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**Claiming to be Global: An Exploration of Ethical, Political, and Justice Questions
Presidential Keynote Address, CIESC Conference 2015**

Réclamer le global:

**Une exploration de questions d'éthique, de politique et de justice
Le discours que la présidente, SCÉCI conférence 2015**

Lynette Shultz, University of Alberta

Good morning and thank you for coming today. Thank you also to the University of Ottawa for hosting the 2015 conference. I also want to recognize that we are meeting on the *unceded ancestral land of the Algonquin people* and to commit to respecting the land and people while I am a visitor here.

Introduction: Claiming to be Global

In every case of an organization that claims to be *global*, there is a blurring of space, knowledge, and cultural boundaries in its relations and activities. The difficulty we encounter in this blurring, as individuals and also as a collective (the organization), demands much more thoughtful engagement and creating space for encounter that recognizes the context within which we organize. This context includes not only urgent environmental, social, political and economic crises but also the legacies and powerful endurance of structures and relations of colonialism, and epistemic, cultural and economic imperialism heavily enhanced through globalization. Is it even possible to organize in ways that avoid perpetuating these problems? What does *being a global organization* mean in this time where we have never before been so interconnected throughout the world but with such terribly precarious relations; a time when the global issues that face us - environmental, social, economic, political - are so great that life itself on the planet is precarious.

In an excellent book by Jonathan Lear, titled: *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (2006), Lear presents an interview with a former Crow chief, Plenty Coups, the leader of an indigenous nation located in what is now Montana. In the interview, the chief describes the end of the Crow civilization as the colonial process of European settlement of native lands became a permanent reality. Plenty Coups describes how, with this loss of land, there came also a loss of culture and all ways of being; a loss of ways of social organization, and of all of their former existence, and he says clearly: “after this, *nothing else happened*” (p. 51). He is describing not only the end of a livelihood but also a civilizational and ontological vulnerability (p.50). It was the end of all they had known and done and of *being* in the world (p. 50-55). The story continues with Plenty Coups describing how the Crow then responded to this collapse by reimagining a new life.

If we listen, we hear in the story a powerful lesson on what to do in our time of global civilizational vulnerability. Plenty Coups stated that what was then required for survival would be a new Crow poet, a person who could “take up the Crow past and – rather than use it for nostalgia or ersatz mimesis - project it into a vibrant and new way for the Crow people to live and to be” (Lear, 2006, p. 51). Here the poet was seen as the creative maker of meaningful space – the creator of a new field of possibility.

Listening to the World 1: The Chick-a-dee Person

The Crow chief's wisdom and ethical advice came from his environment. He is told (in a vision or dream) to become a chick-a-dee person. "This person is the least in strength but strongest of mind among his kind. He is willing to work for wisdom" (Lear, 2006, p.80). The chick-a-dee person is a good listener; nothing escapes his ears. To become a chick-a-dee person one must train oneself by sharpening their ears; acquire the ability to learn from the wisdom of others and to develop a new kind of courage and ability to lead change (Lear, 2006, p. 80 – 81). Plenty Coups describes how "after one acquires this character trait, a new form of excellence opens up: one can survive the coming storm" (Lear, 2006, p. 80).

Boundaries, Globalization and Mondialisation

What can we learn from this story/ from these experiences with the end of one existence and the radical hope for a continued future? How will we organize to survive the coming storm? It is important for our meeting here in 2015, to recognize that the concept of *hope* is being used by indigenous people as we meet for the Truth and Reconciliation closing events. We are part of the process of truth and reconciliation as we meet here to discuss the concerns of our society and it is helpful to acknowledge the lessons of decolonization that are being presented around us to build a context of possibilities.

Plenty Coups described the destruction caused by colonialism: "And nothing else happened after that" (p. 50); it was the end. We can understand this through the ideas of Jean Luc Nancy (2007) who describes the process of globalization as leading to the *un-world* or the suppression of the world; he describes the death of the world.

And nothing else happened. It was the end.

Globalization's ability to capture the world, to categorize all of life and to universalize, "everywhere and anywhere" (Nancy, 2007, p. 33), is its destructive tool of domination. The world is destroyed when it loses its capacity to be creative. Nancy compares this to another process: mondialisation, (not translatable into English). Mondialisation is authentic world making or what Nancy calls creation of the world: "*an insatiable, infinite exercise that is the being in the act of meaning*" (2007, p. 24). Nancy argues that "between the creation of the world OR globalization, one must choose, since one implies the exclusion of the other" (p. 29). To choose the creation of the world means a commitment to struggle: "this creation of the world means creating through each struggle, a world that forms the contrary of global injustice (p.55). The antidote to the destruction of globalization is not retreat into the local as avoidance, but to engage in the creation of the world.

Listening to the World 2: Organizing Ethical Space and Mondialisation

Who Is Making the World?

