

POSTSTRUCTURALISM,
CITIZENSHIP AND
SOCIAL POLICY

ALAN PETERSEN,
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PATRICIA HARRIS

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The impact of poststructuralism on thinking in the social sciences and humanities over the last decade has been profound. However, to date, there has been little systematic analysis of the implications of poststructuralism for the critical analysis of social policy. *Poststructuralism, Citizenship and Social Policy* shows how poststructuralist ideas can be usefully applied in the areas of welfare, health, education and science and technology policy, making particular reference to the theme of citizenship.

With the winding back of the welfare state and the emergence of 'neo-liberalism', policy makers urgently need new tools of analysis. They need to rethink the relations between citizens and the state. The chapters examine the emergence and significance of neo-liberal rule for social policies, new forms of governance implied by the new genetics and the implications for public health, the meanings of education and citizenship in the context of economic rationalism, and the role of technologies in the constitution of the self.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: themes, context and perspectives

Ian Barns, Janice Dudley, Patricia Harris and Alan Petersen

What is poststructuralism, and what has it got to do with social policy? How can policy makers, who deal with very practical issues, make use of the concepts of poststructuralism in their own work? And how does poststructural analysis relate to our understanding of citizenship? These are questions that we explore in this book, with specific reference to the social policy areas of welfare, education, public health and science and technology. In this introductory chapter, we spell out our assumptions and explain what is distinctive about our approach. We examine the politico-economic and theoretical contexts which have shaped both policy making and our own thinking, and outline the themes that are covered in the chapters that follow. We have all contributed equally to the planning and writing of this chapter. To begin, Alan explains the rationale for this book and seeks to clarify our particular use of the term ‘poststructuralism’, and what we believe distinguishes a poststructuralist approach from other approaches. Patricia then examines the relationship between poststructuralism and the social policy literature. This is followed by Janice’s discussion of the economic and political context shaping the specific policy responses that have come to be identified with neo-liberalism. And, finally, Ian explores the relationship between citizenship and neo-liberal regimes of governance—an important recurring theme in the book—and introduces the remaining chapters.

In recent years, there has been a burgeoning number of new books focusing on poststructuralism as a theoretical perspective. There has also been a steadily growing number of texts dealing with conceptual and theoretical approaches to policy. However, as yet, few books have systematically examined the implications of poststructuralism for the critical analysis of social policy. While poststructuralism has had a profound impact on thinking in the social sciences and humanities over the last decade or so, its implications for our understandings of social policy and its impacts have been relatively unexplored. This book represents an effort to address this lacuna, to show how the insights offered by poststructuralists can be usefully employed in the

analysis of contemporary social policy, with specific reference to the areas of welfare, health, education and science and technology. These are areas of our respective research interests and expertise, and also constitute much of the contemporary field of social policy. The emergence of economic liberalism, increasing globalisation, the reconstruction of the welfare state and the move towards a more market-driven approach to social provision has radically reshaped policies in all these fields, calling for new perspectives and new tools of analysis. This rapidly changing context has brought into question many of the categories and concepts by means of which we have so far understood the human, such as 'citizenship' which was developed further in the context of the welfare state. With the 'winding back' of the welfare state, the emergence of a new conservatism and attacks on established social and civil rights, it is important that policy makers and policy analysts who are concerned about protecting and advancing rights seek to critically appraise basic concepts and categories. In particular, there is a need for careful analysis of the manifestations and operations of the increasingly dominant 'rationality of rule' known as advanced liberalism or neo-liberalism. Neo-liberal policies have radically altered the public domain through privatisation, downsizing, the contracting out and rationing of services and the emphasis on local and individual autonomy. There are few areas of policy unaffected by the recent and dramatic shifts in social priorities ushered in by neo-liberal rule. In this context, the concept of citizenship is of crucial significance, as a site for exploring the meanings and limits of liberal democratic participation and for contesting the imperatives of neo-liberal rule. The concept of citizenship, with its implied rights and duties, we believe, needs to be closely and critically scrutinised at this historical juncture, and hence figures prominently in the discussion that follows.

What do we mean by poststructuralism?

