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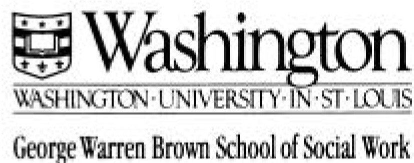

Developing Transnational Social Policy: A North American Community Service Program

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The negative impacts of globalization have dominated headlines in recent weeks and years.[1] Concerns include a proliferation of social ills caused by globalization, including increased inequality within and between countries, increased vulnerability to social risks, and greater exclusion from globalization's benefits. At the same time, some argue that nation-states have less capacity to implement effective social policy, raising concerns that welfare state safeguards are eroding and will never be as effective as they once were (Mishra, 1999). In this context, it is important to examine the emergence of social policies that transcend international borders, what we call transnational social policy. To date, relatively little attention has focused on transnational social policy,[2] contributing to a lack of understanding of policy dynamics and impacts. Moreover, our inattention has contributed to a lack of innovation.

This paper examines transnational social policy in the context of a proposal for a North American Community Service (NACS) which seeks to place youth from Mexico, the United States, and Canada together in community service projects in each of the three North American countries. The goal of the initiative is to foster a transnational approach to youth and community development and build cross-border institutions of cooperation. After describing the project, I use the NACS proposal to consider possibilities and challenges of transnational social policy on a broader scale.

TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES AND POLICY

A North American Community Service initiative is transnational in the sense that it crosses national boundaries and has essential qualities that transcend the nation-state. The trend towards transnationalism can be observed in social processes that are increasingly less constrained by national boundaries and "are anchored in and span two or more nation-states, involving actors from the spheres of both state and civil society" (Faist, 211). The concept of transnationalism began to be widely used in the 1960s to describe the growing reach and influence of corporations (Martinelli, 1982). In academic discussions, the term slowly came to mean the decreasing importance of national boundaries and spread of global institutions. Transnational processes are increasingly seen as part of a broader phenomenon of globalization, marked by the demise of the nation-state and the growth of world cities that serve as key nodes of flexible capital accumulation, communication and control (Glick Schiller, et al., 1995, 49).

We see a great deal of evidence that people and institutions are no longer constrained by national boundaries (Voruba, 1994). The most common application of this idea is with immigrants who daily break down the integrity of national boundaries by crossing and re-crossing international boundaries as they simultaneously maintain cross-border family and community ties. Likewise, other institutions are increasingly unconstrained by national boundaries, including corporations, media, and intellectual capital that have a global reach. As a result, issues that were once perceived as local or national are increasingly being viewed as regional or global. The growing importance of transnationalism as a way to understand social and economic relations is reflected in the growing numbers of transnational studies.

[1] For a discussion of globalization's impacts, see United Nations Development Program's 1999 Human Development Report on Globalization and Human Development. The report highlights increases in flow of short-term speculative foreign investment, influence of transnational corporations, cross-national production, population mobility, and global communication, along with reductions in trade barriers (UNDP, 1999).
[2] There are important exceptions, including de Swaan, 1994; Mishra, 1999; Deacon, 2000, Fox, 2000.

As one indicator, a new journal called *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, dedicated to social scientific understanding of globalization and transnationalism, debuted in 2001.

Many transnational policy discussions are daily front page news. International summits resulting in promotion of international or regional markets, international technology transfers, and international environmental accords occur with increasing frequency, are debated in academia, reported widely in the media, and fought over in the streets. But international social policy discussions occur less often and with less fanfare. Global economic forces exist in large measure outside the control of national governments, while social policy is largely a concern of governments. In fact, to a great extent, national governments *are* their social policy (over 50 percent of the US budget, for instance, is dedicated to social policy and the percentage is higher in Canada). The welfare state developed and still remains very much a national enterprise (Mishra, 1999). Thus it is not surprising that economic institutions are more transnational in nature than social institutions. Nonetheless, international social policy exists, generated by many different kinds of institutions, including international governing organizations, bilateral and multilateral banks, transnational corporations, international foundations, international non-governmental associations (NGOs), and national governments.[3] Perhaps the most far reaching and significant transnational social policies are the intended and unintended consequences of an unregulated transnational economic system.[4]

In many ways, we face a situation similar to that which existed at the turn of the 20th century. The transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society left masses of workers with few social and economic protections. New institutions were created to regulate and protect an urban and industrial labor force. With globalization, the institutions developed during the industrial age no longer meet the needs of increasingly mobile populations working in a global economy. It is already clear that national institutions of social protection are not keeping pace with economic change. Thus far, it is quite easy for transnational corporations and their subcontractors to avoid social responsibility (e.g., "social dumping") for their workers and their families or for rings of slavery and prostitution to avoid legal barriers in any given nation. This affects migrants in the United States, cane workers in Mexico, sweatshop employees in Thailand, foreign teenage prostitutes in Italy, and domestic servants in Singapore. Clearly, some form of transnational social policies are necessary.

