

# Citizens, the State and European Integration : Some Reflections on the British Situation

Eleonore Kofman

Volume 35, Number 95, 1991

Partenariat et territoire

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/022185ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/022185ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (print)

1708-8968 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this note

Kofman, E. (1991). Citizens, the State and European Integration : Some Reflections on the British Situation. *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 35(95), 405–413. <https://doi.org/10.7202/022185ar>

---

# Citizens, the State and European Integration: Some Reflections on the British Situation

**Eleonore Kofman**

School of Geography and Planning,  
Middlesex Polytechnic,  
Enfield, Great Britain, EN3 4SF

In the past few years, the theme of citizenship has acquired a prominent place in political and academic discourses and programmes in Britain (Taylor, 1989). For example, Charter 88, a group encompassing a diversity of political positions ranging from the centre to the left, was formed in late 1988 to press for a new constitutional settlement which would guarantee a number of basic rights anchored in the idea of universal citizenship. Hall and Held (1989) trace the return of citizenship to the political agenda, firstly to the experience of and reaction to Thatcherism, its dismantling of the welfare state, and growing centralisation of power and erosion of local democracy and civil liberties, and secondly, to the various internal and international processes which have led to the undermining of the sovereignty of the nation-state (nationalist movements, European integration, globalisation).

Citizenship is in fact a concept which seeks to confront the success enjoyed by the Thatcherite celebration of the individual without espousing the full play of the market. For Hall and Held (1989), the core of citizenship lies in the relationship between liberty and equality and entails a struggle over the meaning and scope of membership of the community in which one lives. The traditional Left has all too often disparaged the question of rights as bourgeois and criticised the disparity between formal (*de jure*) and substantive (*de facto*) rights. However, with the attack on welfare spending and structural reorganisations in world capitalism, critical theorists have returned to the questions of redistributive justice, individual rights and equality as the basis for social reconstruction and social reform (Turner, 1990, p. 190). For Susan Smith (1989) citizenship provides the pivot of a political project which would come to terms with the conditions of the new times of post-fordism and postmodernism and the foundation for a reconstructed human geography. This social democratic alternative would challenge the New Right with its emphasis on individualism and the market, on the one hand, and the intellectual shortcomings of the orthodox Left's reliance on conflict theories and statism.

In this article, I examine more closely some of the claims made for citizenship as a theoretical concept in the reconstruction of the social sciences and as a political project for the changing world we live in. It should be stated that, given the burgeoning literature on this subject, I cannot hope in this brief review to

---

cover the many attempts to expand and transcend the traditional idea and practice of citizenship. In the first section, I shall briefly outline the different sources of thinking concerning citizenship. A number of critiques have raised questions about the use of liberal traditions as the basis of contemporary citizenship. In the second section, I explore the different scales on which rights and obligations are determined and entitlements are disputed, negotiated and claimed. In particular, we need to pin down the changing relationship between locality, the nation-state and European/global scales. It is generally acknowledged that the modern development of citizenship is associated with the emergence of the nation-state, which is currently being reshaped by economic and political globalisation. Yet the difficulty of conceptualising and specifying what citizenship would entail on a global scale has meant that we have generally not gone farther than noting the effects of the new world order on the nation-state. On the other hand, the desire to retain a degree of control over our lives in the face of global processes has tended to produce a retreat to localities and to communities.

