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The Concept of Citizenship:
A Short Overview

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Citizenship: A Short Overview

Citizenship defines membership in bounded political communities, above all national states, but also cities and supranational entities such as the European Union (EU). Cross-border transactions such as international migration or environmental degradation caused, for example, by climate change, raises the question of who is (entitled to be) a member? Who takes decisions within the respective polity? What are the rights and duties of citizenship? What are the socio-moral foundations of entitlements in civil society? Three overlapping trends in the development of citizenship in democratic polities can be discerned over the past few decades: the expansion of citizenship, for example, with respect to birthright attribution; its erosion, for example, in regard to social rights in welfare states; and its extension, as evidenced in the growth of multiple citizenship and the wider discussion of world citizenship. A particularly challenging application of various forms of citizenship on both the local and global level is green citizenship, which concerns the ecological foundations of membership.

Toward a Definition of Citizenship

Citizenship is a contested and a normative concept, and today most often refers to full membership in a national state, although, in fact, the concept developed out of membership in cities. There are no authoritative definitions. According to the Aristotelian tradition, citizenship constitutes an expression of full membership of persons in a political community (see Aristotle 1962).

Overall, citizenship can be usefully distinguished as a legal concept – legal citizenship or "nationality" – and as a political concept. As a legal concept citizenship means full membership, usually in a state, and the corresponding tie to state law and subjection to state power. The interstate function of nationality is to define a people within a clearly delineated territory and to protect the citizens of a state against the outside world. The intrastate function of nationality is to define the rights and duties of members. According to the principle of *domaine réservée* – exclusive competence – each state decides within the limits of self-determination on the criteria required for access

to its citizenship. One general condition for membership is that citizens have some kind of close ties to the respective state, a "genuine link."

In contrast, citizenship viewed as a contested political concept concerns the relationship between the state and democracy. In essence, citizenship builds on collective self-determination, that is, democracy, and essentially comprises three mutually qualifying dimensions: first, the legally guaranteed status of equal political freedom and democratic self-determination; second, equal rights and obligations of all full members; and third, affiliation to a political community.

Democracy: Citizenship relates to the principle of democratic legitimation regarding the acceptance of rule and the process of rule-making. Flowing from this first and basic dimension are citizenship practices, namely, the ways in which the relations between citizens and the political community as a whole unfold over time, and, more specifically, how citizens negotiate and shape their citizenship. Thus citizenship means above all the principle of unity of both those governing and those being governed (Rousseau 1840/1762). Without democratic procedures guiding citizens' political self-determination, citizenship would mean little more than members of political communities being subjects of a sovereign.

Rights and duties: In liberal and social democratic traditions, citizenship refers to the principle of rule of law regarding a guaranteed right to citizenship and rights associated with citizenship, as well as welfare state intervention regarding the responsibility of policies to underpin a minimum standard of living. In general, citizens' rights fall into various realms: civil or negative rights to liberty, such as the right to a fair court proceeding; political rights to participation, such as the right to vote and to associate; and social rights, this last type includes the right to social benefits in case of sickness, unemployment, or old age, and the right to education (Marshall 1964/1950). Other kinds of rights, such as multicultural ones which aim to maintain established (minority) cultures, are more disputed (Kymlicka 1995). The duties corresponding to citizens' entitlements may include the duty to serve in the armed forces in order to protect state sovereignty against exterior threats, while the duty to pay taxes, to acknowledge the rights and liberties of other citizens, and to accept democratically legitimated decisions of majorities structure the internal sphere.

Collective Affiliation: Citizenship rests on an affinity of citizens with a certain political community (often understood as the "nation" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), the partial identification with and thus loyalty to a self-governing collective (see Weber 1968/1922). Such collectives claim to establish a balance between the individual and common interests on the one hand and the rights and responsibilities within the political community on the other. Affiliation with a collective, whether a nation or another entity, is expressed as a set of relatively continuous social and symbolic ties of citizens otherwise anonymous to each other, and is linked to the status dimension of citizenship because there exist reciprocal obligations of members in a political community, akin to a social contract.

These three dimensions are intricately connected. There is a double coding of citizenship: the access to legally guaranteed status and rights in a democracy (first and second dimension) usually implies belonging to a politically defined community (third dimension). Further, citizenship not only rests on the status of state–citizen ties but also on ties among citizens, forming a continuing series of institutionalized ties among citizens. In particular, citizenship connotes the institutionalization of reciprocity and diffuse solidarity of members in a polity. Quite a number of social rights and corresponding policies, above all those which have a redistributive effect, require specific reciprocal ties and/or diffuse solidarity among citizens. Two examples are, first, the so-called generations' agreement for pension schemes in which one generation pays for the one who has already retired, and assumes that the following generation will do the same; second, the provision of a basic minimum income financed by general tax revenues.

