

# **SYSTEM THINKING FOR GLOBAL POLITICAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

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## **Abstract**

Humans are political animals but need to be better ones, because like all other animals, indeed all life forms, they are connected, through their various social systems of all types and at all levels, more closely than ever before with a planet's subsystems increasingly interlocking in a global system. Their role as political animals is crucial because politics remains the authoritative distribution of values. In a global society lacking an equivalent world government, humans are everywhere performing political activities on different levels, from households to villages, from cities to provinces, from states to suprastate entities, from individual economic transactions to membership in organizations interacting with other organizations, that, in the context of globalization, cannot help affecting the lives of others around the world. Because all political decisions matter, it is necessary in constructing a global society as a system for humans to cultivate their political citizenships, and for others to help them understand what the needs of a sustainable future for the earth require them to take into consideration in their political choices from the perspective of system theory.

Key words: global political citizenship, system thinking, complex system, education

## **The Need for Global Political Citizenship**

As Aristotle claimed and Charles Darwin demonstrated, humans are political animals. This means that human beings have evolved as life systems that cannot live alone but must coexist and cooperate with other humans within both the natural systems surrounding them and the social systems created to embody and guide their cooperation. Indeed, the crucial importance of political interactions for the human species has been underscored by the recent argument that reason itself evolved to facilitate and improve social interactions (Mercier and Sperber 2017). Yet the development and evolution of social systems can only coexist with natural systems. In the process of coexistence through and with other systems, humans have created norms for governance drawing on distinctions that have come to be represented as good or evil. In other words, to shape and guide their social systems humans have constructed value systems and through them willed and pursued mental and physical interactions with other humans and other natural systems.

Identity is uniquely important among the values because it defines and maintains the boundaries of human systems. Identity vis-a-vis the natural system and the social system has become critically important for human beings as life systems. To maintain this identity, loyalty to the group to which individuals belong (itself a critical if often debatable step in the creation of identity) has become another important value system. Human identity and loyalty can be seen in the worlds of natural law, social norms, governmental enactments, and the domain of international law and transnational interactions transcending society and the state.

In the global era, humans live with diverse identities and loyalties and identify places of learning for citizenship in the home, community and global society. Conceptual reeducation for global citizenship is needed to prepare for and bring about change at all levels, focusing on peace, human rights, democracy and development (Osler and Starkey 2003, 243).

## **Political Citizenship Education for One Earth System**

Citizenship has two focal points and, as a result, often two different definitions and conceptualizations, for citizenship has oscillated between emphases on rights and on responsibilities (Bolzendahl and Coffé 2013, 64). On the side of rights that an individual might enjoy as a citizen, citizenship refers to the status of a person who is recognized as a legitimate member of a sovereign nation assigned certain rights under custom or law. A small minority of people can have multiple nationalities, while others are stateless, without the rights of citizenship of any nationality (here used as the virtual synonym of citizenship that the term has become in international law, without the shadings of race or ethnicity it can sometimes have in English). From the other side, the identity of citizens tilts towards their responsibilities. The term "citizen" refers to the right to work, live and participate politically in the entities of which they are citizens, almost always specific geographical areas like towns, countries, cities, states or provinces, and national states; yet the "right" to life, work, and political participation can imply a duty to exercise the rights in a responsible manner.

Both sides feed into any viable conceptualization of citizenship, and from either side there are significant implications for human interaction. From the side of rights, there are conceptual distinctions between the concept of citizenship nationality based on the nation state and global citizenship based on the status of simply being humans endowed by God and the United Nations with essential human rights. In the second concept, citizens have a status distinguishable from their existence as people because they have been allotted special qualities and virtues necessary to maintain the communal system — the "polis," the "res publica" — for the good of all its members. Here nationality refers to the qualification to become a citizen, and the requirements to become a citizen are determined by law (for example, Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea; Nationality Act).