## CONCEPTS AND MODELS OF CITIZENSHIP

A number of different perspectives have fed into the recent interest in citizenship. The first and dominant approach, directly inspired by the writings of Marshall (1964), has focussed on the relationship between citizenship, the development of the welfare state, democracy and capitalism (Giddens, 1985; Held, 1989; King and Waldron, 1988; Turner, 1986). Marshall (1964) defined citizenship as full membership of a community where membership entails participation by individuals in the determination of the conditions of their own association in that community. In relation to rights, he distinguished three types of citizenship which developed historically with the extension of democracy and implementation of the welfare state. In relation to Britain, the first and earliest type consisted of civil rights, that is, rights necessary for individual freedom (freedom of speech, thought and faith, right to own property, right to justice and ability to conclude contracts). Essentially these were the rights that signalled the development of capitalism. These rights were widely applicable by the 19th century as far as males were concerned. Political rights or the right to participate in the exercise of power as a member of a representative body or as an elector were, on the other hand, extended during the 19th century, again only to males. Social rights as class abatement were the last to be gained. Those propounding the relationship between citizenship, democracy and the social rights of the welfare state saw these latter rights as a means of reducing the exclusion of those too poor to participate or what Hegel called the social exiles (Pateman, 1989, p. 182). Part of the attractiveness of this notion of citizenship is that it seems to provide a benchmark from which we can fight against the attrition of rights. It should be said of course that, whilst writing in an optimistic vein, Marshall did not believe that once struggled for and achieved, rights were enshrined in stone. But as Turner (1986, p. 88) has noted, the post-Marshall debate has not been extended beyond class divisions to encompass other divisions and concerns such as feminism, children or ecology. Recent reformulations within this framework have criticised the ethnocentric and narrow

---

focus by Marshall on Britain and advocated a comparative perspective which takes into account global and geopolitical developments (Mann, 1987; Turner, 1990).

A slightly different extension of the Marshallian perspective is that of citizenship in localities, a theme taken up by a number of geographers and sociologists following research programme on localities and interest in the potential of local initiatives (Cooke, 1989; Harloe, Pickvance and Urry, 1990). Localities are not just the product of a division of labour or cultural attachment to territory; they are being shaped by processes of mobilisation through the reorganisation of civil society (Smith, 1989a, pp. 151-152). In this schema, the differentiated bases of power and plural identities are best expressed through decentralised collectivities or localities in which entitlements can be claimed. There is, however, nothing inevitable about the exercise of such rights since they have to be struggled for and negotiated. These authors are searching for new spaces of citizen participation that will serve as locations for the "democratisation of everyday life" (Melucci, 1988). Much of this embryonic thinking remains in a normative register as opposed to the material circumstances experienced by individuals, households or groups. Harrison (1991, pp. 211-212) comments that in Britain, the experience of citizenship in terms of daily life is likely to be very varied whether in relation to work, consumption or law and order. How this and by what means it differs from one locality and community to another will obviously be of considerable relevance. I shall return in the second section to the problems posed by an emphasis on the normative and universalistic conception of citizenship in relation to the exercise and experience of citizenship in localities.

The next two approaches directly confront differential incorporation into citizenship, primarily in terms of social divisions rather than geographical variations. The third, or feminist, strand pushes its critique beyond the existence of differential incorporation of women and seeks to challenge the very constitution of citizenship, not just in its earliest stage when women were still excluded, but in its later extensions to social rights which was still mainly premised on women's dependence on men (Marston, 1990; Pateman, 1989). Women's initial exclusion from citizenship in newly created republican systems in the 18th century stemmed from a division into public and private spheres, each of which was associated with gendered qualities and capacities. The fraternal contract (Pateman, 1988) enshrined men's presence in public and their dependence on women to preserve the morality of the private. Only men could apply reason in a disinterested fashion, form associations in the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) and protect the nation in times of war. Even today, it is men who defend their country in the frontline; the military remains the bastion of male values and bonding (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989; Enloe, 1988). Later on, with the extension of political and social rights as from the 19th century, the model of citizenship continued to be premised on a male model of employment and possession of one's body or person (Pateman, 1989). The key demand as the right to work or be employed such that the welfare state remains structured in ways which reflects benefits pertaining to the public person by virtue of their participation in the capitalist market and those who are dependants of the latter. This was epitomised by the Beveridge proposals (1942) underpinning the post-war consensus around welfarism which incorporated women as male

dependants. Women's standing in the world of work is still precarious (part-time labour), as is their status as citizens. They form a disproportionate percentage of the poor and hence social exiles, such that in 1980 women comprised 64 % of the labour force in the six lowest paid occupations in Britain (Pateman, 1989).

