

Part III. TEACHING GLOBAL STUDIES

Section 1. TEACHING GLOBAL STUDIES: REFLECTIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Reflections on Some of the Challenges of Global Affairs as an Academic Field

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This short paper focuses on three issues. First, it briefly examines the increasing recognition of the necessity to think and act more and more globally, a situation that calls for developing and tailoring knowledge and policy tools to the global level and the needs it entails. Second, it refers to the challenges that, in academia, stand in the way of making this possible. Real and not easy to tackle, these challenges are intellectual, institutional, and human. Third, the paper puts forward a few recommendations to improve the academic field of research and study of global affairs and global studies.

1. Beyond the National Structure of the World

The world continues to be structured around the nation-state. This is seen in a variety of ways, one of them being the fact that for most people, except for a small transnational elite, the national community remains the primary context of socialization. This is true in terms of education and culture. Although more and more children and young adults are exposed to the increasing internationalization of education and culture, for example via the internet, most of them are formally schooled and, more generally, culturally educated in one world.

The national anchoring of individuals is also at work in political terms. To this day, despite the other local, regional, and international affiliations they may have, people experience political identification, participation, expectation, and obligation – four key elements of political socialization – chiefly at the national level. More specifically, the national dimension represents the main point of reference of identification and the framework for the various forms of political participation in which individuals engage, elections to begin with. In this perspective, people are prone to direct their expectations toward their national political leaders and institutions and the services they are supposed to deliver to society and its members. As for obligations, they are essentially geared toward fellow citizens. The limits of the sense of responsibility and solidarity beyond borders are a case in point. Incidentally, these limits are all the more real that *within* borders, with the spread of neo-liberalism and the economic crisis, responsibility and solidarity toward others are becoming more fragile. In this context, it is only normal for politicians

to continue to focus on national needs and dynamics. On the other hand, it is problematic for them to follow this path and difficult to succeed considering that the structure of the international system built around the nation-state and the national bent that this injects into international (and national) life is now only one part of the environment in which we live. Equally important is the globalization of the world.

To be sure, this globalization is not total. It is partial and unevenly distributed around the world in terms of its impact. But it is significant and massive enough to change the nature and functioning of most societies. Compared to the past, societies are less closed and self-contained, and more open and interdependent. For better or for worse, the economy is a prime example of this situation: by and large, national economies are increasingly internationalized. In the environment, too, problems arise and solutions have to be found globally. In the last two decades, information technology and the acceleration of economic globalization, including in the context of the 2008 financial and economic crisis, have only deepened this movement.

Against this background, the globalization of the world, its characteristics and effects, calls for being studied, understood and, somehow, anticipated so that, rather than being a source of alienation, it is as much as possible a source of individual and collective empowerment. For this to happen, relying on the existing knowledge and its forms of production, organization and dissemination is not sufficient. These have to be renovated and adapted to the transformations underway. In other words, knowledge in its various components has to be developed for and tailored to the global level. It is all the more the case since, whether we like it or not, with the internet, information and knowledge are already key areas impacted by globalization.

It is in part the recognition of this necessary renewal of the content, production, organization, and dissemination of knowledge that has led, in the past ten years or so, academic institutions to internationalize themselves.¹ Among other things this has entailed two trends, first, putting in place international partnerships of universities allowing them to join forces on research and teaching global agendas and offering mobility to students (with the possibility of dual degrees across borders) and faculty and, second, for some universities, building academic programs devoted to global affairs or studies. In the field of international affairs, the Global Public Policy Network (GPPN), created in 2005 and bringing together Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po), and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy is one of these partnerships – and the one that is very active and successful. Another one is the Global Studies Consortium, a network of graduate teaching programs on global studies established in 2007. Nineteen universities from around the world are part of the network, such as Australian National University, Aarhus University, Hitotsubachi

¹ Interestingly, and not surprisingly, in the United States, the internationalization movement of universities has been led by private academic institutions. The drive to enroll international students, a major source of revenue and global reach, is part of the explanation. However, if public universities do not attempt to catch up in this area, the advantages from which students from global private universities already benefit will deepen. This will make it all the more difficult for state universities' students, who often do not have the cultural and social capital of private universities' students, to compete for good global jobs, or even local jobs impacted by globalization.

