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3 **CITIZENSHIP IN THE MIDST**  
5 **OF TRANSNATIONAL**  
7 **REGIMES OF VIRTUE**  
9

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15 Following from her earlier work on the global city, Saskia Sassen expands  
17 on her concept of denationalization as a global effect on citizenship.  
19 Specifically, Sassen argues that “the incompleteness of the formal institution  
of citizenship makes it possible for the outsider to claim for expanded  
inclusions,” and that the institutionalization of these claims will lead to a  
condition of “denationalized citizenship.”

21 While one can generally agree with Sassen that other institutions outside  
23 the state are involved in extending protections or in the organization of  
collective identities, the overall argument creates confusion over what  
25 exactly is meant by citizenship, how it is related to the territorialized nation-  
state, and whether protections extended by transnational regimes constitute  
“citizenship.” In other words, while I agree that in practice citizenship  
27 is usually incompletely extended or provided, I challenge her argument  
that citizenship can become “denationalized.” There is a conflation of two  
29 distinctive regimes: citizenship as an institution of the nation-state and  
universal human rights as Kantian aspiration of world citizenship.

31 Drawing on my own work, I will limit my comments to three points that  
are pertinent to Sassen’s formulation.

33 First, we used to think of different dimensions of citizenship – political  
rights, legal entitlements, moral claims, a state, territoriality, etc. – as more  
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1 or less tied together. For instance, when we talk about citizenship, we may  
2 be referring to one of several components, beyond “the formal and the  
3 subjective” mentioned but not identified by Sassen. Citizenship as a term  
4 can refer to juridico-legal, political, cultural, and social elements that are  
5 linked together in a particular nation. Besides the territory and the state,  
6 the components in citizenship include, in various combinations,

- 7 • a juridico-legal concept based on the state’s defense and implementation  
8 of the human rights of citizens within (and perhaps beyond) the national  
9 territory.
- 11 • citizenship as a political membership that defines citizens according to  
12 their claims and duties in relation to the nation, for example conscription  
13 and defense of the motherland.
- 15 • a cultural ideal of national belonging to an imagined community  
16 (Anderson) and shared values that evolve over time such as human  
17 dignity, particular languages and religions, traditions of solidarity and  
18 harmony, multiculturalism, etc.
- 19 • social norms of citizenship, that is loyalty, ethics, moral worthiness, and  
20 contribution to the common good.

21 In our discussions, these different aspects are frequently not distinguished  
22 and the lack of what we mean by citizenship becomes as blurring as the  
23 national borders are said to be by the effects of globalization. Furthermore,  
24 globalization has been wielded as a generic term to mean (privatization,  
25 deregulation) when many other forms of transnational linkages are implied.  
26 The broader concern of Sassen, to analyze the intersection of “formal  
27 citizenship” and “globalization,” points to the need for finer differentiation  
28 and more careful attention to what exactly is being “denationalized” and  
29 what is not.

30 Second, instead of thinking of globalization as a planetary condition of  
31 privatization, deregulation, and neoliberalism, a mid-range approach that  
32 attends to situated articulations of these forms with particular nations is  
33 analytically useful and particularly illuminating. Stephen J. Collier and I  
34 have reanalyzed the global as the dispersal of universalizable technologies –  
35 that is “global forms” such as neoliberal logic, human rights regime,  
36 corporate programs – and their situated articulation with particular  
37 milieus of citizenship. Such “global assemblages” crystallize conditions of  
38 possibility for the transformation of norms and practices in politics and  
39 ethics (Collier & Ong, 2005). For instance, the intersection of neoliberal  
40 values and the politics of emerging nation-states can mutate notions about  
41 the ethics of citizenship.

1 As I have argued elsewhere, increasingly, the cross-border flows of beliefs,  
2 ideals, knowledge, markets, and actors have had a mutating effect on a  
3 nation's thinking on citizenship and its various commitments and interests.  
4 Specifically, some of the components long associated with national  
5 citizenship are becoming disarticulated from one another, and articulated  
6 with diverse universalizing norms defined by neoliberal criteria, or human  
7 rights, and practices of corporations (Ong 2005a, 2006).