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[3] Deacon has argued that in the case of Eastern European post-communist social policy (the opening of which poses huge policy making questions for Western Europe), international agencies play as large a role in defining social policies as national forces: "Comparing the role of the IMF, the ILO, the EC and the World Bank, it is evident that a major ideological struggle is taking place over the shape and content of the social security and income maintenance aspects of social policy in the newly emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. The struggle over what is to replace the social guarantees of forced employment for all between a USA-style individualist social policy, a European style corporatist or social market economy-style social policy (with which social democracy is merging) and a futuristic citizenship entitlement to a guaranteed income regardless of work contribution is being articulated and fought every bit as much a the level of supranational agencies as it is being played out within the confines of intrastate politics. The IMF, The European Parliament and commission, and the ILO together with the World Bank are as important actors a local politicians and local trade union and social movements. The arena of social and Political struggle over these issues is now a global one" (Deacon, 1994, 79).

[4] The absence of policy is policy nonetheless.

However, transnational social policy has received relatively little academic consideration, especially in the United States. The scholarship that exists portrays the negative effects of a global market. Deacon points out that globalization threatens social development in poor nations by generating indebtedness, threatening national assets and environmental and social standards, segmenting social policy benefits within countries, and creating "zones of exclusion" where normal state functions are virtually non-existent (2000, 6). Despite these realities, globalization may provide opportunities that have yet to be realized. As Leibfried and Pierson (1994), write "positive integration is much more ambitious and complex" than simply removing obstacles to a free market. "It aims at joint, constructive action, and the creation of a state with substantial capacities to modify the market distributions of life chances" (1994, 19)

The European Community (EC) is in the forefront of international transnational social policy making. As Leibfried and Pierson (1994) point out, the EC "… is taking on the characteristics of a supranational entity, possessing extensive transnational bureaucratic competencies, unified judicial control and significant autonomy to develop, modify or sustain policies" (1994, 15). They caution that development of a European "social state" confronts many challenges, but point out that progress has been made in several social areas (Leibfried & Pierson, 1994; Deacon, 1994). For example, European labor migrants[5] have the right to migrate and to portable social security coverage. EC policies establish a minimum wage and the principle of equal pay and equal treatment for women at work and in social security. So-called "structural funds," aid EC nations harmed by economic integration and prevent "social dumping" created by investment in countries with less regulation (Deacon, 1994). However, EC social protections have moved more slowly in areas where national welfare policies predominate (Leibfried & Pierson, 1994). Moreover, nativist political movements and violence against "Third Country nationals" have ensured that these groups are excluded from the benefits of EC social policy (Benhabib, 2001).

North America has witnessed more than a decade of path breaking tri-national policy agreements and collaboratives, including governmental and civil society initiatives. Beginning with governmental approaches, the most significant transnational policy initiative is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1993, which "liberalized" the flow of goods, services, and capital among Canada, the United States and Mexico. NAFTA side agreements include a North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC) and a Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). These accords resulted from opposition by groups from across the political spectrum, especially including environmentalist, union, and nationalist groups. Officially, the labor agreements provide "a mechanism for Mexico, US and Canada to cooperate on a wide range of labor objectives and to ensure the effective enforcement of existing and future domestic labor laws,'[6] while the environmental agreements "address regional environmental concerns, help prevent potential trade and environmental conflicts and promote the effective enforcement of environmental law."[7] The CEC established the North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC) as a source of funding for cooperative community-based environmental projects in Canada, Mexico and the United States.[8]

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[5] Of course these protections are not extended to non-Europeans.
[6] See web site: www.naalc.org.
[7] See web site: www.cec.org.
[8] See web site: www.cec.org.

