



The ConSOC/IDB/Government Triad -

A Discussion on:

*“Public Scholarship and the Strengthening of
Civil Society”*

by

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at the

**Meeting of Caribbean Civil Society Consulting Groups
(ConSOCs), Representatives & Liaisons**

**The Courtleigh Hotel & Suites
Kingston, Jamaica
Friday, June 17, 2011 @ 8-9am**

Salutations

- Moderator, Mr. Ancile Brewster, IDB Country Office Representative, Jamaica
- ConSOC Members
- Other distinguished colleagues, ladies & gentlemen

Introduction

I am pleased to be amongst colleagues and partners across the Caribbean having the privilege to discuss a matter of critical importance to the holistic growth and development and indeed positive transformation of our region, especially over the next two decades. Let me first begin by commending the IDB for its role in the formation of the Civil Society Consulting Group (ConSOC) as a *“forum for exchanging information, strengthening dialogue, and facilitating ongoing consultations between [itself] and the civil society organizations... that are pertinent” to the work of the Bank in the countries where it operates.* Commendations are also due for your foresight in facilitating this two-day event, which brings together, especially as it underscores the importance you place on the forging of a mutually beneficial and important relationship—the **Government-IDB-Civil Society Triad** of which we will discuss today. I hope my contribution will enrich the discussions and advance the cause it is seized with addressing.

Because I am still reflexively an academic, I ask for the indulgence of your patience as I establish the foundation for my thesis. I will encourage this in you by telling you up front that the entire works of the PIOJ under my leadership has been re-oriented towards utilizing the public scholarship paradigm of which I will speak this morning. I believe this paradigm is the most productive and relevant one in furthering the mission of the PIOJ, and frankly, is most consistent with the implicit guiding principles of ConSOC, the objective of civil society, and the cause of civil society groups and stakeholders.

I have given you handouts but ask that you allow my walking you through them at the appropriate moments during my presentation and discussion.

Undoubtedly the ConSOC partnership brings together three formidable players—our civil society groups and their critical role in our development and progress; the IDB as the “principal partner for development” of the region’s economic and social sectors; and Governments, many of whom now recognize that such a partnership and collaborative relationship is fundamental for leveraging resources, building strong communities and nation, as well as strengthening and achieving a meaningful developmental process. If carefully nurtured, such a partnership can provide the ideal framework for fostering a respectful, inclusive atmosphere for discussion and decision-making about our country’s vision, plans, policies and programmes.

Therefore, not only is the occasion of this workshop opportune and an important step forward, but it is especially important for us here in Jamaica as the triad is an excellent vehicle for actualizing one of the key Guiding Principles of *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, our country's first long-term *National Development Plan* (Appendix 1). Under it our people have deemed effective partnerships across agencies, sectors, institutions and groups, an imperative for realizing their dreams and aspirations for improved development, progress and well-being for themselves and their country. This was reflected in the collective views they articulated during island wide consultations which informed the formulation of the *Vision 2030 Jamaica Plan*.

My acceptance of the invitation to engage you in discussions on this important topic this morning is driven, in part, by selfish motives. I am first and foremost a student of the issue of societal change and the collective pursuit of agency and expanded freedoms by citizens, and the role and boundaries of public policy, private agents and outside agents in this process. I am therefore seized by the opportunity of engaging your collective wisdom and experiences in my learning, and of the possibility of participating in your timely dialogue.

Globalization and Rapid Technology Change

The lasting lesson of globalization and rapid technological change of the recent decades is that the real wealth of a nation is the human capital of its citizenry, and that a nation-state can best be globally dynamically competitive if its human capital is allowed a framework within which it can be creative and entrepreneurial, and organically renew and reinvent itself.

An important sub-lesson of this period includes: the acceptance among stakeholders in non-market-based economies of the arduous, if not impossible task of constantly trying to recalibrate non-market determined pricing of economic assets to achieve allocative and technical efficiencies, as well as overall economic competitiveness; and its history of stark failure in the technologically and globally driven new world economy.

If you accept, as I do, that democracy and democratization are the market-place and vehicle for the proper valuation, pricing and transacting of political ideas and civic expressions, and of collective social will and values and aspirations of citizens, then you will share my sense that the political and civil society crisis of current and recent decades are mostly as a result of the "market failures" of democracy. By this construct, inclusive and socially just democratic renewal and modernization will address social marginalization issues, and promote agency, entrepreneurship and ownership over the problem solving of social and economic deprivation, including poverty.

Another important sub-lesson of the global crisis of current and recent decades is the recognition and acceptance that market-based economies that are dominated by an unbridled thirst for profit-seeking are, as Muhammad Yunus, the economist who founded the famous Grameen Bank of Bangladesh and was the winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize points out, suffering from a “conceptualization failure, or a failure to capture the essence of what it is to be human, and a failure to appreciate that well-functioning markets can produce unpleasant results.” Yunus further adds, “the modern conventional theory of business has often created a one-dimensional human being playing the role of business leader and so-called entrepreneur. This person in this role is often insulated from the rest of life— the religious, emotional, political, and social dimensions. This person is dedicated to one mission only— maximizing profit— and is supported by other one-dimensional human beings who give their investment money to achieve this mission.” According to Yunus, “this person and his or her supporters know the price of everything and the value of nothing” (quoted by Oskar Wilde).

