

Program 6: Global Citizenship

Globalisation challenges our traditional sense of citizenship. If global corporations are now overtaking national governments as the building blocks of world order, how should we adapt our concepts of civil society and citizenship?

How can global companies be transformed into corporate citizens and defenders of civil society? And in a world in which workers, from professionals to labourers, have to constantly be moving across borders as a fact of life, how far can membership of the nation-state still count as the basis of citizenship?

Rena Sarumpaet

Hello and welcome to the sixth and final program in our series, 'Globally Speaking - The politics of Globalisation'. I'm Rena Sarumpaet.

Today 'Global Civil Society'.

Just as globalisation is creating a world economy and a global popular culture, it raises issues of global governance and challenges our understanding of citizenship and civil society. In a world in which workers, from professionals to labourers, have to be constantly moving across borders, how far can membership of the nation state still count as the basis of citizenship? And if global corporations are now overtaking national governments as the building blocks of world order, how should we adapt our concepts of civil society and citizenship? Can global companies be transformed into corporate citizens and defenders of civil society?

Instead of a world composed exclusively of nations, we now have various global organisations beyond the nation-state, such as the World Bank, the WTO and the IMF.

And there's a tension between these powerful political and economic forces on the one hand and non-government organisations and community movements on the other. Princeton University's Professor Richard Falk characterises these forces as globalisation from above and below.

Princeton University's, Richard Falk, challenges the type of economic globalisation that is being widely promoted by governments and market forces. He argues that "predatory globalisation" needs to be tempered by "globalisation from below" if we are to see the restoration of the compassionate and responsible state.

Professor Richard Falk

Globalisation from above is a much stronger set of tendencies that's linked to real economic power, to the new technologies associated with the information age, and with a good deal of military muscle behind it. It's being challenged by relatively weak and disorganised social forces, and I think what is most fundamentally at stake is to try to strike a new balance between capital and society, between capital driven social forces and people driven social forces. That balance was somewhat broken by the collapse of international labour as a strong political presence that put the state as a mediator between society and capital.

Rena Sarumpaet

Richard Falk argues that the corporate pressures on nation-states call for a 'global social contract' to make corporations more responsible, and incorporate them as citizens of the new global order.

Professor Richard Falk

Now what has happened is that most states act as basically a facilitator of these globalising forces and they are themselves subject to what I would call the discipline of global capital. So what these resisting tendencies are seeking to do, or at least the most constructive elements in these tendencies, is to gain greater influence over the state, to create again a state that serves society as well as serves the market.

It's that struggle for a new equilibrium what I and others have sometimes called a new social contract, perhaps a global social contract or a regional social contract that strikes the sort of balance that the state came to strike between society and the market at an earlier stage of capitalism.

Rena Sarumpaet

In democratic societies, that balance between society and the state traditionally has meant that citizens have a political voice. Bob Holton is Professor of Sociology at Flinders University and author of 'Globalisation and the Nation-State'.

Bob Holton

Our whole politics rests on the premise that the citizens of a democracy can shape their own future and ultimately make the decisions. Well that does get harder with globalisation, partly because governments have to adopt certain sorts of policies which tend to attract rather than repel a very

mobile system of capital markets, if you like money flowing around the world as it does. So how much freedom do national governments have to make their own economic policy?

Rena Sarumpaet

On the question of a new balance between corporations and nation-states, Bob Holton acknowledges there's a challenge in achieving this, but he argues that we should not underestimate the strength, flexibility and diversity of national political cultures.

Bob Holton

In striking a balance, I mean although there are challenges there we haven't lost all capacity to do what we want to do. One piece of evidence for that is the divergence between different if you like western liberal nations and how they handle things like levels of taxation, levels of welfare spending. If we compare Australia with other similar sorts of countries in some places there's far less of a welfare state as in the US and to an extent Japan, in other places there's the same or a bit more perhaps in Scandinavia and other parts of Europe. Taxation levels vary too.

Now if it were true that globalisation required the end of welfare spending, lower taxation regimes you'd expect a greater degree of convergence and conformity, and I don't believe we yet have that. Some people would say ah but it's coming, well what stands in the way of it? Well I think national policies built perhaps on a nation's traditions, built on its priorities does matter.