Before proceeding much further, we should make clear our particular use of the term poststructuralism. Because we take seriously the claim that our descriptions are never innocent, in the sense that they are unable to provide an unmediated and impartial access to an already given social reality, but rather constitute our reality, we believe it is important that authors seek to define their terms clearly. Throughout its relatively brief history, the term poststructuralism has been charged with multiple meanings. This has led to some confusion in discussions. Confusion has arisen in part because writers often use the term 'poststructuralist' as though it were singular when in fact it is plural, encompassing diverse theoretical positions, including

apparently ‘apolitical’ forms of deconstructive criticism and more explicit forms of political critique and practice, such as feminist poststructuralism (Weedon 1987) and queer theory (Seidman 1996). It is not our intention here to explore the diverse definitions of poststructuralism, nor the history of poststructuralist thought, since this has already been done extensively elsewhere (see, e.g., Best and Kellner 1991; Sarup 1993; Smart 1993). When we use the term poststructuralism here, we take it to mean that school of thought which is opposed to and seeks to move beyond the premises of structuralism, to develop new models of thought, writing and subjectivity. As Best and Kellner explain, structuralism focuses on the underlying rules which organise phenomena into a social system and aims at objectivity, coherence, rigour and truth. Structuralists seek to describe social phenomena in terms of linguistic and social structures, rules, codes and systems, and to develop grand, synthesising theories (Best and Kellner 1991:19). Examples of structuralist analysis include Marxism and functionalist sociology. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, focus on the inextricable and diffuse linkages between power and knowledge, and on how individuals are constituted as subjects and given unified identities or subject positions. That is, they focus on micro politics and on subjectivity, difference and everyday life (ibid.: 24). This is clearly exemplified in the work of the French philosopher and historian, Michel Foucault. Poststructuralists such as Foucault are concerned with *de*-constructing the concepts by which we have come to understand the human subject, including concepts such as ‘the self’, ‘the social’ and ‘citizenship’.

Poststructuralists adopt a unique kind of deconstructive and analytic approach, with a specific purpose in mind. Because they seek to challenge the humanist notion of an unchanging human nature, they favour a historical method which sees different forms of consciousness and identities as historically produced. The method of genealogy, proposed by Foucault, has been the method adopted by poststructuralists for disrupting the certainties of the present and allowing new perspectives to emerge, including those of previously marginalised groups (see [Chapter 2](#)). Poststructuralists challenge the notion that there is an overall pattern in history and that the present state of affairs is inevitable and immutable. Given poststructuralists’ scepticism about grand theory building and the claim of positivistic science to know all there is to know, it is not surprising that poststructural work has also tended to focus on the mundane, everyday practices which constitute our social realities. Their focus on ‘subjugated’ and ‘disqualified’ knowledges tends to place them in sharp opposition to the sociological tradition (from Marx, Durkheim and Weber to the present) that privileges professional knowledge

over the lay interpretation of reality (Best 1994:44). This is not to say that they have abandoned analysis of broader social structures or of the broader sweeps of history, or eschew the use of systematic methods. However, the historical and social determinism of structuralist sociology is rejected in favour of an analysis of the interconnections between the macro-level and the micro-level workings of power, particularly as these are played out in specific domains, for example, in the workplace, in education and in the clinic, and how this affects our understandings of the human subject and people's awareness of themselves as subjects (i.e. their subjectivities). Some of these features of poststructuralism are ones which are also often associated with postmodernism.

The term poststructuralism is sometimes used interchangeably with postmodernism, and this is also the source of some confusion. This is not to say that poststructuralism is unrelated to post-modernism. However, the exact nature of the relationship depends upon one's particular conception of postmodernism, that is, whether one is using this term to refer to a period in history, a cultural context or a theoretical approach. Poststructuralism has been variously described as a symptom of the postmodern culture which it seeks to describe, as a part of the matrix of postmodern theory, and as a discourse of and about modernism (see Dickens and Fontana 1994:89–90; Best and Kellner 1991:25; Huyssen 1984: 39, in Smart 1993). These definitions highlight the significance of the broader cultural and theoretical context within which poststructuralism emerges and with which poststructuralists engage. However, they also tend to convey the impression that there has been an abrupt and absolute shift in culture and theory which has not in fact occurred. The popularisation of the ideas of writers such as Baudrillard, who portrays the present age as one in which the distinction between reality and illusion has disappeared—where what is real is but a simulacrum and where 'the social' no longer exists—and Lyotard, whose highly influential book *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) provides a polemic attack against the discourses of modernity while offering new postmodern positions, has had the unfortunate effect of suggesting that there has been an abrupt break with the past. The very use of the prefix 'post' in poststructuralism and postmodernism indeed suggests a radical shift in perspective or milieu that has often been used by critics to dismiss the contributions of those scholars who draw on poststructural or postmodern ideas. Although poststructuralism has emerged in a context of significant change—one in which the very foundations of knowledge are being questioned—it is important to recognise continuities as well as raptures in our ways of thinking about the social world. For instance, the particular concept of 'the social' that

