

Civilising Globalisation: Human Rights and the Global Economy

Kevon Roberts

Universidad de Columbia, Nueva York. E.U.A.

kevon.roberts@gmail.com

David is currently work on a number of interrelated projects comprising principally, a study of the interrelations between the trade, the WTO and human rights, corporations and human rights, and a study of the human rights law dimensions of the World.

A plethora of influences, inspirations, experiences and encounters prompted me to write this review. But if I was to nominate the seminal moment in its evolution, then it would have to be one morning in the middle of September 2003, when I met with a senior economist in his office at the World Bank on H Street in Washington DC to talk about the place of human rights within the work of the Bank. I was doing some preliminary research for a Senior Fulbright Scholarship project that I was to take up in 2004 on that same subject. My host was and is a highly respected economist and strategic thinker both inside and outside the Bank. He was most hospitable, not least for honouring the meeting in the first place given the deluge of work that was pouring into his in-tray following the collapse of the Cancun ministerial trade talks barely twenty-four hours earlier. I enjoyed the encounter and I learnt a lot. During the meeting he said one thing in particular that struck me then and stayed with me thereafter. We were discussing the nature of human rights, and from that building a picture of what impact Bank operations had on them, and they on the Bank. We agreed that the Bank's impact on matters of people's economic and social welfare was profound, as indeed one would expect given the Bank's goals to alleviate poverty and bolster standards of living. However, its impact on people's and governments' civil and political circumstances was, at least in terms of direct action, much less significant (though not immaterial). My host believed that only the latter category of issues constituted the proper concern of human rights, and the former did not. Desirable

though the advancement of people's economic and social circumstances clearly may be, these were policy goals, in his view, not enforceable obligations. As such, the answer to the question of the Bank's impact on human rights was that it was minimal, and did not and should not therefore bear significantly on the strategic thinking and operations of the Bank. This is not an uncommon line of argument in debates over the ontology of human rights more generally. However, within the context of its delivery, it crystallised for me the idea that there are today two major, and often competing, globalising forces that strut the global stage. These are the universalisation of human rights on the one hand, and economic globalisation on the other. While it may be said that they occupy the same global space, they often appear to conduct their affairs separately, and when they do intersect it is more usually in collision rather than collusion. This is an impression that has been reiterated for me over the years in dealings with those from both sides of the debate, be they corporations, human rights activists, governments, academics, students, or officials from international organisations. In fact, an early working title for this book was 'Two Globalisations'. But as my research and thinking developed, I understood that it was in fact too simple a representation of the whole scene. Certainly, it is an important point to make in order to appreciate the history and sentiments of the two fields that persist even today, but as a depiction of the totality of interrelations between the global economy and human rights the title was incomplete. Across the board, the intersections are numerous, subtle and inexorable, and as such I plumped for 'Civilising Globalisation' for the book's title, with its connotations of globalisation being both a civilising force and a force that must be civilised. This double entendre constitutes the book's abiding theme. It also reflects the positioning of the book within the broader imperative of needing to curb capitalism's excesses, so graphically illustrated by the monumental interventions being made by governments in the global capital markets at the time I write these words in late 2008, and the mounting calls for the tightening of the regulatory frameworks within which financial institutions operate.

Bibliografía

Libro: Civilising Globalisation: Human Rights and the Global Economy

Año: 2009

Autor: David Kinley

Editorial: Cambridge

Páginas: 240

