

Role of Individuals And Sustainable Governance

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It is clear that many of the developments related to the “Covid_19” pandemic have led to a change in the economic and political facts and data related to the debates on the status of the state, sustainable governance and the role of individuals..etc. Those discussions that revolve in their entirety around the dialectic of the fundamental contradiction between the globalization of the economy on the one hand and the nationalism of politics on the other. It is the dialectic that can be expressed by the following problematic question:

To what extent can the state maintain its position and functions? What is the possibility of achieving sustainable governance?

In principle, it can be said that one of the most complex dilemmas that prevents access to sustainable governance, is still closely related to the problematic of contradiction in the development of both economics and politics.

Logically speaking, the economy is moving somewhat towards globalization, as economics has historically always been based on market principles (except the Soviet era). Those principles that were soon transformed under globalization from nationalism to global, while the principles of the state as political sovereignty remained oriented towards nationalism to a large extent. On the basis of these changes the logic of global markets has been breached to the logic of the sovereignty of nation-states, where politics is still mainly practiced locally or nationally, unlike the economy that has become global oriented.

Here, the division or contradiction appears in the relationship between authority, responsibility and accountability to some extent, so that we find that there is a global economic authority versus a national or local political responsibility in which the use of authority is concentrated. This contradiction hinders the possibility and effectiveness of achieving and consolidating the principles of sustainable governance at all levels.

Therefore, in order to reconcile between domestic politics and the global economy, the point of balance between them must be based on sustainable governance, which is based on the principle of interdependence between political and economic concepts on the one hand, and the principles of transparency, accountability and participation on the other; *here the individual (the political individual as a citizen or the economic individual as a consumer, a saver, an investor) can be The judgment or equilibrium by which that lost balance can be achieved.* Which we need at the level of the possibility of achieving sustainable governance.

Where logically, both political and economic forces try to win over individuals to their side, whether on the economic or political level. *The individual is, on the one hand, a voter, and on the other, a consumer, a saver, an investor.* At the level of the economic field, despite all the problems of inequality and distributive justice, the individual still holds the initiative, based on his being the basis, goal and reference of commercial forces in all their forms. Also on the political level, the individual citizen is the basis of political authority according to the democratic process and the electoral vote, as it still has a significant impact on the level of determining political orientations.

Based on this, the individuals on whom the political and economic systems are based must assume responsibility, engage and participate in the process of creating that influence and pressure to confront the monopolies and control of capitalist, security, political, media and even academic elites, in order to be the mainstay in achieving accountability, participation and transparency policies on which governance is based. Where governance policies should not be limited to structural reforms or protest in the streets and at the ballot box. Rather, the sustainability and process of governance must be supported by directly holding monopoly forces accountable through a culture of consumption.

That culture that emphasizes the importance of moving from the concept of the political individual (as a citizen) only to the concept of the economic individual (investor, consumer, saver) as well, which is based on an approach that prioritizes the social, ethical, humanitarian and environmental dimensions, when economically shopping.

For example, according to the logic of the producer-consumer-investor relationship, pressure and influence exerted by an individual through a culture of consumption (on the basis of boycotting companies, products or investments) can play a major role in countering the influence of TNCs that support political corruption. Or face their policies based on trying to evade their social responsibilities, not to mention their direct investments and activities that violate human rights, or that increase climate change and prevent environmental protection.

It is also realistically, much of what is required of national governments or international institutions, ***its implementation and commitment depends on the degree of awareness and pressure on the part of public opinion (ie individuals).*** Thus, it can be said that spending or saving money, or directing it to one party, or withholding it from another, may lead to the achievement of the desired goals. Because spending or saving may lead to the desired ends. **This logic or direction of direct action may be better and more effective than traditional forms of political and economic expression.**

Where in light of global markets trying to evade the rules and restrictions of accounting, the role of the individual appears as a force to be reckoned with. ***It can no longer be ignored that individuals all over the world are now turning to political shopping more than towards electoral voting. Thus, participation in the economic boycott process and the trend towards political shopping (so to speak) is a positive indicator that indicates that the political activity of the individual (consumer, saver and investor) has begun to move in the right direction.*** It where the increasing activity and influence of economic forces, and the corresponding unclear political will, results in a growing realization that political shopping is a more effective form of sustainable governance.