has underpinned thinking about social policy and social action for much of the last two hundred years continues to predominate, despite its erosion under neo-liberalism (see [Chapter 4](#)). Faith in rational science and in the ability to manage or ameliorate social problems rationally also endures in diverse areas of culture, including the policy arena, where professional, science-based knowledge and ‘top-down’ approaches to formulating policy continue to hold a privileged position *vis-à-vis* non-professional or lay knowledge and ‘bottom-up’ approaches. Thus, while contemporary societies are undergoing changes of a kind and order that call for novel approaches, we need to guard against setting up false dichotomies of ‘old’ and ‘new’ or ‘past’ and ‘present’ and hence overlooking the importance of continuities in our ‘ways of seeing’.

One of our intentions has been to present our arguments in a way which allows conflicts in viewpoint and unresolved dilemmas of theory to emerge. Although we share certain concerns and can agree on the broad outlines of poststructuralism and how it might contribute to policy analysis, there are also many points on which we disagree and arguments which need further thought. We each make use of and engage with poststructural ideas in somewhat different ways. As you will note, each of the chapters is followed by short reflexive essays which constitute responses by each of us to queries raised by the others to our argument. This gives the book more of an interactive flavour than is found in most other texts. We hope that these essays serve as a pedagogic device, helping to convey to students, and to lecturers not familiar with poststructuralist thought, the challenges posed by poststructuralism to the idea of the authoritative voice. In organising the material in this way, we hope to stimulate further debate, rather than to foreclose discussion about the contributions of poststructural analysis to policy analysis.

The relationship between poststructuralism and the social policy literature

What is the relationship between poststructuralism and the social policy literature? In order to answer this question properly, we need first to clarify what we mean when we refer to the ‘social policy tradition’. A useful way of doing this is by contrast: that is, by establishing which kinds of policy writing are *not* part of the social policy tradition as we understand it.

We start with those texts which aim to provide a set of strategic or analytical tools for the practitioner (thus, for example, Hogwood and Gunn’s *Policy Analysis for the Real World* (1984)). Typically, such texts deal with the formulation, implementation and evaluation of

policy. Their substantive concerns include the nature of decision making, the means of forecasting and diagnosing policy issues and the locus of policy making. Questions relating to the operation of power and the nature of the state are rarely raised. The social and political policy context is a *given*, something which the intelligent policy maker takes into account and deals with as he or she designs and implements chosen strategies.

In contrast, the social policy tradition (in both its more orthodox and critical forms) has such issues at the heart of its concerns. It sets out to describe the social, economic and political conditions in which policy arises. Social policy research aims to provide a critical understanding of how policy is made and what its effects are. Epsing-Anderson's *Welfare States in Transition* (1996) provides a recent example. Its writings are intended to inform the work of the practitioner but not to provide a set of instructions and are intended for academics as well as policy makers.

The social policy tradition also needs to be distinguished from *public policy* writing. This distinction operates at two levels: *area* and *perspective*. As far as area is concerned, public policy texts typically deal with a broad range of policies including macro and micro economic reform, industrial relations, transport, the environment, health, education and (less often) welfare. In contrast, social policy texts generally restrict themselves to areas more obviously linked to the welfare state: health, education, income security and employment are the prime examples. In relation to perspective, public policy writings focus on the institutional settings of political decision making, the actual operations of power and the influence of interest groups, while social policy writings centre on the normative bases and distributional consequences of particular policies.¹ (This difference is only an approximation, given the variety of writings in each school.)