University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Rutgers University (with its Division of Global Affairs), and Shanghai University.²

2. Identifying the Challenges of Global Affairs and Global Studies

These recent academic initiatives certainly represent steps forward, and necessary ones indeed. However, they should not be viewed as all that is needed for making sense of the on-going globalization and at the same time taking advantage of it, in particular by training in the universities of today the national/global professionals and citizens that the world of tomorrow is mostly likely to need. In fact, much remains to be done and the difficulties and challenges that have to be tackled, let alone overcome in achieving this latter goal, make it an uphill battle. This is the case partly because Global Affairs / Global Studies, if and when they are taken seriously in terms of what they demand and imply, are a new field of research, teaching, and practical expertise. In this regard, three types of challenges, among others, have to be highlighted. They are intellectual, institutional, and human types of challenges.³

On the intellectual front, it is now acknowledged more and more that in order to address the perils and fulfill the promises of a future made of a globalizing world, it is imperative to ensure that knowledge in research and teaching, especially in the social sciences and related disciplines, exhibit at least three features. They will have to be multi-disciplinary, global in outlook, and attentive to policy skills. Yet, they are still deficient in these three categories.

Surely, the academic programs that have emerged in various parts of the world focusing on global issues are by and large multi-disciplinary, which is good. The problem is that the multi-disciplinary character of their curriculum rests essentially on the aggregation of disciplines. This is certainly better than functioning within one discipline and being somewhat the captive of it. But it is not as ground-breaking as being able to put forward what could be called integrated multi-disciplinary, that is a type of multi-disciplinarity in the context of which, in addition to discipline-oriented courses, a significant number of courses would be by nature multi-disciplinary.

The lack of global outlook is another intellectual challenge. Indeed, to this day, the humanities and social sciences disciplines essentially amount to national or nationalized bodies of knowledge. This is not surprising considering that many of them have historically developed in conjunction with the national realm and the nation-state. As such, they have come to echo national concerns and sought to address national problems, and bring national solutions to them. In the humanities, think for instance about philosophy and, more specifically, political philosophy. Until recently, with the exception of a few authors, its main purpose has been to reflect on the conditions of possibility of justice within a given (national) community. Consequently justice beyond borders has been secondary. Moreover, it has been limited to *inter-national* justice, which is another way to have the national realm serve as the reference point, making hardly any room for global justice.

² These are not, of course, the only models of internationalization of universities and academic knowledge. Another one, being developed by New York University, entails the establishment of satellite campuses, for the moment in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai.

³ These intellectual, institutional and human challenges are not specific to global affairs. For instance, the track record shows that they exist also in women and gender studies, cultural studies and ethnic studies.

In the social sciences, think about history. Although comparative history and world history have been gaining traction, as a whole, the discipline of history remains a highly nation-centric one. This is also the case for sociology, which has developed as a field designed and aimed at making sense of social relations within the context of national societies. Other examples are statistics and public policy. The strong role they have played in supporting the effectiveness of the modern nation-state is not necessarily an asset when it comes to responding to the global needs of the future. Their national horizon is prone to make them a bit of a misfit for global issues.

On the policy side, the worlds of theory and practice are too separated. This is seen in the fact that more often than not, academic experts tend to be of one mind. They are either theoretically or policy trained and inclined. And yet, from an intellectual standpoint, the ability to display and develop hybrid approaches building on theory and practice is intellectually, not to say in policy terms, very fruitful. As in the sciences, where fundamental and applied sciences are now not as separated as they used to be and scientific discoveries as well as societies have benefited from their 'rapprochement', students of social phenomena would benefit by beginning to recognize that the distinction between theory and practice is somewhat artificial and that much can be achieved intellectually by overcoming it.

The institutional challenges are very much in line with the intellectual shortcomings alluded to above. They are threefold. First, they concern the mostly mono-disciplinary organization of universities, with the impact that this has on the teaching, researching, and recruiting dynamics of academia. Second, little is done to factor in the demands that the globalization of the world puts on the methodology and epistemology – philosophy – of the production and dissemination of knowledge. Third, by aligning themselves primarily with Western knowledge, universities endorse and project a form of global provincialism.⁴

Concerning the mono-disciplinary organization of academic knowledge, an example should be enough to illustrate this norm: as a result of specialization, teaching, research and academic careers⁵ are conducted and institutionalized along disciplinary lines, like economics, sociology, anthropology, and others. This explains that in the programs of global affairs or global studies, professors come from single-discipline departments. The benefits of this situation do not eliminate the fact that it is not an optimal one, for it expresses and perpetuates the mono-disciplinary status quo.⁶

The implications are obvious. To begin with, the teaching of multi-disciplinarity happens seldom within courses. Consequently, students are prone to be more exposed than professors to at least some multi-disciplinarity. This circumstance is somewhat odd and paradoxical since, in principle, the faculty's role is in Global Affairs / Global Studies programs to prepare and shepherd students toward multi-disciplinarity. In addition, faculty research tends to be only marginally multi-disciplinary. As professors belong to one field, the incentive for them to venture beyond their comfort zone is low. It is all the more the case considering that publishing in other fields is destined to entail initially

⁴ From a general standpoint, these institutional limitations show that the organization of the life of ideas does not always serve in the best way possible the life of ideas.

