

Processes of Globalization and Its Effects on the Life of People in the Global South by Drawing Examples from Ghana

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Abstract

This paper uses the concept of globalization which has gain tendency in the 21st century to discuss how processes of globalization affects the life of people in the global south by drawing on the examples from Ghana. The paper discusses the forces of globalization and its constituent elements including transport, information and communication technology (ICT) and transnational corporation (TNC). The paper further touches on how processes of globalization affect the life of the people of global south with examples from Ghana by using the concept of mobility, livelihoods, production, marginalization to throw more and vivid light in that regard. In effect, the paper draws to light the positive and negative effects of globalization.

Keywords: Globalization, Global South, Ghana, Neo Liberalism, Structural Adjustment, Mobility

Introduction and definition of key terms

Globalization has become the latest buzzword, used in any and every context. The word 'globalization' has evolved over time, but it has assumed more prominence since the end of the cold war and rapid liberation of emerging economies. Since the whole process is about development and transformation the process of globalization has become the necessary consequence of the economic development which is the pursuit of most modern market economies leading to interconnectedness of most economies (Lawal, 2006). For the purpose of this paper, it would be approached from these angles. First and foremost, a look will be given at the definition of neo liberalism and globalization. Secondly, critical analysis of the concept of globalization by looking at its driving forces as well as looking at it as a double edged sword as advocated by some scholars. Last but not the least is how the processes of globalization affect the life of people in the global south and how they take part in the process by focusing on the concept of mobility and extracting examples from the reading list as well as buttressing it with examples from Ghana.

Neo liberalism is seen as representative of reform under globalization. Neo liberalism according to (Harvey, 2005:2) cited in (Thorsen & Lie, 2006) 'is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit'.

The neo liberalism rests on economic liberalizations, free trade, open markets, privatization of nationalized industries, deregulation and enhancing the role of private sector in society with the minimal role of the state in the economy. The neo liberal prescription has been seen as a panacea for spreading growth across space whilst on the other challenged and criticized by many scholars that, it has bring more inequality across space than ever before.

It is important to take note of the fact that, there is no single definition of globalization. Globalization has become a commonly used word worldwide. According to Akinlo (1998) cited in (Lawal 2006, 65) 'it is no longer a new concept or phenomenon in the academic and business world as social scientist, journalists, business analysts, management theorists, writers and commentators generally have at various times used and will continue to use the word in particular contexts for declared and undeclared purposes, with more or less effective in their attempt to explain or interpret issues in this changing and complex world' Globalization means different things to different people according to what they want to portray. Many commentators argue that this process of globalization is primarily the geographic expansion of capitalist relations rather than a qualitatively new 'global' epoch. For example, (Panitch and Gindin 2004:3) cited in (Greig, Hulme, & Turner, 2007) define globalization as 'the spread of capitalist social relations to every corner of the world', while (Greig 2007, William Robinson

2004:2, 6) also sees globalization as ‘the near culmination of a centuries long process of the spread of capitalist production around the world’. (Greig 2007; Comelieu 2002: 126) is more cautious on whether globalization involves the ongoing systemic stability of capitalism or a structural shift, suggesting that it represents both the ‘acceleration of an already existing logic’ and an ‘entirely new phenomenon in the history of humanity’. In other words, globalization has ‘moved from to the level of consciousness’ (Greig 2007; Hoogvelt 1997: 121).

Forces of globalization and their constituent elements

Globalization is driven mainly by the forces of transport, information and communication technology and last but not the least is transnational corporation (TNC). Improvement in transportation technology has shrunk the world significantly where less time is needed to travel from one place to another. For example in the 19th century, widespread use of steam engine is the dominant mode of transport whilst the 20th century has seen a commercial jet aircraft, large ocean going vessels and containerization which make movement from one place to the other easier and faster than before. In addition, improvement in technology has made communication faster and more convenient. People can communicate through telephone, e-mail, 3G video conferencing easily. Satellite technology also allows messages to be transmitted simultaneously while internet has allowed consumers to access information about new products and places easily. This has made the world a global village to live in. Transnational Corporation on the other hand play an important role as a driving forces of globalization. This stems from the fact that, they operate in many countries and have production outside the country of origin. A good example of such transnational corporation is the Toyota Motor Corporations & Microsoft Corporation which has their subsidiaries across space. They set up operation in different parts of the world to source for new markets and raw materials that can lower the production cost and in tend offer economic opportunities to people.

