

The Current Social Dynamics of Globalisation and Global Citizenship

Dr Darren O'Byrne
Principal Lecturer and Head of Social Sciences
Roehampton University, London, UK

Paper presented to the Asia-Pacific Alliance of YMCAs Forum on Global Citizenship, Tokyo, Japan, 16th-18th October 2008

DRAFT ONLY: Please do not quote without permission.

Author's contact address: D.Obyrne@roehampton.ac.uk

Introduction

'Global citizenship' is a term which has come to be embraced by many NGOs and practitioner organisations and is commonly used to relate to a general set of desired outcomes, specific examples of which include respect for human rights, respect for the global environment, commitment to peace, commitment to the eradication of world poverty and hunger, and opposition to racism, sexism and all other forms of discrimination worldwide. As an idea it suggests unity – the unity of the human species which is deemed by advocates as imperative if we are to tackle head-on the problems facing us and achieve some form of 'progress'. The term has also become popular among progressive educational theorists, and has entered into the curricula of a number of prestigious educational institutions (Schattle, 2008: chapter 5).

However, the concept is not without its problems. While it may be argued that the emphasis on unity disregards diversity, it can certainly be claimed that the term 'citizenship' as used here has become so vague as to be stripped of its meaning. The purpose of this paper, drawing on a previous monograph on this subject (O'Byrne, 2003) is to present a focused definition of global citizenship, in the hope that from that platform a practical set of proposals can be developed. It is my contention that 'global citizenship' is, or should be, a distinct and realisable goal, a meaningful set of actions and orientations emerging as a direct response to the contemporary challenges of globalisation. To better appreciate that contention, we need to understand the meaning of 'citizenship' as used in the nation-state context. We also need to recognise the history of the concept of 'world citizenship', so that we might clearly distinguish contemporary *global* citizenship from this earlier form, it being my claim that global citizenship *is* distinct in so far as it is world citizenship under conditions of globalisation. Clearly, then, we need also to understand what is meant by this hugely contested term, 'globalisation'.

The meanings of citizenship

While 'citizenship' as a concept returned to the fore as a buzz-word in both political and academic circles in the 1990s, it remained a somewhat contested term. For analytical purposes, we can identify four 'components' of citizenship, namely:

1. *Rights* as possessions of individuals
2. *Duties* to others and to the community
3. *Membership* of a (political) community, defined by identity as well as formal inclusion
4. *Participation* in that community (O'Byrne, 2003: 5-10).

It is commonly held that the first two of these, rights and duties, are reciprocal, and that they form the basis of a 'contract' with the state. The claim that citizenship exists as such a contract, defining the rights an individual has in respect of the political machinery, and thus defining the extent to which that machinery has power over the individual's body, is central to what has come

to be referred to as the *liberal* theory of citizenship. By extension, the liberal theory recognises the importance of membership and participation, but in a narrow sense, in so far as membership is defined in formal-legal terms (citizenship in this sense being a legal category) and participation derives from rights (the liberal democratic tradition exemplified by John Stuart Mill). However, membership and participation are better seen as deriving from a different tradition, which we can broadly refer to as the *communitarian* tradition, which emphasises the active involvement of the citizen within the political community, the *polis*.

Certainly in the Western tradition, which has been largely dominated by the liberal approach, the concept of citizenship is only meaningful when located within a nation-state framework. The reliance upon the existence of a formal political machinery (the state) which provides the central administrative functions on behalf of the community, including serving as what Max Weber famously immortalised as the 'centralised means of violence', is crucial here. Citizenship as a legal category was (and is) *fixed*. Indeed, it is for this very reason that sociologists, from the nineteenth century pioneers of the discipline through the classic work of T.H. Marshall on the subject (Marshall, 1950), up to the liberal, Marxist and feminist contributions to the debate in subsequent decades (examples of which might include, respectively, Bendix, 1964; Bottomore, 1965; Walby, 1994), have happily engaged with citizenship but downplayed or outright ignored the significance of human rights. The tensions between the two sets of rights are clear. Whilst any given 'right' (let us use as an example the right to vote) can be articulated either as a citizenship right or a human right, the legitimacy of the right-claim differs between the two. Claimed as a citizenship right, the right to vote is a luxury enjoyed by certain individuals legally deemed to be members of the political community, and it is a luxury which can be (and will be) withdrawn by the state if its corresponding duties are not respected. Claimed as a human right, the right to vote is a universal absolute, an incontrovertible requirement of the human condition rather than a grant from the state, which cannot be negated.

