

INTRODUCTION

Citizenship and Belonging

IN THE FALL OF 2015, as I began work on the project that became this book, tens of thousands of people from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and elsewhere were streaming into Europe, struggling through the rain and cold, on foot or in small boats, trying to enter the European Union. They were skirting some borders and crossing others. Many were fleeing Syria, where a government was willing to destroy cities and citizens to preserve the power of a ruling clique, abetted by other factions within the territory and external allies. A smaller number of young men were moving in the opposite direction, to leave their countries of citizenship to join the Islamic State, a political entity of unclear dimensions that had conquered territory in Iraq and Syria and pretended to be the echo of the caliphates that began in the seventh century. Some European states built walls—literally—to keep out people who had lost the protection of their own citizenship. Germany was torn between those who believed it could and should take in large numbers of asylum seekers and those who saw a threat to their sense of Germanness. This debate was taking place in relation to one of the world's most innovative citizenship regimes: a person's

citizenship in a national state automatically conveys a European citizenship that recognizes his or her right to live and work as a rights-bearing citizen throughout the European Union. That regime is becoming increasingly precarious in the face of conflicting views, inclusionary and exclusionary, of citizenship. Meanwhile, states that are not so wealthy and without such a deep democratic history—Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey—are shouldering an even bigger burden of housing and caring for Syrian refugees.

In the fall of 2016, as I continued to work on this manuscript, American voters chose as their president a man who proposes to build a wall to keep Mexicans out of the United States and deport millions who are already here, who conflates Muslims with terrorists and wants to deny people of that religion entry to the country, and who mocks and denigrates women, minorities, and other fellow citizens. He claims to be “taking citizenship seriously.” By that, he means “America first.”¹ His campaign and his election have been met with outrage by those with a different vision of how citizens of a diverse country should act in relation to each other and how they should act toward other people who seek work, freedom, or refuge in their country. Divergent views of citizenship are clashing.

A closed-in view of citizenship in the United States, Europe, or any other political entity confronts the reality of human mobility and the variety of forms of community and affinity that people experience, whether in new homes or places their ancestors have lived in for generations. Mobility and multiple forms of belonging are not new phenomena. But only in the past half century, with the collapse of colonial empires that relegated most inhabitants of the territories they controlled to the status of subject, did people around the world begin to assume that every human being was—or should be—a citizen somewhere.²

As political leaders and intellectuals came to imagine a world in which all people would have the rights of citizens within their own states, they were also thinking of a world in which people shared in norms of human progress and efforts to end poverty and injustice. Parts of these goals have been realized in certain times and in certain places, but justice and equality remain elusive objectives, both within and among states. Some collectivities that regard themselves as a “people” if not a “nation”—Palestinians, Kurds, Roma, Rohingya—have found no place in the global system of states; others confront states that assert their indivisible sovereignty with claims for recognition. Meanwhile, thousands of Africans risk their lives in rickety boats to get to Spain or Sicily in the hope of entering the bottom tier of the European job market and thousands of Syrians flee for their lives from their own country—reminders that the making of a world of citizens has not produced a world of equals or a world of justice.

Injustice and inequality cannot be contained within borders. The large-scale influx of immigrants into Europe produces tensions and scapegoating that leaders of xenophobic political parties exploit to gain support among “native-born” French, Dutch, Danish, or German citizens who feel themselves excluded from economic opportunities. Exclusion *within* European countries is as much an issue as walls being erected around the continent.

Inequality in Europe and the Americas has become so extreme that some observers worry that social bonds built up over many decades are eroding. Pierre Rosanvallon, a specialist on European social and political history from the eighteenth century to the present, points to the “silent decomposition of social ties and, simultaneously, of solidarity” and notes that “inequalities have never before been so widely discussed while so little was being done to reduce them.”³ People now

feel incapable of acting as citizens as they once did in making European countries more socially just.

We live in a world that is diverse, unequal, and connected. It is unclear whether the fiction of a global order that assigns each individual to citizenship within a territorially defined state provides a stable basis for world order or corresponds to the reality that millions of people live.⁴ It is even less clear that values that many of us attach to humanity as a whole can be honored when their enforcement is relegated to states that lack the will to enforce them nationally or to agree upon institutions to do so globally.⁵

Nonetheless, millions of people are defending their rights as citizens against governments that threaten to take them away or foreigners who threaten to dilute them, and others seek citizenship in the states in which they are seen as foreigners. Citizenship is both a powerful and an ambiguous concept, ambiguous not least in relation to territory. Mobile people identify with different locations at the same time; they might have legally defined rights in places other than that in which their citizenship is located—rights to welfare, education, sometimes even to vote in local elections.⁶

Whether states exclude potential new citizens or seek them to augment their labor force or to respond to humanitarian imperatives, they are engaged in intense debates over what threshold of commonality is required to allow immigrants to accede to the status of citizen.⁷ The specifics of these tensions are new; the existence of such complexities is not.

