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Shared Societies: The Economic Case*

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Abstract

The Club de Madrid and the Maastricht School of Management wanted to respond to the challenge of encouraging new thinking on the link between economic performance and social conditions. We invited a range of thinkers and writers from intergovernmental bodies, policy think tanks, academia and activism, including some junior researchers, to come together and share their perspectives. Those perspectives were deliberately very different because we wanted to involve scholars and policy makers who may not have already made the link between social and economic conditions and challenge them to look at the issue through the lens of their particular discipline and experience. They came together at an international conference at the Maastricht School of Management at the end of March 2012. This paper provides a summary of the papers presented at the conference. The full papers are made available as MsM Working Papers, and are available, together with audio and video clips of the conference, on www.msm.nl.

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The Club de Madrid is an independent non-profit organization composed of 86 democratic former Presidents and Prime Ministers from 60 different countries, constituting the world´s largest forum of former Heads of State and Government, who have come together to respond to a growing demand for support among leaders in two key areas: democratic leadership and governance; and response to crisis and post-crisis situations. Both lines of work share the common goal of addressing the challenge of democratic governance and political conflict as well as that of building functional and inclusive societies, where the leadership experience of our Members is most valuable.

1. Introduction

According to the Club de Madrid, the global network of former presidents and prime ministers, shared societies can be described *as societies where people share an equal capacity to participate in economic, political and social opportunities regardless of their religion, ethnic or linguistic groups, and where as a consequence relations between groups are peaceful, are inherently desirable.*

The Club de Madrid has had a particular interest in the relationship between inter group diversity and economic performance. Some time ago it developed an initiative on intergroup relations called the *Shared Societies Project* to provide current leaders with greater understanding of the benefits of social cohesion, as well as the incentives and means to advance it. It preferred the term Shared Societies because it was not envisaging a society where some groups are tolerated and allowed to coexist with the rest of society, and the term seems to capture more clearly the idea that all identity groups can have a full role and stake in their specific society, able to contribute to that society and take responsibility for it without having to diminish or deny their other identities. One of its basic assumptions is that societies are most likely to be peaceful, democratic and prosperous when leaders and citizens recognize the value of diversity and take measures to build a shared society. In early 2011 the Project developed this argument in its publication "The Economics of Shared Societies".

While it is possible to make this case conceptually, and offer case studies (though more work needs to be done), it is more difficult to demonstrate empirically the causal connection. Fractionalization in a state has been shown in certain circumstances to have a negative impact but with the right kind of policies the benefits of diversity can be realized. Development can be shown to lead to greater inequality and marginalization of those sections of the community unable to, or excluded from taking advantage of that development, but ultimately diversity can be a driver of development.

The Club de Madrid and the Maastricht School of Management wanted to respond to the challenge of encouraging new thinking on the dynamics of the links between economic performance and social conditions. We invited a range of thinkers and writers from intergovernmental bodies, policy think tanks, academia and activism, including some junior researchers, to come together and share their perspectives. Those perspectives were deliberately very different because we wanted to involve people who may not have already explored the link between social conditions and economic perspectives in their previous work and challenge them to look at the issue through the lens of their particular discipline and experience. Some looked at the issues from a global, regional or national perspective and some chose to look at a local community experience. Some looked at the impact of current trends, some looked at the challenge of measurement of the concepts under consideration and some looked at how policy change can be introduced. They came together at an international conference at the Maastricht School of Management at the end of March 2012.

This paper provides a summary of the papers presented at the conference. The full papers are made available as MsM Working Papers, and are available on www.msm.nl. Our summary is structured as follows. First, in section 2, we discuss the contributions that make the economic case for shared societies. Then, in section 3, we focus on a number of contributions where the economic case for shared societies is argued from the perspective of violence and conflict that can be a result of a failure of societies to be inclusive. In section 4 various regional and national case studies of the relationship between shared societies and development are summarised. The final section, section 5, summarises the contributions to the workshop where the role of civil society in promoting social change were discussed.

2. The Economic Case for Shared Societies

According to Valenti and Giovannoni (2012) the economic case for a shared society is complicated. This is due to the fact that the concept is new, the literature is relatively small and little quantification of the relationship between the concept and economic performance has been done. From the existing literature they do however derive a number of important conclusions.