In actual fact, the modern concept of human rights emerges from an entirely different discourse. It comes from the discourse on *world citizenship*, which as a concept pre-dates the modern nation-state by a long way (for more on which, see O'Byrne, 2003: chapter 3; Heater, 1996). Its origins may lie in many religious and philosophical texts around the world. In its Western lineage, the idea arises in classical debates from Socrates to Seneca, and is rooted in the concept of empire. Religious universalists such as St Augustine later transformed the concept, placing the emphasis on the unity of 'one people under God'. The onset of Western modernity then politicised the concept of world citizenship, equating it to moral and political demands designed to protect the individual from state excesses and to form the basis of a just and equal society. The philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and his famous 'categorical imperative', provides probably the best known example of this moral universalism. It is indeed in these claims, made by Kant and others such as John Locke and Thomas Paine, that the modern language of human rights evolves. However, this language remained ever the language of the philosopher, just as it had done since the origins of the discourse on world

citizenship. It carried no legal force. Accordingly, in so far as the legally enforceable language of citizenship took precedence, citizenship rights became the meaningful object of analysis for social scientists as opposed to human rights, because citizenship rights were meaningful in a pragmatic sense. Admittedly, in the twentieth century, political developments such as the League of Nations and then the United Nations, accompanied as they were by newly emerging approaches to world citizenship, federalism and functionalism, did promise to shift the force of human rights demands from the moral to the legal realm, but the impotence of these institutions and the perceived absence of legitimacy of their various treaties and covenants meant that in practice if not in theory this remained the case.

The challenge of globalisation

It is my suggestion that post-war globalisation has been accompanied by a transformation in the concept of world citizenship, such that it is now better to define it as *global* citizenship. Globalisation has been variously described and theorised, although much of the discourse around it remains rooted in an assumption that it is primarily an economic process. In my own theorisation of globalisation processes, drawing on the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas, I have sought to challenge this overly-simplistic account (O'Byrne, 2005a). While it is certainly the case that we can imagine, and perhaps identify, a *globalisation of the market*, it is best to treat globalisation not as a singular project or as a reification but as a *process* which can be applied to something, and which thus takes economic, political, social and cultural forms. All processes naturally are journeys which have some perceived destination. Globalisation is the process of 'becoming global', or achieving *globality*, which is the condition of being global (Robertson, 1992). Globality exists, and is exercised by agents whether they be individuals, NGOs, corporations and so on, as the recognition of the world as one place. To act on the global stage is to exercise globality. An individual who behaves in a certain way out of concern for the global environment, an NGO campaigning on an issue that transcends national borders and which thus requires global solutions, or a corporation marketing its product using images designed to appeal to audiences from all continents, are all exercising globality.

There are various historical benchmarks of the contemporary phase of globalisation, which Robertson (1992) conveniently lists. Perhaps one of the core such benchmarks is the realisation, that must surely have come to people alive at the time of the dropping of the first atomic bomb, that the destruction of the planet was actually a possibility, rather than merely a religious story or a concept so abstract and futuristic as to be meaningless. The subsequent realisation, during the Cold War, that the security of citizens in other states could not be guaranteed by the governments of those states, challenged the assumption that the legitimacy of a nation-state government resides in its ability to protect its citizens from threats. Just as the problems facing individuals clearly transcended traditional nation-state borders, so, it was claimed, must their solutions, and the formal political structures of the nation-state, whose legitimacy was born in a different age and who could no longer guarantee solutions to the immediate problems facing individuals –

such problems as environmental degradation impact directly upon individuals, unmediated by nation-states – gave way to the new politics of social movements, of global concerns, of non-governmental organisations.