The essence of the separate individual, a central tenet of the liberal versions of citizenship, is defined in terms of his (sic) relations to the rule of law, whose equality stems from eliminating from this relationship all indications of social status, socio-economic position, race, gender, etc. Showstack Sassoon (1991) maintains that this conceptual universality also ignores the different needs of citizens which vary in a number of ways according to age, life cycle, sexuality, to name but a few.

The last, or anti-racist, approach has a number of affinities with the feminist critique in that it draws attention to the centrality of inclusionary and exclusionary practices as an integral part of the development of welfarism and the historical construction of the nation-state (Cohen, 1985; Miles and Rathzel, 1991; Taylor 1990) as well as differential access to welfare (Gordon, 1989; Harrison, 1991; Smith, 1989b). Turner (1990, p. 196) notes that the development of citizenship at the state level has often proceeded with the erosion of rights and subordination of cultural and national minorities, for example, those in the Celtic fringe in Britain. These latter groups are often as concerned with struggling for the right to be different as claims upon universal rights. Cohen also traces the initial development of social rights, such as pensions and social insurance, and its close relationship to the exclusion of those deemed aliens. The coupling of welfare rights and exclusion instituted by the Liberal Government prior to the First World War persisted into the post-World War II period and the immigration of Commonwealth subjects. Given the implementation of more restrictive legislation in Britain regarding nationality and citizenship (1981) and immigration (1988) and harmonisation of conditions of entry into European Community states (Bunyan, 1991), this is a dimension of citizenship rights that is now being highlighted.

Thus, the discussion of the constitution of citizenship involves a series of debates about the construction of the nation-state, the organisation of civil society at different scales including the public/private dichotomy, and the new forms of economic and social relations between the individual, community and the state. The Conservative government in its three terms of office has attempted to alter the relationship between the state, social groups, individuals and the market. Whilst there have been debates about whether the welfare state has actually been rolled back and the New Right's hegemonic project thoroughly instilled and accepted (Hall and Jacques, 1983; Jessop *et al.*, 1988), it is undeniable that new relationships have been introduced. Even though a full-blooded market system has not been pushed through, principles of competition and the internal markets have substantially modified the operation of many sectors of the welfare state. Is it simply no longer possible to equate extension of welfare with the state, a criticism levelled by Harrison at Turner. Indeed, the line dividing the market and the state has increasingly been breached through the promotion of internal and state regulated markets as in the National Health Service Review (1988), the Education

---

Act (1988) and the Housing Act (1988). Furthermore, and of direct relevance to advocates of localities as the privileged site of the exercise of citizenship, these changes have had substantial implications for the local state (Goodwin and Duncan, 1989), the level at which many welfare functions are delivered and social rights claimed. The local state has seen its functions fragmented and reduced and its financial support severely restricted; it is no longer supposed to act as provider but as an enabler and regulator, or "shadow state" (Wolch, 1989). In the New Right vision, the active citizen will be involved with marginalised groups (elderly, disabled, mentally ill, disadvantaged) in a voluntary and/or informal capacity, or as a charter for consumers in claims against the state for the provision of public services (Pirie, 1991).

We have seen that the emphasis within the dominant conceptualisation of citizenship has been the creation of a benchmark from which we can monitor the shortcomings in the provision of social rights and exercise of political rights to particular groups. A number of issues have been raised, however, about this relatively fixed conception of citizenship. The first fundamental critique argues not so much that there exists a wide disparity between formal and substantive rights but that the very model of entitlements is itself spuriously universal. This is essentially the feminist and anti-racist positions. This critique may be coupled with the argument that the dominant conceptualisation of citizenship does not recognise the underlying structural power relations embedded in state and market practices (Taylor, 1989, p. 20).

The second criticism attacks the fixity of rights implicit in an approach associated with a constitution or treaty such that the set of rights won at a particular historical moment represents the outcome of the balance of economic, social and political forces (Marston, 1990). It may be more difficult to challenge these rights at a later date. A highly pertinent example can be given in relation to the recent attempt to push European Community states into passing anti-racist legislation since this did not figure in the Treaty of Rome (1958) and has subsequently not been included in the Social Charter (1989) which is limited to workers' rights.