This book focuses on citizenship as a divisible and flexible bundle of rights and obligations in relation to a political entity. Running through the discussion of citizenship in many times and places in the following chapters are two central themes. First, I will bring out the varied kinds of political units in which citizenship could be exercised and contested, including

cities, empires, federations, and culturally defined communities as well as nation-states. Second, I will suggest that citizenship has not simply been a common status that presumes and perpetuates the equivalence of citizens, but a framework for debate and struggle over the relationship of political belonging to religious, linguistic, and cultural difference and over the tensions between the citizenship ideal and political oligarchy and economic inequality.⁸

Citizenship entails belonging to some sort of political collectivity. It is a different type of relationship than that of a follower to a leader, be it a lineage elder, a chief, a noble, or a king. We could characterize these personal relationships as “vertical,” while citizenship—as membership in a political entity—is “horizontal.” Citizens exist in relation not just to a leader or in a more abstract sense to a state, but to each other. This distinction in ideal types is further complicated by each historical situation. Citizens are not only connected horizontally to their fellow citizens, but vertically to people with more or less wealth, power, or influence than they have. The degrees to which these different sorts of attachment play out vary greatly.

The study of citizenship confronts a tension between a “minimalist” definition of citizenship as “an ‘institution’ mediating rights between the subjects of politics and the polity to which these subjects belong”⁹—and a maximalist definition that insists that citizenship necessarily entails the rule of law, full participation in making political decisions, equality among all citizens, and a list of rights such as free speech and the protection of private property—in short, the premises of liberal democracy. The latter is a normative and historically specific conception, often dated to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789, or more generally to the breakthroughs in political thought in western Europe in the eighteenth century.¹⁰ To assert that citizenship *should* entail a

set list of rights is to make an argument. To *define* citizenship based on such a list of rights or the sovereignty of the “people” is to narrow the domain of inquiry and to begin with an answer rather than to pose the most critical question: what is the relationship between the fact of “belonging” to a political unit and the possibility of making *claims* on that unit and those who govern it?¹¹

That the rulers of some polities regarded citizenship in an exclusionary way, insisting that some people who owed obedience to the state were citizens while others were not, makes clear that the definition of citizenship is itself in certain historical situations the object of struggle. Instead of starting out with too categorical a distinction between the “citizen” as bearer of rights and the “subject” as rightless member of a political unit, we can explore the grey area in which people struggled over what it meant to be part of a polity.¹²

Might not horizontal relationships—of citizens with each other—put pressure on vertical ones? Might not people who do not benefit from a powerful patron find common cause with people like themselves against the exclusions from which they suffer? If a state is to sustain the allegiance of its citizens, is it in some degree constrained to provide them security or perhaps mechanisms to insure order, if not improvement, in their lives? When ruling elites concede something to “their” people, might that not that encourage them to take for granted a certain status and possibly to ask for more? Might citizenship be contagious, as people see examples of something to gain by attachment and loyalty to a polity? By leaving open the relationship of belonging and rights—and of horizontal and vertical relationships—one can study citizenship beyond the limited context of post-1789 Europe and its extensions, and also understand more of the dynamics of claim-making in Eu-

rope itself and the range of political possibilities that process has opened up, and sometimes shut down.

Citizenship has a much longer history than the nation-state. The lineage of the concept in Europe and its offshoots dates to the Greek city-state and the Roman Empire. It implied membership in a political community and expectations that the unit and its leaders would provide protection against outsiders and judicial institutions to regulate relations among members. Its implications for participation in political decisions, however, was variable and often contested. Both the vocabulary with which citizenship was conceptualized and the debates over its significance have inflected considerations of citizenship ever since. The Romans, unlike the Greek city-states, saw the possible offer of citizenship as a way of attaching conquered people to the expanding empire. To some historians of the Roman Empire, no other polity, before or since, “has been so grand that it could claim to encompass the whole world or attempt to create a form of universal citizenship that was open to all comers.”¹³ Yet the possibilities of inclusive citizenship have kept coming back.