The first is that a shared society requires deliberate policies for social inclusion and social cohesion. Social inclusion policies refer to policies that further the broad participation in society across ethnic, cultural, gender and income lines. Social cohesion policies refer to policies that build trust across these groups. Valenti and Giovannoni (2012) point to a number of studies, particularly using measures of social cohesion (such as trust) that have found that better social cohesion may facilitate provision of public goods and economic growth.

The second conclusion they derive is that many of the ‘good’ institutions for development, such as rule of law, good governance, voice and accountability are also appropriate and beneficial for promoting a shared society.

Thirdly, they illustrate that the costs of a fractured (non-shared) society may provide insights into the economic advantages of a shared society. They show that the literature is clear on the facts that fractionalized societies pay a high price due to corruption, conflict, rent-seeking, reduced innovation and competitiveness – as the subsequent contributions on violence and conflict (see section 3 below) further documents.

Caliari (2012) steps one step back from the empirical approach of Valenti and Giovannoni (2012) to consider the theoretical arguments for the economic value of shared societies. He argues that classical contributions to development economics provide theoretical support for the Club de Madrid’s assertion that a shared society is beneficial for development (and that indeed the causality also runs from a shared society to development and not just the other way around).

From Ragnar Nurkse’s contribution in *Theory of Balanced Growth,* Caliari (2012) argues that unemployment is one of the most significant barriers to development, and that allowing everyone to share in contributing to economic activity, through for instance full employment, will make an important contribution to growth. Indeed, Caliari (2012) reminds the reader that Nurkse illustrated that unemployment (surplus labour) leads to lower savings, lower capital accumulation and consequently reduction in consumption and growth. In addition, unemployment, as a consequence of social fragmentation and exclusion, contributes to social instability and conflict (see section 3 below). Social exclusion – for instance through discrimination “narrows the labour market and underutilizes the capabilities and capacities of those excluded”(Club de Madrid, quoted by Caliari, 2012). The emphasis on unemployment as a symptom and cause of exclusion that constrains growth and development is also central in the Structuralist School, the second major theoretical body of thought that Caliari draws on.

Finally, Caliari (2012) discusses Institutional Economics as providing further theoretical support for the contention that shared societies have a positive economic impact. For him, the principles of a shared society, such as tolerance and sense of belonging is conducive for knowledge generation and dissemination, the key drivers of growth in today's technologically driven economies.

A further paper that stresses the economic case for shared societies is by Dhéret (2012) who focuses on the economic – and social – crises in contemporary Europe. As she puts it, Europe has since around 2008 been stumbling along in a "seemingly endless series of economic crises". Her point of departure is that these impacted negatively on Europe's growth potential, reduced European citizens' purchasing power, and "shaken the EU's social fabric to its foundations…the crisis has reinforced the position of radical parties on both sides of the political spectrum or even encouraged certain mainstream parties to adopt a protectionist and nationalist approach" and that this ultimately threatens social cohesion in Europe.

Dhéret (2012) studies social cohesion in Europe based on the findings of 'Well-being 2030', considering how shared societies can serve the purpose of increasing citizens' well-being and exploring the role of social policy in Europe to achieve this objective. She concludes that a political / public debate on the development model Europe wants to promote has become a precondition to revitalising the European social model and reconciling citizens with the European project, but that not much debate is taking place at present.

It is not only the contemporary crises in Europe that makes the economic case for shared societies prominent – also elsewhere in the West, most notable the USA, concerns about the relationship between inequalities and economic stagnation has arises. According to Torres (2012) the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the USA had been preceded by rising inequalities and greater social exclusion. For instance Torres (2012) show that growing income inequality has been fuelled by (i) rising incomes for the very rich; (ii) a slowing down of wage growth; and (iii) increasing global unemployment. He warns that "there is also evidence of links between income inequality and social unrest…[an] examination of the determinants of social unrest in 2011 revealed that limited disposable income and unemployment are most strongly associated with the estimated risks of social unrest", and that greater inequality is hampering efforts towards a greener, more sustainable and healthier economy.

Moreover, not only has greater inequality associated with the crisis exacerbated social and environmental problems, but Torres (2012) also argue that the increasing trends in inequality preceding the crisis was a contributing factor in the collapse. This is because income inequality, especially through growth in wealth at the very top, leads to a "build-up of private debt" and to predatory lending and high risk-taking which in the context of weak regulation and globalized markets (including tax havens) turned out to be unsustainable. It is a discussion to which Burke (2012) returns, when she asks how social change agents, such as the Occupy Movement, can promote a shared society in the light of the powerful influence of the global banking sector (see section 5).