A third substantial point concerns the notion of membership of the community which sets out the conditions that link rights and obligations. Community is frequently assumed to be a positive attribute, shielding us from the state and opening up autonomous spaces of participation. Yet, equally, it can be constraining in its obligations (Taylor, 1989) and intolerant towards those deemed not to belong. To some extent, the failure to penetrate the ideologically loaded concept of community arises from assumptions about the workings of community; it is both enabling and constraining, and simultaneously an inclusionary force for some and exclusionary for others on grounds of religion, ethnicity, sexuality, for example. Furthermore, there exists the assumption that within the community, whether local or national, obligations and entitlements somehow balance out. In reality the obligations and entitlements do not usually accrue to the same group of persons, as is demonstrated quite clearly in relation to community care. Women face the obligations of care but do not gain compensatory rights. Indeed, it could be

---

said that they are as a consequence prevented from participating as citizens through the loss of economic and social resources and confinement to the domestic sphere.

## **NATION-STATES, EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, LOCALITIES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Now while the state continues to determine the formal framework of citizenship rights, especially the right to enter a territory and qualify for citizenship, it is the community that is more likely to confer the conditions which will enable full belonging and participation to occur. Institutions, such as churches, schools and family that create, maintain and reinforce a sense of belonging to a community have a degree of independence from the state and are located in civil society. Of course, the state through legislation and its policies plays a major part in constructing the ideologies which define the Us and the Other. The British state has constantly attempted to narrow and widen the category of British citizens (Klug, 1989; Miles and Satzewich, 1990) as it endeavours to reproduce a homogeneous racialised Us. In Britain, for example, the 1981 Nationality Bill redefined who had the right of abode and citizenship. It distinguished between the patrials, generally indigenous British who had settled in the white colonies and who had the right to claim citizenship, and those from the New Commonwealth, mainly without previous connections, who did not have such citizenship claims. Fixing external boundaries is a domain where the state is able to exercise more control than defining internal ones, as is evident with the waxing and waning of nationalist movements in Britain. In fact, whenever the question of who belongs to a national community is raised, we see the interplay of the state and civil society, as for example with the Salman Rushdie affair and the Gulf War which highlighted the positioning of Islamic communities in Britain.

At the same time, a gap has widened between membership of national political communities and the development of international law and supra-national political organizations (Held, 1989). Increasingly, rights and duties will be regulated in the proposed neo-liberal Europe (Graul and Teague, 1989) by the European Community in conjunction with states (Allen and Macey, 1990; Bunyan, 1991). Whilst the European Parliament has been working on a Charter for Immigrants and guidelines to counteract xenophobia and racism, informal groups of ministers and officials have come together to devise stricter measures of surveillance and entry into the European Community, for example, the Trevi Group of Ministers (1976) with a remit to combat terrorism, and the Schengen Accord, first signed in 1985 between Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, to harmonise policy on visas and coordinate crime prevention and search operations. The European Commission has acknowledged that this will likely serve as a future model of control in the post 1992 Single Market Europe. Similarly, the Social Charter will probably mitigate some of the problems faced by the social exiles. So increasingly the state and supra-state will jointly determine the enjoyment of rights and the capacity to participate as members of a community for citizens of the European Community. Of course, the institutional arrangements are

---

not sufficient to understand what has been happening to political and social rights since, as Turner (1986, p. 48) points out, the particularly rapid erosion of these rights in the 1980s in Britain is linked necessarily to large-scale global changes in the economy. We can only understand fluctuations in the rights and entitlements of citizenship in the context of a world of nation-states and the history of Western Europe in the world core (Taylor, 1989).