The new global citizenship?

World citizenship, then, was always an abstract, idealised concept. *Global* citizenship is world citizenship under globalised conditions, and is a pragmatic response to these conditions. For example, human rights claims become more than merely philosophical under such conditions, they become sociologically and legally defensible. There is a clear and distinct difference between individuals arguing for human rights as an *ideal* defined in terms of moral or political philosophy, and campaigning for them as an *absolute demand*. Processes of globalisation render the need to re-think the concept of citizenship and the role of civil society with some urgency (Delanty, 2000; O'Byrne, 2003; O'Byrne, 2005b; Schattle, 2008; Vandenberg, 2000).

Contemporary globalising conditions facilitate shifting political identities, from the politics of class and the nation-state, to the politics of identity and globality, and with that shift comes a shift in the media through which such political identities are articulated, from political parties to NGOs. Campaigning organisations are clear examples of this pragmatic global citizenship in action. Take one I know quite well but which is not so well-known generally. The World Service Authority, based in Washington D.C., seems at first to be somewhat esoteric. Here is an organisation, a casual reader might surmise, that claims to be the legal arm of something called the World Government of World Citizens (and clearly there is no world government!) and which distributes such documents as world passports. Surely such an organisation is typical of the abstract, idealised nature of world citizenship in its old sense, its documents and its claims for governance merely symbolic?

Perhaps surprisingly, this is not actually the case. The organisation in question is in fact a very pragmatic human rights NGO that grounds itself in claims made possible by aspects of globalisation (O'Byrne, 2003: chapter 6). The 'world passport' it provides is in fact a clear negation of the demands made by nation-states for individuals to possess such documents at all when they exercise their right, under Article 13 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to cross borders (for more on this, see O'Byrne, 2001). The organisation charts the *de juris* or *de facto* acceptances of the passport and thus its validity by states and treats these as precedent. It thus makes demands on state border controls to respect Article 13 (2) and subsequent documents, so as to ensure that those who are otherwise denied the right to cross borders are able to exercise that right. In a very real and pragmatic sense, people's lives are saved because of this, but none of it would be possible without Article 13 (2). The moral argument for a right to cross borders based on abstract ideals has thus been replaced with a more forceful argument based on documents signed by governments that form part of the UN-sanctioned International Bill of Rights, whether those documents are legally binding or not (the UDHR is actually not legally binding, but that is not the point).

In other words, human rights, previously an abstract concept articulated as a moral claim, is now a social institution, a discourse external to but constructed by the individual, which provides a framework within which social actions are performed. There is a generic *language* of human rights which is signified in local contexts via different social practices (just as there is a generic language of religion which is signified by different practices of worship, of kinship which is signified by different family structures and types and so on). Thus, human rights, historically ignored by the discipline for reasons I have already suggested, has become a meaningful subject of sociological analysis (for more on the sociology of human rights, see O'Byrne, 2002), just as the sociological significance of citizenship has been in relative decline – it no longer carries sufficient pragmatic weight (on the relationship between sociology, citizenship and human rights, see Turner, 1993).

If the new global citizenship is to be primarily a pragmatic as opposed to abstract construct, how might it be more generally exercised in practice? How, and through which kinds of claims, might it be articulated? What might be its core dimensions? To answer these questions, we might usefully return to the definition of citizenship used earlier, and its four key components, and amend them accordingly, such that the dimensions of global citizenship would be:

1. Rights: From nation-state citizenship to human rights
2. Duties: From the national interest to environmentalism and planetary survival
3. Membership: From the political state to multicultural society
4. Participation: From liberal democracy to information society (O'Byrne, 2003: chapter 9).