At the same time, tri-national non-governmental organizations are attempting to redefine traditional boundaries of affiliation. An example is the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC), which serves as a "bridge of understanding" among higher education systems and institutions in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. According to its mission, CONAHEC is dedicated to removing obstacles to academic interchange in North America and fostering better understanding and opportunities for collaboration through (1) providing information, liaison, research aimed at academic cooperation at bilateral and trilateral levels, (2) serving as a forum for discussion, analysis and promotion of education policies on academic cooperation and professional mobility in North America, and (3) creating networks to foster innovative partnerships and new dimensions of cultural and educational exchange.[9]

Other non-governmental organizations engage in transnational initiatives that mobilize citizens' actions groups organizing on behalf of free trade, the environment, democracy, women's rights, and immigrant rights (Fox, 2000). In North America, many of these groups focus on the impacts of NAFTA and transnational corporations on the health, welfare, and human rights of low-income populations in Mexico, the United States, and Canada (Poole, 1996).

In Southeast Asia, ASEAN engages in multilateral social development initiatives resulting in joint meetings, joint declarations, memorandums of understanding, events, clearinghouses, and so forth. The recent focus of many of these initiatives is population groups affected by the 1990s financial crisis.[10] Among other advances is the creation of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), whose purpose is to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture.[11]

The next section examines a regional effort to develop transnational social policy. It is a proposal for a tri-national North American Community Service (NACS) program. Beginning with an historical examination of youth service policy in each of the three North American nations, I identify ideas and principles for a tri-national community service program. It emerges out of a collaborative effort among NGOs in Mexico, United States, and Canada. Following this, I identify opportunities and challenges of this initiative. In conclusion, I explore theoretical lessons, challenges and advantages, and possible roles for social work in transnational social policy development.

YOUTH SERVICE IN NORTH AMERICA[12]

Organized civilian (non-military) service by youth has a long and noteworthy history in North America. Mexico, United States, and Canada all have youth service programs with roots in the Depression of the

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[9] See web site: www.conahec.org.

[10] See web site: www.asean.or.id/function/ov_sd.htm.

[11] See web site: www.seameo.org/about/vision.htm.

[12] This section draws on Eberly and Sherraden's treatment of youth service in nine countries (1990), and country profile papers on Mexico (Guevara, 1999), the United States (Furano & Walker, 1999), and Canada (Ninacs & Toye, 1999) commissioned by the Ford Foundation for an international youth service conference held in Costa Rica in 2000 (Stroud, 2000).

1930s. Youth service programs have expanded during some eras and contracted during others, but the idea and reality of service have survived changes in administrations, budget cuts and other challenges over many decades. In all three countries there is a strong base of support for youth service, despite different histories, political systems, and traditions. This section extracts lessons from the experiences of these programs in an effort to shed light on how a North American youth service policy can be forged.

Youth Service in Mexico

The roots of community service in Mexico are ancient and profound. Indigenous communal work traditions, such as the *faena*, make modern-day community service a familiar sight. Community service was institutionalized by ideals of social solidarity during the Mexican Revolution and operationalized in Depression-era public works and public services programs. This historical legacy serves as a foundation for service and reciprocity among those who can serve, the needy, and the state. The idea of service resonates among Mexicans.

Youth service occurs in several forms in Mexico, including university social service, military social service, middle and high school volunteer service, and voluntary agency youth service (Sherraden & Sherraden, 1990; Guevara, 2000). The largest is a program begun during the Depression, *Servicio Social*, which requires all graduates of higher education to serve for periods of six months to a year before receiving their credentials. A large portion of the 206,000 students estimated to have graduated in 1998 performed at least six months of community service (Guevara, 2000). Although fulfillment of this requirement varies enormously, by any standards this is an important youth service program. Funded and coordinated by the federal Department of Social Development (SEDESOL), *Servicio Social* is operated by each university throughout the country.

Other government-sponsored community service includes military service where soldiers undertake community service projects, literacy training, and sports promotion. In the area of literacy, for example, military recruits participate either as students or as teachers in literacy education (this program is undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Education).[13] Non-governmental community service is growing, as middle and high school youth work in environmental and other volunteer work. Voluntary youth agencies are part of a rapidly expanding non-governmental sector (Fox, 2000). These agencies are offering greater opportunities for youth service in a variety of areas, but they are still quite limited in size and capacity.

