CHANGING NOTIONS OF POLITICAL COMMUNITY THROUGH SUBNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to address the question whether, in the face of growing dominance of globalisation, political communities will become less nationalistic and state-centric. The focus is on conceptually redefining the traditional notion of political community by looking at how transnational community is formed through social and political communication. After outlining the definitional minefield of concepts three metaphors or images of transnational community-building, namely transactionalism, cosmopolitanism and neo-medievalism are discussed. From there, the dynamics of the subnational external relations of provinces and municipalities are examined. Specific attention is paid to the Free State province and the Local Municipality of Mangaung and the way in which basic political values of citizenship and rights are communicated and inculcated.

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars of International Relations (IR) are generally reluctant to think of political community as existing outside the bounds of the territorial state, be that international or transnational community. Despite the pervasive manifestations of globalisation the myth persists that the state is the only form of political society.

The focus in this article is firstly on conceptually redefining the traditional notion of political community by looking at how transnational community is formed through social and political communication. Secondly, emphasis is placed on subnational politics in the form of the IR of provinces and local municipalities. Specific attention is paid to the Free State province and the Local Municipality of Mangaung. The Free State Centre for Citizenship Education and Conflict Resolution (CCECR) is referred to since it stands uniquely between government and local civil society. During its existence, the Centre played an invaluable role in communicating and inculcating basic political values of citizenship and rights.

One of the questions that the research seeks to address is whether, in the face of the growing dominance of globalisation, political communities will become less nationalistic. In practice subnational players become integrated into a dense web of multi-layered diplomacy and their role with regard to external interactions cannot be negated. However, if not properly co-ordinated such interactions may prove to be detrimental to building the national character of newly democratised states. But such interactions may also add value to national efforts of projecting the state as part of a globalised world. In the South African case there are very definite constitutional limitations and local actors will have to find innovative ways of working with, and not against, those restrictions. This can only happen if intergovernmental policy (from national to provincial and local spheres of government) is communicated clearly and in the interest of all subnational stakeholders.

In comparison with the European experience of transnational community and examples such as Canada and Austria where empirical evidence is abundant, evidence is generally hard to come by in the South African context. As yet no systematic documentation exists and one has to rely on informants at the IR desks of the provincial premiers and documents and policy frameworks of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Departments of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) to construct a coherent picture. Much of the international interaction between provinces and organised local government takes place at elite, person-to-person level, the so-called "direct dial diplomacy". One can nevertheless glean some emerging patterns.

The article begins by outlining the definitional minefield of concepts and then presents three metaphors or images of transnational community-building, namely transactionalism, cosmopolitanism and neo-medievalism. From there, the dynamics of subnational external relations in the Free State province are examined.

STEERING THROUGH THE CONCEPTUAL MINEFIELD

In this article the term "community" refers to the idea of human association in which

members share common symbols and wish to co-operate in order to realise common objectives (Linklater 2001:621). There are many forms of community such as local communities (e.g. neighbourhood groups), national communities (e.g. nation-states), transnational communities (e.g. scientific associations or international nongovernmental organisations), and virtual communities (in cyberspace). Politics forms part and parcel of all such communities where collective decisions have to be taken regarding the allocation of scarce resources and values. However, not all of them can be termed "political communities". The key aspect which distinguishes a political community from, for instance, a religious community, is the fact that the former has strong aspirations to govern itself and to be free from alien rule (Linklater 2001:621). As Devetak (2002:173) remarks, "it is about expanding the self-legislative capacities of all humans". According to this definition, the nation-state can then be classified as a political community, where the state claims legitimacy on the basis of the fact that it represents the nation. So, in a traditional sense a political community refers to a community of people who share a sense of allegiance to the same government and display a willingness to work together to settle their conflicts in a non-violent manner (Nwabuzor & Mueller 1985:55).

Such a sense of belonging is promoted through inter- and intra-community communication. The state became the dominant form of political community as a result of warfare and the process of industrialisation. Benedict Anderson (in Linklater 2001:620) argues that "print capitalism" made the development of national consciousness possible. Books, newspapers, radio and television communicated common national symbols and a shared sense of history. Industrialisation led to the emergence of national languages and cultures. The sheer volume of commercial transactions could only take place if strangers were able to communicate in the same language.