Our book is primarily devoted to 'social' policy areas in that three chapters deal with the established trio: health, education and welfare. Its perspective, though, departs from both 'public' and 'social' policy orientations as described above. It is, we have claimed, 'poststructural'. How does this affect our approach to policy? In what ways are poststructural approaches different from what went before? And, in particular, given the focus of this book, how do 'poststructural' perspectives differ from 'social policy' perspectives?

Before attempting to answer these questions, a word of caution. In proposing an (approximate) distinction between 'poststructural' and 'social policy' perspectives, we do not claim to have entered a whole different genre of writing. Proponents of new schools tend to overemphasise the distinctiveness of their own approach and dwell at some length on the deficiencies of what went before. Poststructuralism

has been no exception to this (cf. Garland 1997). In contrast, we suggest that it is important to emphasise continuities alongside differences, and to acknowledge sameness as well as contrast, and dialogue as well as opposition. In this context, we draw attention to three important characteristics shared by poststructural and established social policy perspectives.

First, both belong to a *critical* tradition in that they query/reformulate/disestablish current certainties and operations. Both perspectives know that apparently progressive measures may have divisive and oppressive effects. This, as Mann (1998) points out, is as true of Titmuss as of many of the newer poststructural or 'post-modern' approaches to policy. Second, both tend to share a *leftist* position in that they are concerned with the ways in which current patterns of power and knowledge operate to disenfranchise and silence certain groups of people and/or ways of thinking. The language may have changed but the direction of the critique is similar. Third, both share a *social* orientation, in that the terms and conditions under which the public domain is organised is a central problematic for both. Given these continuities, what are the main differences between 'poststructural' and 'social policy' perspectives?

One of the most frequently cited distinctions relates to the place which a normative position plays in the analysis. On this line of reasoning, a social policy perspective is more likely to have an up-front normative stance and be directed towards achieving a specific normative project, be that Marxist, feminist, Fabian, social democratic or anarchist. In contrast, poststructural approaches are said to be directed towards explicating the characteristics of current policies rather than voicing a particular normative position (cf. O'Malley *et al.* 1997). While we accept the general direction of this argument (and revoice it at various points in the book), we suggest that it cannot be taken too far. It both exaggerates the extent to which established social policy texts set out to promulgate a particular normative perspective² and masks the normativity invested in poststructuralist accounts. Explication and prescription are invariably interwoven.

There are other, perhaps more promising, ways of distinguishing between 'social policy' and 'poststructural' perspectives. These relate to the construction of the state, the status of general categories and the notion of 'truth' (cf. Hillyard and Watson 1996).

Social policy accounts generally treat the state as a unitary object which has its own rationale, motivations and interests. Such a notion is encapsulated in references to the 'capitalist', 'patriarchal' or 'democratic' state. In such accounts, the positioning of the state—whether it is partisan, a site of struggle or a court of appeal—varies, but the idea of it as some kind of 'thing' which thinks and responds

persists. In contrast, poststructural narratives dismember the state, emphasising the various and inconsistent practices which shape its manifold components.

The position of the state as the main seat of power is correspondingly down-played in poststructuralist approaches. It emerges as one segment of a much broader play of power relations involving professionals, bureaucracies, schools, families, leisure organisations and so forth. In Foucault's terms, the various institutions and practices of the state operate as part of a 'capillary' of relations in which power continually circulates and recirculates. Accordingly, poststructural interest is as much directed to the local dole office as the central policy making bureau, and to the doctor's surgery or social worker's office as the Departments of Health and Welfare.

The general categories which characterise many social policy accounts are dislodged in poststructural analysis. Notions of 'class', 'gender' and 'race' are problematised in so far as they represent undifferentiated categories which explain the genesis of 'capitalist', 'patriarchal' or 'racist' policies. It is, though, important not to overemphasise the difference between social policy and poststructural accounts as far as this is concerned. Social policy texts, particularly feminist ones, have long acknowledged the need to dislodge global categories and explore the interconnections between gender, class, race, age, differential ability, etc. (for example, Williams 1985). And poststructural approaches, in their turn, deploy general categories in certain circumstances and for certain defined purposes.³ What differentiates poststructural accounts from social policy approaches is that the notion of difference provides the *starting point* of analysis rather than something which is acknowledged to exist within a prior category.

