Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

Transnationalism and Dimensions of Citizenship

Marianne van Bochove; Katja Rusinovic

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Review Article

Transnationalism and Dimensions of Citizenship

Marianne van Bochove and Katja Rusinovic

Bauböck, R. (ed.) **Migration and Citizenship: Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation**
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006, 129 pp., £17.50 pb. (ISBN 90-5356-888-3)
Bosniak, L. **The Citizen and the Alien: Dilemmas of Contemporary Membership**
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, 222 pp., £11.18 hb. (ISBN 0-691-11622-9)
Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M. and Passy, F. **Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe**
Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 312 pp., £14.72 pb. (ISBN 0-8166-4662-7)

Introduction

In the international migration literature over recent decades there has been increasing interest in transnational movements and contacts. Researchers have shown that immigrants maintain economic, social, political and/or cultural ties with their home country (Basch *et al*. 1994; Levitt 2007; Portes 2000). The concept of transnationalism is not new. International migration tends to go hand-in-hand with intensive economic, social and cultural bonds between migrants and their family members and relatives at home (Engbersen *et al*. 2003). What *is* new, however, is the extent and diversity of these transnational ties, which can be explained by the availability of high-tech means of communication and transportation, such as cheap flights, long-distance telephone, the Internet, e-mail, and satellite television (Portes *et al*. 1999; Zhou 2004).

Marianne van Bochove and Katja Rusinovic are respectively PhD Candidate and Post-Doctoral Fellow in Sociology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Correspondence to: M. van Bochove or Dr K. Rusinovic, Dept of Sociology, Erasmus University, PO Box 1738, NL-3000 DR, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: vanbochove@fsw.eur.nl; rusinovic@fsw.eur.nl

Within citizenship literature there has also been an increasing interest in the impact of transnational movements. The fact that immigrants are no longer exclusively embedded within the borders of the nation-state suggests a need for a reconsideration of citizenship literature, which for the most part developed within the scope of the nation-state. As a result of the presence of illegal, temporary or permanent migrants in society, we can now question whether citizenship theories in which the nation-state plays a central role are still tenable (Holston 1999; Soysal 1994).

In this review article we discuss three books—*Migration and Citizenship*, *The Citizen and the Alien* and *Contested Citizenship*—that, each in their own way, contribute to the discussion of migration and citizenship. The books differ with regard to their approach, pretensions and empirical foundations, yet all examine the consequences of migration for national citizenship. We therefore ask: What does migration imply for (1) the content and meaning of the citizenship concept, (2) the location or scales of citizenship, and (3) the future research agenda?

Citizenship: A Divided Concept

While all three books discussed in this article contribute to a clear conceptualisation of citizenship, Bosniak's *The Citizen and the Alien* does so in the most fruitful way. Bosniak describes citizenship as an 'overworked term' and a 'divided concept', a generic term for all sorts of phenomena. To bring some fresh air into these sometimes disorderly discussions, Bosniak disentangles citizenship into the *what*, *where* and *who* of the concept. Starting with the 'substance' of citizenship (the *what* question), she draws a distinction between four oft-mentioned elements. The first dimension Bosniak describes is *citizenship as legal status*. Residents of a territory who are formally entitled to the status of 'citizen' have certain privileges and obligations. The second dimension of citizenship can thus be defined as a source of rights (see Marshall's 1950 study on the evolution of civic, political and social citizenship). More recently, Kymlicka (1995) and Modood (2007) have argued that attention should be paid to cultural or group-based rights, in answer to the multicultural character of contemporary society.

Although this concept of *citizenship as a bundle of rights* is quite dominant, other authors have also pointed to the duties which citizens have to fulfil with regard to the political or socio-cultural community of which they are a member. This third dimension which Bosniak distinguishes touches upon *citizenship as an activity*. Some authors, like Barber (1984) and Van Gunsteren (1998), are primarily concerned with citizens' involvement in the political domain. Bosniak describes citizenship in this political sense as 'the process of democratic self-government, deliberative democracy, and the practice of active engagement in the life of the political community' (Bosniak 2006: 19). Other authors argue that political participation alone is not enough to build active citizenship. Citizens should also contribute to the common good of society by taking part in civil society (Etzioni 1996; Walzer 1991). From this

communitarian point of view, citizenship is more than an agreement on the core values of democracy and participation in elections. This active dimension of citizenship closely relates to what Bosniak describes as 'the affective elements of identification and solidarity that people maintain with others in the wider world. It conveys the experience of belonging; at stake are the *felt aspects of memberships*' (Bosniak 2006: 20, reviewers' emphasis). This, then, identifies the fourth element, which Bosniak sees as defining our contemporary conception of citizenship, alongside legal status, rights and political participation.

After having examined the different dimensions that are covered by the term 'citizenship', Bosniak focuses predominantly on citizenship as a source of rights, using the position of legal and illegal aliens in the United States as an illustration. Here, the *who* question or the 'subjects' of citizenship have a central place. Bosniak examines what influence the lack of formal citizenship status has on the daily life of aliens. She challenges the strict distinction that is often made between access to the territory of the nation-state and staying within its borders. The oft-suggested thought that the state's policy is 'hard on the outside, soft on the inside' is being questioned. Bosniak makes clear that access to the territory is only the first obstacle that migrants have to face after deciding to leave their home country. Within the territory of the state, aliens experience a number of additional restraints. To support this argument, Bosniak uses examples collected from constitutional jurisprudence and, in a case study, shows what non-physical boundaries migrant women who stay in the United States as domestic workers experience. She thus convincingly puts forward the view that migrants—with or without formal status, legal or illegal—are both citizens and aliens at the same time. Although Bosniak sheds new light on the position of aliens in the US, many of the findings in *The Citizen and the Alien* are not as pioneering as they are supposed to appear. In Europe, for instance, the incorporation of illegal aliens into different areas of society has been the subject of empirical research for some time; the internal borders which aliens face in the country they live in have been studied thoroughly (e.g. Burgers and Engbersen 2003; Engbersen 2001).