In some countries individualism is more prized than if you like a more community centered approach - I'm thinking perhaps in the USA. Australia, well we tend still to value the importance of community, of norms of community life like a fair go and so I'm to some degree optimistic that some of those sorts of questions can still be handled pretty effectively at a national level.

Rena Sarumpaet

While there might be grounds for optimism in the economically and politically more stable countries, globalisation makes it all the more crucial for less stable nations to strengthen their civil societies, and not just their political and economic systems. Dr. Djisman Simandjuntak is Executive Director of a Jakarta based Business School.

Dr. Djisman Simandjuntak

In the past I think what really counted in business was proximity to people with political power. But after the crisis I think business people have started to understand this well that in the longer term it's not really the relationship with government but competencies that count in the global competition, and I think they also have understood better now that sustainability of growth in business will have to rely more and more on success in the international competition.

But it boils down to one major concept and that is good governance and it applies to politics, and it applies to business, it applies to civil societies as well.

Rena Sarumpaet

Dr. Graham Dunkley, author of 'The Free Trade Adventure', criticises the ideological side of globalisation, especially the belief that globalisation is both desirable and inevitable.

Dr. Graham Dunkley

I think globalisation has been a discretionary mechanism. The various forces pressing for globalisation have been very strong and they've convinced governments that globalisation is a good idea, that it will bring many economic benefits and opportunities and global competition makes you more efficient and so on. I think all those ideas are questionable.

Rena Sarumpaet

Graham Dunkley argues that the much vaunted 'death of the nation-state' will only occur if governments relinquish national sovereignty. Furthermore he argues they can and must assert themselves to achieve the desired democratic balance in the new world order.

Dr. Graham Dunkley

What governments have done over more recent years is they've accepted these arguments and they've gone to these forums virtually competing with each other to liberalise more and more, and resulting in what I call sovereignty suicide, effectively governments are committing suicide in terms of their sovereignty.

And mostly this has been done by deliberate deregulation which is discretionary, they needn't necessarily have done those things. Some technologies are making globalisation easier, but not necessarily inevitable. And certainly more and more people are arguing for a shift back to at least some degree of control over these global forces.

They could reclaim some of that ground, it could be hard I think in the long term they will probably have to do it through collaboration with other countries and sort of have a world agreement to re-regulate in various ways. But it shouldn't be just like we go back to the old system, which in many countries was very corrupt. It needs to be democratised within each country, and it needs to be planned better so that appropriate development policies and appropriate technologies are used to a much greater extent than in the past. And I would like to see the multilateral agencies restructured so they're more democratic as well.

Rena Sarumpaet

You're listening to GLOBALLY SPEAKING - The Politics of Globalisation - program 6, 'Global Civil Society'.

New forms of global governance will require new forms of citizenship including corporate citizenship. Martha Nussbaum, Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago explains that already the best corporations are those that realise they have to be sensitive to cultural differences and environmental problems.

Professor Martha Nussbaum believes that in an increasingly globalised world, we need to promote greater cultural understanding and good corporate governance.

Martha Nussbaum

You're either a good citizen or you're a bad citizen, you can't be a non-citizen in this global world. And I think we could argue that the best businessmen already know that and they say that. If you ask any CEO of a major international corporation what kind of workers do they want, they don't really want workers who are just trained in the narrow technicalities of their business. They want people who can think for themselves, who are imaginative, who can form a good human relationship with people who are different from themselves.

I think the danger is very great if we in the west bring to the rest of the world the narrowest and most ugly, if I want to put it that way, of our values, that is the materialism, the aggressiveness, the desire to maximise profit. And I think right now that's what we're doing, that's what we bring to the rest of the world when our corporations go over there, because these corporations basically operate in the rest of the world so as to maximise profit, and they don't say well let's see how I could protect the lives of children here, let's see how I can help to increase literacy in this country where I'm doing business, let's see how I can help to advance ecology. No, they typically try to find the cheapest labour they can and they try to adopt the lowest pollution standards that they can get away with in that country.

There are exceptions to this and the United Nations Development Program now singles out corporations that willingly adopt better labour standards and better ecology standards than they're required to do by the law of the developing countries in which they operate. But we'd better see that if our corporations and the International Monetary Fund and other agencies are going to export only western aggressiveness and materialism then of course it would rightly be rejected as non-humane and as at odds with the deeper strata of all the major cultures of the world.