Three themes frame the way that youth service is viewed in Mexico: citizenship, education and training, cultural integration, and community development (Table 1) (Sherraden, Sherraden & Eberly, 1990). Reflecting the concept of solidarity, *Servicio Social* is viewed as a reciprocal obligation in exchange for free public higher education. It is regarded as a way to instill moral and civic values and foster engaged citizens in a new democratic Mexico. From this perspective, youth service may serve as a training ground for citizenship. It also provide opportunity for mobility among youth through development of their human and social capital. Youth service is also seen as a way to promote development in poor

[13] See web site: www.sedena.gob.mx.

communities. Early efforts to send medical personnel to the countryside during the 1930s resulted in delivery of service and increased public health expenditures in areas previously neglected by policy makers. Health care is still considered among the most successful programs of *Servicio Social*. In addition, recent initiatives by several universities have adopted models of community development with *Servicio Social* interns at their core. These efforts are not seen as simply training opportunities, they are viewed as real engines of community development (Arredondo, 2000).

Youth Service in the United States

The policy roots of youth service in the United States are in Depression-era community service and public employment programs. Philosopher Henry James' idea for a "moral equivalent of war" was first put into practice through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), created in 1933 by President Franklin Roosevelt (Sherraden, 1979). The CCC aimed at providing jobs for unemployed youth and conserving the nation's natural resources. Although the CCC was terminated in 1942, new youth service programs were created thirty years later that were modeled on the CCC example.

The Peace Corps, created in 1961, sends mostly young U.S. citizens overseas for two years to do community development work. The domestic equivalent, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), followed in 1964, along with the National Teacher Corps, the Job Corps, and University Year of Action. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s smaller and more decentralized programs were developed, including conservation corps in many states, such as Youth Conservation Corps (1970), California Conservation Corps (1976), and the Young Adult Conservation Corps (1978). Today there are 100 youth corps operating in 33 states and 148 communities (Furano & Walker, 2000).

Table 1. Selected North American Youth Service Programs and Goals

	Canada	United States	Mexico
National Programs	Katimivik (1977)	VISTA (1964)) AmeriCorps (1993) Learn and Serve America (1993)	Servicio Social (193X
Goals[1]	Cultural integration Personal development Community development	Community development Employment opportunities Education and training	Citizenship Cultural integration Community development Education and training*
International Programs	Canada World Youth (1971)	Peace Corps (1961)	
Goals	International understanding International understanding	Community development Community development	

1. Adapted from Sherraden & Eberly, 1990. This list includes only the highest scoring purposes of youth service in the three countries.

* Although education and training rank lower in Sherraden, et al., it is included because of the emphasis on applying professional training in *Servicio Social*.

During the 1990s, under the leadership of the Clinton administration, the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was passed, creating the Corporation for National Service (CNS) (Furano & Walker, 2000; www.cns.gov). CNS manages funds and oversees three large programs with over 50,000 participants, including AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America and the National Senior Service Corps (formerly the RSVP, Foster Grandparent, and Senior Companion Programs). Another program, YouthBuild supports participants in 108 sites to earn a high school equivalency degree and rehabilitate and build houses for low-income families (Furano & Walker, 2000). While these programs are federally-funded, program goals and projects are managed locally.

Early service programs aimed at developing citizenship and providing financial support. But since the 1960s, service programs have also introduced youth development and community development, and international understanding as goals (Sherraden, et al., 1990). The idea of community service is well accepted, but government sponsorship and funding remain controversial, despite research that indicates that there are positive returns on such investments.

Youth Service in Canada

Youth service in Canada also has its roots in Depression era public works programs (Sherraden & Eberly, 1990). Thirty years later, as Canada confronted social problems of teen delinquency and unemployment, a number of youth service programs were created. Among those was the Company of Young Canadians (1966-74), which assisted disadvantaged people in Canada and abroad. As the program goals increasingly moved toward community development and advocacy, it encountered resistance from government, was reorganized and eventually terminated in 1974 (Ninacs & Toye, 1999). A little later, high youth unemployment rates prompted development of job creation programs, including Opportunities for Youth (1971-1975), a summer service program for students, followed by other youth service programs targeting unemployment youth (Ninacs & Toye, 1999). A contemporary example is Youth Service Canada, which funds community service projects for unemployed and out of school youth to help them develop life skills and work experience.[14]