8 For instance, in fast-growing Asian countries, citizenship as political  
9 rights and cultural solidarity has remained robust, while the social norms  
10 of citizenship are increasingly influenced by a neoliberal emphasis on  
11 acquisition of knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurial ethos (Ong, 2009). **AU:1**  
12 Through the invoking of the political exception, certain sectors and  
13 categories of citizens are expected to strive for new social norms of human  
14 capital, entrepreneurial and self-managing than other areas, in a graduated  
15 approach to improving the overall human resources of the nation (Ong  
16 2005b). In other words, certain citizenship components are now articulated  
17 with global regimes based on nonterritorial norms of human capital, but the  
18 juridico-legal elements have remained relatively unaffected. There is the  
19 possibility, however, that human rights regimes are beginning to interact  
20 with politico-legal thinking on citizenship in say China, but the adoption of  
21 these ideals is still in question.

22 Third, beyond the state-centered control of citizenship and its criteria,  
23 anthropological investigation has opened up the study of citizenship by  
24 focusing on very different kinds of claims on national regimes or global  
25 entities. Here we are dealing with the practices and performances  
26 that activate a variety of claims for inclusion or protection in multiple  
27 contexts. For instance, my concept of "flexible citizenship" analyzed the  
28 transnational maneuvers of a managerial elite that skillfully navigates  
29 different immigration regimes in order to gain access to profitable markets  
30 and safe nations. Hong Kong managers intent upon capital accumulation in  
31 global spaces must also manipulate negative cultural stigmas in the host  
32 country in order to make claims on citizenship. Another kind of citizenship  
33 claims is made by excluded populations who lack access to fundamental  
34 democratic rights. For instance, millions of on-line Chinese use the Internet  
35 for entertainment as well as for accessing foreign news, spreading stories  
36 of injustice, and promoting a cyber public that challenges authoritarian  
37 rule (Ong, 2006).

38 Yet other examples of citizens' claims are by citizens and residences  
39 excluded from protections codified by the state law. In Latin America and  
40 India, social movements in the streets have developed at the confluence of

1 urban development and migrant communities. Street demonstrations by the  
2 disenfranchised – poor migrants, shantytown dwellers, refugees – articulate  
3 array of civil, political, and social rights. The streets form an arena for the  
4 political mobilization of the poor to claim public resources such as urban  
5 housing, water, and electricity in an exercise of “substantive citizenship”  
6 (Holston, 1993). The victims of Chernobyl dramatize how notions of life  
7 itself can change social norms of citizenship. By claiming biomedical  
8 resources, social equities, and human rights from the Russian state, victims  
9 gave form to a kind of “biological citizenship” (Petryna, 2002). Another  
10 example from Europe shows how health has become the ground for  
11 claiming asylum. The suffering body of the HIV-infected migrant reverses  
12 public perception of his biopolitical otherness rooted in race and alien  
13 status. Increasingly, some form of legal recognition is awarded in the name  
14 of humanity, that is the right to a healthy body, regardless of the citizenship  
15 of the patient (Fassin, 2001).

