

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

NECE Workshop: The Impacts of National Identities for European Integration as a Focus of Citizenship Education

INPUT PAPER

Introductory Remarks

“Mobility, Identity, Citizenship”

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Analysts have opposed citizenship and identity, arguing that the first is universal, the second particular; the first implies difference, the second similitude. Citizenship could be defined as the common space, where different identities can take form, whereas identity is rather linked to the imaginary of time, origin and memory, it excludes the others and is defined against them. The former tends to crystallize in legal arrangements; the latter is largely based on symbolic representations, stereotypes, myths, etc.

The rise of national or ethnic identities is a sign of the degradation of citizenship standards. Vice versa, the expansion of citizenship pushes identity into the private sphere. What I want to argue here is that globalization affects both citizenship and identity; it multiplies and fragments them both, creating new *soft borders* and some sort of *market of belongings*.

Let me start first with the paradox of identity. There is no identity without otherness on one hand, and without a common space, where these two can be juxtaposed that we usually call “culture” (the codes that help us distinguish between “us” and “them”). Identity markers not only make you similar to those of your kind, but differentiate you from the aliens. Say, the establishment of national languages – one of the greatest enterprises of the nation-state – not only creates transparence within the national territory, but also opacity with respect to the others. Identity thus erects borders, it integrates and excludes, even if there are hardly any written regulations about how this should happen – you simply do not do business with members of X, you do not marry into members of Y.

Identity is activated by the contact with the other. You get aware of who you are whenever you meet someone who is not supposed to be like you. The encounter of the others makes you conscious of the ways in which you should differentiate from them. If we follow this reasoning, it becomes obvious why rather than homogenize the planet, globalization brings about the multiplication of identitarian borders: simply, accelerated mobility makes you meet others much more often.

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But mobility – made easier not only by technology, but also by legal and political arrangements – affects also the very essence of identitarian formations. It is no longer the community that fatally makes me what I will be; I choose where to belong. Rather than speaking about post-modernization of identities, I will suggest the metaphor of the *market*. Identity is part of the lifestyle I choose, but also of my survival kit in new circumstances.

Let me now pass to the paradoxes of citizenship.

The concept itself has been a problematic since Thomas Marshall, who notoriously distinguished civil, political and social rights, acquired respectively during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries in northwestern Europe. It has been observed that, whereas civil rights presuppose a diminishing role of the state which refrains from interfering into private life, social or welfare rights imply an ever bigger state, where redistribution of national income in fact hurts the right to property. The logic of *civil and political rights* on one hand, and the one of *social rights* on the other thus go separate ways in the 20th century giving rise to a steady conflict between right and left. Whereas western democracies insisted on political and civil rights, the Socialist bloc declared those to be “formal” and paraded with the more “substantial” social rights like housing, medicare or employment their constitutions supposedly granted (This goes back to Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” (1844), juxtaposing political *form* and economic *essence*, i.e. the *citizen* and the *bourgeois*.)

But citizenship is no longer confined to the nation-state. The notion of human rights generalized after the Universal declaration of the UN (1948) is rather unique if you see it in the perspective of history. It is no longer the territorial belonging (the state) that confers rights, but, on the contrary, some abstract rights that entitle the person to be member of the territorial community:

“Art. 13 (b). Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country (...). Art. 15 (a). Everyone has the right to a nationality.”

By being dissociated from territory, *human rights are in fact dissociated from duties*, as there is no concrete group who is supposed to grant them. Immigrants are accepted to be members of the community on economic, political, or humanitarian grounds, without being asked to merit admission beforehand by performing some services to the community, as it has always been the case throughout history. Ulrich Beck points to the double character of such human-rightist cosmopolitization that goes over the heads of the nation states, being at the same time universal and individualist; it results in “a legally binding world society of individuals” (Beck 2000: 84).

Another dissociation is operated between *economic* and *political* rights in Western Europe, since the 18th century, when wars no longer interfered in property relations (Carl Schmitt, 1950/1997). Economy has escaped the control of political power; it seems to follow its own logic. Some scholars use the 13th century term of “denizen” to design a person, who has economic rights only – as do millions of migrants nowadays (a denizen is a foreign subject that gained the right to hold land through the ‘letter of patent’).