Rena Sarumpaet

The United Nations is in fact working towards establishing a social contract with global corporations. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledges that economic liberalisation produces greater wealth, but wants to be sure that it's spread more equally.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

It would be tragic if local or national communities react to the challenges and shortcomings of globalisation by repeating the mistakes of history and turning in on themselves. Why? Because open markets offer the only realistic hope of pulling billions of people in developing countries out of abject poverty whilst sustaining prosperity in the industrialised world. What we must do instead is to ensure that global market is embedded in broadly shared values and practices that reflect global social needs, and that all the world's people share the benefits of globalisation.

Rena Sarumpaet

Kofi Annan argues that there are many ways in which global corporations can show leadership by applying human values to the development process even where governments are not.

Kofi Annan

I think what we are trying to do here is to encourage corporations, corporations that have considerable influence and rich and power to work with us in giving meaning to some of these values that their own governments have signed on to, and basically telling them we have to work together to make this world a better place. I'm not going to use that famous word, give globalisation a human face, but basically what we are telling the corporations to do with us if you accept these values plug them into your global corporations. Let it become part of your corporate structure and culture. You don't need to wait for a government to pass laws before you ensure that your operations do not pollute the lake or the water that produces the fish for the people.

You don't need to wait for government to pass laws before you pay a decent wage. You don't need to wait for governments to pass laws before you refuse to employ children. The fact that some of these companies may have made mistakes, may have done the wrong thing, does not mean that we should not encourage them and work with them in moving in the right direction in doing right and being sensitive to the needs of the people in the society in which they operate.

Rena Sarumpaet

Global civil society isn't just about making corporations into responsible citizens. Globalisation also challenges the traditional concept of individual citizenship as a form of allegiance to a certain nation-state. Just as globalisation through technology moves money, and information around the world, more and more people have become 'de-territorialised'. That is uprooted from their place of origin - whether they like it or not. It's no longer just a matter of migration in the traditional sense, of

moving from one country to another to live. Now, many people are constantly on the move without ever settling.

Both expatriate business executives and illegal migrant labourers are products and agents of globalisation, but in different ways. There are even slang terms for people who live like this: 'astronauts', 'aeroplane jumpers' or 'trapeze artists'. John Friedman is Emeritus Professor at the UCLA.

John Friedman

There is reference in Taiwan to what they call trapeze artists - these are Chinese professional and business people who are more at home in hotel rooms than they are in their own home communities who move from country to country negotiating whatever they negotiate. And so have loosened their bonds, their ties to a particular nation state and are more generally active throughout a region involving more than two, sometimes three or four countries.

So that is the new transnational phenomenon and I think it gives rise to a new cultural politics, and also a new identity politics and raises questions of citizenship.

Rena Sarumpaet

John Friedman distinguishes between citizenship as a form of belonging to a national culture, and citizenship as a mere legal status, like a flag of convenience:

John Friedman

Many of these so-called trapeze artists have two passports or maybe perhaps more than two passports. Some of these passports as you know can be obtained across the counter as it were, they are simply purchasing citizenship, for a certain amount of money you can get a Fijian passport or you can get a Canadian passport, or from some obscure Latin American country you can get a passport, and well those passports are then produced whenever necessary. So citizenship in that sense for this particular group of globalising migrants is more of a functional term.

Rena Sarumpaet

Again, it must be emphasised that these people on the move include illegal labourers and fugitives who are marginal to a global civil society, as well as the cosmopolitan elite who are at its centre. This includes people like Dipesh Chakrabathy an Indian born academic who lived and worked in Australia for many years and who now teaches at the University of Chicago.

Dipesh Chakrabathy

What has happened globally whether we like it or not is that the professional classes, you know people like myself who sell their skills basically are being increasingly rewarded for being global, for being mobile, for being able to pick up their bags and go somewhere else. So we bring up as a class, I'm not saying every individual, increasingly we bring up our kids to be like that. We give them the skills so that you know the skills of social adaptation and the skills of creating lives for themselves, so that one day they can be in Montreal and then they can find a job in Canberra, then they can move to the States you know move back and forth.

The structure is such that's one of the pulls one feels, and I'm not saying you have to like it, I personally think there are many downsides to it, but at the same time that's how the reward structure is being set up. But I've come to accept that as some kind of a skilled immigrant from India for whom the market is global I have become that sort of a person where my affections go in many different directions and I just hope that I'm not faced with a dire situation in which I'm called upon to choose one or the other. But at the same time if that situation ever arose there would be a tension between the structure of this world and the call to be loyal to just one place.

