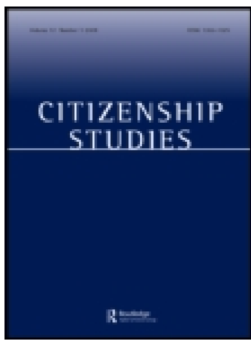

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AFTERWORD

Citizenship as horizon

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The idea of citizenship has today emerged as a global horizon under which a proliferating range of claims and demands for recognition, visibility, care, moral dignity, and inclusion are made. Initially a legal concept tied to self-determination and national sovereignty, the global human rights agenda has made citizenship less tied to the nation-state and instead a carrier of multiple cultural and political meanings and agendas from the global level to the most localized context. But can there be meaningful forms of citizenship that are not guaranteed by a sovereign state?

Keywords: self-determination; human rights; global horizon; nation-state

Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology, argued that human experience and interpretation of the world always unfold within distinct contexts of memory and potentiality. These Husserl called horizons. A horizon is always situated, historical, and subjective. It structures thought and limits imagination and it is only by knowing and understanding the horizons we live by that phenomenology, the science of experience, can advance toward higher levels of universal understanding of the human as such (Husserl [1950] 1999, 44–45). Such was Husserl's proposition.

Today, at the beginning of the twenty first century, it seems to me that the idea of citizenship has become more than a mere concept, it has become a meaningful and effective horizon for political imagination across the globe. This is true both in a socio-historical sense and in a conceptual sense.

From national citizenship to human rights

The term 'citizenship' condenses three bundles of political and social values that have global purchase and rich vernacular lives across the world: (1) fundamental political and legal rights, (2) social entitlements, and (3) loyalty, belonging, and civility. Citizenship is also a metaphor for the political properly civilized, a perpetual promise of inclusion and public recognition of individual and groups. Few other terms are so capacious and protean and yet so clearly tied to an Ur form of (supposedly) civilized political community, the Greek polis. Few other terms in our global political vocabulary are so universally accepted as a desirable norm and aspiration. In the twentieth century, the two other fecund concepts flanking citizenship's horizon-defining power were those of national self-determination and human rights. The linking of citizenship to national sovereignty and the nation-state provided the most powerful political promise in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a promise that was the driving force in anticolonial movements for independence, and in the

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building of inclusive welfare states and 'great societies.' Only within the confines of a nation-state could true and deep citizenship be realized, the logic of self-determination went. Only here could the political rights and social entitlements that millions had aspired to for generations be founded upon the bedrock of deep cultural loyalty and emotional attachment.

However, as it became clear all too soon, the nation-state was as often curtailing and withholding rights and recognition as it was enabling them. It is not surprising that the excesses of World War II and the new utopianism expressed in the Declaration of Human Rights meant that the idea of rights began to be disentangled from the nation-state. Human rights emerged from the 1970s as the more expansive paradigm from where to imagine what citizenship could mean and encompass (Mazower 2012). Both more universal, and applicable to individuals regardless of location and culture, human rights provided an ever-expandable set of social and cultural rights, the 'right to nationality' now merely one of many rights, and not the precondition for citizenship and belonging as within the paradigm of self-determination. This in turn enabled a shift away from looking at rights as formal inclusion in a sovereign nation-state, or a national community, toward looking at the quality and depth of rights, and how recognition as citizens was experienced by groups and individuals. Within this expanding canvas of rights, cultural and religious minorities, underrepresented communities, indigenous people, and those who had suffered historical wrongs, and many others, could find resources for claims to inclusion, dignity, 'full citizenship,' and public recognition. This is really the moment where 'citizenship agendas' gradually emerged as a dominant form of claim-making, a globally expanding modality of how demands are conceived, framed, and presented. In short, when citizenship became a horizon (Moyn 2012).

Several of the papers in this special issue throw fascinating light on how 'citizenship agendas' – the idea of enjoying rights, and to be included and recognized within a political community – today are regarded as foundational by people in widely different historical contexts. From Hourani's (2015) incisive account of how the inhabitants in South Beirut pin their hopes on Hezbollah's 'resistance society' providing a more powerful alternative mechanism for inclusion and protection than that of a distant and fragmented Lebanese state, to Perkins' (2015) description of the controversy over the use of amplified sound to calls for prayer among residents of a city in Michigan. Perkins details how the sound of the muezzin went from having no place in the imagining of what citizenship could entail, or sound like, to become included within a new and more capacious horizon of citizenship. Jaffe (2015) shows that, in Jamaica, decades of violent street politics and a hollowing out of the state's monopoly of violence has meant that citizenship and public recognition now are powerfully associated with political parties that in several cases have all but merged with criminal organizations. Here, effective citizenship, understood as protection and access to resources, is neither a very 'civil' nor legal affair but loyalties to political formations are deeply felt and experienced as horizons.