A distinction is made between the concept of the nation as a political community with collective political aspirations and the idea of a nation as an ethnic group or cultural community characterised by a strong exclusionary identity (Heywood 2002:106). In line with this thinking, Eric Hobsbawm (in Heywood 2002:109) also contended that nationalism rather than ethnicity forms the basis of nations. Unlike a community built on an ethnic identity, the identity of a political community is culturally heterogeneous. Despite strenuous efforts, no state has ever succeeded in maintaining or creating a truly homogeneous national political culture. In this regard Tilly (1998:406-407) points out that the nation-state depended enormously on the interaction of transnational forces (be that through trade or other means). The existence of transnational communities is therefore nothing new.

Throughout history states have been able to project their power across borders which made global empires possible. The state has therefore been a principal architect of globalisation. "Globalisation" is defined in this context as including all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world or global society (Albrow in Scholte 2001:15). The impression is often created that globalisation is only an external process being imposed from the outside. However, globalisation does not

merely change the external environment within which states operate, but also simultaneously reflects internal change in the very nature of states' functions (Clark 1999:107; Devetak 2002:169). Globalisation affects both external and internal sovereignty in terms of relations between public and private actors, but does not necessarily uproot the state as one of the key referents of political community. Hence the state is not only a prime architect of globalisation, but also an active agent in the process of communication from within.

ALTERNATIVE IMAGES OF POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

I have borrowed the term "images" from Fry and O'Hagan (2000:5-6) who view it as a picture that draws us to what is thought to be an important feature. It seeks to simplify, to influence, and to depict a complex reality. At the same time "image" represents, but is distinct from a theory or theoretical perspective.

Transactionalism: transnational community through social and political communication

The first alternative image of political community views transactions as being the basis for building pluralistic security communities. At the heart of this transactionalist approach lies the assumption that social and political communication is the cement of political communities (Archer 2001:146-148). As Adler and Barnett (1998:7) remark, "communication processes and transaction flows between peoples become not only 'facilities for attention' but factories of shared identification. Through transactions such as trade, migration, tourism, cultural and educational exchanges, and the use of physical communication facilities, a social fabric is built not only among elites but also the masses, instilling in them a sense of community". In this context economic and political transactions are more than just the quantitative exchange of goods and services and have the potential of becoming the qualitative cornerstone for fostering trust and cohesion within the community. This line of argumentation is consistent with Jürgen Habermas's theory of "communicative action", according to which communication and action are different sides of the same enterprise (Barnett & Adler 1998:416, 417). Quantification cannot replace in-depth analysis of qualitative change in communication and subgroup formation. A combination of such methods is necessary to understanding how the kinds of intrastate processes which ultimately should lead to building a national character in domestic politics could also be made applicable to the transnational (suprastate) and subnational realms.

Cosmopolitan democracy and transnational citizenship

The second image draws on the issue of citizenship which is a powerful theme in all political communities and also fundamentally affected by globalisation.

The notion of cosmopolitan or global citizenship is currently very much in vogue, especially in relation to the experience of the European Union (EU). In this respect Nobel laureate Joseph Rotblat (in Urry 2003:97) argues that we must develop an allegiance to humanity rather than to the nation: "We must exploit the many new channels of communication to bring us together and form a truly global community."

At the root of cosmopolitanism lies the question of whether globalisation is changing one of the fundamental assumptions of modern political communities, namely that citizens have special duties to each other and fewer responsibilities to the rest of the human race Globalisation often prompts political communities to question the idea that the interests of their citizens should be promoted above all else (Linklater 2001:626; Kaldor 2003:18). According to this view, increased global interconnectedness through co-operation and communication around common issues promotes a tolerant global civil society.