With this frame as background, I offer that goods and political market participation have important social dimensions that go well beyond pursuing national economic development through the solving of economic efficiency challenges in the use of scarce economic resources. As often advanced by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, the freedom to participate in market exchange and transactions, and I add, political and democracy markets as well, “is itself part and parcel of the basic liberties that people have reason to value.” They offer important actionable and psychic benefits in the forms of inclusiveness, fairness, and empowerment, as well as transparency, accountability and guarantees about government action. They therefore promote transitive dignity in socially-just self-agency among citizens while giving important feedback on the democracy market valuation of individual and collective aspirational goals. Political markets therefore play a critical basic role in social living and socially just and inclusive sustained improvements in well-being.

By this framework, nation-states are enhanced and advanced, and national development occurs by this market process *when, and only when*, the institutional framework governing and incentivizing citizen behavior is such that when an individual or social or economic collective seeks to maximize their self interest, it also enhances the national interest and social and economic wealth. That is, the national interest and wealth are enhanced by an amount greater than the sum of the private gains to the self-interest maximizing individuals and/or groups.

By the same logic, if the maximization of individual or group self-interest diminishes the national interest and wealth, i.e., the national “whole” is less than the sum of its parts, as is the case when individuals pursue their self-interests through corruption, degradation of the natural environment, crime and systemic criminality including tax evasion, then the institutional framework governing the structure of incentives facing individuals and entities is fraught with

perverse incentives that make self-maximizing behavior counter-productive to national development.

The work of the PIOJ under my leadership is premised on the certainty that the valuation and transacting of social aspirations and values, including heightened humanness, social justice, balanced environmental stewardship, through democratic markets, and within an institutional and incentive framework that organically values and reproduces them, is the best way to build sustainable competitive socially just economies in the new world economic paradigm of globalization and rapid technologic change.

Public Scholarship

My thesis is that public scholarship is an ideal paradigm and vehicle for the pursuit and achievement of the worthy ends discussed above. Public scholarship in this context is defined as “knowledge-making through a collaborative co-learning approach about, with, and for diverse publics and communities.” It involves stakeholders, such as the representatives in the triad of our discussion, combining knowledge from across agencies and formal disciplines with the creative human capital, localized knowledge and “experience” human capital of community members, for the purpose of creating new conciliant knowledge on, and problem-solving about, pressing development, well-being and civil society concerns.

What is critical in this process is that the interdisciplinary and inter-group nature of the public scholarship engagement entails the dignified participation and thus strengthening of the capacity of residents of a community to be agents, if not owners, of the pursuit and production of their development, well-being and freedoms.

Public scholarship is therefore both an organizing principle and nexus for connecting the paradigm and vehicle of our institutions and engagements to the civic purpose and aspirations of communities, thereby giving the Triad a use-inspired platform, with the centrality of the self-agency of communities, to collaboratively engage in knowledge-making about the present and imagine the future. It is a synthetic method which merges a variety of agencies, disciplines and stakeholders into a vehicle for mobilizing, concentrating, channeling and intertwining the renewal and development aspirations of residents and citizens with creativity and knowledge-making processes. This is for the purpose of identifying and commoditizing *use* and *exchange values* of community aspirations and assets.

At its core is an appreciation of the principal roles of creativity and entrepreneurship in the creation of dynamic and modern “communities,” and that the cultural and economic renewal and re-branding of a community is as much about a created experience as it is about inherent merits of location, circumstance and/or historical and cultural assets.

This public scholarship process depends on the productivity of the collaboration between the differentially skilled and experienced partners, and is especially relevant in situations where ecological, social and/or economic distresses have disenfranchised residents of the ability to satisfy their basic needs, which in turn has restricted their social, civic and economic developments and wider freedoms. In its essence it makes residents equal and valued partners in problem-solving over their circumstances, thereby affirming their dignity in self-agency, and creating an important basic liberty that they have reason to value.

Economy of Institutional Change

In addition to the merits of the paradigm discussed above, public scholarship is also an effective paradigm in the economy of institutional change. It does this by “assetizing” and commoditizing group dialogue and collaboration, localized “experience-knowledge,” the process of knowledge-making, and community agency into a political marketplace product. This links the modern relevance and “valuableness” of social, economic and political institutions and their officers, with the effectiveness of their engagement with, and embrace and problem-solving of, the difficult community issues that are entailed in the changing character and demands of modern civil society.

Public scholarship as a paradigm therefore values and commoditizes malleability in government and political, social, educational and economic institutions, and rewards— as framed in the work of Nobel laureate Douglas North— new and/or dynamic organizations that can efficiently and competitively negotiate and transact the cost of dynamic relevance in the new global and technologically driven societal paradigm.

