

constructivists really started working on non-governmental organisations. And so that work was out there civil society, especially people like Sidney Terrell had written important work and Snow and so there was a lot of good work in that space of mobilisation of non-state actors, but not so much on corporations. I mean, I can think of very few that were writing about it. Bob Gilpin, of course, Robert Gilpin had written about it. And there were a few, but not a lot. And so I think that spaces opened up in the late 90s. There was an important book by Virginia Hoffler, Clare Cutler and Tony Porter, on private authority and I think that work emerged out of interest. Everybody was interested in Susan Strange's work she was one of the few she and Robert Gilpin, I'd say were, among the few that even took that

with every decision that's made and if you're not looking at what's happening to the losers, you're really getting less than half the picture, I'd say.

Tom Pegram 08:20

Yeah, I mean, this is obviously the critique that Susan Strange levels at the whole regime analysis community in her 1982 rather abrasive piece: 'Cave! hic dragones' I can't remember the rest of the title, but it's, it's well worth a read and she essentially said that, you know, regime analysis, IOs are all well and good, but what's missing? And, you know, well, how did we arrive at this institution? You know, what, what, how is this masking some of that value power conflict that you're pointing to? Of course, then you have Barnett and Duvall's book in 2005, right, which kind of opens up that whole power and global governance agenda, which is really helpful. But it's it has struck me as some something slightly peculiar that doing research into this space, it is sometimes a bit of a process of excavation and there have been people like Jim Rosenau, like Robert Cox, like Overbeek, who were pointing the finger at illicit covert activity, the dark underbelly of global governance, private power, but it seems as if a lot of that agenda just got swept to the side for a long time.

Susan Sell 09:26

Phil Cerny had important stuff in that space, too. I'd say Rosenau, Cherny or Cerney however you say the name. Yeah, they were asking those questions, but it did get swept to the side because of the dominance of the neoliberal institutionalist agenda.

Tom Pegram 09:42

We see some of that now being revived, I think in contemporary debate, particularly perhaps in historical context, looking at the role of private power going back, you know, centuries looking at the role of the East India Company, for example, course also the work by Craig Murphy, and others looking into those dynamics. So it has been part of the conversation but hasn't really been in the mainstream. Do you think its time has come?

Susan Sell 10:05

Well, I think it has, but I, I thought it should have been for a long time. And it really hasn't. But I just was asked to review a book for perspectives on politics. And I haven't received it. This was like yesterday, and I was really excited just to see that such a book exists. And it's called Billionaires. And it's really about the role of Billionaires in world politics. So there's a chapter on George Soros. There's a chapter I, maybe on Bill Gates, who we'll get to in a bit, I'm sure talking about the WHO. And you know, 'The Dark Money' that Jane Mayer has written so compellingly about with the Koch Brothers. I think the Koch Brothers is a chapter. So I can't wait to read it. I mean, you know, so I think that there is, especially in the last 10 years, and what we saw under the Trump administration, but it's gone, you know, it goes back much further than that. But the role of money in politics and the United States with the Citizens United decision, the Supreme Court calling corporations as persons who, you know, it's their free speech rights to give as much money as they want to whatever they want, has really, really tipped the balance and made people less confident in democracy, because it's clear that it's almost like an oligarchy. In terms of, you know, the money is buying the political influence and the political power and so the leadership has really gotten out of step, I think, with what people want and, you know, you see that in poll after poll. So, you know, there's really some structural imbalances and they caught the

I'm interested in what is it I can take from here to help me understand the world and explain it, and maybe think about ways to do something about what I see that I think isn't working.

Susan Sell 18:26

Yeah, Mearsheimer against the world. I mean, he's a powerful personality. And well, that's very helpful, Susan, thank you. I know, Jessica's got a question. So do come in Jess.

Jessica Knezy 21:25

Yes. I agree with everything that you've said about the phases that the field has gone through, and

or you know, as a starting out assistant Professor, feminism was considered to be super marginalised. It was really marginal in the field, environmental politics was considered super marginal, in the field. I mean, Paul Walker was one of the pioneers of that. But, you know, there were very few people writing about it. And the attitude, frankly, was that, and I don't agree with this attitude, but the attitude that I

Jessica Knezy 29:43

Yeah, I agree. I think a lot of that hierarchical paradigms you're mentioning in terms of the importance of fields and you know, having security at the top, political economy, then, you know, etc. that stuff. That's definitely shifted, and I think that there's a a freedom now to be a bit more disruptive in the field. But there's a lot of also a lot of influence in terms of where we get our knowledge. And that actually links back to our conversation about private power. So how do you think that the influence of academics has changed in the last few decades in terms of, of work and research having real impact on world order and structure?