It would, however, be foolish to assume that cosmopolitanism can replace localism or the role that separate communities play in the lives of human beings, i.e communitarianism. Communitarianism is associated with fraternity and a willingness to share burdens with one's fellow-citizens (Bealey 1999:75). The shift towards the local is at once a reaction to and a manifestation of globalisation and the decline of the nation-state. Michael Walzer is sceptical of the notion that individuals will simply exchange their membership of particular societies for membership of a cosmopolitan world order and maintains that concepts of citizenship and community are inextricably linked to the nation-state (Linklater 2001:630). As an alternative, one could argue that cosmopolitanism and localism form a continuum where individuals' attitudes might range in strength depending upon the degree of attachment to either the national or the local.

A cosmopolitan model of democracy is viewed as a radical alternative for fostering peaceful global governance. At the macro-institutional level 'topdown' democratic reform is proposed to achieve

- the establishment of regional parliaments such as the EU;
- the entrenchment of human rights conventions in national parliaments and the monitoring of compliance by a new International Court of Human Rights;
- the establishment of a new co-ordinating economic agency at regional and global levels; and
- radical reform of the United Nations (UN) Security Council or replacement of the UN with a genuinely democratic and accountable global parliament.

At grassroots-level democratisation 'from below' refers to the emancipatory potential of global civil society. Individuals belonging to groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch can exert a lot of power in favour of radical institutional change (Dunne 2001:173-175). Their role is fundamentally to serve as a check upon forms of government and their use of power.

The normative underpinnings of cosmopolitanism are confirmed by Kaldor's (2003:19) description of cosmopolitan democracy as "a commitment to humanist principles and norms, an assumption of human equality, with a recognition of difference, and ... a celebration of diversity". For Held cosmopolitan democracy is necessary to correct the democratic deficit (Griffiths 1999:77) evident at state level, in transnational corporations, international organisations and even global social movements. He strongly contends that in the context of globalisation national communities do not have the exclusive right to make decisions for themselves. The institutionalisation of cosmopolitan principles of equal moral worth and active agency can only take place in the context of the entrenchment of accessible and open public forums (Held 2002:313). Cosmopolitanism is therefore first and foremost a value system aimed at inducing a radical rethinking of political community based on principles of universal justice.

The notion of public forums implies, once again, the importance of community communication. Linklater's vision of overlapping and intersecting dialogical communities is based on the premise that an altered post-sovereign state fulfils the role of facilitator, enabling "multiple political authorities and loyalties to develop, and to endeavor to bring harmony through dialogue to the great diversity of ethical spheres which stretches from the local community to the transnational arena" (Devetak 2002:174).

Critics argue that cosmopolitan democracy is overly idealistic and unworkable at the global level where there is no counterpart to the nation. However, just like the modern territorial state was not built overnight, the transformation of political community to a multilevel, multilayered cosmopolitan polity is going to take equally long.

Neo-medievalism
A third image of political community is neo-medievalism, which refers to an ideal political order in which individuals are governed by a number of overlapping authorities. Europe in the Middle Ages – before the rise of the modern state – was organised in such a way. In this cobweb image of world order the state remains as one of the authorities, but transfers some powers to international institutions (e.g. in respect of global problems), transnational market actors, agents of civil society, and to domestic regions. In the words of Linklater (2001:627), "loyalty to the state would coexist with loyalties to substate and transnational political authorities. None of these authorities would reign supreme".

Although loyalties and identities are shifting, together with a weakening of the state's monopoly over the concept of citizenship, this image does not as yet see a global ethos of human solidarity emerging. In contrast to cosmopolitanism, the neo-medievalist image is a complexification of the experience of contemporary world politics, but it does not herald the dawn of a new era where the interests of the whole transcends the interests of the parts (Falk 2000:109-11).

GLOBALISATION AND PATTERNS OF GOVERNANCE
A shift in focus away from the politics of hierarchical and institutionalised (territorial)

forms of government towards less formalised supraterritorial networks of governance is thus noticeable. The Commission on Global Governance defines "governance" as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs" (Makinda 2000:163). "Global governance" refers in short to formal and informal sets of arrangements in global politics. Globalisation and global governance give rise to new forms of political community, which in turn shape the structures and processes of governance. What holds a political community together is also what holds global governance structures together. As the Commission on Global Governance remarks, global governance is a means "through which conflicting and diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken" (Makinda 2000:163).