⁵ Think about the fact that hiring, promotion and tenure, and other academic incentive and award aspects, are organized around disciplines.

⁶ Obviously, there is much more to say on the pros and cons of the mono-discipline and multi-disciplinary approaches, of approaches focusing on either 'deep' (mono-discipline) or 'wide' (multi-disciplinarity) and their relationships.

a substantial amount of additional work. Furthermore, there are implications for the placement of students enrolled in these types of Global Affairs / Global Studies programs, especially doctoral students. Since multi-disciplinary programs are few and far between in the current landscape of universities, in the United States and beyond, they are clearly at a disadvantage compared to Ph.D. students who have been trained in a more traditional and narrow fashion. In other words, what is supposed to be an edge – being enrolled in a multi-disciplinary Global Affairs / Global Studies program – runs the risk of turning out to be an impediment.

Regarding the philosophy of knowledge, the fact of the matter is that the courses on methodology and epistemology offered in Global Affairs / Global Studies programs tend to be anchored in political science. In this regard, even when these courses are intellectually eclectic and open, and of great quality, they are still limited by the idiosyncrasies of the discipline of political science. This is all the more unfortunate considering that methodology and epistemology courses coming from other disciplines are hardly a possibility. And even more rarely do the Global Affairs / Global Studies programs provide courses exploring the challenges and demands of multi-disciplinarity, let alone what it would take to go beyond methodological and epistemological nationalism (Beck 2006) and have better intellectual tools to think globally about global issues.

As if this did not already present major limitations, there is also the fact that the academic knowledge of reference in Global Studies or Global Affairs, as in general, is by and large Western, if not Anglo-Saxon. This situation, which is reflective of the current geopolitics of knowledge,⁷ is at work in American universities. Indeed, although these are among the most internationalized and pluralistic academic centers in the world both in terms of faculty and curriculum, they have the tendency to display self-centered knowledge. This is also the case in other Western universities (Europe). It is as well at work, and this is perhaps even more problematic, in non-Western academic institutions. More often than not, these borrow from the West and locally import intellectual and cultural traditions that are not necessarily mindful of and helpful to the local needs. Despite the fact that the qualities of such (Western) knowledge cannot be doubted, the situation of monopoly that it amounts to brings about serious issues, particularly at a time when, with the latest developments of globalization, there is a shift of power outside the West and toward Asia.

It is not surprising that the human challenges of the current Global Affairs / Global Studies approaches are connected with this situation. They can be summarized in the following two ways.

The first human difficulty is that faculty involved in Global Affairs and Global Studies are both progressive and conservative. They are progressive in the sense that their involvement in this area is a testimony of their awareness that the world is changing and that this requires from universities intellectual and institutional adaptation and innovation not only to cope with the changes, but also to anticipate and optimize them. However, as frequently they are the products of an academic world of mono-disciplinarity, it can be challenging for them to free themselves from the conservative bent of the past. Being the advocates and agents of change to nurture and midwife multi-disciplinarity and Global Studies while having a foot in and being shaped by the past, is no easy task.

⁷ Intellectual hegemony comes with power hegemony.

Second, intellectual and institutional challenges are prone to translate into an ethical problem for the faculty. On the one hand, professors and scholars involved in Global Affairs / Global Studies know that they are doing the right thing for the preparation of the next generation. But, on the other hand, they also recognize that they themselves and the academic settings in place are not necessarily the best to prepare students for successful careers. In this regard, the unsatisfactory track record for placement of Global Affairs / Global Studies' students, in academia and beyond, should give pause to concerned faculty.

3. A Few Recommendations for the Way Forward

In situations where something is needed (and Global Affairs / Global Studies approaches are certainly needed) and yet encountering challenges (which is also the case for Global Affairs / Global Studies), the first rule and requirement for being able to move forward in a meaningful way is excellence. It is about taking excellence seriously and placing it at the core of the enterprise. While unlikely to generate drastic and full changes overnight, in time and piece by piece, when committed to and followed through with, this posture will put on the right track. If this is the case, how can the quest for excellence be met in intellectual, institutional, and human terms in Global Affairs / Global Studies? A few ideas come to mind. Of course they are no more than a starting point to think about the matter.

Intellectually, for Global Affairs / Global Studies to become a success story, there are at least three conditions.

