

Borderless

By Roni Shapira

I'm walking through the streets of Seoul, where I am currently living. Subway, Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts and Burger King all greet me. Hangul characters mixed with Latin ones. Tasty! Fresh! Delicious!

A mere 5% of Korea's residents are foreigners, making Korea one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. Yet globalization shapes the street, bringing a taste of Americanization. In fact, for example, Koreans love Starbucks. With nearly 300 outlets, Seoul has more Starbucks locations than any other country in the world. Korea has not abandoned its traditional tea houses but it has also been willing to embrace American culture, to let it find its place in between kimbap and BBQ restaurants.

Of course, Starbucks is not merely an American enterprise. Starbucks' coffee beans are sourced from all over the world. On the way from the tree to my coffee mug, there is an international journey, one that is often fraught by human suffering. My coffee beans have likely seen more of the world than the people who worked to get it.

This is globalization. The process of ideas, information, culture, people, services and goods shifting around the world. In a way, globalization echoes most actions we do. From this English to my jeans, from my computer manufacturing supply chain to the Netflix tv shows I watch to the Reddit forums with voices from around the world, our world lacks the borders it used to have.

Nonetheless, the borders between countries have changed and perhaps, even strengthened in some aspects. Being a citizen of a country still shapes many of your opportunities. Visas, trade barriers, funding opportunities and so on. In this sense, citizenship becomes a form of discrimination. The borders are stronger than ever.

What is citizenship? In his groundbreaking essay, T.H. Marshall describes social citizenship as the idea that participating in a community requires being given certain rights. Civil, political and social rights are baked within the idea of citizenship. If you are part of our country, you must be given these rights. Marshall

describes social citizenship as the idea that participating in a community requires being given certain rights. Civil, political and social rights are baked within the idea of citizenship. If you are part of our country, you must be given these rights. Marshall wrote these words in 1950 in an attempt to argue that it is citizenship that is the basis of social welfare, not need. Marshall's work was seminal in the sense that it forged the path for the modern welfare state.

Indeed, modern welfare states still exclude many people. For example, Denmark leads the world in its welfare state yet has very strict immigration policies. Many of the members of our societies are not citizens and are not given rights. From immigrants to workers to outsourcing, we depend on people who are not citizens of our societies. I may think that I have nothing to do with the people who picked my coffee beans but this is untrue; I digest their labor. We cannot claim that our societies are built only out of those with citizenship. Perhaps we never could but now, it is even starker.

So what is citizenship in a global world? Marshall suggested that civil rights were given in the 18th century, political rights were given in the 19th century and social rights should be given in the 20th century. Now, in the 21st century, perhaps we are ready for a different set of rights. What are the rights that each state owes each individual? What is the state in a borderless society?

I would propose that an answer to this question starts with building trust. This sounds simple but it is not. Citizenship is a form of "us" and "them" relations, of othering. It is a way of stating that some people are part of society and others are not. Nonetheless, states also serve important functions. They are the bricks of our modern world, they give people self determination, they preserve culture and so on. Trust is the middle ground to this. If I trust someone, it implies that I see them as part of my society, as an equal that can contribute to my welfare. They are seen as part of the "us".

With trust come duties. What duties? This question does not have one answer. Perhaps trust translates to better immigration laws, to equal access, to more

opportunities. Perhaps it merely starts with embracing foreigners, expats, immigrants and refugees. Maybe it is reevaluating the economic systems so that they benefit more people. A form of dialogue is needed but it must be rooted in the realization that we are part of each other's society and with this, come rights in the form of a social contract. Trust can be a solution here, finding ways to form borders that make sense to the people on both sides of the fence. If the streets of Seoul can find a way to blend borders, our countries can do the same.