The Expansion of Citizenship: From Exclusion to Inclusion and the Struggle for Rights

In the expansionist view citizenship is susceptible to reinvention in ways appropriate to the exigencies of contemporary challenges and is seen in terms of the progressive inclusion of heretofore marginalized and excluded groups. For example, Talcott Parsons's (1971) evolutionary functionalism suggests that among the master trends shaping modern societies is a growing capacity for and societal interest in inclusivity.

From such a perspective, citizenship serves as a particularly significant mode of identity and solidarity in pluralist societies and a central component of this assertion is citizenship acquisition for migrants and their children. The acquisition of citizenship is constituted by criteria relating to country of birth, the two most widespread principles being *jus sanguinis*, the principle of intergenerational transmission; and *jus soli*, the principle of territoriality, more inclusive to children of newcomers who are born in the state. Criteria relating to newcomers could also be the length of stay in the country where citizenship is sought, language competence, a certain proof of civic literacy, demonstration of material resources, or marketable skills. With respect to these criteria regulating the acquisition of legal citizenship at birth or by naturalization, there has been a European trend toward convergence, for example, the increasing spread of the principle of *jus soli*, or the convergence of explicit rules, such as requiring knowledge of the official language of the country of naturalization as a prerequisite for acquiring citizenship.

Nonetheless, it is highly contested whether, to what degree, and for which category citizens' cultural or even group-differentiated rights should be a constitutive part of citizenship (Young 1989). Critics charge that cultural rights could form the basis for new divisions among citizens, contradicting the notion of equal democratic citizenship. Multicultural rights, it is argued, could potentially be invoked to have the (welfare) state redistribute from the majority to minorities who are culturally different. Charges like these have emerged in general debates on immigration in Europe, Australia, and North America. Much of the discussion has been connected to collective identification, the third dimension of citizenship.

In the overall liberal framework, we observe restrictive countertrends. After 2001, many countries raised the bar for naturalization, with the implementation of assimilatory elements like language and citizenship tests, integration courses, and citizenship ceremonies. Obligatory civic integration points to concerns that liberal-democratic norms and principles be shared by all. Consider, for example, the increasing securitization of citizenship and public concern about the compatibility of Muslim immigrants post-9/11.Finally, in the sphere of emigration, we see tendencies toward re-ethnicization, whereby home country governments promote dual citizenship to foster the affiliation of emigrants to their country of origin.

The Erosion of Citizenship: Naturalization, Social Cohesion, and Neoliberalism

Erosion theorists voice two kinds of concerns about what is seen as a decline in the efficacy and salience of citizenship. One variant addresses what is perceived to be the steady decline in involvement in public life by ordinary people. This particular topic has been centrally important to those interested in the fate of the public sphere or civil society, in different ways and from different perspectives, as the works of Benjamin Barber, Robert Bellah, Amitai Etzioni, and Robert Putnam attest (Kivisto and Faist 2007).

The second variant of erosion concerns a lively debate over the assault on social citizenship deemed to have been brought about by the rise of neoliberal political regimes since the 1970s. Appropriately, this debate is usually framed in terms of T. H. Marshall's (1964/1950) paradigm of the evolution of citizenship that is linked to the rise and expansion of the modern welfare state in order to counter inequitable results produced by market forces and thus ameliorate class inequalities.

The two strands of thinking on erosion coincide with what the critics of multicultural citizenship have referred to as de-solidarization of citizens in welfare states as a consequence of multicultural citizenship. Still others argue that multiculturalism policies fuel cultural conflict and thereby increase levels of opposition to immigrant rights by encouraging identity politics on the part of the majority groups. By contrast, defenders of multiculturalism have maintained that multiculturalism policies have led to increased equalities, countering the discrimination of minorities within national states (Banting and Kymlicka 2006).