Katimivik is the most important publicly-funded national service program in Canada. Created in 1977, Katimivik focuses on youth development, job experience, and intercultural exchange through community service (Singh, 1999). Although it effectively suspended in 1986, advocates were able to bring back to life a smaller version of the program in 1994. Currently, in Katimivik, or "meeting place," about 1000 young people undertake eight to nine months of service in small groups of 11 youths and one leader. They live and work in three work sites, one French and two English speaking communities, under the auspices of non governmental organizations. Volunteers earn a small stipend. Although relatively small, Ninacs and Toye (1999) calculate that one in approximately every 1000 youth in Canada between the ages of 17 and 21 participated in the 1999-2000 Katimivik volunteer year. A quarter of the participating youth were from disadvantaged households and almost half were French speaking. A 1999 evaluation suggested that they gained understanding of diversity, along with leadership, team

[14] See web site: http://youth.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/programs/ysc.shtml

building, and conflict resolution skills (Ninacs & Toye, 1999). Moreover, they contributed almost $3 million dollars worth of volunteer work to Canadian communities (Ninacs & Toye, 1999).[15]

Canada also has several international youth service programs, the largest of which is Canada World Youth (CWY) founded in 1971. The youth exchange program at CWY (1971) pairs 17 to 21 year old Canadians with volunteers from another country where they live and work before returning to Canada to serve in a volunteer program for a total of six to seven months. Primarily funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Government of Quebec, CWY placed 1000 youth participated in 44 CWY programs with 54 partner organizations in 25 countries in 1998 (Canada World Youth, 1998-99).[16] Evaluations suggest that the program prepares young people for work, and promotes civic involvement (Ninacs & Toye, 1999). A smaller international program, Canadian Crossroads International (1968-), also sends youth overseas, sponsors youth from partner countries to do volunteer service in Canada, and funds exchanges among partner countries (Ninacs & Toye, 1999). The programs' goals are to promote cross-cultural understanding, educate youth from Canada and partner nations, develop leadership skills, and promote understanding of causes of inequitable development.[17] Youth Challenge International (1989-), a newer and smaller program, sends teams of volunteers, aged 18 to 25, overseas to work in community development projects.[18] Like CWY, both of these programs are also supported by CIDA and other public and non-governmental funders.

The goals of Canada's programs are primarily youth development, cultural awareness and integration, and national and international community development (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990). The founding President of Katimivik and Canada World Youth, Jacques Hébert, captures these goals when he speaks of Katimivik: "Katimivik is first and foremost a new school for the youth of today …. In a world transformed into a global village, each man would be responsible for his fellow-man, and all citizens, young and old, would be directly involved in the development of their country and of the rest of the world" (Hebert, 2000).

Table 1 compares youth service policy in the three countries. The origins of all three countries' youth service programs lie in the time of the Great Depression, when policy makers had to respond to growing social and economic dislocations. Their development over the following decades, however, evolved in ways that distinguish the programs in each country from one another. Youth service in Canada and the United States is largely voluntary, while the largest Mexican programs (Servicio Social and military community service) are compulsory in Mexico. However, while students in Mexico are required to complete a period of social service, some of the newer and innovative social service opportunities in Mexico are voluntary, such as the community development brigades and emerging programs in the non-governmental sector. Youth service in the United States and Canada are the least centralized. Funding comes from the public and private sectors, but administration is largely decentralized and in the non-profit sector. Funding of Mexico's main youth service program mainly comes from the public sector,

[15] See web site: www.katimivik.org.

[16] See web site: www.cwy-jcm.org.

[17] See web site: www.crossroads-carrefour.ca.

[18] See web site: www.yci.org.

although its administration is handled mainly through universities and schools. Although it is difficult to know with certainty, Mexico has a large number of volunteers, while the United States and Canada have fewer. The United States and Canada have greater numbers of programs.

The purposes of youth service in the three nations share certain characteristics, but vary to some extent. In Mexico the emphasis is on development of citizenship and cultural integration, in addition to being part of service learning for academic purposes. In recent years, an early emphasis on community development has been increasing in importance. In the United States, the emphasis is on community development and providing employment for young people, with lesser emphasis on education and training and, in the case of overseas programs, international understanding. In Canada, the emphasis is on cultural integration and youth development, with lesser emphasis on community development. Like the United States, overseas programs in Canada are designed to increase global understanding and involvement (Sherraden, et al., 1990).