When globalization forms the context for our organization, the organization will take on the characteristics of globalization. We see this in international organizations that *claim to be global*, but where, for example, decisions are made in urban or westernized centres that impact the lives of people around the world. People who are just living their lives become captured in the categories of "the girl child"; "the oppressed Muslim woman"; or the "backward farmer." As globalization winds its way through even well intentioned

organizations, these people's lives are reduced to simple stereotypes to serve the agendas of others far away in organization board rooms. There is a profound misrecognition that happens in the process of being captured in someone else's category and their organizational outcome. It is a seriously violent act.

The violence of colonialism, along with its companions patriarchy and imperialism's global capitalism, become embedded into our organizations. We see this in the demand for outcomes where all that might be possible becomes captured and controlled. Who hasn't been pressured into managing their organization according to outcomes? What and who is made invisible by organizational outcomes applied to communities or learning or economies or other human relations? We also experience the hegemony of organizations in the rise of *risk management* where people and ideas are carefully constrained in order to control anything that might occur between *the plan* and *the outcome*. These are not processes of world making, of the creation of the world! These are processes designed to universalize and monopolize – and dare I say, to harmonize - the actions of the periphery with the needs of the centre. The world is captured in the globalized outcomes of international organizations.

It is not accidental that organization studies propose similar organizational strategies everywhere (*everywhere and anywhere*). Organizational studies are an example of what Joseph Heinrich, Steven Heine and Ara Norenzayan (in 2010) call WEIRD, where all research is done with white, educated (credentialed), industrialized, rich, (liberal) democratic (neoliberal) actors. Even weirder, it is predominantly in English. WEIRD is the category of normal, the centre for understanding how organizations act and should be managed. At the base of these studies, we hear that all people are to be organized as if this was their own category regardless of what must be denied or hidden in order to fit the category. It is therefore certainly not accidental that 'global' organizations are modeled on the organizational norms and practices of western institutions, mostly corporations. Accounting, evaluation, assessment, reporting all create a one-way transfer of information through hierarchal structures. In globalization's organizations, *nothing else happens*.

Listening to the World 3: Organizing Ethical Space and Mondialisation ***We Make the World***

We need our chickadee person!

It could be Willie Ermine, a Canadian indigenous scholar whose works has been powerful in challenging how relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people take place in the communities, organizations, and institutions in Canada. Ermine (2007) draws on Roger Poole's work on "deep subjectivity" to describe an ethical space. An "ethical space" is formed when two actors, societies, organizations, with or from disparate worldviews, are poised to engage each other. Poole (1972) describes a photograph taken during the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the photo, there are people sharing a park bench and looking at each other; there are three Russian soldiers and two local Czech citizens. An encounter between the oppressed and the oppressor is created visually. The space between them is what intrigued Poole. On one level, the people acknowledge each... in their gaze. However, it is space between them, the place of the unstated, the knowledge, wisdom, emotions, and culture that creates what is a possible next. It is a space of possibilities although loaded

with history and difference and intense humanness and emotion. An *ethical space* is a space of world making and should not be mistaken for an empty space. Through Ermine's vision of deeply ethical relations made possible when relations of dominance are suspended, even for a moment, while we see one another as co-creators of an encounter, we might be able to untie ourselves from our colonializing tether.

It is the thought about diverse societies and the space in between them that invites the development of a framework for ethical organizing between human communities. How might we use ethical space for justice? The task, according to Nancy (2007), is how to open ourselves in order to look ahead of ourselves, where nothing is visible or "being without given" (p. 68). World making and being in the world is not about prophesizing or controlling the future. We can't know what will happen in ethical space. There is no outcomes based creation of the world! Robert's Rules of Order are not for world-making. There can be no *risk management* protocols for the creation of the world. Being in the act of meaning or creating the world, is relational and without an end in sight.

Listening to the World 4: Organizing and Solidarity in World Making

Organizing ourselves against the suppression of the world (Nancy, 2007) means decolonizing our organizations and how they work. Celestin Monga, in his 1996 work, *Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa*, describes how neocolonial structures work in the African context, a system dominated by colonial capitalism under neoliberal globalization. He identifies four myths of governance employed by post-colonial African political agents (p. 65-68) that might also be used to describe how global organizations act in local contexts in ways that perpetuate colonialism:

1) *Myth of solidarity*

In this myth, local elites are enrolled to translate and support the colonial organization mechanisms where the universalism of the powerful colonizer becomes embedded in the local organization as an imperialist project and under the guise of *solidarity*. This misuse of the power of solidarity is important to identify. With whom are we in solidarity? Corporatized models of organization will allow only solidarity with the dominant centre and even more so if this centre is a western idealized location.

2) *Myth of protection*

The organization's agents arrive from *the centre*, claiming to be there to protect the masses from each other and/or from powerful outsiders. We hear the themes and priorities of global organizations spilling into the lives of local communities along with slogans and project funds for protection of African women from African men; Indian girls from Indian men; rural farmers from their own backwardness (we should all read more Fanon!). Organizational violence heaped on people already captured in capitalism's categories.