At the other end of the geographical spectrum, certain writers (Cooke, 1989; Smith, 1989a) see the locality as the base for a large measure of individual and social mobilisation to activate, extend or defend these rights, not simply in the political sphere but more generally in the areas of cultural, economic and social life. Whilst acknowledging the opportunities the locality offers for exercising rights and meeting obligations, we should not forget that the framework is increasingly set by the state which is more than ever curtailing local democracy (Goodwin and Duncan, 1989). Flexible accumulation in Britain has not made community control more feasible; it is as likely to redistribute the burden of welfare within the community more unevenly than ever. It is of course the state which decides whether non-citizens shall enjoy a basic political right of voting in local elections (only Denmark and Netherlands currently allow this for legal immigrants). Where this right exists, the actual rate of participation in voting varies, thus revealing the different levels of encouragement by communities and the local state and the economic and social resources of the immigrant groups.

There exist considerable geographical differences in the provision of welfare and its forms (state, voluntary and private) in Britain. We do not know how this intersects with differential access to welfare of those groups who, it has been argued, are differentially incorporated in their rights and exercise of citizenship. Some of the parameters of variations in provision and access are political control of local councils (Labour, Liberal Democrats, Conservative and n<sup>o</sup> overall majority for a party), rural/urban, strength of voluntary organisations and community groups. Increased decentralisation may, however, be used as a means to reduce welfare and deny access to it for marginal groups, so as to reduce the burden for the wealthiest groups in the locality. There is also ample evidence from the recent British history of urban policy and race that localities have, on the one hand, been catalysts for more restrictive attribution and application of citizenship nationally as in their contribution to a racialisation of politics in the 1960s, and, on the other hand, in the forefront of developing structures which would enable a wider participation of marginal groups and less discriminatory access to welfare services, for example the Greater London Council in the 1980s (Solomos, 1989, ch. 5). Certainly the interaction between local and national initiatives is complex and fluctuating.

I want to conclude this section by briefly examining the unique significance of locality in normative theory as the locus for exercising, extending and restructuring the rights of citizenship (Smith, 1989a, p. 154). Localities within a decentralised structure of state administration appear to provide ideal conditions for social participation and political arrangement which might secure a genuine plurality of life (p. 153). However, it is worth noting that those who are the least

empowered in society have tended to organise nationally in order to extend their rights. Furthermore, some of the most significant advances have occurred from appeals and claims made to higher levels, that is, the European Court of Justice or the European Commission. This is not to dismiss the relevance of localities but to insist that they must be placed in the context of the national level and the impact of European and global processes. There is a danger that the locality in the prescriptive content of citizenship theory will be viewed through rose-coloured glasses of utopian decentralisation.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen that radical critiques of traditional concepts of citizenship have argued that the model of citizenship is seriously flawed. Its putative universality, yet differential incorporation and practices of exclusion, are not merely unintended consequences, or the gap between formal and substantive rights; these characteristics are an integral to the dominant conceptualisation of citizenship primarily derived from liberal and social democratic political theory. This does not mean that we should dispense with the notion of citizenship, but rather that it is too limited to serve as the pivot of a new political project and reconstructed social science. Certainly, comparison with other European states, such as Germany, where it has been difficult for immigrants to acquire citizenship, shows that being a citizen is important in giving an individual or group some security from the threat of arbitrary exclusion, minimum rights and access to welfare. Yet in Britain, one of the significant developments has been the erosion of rights for non-citizens through the tightening of immigration and nationality laws and rights to welfare. Is this not the crucial issue we should be addressing?

## REFERENCES CITED

- ALLEN, Sheila and MACEY, Marie (1990) Race and ethnicity in the European context. *British Journal of Sociology*, 41(3): 375-93.
- BUNYAN, Tony (1991) Towards an authoritarian European state. *Race and Class*, 32(3): 19-30.
- COHEN, Steve (1985) Anti-semitism, immigration controls and the welfare state. *Critical Social Policy*, 13: 73-92.
- COOKE, Philip, ed. (1989) *Localities*. London, Unwin Hyman.
- ENLOE, Cynthia (1988) *Does Khaki Become You*. London, Pandora.
- GIDDENS, Anthony (1985) *Nation-State and Violence*. Cambridge, Polity.
- GOODWIN, Mark and DUNCAN, Simon (1989) The crisis of local government: uneven development and the Thatcher administration. In J. Mohan (ed.) *The Political Geography of Contemporary Britain*. London, Macmillan, pp. 69-86.
- GORDON, Paul (1989) Citizenship for Some? Race and government policy, 1979-1989. *Runnymede Commentary*, 2, London, Runnymede Trust.
- GRAHL, John and TEAGUE, Paul (1989) The cost of neo-liberal Europe. *New Left Review*, 174: 33-50.
- HABERMAS, Jorgen (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Polity.
- HALL, Stuart and HELD, David (1989) Left and Rights. *Marxism Today*, June: 16-23.