Finally, Torres (2012) discusses some policy options to address or halt growing inequality. These policies should aim for promoting a shared society as envisaged by the Club de Madrid. As was emphasized also by Caliari (2012) he emphasizes the importance of appropriately functioning labour markets and labour institutions including social protection, and more progressive taxation (also a topic picked up during the workshop by Harrison, 2012). The implications are clear: the West will not get out of its stagnation without promoting a more shared society.

3. Violence, Conflict and the Need for Shared Societies

Whereas the contributions to our conference that were discussed in the previous section makes the economic case for Shared Societies by tracing how they can contribute to growth and development, a number of papers also made the case by illustrating how violence and conflict results when a shared society is lacking.

Hyslop (2012) presented a paper on the "*Violence Containment Industries" (VCI)* in the USA. These industries include "all economic activity devoted to either inflicting, preventing, and dealing with the consequences of violence". In the USA the VCI costs the economy more than US $ 2.16 trillion – equal to 15 per cent of the country's GDP. It implies a huge waste. The USA is clearly paying dearly for its growing inequalities and great social divides – to the amount of

US $ 7,000 for every man, woman and child. It constitutes a powerful economic case for a shared society.

Justino (2012) builds on this and explains the broad relationship between economic exclusion, inequality and conflict as it is now understood in the scholarly literature. Three issues are central: one, the fact that conflict threatens the existence of shared societies by polarizing and ripping communities apart, destroying trust, cohesion and inclusion; two, that conflict is often the result of a lack of social cohesion and inclusion, and of marginalization, inequality and the breakdown of trust; and three, how during conflict a shared society eventually emerges – as Justino (2012) puts it “very few countries in the world have implemented systems of justice, equality and democracy without some amount of bloodshed”.

In each of these three instances, Justino (2012) provides an extensive overview of the literature. She is particularly concerned to draw from this advice on how local communities and governments can end violence and establish shared societies in the particular regions where these societies are located. Her analysis suggests this is no easy task, given that such efforts may be either facilitated or hindered by the kind of “social and political institutions that emerge and endure in areas of violent conflict”. This means more research is needed to understand the type of institutions that emerges from conflict. To understand how to create shared societies, we need to understand what occurs in its absence.

4. Regional and National Case Studies

In addition to papers making the case for Shared Societies and papers that discuss the costs of the absence of shared societies, a number of papers at the conference shared the experiences of a selection of countries and regions in terms of shared societies, conflict and transitions to peace. What can we learn from these regions and countries?

Hofmeyr (2012) follows South Africa’s efforts over the past 18 years, from the ending of apartheid and the first democratic elections in 1994, to establish a more shared society. According to Hofmeyr (2012) South Africa’s progress after a laudable start in the 1990s has not been even. Its story is one of initial political inclusivity marred by continuing economic exclusivity and a growing threat to even political inclusivity. “Millions of citizens still lack the agency to improve their living conditions…many continue to feel disempowered and have become disillusioned", he points out. The causes seem to be simple: continuing high unemployment and high –even increasing – inequality, both the key characteristics of non-shared (exclusive) societies.

Facing such levels of exclusivity, it is perhaps no wonder the South African economy had only managed to achieve mediocre growth rates during the strongest commodity boom since the Second World War. Hofmeyr (2012) traces part of the reason for growing inequality to the country's failed black economic empowerment programme, which had resulted in large emigration of skilled whites and which however only benefited a relatively small emerging black elite. As a result patronage and corruption have become rampant in the country in recent years (a former head of police was jailed for corruption and gangsterism and a second fired for allegations of corruption). Inter-group conflict and xenophobia have seen increasing violence. The ANC's Youth League has intensified calls for the expropriation (theft) of farms as had happened in Zimbabwe, and earlier in Uganda (e.g. Collins, 2012).

For Hofmeyr (2012) there is now an urgent need for interventions to stem the tides of unemployment, inequality, and poverty, including deliberate policies to focus again on the lost project of building the "Rainbow Nation".

Whereas the South African transition has been problematic, the Northern Ireland peace process has, according to Nolan (2012) been a "remarkable success story for a conflict that was once routinely described as intractable". He discusses how changes in the socio-political sphere can be measured and monitored in order to track whether a more shared society is emerging, or whether, as a he puts it "the continuing separation of the two ethnonationalist blocs is allowing a form of benign apartheid to grow up".