de Koning (2015) describes how nostalgic references to a supposedly purer and more intense citizenship and neighborliness in twentieth-century Netherlands frame interventions that aim at transforming unruly immigrant youngster into 'good' self-disciplined citizens that do not disrupt the experience of seamless 'social cohesion.' The enigmatic and nostalgic rhetoric of 'cohesion' is invoked across continental Europe today, and it also reverberates through Koster's (2015) piece on efforts at turning 'poor' residents of Dutch neighborhoods into more enterprising citizens, vested in their locality. Sharp (2015) describes how an older generation of men in Guatemalan towns and villages mobilize

older, indigenist frames of ‘cohesion’ and custom against what they see as unruly young men returned from the USA, contaminated by gang culture. In these cases, we can see that the horizon of citizenship, while expansive and emancipatory in some configurations, also can have both conservative and exclusionary potentials in other cases.

Citizenship as an analytical frame

Mirroring the political vernaculars of our time, academics have increasingly used citizenship as an analytical lens and focus. This special issue, and indeed this journal itself, testifies to the rich and broad field of studies and concerns that are explored under the rubric of citizenship. This reflects the protean force of citizenship as an ‘emic’ and political category but it raises the question of the analytical force of the term ‘citizenship’ itself. My contention here is that citizenship is perhaps better thought of as a horizon for thought and imagination, a field of action rather than a precise category, as a promise rather than a thing or a precise legal status. It is striking, for instance, to see how often the notion on ‘full citizenship’ is directly or indirectly invoked in a staggering range of work – from political philosophy and critical race theory to migration studies, studies of inequality, and social exclusion to the proliferating genre of studies of immigrant ‘integration.’ In all these cases, scholars, activists, or advocates they work with, as well as officials, measure the situations of deprivation, injustice, or the policy problem they grapple with against a standard of ‘full citizenship’ to be achieved. It is rarely clear what this fullness may entail and herein lies the protean force of the idea of citizenship: it is a never fully realized ideal that always has to be invoked, revisited, and discursively reconstructed in order to be effective. At the same time, it is equally clear that the idea of ‘full citizenship’ derives considerable force from the global circulation of models of what inclusion, recognition, reparation, and protection can look like in other societies and contexts. Hence, its force as a horizon, as potential rather than as actual experience.

This circulation and proliferation of what citizenship agendas may look like, and what ‘fullness’ citizens may aspire to, has a direct bearing on the relationship between citizenship and the so-called ‘non-state actors.’ In classical liberal perspectives inspired by Mill and Tocqueville, citizenship grows from below, from associational life and civic spirit that, then, is aggregated and legally protected by the government. It is only in the twentieth century that the modern state assumes a role as an arbiter and grantor of citizenship and recognition of an expanding array of rights from ‘above’ as it were – turning citizenship into an ever ‘thicker’ compact of rights and entitlements embedded in national cultures and language ideologies. Neoliberal ideology aims at a return to a ‘thinner’ idea of rights that gives the power of recognition and mediation of citizenship back to the ‘non-state actors’ that supposedly populate what the Tory’s call ‘big society’ as opposed to big government. Neveu’s (2015) intriguing contribution suggests that the invocation and involvement of ‘ordinary citizens,’ as opposed to political activists or social movements, are central to the legitimacy of this new aspiration toward more ‘direct’ modes of government in contemporary France. However, she also demonstrates that the association of ordinariness with ‘the people’ – the most foundational of all modern political concepts – gives the idea of the ordinary (streets, people, routines, everyday life as such) a symbolic potency that also becomes a rallying point for anticapitalist activists critical of the state and organized politics. Perkins’ example from Hamtramck, Michigan, provides an example of how the meaning of citizenship can be cautiously expanded into the realm of cultural and sensory experience within the relatively ‘thin’ model of citizenship in the USA where the citizen, at least in principle, is supposed to freely

celebrate any culture and religion. By contrast, the attempts at engineering 'society,' 'good' public behavior, and proper civic sense in the Netherlands, described by de Koning and Koster, demonstrate how deeply the ideals of citizenship and rights are 'culturalized' and enmeshed in the 'thick' culture of discrete nation-states in Western Europe.

However, in many postcolonial societies marked by experiences of states and governments that were both more fragmented and more despotic at the same time, it is most often non-state actors that are ready at hand as vehicles for citizenship aspirations. Yet, these actors also generate deep ambivalence. In such societies, i.e., in most of the world, the promise of 'full citizenship' remains indelibly connected with the imagining of a properly functioning and comprehensive structure of government. Within the powerful global horizon of citizenship, it is probably impossible to get this imagined genie of the benevolent state that recognizes and guarantees social, political, and cultural rights back in the bottle. In such contexts, as that of the Shi'ite residents of South Beirut, one can legitimately ask: what is the value and staying power of citizenship that is provided by a non-state actor but not guaranteed by a legitimate and sovereign state? Can there be citizens without states as, Arendt ([1950] 1968, 290) asked in 1950? That question, and the quality and depth of citizenship, has defined the better part of global politics ever since.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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