The combination of citizenship and these implicit qualities together is called Citizenship (Shim 2010, 9). Citizenship is a citizen's consciousness of rights and responsibilities as well as the community consciousness that should be provided as a democratic citizen (that is, consciousness of the "rights" of larger, supra-individual systems). This is achieved through individual socialization — i.e., through education, including the full range of learning experiences. The goal of citizenship is the development of "good citizens" emphasizing responsible moral precepts and behavior. Political citizens have to cultivate their ability to explain, analyze, and evaluate public problems and then influence the network of political interactions through surveillance, criticism, and voting.

Political citizenship naturally affects citizens' overall citizenship. When individuals and groups lack one of these elements of citizenship, they can essentially be seen as not having all three elements. Social citizenship needs to come with political citizenship or political citizenship rather than the third stage of membership. Otherwise, political citizenship is a false promise (Bueker 2009).

The convergence of the two sides of citizenship in modern political life means that "norms of political citizenship are shifting from a pattern of duty-based citizenship to engaged citizenship" (Dalton 2008, 76). However, it must also be noted that the norms involved in "good citizenship" and the types of engagement sanctioned are a moving target changeable by historical context. For example, cross-national studies in Europe have found sharp disparities within the valuation of types of civic activity, with voting scoring higher than obeying the law or paying taxes, while significant differences continued to persist between citizens in states in Eastern Europe versus Western Europe (Bolzendahl and Coffé 2013). This only reaffirms the necessity of education as a precondition of "good citizenship" at any level, for interaction with any social or natural system.

Moreover, the convergence of sides of citizenship in the context of the social, economic, cultural, and political transformations of the past three quarters of a century also means that we

need to become more aware of the disparate political geographies involved, which can limit or extend meanings and implications of citizenship based on "continual rearticulations of the relationships and sites through which citizenship is constructed" (Staeheli 2011, 393). For example, the public spaces in which political animals now interact are often virtual, and tend to expand the scope of democratic politics from the specific activities and arenas originally involved. Without negating the importance of citizenship as a status of membership in a group (identity), we find, as Staeheli has noted (2011), a fluid, chaotic system constantly redefining itself and our status within it as citizens.

Global Political Citizenship is part of that redefinition. It refers to cultivating the rights, duties and qualities necessary for political life as members of the global community or global system (the concepts are interchangeable), in addition to their other identities and citizenship statuses. While obviously the responsibilities of global citizenship do not currently, may not ever, and arguably should never involve voting for leadership of a world government, nevertheless we can point to other responsibilities no less crucial, just as we can conceptualize the rights involved in terms of international law as well as natural law, comparable to the development of citizenship rights in constitutions, bills of rights, legislative actions, and court rulings since the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The concept of global citizenship was contemporaneous with these developments in political thinking. It originally lagged behind other rights and responsibilities, but the vitalization of cosmopolitan thinking in the context of globalization and of the holistic vision as a result of systems theory have quickened its pace since the end of World War II.

From another direction, rights, according to the widely known historical analysis of Thomas Humphrey Marshall, have been realized in Western countries since the 17th and 18th centuries in three forms – civil (essentially equivalent to individual liberty), political (typically embodied in suffrage), and social rights (cf., for example, Kramsch and Dimitrova 2008). The allocation and implementation of these rights occurred at different paces for the different forms and were initially restricted by various forms of discrimination, for example by race or gender, but over the past century their scope has become more standard and more universal. This universalization of rights has become a foundation stone for the conceptualization of global citizenship.

In the current era where globalization is accelerating but continues to use the nation state as its base, ordinary citizens must be viewed and treated with due dignity in terms of both the world and the nation. It is impossible for a person whose political identity is bound to a certain country (polis) to completely overcome the limits of that polis. However, through the inculcation of critical rationality, characterized by an autonomous, analytical, self-reflective, and open mind, the rights and responsibilities of global citizenship can be placed on a firmer footing more comparable to those offered by more geographically restricted conceptualizations. We therefore need better, more inclusive, more self-critical education to become better global citizens.