When, in the aftermath of France’s defeat in World War II, an assembly was elected to write a new constitution for a new French republic, its members debated whether to continue the practice of the previous century to limit citizenship rights to the population of European France and select portions of its overseas territories or to give a renewed legitimacy to France’s empire by extending those rights to all inhabitants of French territories in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Several participants in these debates evoked the edict of the Roman emperor Caracalla, who in AD 212 extended Roman citizenship to all free and male inhabitants of the empire. For one side in the debate, imperial citizenship—and this phrase was used—would mark

France as an inclusive, grand power, acknowledging the ultimate equality of all peoples within its embrace without demanding that they give up what some called their “local civilizations.” Their opponents mocked the idea of a new edict of Caracalla, a seemingly anachronistic and pretentious assertion in a world in which distinctions of power, culture, and race were fundamental and, they insisted, legitimate. The advocates of the 1946 edict of Caracalla prevailed, and the constitution of the postwar French Republic proclaimed that the inhabitants of its overseas territories had the rights of the citizen. Rome’s template for citizenship as inclusion in empire and France’s understanding of citizenship as the sovereignty of the “people” were linked in a way that a conventionally national perspective on history obscures.

Imperial citizenship was a concept that could capture the political imagination of Africans and Europeans in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁴ Empires, incorporating diverse populations by violence and other methods, had long been a fundamental unit of political membership. Empires were both incorporative and unequal. In the postwar years, political leaders like those of French West Africa explored alternatives such as federations that would remain incorporative and diverse but would become more equal. Other people saw themselves as members of collectivities—as Arabs, Jews, Blacks, Slavs, etcetera—dispersed around the globe with different relations to specific territories. In the end, decolonization ended up in the creation of nation-states; the number of political units in the world went from around 50 in 1945 to nearly 200 today. The division of the world’s people into distinct citizenries came in the last half century to be considered so normal that alternative conceptions passed for a time out of view.

Whether people’s rights of speech and protection against arbitrary authority would be protected or whether they would

have a chance to have a decent standard of living or the social protections that were coming to be expected in Europe and North America depended on whether the individual states actually worked for their citizens. In much of the world this has manifestly not been the case. Hence, activists and scholars have had to confront the question of where rights and citizenship can and should be located. Citizenship in a nation-state, in itself, neither guaranteed the protection of people's rights nor assured a satisfying response to the complexity of people's sense of belonging.¹⁵

*Multicultural, Flexible, Global,
and Other Citizenships*

In looking beyond national identification, scholars and activists have introduced such concepts as multicultural citizenship, multinational citizenship, multilevel citizenship, diasporic citizenship, flexible citizenship, and global citizenship.¹⁶ Citizenship is proving to be a capacious concept, allowing us to think about forms of belonging and their relationship to states in a variety of ways and to address the old and new problems of people living both within and beyond territorial boundaries and of states that both protect and abuse their citizens.

There is a danger from this proliferation of adjectives: the noun may become too diffuse to be useful.¹⁷ It is also important to recognize that, in any historical situation, people do not necessarily act in accordance with clearly defined categories. Those categories are themselves changing as people make claims, as they devise institutional mechanisms for determining who belongs in a polity, what if any rights and obligations their membership will entail, and the relationship between the territorial fixity of political units and the way people move about. We need to balance the need for definitional precision

against the need to analyze the terms in which people understand ambiguous and changing situations.

Some observers see a “European citizenship” that already exists in law—built upon citizenship in a Member State (France, Germany, Italy, etcetera) of the European Union—as a harbinger of a citizenship that is both portable and divisible, so that, for instance, people have rights to social benefits in one country and vote in another. But social and political protections remain fragmented and under threat, and whether European citizenship can capture the political imagination of the people who bear it is uncertain.¹⁸

Citizenship is the right to have rights—or, better, the right to *claim* rights.¹⁹ It is the right to claim rights somewhere, as members of some kind of political unit. Citizenship rights differ from human rights, which—whatever they entail and however they might be enforced—attach in theory to the entire species and the entire earth. While citizenship is not a tightly bounded notion, it is most useful when instead of encompassing any kind of political activity or any notion of belonging it focuses on relationships of individuals and collectivities to formal political institutions.²⁰

T. H. Marshall’s famous theory of citizenship distinguished three levels—civil, political, and social—arranged sequentially, defining citizenship as protection of the person, as participation in politics, and as a claim on at least a minimum level of collective resources. Margaret Somers questions the hierarchy, insisting that the social—the existence of people in relation to each other and to collective resources—is not an outgrowth of civil-political citizenship but a basic part of the human condition. Citizenship recognizes and gives substance to “attachments and inclusion” among people.²¹ She points to a tension that is fundamental to debates over citizenship: between citizenship as a recognition of the rights-bearing person, engag-

ing in markets and political arenas as an individual protected from an overbearing state, and citizenship as a social construct, based on relationships in which the social body as a whole is protective of material welfare and a sense of commonality.