Questions relating to the status of 'truth' and its displacement in postenlightenment thought have been extensively discussed elsewhere. They are the main concern of antifoundationalist writers such as Rorty (1989) and Bernstein (1991). We shall not attempt to canvass these debates but simply signal their implications for poststructural accounts of policy. We need to start with a disclaimer. Critical policy accounts have not, in fact, taken 'truth' as given. Quite the contrary: interrogations from Marx on have accepted the connection between ruling interests and ruling ideas. In this sense, Foucaultian ideas about the interconnection between knowledge and power are scarcely new. What *is* relatively new is Foucault's insistence on the *indivisibility* of knowledge and power: 'we are subjected to the production of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth' (Foucault 1980:93). This

means that there is no free domain, no possibility of uttering truth outside an ambit of power relations.

This has significant implications for poststructural approaches to social policy. First, and least contentiously, it consistently directs our attention to the relationship between knowledge and power: in this instance, to the relationship between expert knowledges of the economy, health, families, education and so forth and the kinds of political and social programmes to which these knowledges give rise. This interest is exemplified throughout the chapters of this book.

Second, it means that universal symbols and promises—‘socialism’, ‘social justice’, the ‘collective good’—are ruled out of court. As well as being related to the relativisation of truth, the disappearance of these universals is directly connected to the poststructural emphasis on difference. To the extent that social life is characterised by multiple and incommensurable sites and subject positions, it becomes difficult to talk of collective goals, of the public good or of any universal notion of social justice. It is at this point that poststructural analysis runs into serious difficulty. In the eyes of some critics at least, poststructuralism not only fails to oppose the atomisations of neo-liberal policies but actually reproduces its individualistic assumptions (cf. Taylor-Gooby 1994). The charge merits further consideration.

Poststructural analysis, neo-liberalism and the fragmentation of the public domain

As already pointed out in this Introduction, neo-liberal policies have weakened and fractured the public domain through privatising, contracting out, downsizing, rationing and disestablishing a host of public services and utilities. The political rationality which accompanies and justifies these moves not only speaks of restraint but also of its mission to recognise and reward individual choice and personal decision making (Rose 1992, 1993, 1996).

Neo-liberal rationalities are popular political discourses and thus a quite different beast from academic poststructural analyses. They also form the *subject* of much poststructural analysis, particularly as far as the governmentality literature is concerned. And much poststructural analysis is devoted to dislodging the certainties of neo-liberal orthodoxies. Is it nevertheless true that poststructural analysis is debarred from assisting in the reconstruction of a public sphere precisely because of its own insistence on multiplicity and difference?

Any answer to this question must first clarify the way in which neo-liberal and poststructural discourses actually deploy the notion of ‘difference’. Neo-liberal usages commonly refer to the separate interests of indivisible human actors: that is, to the rational

calculations of the 'economic man' who stands at the centre of liberal thought. In contrast, poststructural accounts deploy 'difference' to refer to the multiplicity of subject positions produced through the operations of power/knowledge: positions which constantly shift, are differentially experienced by people, and cannot be traced back, or reduced, to any single actor.

Building on its notion of difference, and on its armoury of beliefs more generally, neo-liberalism perceives a 'truth' towards which its energies should be directed: the promotion of personal choice and individual enterprise. This leads to a clear if limited role for the state: it is to be devoted to the central administration of resources, the devolution of management, the maintenance of law and order and—usually but not invariably—the protection of moral standards. Poststructural accounts, with their interest in the circulation of power around and beyond the official institutions of the central state, are able to take a different view of the relationship between state and society. There is no necessary antagonism between 'state' and 'society' and, indeed, no necessary distinction in the first place. This provides the space for an attempt to articulate the political conditions which would variously assist citizens to be involved in their own governance at a local as well as a central level. In this way, poststructuralist accounts can, we suggest, assist in the reconstruction of the public domain, even if in an altered form. We refer briefly to two main types of theorising.⁴

First, there are a group of writers, influenced by poststructuralist thinking and loyal to older democratic concerns, who argue for a genuine devolution of decision making power combined with an adequate guaranteed minimum income (GMI) or citizens income (CI). The aim here is to disperse the locales of power and provide the conditions under which local networks of 'thick welfare, thin collectivism' may emerge. Paul Hirst's *Associative Democracy* (1994) provides the best-known example. Such an approach could provide a different relationship between civil society and the local state and undermine the dualisms on which that distinction has historically rested (Hoggett and Thompson 1998). It does, however, tend to operate at a level of abstraction which ignores the actual practicalities of policy making, particularly as far as distributional issues are concerned.