### **III: Educational Content of Global Political Citizenship**

Politics is generally categorized into two concepts. Politics is the "authoritative distribution of values" as articulated by David Easton and the distinction between "enemy and myself" as discussed by Carl Schmidt (Lee 1994, 5). This categorization can be called the conceptual elements of politics.

Throughout the world, whether Korea, the United States, France, or Austria, we are currently confronting a convergence and confusion of values reflecting the different goals and directions of democratization and industrialization. As we have seen, rhetoric about citizenship can focus on the rights of citizens, or on the concept of nation, people and citizen. The semantic fields of the two focal points differ markedly. However, citizenship status has a conceptual meaning incorporating and transcending both as temporal and spatial factors expand its scope. In this

sense, global citizenship is increasingly the locus in which we must expect to find the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the era of globalization.

The conceptual matrix of political citizenship can be divided into two categories.

of citizenship two concepts of politics	conceptual elements	right	duty	
			endowment	virtue
distinction between enemy and myself				
authoritative distribution of values				

Political reality is a kind of complex system. In complex systems, simple systems are superimposed to form a political space over four dimensions. In general, time and space cannot be thought of apart from each other because space (3-D) and time (1-D) must be determined in order for an event to be precisely defined within the universe. Likewise, any political phenomena that can be distinguished exist in time and space over four dimensions.

What this means in practice is that any discussion about human political interactions must presume and anticipate a certain level of chaos. In particular, the area of rights that citizens should have is also expanding and developing. Recognition of complexity and unintended consequences is also a prerequisite for institutionalization of rights and responsibilities in law. It is also a crucial gauge for evaluating the contributions of leaders and average citizens alike, all of whom must expand their level of awareness. We need complex leadership (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001) and complex citizenship that reflect the complex realities of being political animals.

In particular, to achieve a sustainable state of the even more complex Earth system as a whole, it is necessary to change the perception of political leadership and of citizenship. For the resilience of the earth, political citizens need to fulfill their rights and responsibilities through critical reflection. In order to govern the global complexity arising from the complex relationships among the many components of the life systems within the planet, the viewpoint of political leadership must also become different.

Despite tendencies towards renewed autocracy around the world in the face of complex problems that seem intractable to many citizens, it is incumbent on systems theorists to better communicate the message that effective management of complex systems requires a more indirect form of leadership that often blurs the distinction between “leader” and “follower” through a complex adaptive systemic leadership that recognizes the chaotic interconnections in social systems (Marion 1999, Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001). But this perception of interconnected leadership and “followership” also raises the bar for citizens, who bear comparable responsibilities and must be educated to understand both the underlying chaos and their potential to change and channel it.

Civic and citizenship education is becoming a central preoccupation for many countries including Israel (Lemish 2003) and South Korea, in which an active search for social consensus is trying to move beyond an anti-political tradition (Lee 2010). It is crucial that these efforts be maintained and expanded. But to them must be added global political citizenship education as a reflection of the escalating complexities of the global economic, social, cultural, and political system — that is to say, of globalization.

Global migration of individuals and groups, shifts in job opportunities reflecting globalized production, and the spread of universalized rights and responsibilities of citizenship have created an international community around the world. At the same time, globalization has

arguably hurt as many people as it has helped, and political movements based on national, religious, and nationalist ideologies threaten democracy and challenge existing political and social structures. In this context, education and civic education in general provide a mechanism for communicating the core shared values on which a just, peaceful, and lasting democratic society can be built. Global political citizenship comes at a time when it should be interpreted in a broader sense derived from international law, as well as the rights and obligations of citizens derived from the sovereign state in a legal sense (Osler and Starkey 2003). But beyond even these factors, we must learn to better communicate the chaotic complexities of our political systems and how these are changing and expanding the geographical scope of our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

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