People can be attached to different political communities at the same time. Today, one of those attachments—actual or desired—is almost always citizenship of a state. What is less clear in the past and present is the relationship of citizenship in a state to the other forms of belonging that are important to people's existence.²² In some places, the state might be remote—although rarely absent—and other forms of community more salient.

Some scholars of Africa think the concept of citizenship effectively describes the sense of belonging and modes of political participation in the institutions and cultural practices of particular ethnic groups to which people may feel more attachment than they do to an internationally recognized state. Scholars of migration think that the combination of ties to countries of emigration, rights acquired in countries of immigration, and networks established within the migratory pattern constitute, for at least a portion of the people in motion, a kind of “flexible citizenship.”²³ Many migrants, however, lack the right papers to move about. Trying to enter a country other than their own, they face barriers that are formally based on their nationality but also reflect distinctions of race or religion. They are experiencing inflexible citizenship.²⁴

Looking at the case of Eritreans who have left their impoverished and conflict-ridden African homeland for Europe or North America, Victoria Bernal shows how closely connected, via the internet and associations, these migrants remain to Eritrea while acquiring citizenship elsewhere: “Eritreans in diaspora,” she writes, “are to some degree quasi-citizens in their new homes where they often remain outsiders even if legal

citizens, and quasi-citizens of Eritrea where they do not live and whose passport they do not hold, yet where they are recognized as nationals and where they see themselves and are seen as stakeholders.”²⁵

These notions of flexible, portable, or divisible citizenship address the ambiguities of people’s locatedness and sense of belonging in contemporary society. By looking beyond a rigid relationship of individual to state, these concepts constitute a response to postcolonial or postmodern critiques of the citizenship concept itself. Such critiques suggest that conventional notions of citizenship force a rich variety of political associations and ideas into the bounds of state structures, especially those associated with European dominance or European claims that its ways represent universal political principles.²⁶ Indeed, some defenders of “western” ways of politics insist that conformity to European norms is the only acceptable future for once-colonized people, or they assert that immigrants coming to Europe with their own norms and values are incapable of acting as citizens. Neither the critique nor the defense of a conception of citizenship centered on a simplified view of European political theories gets at the dynamics of citizenship in the context of the rise and decline of empires and of long-distance migration.

As soon as people in the Americas, Africa, and Asia claimed citizenship for themselves, the concept took on different meanings. People of diverse origins across large spaces could claim recognition as “imperial citizens” with all the attendant rights; they could seek recognition as a “nation” spread over different continents; they could seek to constitute new states; they could advocate forms of citizenship that were inclusive, exclusive, or something in between. The following chapters will discuss debates over such possibilities, including the attempt in 1812 to write a constitution setting out the rights of citizens and

embracing both Iberian Spain and Spanish America and the insistence of South Asian intellectuals in the nineteenth century that they were citizens of the British Empire (both discussed in chapter 2), as well as the claims of Africans to French citizenship in the 1940s and 1950s (chapter 3).

Citizenship does not and cannot preclude other forms of association and mobilization. People live with “multiple, overlapping, and proliferating forms of connectedness and dependency.”²⁷ We should take into account the range of possibilities for asserting political belonging, but as long as states are a political reality—and claims of their outdatedness are themselves outdated—the question is how other forms of affinity articulate with citizenship claims.

Becoming Citizens

Citizenship, as a political concept, offers a dynamic possibility more open than that presented by religion, ethnicity, or kinship, that of *becoming* a citizen. As T. K. Oommen puts it,

We need the concept of citizenship precisely because it is different from nationality and ethnicity. Citizenship provides the non-national ethnic and minority populations in a multi-national state with a sense of belonging and security. It is a partial compensation for their remaining within the state in spite of their different identity from the mainstream, dominant nation or nationalities.