The Extension of National Citizenship: Multiple Citizenship as Dual and Supranational Citizenship

Citizenship is becoming increasingly unbundled insofar as identity, political participation rights, and social benefits, once grouped tightly together under the rubric of national citizenship, are, in a number of circumstances, today being disaggregated and

assembled in new ways. The voting rights of certain non-citizen residents in EU elections and some municipal and sometimes even national elections in Europe may serve as an example. Some see in this disaggregation a sign of the end of democracy as we have known it. Others suggest that one can also locate in such a disaggregation a site for a pluralist cosmopolitan federalism of the sort that Immanuel Kant advocated (Benhabib 2004).

Basically, there are two forms of citizenship reaching beyond (and below) the national state. The first form of this type of citizenship is best visualized as overlapping circles. Dual or multiple citizenship in national states is a prominent example. The second form is nested, consisting of concentric circles: a person may be a citizen of Lisbon, Portugal, and the EU. This latter form relates to supranational but also to city-level or local citizenship.

Toleration of dual citizenship in immigration countries is usually legitimated by positing that legal equality should be a prerequisite for substantive citizenship, that is, full participation in economic, political, and cultural life in one's place of residence. Instrumentally, the claim hinges on the observation that those states tolerating dual citizenship have proportionally more immigrants who have naturalized. Moreover, in international law citizenship is increasingly viewed as a human right, as in the case of stateless persons. Gender equality as a human right entered international law in the *Convention on Nationality for Married Women* in 1957, and later found its way into the law of national states. According to this body of law, women do not have to cede legal citizenship when marrying a spouse of another nationality. Taking this a step further, children from bi-national marriages in Europe have dual or multiple citizenships. Countries with significant shares of emigrants have adapted their citizenship laws, verging toward greater tolerance of dual citizenship among their citizens abroad.

Dual citizenship is not the only form of multiple citizenship. There are forms of local citizenship on the substate level and on the suprastate level incarnations such as EU citizenship. The empirical observation that social and political citizenship do not coincide has led to a wider and farther-reaching debate on the nature of contemporary citizenship.

One branch of the discussion concerns the concept of post-national citizenship. In general, post-nationalists claim that human rights have come closer to citizens' rights. In their view, liberal-democratic states have increasingly come to respect the human rights of persons, irrespective of their citizenship (Soysal 1994). Interstate human rights discourses and supra-state institutions such as the EU have led states to grant rights to certain groups who thereby do not become citizens (yet) but denizens – immigrants holding permanent residence status, including virtually all civil and social rights. To some extent, the emergence of denizenship counteracted one of the main trends of national state citizenship, which privileged the binary opposition of "citizen" versus "alien," in contrast to the complex relationships between individuals and communities in *ancien régime* societies (Fahrmeir 2007). These categories of people include permanent residents in the member states of the EU, that is, citizens of third states, holding the citizenship of a non-EU country. This means that supra-state institutions such as the European Court of Justice have developed common rights for all residents. For this reason, today there are few differences between denizens and citizens of EU member states, at least with respect to social rights.

Reconciling Human Rights and Citizen Rights? World Citizenship

Regardless of its transnational (or local) extensions, citizenship in a mobile world is not a concept which could be used to distinguish between the principles of, or global justice and human rights, on the one hand, and justice within bounded political communities such as national states on the other. Justice within the latter requires some sort of social closure and exclusion of outsiders. This becomes obvious in the case of irregular migrants or refugees. In short, citizenship presents two faces. Within a political community it stands for inclusion and universalism, but to outsiders citizenship means exclusion. There is a fundamental tension between state control and efficiency in guarding citizen rights on the one hand and the claims of individuals who may not be (full) members on the other.

In normative political theory, in turn, two branches can be identified: a world citizenship – or genuine cosmopolitan – perspective, and a national cosmopolitan perspective. In a genuinely cosmopolitan citizenship perspective, civil, political, and social

rights are part of a desirable world citizenship (Heater 2002). Theorists of an optimistic perspective may refer to Max Weber's social and economic history (Weber 1968/1922) and argue that citizenship was first conceived and practiced at the municipal level in ancient Greece and medieval Europe before it moved up one level and became *de jure* and *de facto* congruous with membership in a territorial national state characterized by an authority–demos relationship. Citizenship and citizenship rights beyond the national state would therefore be an evolutionary leap forward. Ultimately, however, this would require a global political community with socio-moral resources to be drawn on as required. This would be a broad extension of Immanuel Kant's idea of a cosmopolitan right to hospitality by means of a rational development of collective identities beyond the national level. Such a global political identity is conceivable today only as a transparent, constructed affiliation (Habermas 1998). World citizenship would not acknowledge any privileges passed on by descent or birth within a certain territory. We would all formally have the same status as members of an all-encompassing, global polity. Such a community would, however, be greatly endangered by a "tyranny of the majority" because of the unavailability of exit options, and thus undermine the first dimension of citizenship. Even more important, certain kinds of rights, such as social rights, would require a willingness to redistribute goods among anonymous others. While these qualities can be observed when disaster strikes, they have no legal status and certainly no regulative components.