Susan Sell 30:28

Boy, that's a tough question. And I think the field is really divided by, you know, what I always am interested in having these conversations with people in the field, like, what makes you get out of bed in the morning. And I find that a surprising answer, sometimes people whose work is very, you know, for what, for lack of a better word, you know, woke or very, you know, critical, or whatever, they might tell me that they, their interest is to get the top three people in the field to read their work, when I assume that they're writing that way, because they actually want to make an impact in the world. And then some people that are writing things that I might consider more inside baseball, want to have an impact in the world. And, you know, I think that in IPE, the OEP stuff has just made itself more and more irrelevant to policy and more and more irrelevant to understanding the world, going in the wrong direction if that's the impact. But if you want to have a super teched up model, and, and these kind of a, you know, want to be economists or something like that, then maybe that's an important thing to you, and you want to have a really, really rigorous model of something. But I think that the value of political science is to ask about who wins and who loses and why, and how, and not to have a really, you know, great model of something that only five people in the world care about. So, you know, we get more and more rigorous and, and so I think there's been a lot of professional socialisation that is then not helpful in terms of having an impact in the world. And you know, but it's true. I mean, I understand why political scientists would want to adopt all the methods and logic of economics, because it seems like economists get a seat at the table, and political scientists really don't. So I can see that. But then, you know, the value of what that contribution is, I think, is maybe it's not, I think putting our energy in the right place of what the superpower political economy is, as opposed to the superpower of economics, you know, in terms of rigour and all that. But I mean, I'm not saying political economy is not rigorous, but it's the questions we ask and the things we're concerned about. And I think political science is about power, and who has it, how it's used, who benefits from it, and who loses from it. And whether that's power of the fossil fuel industry, of, you know, gender power, post-colonial power, power of the Koch brothers to shape elections and outcomes. I think that's the stuff that we're good at and the stuff that we should be looking at. But, you know, I would be fooling myself if I were to say that I think political scientists have had a huge impact on policy I mean we try. You know, I like to think conversations get changed as a result of it. And I think that matters a lot. I think that really matters a lot. How you frame issues matters a lot. You know, I saw that looking at intellectual property when intellectual property owners were successfully able to frame it as a trade issue. All of a sudden, they had access to all these institutions and actually had clout that, it completely changed the landscape just by connecting those two and saying this is a trade issue. And then I think the access to medicines campaigners have had clout by framing it as a health issue. Now, you can't have a conversation about intellectual property without talking about public health. So, you know, I think people can make a difference in the way we think about things and talk

you know, magic kingdoms, bleaching, and, you know, to have climate denialism here is really, it's quite something, but that's how powerful that private campaign funded by fossil fuel industry has been you know, in creating this alternative reality that's politically convenient, but ecologically disastrous.

Tom Pegram 39:55

Yeah, well, let's get into that a bit, Susan. So I mean, a lot of your work has been on sort of looking at the micro politics that underlie private power and how it's exercised, particularly within domestic settings, you have this, this great kind of framing or going granular how these actors will circumvent and shift away from public forums and really operate in the shadows and indeed, there's an article today in The Guardian. Some leak revealing that Monsanto Bayer now had been pressing the US trade office to force the Mexican government not to ban glycosides. So it's very interesting dynamics, very hard to research, though, perhaps one, one might suggest, but you've had a good stab at it. And I've been thinking about your research on access to medicines. Why? Why is it that these international instruments like the TRIPS agreement, really do end up being pretty ineffectual in preventing health harms? There's probably a range of different factors I mean, which one would you weight as perhaps most significant in terms of trying to really understand why these international agreements, these international organisations just fall down when it comes to actually protecting these vulnerable groups and ensuring they have access to basic public goods, including generic medicines?

Susan Sell 41:17

Well, I mean, I would go back to the question of asymmetric power. And I go back to the question of private power. Andp-11.04 (e)-8i(e)-8(st)-4(i)26(o)-8(n)-8(r)7(.)-4()1(e)-8(r)7(t)-4(h)13(e)-8((t)-4(h)1nTQq0.000009