Let me just mention “ecological citizenship” (van Steenberghe 1994) that fragment territories even further, as ecology does not stop at political borders. This is, in fact, quite an ambiguous notion: on one side, it is nature that is given protection against the activities of man; on the other, a harmonious natural environment is supposed to be a right of the human being as such. (As a result, there seems to be a slit between the rights of businesses that seek places where ecological regulations are less strict, and the rights of residents or holiday makers looking for better living conditions).

Finally the most controversial notion of cultural citizenship (Turner 1993) has been subject to the violent controversies throughout the 1990s. It is now no longer nature, but culture that is presented as a separate sphere, granting the individual with rights, namely to live in an environment that corresponds to his or her competences, values and customs. Again, what is new in this notion is that it is being defined independently from the other aspects of citizenship: you are entitled to preserve your cultural scenery, no matter where you have immigrated, who is in power, what property relations are, etc. (Cf. Urry, 2000: 174). Culture has somehow acquired a being of its own independent of the world it is situated in: it is

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perceived as a sort of *mobile context* you can and have the right to take with yourself when you move from one community to another.

Let me recapitulate. The different aspects of contemporary citizenship are in a constant process of expansion and autonomization, where inherent contradictions become more and more explicit and start to present alternative choices before the individual or the community. Mobility is the crucial factor for this fragmentation of citizenship and, more generally, of the living world. To use the above metaphor, citizenships are offered to the individual, freed from his or her fatal belonging to the community, again, a sort of *market*, where a choice is offered between conditions, rights and duties. One place grants better economic citizenship, the other one does well in terms of social rights; here they respect your culture, there, they protect better human rights, etc.

Some still hope for a common EU citizenship to be established, referring to the ascending line of the labor rights granted by the treaty of Rome, the consumer rights that ensued from the establishment of the Common market and, finally, the shy introduction of political rights by the Maastricht treaty (Magnette, 1999: 228). But it seems nowadays that the EU tends to go towards the decentered model of citizenship, very much like the rest of the global world. The idea behind the principle of subsidiarity is that levels of citizenship rights and actions are hierarchically ordered, so that you are supposed to pass on to the higher one only if the problem cannot be resolved on the lower (where you address higher instances like the European court of justice only after exhausting all possibilities of the local jurisdiction). Such an arrangement presupposes a relative stability of populations which seem to be ever more fluidified nowadays. Thus, besides the horizontal type of transnational citizenship, a growing space of possibilities is emerging for horizontal movements, where the individual actor simply chooses the better conditions.

Let me give just two examples.

The most criticized aspect of this process is the right of capitals to flee towards places that propose better conditions. Such are low taxation and absence of control in the tax-paradises, small salaries and feeble trade unions in authoritarian regimes. Even if differences are not as big as on a planetary level, the absence of common legislation on taxation creates such type of movement within the EU, too. The competitive lowering of taxes in the new member states in Eastern Europe can give us an idea of the process. If in the north-west of the continent income taxes are progressive and can go to over 50 %, the so called flat tax (where rich and poor pay the same percentage) was cut to 25 % in Latvia, 19 % in Slovakia, and 16 % in Romania, whereas the Czech republic plans to join the race with 15%, and Bulgaria with the record 10% ! A similar competitive lowering of rates is under way in the sphere of social insurances, the protection of workers' rights, in short, a sort of competitive trans-European social dumping.

The second example is labor migration. Mobility is not a privilege of some cosmopolitan class (the 'new nomads', as Jacques Attali called them), and with the mere 3% of displaced persons globally it does not seem to be a dramatic trend, neither.¹ Mass mobility concerns some specific places on the globe situated usually at the periphery of a rich and powerful economic space. Thus in Bulgaria – even if there are no trustworthy statistics – sociologists would estimate at over 13% percent the seasonal migrants, plus those who have not yet settled definitely in the richer countries of the EU, the illegals or such who intend to come back. In Mexico, because of its enormity, the percentage might be somewhat lower, around 8 to 10. If you consider internal migration within China oriented from the rural inland towards the industrial southeast coasts, the proportion of around 1/10 will not be very different (even if they do not need visas, the so called 'floating people' need residence permits to stay in the big cities). If the average family has 5 or more members and migrants amount to 10%, half of the families are concerned with the process – they receive remittances, practice long-distance kinship, welcome those absent for holidays, dream of following them in emigration, etc. In all those cases mobility fragments citizenship: in one place the migrant has political rights, in the other he or she is a denizen with economic rights only; in one cultural rights are more important, in the other, human rights, etc.