The Janus-faced character of globalisation is epitomised by the twin processes of integration and fragmentation where some political communities become increasingly enmeshed in the global order while others are becoming more marginalised. The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia is a good example of violent nationalism destroying a multicultural political community. Non-Western communities, such as the Muslim political community, struggle to preserve control over local identities, symbols, and values in the face of the media's communication of a Western message. Thus localisation, nationalism, and ethnic and religious revivalism have assumed importance partly because of the threat which universalisation poses to different cultures, standards, and interests (Makinda 2002:175; Held et al. 2000:7-8). In this regard Halliday (1994:106) refers to religion, sport and satellite TV as examples of new forms of division and chauvinism or particularist hegemony. Linklater (2001:624), however, does not see such cases as a challenge to globalisation. In the context of the developed world, in fact, these developments are "an expression of a globalizing political culture which attaches great value to national and cultural differences between people". This is evidenced in the more stable political communities such as Canada, Italy, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Hence it is not a case here of integration *versus* disintegration, but rather "fragmegration" in which globalisation and localisation are two sides of the same coin.

The involvement of other actors in governance often complements the actions of states, but on other occasions they compete with the actions of governments. Four broad types of governance are distinguished, namely substate, suprastate, marketised, and civil society (Scholte 2001:24-27). In the words of Held (2002:320), new patterns of governance are "diffused 'below', 'above' and 'alongside' the nation-state". For the purposes of this article the emphasis falls on the substate form of governance. The study follows the general trend of transnational identities as being an elite-centered phenomenon. The article therefore focuses on the role of subnational (provincial and municipal) political elites, officials, and bureaucrats in the formation of transnational political community.

Direct transborder links between substate authorities are on the increase. Rosenau (in Geldenhuys 1998:20) describes this phenomenon as "subgroupism", when "individuals redefine their loyalties in favour of more close-at-hand collectivities". Subnationally

provinces, *Länder*, regions, states and local governments (municipalities) make policy decisions that bypass central governments. They also forge international partnerships, engage in efforts of micro-regionalism and/or sign international agreements. As an example of micro-regionalism, some Austrian *Länder* together with Italian provinces, Swiss cantons and the Alpine court of the German *Land* of Bavaria constitute a transborder working group which is quite influential in the making of foreign policy (Van Wyk 1998:21, 24). Furthermore, provinces of Canada and China, as well as most of the US federal states, now have their own 'diplomatic' missions abroad. In Europe, some fifty substate regional governments in seventeen countries maintain direct links through the Assembly of European Regions. Municipalities are also increasingly entering into transborder agreements to co-operate around issues of mutual concern, such as pollution control, crime prevention, disarmament and development. An example of such a body is the World Association of Major Metropolises (Scholte 2001:24).

THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE FREE STATE

Traditionally, the task of foreign policy rests in the hands of national government, primarily the Executive (e.g. the President) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Few national constitutions actually provide subnational governments with opportunities in this respect. At the same time, within a federal-type system (such as in the case of South Africa), provinces and local governments have the right to draft their own constitutions and they also have a wide range of constitutionally recognised and protected powers such as in the areas of agriculture, regional development and local government. After December 2000, local government became endowed with considerably more responsibilities and powers in respect of direct service delivery functions and the management of their localities to ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability. However, the constitutional position of provinces and local governments in external relations is far from clear. As far as foreign policy is concerned, power remains centralised (Van Wyk 1998:29; Geldenhuys 1998:5). The Office of the Chief State Law Advisor (International Law) in the DFA does provide a "Practical guide and procedures for the conclusion of agreements", but has built in a number of checks and balances. See in this regard Section 231(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 where it is clearly stated that "[t]he negotiating and signing of all international agreements are the responsibility of the national executive". International agreements of a "technical, administrative or executive nature" do not require ratification or accession and must merely be tabled in the two Houses of Parliament (Section 231(3)).

This notwithstanding, the South African government recognises the role of subnational governments in international affairs and emphasises the need to keep the lines of communication open:

> The execution of our foreign policy, a central government function, cannot be determined and directed without the recognition of activities, needs and the potential of provincial and local governments. As seven of the nine provinces border states of

Southern Africa, it is of vital importance that the formulation of a foreign policy framework for Southern Africa in future be determined in consultation with the provincial governments (Van Wyk 1998:54).

