popular supermarket chains, which have large carbon footprints, it is no wonder that our consumption is having huge impacts on the environment. In addition because this 'throwaway mentality' has become more common, the proper recycling of our waste has become more easily disregarded by consumers. 'Of the 13 billion plastic liquid containers that were used in the UK alone last year, just three billion were recycled', (Royal geographical society with IBG, p.1).

Therefore to alleviate the damaging effects our waste has on the environment, Keep Britain Tidy have implemented numerous strategies. They aim to 'develop and fund anti-littering education campaigns in schools' as well as work alongside businesses developing approaches together 'to reduce branded littering' (Keep Britain Tidy, 2015, p.9). This method encourages communities to reuse resources and also educates people on how to change their behaviour in the long-term by finding solutions to eco related problems on a daily basis. In turn, this has promoted localism as people buy more local market foods instead of single-use plastic produces, and also means people reduce their carbon footprint from the chain of global trade and services. In addition the charity have developed 'sustainable volunteering programmes around the country, supporting at least 10,000 individuals to clean up their communities', (p.9). This has boosted environmental awareness and protection within communities. So far their efforts have accomplished 1 million bags of litter collected, 9 million fewer bags and 1,970 green-flag awards have been given to numerous parks across Britain.

To conclude, many of these methods implemented by different local communities around the world have had a significant effect in mitigating various environmental and economic issues of globalisation. However, it is also clear that not all of these local communities hold enough power to reduce these impacts on a wider scale.

Particularly in the case of Fort McKay, of all the methods discussed I believe that the first nations efforts to reduce environmental damages have been the least effective. This is

because although a 20km exclusion zone may sound like a generous expanse of land that is being protected, in reality the first nation's territory is expected to inhabit a considerably larger area. Fort McKay is already 'surrounded on three sides by oilsands mines and about 70% of their traditional territory has been allocated to oilsands', (Junker, 2019, n.p). Therefore even with the negotiations Fort McKay have made, they cannot stop the wider degradation of their land which is expected to be on the rise. Unfortunately, Fort McKay have already gone to court appealing numerous oil sands projects over the years and are likely to have to continue doing so, as they stand as only a small community in the midst of a large and aggressive industry. For these reasons despite their efforts to exercise their rights, Fort McKay have been somewhat overtaken by the powerful industry that do not want to have to compromise, which means the communities say has only had minute effects in governing the environmental impacts of globalisation. This could be due to the small scale of Fort McKay's power and methods; this makes them somewhat the least influential practice compared to the Keep Britain Tidy and Transition Town operations that work on larger scales.

Transition towns and the Keep Britain Tidy organisation have proven to be more effective than Fort McKay in governing the negative issues that stem from the globalised world. Both Totnes and numerous communities around Britain (and worldwide) have been able to largely increase localism by encouraging people to buy more local produce, so they can cut their ties to globalised industries with large carbon footprints. Furthermore they have similarly enforced numerous eco-friendly methods within communities to be more sustainable and waste less, in addition to spreading awareness so people can adapt to become more environmentally friendly. Perhaps what makes the operations of Transition towns and Keep Britain Tidy more influential than Fort McKay is that they operate on a slightly larger scale. Their strategies are spreading from community to community in Britain and worldwide which increases their power to influence, making them successful operations in combating the problems of globalisation.

The draw-back to both of these organisations is that they are largely dependent on people's good will and motivation to change and make a difference, which can be subjective. Some people may not understand the importance to recycle or be willing to change their habits and behaviour to become more environmentally sustainable. Lots of the efforts to keep communities clean in Keep Britain Tidy are carried out by volunteers which may not always be in constant supply. Transition town Totnes has only 3,270 residents engaged so far and currently only around 2000-3000 other transition towns have emerged worldwide. This being said, although the projects are small scale, they have already made a huge difference in helping to lessen and mitigate the impacts of globalisation. Especially after the increased awareness of environmental movements in recent years they have been on the rise and are expected to grow into larger forces that are combating the negative impacts of globalisation worldwide.

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