Second, there is a second group of theorists who, true to their poststructural affiliations, are reluctant to prescribe outcomes or political programmes in any detail. Instead of speaking of the public good or even the public domain, such writers consider the kind of democratic conditions which would acknowledge contestation and promote the expression of difference. The interlocking although differentiated nature of social and political life is recognised and a

plea made for an environment which allows people to live together without claiming to 'know' or 'speak for' each other. Writers in this genre aim to promote mutuality rather than insist on solidarity. In this vein, Iris Young (1990, 1993) argues that the notion of community with its tendency to 'subsume and delimit difference' should be replaced by the ideal of 'the unoppressive city' as a space which allows for 'unassimilated otherness' (Hillyard and Watson 1996:336). Citizenship, in short, is to be promoted as an expression of openness, tolerance, difference and mutuality rather than sameness. Such themes are developed by Fraser (1994, 1995), Frazer and Lacey (1993), Phillips (1993) and Yeatman (1994).

While we do not directly discuss these writings in this book, citizenship, and its relationship to neo-liberalism, is one of our key themes and so we should, therefore, at the outset clarify our assumptions about citizenship. First, however, we feel it is necessary to provide a brief review of the broader economic and political context giving rise to neo-liberal rationalities and policies.

The economic and political context

The period between 1945 and the early 1970s was a period of economic stability and prosperity for western nations. Often referred to as the Long Boom, this Keynesian/Fordist settlement between capital and labour, of mass production and mass consumption was reinforced and supported by welfare state provisions. The character of the welfare state varied according to the specifics of the national circumstances and traditions—thus the Beveridge model of the UK welfare state and the Australian 'workers' welfare state' (Castles 1988) each reflected the cultural and political assumptions of their particular societies. In each case, the objectives of public policy were broadly, to ensure 'the general maximization of welfare within a *national* society' (Cerny 1990:205; emphasis added). However, over the decade or so between the early 1970s and the early 1980s, this Keynesian/Fordist compromise unravelled as a result of the collapse of the Bretton Woods international monetary system; the oil crisis of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the subsequent oil price rises; the internationalisation of financial markets and the abolition of exchange rate controls; 'reindustrialisation'; the rise, particularly in Asia, of the newly industrialised countries (the NICs); pressures for free trade and market deregulation; and new post-Fordist models of flexible production (Hirst and Thompson 1996:5). Together with the ensuing inflation and elevated levels of unemployment (particularly long-term

unemployment) in the western industrialised countries, these resulted in new international economic and trading relations.

The late twentieth century has also been characterised by changing patterns of production. The nationally based mechanised assemblyline manufacture of Fordist mass production has been challenged by post-Fordist models of more flexible production, niche marketing and niche manufacturing. This is a model of 'tailoring' production more closely to the demands of international competition, and is based on developments in computer technologies, laser technologies, communications technologies and the like. Moreover, production is increasingly global: components are manufactured and/or assembled in factories and plants located in different world locations.

This new economy is claimed to be dominated by multinational companies (MNCs) and transnational companies (TNCs) whose investment decisions are influenced by principles of efficiency and productivity, rather than by national loyalties. This is the context of globalisation consisting of 'a *global auction* for investment, technology and jobs' where 'the prosperity of workers will depend on an ability to trade their skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial acumen in an unfettered global market place' (Brown and Lauder 1996:2-3).

Globalisation is a narrative of incorporation into a world system. The central premise of this narrative is the new world order of a truly global economy. The new global order is argued to be the culmination of a number of interdependent developments which include:

- the aspirations of virtually all societies throughout the world towards western materialist/consumer-based lifestyles;
- the penetration and near hegemony throughout the world of western popular culture, and particularly American expressions of this mass culture;
- the increasing dominance of western, and particularly US sourced models of production and consumption;
- the increasing integration of world economies into a single global international market;
- free trade and the new international division of labour.