A North American Youth Community Service Proposal

With this backdrop, it is evident that sufficient knowledge, public support, and technical expertise exists in each of the three North American nations to support development of a tri-national youth service program. But important questions remain: What would be the purpose and goals of a North American youth community service program? How should it be designed and funded? Does the political will exist for transnational policy in North America?

To begin to answer these questions, a demonstration of a North American Community Service (NACS) project has been proposed. This is a collaborative proposal to place youth from Mexico, the United States, and Canada in community service projects in each of the three countries. The goal of NACS is to foster development of North American cooperation, specifically, "to raise awareness on the part of North Americans (Mexicans, Canadians, and Americans) of shared cultural, environmental, social and economic challenges and to increase their capacity to confront these challenges in collaboration with one another" and to develop skills that "prepare them to take on leadership roles in the creation of a sustainable North American community" (NAMI, 2001). Moreover, the project aims to benefit local communities by providing service and a cross-cultural and intergenerational exchange.

NACS is being organized by the North American Institute (NAMI), a tri-national public affairs organization providing a forum for the cooperative development of ideas for managing the emerging North American Community.[19] The steering committee and advisory group include representatives of youth service organizations, academics, funders, and policy makers. A demonstration is scheduled to begin in Spring of 2002. It will consist of three tri-national teams of nine young people, ages 18-25 who will rotate every three months among sites in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. An emphasis of evaluation will be on assessing the transnational impacts of the initiative, including practice and policy lessons.

[19] The North American Institute (NAMI) website is: www.northamericaninstitute.org.

Benefits of a North American Community Service Program

There are many potential benefits of a cross-national youth service program. A comparative analysis of youth service in nine nations in the 1980s, suggested that youth service has its impact on civic participation, cultural integration, community development, and youth development (Sherraden, et al., 1990). While the impact varied across different nations, these may be areas where transnational youth service program may also be successful.

First, civic participation is enhanced by service through the generation of "social capital." If community service is designed with participants as partners, learners, and connectors rather than isolated individuals, and if the activities of youth are "of" the community and not just "in" the community, the potential is there to build a sense of civic responsibility and participation. Youth service can serve as a mediating institution, one of several stakeholders in a process of "mutual engagement" and "building of trust and common cultural knowledge" (Lopez & Stack, 1999). Youth service may lead to development of a North American identity among the youth and the communities where they serve.

Second, youth service can help to foster a sense of cultural understanding. National programs have been quite successful increasing cultural appreciation, promoting democratic values, fostering tolerance and mutual respect, and resolving conflicts (Sherraden, et al., 1990). An international youth service program can potentially help young people – and the communities where they are working – to develop truly new ways to look at and participate in a global world. While we give lip service to the importance of a "international perspective," it is not a reality for most people in terms of language, understanding of culture, history and traditions, and understanding of others. Youth who participate in international service may be able to develop a more profound and truly international perspective. In their lives, they may be able to lead the way to more fruitful approaches to international social welfare and peace.

Third, youth service can contribute to community development through productive engagement in sustainable social and economic development projects. The experiences of youth service projects throughout the 20th century are full of examples of lasting social and economic value. The projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the United States and of the rural Brigades in Mexico are two examples of projects that had tangible positive impacts on the environment and quality of life. There is no reason to think that a cross-national project, if it reaches scale, could not make comparable contributions.

Fourth, studies have documented the many personal benefits that youth experience in service. These include increases in civic participation, self esteem, leadership, career development, skills, and so forth (Grantmaker's Forum, 2000). A cross-national service project could offer additional benefits to young people, including language and social skills that help them understand and function better in a multi-cultural and international environment. Moreover, such a project may offer a chance to clarify how they might contribute to the North American community in their future studies and work.

Challenges to a North American Community Service Program

Many conceptual and practical challenges confront a proposal for a North American Community Service, including sponsorship and funding, program goals, role of the state, role of civil society, and benefits to youth. Concerning sponsorship, under whose auspices should a NACS be organized? The NACS planning group has emphasized the importance of transnational leadership and decision making. Given the different levels of resources and international clout, it would be easy for the United States to dominate in the design and implementation of a such a project. However, in order to build a North American community, it is important that each of the three nations have equal representation and influence.