This critique of the concept of world citizenship highlights the central elements of a republican version of national cosmopolitanism. The republican version grasps social rights primarily as a close form of diffuse solidarity on a national scale. As a consequence, the following conditions can be fulfilled only in a national state: first, only holders of the respective legal citizenship are counted as valid members of a framed political community and in this way secure the sociocultural basis for citizenship, namely trust among citizens. Second, a common culture has a bonding effect on citizens and enables them to agree on substantive rights and obligations that form the basis for their membership. Third, citizenship confers participatory rights and political representation.

Ultimately, world citizenship from this perspective appears to be little more than a vague cosmopolitan idea in a world lacking a fundamental moral consensus. A fur-

ther criticism is that at best world citizenship would weaken the bonds that hold citizens of a national state together. And only these national bonds ensure that citizens maintain their ties to the rest of humanity (Walzer 1996). Even so, this critique of the concept of world citizenship is debatable, based on empirical findings which suggest that world and national citizenship are not necessarily zero-sum notions (Furia 2005).

Global and Local Citizenship Reconsidered: The Case of Green Citizenship

Two views should be considered jointly to arrive at adequate conceptions of citizenship in an age of cross-border diffusion such as anthropogenic climate change. In doing so, theorists of contemporary citizenship can attempt to deal with complex problems spanning the globe and affecting various locales at the same time. There are two contrasting, ideal typical notions, namely a cosmopolitan versus a local green option of citizenship (Trachtenberg 2010). The first has been called a "post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship" (Dobson 2003) in which an imagined global polity is the basis of reference and in which existing polities are called upon to bring in global concerns with reference to a world-spanning political community. The second is a local concept of green citizenship that privileges local ties and multiple grass-roots activities.

Two dimensions can serve to highlight the two contrasting understandings of green citizenship: the issue of morality and the public sphere to which each of these two concepts is meant to apply. First, as to morality, global ecological citizenship promotes a clear idea of justice and the idea of thin solidarity among all concerned across the globe. As in a series of concentric circles, moral considerations toward those far away are thinner than to those at home. Nonetheless, there are abstract norms, such as human rights, which should guide attitudes and action toward all human beings. The task, then, is to be fair and just with respect to the costs of the ecological footprint. Accordingly, this cosmopolitan notion of citizenship implies an effort by those who contribute to climate change to avert the deleterious consequences inflicted on others through, for example, droughts, heavy rains, and the resultant losses in agricultural production. By contrast, local ecological citizenship provides a

thicker idea of commitment, applies to those in the most proximate polity, and is meant to provide a localized vision of the good. Second, concerning the public sphere, the global version deals mostly with the private actions of citizens, which impact on the overall public good in the world. The local version, however, emphasizes that citizenship implies a communal effort. In a way, these contrasting notions of green citizenship replay the old liberal versus republican distinction regarding citizenship. Clearly, one could also posit that global citizenship applies best to complex world-spanning problems such as anthropogenic climate change, whereas local citizenship is better able to address problems produced on the spot, that is, pollution of bounded ecosystems. Yet this simple dichotomy does not address the way citizenship is best understood to deal with "glocal," that is, global and local issues, and the entanglements across the borders of national polities (Jelin 2000). There is both local and global resistance against the commodification not only of land and labor but also of nature.

Conclusion

As various authors have observed, the new social project in regions such as Europe favors a citizenship model that privileges individuals as bearers of human capital and draws a close link between work, economic productivity, and social justice (Somers 2008). Free-floating individuals in the market sphere enjoy a contract with the nation-state only if they contribute to the community and are not a burden to the social welfare system. More specifically, liberal-democratic states are increasingly leaning not against foreigners per se, but against a specific type of immigration which seems incompatible with liberal ways of life. The selection of immigrants has shifted from openly discriminatory group-level exclusion to application of the criterion of individualistic skills, in addition to criteria based on human rights, such as family reunification and asylum. The blurring of racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries is enforced by a human rights discourse that stigmatizes group-level exclusion, but sanctions individual-level exclusion based on language, culture, and human capital.

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