What Oommen refers to, somewhat awkwardly, as “citizenization” implies both that individuals can adapt to the political culture of the society in which they seek to be members and that the political culture can adapt to the diversity of its constituents.²⁸ These processes are often the objects of struggle. Citizenship certainly excludes, but debate over the criteria

of inclusion is internal to the construct. A major question is whether it is limited to people of a certain religion or other particularistic attribute or focused on people's adherence to a political unit. Some commentators term the former conception of citizenship "ethnic," the latter "civic."²⁹

The high stakes of inclusion are why rules for the acquisition of citizenship are often contested. Most polities want to reproduce their citizenry: they accept that citizenship is transmitted by birth, either by the fact of birth occurring on the state's territory—*jus soli*—or by virtue of descent from a recognized citizen, regardless of whether the individual was born on the territory of the state—*jus sanguinis*—or more typically by some combination of the two.³⁰ Critics worry that *jus soli* awards citizenship to people with no more than an accidental attachment to the social and cultural arrangements of the country. Others worry that *jus sanguinis* makes it difficult to integrate long-resident migrants and that it reifies an ethnonational community—a community of blood—defined against outsiders.³¹ Whether born or naturalized, citizens can be the object of efforts at education and acculturation—to teach them the proper way to be the citizen of a particular country.³²

More difficult still is the question of how high the barrier to foreigners entering the polity should be, given labor needs, humanitarian concerns, and desires to maintain a coherent political community. Naturalization rules might require a long period (5–10 years) of legal residence before granting citizenship. Administrators are likely to be interested in income, police records, language acquisition, degree of cultural assimilation, and expressions of loyalty. Not all members of the host society will be enthusiastic about granting citizenship. The newcomers' cultural patterns might seem alien; they might bring in dangerous ideas or practices; they take jobs; they strain

welfare and educational facilities. Controversies abound—in Africa as well as Europe and North America—over setting immigrants on a road to citizenship, keeping them in a marginal status so they can be sent away when no longer useful, or preventing them from entering in the first place. Some of the more thoughtful participants in discussions of these issues stress the importance of avoiding dichotomous thinking: too sharp a distinction between the rights of the citizen and of the resident foreigner, too *laissez-faire* or too restrictive an approach to mobility, too strong or too weak requirements for cultural assimilation.³³

The discourse of elites and ordinary people is often laden with images of what the proper citizen looks like, what his or her religious beliefs should be, how he or she should behave. The controversies in France over the vestimentary practices of Muslim women—at school or on the beach—reveal a brittleness in the self-representations of a society that proclaims with insistence its attachment to the equality of all citizens of the republic but has trouble with people who want to be citizens in different ways. Insistence on homogeneity and acceptance of difference are both *arguments*; neither is an essence of what citizenship inherently is.³⁴

The point is not to try—a hopeless task—to resolve such tensions in one direction or another, but to work with them and to think through the possibilities and constraints in lives that are spatially located but not contained. A state that aspires to an inclusive and democratic future needs to take account of its own diversity and what immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers bring to it without abandoning all notions of collective control over the process of admitting and integrating new citizens. It has to balance commonality and social complexity.³⁵ That is the opposite of what many states today are doing.

Recognizing Difference

For theorists like Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor the cultural dimensions of citizenship need to be given explicit recognition in law and political practice. They start off from the premise that most states, whatever their fictions of commonality, are in fact heterogeneous. Kymlicka and Taylor move beyond the material and judicial implications of citizenship to assert that humans have historically defined themselves by their relationships with each other, creating self-identifying collectivities. Those collectivities are now nested within nation-states. The liberal notion of individual rights, the argument goes, is inadequate to protect collectivities, for without the means to defend language and cultural practices of the collectivity, there will no longer be a common culture in which an individual can participate if he or she so desires.³⁶ What Kymlicka considers “national cultures” within a polity—he is less sympathetic to immigrant cultures—should have a measure of political autonomy, the right to teach and use their own language, and other rights as a collectivity. The key question is recognition: the state itself should acknowledge the importance of different forms of collective identification among its citizens.³⁷

Characteristic liberal arguments have been deployed against such proposals. The most basic is that the very argument that Kymlicka and Taylor make—that the nation-state is a constructed entity that doesn’t fully embrace the forms of identification of people within it—applies to groups *within* the state as well. The idea of a homogeneous ethnic group is as much a fiction as the idea of the homogeneous nation-state.³⁸ Africanist scholars have long stressed that ethnic groups are imagined communities, forged not by the timeless experience of living together, but by the back-and-forth movement of people

in the distant or recent past, by forced incorporation into conquering empires or the breakup of such polities, and by the acquisition of clients or (in the past) slaves.³⁹ Kymlicka is well aware that ethnic groups can be patriarchal and oppressive, and he doesn't want to deny individuals an exit option, but he is still willing to give groups the power to police their borders and fix in time their cultural contents. In asserting "that national minorities have societal cultures, and immigrant groups do not,"⁴⁰ he denies the very processes that shape culture in the context of the movement of people.