Late twentieth-century communications technologies, together with the post Cold War peace—what Fukuyama (1993) has called 'the end of history'—both facilitate and provide a context for processes of globalisation. Whilst globalisation ostensibly has cultural, political and economic dimensions, all of the above developments are structured by a rationality which is principally western and principally economic. Although the global culture which our increasing communications capacities is shaping appears to be

principally social, it is a culture of mass consumption. It is hence ineluctably articulated into western capitalism and global markets.

The claim of globalisation is that national economies are being increasingly subsumed into a global economy, so that the discipline of international markets and money markets should determine public policy rather than national, social and/or political priorities. These policies, almost without exception, require states to reduce public spending, deregulate capital and labour markets, minimise welfare provision and either eliminate or privatise as much as possible of the welfare state.

Brown and Lauder (1996) posit two 'ideal type' economic responses to the new conditions of economic globalisation: neo-Fordism (or the New Right) and post-Fordism (which Brown and Lauder term 'Left Moderniser'). These loosely correspond to demand-side and supply-side approaches respectively. Neo-Fordism is characterised by emphases on markets, labour market 'flexibility' (through lower labour costs), efficiency (enhancing productivity through minimising production costs), deregulation, privatisation and managerialism; whereas post-Fordism is a 'high skill/high wage' route to national prosperity and is characterised by high skill, high value added innovative production and market flexibility through multiskilling.

In response to the changing economic circumstances of globalisation, the state may be actively interventionist—a strategic player attempting, through labour market policies and education and training, to facilitate the development of a high-wage, high-skill post-Fordist economy. Alternatively, the state can adopt the *laissez-faire*, minimalist neo-Fordist strategy of leaving economic restructuring to market forces. Whatever the strategy/approach, the objective remains international competitiveness in global capitalist markets. From the late 1980s, Australian Labor governments adopted the active strategic route to economic prosperity, attempting to stimulate the development of a high-skill, high-wage economy of the kind envisaged by Robert Reich in his influential book *The Work of Nations*. Since the election of the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition government in 1996, Australian public policy, particularly labour market policies, have been dominated and structured according to neo-Fordist principles and assumptions. In contrast, UK public policy has moved from the neo-Fordism characteristic of the Thatcher years to the post-Fordism—or 'Left Moderniser' strategies—of New Labour.

The mixed economy and welfare states of the post Second World War period have been replaced by what Cerny (1990:204–32) calls 'the competition state'. In the competition state, society and the economy are conflated, and an economic rationality is the discursive foundation

organising social relations. Cerny (ibid.: 205) describes the transition from the welfare state to the competition state as follows:

a shift in the focus of [state] intervention from the development of a range of 'strategic' or 'basic' industries...to one of flexible response to competitive market conditions in a range of diversified and rapidly evolving international marketplaces... [and] a shift in the focal point of party and governmental politics from the general maximization of welfare within a national society (full employment, redistributive transfers and social service provision) to the promotion of enterprise, innovation and profitability in both private and public sectors.

Under welfare state conditions the state's role was 'to *take certain activities out of the market place...*and to "socialize" them'. Whereas the welfare state was a '*decommodifying agent*', the competition state is a '*commodifying agent*' (ibid.: 230).

The economic priorities of the competition state apply not only to the objective of competitiveness in the increasingly open and integrated environment of international capitalism, but operate also to reconfigure relations within the state. Competition is thus a national imperative 'requiring' efficiency, privatisation and corporatisation in the public sector—for example Australia's National Competition Policy (which resulted from the Hilmer Report of 1993) requires that governments must ensure 'competitive neutrality' with private sector providers of services or divest themselves of activities 'more appropriately' serviced by private industry. In addition, the competitive individualism of neo-liberal thought and market relations becomes the normative paradigm for social relations—the freedom of individuals is the freedom to engage via contractual relations. It is in this context that the notion of citizenship has increasingly been contested.

The concept of citizenship

As mentioned, 'citizenship' is a major recurring theme in our book. Over the past decade in Australia, as elsewhere, there has been a resurgence of interest in the idea of citizenship both in academia and in public life more generally. The notion of citizenship has been taken up by public intellectuals, think tanks, research centres, academic journals, educational reformers, as well as by politicians and government agencies. In 1994, in Australia, the then Keating Labor Government commissioned a 'civics expert group' to come up with recommendations about the best ways to promote a greater awareness

of civic life (Civic Experts Group 1994). The Howard Coalition Government has also deployed the rhetoric of active citizenship, particularly in relation to deflecting opposition to its reduced support for health, education and welfare services and the redirection of education towards more explicitly economic goals (Kemp 1997).