In this regard the establishment of the Directorate: Provincial Liaison in the DFA in 1995 to promote communication between national government and the provinces in matters of foreign affairs is promising. The functions of this body relates to issues of co-ordination to ensure inclusion of provinces in international agreements; facilitation of provinces' international agreements; training of provincial officials in international relations; and assisting provinces in maintaining external relations such as visits and membership of international bodies (Geldenhuys 1998:52).

Reasons for the growing international role of non-central governments

In spite of the constitutional obstacles the internal and external environments encourage provinces and local governments to expand their external relations. Firstly, the demands of globalisation amplifies the need for increased transnational co-operation to foster links in fields such as language and culture, environmental protection, traffic regulation, crime prevention, disaster management, animal control and diseases, tourism, border control, trade, and industry (Geldenhuys 1998:6). Common problems therefore, but also increased internal and external competition between provinces (De Villiers 1995:135-136) over scarce resources in a cutthroat neo-liberal environment, necessitate greater subnational involvement in international affairs. Add to that the opportunities created by information and communications technology, then it is no wonder that subnational governments are beginning to assert themselves in the area of external relations.

Secondly, due to a lack of communication, insensitivity or ineffectiveness, national governments do not always meet the developmental and economic needs of the provinces, thereby forcing them to enter into partnerships which could bypass national government (Van Wyk 1998:26; Geldenhuys 1998:17,19). Hocking (in Geldenhuys 1998:16) observes in this regard that central government can no longer claim exclusive control over foreign affairs: "[T]he various levels of government have legitimate international interests and these have to be accommodated rather than denied."

Thirdly, agreements signed by the national government have spillover effects to the provincial and local level, particularly since provinces participate in the negotiation as well as the implementation of such treaties. A typical example of this would be the European Union Partnership Support Programme (EUPSP) (1997-2002) which assisted members of the new government in performing their duties in terms of their democratic mandate. The original relationship was established by the national parliament with the legislatures of all nine provinces becoming involved later. Members of provincial legislatures were empowered and given resources enabling them to run effective legislatures (Tshabalala 21/07/04). Spillover works both ways. Agreements concluded at the national level often deal with matters within the jurisdictional domain of provincial and local government, such as environmental protection, tourism and crime. Subnational initiatives may also in turn affect the governance of foreign relations at national level (Geldenhuys 1998:16-17).

Finally, "subgroupism" or micro-regionalism is encouraged in the South African context. The geographical proximity of seven of the nine provinces to sovereign states facilitates cross-border co-operation (De Villiers 1995:135). See for example the relations of Mpumalanga with Gaza and Maputo in Mozambique.

Forms of sub-national external interaction in the Free State

Provincial government

An interview with Ms M. Mosala, Deputy Director in the Intergovernmental Relations Directorate in the Office of the Premier of the Free State on 23 July 2004, confirms the strong centralised control of DFA over the external relations of the provinces. Provincial international relations are approached in a fairly fragmented manner with provinces taking their cue from national government. National government initiates contact with a foreign country and informs the provinces of the possibilities of establishing links with entities in those countries. The provinces then have to decide whether they wish to pursue those links. The DFA ensures that no duplication of contacts takes place and that provincial contacts do not clash with national priorities.

The external relations of the Free State province and local government take many forms. Firstly, symbolic foreign policy was conducted through "transborder regional micro-diplomacy" when the Free State received a courtesy visit from a Lesotho delegation in August 1997. Two months later the Free State was officially represented at the enthronement of King Letsie III of Lesotho (Geldenhuys 1998:36). This type of interaction is considered to be ceremonial rather than substantial and is marked by informal contacts which are conditioned by geographic proximity. No reference to any agreements between the two sides could be found and no formal attempts at establishing crossborder integration have been initiated.