- HALL, Stuart and JACQUES, Martin, eds (1983) *The Politics of Thatcherism*. London.
- HARLOE, Michael, PICKVANCE, Chris and URRY, John, eds (1990) *Place, Policy and Politics. Do Localities Matter?* London, Unwin Hyman.
- HARRISON, M.L. (1991) Citizenship, Consumption and Rights: a Comment on B.S. Turner's Theory of Citizenship. *Sociology*, 25: 209-213.
- HELD, David (1989) Citizenship and Autonomy. In D. Held and J. Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies Anthony Giddens and his Critics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 162-184.
- JESSOP, Bob et al. (1988) *Thatcherism: a Tale of Two Nations*. Cambridge.
- KING, Desmond and WALDRON, Jereny (1988) Citizenship, Social Citizenship and the Defence of Welfare Provision. *British Journal of Political Science*, 18(4): 415-44.
- KLUG, Francesca (1989) "Oh to be in England": the British Case Study. In N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias (eds) *Woman-Nation-State*. London, Macmillan, pp. 16-35.
- MANN, Michael (1987) Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship. *Sociology*, 21: 339-354.
- MARSHALL, T. (1964) Citizenship and Social Class. In T. Marshall *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, New York, New Doubleday.
- MARSTON, Sally (1990) Who are the "people"? Gender, Citizenship and the Making of American Nation? *Society and Space* D, 8(4): 449-58.
- MELUCCI, Alberto (1988) Social Movements and the Democratisation of Everyday Life. In J. Keane (ed.) *Civil Society and the State*. London, Verso, pp. 245-260.
- MILES, Robert and RATHZEL, Nora (1991) Migration and the Articulation of Racism. In S. Bolaria (ed.) *World Capitalism and the International Migration of Labour*. Toronto, Garmond Press.
- MILES, Robert and SATZEWICH, Victor (1990) Migration, Racism and "Postmodern" Capitalism. *Economy and Society*, 19(3): 334-58.
- PATEMAN, Carole (1988) The Fraternal Social Contract. In John Keane (ed.) *Civil Society and the State*, London, Verso, pp. 101-127.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1989) The Patriarchal Welfare State. In C. Pateman (ed.) *The Disorder of Women*, Cambridge, Polity, pp. 179-209.
- PIRIE, Madsen (1991) *The Citizen's Charter*. London, Adam Smith Institute.
- SHOWSTACK SASSOON, Anne (1991) Equality and difference. In David McLellan and Sean Sayers (eds) *Democracy and Socialism*, London, Macmillan.
- SMITH, Susan J. (1989a) Society, space and citizenship: a human geography for the "new times"? *Trans. IBC*, 14: 144-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1989b) *The Politics of "Race" and Racism*. Oxford, Polity.
- SOLOMOS, John (1989) *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*. London, Macmillan.
- TAYLOR, David (1889) Citizenship and social power. *Critical Social Policy*, 26: 19-31.
- TURNER, Bryan S. (1986) *Citizenship and Capitalism*. London, Allen and Unwin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1990) Outline of a theory of citizenship. *Sociology*, 24: 189-217.
- WOLCH, Jennifer (1989) The shadow state: transformations in the voluntary sector. In J. Wolch and M. Dear (eds) *The Power of Geography. How Territory Shapes Social Life*, London, Unwin Hyman, pp. 197-220.
- YUVAL-DAVIS, Nira and ANTHIAS, Floya, eds (1989) *Woman-Nation-State*. London, Macmillan.

(Acceptation définitive en juin 1991)