Problems with and challenges to the model of global citizenship

When I first constructed this model, I recognised its limitations, bound as it is within a predominately Western framework. In respect of human rights, I do not mean the classic dichotomy of universalism versus relativism. I do not see human rights *per se* as an exclusively Western construct, or worse, a tool of Western imperialism. Rather, I see respect for human dignity articulated in some form or another across the diverse range of value systems. I do, however, recognise that the dominant discourse on human rights as articulated by the global elites as a distinctly Western manifestation of this common feature, embedded as it is in an individualism which reduces human rights to possessions of autonomous individuals *contra* state interference. The liberalism underpinning this particular form of human rights discourse also underpins Western capitalism and secular democracy, but to see it as synonymous with human rights *per se* is akin to seeing Christianity as synonymous with religion. The challenge facing us is to interrogate the processes through which this discourse on human rights has been constructed, and to ask who controls these discourses.

Much the same can be said of a perceived duty towards the survival of the planet via a commitment to environmentalism – who controls this discourse, and to what extent can it be regarded as Western angst? When promoting some aspect of multiculturalism (a term which, in the few years since I first introduced the model, has come under considerable attack), we should consider whether, despite the claims made by many states, this multiculturalism is a myth or a reality, and such a question can only be answered within the context of on-going core-periphery relations, and not at the level of the nation-state itself. In respect of the potential for democratisation opened up by information technology, we must ask who has access to it, and who does not. In other words, 'globalisation' has always been a primarily one-sided (but never exclusively one-way) process, and so, by extension, is this model of global citizenship, so long as inequalities continue to exist in access to both the means of compression (material access to information technology, global travel etc) and the means of globality (cultural capital). This dialectic, which I first presented some years ago (O'Byrne, 1997), remains in my view the core to understanding the nature of the unequal access to the possibilities brought about by globalising processes.

Although I had recognised the limitations to these models when first developing them, I maintained a belief in their usefulness as perhaps 'ideal-typical' examples of global citizenship in action. Even so, underpinning them was always a belief that what I now call the 'liberal form of globalisation' (not, please note, the *neo-liberal* form), was more reality than myth. More recent world events have challenged that belief. The events of September 11th 2001 and their aftermath have radically transformed the discourse on human rights. In the name of 'national security' Western governments which had perhaps hitherto aspired to be seen as champions of human rights have returned in important ways to nation-statism and protectionism. While not long ago such leaders proudly (albeit in their own limited and self-interested ways) proclaimed their commitment to human rights, now the term is used pejoratively, akin to 'political correctness', an extremist discourse that gets in the way of 'what needs to be done'.

At a theoretical level, then, we should give careful consideration to the extent to which this liberal form of globalisation – the emergence of the idea of the world as a single place – is in fact a meaningful description of contemporary global change. In a forthcoming work, I address this very subject (O'Byrne, 2009). The liberal form of globalisation is one of seven ideal-typical models describing distinct processes which, while in reality and in everyday experience no doubt overlap and co-exist, point to very different journeys and perhaps serve very different ideological agendas. These processes can be described and summarised as follows, in no particular order:

1. Globalisation: The process, already described, of becoming global, of acting directly on the global stage, which necessarily entails the erosion of the significance of the nation-state;
2. Liberalisation: The process by which borders *between* nation-states are being eroded, making possible the freer exchange of good, ideas, people etc, but which does not, significantly, entail operating globally;

3. Transnationalisation: The process resulting in the emergence of level of activity in respect for example of corporations and political institutions *above* that of the nation-state, but again, not necessarily global;
4. Creolisation: The process by which local practices and cultures are recognised as ever-changing, due for example to cultural flows, which challenges the perceived authenticity of such local practices and cultures, and which may operate within a globalised or liberalised framework, but which need not;
5. McDonaldisation: The process by which social, cultural, political and economic practices around the world, regardless of nation-state, are being standardised, from fast-food restaurants to democracy as a political system, but which entails neither the recognition of the global level nor the erosion of the nation-state *per se*;
6. Americanisation: The process by which the world's dominant nation-state has constructed, through economic, cultural, political and military means, an empire dependent upon it, which may or may not be a global empire;
7. Balkanisation: The process by which the world is becoming not more unified but in fact more divided, albeit less along the lines of conflicting nation-states or political power blocs and more along the lines of conflicting 'civilisations'.