corporations that were in pharmaceuticals that were controlled in the United States. So yeah, investment. But you know, what are the spill over effects for the economy at large? Is technology being transferred? Probably not. You know, so another big issue, I think around why they don't is because a lot of the development pathway in the last 10 years anyway, has been to be part of a global value chain. And if you want to be part of a global value chain, one of the requirements for that may be that well, you better protect intellectual property, do you want to be part of this global value chain, even if it's going to be at the bottom end of the manufacturing and not get a huge amount, well it's better than what we had so, you know, I'm not going to make them mad. I want to be part of this global value chain, you know, I want to.. And then, and then there are some cases where in which, China, for example, has gone pretty much whole hog on intellectual property protection. Now, if you listen to US policymakers will say, "Oh, no, they're stealing all our stuff. And they're cheating, and they're not respecting it." But in fact, the central government is very committed to it and I think they're gonna adopt all the bad habits of the West, they want to be on the side of the table getting the royalties, so they have really trained up their people, they've got these IP courts, they've become incredibly litigious, even within China, about intellectual property rights. So the sectors that they're strong in, they are being very forceful about their intellectual property rights. So, you know, they they've sort of seen what we did. The US did, and, you know, got rich from doing that. They're doing the same thing. So yeah, there's, there's still breaches of it, and all the rest of it, especially in poor areas because there's so many different China's right, there's, but, you know, in terms of Central government's commitments, they're all in now. So they're not going to be the avatars of access and, you know, they're not going to be what Brazil used to be before Bolsonaro. So, yeah. Gosh, did I answer your question?

Tom Pegram 46:13

Yeah, I think so. That's very interesting insights from China, something to keep an eye on there as you say, it's a quite a challenging context to make sense of, and scholars like Lee Jones and Shahar Hameiri are really working hard to try and get a sense of the state transformation dynamics within China, of course, as you say it's different China's within...

Susan Sell 46:33

Yeah, it's super complicated. I mean, yeah, I've been there a couple times doing field work and, and, yeah, it's, it's, I just, it's fascinating, but the more I learned, the less I understand, I think is probably fair to say.

Tom Pegram 46:49

Sounds quite wise. So I know that Zoe's got a question

Susan Sell 46:54

It's wisely humble, I think.

Zoe Varenne 46:58

Yeah. So I was sort of wondering, how do you think that COVID-19 illustrates or maybe exposes the challenges and constraints that global health has to confront existing within the structural reality of neoliberal capitalism?

thing and that meant no supply. So you know, killing competition is a big problem. There's a lot of monopoly power that needs to be addressed and so, you know, structurally, I think the really big differences are financialization, intellectual property intensification, and then digitization, which is a whole nother factor but all these things have changed even non digital businesses, they've changed non intellectual property intensive businesses, they've changed the banking and finance in incredible ways. There's a very good book by Walter Mattli, called 'Darkness by Design' and it's all about how the use of algorithms and high speed computing is what really destroyed the New York Stock Exchange, and now it's dominated by a handful of banks instead of the old boys version of the stock exchange, which is a bit more equitable and not dominated by top firms. So there's a very good, a very good article or concept the guy that founded Acer computers wrote about the smile curve in economics and I think that tells us a lot about what's gone wrong. And in the smile curve of economics, if you think about a smile, either corner that, the top corners of that smile are dominated by intangibles. So it's brands, intellectual property, r&d, and then on the other side be marketing distribution etc. So at the bottom of that, and in those areas are super economic concentration, just a handful of firms dominate those ends of the smile curve at the bottom of that smile curve are workers and there's a lot of competition there for cheap labour to, in these global supply chains. So you know, Foxconn they get pennies on the dollar for every iPad or, you know, Apple product that they produce, iPhone. They get pennies on the dollar. Apple gets the lion's share of the money. And one thing that's happened, because everyone now is also talking about shocking levels of inequality that have not been seen since I don't know, 1890s or something maybe worse.

Susan Sell 55:13

What's happened is that smile has gotten steeper, after the war, after world war two up until about mid 1970s, maybe the differential of value between those of the top of the smile curve, owners of intellectual property, for example, and those at the bottom workers, because there were unions, that smile was not so steep and executive compensation was not stock based it was performance based, is your firm diversifying? Is it selling good mousetraps? Are people buying them, and then workers were paid living wages, that is all gone and now that smile curve is so steep, and it also has exacerbated inequality, and the concentration of wealth at the top 0.0001% and the miseration at the bottom and I think this, these big structural stories are part of you know, we hear "Oh, everyone's worried about inequality. Oh, everyone's worried about, you know, why aren't they getting the vaccine, everyone's worried." But they're all part of this bigger story and until we start to address even things like corporate governance. How do you compensate an executive? Not by share buybacks. You know, that's William Lazonick, a very interesting economist, he calls it a licence to loot, you know, loot your own company,