By making "recognition" the issue, Taylor and Kymlicka say little about the social and economic dimensions of citizenship. States have been instruments for the accumulation of wealth by dominant classes and they have been instruments for the protection of people from the consequences of accumulation. The question of who has voice in deciding how a state will act and who is entitled to assistance or protection shapes the significance of citizenship. Here the boundary question is crucial, for capital, commodities, and people move unevenly, seeking markets, investment opportunities, jobs, land, and protection beyond borders.

Group rights are not simply a possibility imagined by political theorists; they have existed and exist in practice. The Ottoman Empire, tsarist Russia, and the USSR allocated different sets of rights to ethnic, religious, or class categories, and "group-differentiated citizenship" has been a part of the Indian political regime, before and after independence. "Scheduled tribes" and "scheduled castes" are recognized by the Indian state as bounded collectivities, with a right to protect their language and culture, and, in the case of those defined as "backward," with special quotas in job allocations and other specific social benefits (see chapter 3).

On the other end of the spectrum lies the Jacobin version of citizenship, allegedly rooted in the French Revolution's abolition of the division of society into estates (clergy, nobility, third estate), now interpreted to mean that the state cannot recognize social distinctions among citizens.⁴¹ Official statistical agencies in France are not even allowed to collect census data on race or ethnicity, for fear that acknowledging such categories would create their own reality. This conceit doesn't make it easier to study the important place of distinction-making in the history of post-revolutionary France.

Both group-differentiated citizenship and Jacobin citizenship are problematic notions, each in its own way. That the Indian state sees recognition of social entities within it as a means of negotiating modes of participation in a differentiated polity has arguably contributed to its endurance as a democratic polity, but it also encourages groups to look inward, to emphasize their separation from others, to practice the politics of ethnic patronage.⁴² In February 2016, members of the Jat—considered a relatively “high caste” group—engaged in violent protest, sabotaging part of the water supply to Delhi, to object to job quotas that favored other castes. Leaders even demanded to be reclassified as a “backward caste” to obtain, in effect, affirmative action as a collectivity.⁴³ In France, what elites think of as “universalism” appears to much of its Muslim minority as a rigid Frenchness that marks them as alien, dangerous, and excludable. If at first glance a radical defense of egalitarianism and community, the singularity of Jacobin citizenship leaves a significant part of the nation feeling less than equal and less than included.⁴⁴ We are left with the question of whether we can think about diversity and inclusion in ways that avoid essentializing the “group” or reifying the “nation.”

Although states have long been concerned with policing their borders and communities have worried about burdens

that might be placed on them, the stakes rose with the slow extension of welfare states in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Europe.⁴⁵ Should those benefits go to citizens? To residents? To workers, whatever their origin? The claim to exclusive—and provable—rights to the benefits provided by a given state gave rise to claims and counterclaims.

The locatedness of citizenship confronted and confronts the apparently “global” dimensions of commerce and finance. That contemporary states are immobile and workers uproot themselves only with difficulty, while capital, technology, and commercial networks are highly mobile, puts pressure on the social benefits of citizenship. Transnational corporations profit as well from international legal mechanisms to enforce “free trade” much stronger than those that sustain social rights, even when such rights have a measure of international recognition under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. In turn, threats to what people perceive as their social rights as citizens may give rise to movements to defend a putative national identity, thereby sharpening lines of exclusion.⁴⁶ Targeting “immigrants” as the cause of insecurity about jobs and collective identification is a response to today’s disjuncture between the mobility of capital and the territorial provision of social rights, but it is not an answer to the underlying problem.

Citizenship is a good concept with which to think about such issues. Because it weaves together citizens’ rights and obligations in relation to a political unit, citizenship allows the individual to make claims within the same rhetorical structure as the state asserts its authority.⁴⁷ It enables a strong rhetoric of equivalence: the community of citizens should not allow anyone to be a “second-class citizen.”⁴⁸ For this reason, the stakes are high in deciding who can claim the status of citizen.

Citizenship beyond Borders

People organize within the citizenship construct to claim first-class citizenship, or they want to attach their citizenship to a different political entity, whether by secession or aggression, or they put little value on citizenship in any form and attach themselves to another sort of community—religious, ethnic, or otherwise. People cross frontiers, developing new attachments without necessarily giving up old ones. They might want the warmth or comfort of a natal community or they might seek to escape from patriarchal authority.⁴⁹ States can be destructive and oppressive as well as solidaristic, giving rise to collective action to overturn the regime and individual mobility to escape it—an extreme version of which we are witnessing now in flight from Syria or Afghanistan to the European Union.