How processes of globalization affect life of people in the global south by drawing examples to Ghana

Mobility, Livelihoods, Production, Marginalization and Ecology are some of the important concept which can be used to throw more and vivid light on how the processes of globalization affect the people in the Global South. One may ask, what is the Global South? According to Jonathan Rigg, Global South and North dichotomy is associated with Brandt report of 1980. Global North and South are broadly associated with ‘poor’ and ‘rich’ and ‘developing’ and ‘developed’. So Global South is synonymous to poor and developing (Rigg, 2007, 3; Brandt 1980). So in short, Global South has to do with the developing countries especially in Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc.

Using the concept of mobility to understand how the processes of globalization affect the life of people in the global south can take a diverse form. One of the recurring theme in Jonathan Rigg’s book titled - An everyday geography of the global south is ‘the heightening, widening and intensifying levels of mobility that characterize the lives of people of Global (Rigg, 2007:118) This mobility not only involve the movement of individual for work but also extend to the movement of ideas, commodities, products, capital, knowledge, technology, etc all in the name of the catchphrase globalization. In my personal opinion, the processes of globalization affect the life of people in the global south in both ways; positively and negatively with regard to the concept of mobility.

It is possible to understand the process of modernization in two rather different but nonetheless interrelated and intertwined ways. Traditionally, it has been considered in terms of transformation of the economy and technology. These encompass for instance, structural changes as output and employment shifts from primary to secondary and tertiary industries. A second, less material approach to understanding modernization is to see it being driven by sequence of broader processes that include political and social as well economic and technological changes (Rigg 1997; 59). This all-encompassing change is made possible by the widening, spreading speeding up of the world wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life.

Development displacement as a result of neo liberal policies and firmly grounded in processes of globalization is one way in which the life of people in the global south has been affected. These people are compelled to move by large scale development as airports, dams, road and urban housing and many of these projects are funded by the IMF and the World Bank. The World Bank – which funds many of such projects – estimates that they displace an average of 10 million people per year. Growing awareness of the problem in the 1980s led the World Bank to impose conditions on its loans designed to ensure compensation and appropriate resettlement (Stephen Castles 2004; McDowell, 1996). Millions of development displaces experience permanent impoverishment, and end up in a situation of social and political marginalization (Stephen Castles 2003, 14; Cernea and McDowell, 2000). A clear example of such development displaces in Ghana is the construction of Asokombo Dam in 1964 as well as the ongoing construction of Bui Dam in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. Displacement means losing ties and being forced to adopt a completely new way of life, including rural – urban drift, becoming part of the floating population or spill over into the international migration (Castles, 2003).

The desire to move from one origin to another can be seen as an integral part of globalization fuelled by the forces of globalization including the mass media, ICT, digital technology, etc. Globalization involves the proliferation of cross border flows not only of capital and commodities, but also of cultural values, ideas and

people. These processes affect the everyday life of people in the global south in the context of mobility not only on national level but also on the local level or within countries. Taking the case for Ghana for instance, there is a widespread rural urban migration in Ghana as a result of inequality in the system fuelled by neo liberal ideas of free market. There exist exodus of people from the Northern part of Ghana, mainly youth and female who come to the city of Accra and Kumasi in search of jobs. After their arrival, they found themselves on the street of Accra engaging in menial jobs with the commonest among female being 'Kayeye' or head porter. This is a clear example of how globalization has affected the life of people of the global south and in this case Ghana.

At page 120 of Rigg's book- *An Everyday Geography of the Global South*, he raises a question of why people are further on a move and with a further frequency than ever before. According to him, 'as one will expect, there is no single, simple answer but embedded in this mobility revolution are a set of interlinked, sometimes reinforcing factors' (Rigg 2007:120). And again in his view, the frequency and ever mobility of people can be attributed to resources and environment as a category with land squeeze in rural areas, growing inequalities in access to land driven by the wealth concentrating effect of market led growth. Economic category with the causal factors being real decline in the value of agricultural commodities, rising costs of farm inputs, etc. Third category according to Jonathan Rigg is social category with the causal factors as mobility as a route to emancipation, growing wants driven by consumerism, changing gender norms regarding the acceptability of mobility, especially for young women. The last but not the least category with its causal factor according to Rigg is technology and its causal factor includes better roads and faster travel, cheaper travel and improved communication between sources and destination areas in terms of work opportunities and living conditions (Rigg, 2007). Linking this argument to Ghanaian context seems quite true in the sense that in Ghana, the movement of people from the urban areas to where they perceived economic opportunities notably growth pole areas in the cities of Accra and Kumasi are as a result of this resource, environment, economic, social, political and technological factors.