oh, my gosh, how much of that money and research came from government, came from taxpayers. So taxpayers are paying for this stuff twice. I read this fascinating thing, I think it's called that MRNA, it's a, it's a technology they're using for one of the vaccines and the New Yorker had this long article of scientists who had gotten interested in this technology back when the first Ebola cases came out and then he was a government scientist and then they kind of shut it down when Ebola came and went. But he kept, he didn't let the bug go, you know, he kept he kept thinking there's something to this technology. Well, partly because that was developed over a long period of time in a government laboratory, it was ready to roll. And you know, I mean, pharmaceutical firms don't want to be transparent about how much money they've invested in things versus what governments have invested, or how much of the research was actually done in federally funded, public funded programmes, so that they can charge their super rents. But if they were transparent about it, especially like in the United States, you say, wait a minute, you know, 80% of the value of that I'm making up a number, but 80% of the value of the thing actually came from me, taxpayer. Why do I have to pay this money for this? Or why isn't it available to me when I was 80% of the, of the answer? So they don't want that stuff to be known and I think, you know, that's another, to me, it's kind of low hanging fruit, but they're going to resist it like crazy, but low hanging fruit in terms of transparency. They don't want to be transparent about how they price their things and, you know, the Gates Foundation has stepped in and but I think people in the access to medicines community realise that philanthropy capitalism is also not the answer. It's more of a, you know, relying on these billionaire philanthropists is more of a recognition that the public system has failed and, and it's not sustainable because what if Bill Gates decides he's interested in something else all of a sudden? I mean, it's just not a sustainable approach. And, you know, as much, you know, I give him props for donating or invest in a lot of money through his foundation, I mean, very generous, I'm not gonna... But he's undercut the power of the WHO, he's undercut the WHO it's more... Gates gives much more money. I think a huge part of their budget comes from the Gates Foundation. SO their hands are a bit tight, because they can't tick them off because they need the revenue or the you know, the funding, even if it has strings attached. They need it, because governments have stepped away but one thing I hope a lesson that's going to come out of COVID is in many cases that you know, after all those libertarian years of "Governments the problem! Government's the problem." Many governments have really stepped up to the plate and done a good job and show that they can mobilise in an emergency and show that they can do what is necessary, whether it's, you know, quick development of vaccines, or helping people who have lost their jobs because of COVID to kind of keep things going, so... All that, you know, "Starve the government! Starve the government!" That's coming home to roost. Now, we're realising it doesn't have to be that way. And in fact, when you get into a situation like this, maybe some big stimulus package is the way to go. Maybe, maybe governments can actually do this with competent leadership. We're not helpless. We can't just, you know, we're not relying only on the private sector right now. Far be it from that with, under COVID. So I think, you know, there's, that's kind of like a kaleidoscope. You look at, you know, some of the things look really positive and hopeful and some of the things just are disaster and you wonder how can we ever come out from under this, but that's why I think it's just a time of opportunity and a time of framing things and a time of opportunity to frame things in a constructive way that more people could get behind and, and translate this experience in a way that could lead to transformative policy change. I think that's, that's an opportunity. Hideous opportunity.

care about, it just keeps you going because there's boring times there's times that are frustrating. There's times when that manuscript gets rejected. And, I mean, there's a lot of those times, but I just think do something you're passionate about, find that and then keep, keep going. But I think critical scholarship needs to be informed by things in the world. Not criticising another scholar, because you don't like their argument. I'm a big believer in empirical research, so yeah, back and forth, you go back and forth from the theoretical stuff, and then what you find on the ground and say, "This doesn't make sense," kind of like those early conversations that Debbie and Marty and I had about the things we were looking at, like, "wow, this isn't... The world they're describing is not the world I'm seeing." And that gets you started on a whole bunch of journeys. I'll tell you one, one more quick story, which has been a super fun thing for me. And when Owen Williams and I did a special issue, a review of international political economy on capitalism, and you know, structural kind of arguments about global health, that came out last year, and we had a really great review process, and the macro reviewer who reviewed the entire issue, came back and said, and I have no idea who it was, but thank, thank you, whoever you are, if you ever hear this, you know, our original article was, you know, capitalism is bad for health, you know, and, and this reviewer said, "Well, yeah, well, feudalism was bad for health, what's different?" And that got me on to this whole journey of trying to figure out because I was like, it isn't Reagan and Thatcher capitalism. That's not what we're looking at. This is not the neoliberal capitalism in the 80s and 90s. You know, something's different, what's different? So ever since I got that review, I've been reading what's new, what's new in the 21st century, that's qualitatively different. What's changed? What's gotten things so dysfunctional? And in terms of inequality, concentration of wealth, bad outcomes for workers, you know, across the gamut and that's when I started looking at financialization, digitization, and I knew IP was a huge part of that and the smile curve. So I'm still kind of working on that what's new, but I'm convinced there's something new and ultra-dysfunctional going on. And so I'm going to make it my life's work in the next couple of years anyway, to keep pushing that question and I'm so grateful that someone posed that way, to me in the review process, because like,

opportunities to take it all in. So yeah, it's a fascinating time, sobering time, but a fascinating one. So thanks so much for joining us today and for sharing all of your rich insights. Really enjoyed it.

Susan Sell