Therefore, it seems that political shopping has begun to replace traditional citizenship, as it is the tool that enables the individual (as a citizen, investor, consumer or saver) to impose accountability and correct public policies in a more serious and practical manner. ***Accordingly, in light of financial greed, political indifference and the absence of responsibility among many technocratic elites and market forces, individuals can assume responsibility and participation in achieving sustainable governance by adopting political shopping policies (whether at the level of consumption, saving or investment) as a strategy or a new form of effective accountability.***

To sum up, in practice we must admit that while the social contract that binds peoples and governments is becoming increasingly fragile, it seems that the pressure and influence of individuals is making a real impact in the face of monopolistic forces and corruption. *That effect, which governments or even some international institutions cannot bring, and which may be fundamentally unwilling to do so.* For example, as a result of the revolution in the world of communications, *governments, transnational corporations and giant media are no longer the only ones in control of the knowledge and events industry.* Indeed, it is possible for any individual (with minimal technical knowledge) to be the source of the news as well as the maker of the event that has a local and global impact at a very rapid pace that exceeds the speed and pace of time taken by governments to effect a change in their policy. Not to mention also the inability of TNCs to cope with this impact on the economic level, which has increased the possibility of subjecting its political, commercial, social and environmental accounts to scrutiny and accountability.

It has become clear that one of the most prominent features of this current political age is that the making of global and local events today is no longer confined to governments as it was in the past, and transnational corporations are no longer free in their influence on societies, but rather, the list of political and economic decision-makers includes individuals as well.

Accordingly, it can be said that the increasing influence of monopolistic powers reflects (to some extent) the imbalance in the global economic system, the increase in political corruption, or the failure of the policies of technocratic elites. But on the other hand, increasing the influence of individuals through NGOs expresses that markets can influence society, but cannot inevitably determine it. In this context, the least that can be said is that many TNCs and even governments are now operating more transparently than before as a result of this pattern of pressure and influence from individuals, regardless of how problematic it is to measure the extent of this influence.

For example, a pattern based on focusing on world-famous brands or important political figures by individuals (through boycotts of consumption and investment or through smear campaigns and protests) may have negative consequences on their activities. *Most importantly, trying to rebuild their reputations or restore trust (whether companies, governments or personalities) can be very difficult, even very costly.* Thus, based on this pattern, it is possible to establish political, economic and environmental alternatives, the source and center of which is the influence of the individual who is trying to uncover the facts and find appropriate solutions.

This influence, which has the potential to add a new voice to the global and local decision-making process (at all economic, political, social and environmental levels), ensuring the trend towards a more inclusive sustainable governance that stimulates change, according to the equation based on the principle of power and counterpower. Here, we have many examples and evidence that confirm the efficacy of this style in the face of the influence of economic and political forces in line with the path of sustainable governance, including, but not limited to:

1. *Influencing political and economic decision-makers and international financial institutions with regard to the indebtedness of extremely poor countries.* Where a global public opinion was created that resulted in concessions to reduce these debts.
2. *Lobbying the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the issue of intellectual property rights (related to trade, drug prices and accessibility).* Where the Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights on Trade and Global Health has been adopted in a manner that

protects public health and promotes access to affordable medicines for all classes of society. *As a result, countries such as Thailand, Brazil, India, South Africa and others have been able to give local pharmaceutical companies licenses to produce medicines at discount prices*, which are equivalent to those drugs that enjoy proprietary rights, defying the TRIPS agreement concluded at the WTO that entered into force in 1995.

3. *To highlight the negative impact of excessive economic activity on the environment.* Various types of pressures and influence are exercised in order to confront climate change. Here, we may not need to cite examples of the success that has been achieved in this regard, because of its clarity and effectiveness on the ground.
4. *Confronting the genetically modified food industry and trade.* Whereas, genetically modified food companies were prevented from entering many markets (including European and Japanese). In fact, this effect of confronting the genetically modified food trade has reached some cities in the United States, despite the direct and significant support provided by the US administration to that trade.

It is clear that the outcome of these successes was not due to the influence of political and economic authorities, but rather the will of the individual (consumer, investor and saver). This is done through coordinated campaigns based on boycotting or encouraging consumption and investment (in line with protecting the environment and human rights and limiting corruption). Logically, this is a matter of great concern to the corrupt political and economic forces, as the current political and economic pattern often deviates from moral principles. While on the other hand, shopping (in all its forms) among individuals has become more and more imbued with a moral sense.

Also, which should also draw attention, is that this type of shopping is not just a tool of pressure, but rather a tool for stimulating many economic and political forces to reconsider defining their roles and responsibilities. Thus, in light of a global governance characterized by complexities and unclear definitions, the role of the individual as an effective force appears, which proves the belief that traditional politics alone cannot achieve many of the desired goals.

For example, while the US administration is still not doing much on environmental issues, a number of US cities (such as Florida and California) and US oil and chemical companies have already put environmental goals into practice. *This shift in the behavior of some political and economic officials resulted from realizing the importance of linking their activities to social, ethical and environmental responsibility as an urgent necessity to preserve their economic and political interests. Certainly, this realization would not have occurred without the influence and pressure of individuals.*