Admittedly, these are crude typologies, and do not necessarily describe the experiences of global change at individual or local level. They do, though, reflect different *discourses* on the contemporary global condition. American neo-conservatives, keen to engage in war in the Middle East and to 'protect' their way of life against the perceived threat of the Other, armed with a mis-reading of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1997), do so by presenting an image of a heavily Balkanised world. Contemporary Marxist-Leninists, keen to advance their belief that all the world's ills can be laid at the feet of American hegemony and the excesses of capitalism, present an image of a wholly Americanised world (e.g. Panitch and Lees, 2003). Postmodernists keen to debunk claims of cultural authenticity offer up an image of a creolised world (e.g. Hannerz, 1996). Neo-Weberians and post-Frankfurt School critical theorists schooled in Marcuse's era-defining text from the 1960s, *One-Dimensional Man*, see the same dehumanising, homogenising processes at work in their descriptions of contemporary McDonaldisation (following Ritzer, 1993).

And here, of course, we face our final challenge. If I have presented an account of global citizenship as world citizenship under conditions of globalisation, what alternative models of citizenship might we imagine being or becoming meaningful under conditions of Balkanisation, or Americanisation? What we should attempt to imagine is a continuum of citizenships, in much the same way as we can imagine a continuum of global transformations, each of which is as 'real' (in respect of experience) as each other. For sure, if we are to provide a stronger theoretical framework for the ever-expanding literature on 'education for global citizenship', we need to be reminded that citizenship is and must be a response to real conditions. Before

proclaiming a new theory of citizenship, we need to better understand the dynamics of those conditions.

Bibliography

- Bendix, R. (1964) Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies of Our Changing Social Order Berkeley: University of California Press
- Bottomore, T. (1965) Classes in Modern Society London: Allen & Unwin
- Delanty, G. (2000) Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics Buckingham: Open University Press
- Hannerz, U. (1996) Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places London: Routledge
- Heater, D. (1996) World Government and Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought London: Macmillan
- Huntingdon, S. (1997) The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order London: Free Press
- Marshall, T.H. (1950) Citizenship and Social Class Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- O'Byrne, D. (1997) 'Working-Class Culture: Local Community and Global Conditions' in J. Eade (ed.) Living the Global City London: Routledge
- O'Byrne, D. (2001) 'On Passports and Border Controls' in Annals of Tourism Research 28, 2, 399-416
- O'Byrne, D. (2002) Human Rights: An Introduction Harlow: Prentice-Hall
- O'Byrne, D. (2003) The Dimensions of Global Citizenship: Political Identity beyond the Nation-State London: Frank Cass
- O'Byrne, D. (2005a) 'Toward a Critical Theory of Globalization: A Habermasian Approach' in R. P. Appelbaum and W. I. Robinson (eds) Critical Globalization Studies New York: Routledge
- O'Byrne, D. (2005b) 'Globalization, Cosmopolitanism and the Problem of Civil Society: Some Introductory Remarks' in J. Eade and D. O'Byrne (eds) Global Ethics and Civil Society Aldershot: Ashgate
- O'Byrne, D. (2009, forthcoming) Theorising Global Studies Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Panitch, L. and Leys, C. (eds) (2003) The New Imperial Challenge Socialist Register 2004, London: Merlin Press
- Ritzer, G. (1993) The McDonaldization of Society Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge
- Robertson, R. (1992) Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture London: Sage
- Schattle, H. (2008) The Practices of Global Citizenship Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield
- Turner, B. S. (1993) 'Outline of a Theory of Human Rights' in B. S. Turner (ed.) Citizenship and Social Theory London: Sage
- Vandenberg, A. (ed.) (2000) Citizenship and Democracy in a Global Era Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Walby, S. (1994) 'Is Citizenship Gendered?' in Sociology 28, 2, 379-95