16 Despite these changes in the ethical heft of citizenship, many others  
17 cannot make claims on a state, but must instead turn to transnational  
18 agencies for protection. Global agencies from the United Nations to the  
19 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to corporations extend minimalist  
20 protections that fall short of citizenship. Despite the rhetoric of human  
21 rights, it is by no means clear that the right to survival can everywhere  
22 be translated into citizenship. In practice, human rights discourse merely  
23 legitimizes claims on intervention on the grounds of common humanity.  
24 Categories of the human – refugees, the undocumented, subjects of failed  
25 states, and nonstate persons – exercise claims on the grounds of sheer  
26 survival, not citizenship (see Ong, 2003). These are “counter-politics of sheer  
27 life” – a situated form of political mobilization that involves ethical claims  
28 to resources articulated in terms of their needs as living beings (Collier &  
29 Lakoff, 2005, p. 29). For instance, in Cote D’Ivoire, HIC patients are  
30 required to assemble themselves around a clinic in order to claim a kind of  
31 “therapeutic citizenship” from drug dispensing pharmaceutical companies  
32 (Nguyen, 2005). Global corporations, in an age of concern to demonstrate  
33 social responsibility, are increasingly exercising a kind of “ethical citizen-  
34 ship” by spreading resources and knowledge, but such ethicalizing corporate  
35 behavior does not amount to citizenship because it is based not on law but  
36 on social norms and is highly contingent in implementation. These forms of  
37 nonstate transnational protections and right to survival mimic conventional  
38 citizenship, but do not displace it.

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## CONCLUSION

In short, as the empirical cases briefly mentioned above show, globalization cannot be said to lead to the denationalization of citizenship, but rather it brings about specific articulations between national citizenship and transnational norms on the one hand, and the rise of nonstate spaces where transnational institutions seek to protect people on the grounds of humanity, not citizenship on the other. By differentiating among the components that used to be tied together as citizenship, and tracing their variable links to global forms, I identify two kinds of transformations within and outside the state when it comes to administering the human:

- (a) In situated interactions between global forms and national politics, citizenship can become linked to external social criteria of moral worthiness (based on human capital or human rights) promoted by transnational regimes.
- (b) As states for a variety of reasons exclude protection from some citizens as well as noncitizens, a spectrum of nonstate agencies provide citizenship-like resources and protections that fall grievously short of actual citizenship.
- (c) Some transnational norms interact with citizenship criteria, and some transnational institutions extend protection, but these do not displace citizenship and merely seek to protect marginalized citizens and stateless persons.

Citizenship, as Sassen notes, is embedded in the nation-state, but by that logic cannot be “denationalized,” as she also claims in a contrarian move. While we can all agree that transnational regimes of virtue or corporate largess are extending protections and services to a variety of marginalized groups regardless of national borders, these regimes do not replace but rather seek to supplement citizenship orders. Human rights regimes do not displace citizenship because they do not exist as formal legal relationship with enforceable rights and obligations to a territorialized citizenry. By contrast, only states can enforce (human rights as) citizenship rights. Certain conceptualizations of citizenship can be influenced by the discourse of human rights (as has been the case in China), but the transnational regimes of virtue cannot disembed citizenship from the state.

The claim of “denationalized citizenship?,” while tentative, is derived from a kind of unilinear thinking that presumes successive political orders

1 culminating in a form of world citizenship. Here it is useful to invoke the  
 2 Kantian ideal of allegiance to the worldwide community of human beings  
 3 (Kant, 1964). Despite the proliferation of NGOs, multilateral agencies, and  
 4 other groups, they do not collectively constitute the kind of robust  
 5 institutions and commitments that would qualify as a Kantian “world  
 6 citizenship,” a condition that would require a federation of states that  
 7 institutionalize human rights, and thus still requires state action to protect  
 8 its citizens (i.e., citizenship). Without a global state that can enforce rights,  
 9 claims of nonstate citizenship are fundamentally discourses of ethical  
 10 obligations to our fellow humans as members of the same planetary oikos  
 11 (Arendt, 1958). There is, in other words, a profound difference between the  
 12 state-based *systems of government* which target population is citizens and  
 13 nonstate *regimes of ethical governance* for which the reference population is  
 14 humanity itself.

15 These two spaces of politics influence one another and articulate in  
 16 complex and contingent ways. As I noted above, anthropologists have  
 17 shifted from a linear logic to a spatial assemblage as the space of inquiry  
 18 into the particular interactions of co-existing political systems. Careful  
 19 empirical study of situated articulations between citizenship orders and  
 20 regimes of transnational virtue is more fruitful for analyzing our fractal  
 21 political contemporaneity.

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