Another clear case where the processes of globalization affect the life of people in the global south in relation to the context of mobility is where people moves in search of economic opportunities because of the economic inequalities created by the neo liberal policy of free market economy. The example is drawn from Puruliya District on the Chottanagpur Plateau of West Bengal. In the 1960s and 1970s, poor people in the region of low agricultural productivity and few employment opportunities had a little choice than to migrate seasonally to find work. Migration was driven by distress. In the 1980s and early 1990s, however, as work opportunities expanded and real wages increased so migration became a means by which migrants could accumulate cash and, on their return, invest this in better housing, land, livestock and education of their children (Rigg 2007). This scenario of the West Bengal is clearly related to the processes of globalization because it has made it easier for the free flow of labour from one economy to another economy, where they migrate seasonally to find works, etc.

Another equally important way in which the processes of globalization has affected the life of people of the global south with reference to Ghana using the context of mobility is that, it has created a new 'network of system' which exclude the halve not and include the halves. This is explicitly buttress by Castles (2003) where according to him, globalization leads to selective inclusion and exclusion of certain societies and region in the network system.

People trafficking and smuggling is another means in which the processes of globalization which has integrated and shrunk the economies through the forces of ICT, communication, improved transport, etc. has affected the life of people at the global south. Smuggle migrants are moved illegally for profit; they are partners, however unequal, in a commercial transaction. By contrast, the movement of trafficked persons is based on deception and coercion and is for the purpose of exploitation. The profit in trafficking comes not from the movement but from the sale of a trafficked person's sexual services or labour in the country of destination. Most smuggled migrants are men whilst most trafficked persons are women and children. The trafficking of women and children occur all over the world and this is propelled by shrunk economies as result of information and communication technology especially through the internet. With this, there are adverts on various sites with promising economic opportunities like jobs and when these people do apply for these jobs, they end up doing all kind of works including prostitution.

One of the most powerful effects of globalization is the spread of education in the global south. Today, you can move in the search of the best educational facilities in the world, without any hindrance. A person living in Ghana can go to another continent for a new experience which he may not find in the home country. If one is interested, one can even get a specialization in subjects not indigenous to a country and spread that knowledge to the home country. A good example is how the people of the global south notably managers went to countries of global north to learn the best practices in the field of mass production and incorporated that knowledge in their own production units. A case to buttress this point is taking myself as an example where I move from Ghana to Norway for my masters education which is made possible by the forces of globalization including improved transport, ICT, etc. which made this possible. Also most of the academia in Ghana had their education in the global north which is made possible by the globalization which allows for free movement of people, hence

acquiring knowledge and skills from other continent other than their own.

According to Castles (2003), globalization generates factors favouring mobility which may be far more powerful than official control measures. Growth in inequality between north and south, which comes about as a result of neo liberal policy which the processes of globalization have ascribed to. This compels people in the global south to move to the global north in search of better economic opportunities. Secondly has to do with political destabilization in many countries of the South resulting from unequal power relations. This is often exacerbated by the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which undermine social policy. The political destabilization in some of the countries in the global south has resulted in the internally displaced people, refugee and asylum seekers who migrate to other part of the world especially the Global north. A third factor is the cultural attraction of northern lifestyles, beamed into every village by the mass media.

Forced migration is another way in which the processes of globalization have affected the life of people in the global south within the context of mobility. It is clear that both the positive and negative consequences of globalization have had an enormous impact on patterns of forced migration. The widening disparity between the world's wealthiest and poorest nations has resulted in huge numbers of people leaving their homes and migrating in search of work. The harsh structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and IMF have had a direct impact on the economic and political stability of many of the world's poorest countries, leading to internal conflict and war, and, as a consequence, adding significantly to the global population of refugees and internally displaced people. The positive impact of globalization in developing countries has also resulted in an increase in migration, due to better education, increased wealth and affordability of travel, and the 'globalization' of the media. Stricter immigration policies, aimed at preventing immigration from poor or developing countries, have had an extremely detrimental effect upon the ability of refugees fleeing war and persecution to seek asylum, which, in turn has led to a greater dependence on human traffickers and organized crime syndicates to ensure entry into countries which would otherwise have been impossible to penetrate.

