



TASA The Australian
Sociological Association

**Applied Sociology Thematic Group
For the Australian Sociology Practitioner
Contact Email for July 2013**

Greetings one and all,

Cottage Industry

(A business or manufacturing activity carried on in people's homes. (OED))

The pre-cursor to the industrial revolution was cottage industry. In the Middle Ages it was the cottage industry that developed as mechanical assistance developed and that, in turn, began the move of the population from farming to mechanical skills and the development of the *Gesellschaft*. I have just noticed that what could mark the decline of the *Gesellschaft*, is the emergence of a new type of cottage industries. As the electronic technology develops, new products are developed or made widely available, some people at least, (the NBN proponents) are touting it as the means for people to work from home. The issue this raises is that, if this does become a dominant social structure, the resulting structure will not be the *Gemeinschaft*. I live in a community that can be defined as a village by population numbers, but it is nothing like a *Gemeinschaft*. There is no social cohesion or inter-relatedness about it, and it operates as a detached part of the *Gesellschaft*.

Tönnies argued that the *Gesellschaft* is built on big business profits and does not identify with the country where people live but with a world market where all are expected to buy. Sztompka adds to this that, the increasing dominance of the *Gesellschaft*, brings with it a state of constant crisis in which traumatogenic change is generated, with the result that cultural trauma is manifesting itself in the lives of people who live in the *Gesellschaft*. He argues that the *Gemeinschaft*, as the cultural reservoir from which a community draws its heritage, traditions and its sense of continuity, has been undermined or destroyed by the *Gesellschaft*. This means that *Gesellschaft* dwellers are losing contact with their past and with each other.

Tönnies agrees with this when he points out that, with the coming of the *Gesellschaft*, the state, on behalf of the controllers of the *Gesellschaft*, will move to undermine the cohesiveness of the *Gemeinschaft* and impose the culture of individualism. National culture in the past has been made up of threads of tradition and knowledge that are common to the majority of people in a society where they know the same stories and share the same beliefs. Edwards picks up this same point when she argues that there is now no such thing as a homogeneous national culture in Australia.

Sztompka identifies social change as today's underlying and dominating social driving force that results in chronic social trauma. So if the social change that is

taking place is to be a move away from Gesellschaft, what social structures are likely to develop?

References

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