Some argue that mobility is greater in today's world than in the past and the forms of affinity that are available are more diverse. Yet the location of citizenship has long been open to contestation and complicated by forms of belonging that cut across the membership of all sorts of political entities. People migrate to flee oppression or improve their lives, but they also make claims, individually and collectively, on states for protection and, in recent times, for social benefits, education, and support for cultural expression. At the same time, states may support economic and military initiatives across borders, but they depend on citizens for revenue and labor. They maintain surveillance over citizens and at times impose social norms on them. In both senses, the citizenship construct, in past and present, supplies a measure of fixity to people whose social location is uncertain and whose physical location is variable.

In medieval Europe, a person might be the citizen of a city, but he or she was also subject of a king and hence belonged to a political unit that was to varying extents territorial and

patrimonial—combining control of territory with relations based on the personal dependence of followers on the leader. The African living in a kingdom might be a member of a kinship group, under the leadership of lineage elders, but was also subject of a king, by whom he or she expected to be treated according to certain norms and to whom he owed certain obligations. In 1948, the Canadian citizen acquired citizenship of “the United Kingdom and Colonies”; in 1993 the French citizen automatically became a citizen of the European Union. Now many people possess dual citizenship. Willem Maas can thus conclude that “unitary citizenship is the historical exception; more common are varieties of multilevel citizenship.”⁵⁰

Different relationships of belonging and space both persist and evolve over time. The first Islamic caliphate of the seventh century tried to define a community of Muslims—the *umma*—that superseded kinship and tribal ties, but as it expanded the caliphate had to recognize the legitimate place of non-Muslims within the polity, a range of social relations that brought converts and clients into the *umma*, and the increasing number of Muslims around the world who did not live under the caliphate’s political control.⁵¹ Later on, the Ottoman Empire put together a political field that was both Islamic and multiconfessional; one could be “Ottoman” in different and changing ways, and at the same time be Palestinian or Jewish or Egyptian. By the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was facing the question of whether its complex notions of belonging could sustain the integrity of the empire or whether a more singular notion of an “Ottoman citizenship” would help meet the challenges of the new era.⁵² More recently still, certain movements among Muslims reasserted aspirations for a de-territorialized Muslim polity, looking back to the early caliphates and to the *umma*, denying the relevance of citizenship altogether.

Political movements take place not only within boundaries of social and cultural identification, but across them, highlighting the ambiguous and changeable relationship of community, state, and space. When political activists in Great Britain and the United States attacked the slave trade and slavery in the early nineteenth century, they made an issue of the fate of people from an alien continent—Africa—living on plantations in places that most citizens of those countries had never seen. Was the status of the slave on a sugar plantation in Jamaica or a cotton plantation in Alabama a concern because he or she “belonged” in the British Empire or an American state, or because of the slave’s humanity? Did subsequent critiques of the inhumane treatment of colonial subjects in one’s own empire refer to an implicit imperial citizenship or to an implicit world citizenship—an assertion that everyone should have the right to have rights? Did the worldwide revulsion against the Nazi genocide, the growing consensus in the 1950s that imperial powers should not rule over different peoples, or the growing importance among international organizations from the 1970s of “human rights” push politics beyond the realm of citizenship or suggest that there was another, all-inclusive, level at which the rights generally associated with citizenship deserved protection? Could international tribunals or even the capacity of organizations to publicly shame violators of rights provide instances, more or less effectual, for defending those rights?

When people assert their rights as citizens of a state they regard as theirs, they implicitly acknowledge that other people in other places will be making similar claims, and they raise the possibility that the specific rights they claim should have significance beyond their own political unit. It is nonetheless a big a leap from such an observation to positing the existence of a “global citizenship”; neither a consensus on what such a

citizenship should entail nor effective institutions to enforce such a set of norms exist. But citizenship talk is not easily containerized, and the relationship between rights located in a state and universal rights is a dynamic one.⁵³

Some scholars consider multilevel or flexible citizenship to be “post-national,” but as we have seen these constructs are not, in the chronological sense, particularly “post.”⁵⁴ Claims to rights have long been made in the context of empire or in the name of an all-inclusive humanity. And some intellectuals and activists worry, with good reason, that the prevalence in recent decades of human rights discourse—positing an abstract human and a set of universal rights—reflects not so much a heightened sensibility toward common humanity as the decreasing ability of citizens to undertake political action within state institutions and of class-based organizations, notably trade unions, to defend social entitlements. The individual whose “human” rights are being protected resembles the individual who is a seemingly autonomous actor in the market and the voting booth.⁵⁵ This tension between the abstraction of rights and their concrete manifestation has long been fundamental to the politics of citizenship.⁵⁶