Jamaica’s Experience

The rest of my formal comments will highlight how this public scholarship paradigm was used to successfully establish three critical foundations of Jamaica’s future, and is gearing up to drive a fourth leg.

I will then turn to discussions and questions.

Ponder with me the implications of my comments within the context of ***Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan***. What is the meaning of its four goals, which are a conciliation of our collective aspirations, and its intended articulation into the creation of a Jamaica where justice, fairness, opportunities, hope and economic and human development are transitive and valued across all our communities and residents, including those residing in volatile, vulnerable and squatter communities with high human insecurity? As a reminder, the goals of Vision 2030 Jamaica are as follows:

1. To empower Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential
2. To make the Jamaican society secure, cohesive and just
3. To make the Jamaican economy prosperous
4. To make the Jamaican natural environment healthy



At the PIOJ we have developed a dashboard of Indicators of National Well-Being to help us measure our progress. Plan implementation will be pursued through three-yearly Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) and detailed Sector Plans which establish important milestones along the journey to 2030. Appendix 1 - *Vision 2030 Jamaica* details the metrics we have developed to track our progress. These metrics indicate our concurrence with the increasing global recognition of the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance, national development, social progress, and of the importance of data and evidence-based analysis in guiding public policy aimed at translating society's collective conciliant aspirations into national development.

We are proud of the general progress we are making towards our goals, and especially delighted that in the murder rate, justice status case clearance rate and adult literacy rate, we are already close to our 2015 medium term goals.

More important and relevant for our present discussion, however, the GOJ is now being held to the *Vision 2030 Jamaica* goals by every civil society group, ministry and business interest. A perusal of Appendix 2 entitled *State, Non-State and Private Sector Participants in the Public Scholarship of Strengthening Civil Society* will offer a compelling reason. This listing highlights the extensive and inclusive collaborative knowledge making process *Vision 2030 Jamaica* endured.

Ditto for the Community Renewal Programme, Growth Inducement Strategy, Partnership for Transformation, and the Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Project. The latter will address the nation's preparedness to develop a risk management approach to abating the potential damages from the climate hazards that we know about and to which we are exposed, and which we can take preventative, mitigating and adaptation measures to offset and withstand their impacts (Appendixes 3, 4 and 5).

Integrated disaster risk management approach is a fundamental principle on which *Vision 2030 Jamaica* is built and which informs the country's thrust towards dealing with climate change. It is for this reason that "*Climate Change Adaptation, Hazard Risk Reduction, and the Sustainable Use and Management of our Natural Resources* are Key Outcomes under Goal 4 of the Plan: "*Jamaica has a Healthy Natural Environment*".

In keeping with this philosophy, the mantra of the PIOJ is that "development and sustainable freedom is about our country achieving a balanced stewardship between the demands of the natural environment, the demands of the built environment, and the demands on both to deliver sustained improvements in the well-being of residents."

Public scholarship advances our ability to knowledge-make in all the related areas of this quest. For example, it will help us understand how our environment can become more resilient through the rehabilitation of watersheds and the restoration and protection of coastal and marine ecosystems, and through capacity building within key institutions and general awareness in building practices.

Closing Thoughts

At the PIOJ we believe that increased national awareness and the humanizing of the demands of making societal progress towards the nation's conciliant aspirations, creates an improved environment for inclusive policy making and decision making involving stakeholders at multiple levels, including at the level of households, businesses and civil society.

Public scholarship at once offers both social capital and public capital towards the achievement of this end. Social capital strengthens the relationships between groups and fosters greater intergroup dialogue. Public capital represents important transparency guarantees and accountability on government's collaborative partnership, facilitation, contributions and role in the process of national development and platforms the transformation, modernization and development process.

Within this relational paradigm it is important that civil society fulfills their organic role of giving the nation the holistic and comprehensive real-time feed-back essential to crafting development plans that are 'people-oriented' and citizen-centered. This will promote a better balance in public policy and private sector economic choices between macroeconomic and microeconomic issues as they relate to well-being and development issues, and the placing of a primacy on "human development" in public policy planning. Towards this end:

- it is critical that civil society Groups be among the drivers of our national renewal and development initiatives and pressure government into integrity of commitment;
- it is critical that civil society stakeholders guard against becoming advocates for narrow profiteering, rent seeking or special interests, or themselves violating the important market tenet and arrogating to themselves the arrogance of the moral superiority and righteousness of their issues, rather than respecting the process of being a part of a market competition of ideas; and that
- Government agencies, and especially the PIOJ in its chief advisory role, while remaining grounded in evidence-based statistical and empirical analysis and policy framing and advice, should actively practice a recognition that the process of knowledge-making through Public Scholarship must also draw on the input and expertise of civil society.
- **(see Appendix 6)**

IDB should:

- strive to facilitate the provision of the enabling environment for the collaborative process to become productive;
- promote initiatives that show a respect for how public scholarship can inform well-being and economic development assessments and policy guidance;
- offer financial resource and technical advice towards the ends identified immediately above; and
- be sensitive to the extent to which its assistance coincides with country priorities— social, economic, environmental and governance— especially those identified and agreed on through the democratic process of public scholarship.

END