¹ According the UN, in 2002, 175 millions have lived outside the country they have been born in. <http://www.theatlantic.com/foreign/unwire/crossette2004-05-17.htm> (visited 01/03/2007).

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What is most striking is the gradual separation of the living world into functionally different spaces. Let us take the example of the migrant workers from the EU's periphery. They face a situation that is not difficult to rationalize: the cost of labor in the developed countries is high; the cost of living at home is low. What do they do? They split their life in two: they work abroad sparing every penny, working overtime, living in horrible conditions; then they come home, where their family waits for them, and indulge in ostentatious consumption, parading with their 'success'.

We thus need new concepts to define the differences within in; the very borders that fragment it are *soft borders* that no longer have an absolute character, as they can be crossed, changed, relativized. Nevertheless, they temporarily orient the flows of persons, capitals, information, goods, etc., and thus have very real effects.

Crossing the soft borders of the contemporary world undermines the traditional forms of citizenship. It makes the person more docile, eager to accept lower social standards, less democracy, and a worsening of general conditions of life - in short, the mobile person is constantly a stranger in the world, with all the inconveniences that this position brings about. But, on the other hand, the citizens - once freed from the fatal belonging to territory - profit from the market of citizenships, play with legislations, cheat with taxes, fool authorities, flee whenever conditions do not suit them. Fragmentation of the living worlds has become the arena for the new social battles.

To analyze the impact of such fluidification of populations on democracy, I will suggest the notion of *citizenship pressure* exercised the framework of a given sociopolitical unit. Until one moment this pressure holds power at bay and urges for reforms; then a significant number of people leave, steam is released, pressure falls and the will for change fades away. The best example is former Eastern Germany, where not only economic problems were resolved, but also sociopolitical unrest was calmed due to the fact that some 20 % of the population passed to the West.

The newly acquired liberty of movement has simply abolished the existential aspect of sociopolitical space one inhabits: any social or political problem can be solved, on an individual basis, by *flight*. Zygmunt Bauman has called this state of the world 'liquid modernity' (1999), pointing out that power no longer operates through coercion and conflict, but through avoidance and evasion. Remember also the famous dictum by the British economist Joan Robinson "There is one thing that is worse than being exploited – not being exploited". In the new global arrangement the strongest menace is that power will desert leaving chaos behind.

What I want to stress here is the same applies to the citizen themselves: citizenship, one might say, operates ever more through avoidance and evasion. You will go to the better place to work, but then, you will not integrate, maintaining some alternative cultural citizenship, you will participate to politics at home, practicing what Benedict Anderson happily called 'long-distance nationalism' (1992). The fragmented identity formations no longer stabilize the individual; on the contrary, they help him or her moving around, establishing networks, refusing integration, maintaining special statuses, etc. Would this imply a new form of democracy, where authorities struggle to attract human flows, as it happens on the market place with clients? Where political science operates with concepts like speed of circulation, viscosity, stagnation, or overspill?

Should we go on insisting on the introduction of a unique European citizenship, moreover, on some unique European identity? This will imply that we think of the EU along the lines of a nation state, which – unfortunately, as far as I am concerned – it is not, and the will to build a political Europe today seems dead. Let us rather face the new reality. If we were to conceive a new notion of EU citizenship, it should thus be a dynamic one bearing in mind the factor of movement, choice and fragmentation, in short, the emerged dimension of market of spaces. The EU is a (soft) empire, based on difference, and differences tend to grow ever greater thanks to technology. It would thus be more realistic to adapt our notions to the present state of affairs, and try to develop some concept of meta-citizenship that will take into consideration mobility and choice between life-worlds. It seems more urgent today to design a set of

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rights and duties will not be linked to one specific territory or socio-political unit, but rather be an *interface* between situations², and will help integrate and desintegrate the mobile persons in their life-trajectory.

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² The Danish notion of "flexsecurity" is an interesting practical example in this direction. The idea is, instead of helping the persons keep their jobs and penalizing the employer who would fire them, to help them find a new job.

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