Cultural erosion is one way in which the processes of globalization have negatively affected the life of people in the global south through the force of improved ICT. In this 21st century, satellites are linked to other technology, providing a media saturated environment where with a click of button, someone living in Accra – Ghana can get to know the happening in Trondheim -Norway in a seconds through a television or via the internet. The global consciousness of the contemporary mind 'is provided by technology originally associated with a top- down surveillance and a Cold War military history of the pace race and satellite development' (Greig 2007; Little 2004, 3). Yet ironically, this global reach also threatens the very diversity that people can now appreciate. The big question is, has globalization resulted in convergence of culture or promote greater equality. In my view, globalization has eroded the various aspect of culture in the global south notably dressing and consumer goods being paramount on the list. This also take the form of ' symbols and products of transnational corporations (mainly US companies) extend their reach across the world and crowd out local cultural symbols' (Greig 2007, 171; Hertz 2002; Klein 2001, Ritzer 1993). (Greig 2007; Holton 2000) has identified three distinct approaches to the cultural impact of globalization and these are homogenization, polarization and hybridization.

Another equally important way in which the processes of globalization affect the life of people in the global south has to do with increasingly mobile capital which offer a plethora of choices to people in the global south and at the same time with both positive and negative ramifications on their lives. According to Greig (2007), firms are able to move their facilities across space – looking to settle in an environment with the lowest costs before taking off to other more competitive climes this very possibility forces global 'discipline' on workers, whose will be bent by the TINA principles to accepting that it is natural to move a firm or industries to more congenial matter. It might not only settling in a country due solely to lower cost consideration but equally to political stability of that country because I presume, the survival, growth and optimal profit maximization has something to do with a country's political stability. No companies will be interested in locating a firm in war torn zone say Afghanistan or Somalia despite the environment possesses lower cost of their production. The establishment of firms or subsidiary companies in other country not only affect the life of people in terms of job opportunities, diverse product to enjoy but at the same time, have a profound effect on the local businesses who are into the same product, thereby stifling local businesses and rendering workers redundant when the local firm could not break even.

Furthermore, movement of people across space is one of the form in which globalization has affected the people of the global south. This stems from the fact that, improved communication network, significantly transportation either by air or by road has led to an intensifying rise in the movement of people across space as economies become shrunk than ever in search for economic opportunities, etc. A case in point is where traders in Ghana for instance due to liberal market economy travel to neighbouring country especially Togo to purchase textiles which are comparatively lower in cost than their counterpart in Ghana and this is attributed to globalization as it involves integration of both economies. This also creates job opportunity for the teeming youth in the retailing sector of Ghana.

Remittances are another form in which globalization has affected the life of people in the global south within the context of mobility. As people move or migrate to other region along regional level, within or to the global north, the money they send back to their family back in their home country is termed as the remittances. These remittances help in diverse ways and especially in Ghana, these monies are used to pay school fees, taking care of the sick, organize funerals, etc. It is also important to note that, these remittances also contribute to the economy of Ghana especially if coming from the global north

Transfer of skilled labour or brain drain can be said to be one negative ways in which the processes of globalization has affected the life of people in the global south. This comes about when the youth or the breadwinners of the family travel abroad in search of greener pastures and leaves the rest of the family behind. In case of Ghana, many medical doctors and nurses leave the country for greener pasture abroad which has a repercussion on the health delivery in most hospital in Ghana as patient doctor ratio is very high. According to Rigg (2007, 122), ‘the process of migration is seen as to lead to the loss of human capital as the young, the able and the better educated leave home; it leads to deskilling as these trained migrants take up menial work which is beneath them; it compromises the social sustainability and coherence of communities as the ‘left behind’ struggle to maintain the rhythms of life with unbalanced population profiles; and the presumed benefits of migration – in terms of remittances – is transitory and sometimes destructive as migrants and their families channel money into displays of conspicuous consumption’.

Conclusion

Though there is no single definition on globalization, (Greig 2007, 169; Robertson 1992:8) defines globalization as not only a ‘compression of the world’, but also ‘intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole’. It has been perceived by others as double edged sword with varying degree of positive and negative impacts on the life of people in the global south. The processes of globalization brings about economic opportunities, job opportunities, consumption of diverse product, flow of capital as well as deepening the inequality between the rich and the poor, environmental degradation problems, child trafficking, forced migration, development displaces as a result of the policies of the World Bank and the IMF, loss of human capital etc. It is important also to note that, this mobility not only involve the movement of individual for work but also extend to the movement of ideas, commodities, products, capital, knowledge, technology, etc. all in the name of the catchphrase globalization.

Acknowledgement

This paper is based wholly on author’s work as a student of Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The author is grateful for the comments made by the two anonymous referees. The views expressed in the paper are the authors’ own and not anyone.

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