3) *Myth of competence*

Despite the great difficulty of organizing in ways that recognize the complexity of the world, too often organizations working within this myth deny that local people know what needs to be done to address their problems and concerns. Global actors are viewed as more competent and able to translate global policy and expectations into local practice. As Bruno Latour (2008) describes, global actors tend to be perceived as facts and this confers upon

them a legitimacy and stabilizing force. They are considered as established entities with particular characteristics. Global organizations are treated as *facts* rather than processes and assemblages of relations of actors and spaces. Local actors “take a back seat” (Monga, p. 67) to global actors who are viewed as more competent at organizing local communities.

4) *Myth of legitimization*

Organizations aim to reach an effective consensus in institutions so as to reinforce the obedient attitude that facilitates their functioning. This myth helps to direct people toward organizing strategies that perpetuate colonized relations. They are not the ways that people have traditionally made decisions or organized themselves to address the problems they face.

In the World Council for Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), we have recently set up a committee on ethics that is tasked with finding ways to challenge these myths in the organization. Whose laws will we turn to when there are questions? Is it reasonable that the default position is what is done in the USA or Britain? Does democratic decision-making always require a President? What alternative models of decision-making or research dissemination or collaboration might make WCCES a more *legitimately* global organization? It is helpful to locate WCCES within the wider movement of globalization in higher education with its shift from collegial governance models to more corporate structured models (Shultz, 2013). Why is a centralized organization structure becoming more legitimate? What happens when there is conflict? Is there a way to organize to support conflict to be generative and a reason for more and wider deliberation rather than less? It is clear that to create change in the organization requires that we transform our beliefs in many colonial myths.

In order to do this, I would like to propose we imagine practices of deliberative governance emerging from ethical spaces as a way to organize ourselves. Through this we might join many grassroots and radical democratic organizations working against the destruction of the world and toward a decolonizing world making.

Deliberative governance and organizing for global social justice

What might a deliberative organization look like? It requires, as a starting point, to see the organization in its context and to work with spaces and actors, and seek the knowledge that exists to not only make decisions, but to hold the space. It is to maintain what holds us together.

A starting point is with *pluriversal public space as ethical space*. Governance that takes place in public space involves finding ways to limit barriers to whom can speak and providing the legal and political means for those who are excluded to have access to speak. Here I am not limiting the idea of publicness to be about relations with the Westphalian state. It is already established that ideas, actions, and engagement spill over national boundaries. As Nancy Fraser and Kate Nash (2014) suggest, we need a “critical theory of post-westphalian contours” (p. 133). Here I am referring to how a specific global organization works with its context, communities, and publics who are the people whom it affects. As Fraser & Nash (2014) highlights, participative parity is an important condition of global social justice. That this happens in a space based on pluriversalism (which is

creative) and not universalism (a process of globalization), opens up what is possible within the space.

This space must also be *empowered space* (Dryzek, 2012). This idea refers to the creation of authentic collective decision-making strategies that work to link actors and efficacious processes of democratic change. While these spaces might vary according to context, an empowered space is one where decisions are legitimately made according to agreed upon processes and that lead to policies and sanctioned commitments for their enactment (Dryzek, 2006; 2012).

Organizations must be places of *non-conquering networked relations and pathways* or perhaps more simply, non-colonizing. Here, what we *can't* continue to do is most evident. We cannot continue supporting the violent processes of globalization's universalism where *the world* is captured and forced to conform to the categories of western knowledge and experience.

One of the key standards for public engagement is the principle that all those who are affected should have a voice in decision-making (see for example, Fraser, 2009; Fraser & Nash, 2014). *Accountability* of global organizations requires that ethical spaces for encounters with all affected must be established, making the organization space accountable to a public space. This accounting for decision-making contributes to a necessary transparency if a global organization is to act in a non-colonizing way. The legitimacy of an organization's governance requires that the deliberative processes of the organization itself become objects of reflection and reflexivity both internally and externally. This contributes to legitimacy, authenticity, and ultimately, authority being located in the deliberative governance system as a whole (Dryzek, 2006; 2012).

Conclusion

My experiences during my time as President of CIESC have led me to question how organizations that claim to be "global" work in a world that needs the best we can collectively imagine. We are clearly in a time of global civilizational vulnerability, and as Chief Plenty Coups can teach us, this is a time where we need to look for new ways to survive the coming storm. We need new ways to address urgent global environmental issues, economic inequalities, the vast death machines of militarization and securitization, and the multitude of ways that the legacies of colonialism's racism and sexism continue to damage the wellbeing of much of life on the planet. It is not acceptable to continue to organize without critique and to create organizations that mirror the very system that we are trying to change. I agree with Jean Lu Nancy (2007) that "between the creation of the world or globalization, one must choose, since one implies the exclusion of the other" (p. 29).

The chickadees tell us to choose life.

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