Rena Sarumpaet

In Australia, migration has always been about permanent settlement, and citizenship has been freely granted after a certain period of stay. But internationally this is not what many contemporary migrants want, as John Friedman notes.

John Friedman

Migrant workers do not necessarily come to stay, do not necessarily come to integrate themselves as immigrants into a society, but are there for rather more mundane reasons, let's say just earning money, and helping to support relatives at home. So they don't necessarily cut themselves off from their home countries. And in fact even though they may be longer-term migrants, they may very actively participate in the politics at home. That's been the case of Turks in Germany, and Kurdish people in Germany, and in Europe more generally. It's also been the case of Mexicans in the United States, in the recent elections in Mexico for example there has been very active solicitation of the Mexican vote in the southern part of the United States, particularly California and Texas and New Mexico. Because these people can also support election campaigns with money, so not only with votes but with money, and so it's very strange to see Mexican politicians campaigning quite actively in the United States for an election that takes place across the border.

Rena Sarumpaet

However, if we recall Richard Falk's formula, globalisation occurs from below as well as from above. And new communication and information technologies are enabling marginal workers to empower themselves by organising globally.

Martha Nussbaum again

Martha Nussbaum

That is a world that's globalising is a world where there's so many new opportunities for rich human connections. If you think about the international women's movement, well it used to be that women were very isolated, each in their own region, each in their own social class. But now with email you can be in touch with women all over the world and you can share experiences and ideas, and it's led to some wonderful efforts such as women who were in the informal sector of the economy, which means hawkers and vendors, craft labourers, agricultural labourers, all these people that are not protected by labour unions, they're organising now internationally to get basic protections for their rights. Now that could never have happened without globalisation, without the new communications possibilities that that opens up.

Rena Sarumpaet

John Wiseman - author of 'Global Nation: Australia and the Politics of Globalisation' brings home the argument by putting it in an Australian context.

John Wiseman

There's no doubt that one of the paradoxical impacts of globalisation has been the renewed sense of how important local communities are. And in Australia we've seen that very clearly in the resurgence of concerns about what's happening in rural and regional Australia in small communities where their banks are being closed down or schools are being closed down or hospitals are being closed down, and there's been some extraordinarily creative and resilient kinds of responses to that, and that's had substantial political impacts in terms of the outcomes on elections and so on.

So there's no question that globalisation has meant a resurgence of concern about the local and the importance of local communities. And I think in a globalised world even to think about local communities you have to think more than locally and more than nationally. You do need to think about human rights and labour rights in countries like Indonesia or the Philippines, or Malaysia - first because human rights matter, but secondly because it's in the interests of local communities and workers in countries like Australia to make sure that working conditions and labour rights are not being driven down in a race to the bottom.

Rena Sarumpaet

John Wiseman gives us grounds to end on an optimistic note. If the corporations seem reluctant to play their part in building the new global civil society, local communities will take up the challenge.

John Wiseman

There's no doubt that the dominant model of globalisation is the globalisation from above, and that certainly is the globalisation of Disney and Microsoft and the large corporations and the World Trade Organisation and so on. But there is a, it's partly a resistance, it's partly a process of resistance which you could call globalisation from below which is about community organisations, trade unions, local governments and so on challenging the inequalities and the environmental consequences of some of the worst forms of unregulated economic rationalism on a global scale.

But globalisation from below is also about regaining a sense of the importance of local communities and local connections and realising perhaps most of all that to build and strengthen local communities in a globalised world you have to link local communities together. The old slogan, 'think global act local' isn't good enough, in a globalised world we all have to learn how to think and act at a range of levels at a local level certainly, but also at national and regional and international levels, and that's a real challenge. It's a challenge in terms of understanding those connections, and it's a challenge to learn how to work with people at a range of levels like that.

Rena Sarumpaet

John Wiseman.

Check out our website too at abc.net.au/global - that's abc.net.au/global

And that concludes our series, GLOBALLY SPEAKING - The Politics of Globalisation, a joint project of Radio Australia and Victoria University in Melbourne. Academic advisor for this program is Professor John Sinclair from Victoria University. Series producers, Sue Slamen and Barry Clarke. Technical production Darren McKenzie.

I'm Rena Sarumpaet, thanks for your company.