Globalisation and Sustainability: Protagonists or Partners?

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Overview

The notion of ‘rural entitlement’

Current views of rural redistribution

Is there evidence of rural disadvantage?

The problem of rural accessibility
Globalisation?

• Has there been a term so over-used an ill defined? 
  *Probably yes, ‘sustainability’ but we’ll come to that later*

• What is it?
  – The speeding up and geographical spread of economic, social and political interactions?
  – Capital becoming less territorially bounded?
  – The homogenisation of cultural and social forms?
  – The end of geography?

• Is globalisation anything new?

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Globalisation and Rural Australia

• Traditional interpretations have focused on:
  – Shifts in the global political-economy since the 1970s
  – Global competition for commodities
  – The deregulation of the economy
  – The rise of neoliberalism/economic rationalism

• Views on what has this meant for rural communities:
  – Upheaval in rural economies
  – Major social and demographic upheaval
  – Enhanced powers of centralisation and homogenisation
  – Service and infrastructure implications
• The ‘pessimistic’ tends to focus on a deterministic set of one way impacts – global-to-local

• An alternative set of views focus on opportunities
  – Injections of global capital into rural and remote regions (though beware the staples trap…)
  – Opportunities for business and social engagement with a wider world
  – A blurring of rural-urban economic and social divides
  – New opportunities for education and training, service provision, social engagement, commerce etc.
• Taken on their own, both sets of views tend to under-emphasise space/place
  – Globalisation, however defined, is spatially uneven – with impacts/responses highly variable from place to place
  – Far from the ‘homogenisation of space’, the particularities of places seem to be becoming increasing important

  – Insert pics
A Multifunctional Regional Australia?

• No longer should we think of regional Australia as a space of primary production – now a multifunctional space
  – Production values, but increasingly diversified
  – Lifestyle/amenity migration/recreation etc.
  – Knowledge economies and learning regions
  – Conservation and protection
• Driven by a combination of global and regional/local processes
What Does This Mean in a Policy and Practice Sense?

- Diversity of impacts and implications of globalisation – both positive and negative (risks and opportunities?)

- Diverse and creative responses to policy issues

- More thoughtful approaches to sustainability policy agendas…
What about sustainability?

• Perhaps the most ill-defined, over-used term of the past 25 years?

• Simplistic functionalist definitions that emphasised interactions of economic, social and ecological processes

• How was it interpreted in the case of rural communities?
  – Preservationist/protectionist?
  – Insensitive to questions of spatial and temporal scale
  – Lacked definitional precision

• Is its utility really as a simple set of guiding principles?
Resilience and Adaptive Capacity?

• Focus on the ability of places, communities etc. to respond to (mainly external) shocks

• Particular interest in notions of social and human capital as resources to enable productive response

• Also, social and economic risk factors

• There remain questions about temporal scale and spatial variability
Protagonists or Partners: Perhaps Neither, Perhaps Both

• Globalisation (in all its guises) is a driver of transformation in rural and remote Australia – sometimes positive/sometimes negative

• Rural/remote communities should not be seen as ‘passive recipients’ of global processes – notions of ‘room to maneuver’, adaptive capacity etc. are helpful in this regard

• But, there is always a need for a dose of realism – beware the white knight (aka. Small town revival consultant!)

• Policy and practice need to be attuned to the increasing diversity of regional Australia, and the diversity of responses therein