Funding is another key issue. While it may be relatively easy to raise the funds for a demonstration project, it will be far more challenging to take the program to scale. A demonstration can be funded with private funds from individuals and foundations. A North American Community Service corps that offers opportunities for large numbers of youth from the three countries to work across the three borders will require considerable resources, including public funding. Program funding must come from all three countries, although there should be recognition that levels of support might differ among the nations depending on the ability to contribute. Similar to EC, the United States might be expected to provide the greatest financial contribution.[20] Contributions by NGOs and private partners might further reduce portions owed by Mexico and Canada.

This idea will also encounter political challenges, although the biggest hurdle is likely to be development of a large scale program. This leads to the seriousness of agreement on a basic mission and goals for NACS. Fortunately, there is overlap in existing community service program goals in the three countries, including building international understanding (Canada and US), cross-cultural understanding (Canada and Mexico), education and training (US and Mexico), employment opportunity (Canada and US), community development (Canada, United States, and Mexico) (Table 1). NACS will have to develop consensus about the basic goal of building the North American community, but it also makes sense to make the most of existing common ground.

NACS will encounter serious problems if community service is viewed as a nation building tool. There are historical examples of national service programs that aim to extend the reach of the state and incorporate citizenry, including extreme examples such as the Red Guard and Hitler Youth (Sherraden, et al., 1990). Incorporation and control would clearly not meet the goals of NACS and attempts to introduce a nation building theme is likely to create problems. But, while economically and socially moving along a path towards globalization, nationalism remains a powerful force (Glick Schiller, et al., 1995). The idea behind transnational service may in some respects be in contradiction to basic aims of the nation-state. As nations join regional economic communities (e.g., ASEAN, NAFTA, and the EC),

[20] AmeriCorps is not a potential source of funding because its rules explicitly exclude expenditure of program funds on international experience or on foreign nationals engaged in service in the United States.

the traditional role of the state is challenged. Developing cross-border social policies will pose even greater challenges. It will be important for planners to justify this proposal on the basis of regional integration being in a nation's best interests without the rhetoric of incorporation. Can NACS be designed to respond to these challenges?

Another challenge is who will participate in program design and operation. To be truly transnational, not only must all three nations be equal partners in design and sponsorship, but local communities must also be involved in selecting and designing projects. It would be unfortunate for one nation or a central "authority" to make key decisions without input from all three nations and the communities where service would take place. An example of this came up in a planning meeting where it was proposed that restoration of a historical building be adopted for a pilot project. At this suggestion, a young participant from the community said that she believed the community had different priorities. While historical preservation was important, she thought that her community needed help caring for children while mothers were at work. Who will make these kinds of decisions?

At the same time, it is important that safeguards are set in place to ensure that local elites do not dominate local decision making and local project benefits. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) document situations where "community chests" designed to collect and distribute immigrants' remittances (funds sent back to their community of origin) have been set up by or, in other cases, appropriated by elites.

A final consideration with respect to participation is the role of youths in design and operations. It is worth considering a role for youth in decision making to ensure that program design meets youths' expectations. Furthermore, there should be a role for young volunteers in operations and evaluation. This would increase their level of engagement in the project and also provide useful feedback for the project operations.

A cross-national youth service program also must find ways to make participation an authentic opportunity for less socially and economically advantaged youth. Research indicates that there are broad benefit to youth service (Grantmaker Forum, 2000). Upper middle class youth from all three countries will likely be interested in community service of the unmistakable benefits. Learning another language and how to function in another culture opens up unique opportunities in education and careers in international business, government, and other spheres. Additional skills and social networks may enhance job market possibilities and provide opportunities for further study. But what are the benefits to less economically advantaged youth? While the idea might appeal to them on a personal level, becoming a volunteer may be impossible because of daily demands. Poor families may need the small amount of income that their children can contribute to the household. Others may not have the "luxury" of taking time off from developing their careers to engage in an activity that may have some long term but not immediately visible benefits. Some observers of *Servicio Social* suggest that students' lack of interest in the program often comes from this concern about careers. These young people view their required social service as a deviation from "fast track" careerism and frequently evade their service requirement. Instead, they participate in a perfunctory fashion, or engage in "service" that they believe will help develop their career, such as working for a professor, a public official, or a business. To meet career objectives, youth service programs must articulate clear and long term benefits to participating