Secondly, in contrast to the previous type of interaction, "transregional micro-diplomacy" is much more formal and takes place between non-contiguous sub-national authorities. The Free State provincial government concluded sister or twinning agreements with its counterparts in Flanders (Belgium) on education and training; in South Australia and Victoria (Australia) on the transfer of skills; and in Saskatchewan (Canada) on general co-operation (Geldenhuys 1998:39). As part of the agreement with Saskatchewan, visits to various Canadian government departments and the provincial legislature were undertaken (Geldenhuys 1998:39; Van Wyk 1998:47). Twinning agreements are not international agreements, but rather an informal arrangement indicating mutual intentions and goodwill. It does not entail a legally binding document (Department of Provincial and Local Government 1999). Van Wyk (1998:47) also reports that the Free State had an agreement with Spanish communities in the areas of business, sport, science and culture. At present agreements of co-operation with Angola, Lesotho, China, and the province of Antwerp (Belgium) exist around issues of economic and social development as well as training.

Lastly, more evidence exists with regard to the third type of interaction, namely "global para-diplomacy". This includes official visits and formal agreements. Due to constitutional restrictions, to date no province has opened a representative office

abroad. In the Free State, former Premier Lekota, for example visited Taiwan and China. Members of Executive Committees (MECs) and officials undertake frequent study visits overseas (e.g. Hong Kong, Mauritius), reflecting the individual's departmental responsibilities. In a less formal sense than partnership agreements, arrangements for assistance in the areas of community policing and rural development (Britain); agriculture (the Netherlands); and health (Japan, Belgium, Britain, and the EU) towards the end of the 1990s should be mentioned (Geldenhuys 1998:43-44).

Organised local government

In July 1999, the DPLG published a policy framework on Municipal International Relations (MIR). The document reflects an understanding of the challenges posed by major global economic, political and technological changes and their impact on local economies and the ability of local authorities to communicate and interact more effectively. The main purpose of the document is to assist national, provincial, organised local government, and individual municipalities to develop quality MIR programmes in order to support both South Africa's internal developmental needs as well as its approach to foreign relations. Such a support framework would not only benefit municipalities and their respective communities, but could also mitigate the problems at local or municipal project level such as the lack of sustainability and the danger that international exchange could distract local governments from their internal developmental priorities. So in essence, the policy framework serves as an instrument to make communication about sharing ideas and innovations between municipalities, local nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) and private associations as part of a global network of local government players more effective.

It is interesting to note that co-operative community communication has become less ceremonial and more substantial and project focused. Communication has become much more systematic with an emphasis on tangible results. This shift reflects the complex (non-linear) nature of contemporary linkages. Furthermore, embryonic signs of building a cosmopolitan community is also evident in the stated objective of building "relationships across national and cultural divisions and contribute in this way to international understanding and world peace" (DPLG 1999).

The South African Cities Network (SACN) – a partnership of the nine largest cities and SALGA – promotes good governance of South African cities and seeks to analyse strategic challenges facing South African cities in the context of global economic integration and national development. SALGA is mandated to represent South African local government at a regional and international level. In terms of networking and partnerships the SACN forms part of a regional and global city network and works closely with African cities (South African Cities Network 2002).

According to Mr M.G. Silwana, Executive Director: Strategy and Transformation in the Office of the City Manager of Mangaung Municipality, the city has had a number of sister city arrangements in the areas of governance, tourism, economy and development. Twinning arrangements exist between the municipalities of Mangaung

and Welkom and Chinese cities (Mosala 23/07/04). At present the DPLG and the national government of Belgium are co-operating with six South African municipalities of which Mangaung is one. Three projects are currently in operation, namely

- a partnership arrangement with Flanders regarding research around youth development;

- a sister city agreement with the city of Ghent in Belgium of which specific deliverables would be finalised in September 2004; and

- a cultural partnership with the city of Amsterdam, with a Mangaung delegation having met their Dutch counterparts in August 2004.

While twinning is still important, Free State local government is also beginning to use more flexible networks in the form of joint programmes of research, learning, information and technology sharing, management development, co-ordinated action on common problems and economic co-operation (Silwana 30/07/04).