The immediate catalyst for the resurgence of interest in citizenship has of course been the ascendancy of neo-liberalism, or economic rationalism as it is known in Australia (Mouffe 1988; Meredyth 1997). The rise of the New Right has meant the progressive dismantling of the taken-for-granted postwar social democratic/ welfare state policy framework (though not by any means a withdrawal of strategic control of social life). The changing economic and political circumstances associated with the end of Fordism and the increasing globalisation of economic life has made it extremely difficult to rebuild effective political support for the old social democratic framework. Instead, socialists, social democrats, feminists, radical environmentalists and social liberals have drawn on the language of citizenship, civic life and civil society as a way of resisting the economistic assault on social life and public institutions (Cox 1995; Marsh 1995; Pixley 1993). In the context of the reduction of public services, the privatisation of public life and the foregrounding of public choice theories of public policy, all in the name of the imperative of increasing global competitiveness, the idea of citizenship offers a new/old language to defend the distinctive and irreducibly political nature of civic life.

An important aspect of this revival of civic discourse has been a renewed interest in T.H.Marshall's account of the historical expansion of the legal, political and social rights (Bulmer and Rees 1996; King and Waldron 1988). However, just as significant has been the recovery of an older civic republican (and, for some, communitarian) tradition of citizenship (Barber 1984; Beiner 1995; Mouffe 1988, 1992; Oldfield 1990; Turner 1990), a tradition which differs in a number of important ways from liberal conceptions of citizenship. According to the new civic republicans, citizenship should be understood as not just a legal status or a set of rights associated with (passive) membership of a nation-state but a responsibility for active civic involvement in community affairs and public life. It should also entail notions of political learning and the development of shared conceptions of the common good, rather than merely the pursuit of preformed interests or the defence of individual rights. It should express a rather different conception of the relationship between public and private spheres. Furthermore, in the view of people such as Bellah, Boyte, Gamson and Putnam, the rich civic life of an associational civil society is the

necessary precondition for both good government and a prosperous economy.

Although for some on the left, civic republican ideas of civil society and citizenship provide the best prospect for the defence of the social against neo-liberal 'reform', others are not so sure (Mouffe 1988; Young 1989). Social democrats and feminists worry about what the implications might be of civic republicanism, particularly its notion of the common good and the expectation of active participation, for the achievements of modernity: personal freedoms, individual rights, social diversity and confessional pluralism. A lively debate continues, particularly in North America, over the relevance and desirability of a civic republican ideal of citizenship.

Meanwhile, at a more pragmatic level, another problematic aspect of the notion of active citizenship is its effective cooption by neo-liberal regimes. By urging citizens to take a more active responsibility for matters of distributive justice, environmental care and so on, governments seek to reduce public expectations with respect to state provision for health, education and welfare provision. In this perspective, the notion of active citizenship becomes much more politically ambiguous, able to express either a communitarian ideal of social solidarity and community or a neo-liberal vision of a minimalist state and a renewed ethos of voluntary self-help.

However, from a poststructuralist perspective, such debates are, first, much too abstract and removed from the detailed circumstances of people's everyday lives, and, second, fail to recognise the ways in which the notions of citizenship are deployed within those political rationalities through which populations are governed and self-governed. Burchell (1995) argues that both sides of the current debates about citizenship reflect the continuing influence of a post-Rousseauian political philosophy, and both assume one or other sort of a transcendental moral subject. Burchell (*ibid.*: 549) comments:

What is altogether missing from this kind of controversy is a sense of the citizen as a social creation, as a historical *persona*, whose characteristics have been developed in particular times and places through the activities of social discipline, both externally on the part of governments and 'internally' by techniques of self-discipline and self-formation.

One of the tasks of the chapters in this book is to explore the ways in which the language of citizenship is being deployed within the discourses of neo-liberal governance in the context of specific social sites, and the ways in which these discourses are involved in the formation of particular subjectivities and political identities. The