To think about citizenship implies that there is also a domain of noncitizenship. Within territorial conceptions today, the distinction between citizens and foreigners is apparently straightforward. In empires, from the reign of Caracalla to the British Commonwealth, not everyone was incorporated on the same terms. Slaves and women—together constituting the large majority of the population—were left out of post-212 Roman citizenship. Imperial regimes have at times insisted that groups within the empire possessed distinct sets of rights (the Russian model) or else distinguished between inhabitants who were “citizens” with all the attendant rights and duties and those who were “subjects,” under the empire’s jurisdiction but

without the status or the rights of the citizen (the nineteenth-century French model).⁵⁷

The distinction between citizen and subject in the French and other empires was not a given characteristic of empire, but was contested over many years. Whether the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 applied to a culturally, territorially, and politically defined French nation in Europe or to a French empire that included Caribbean islands populated by white planters, mixed-race property owners, and slaves of African origin quickly became the object of debate and violent struggle (chapter 2). The very insistence in revolutionary discourse that no status markings could separate French citizens from each other raised the stakes in the conflict. In seeing how the apparent universality of rights was in practice constricted, some scholars refer to an “anthropological” limitation on citizenship—a certain cultural and social minimum that had to be met to be a citizen.⁵⁸

Hence the argument that certain people could be considered “French” but not citizens, that slaves could be deprived of rights and women could have some rights but not the right to vote, since slaves were dependent on masters and women on husbands or fathers. It was only in 1944 that French women received the right to vote and only in 1946 that the distinction between subject and citizen in overseas France was abolished.

We should avoid the temptation to let a simplified and normative version of the citizenship discourse of France in 1789 stand in for the essence of what citizenship is. Even within western Europe, the notion of citizenship is not uniform. It is less salient in Britain than in France, although the notion of a “freeborn Englishman” carried something of the same valence for subjects of the king or queen as did citizenship for post-1789 France. Rogers Brubaker’s pioneering comparative study built on the French and German cases to argue that the laws

and politics of citizenship follow different trajectories. While later scholarship suggests that the French-German distinction was not as clear or as stable as he argued, the point remains that citizenship, in both political and legal terms, is a varied and contested phenomenon.⁵⁹

Thickening and Thinning Citizenship

Some specialists who have given much thought to the worldwide significance of citizenship distinguish—and it is obvious which side they’re on—between a “thick” and a “thin” citizenship.⁶⁰ “Thin” posits a one-to-one relationship of citizen to state that guarantees a fixed set of rights and gives the citizen freedom to participate in his or her individual quality in electoral politics and market relations; “thick” points to the claims of citizens to the material and cultural conditions that sustain their lives. These concepts are not static: some people organize to thicken citizenship, others to thin it out.⁶¹ When pensions are reduced or education made more expensive in the name of austerity, social citizenship becomes a contingent right. When the right to vote is denied as it is in some American states to felons who have already served their sentences or when unemployment benefits are denied because of failure to meet stringent rules, the substance of citizenship becomes conditional, not a quality inherent in the person. Even the most generous welfare states of Europe are accused of treating people not as citizens—as part of a solidaristic political entity—but as “consumers” or “users” of social services, or as “taxpayers” or “producers.”⁶²

One option we do not realistically have is to ignore the citizenship question altogether. Whether we like it or not, states remain key actors in world politics and they police their borders, provide benefits to at least some of their citizens, and keep

others out. We can—and should—talk about citizenship as potentially flexible, divisible, portable, and multilevel rather than as characteristic of a closed political space, but in many states, rich and poor, there are strong pressures coming from part of their citizenry itself to close off that space.⁶³ We need not be stuck in a dichotomy between a unitary vision of the citizenry of a state and a notion that citizens are divided into distinct self-identifying groups. We can, however, retain an important role that citizenship has played historically—as an “aspiration,” an ideal of acting collectively for the common good—even if the basis of the commonality is uncertain.⁶⁴

How much can governments and communities impose their vision of how a person is to act if he or she is to enjoy the full benefits of citizenship? To what extent does the possibility of people *becoming* citizens clash with visions of citizenship as a community of the familiar and the like-minded? Will the multiple affinities that people bring to their relationship with a state or develop over the course of their lifetime enrich or diminish their identification with their fellow citizens? What is the connection between citizens’ attachment to their state and the state’s ability to meet their expectations—from protection to social benefits? How much inequality is compatible with the notions of belonging inherent in the concept of citizenship? These are among the questions that we, as scholars and as citizens, confront as we face the future—and the past.