youth, and in the case of low income volunteers, provide some remuneration. Some youth programs have demonstrated ways to do this, including providing a significant stipend, access to educational opportunities, development of skills that can be parlayed into improved career options, and occasions to help youths' own communities (Arredondo, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Plans for a North American Community Service program provide an opportunity to begin thinking about how to shape transnational social policy along sound democratic principles. As a place to begin, a North American Community Service project has several advantages. Youth service is already an integrative idea. Each of the three nations already has youth service programs that bring together diverse groups of young people to work on community projects. Two of the nations have youth service programs that promote international understanding. Therefore, the idea of a transnational program in North American youth service is not an unfamiliar, nor a controversial, idea. On the contrary, youth service is already well accepted in all three countries, and some agreement on goals across the three countries exists. Second, youth service can be funded and piloted in a small and decentralized manner that would provide a way to learn how to structure and organize a full-scale program. Even a large-scale program would not be as expensive as some other areas of social policy, making it more practical as a starting place. Finally, a North American youth service project would permit Canada, the United States, and Mexico to discover common ground in an activity that is likely to yield positive effects. Youth are perhaps the best candidates to begin envisioning a mutual future.

The case example underscores the importance of cross-border decision making and implementation. A unilateral approach to a transnational policy making will not work, as participants in Mexico made very clear (Sherraden, 2000). Second, new institutional arrangements will be needed to create policies and implement them. The case study suggests that it may be easier to initiate transnational social policy outside of traditional government and international agencies, but in order to "go to scale," policy must be supported by governments. While the EC provides examples and research opportunities, it is likely that we will create our own variation based on the unique North American situation. Third, transnational social policy must reflect goals that are broader than those of any particular nation. Identifying common issues and goals, that include those who find themselves most vulnerable in the globalizing economy, is perhaps the greatest challenge of all.

Challenges to developing progressive transnational social policies cannot be minimized. The case example described in this paper has encountered relatively little resistance thus far, in large measure because there is relative consensus and because few resources hang in the balance. Other transnational projects may encounter greater opposition from businesses who seek to lower costs or sectors of government which seeks to defend national policy and limit the numbers who fall under their jurisdiction and responsibility. Transnational social policy is also complicated because it covers nations that are economically, socially, and culturally diverse. In the case example, we have witnessed skepticism from Mexico regarding the project's intentions and ability to meet the needs of Mexican youth and skepticism from the United States regarding the demand on resources.

But resistance to transnational social policy is not universal. In the case example, support has come from many groups that recognize the importance of building capacity among youth to solve regional challenges, and developing North American institutions. Many recognize the negative implications of doing nothing. Some governments recognize the potential benefits of transnational social policy. For example, the Mexican government is actively developing transnational links aimed at the Mexican community in the United States through its Program for Mexican Communities Living in Foreign Countries program (Goldring, 1996; de la Garza, 1997; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). The new Mexican President, Vicente Fox, is actively courting the U.S. Mexican origin population in an effort to stimulate investments in Mexico (Thompson, 2001; Sullivan, 2001).

A BRIEF SOCIAL WORK AGENDA

In order to influence the development of transnational social policy, social workers must be involved in the creation, implementation, and research on transnational social policies. As in other disciplines, social workers have tended to limit their policy analyses to those within the nation-state, while the well-being of clients (e.g., migrants and other low wage workers and their families) may be dependent on global forces. As Basch, and colleagues, point out in a discussion of multiculturalism: "…despite important differences in approaches to multiculturalism, by and large those who have been leading the struggle for multiculturalism do not look beyond the borders of the United States" (1993, p.45) There are many roles that social workers can play, analyzing existing transnational examples and impacts on the poor and other vulnerable populations. Social workers can also help define principles for inclusive and progressive transnational social policymaking. Perhaps most important, social workers, who understand how policy looks "on the ground" and how it affects ordinary people, can make important contributions to innovation and design of transnational social policy. In the early part of the twentieth century when nativism was reaching a peak, Randolph Bourne wrote about the influx of immigrants: "Let us make something of this trans-national spirit instead of outlawing it" (1916, cited in Goldberg, 1992). Almost one hundred years later, his advice should be heeded as we examine the opportunities and challenges that confront us in globalism. Social workers could be among the architects of a progressive global social policy.

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