In the context of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, Nolan (2012) discusses four domains that such measures should track: (i) the sense of security people feels; (ii) equality (iii) political progress; and (iv) social cohesion. Nolan (2012) claims that there has been good progress on the basis of these measures in Northern Ireland. The transformation of the country is however, not yet complete, with concerns remaining over paramilitary activities and sectarianism.

Ottone (2012) evaluates the extent to which the Club de Madrid's concept of a Shared Society has been achieved in Latin America. He provides a historical context for the development path that contemporary states on the continent have followed. He notes that although Latin America consists of "vastly heterogeneous" countries, they face similar shortcomings in realizing a shared society, such as "high rates of poverty and indigence, persistently unequal income distribution and uneven opportunities, unsatisfactory economic growth and…a lack of solid political systems".

Ottone (2012) argues that the obstacles that these pose for shared societies to be realized in Latin America are of such a nature that supranational co-operation is needed. He calls for better and more regional integration, arguing that Latin American countries have a common destiny, and that the diversity of its peoples, political and social actors is not an obstacle to a shared society. Ottone's (2012) contribution is an important one to keep in mind when one considers that the discussion about shared societies have so far been largely on the level of a country or community – he is quite right that the interrelatedness of the global economy means that shared societies have also been intertwined above and beyond the national level.

In addition to case studies from South Africa, Northern Ireland and Latin America, the case of China also received attention at the conference. Wan (2012) notes that although China's economic growth achievement has been remarkable its income distribution has been worsening. This may now be threatening social and political stability. Wan (2012) discusses in great detail the changes and patterns and the causes of China's rising inequalities. He argues that for China to realize eventually a more shared society, its development policies need to shift from promoting growth, to prioritizing equity (through urbanisation). Such policies could include better management (and promotion) of urbanization, development of financial markets, the extension of public services, the promotion of lagging, inland regions, and the development of the service sector.

A final case study presented at the conference returns us to Africa. Collins (2012) reminds us that before Amin assumed political power in 1971 Uganda was a multi-ethnic country with a sizable Asian (Indian) minority. In 1971 however Amin expelled the Asian minority. More than 55,000 Asian's fled and more than 20,000 are still unaccounted for. The expulsion was followed by mass theft. Collins (2012) documents that "5655 firms, ranches, farms, and agricultural estates were reallocated along with cars, homes, and other household goods". As a result the Ugandan economy was devastated – real salaries and wages declined by 90 per cent in less than a decade (a similar economic catastrophe followed the expulsion of white farmers from their land in Zimbabwe, more than two decades later). With military and financial aid from Ghaddaffi's Libya, social dissent was repressed violently, resulting in massacres: "Bodies were often dumped into the River Nile".

Today, although Uganda has benefited from the return of many Asians and growth has resumed, Uganda is still far from a shared society. For Collins (2012) therefore, further economic development of Uganda critically requires further efforts towards inclusivity and cohesion.

5. Civil Society and Social Change

While much has so far been said about the desirability of Shared Societies, the question is how do they come about? Although Justino (2012) briefly touched on this, two papers at the conference illustrate how in particular civil society, in collaboration with other social change organizations, can be a catalyst for shared societies, in the context of two recent global issues or trends.

Burke (2012) examines the "Occupy" movement that arose in New York in the aftermath of the global economic crisis (see also Torres, 2012) and at the same time as the social unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, and in Europe. The Occupy movement is a "non-traditional" social change organization pressing for progressive social change – in contrast to more traditional organizations such as unions, community coalitions, and political parties. She tracks the rise in the Occupy movement to a disillusionment of people with traditional social change organizations, who are increasingly seen as being complicit in a system that "perpetuates" inequality. Hence inequality comes over strongly in her chapter, as in most of the previous, as the key concern vis-a vis shared societies.

According to Burke (2012), despite the Occupy movement's distrust of traditional social change organizations, there is strong justification for co-operation with them, not only to reduce inequality but also to fight social concerns such as debt injustice, persistent unemployment, and to fix the dysfunctional global financial system. With the power of bankers and the regulatory capture of governments by strong plutocratic interests, such an alliance of non-traditional and traditional social change organizations have become vital to press the case for a shared society.

The importance of civil society to press for social changes in favour of a more shared and inclusive society is further emphasised by Harrison (2012) who stresses that values of shared societies, such a social justice, inclusion and cohesion are “not just shared by progressive policy makers. They are also shared by millions of ordinary consumers and voters around the world”.

