

Globalization and the transformation of citizenship

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Abstract: This dissertation examines the condition of contemporary citizenship as it is being contested and redefined, with consequences for the prospects for social justice. The study contradicts current theoretical developments that understand the reformulation of citizenship under globalization in terms of expansion and inclusion, by drawing on overwhelming evidence of displacement and disenfranchisement to suggest that citizenship is in demise. While some theorists suggest that waning sovereignty allows new citizenship claims to be made at global and urban scales, my analysis of the practices of the U.S. state shows that it is still thoroughly powerful in constructing the state-subject relationship. Not only does the nation-state serve as the impetus behind, and the mechanism for, differentiation practices that maintain the in/exclusionary quality citizenship, but also the hegemonic U.S. state has expanded its territorial reach to influence the relationship between states and subjects far beyond its own borders.

The main body of the dissertation examines in turn the three broad theoretical strands that dominate the globalization/citizenship debate, each positing a new form of citizenship apparently emergent under globalization: postnational, cosmopolitan, and urban. Through examinations of prisoners' rights at Guantánamo Bay and the 'war on terror' conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan I find, respectively, that both the international human rights discourse of postnationalism and the cosmopolitan attempt to generate global democratic institutions are weak in the face of the persistent nation-state. Similarly, the thoroughly attenuated, 'clientalistic' form of citizenship found in contemporary cities, that abandons citizenship to the market as the state retreats from its buffering role, reflects the way in which the nation-state's practices and policies in the context of the global political economy have played out at the urban scale. In all three cases, the new forms of citizenship identified - empirical and normative - are overwhelmingly offset by the actions of the nation-state. Rather than accept uncritically an overly optimistic interpretation of the political potential of globalization, I suggest that the nation-state's spatial practices need to be drawn more fully into analyses of contemporary citizenship precisely so that possibilities for oppositional political formation can be evaluated.