First, multi-disciplinarity has to be more than a juxtaposition or aggregation of disciplines. In addition to this, it has to be pursued as much as possible through courses and research practicing multi-disciplinarity from within. From the standpoint of teaching, when professors themselves do not have the multi-disciplinary background required, co-teaching can help to achieve this. In this perspective, co-teaching is most successful when on a given theme, it is done by two faculty who, while having different academic backgrounds, are eager to learn from the exchange and dialogue of disciplines. For research, multi-disciplinarity can for instance happen via collective research projects. Both for teaching and research, this presupposes professors willing to go beyond business as usual and work toward stretching themselves intellectually. For example, rather than simply reproducing, in Global Affairs / Global Studies programs, the courses they offer in their home departments, they might tailor or adapt their courses specifically for Global Affairs / Global Studies programs.

Second, more courses of a comparative and global nature must be offered to students. The comparative courses could be across regions, disciplines, cultures and time, and themes. As for the global courses, they could deal with global issues but should also include courses of a methodological and epistemological nature, exploring what it takes to put forward global knowledge.

As for intellectual excellence when it comes to students, there is no other way to achieve this than by being very demanding of them. Multi-disciplinarity and Global Affairs / Global Studies are presenting too many difficulties as fields to ask anything less of students. In the tough and competitive current academic and professional environment, it is not helping students to have them think that they do not have to work extremely hard,

and creatively, to meet the challenges ahead. Far from helping them succeed, allowing them to adopt a complacent attitude is a recipe for failure. This speaks to the institutional dimension of excellence.

On the institutional front, excellence requires at minimum being serious about the seven following elements:

First, clear and rigorous academic systems have to be put in place at all the steps of the learning experience, including recruiting, course teaching, and evaluating students. This encompasses, among other things, casting a wide net for students from around the world, so that the classroom itself becomes one of their training grounds for the study of global affairs.

Second, more emphasis should be placed on foreign languages. It does not make sense to have a Global Affairs / Global Studies program in which foreign languages are not an integral part of the curriculum. Professionals who do not have this type of skill cannot hope to be and go global. Over time, this foreign language requirement could lead to have part of the curriculum being taught in a variety of languages, and the imperative for students to spend part of their studies abroad.

Third, the topics of the Ph.D. dissertation have to reflect a real commitment and relevance to Global Affairs / Global Studies. This presupposes having the proper expertise reflected in the faculty and dissertation committees. Widening and deepening the extent of expertise of the faculty will help to achieve this goal.

Fourth, as only a small percentage of the students will find academic jobs,⁸ it is necessary that Global Affairs / Global Studies' students acquire policy and practical skills of global relevance, at the Master's level and, if possible, at the Ph.D. level. It is also advisable that the acquisition of policy / practical skills is referred to in the name given to the degree (*e.g.*, a track referring to 'global policy'). This will enhance their chances of finding jobs at the international level, in international organizations, private companies, non-governmental organizations, foundations, *etc.*

Fifth, as much as possible, and based on in-house resources and outside the university resources, full-fledged academic positions of Global Affairs / Global Studies (in Comparative Studies, Global Studies, *etc.*) have to be created in order to nurture the development of integrated multi-disciplinarity and global scholarship.

Sixth, the Global Studies Consortium, of which the Rutgers University Division of Global Affairs is a member, has to be better used and made into a real asset, for the students, faculty, and programs that are part of it. Provided that the academic programs in the network are of a similar nature and level (including graduate programs delivering Master's and Ph.D. degrees) and converge on academic objectives, the consortium's activities have to be more than just a yearly conference. It could be called up and institutionalized to offer a rich and pluri-cultural curriculum and lending global experience to students and faculty, with much mobility and integration among the global studies consortium programs. This could take place in a manner reminiscent of the Global Public Policy Network (GPPN), but in ways developing relevant, promising, and specific characteristics, so that it would not duplicate, but rather complement the already successful GPPN.

⁸ Arguably, foreign students studying Global Affairs / Global Studies in the United States are more likely than American students to land academic positions back home, particularly if they come from emerging countries.

Seventh, the support and commitment of the senior management of universities is critical to success. Their importance is proportional to the challenges and potential benefits associated with Global Affairs / Global Studies programs and, more generally, the internationalization of academic institutions. Without such support and commitment, which should be both in terms of strategic vision and resources, progress is prone to be limited and, therefore, cannot be a game-changer. The fact that all the universities occupying leading positions in this area enjoy decisive support from the top is a case in point.

Finally, what about human excellence?

Here, the short answer is that, to a large extent, it is about having the desire and the will to be part of a 'winning proposition' and be proud of what could be and very realistically can be achieved. As we can judge from this short text, there is a long way to go. But it can be done.

Reference

Beck, U. 2006. *Cosmopolitan Vision*. Cambridge: Polity Press.