Harrison (2012) argues that consumer campaigners should form global alliances with other social change organizations (as Burke, 2012, also stresses) to promote shared societies. He describes, using examples of the boycott of South Africa during the apartheid era and the Fairtrade Movement, how consumer campaigns can bring about desirable social change. Such campaigns not only target governments directly, but also businesses or brands. As a result of such actions many businesses have started to take Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) more seriously, and Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSI) increasingly becomes a vehicle of choice for businesses and consumers to address issues of economic justice and human rights. Harrison (2012) lists 15 such MSIs and concludes by recommending that governments provide greater support to consumer campaigners including recent initiatives such as boycotts of banks (see also Torres (2012) and Burke (2012)) and campaigns against tax avoidance. He makes a strong case for the role that consumer campaigns can play in naming and shaming big corporations who violates the principles of shared societies and governments that tolerate such behaviour.

6. Concluding Remarks

As a whole the contributions to the Club de Madrid and Maastricht School of Management conference put forth a strong economic case for why shared societies matter, apart from their intrinsic worth. In a nutshell, it has showed us that shared societies enjoy better prospects for both material and non-material wellbeing, and material gains can be better applied in a socially and environmentally sustainable way in a shared society. Governments in shared societies tend to be better resourced - shared societies can raise more taxes for the common good. This is the case in both developing and advanced economies. Government in shared societies are more responsive to people's need, and more in contact with their populations' priorities. Firms in shared societies can draw on a stable, more contented population, where they can draw on the skills and creativity offered by all individuals. Entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation flourish in a tolerant, diverse and peaceful environment. And households that are included within broader society tend to be more resilient in the face of misfortune. Without shared societies the probability of conflicts, marginalization and disillusionment is high, and of citizens opting out of the democratic political processes.

Establishing and maintaining a shared society is however difficult, even in democratic and rich countries, as many of the case studies summarised in this paper has shown. When the Club de Madrid started the Shared Societies Project, the global financial system had not yet turned into the global maelstrom of crisis and stagnation that we had experienced these last three years. These events have confirmed in an unexpected way the significance of a shared society. When we face a crisis there is a tendency to fall back on old ways of doing things and avoid innovation, yet crises are often a sign of the failure or limitations of existing approaches. It is at times of uncertainty that innovative thinking is most needed.

So it is with the shocks that have rocked the global financial system. They are a challenge to current orthodoxies, yet in the face of these challenges the main reaction is caution. The mantra has been fiscal rectitude which translates into austerity. But as the western economies drift into recession and the public react against the impact of austerity, growth is becoming the new mantra.

We have a polarization between leaders arguing for austerity and others calling for growth though the starkness of the division is masked by the way the options are presented. On the one hand the argument is made that we need growth but it has to be built on austerity. And the alternative argument is that we need fiscal rectitude but at this moment we need to grow the economy to enable us to balance the books. These kinds of statements are still prioritizing one over the other: austerity first or growth first.

But we do not seem to get to the heart of the matter. The question is not whether we need austerity or growth. The real questions are "what kind of austerity" and "what kind of growth".

Some austerity will help us out of the present problems while other forms create a black hole from which there is no escape. Growth is needed to create wealth but the wrong growth policies will create problems down the road both for the economy and the environment. Growth based either on financial sector growth or high commodity prices and resource extraction as we have seen over the past two decades, do not lead to shared growth – one reason being that these growth paths reduces the need for taxation-accountability that underlies shared societies, increase inequalities, and can only respond to the inevitable fiscal crisis through imposition of draconian austerity measures. Hence the key question to the realisation of shared societies are how do we identify what is the right kind of austerity and the right kind of growth? One can also ask whether there may be a third factor that needs to be included in our policy equation? For example, a growing body of evidence seems to be pointing to the importance of equality in creating sustainable, meaningful economic wellbeing. Yet the austerity policies being advocated at the moment have a markedly regressive impact on equality, because those with less are the easiest to target even though they are least able to contribute. Growth policies seem equally to ignore the redistribution implications of different growth strategies.

So can we think of austerity policies and growth policies which can work together **and** have progressive impacts? Equally how do we ensure that other social impacts are factored into our assessment of policy options? Wan (2012) proposes a "theoretically sound and practically operational indicator of inclusive growth" that takes account of equity and which could be used as a performance assessment measure of progress towards an economically sound shared society. Ensuring that whatever option is chosen will improve social inclusion and cohesion should certainly, in light of the arguments offered here, be a guiding principle.

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