As a result of the paradoxical position that provinces find themselves in constitutionally and practically, a vacuum is created within which institutional mechanisms of communication become essential in building not only a unique Free State community, but also a provincial and local community which draws its identity from its communication with external communities. In 1996, the Centre for Citizenship Education and Conflict Resolution (CCECR) came into being to promote democracy, protect human rights (including the rights of minorities), prevent discrimination and resolve conflict in the Free State (Ellis 2004). The Centre was unique in the sense that it was the only provincial statutory body of its kind in the country. It was somewhat of a hybrid – a mixture of government and civil society. Since the Centre served as communicator of the values underpinning a democratic and tolerant political community in the Free State, its closure in September 2003 confirms the contention that the road to building meaningful transnational coalitions to support the national cause is an arduous one. No attempt was made to capitalise on the vast network of contacts which the Centre built up. Since the building of political community is first and foremost an elite affair, it is ironic that the very elite displays such short-sightedness.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL COMMUNITY? SOME EXPLORATORY THOUGHTS IN CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to highlight the reality that new forms of governance have defined the discipline of IR in recent times. The article was furthermore aimed at encouraging thinking about alternative forms of political community which includes an expansion of political community not only beyond the frontiers of the sovereign state, but also by deepening and multiplying them within those frontiers. Such reconfiguration is characterised by a blurring of lines between the internal and the external. So viewed on the whole, the article examined how local and global alliances formed between actors in different locations undermine the notion of internally homogeneous and externally bounded sectors. The role of social and political communication as a vehicle for the creation of political community was highlighted throughout.

Although it has been argued in this article that the redefinition of political community is an emerging global trend, this observation needs to be qualified by a healthy dose of realism. Although central governments can benefit immensely from subnational units striving to promote national objectives through their own external initiatives, the risks of decentralisation are also very real.

In the case of the Free State, as in all the other provinces, constitutional constraints are a major impediment. This situation is exacerbated by the tradition that issues of high politics, such as foreign policy, are elite affairs and therefore usually covered in a cloak of secrecy. Signs of "excessive" affinity between a province and an adjacent independent state could threaten national aims of nation-building and could also create fears of excessive transborder ethnic identification and possible secessionist aspirations. Too many unco-ordinated subnational ventures could fragment the unified policy position that any country would like to present to the outside world. The relative inexperience of subnational players in international relations could damage South Africa's standing in the diplomatic community. Giving the provinces a free reign could also lead to the wealthier provinces such as Gauteng and Western Cape to dominate at the expense of less developed provinces. A lack of co-ordination furthermore has definite implications for efficiency and service-delivery in the province. The internal political dynamics of a province also need to be taken into account. In the Free State, where political tension between ANC factions from the North and the South have seriously impacted upon the workings of provincial government, too much attention on international activities could prove to be detrimental.

How plausible is the development of alternative political community in the Free State? It is still too early to expect any significant formation of subgroupism and there is therefore no danger of a crisis in authority. The evidence presented in this analysis points at most towards a rudimentary beginning of transnationalised political community. What is certain, though, despite the constitutional limitations, is that the external environment as well as pressure from within to expand horizons will in future become more prominent and could lead to more definitive transformation of the Free State political community. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that provinces such as the Free State are increasingly beginning to "reach out" to (Southern) African governments rather than just Western countries. The links between the Free State, Angola, and Lesotho may in the long run prove to be more effective in establishing transnational political communities than connections with remote (geographically and culturally) subnational groups in the developed world.

Globally, cosmopolitan claims of an emerging global civil society and transnational community are counterbalanced with communitarian scepticism. Both extremes carry within themselves the seeds of totalitarianism. If cosmopolitanism is presented as a new grand narrative or universalising truth it could very well become a project of global domination against those who remain wedded to particular communities. Similarly, communitarianism, like with all other types of community, is also dangerous in that the language of community can be used to exclude or marginalise and even to oppress. Ultimately it is all about how communication across and within communities is used by those in power to either promote or hinder political objectives.

ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CBO	Community-based Organisations
CCECR	Free State Centre for Citizenship Education and Conflict Resolution
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
EU	European Union
EUPSP	European Union Partnership Support Programme
IR	International Relations
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MIR	Municipal International Relations
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisations
SACN	South African Cities Network
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
UN	United Nations

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