Bosniak also asks what the locations are where matters of citizenship are fought out. However, the different scales of citizenship—local, national or transnational—often remain implicit. To get a more explicit answer to the *where* question of citizenship, we must turn to *Contested Citizenship* by Koopmans *et al.* In their study the authors test different hypotheses concerning the location of citizenship. A growing number of studies argue that the term 'citizenship' needs to be revisited. According to this view, the nation-state is no longer the first and foremost location for questions of citizenship. The growing significance of dual nationality is one indicator pointing in this direction; many migrants not only obtain formal citizenship in the country of immigration but remain an official member of the country of origin as well. Furthermore, various authors argue that the activities and feelings of belonging which are said to be connected to citizenship are not circumscribed by national borders (e.g. Bauböck 1994; Guarnizo and Portes 2003; Itzigsohn 2000). Moreover, rights that, in the past, were primarily connected to

national membership are increasingly decoupled from the nation-state (see Holston 1999; Soysal 1994), in the context of which the development of European citizenship and the international human rights system are often cited as examples. These developments are supposed to lead to the emergence of 'transnational' or 'post-national' citizenship.

Toward Transnational Citizenship?

Koopmans *et al.* take part in the discussion about post-national, transnational or multicultural citizenship and question whether national sovereignty and citizenship are actually being challenged. In their book, they seek to answer questions such as: 'Is the nation-state still the most relevant unit of analysis, or are we about to enter a new post-national or transnational era?'; 'Are supranational norms and transnational interdependencies decisive in immigration controls and granting rights to immigrants?'; and 'Are migrants more inclined to make claims in the public sphere that relate to the nation-state they live in, or are these claims increasingly being made at a transnational level?'.

In answering these and other questions, the authors compare the situation in five European countries: Germany, France, Britain, The Netherlands and Switzerland—countries with different citizenship traditions. They compare the conditions which these countries stipulate for immigrants to acquire nationality (by birth in the national territory or acquisition by descent) and the way(s) in which these countries deal with cultural differences, such as granting cultural group rights or not.

Like Bosniak, Koopmans *et al.* opt for a broad definition of citizenship, namely 'the set of rights, duties, and identities linking citizens to the nation-state' (Koopmans *et al.* 2005: 7). The authors depart from a viewpoint more within political science, whereby they examine the dynamics of citizenship based on political claim-making in the public sphere by different interest groups. Measured through a content analysis of daily newspapers in the five countries, they compare claim-making by three actors—immigrants, extreme-right groups and anti-racism movements. Based on the claim-making, the authors then examine whether there is a movement from national to cross-border citizenship. Their conclusion is that, in all five countries and contrary to what one might expect from a transnational or post-national perspective, claim-making in the public sphere does not exceed the territorial scope of the nation-state. According to Koopmans *et al.*, there are very few indications for transnational citizenship. Their evidence points decisively toward the continued relevance of national approaches to the integration and behaviour of immigrants: 'Our results show that national integration regimes can be remarkably successful in eroding migrants' identification with the national and ethnic categories of their original homelands and in shifting their identities and interests instead toward status or racial categories defined by the country of settlement's incorporation regime' (Koopmans *et al.* 2005: 145). Their results do not point to the decreasing importance of the

nation state. On the contrary, differences between nation states would seem to be increasing, especially with regard to immigration and integration policies.

The Koopmans *et al.* study also provides highly necessary empirical data on the locations and levels of scale in which citizenship matters take place. Too often, in the existing literature, claims without systematic foundations are made about the importance of transnationalism (Guarnizo and Portes 2003). Yet whether the decisive statements of Koopmans *et al.*, based on their collected data, are convincing enough, is still to be proven. Their specific research method raises several questions. First of all, it remains unclear to what extent immigrant organisations exclusively use national media in order to make their voice heard. It is possible that it is a well-considered decision of organisations to approach national media exclusively when it concerns national matters. Perhaps media in their country of origin or media at the European level are approached the moment a 'transnational' issue is concerned? This cannot, however, be deduced from the empirical results.

A second comment concerns the data Koopmans *et al.* appeal to. These data concern the period 1992–98. One can question whether the results of their analysis— namely that we are witnessing a renationalisation rather than a further *de*nationalisation—can be applied to the current discussion on transnational citizenship. Especially in the last decade, high-tech and cheap means of communication and transportation have rocketed skywards.

Finally, in *Contested Citizenship*, the forms of transnationalism examined are all 'from above'. This means that it is not the daily transnational activities of individual immigrants which are central in the analysis, but the institutionalised corporate actors (Smith 1992). Yet, although the transnational experiences of individual immigrants are not examined, the authors draw unambiguous conclusions concerning immigrants' involvement. But can such conclusions be made based on this study?

Still, the study is very interesting, especially when the authors take a position in the debates on post- and transnationalism. It is also one of the few studies in which 'transnational citizenship' is made quantifiable and examined systematically. However, in our view it is too early to reject the concept of transnational citizenship completely, To obtain more clarity on the importance of cross-border forms of citizenship, further empirical research is required in which the nation state is not automatically the point of departure, and in which transnational activities that do not make the newspapers are included as well.

Future Research Directions

In *Migration and Citizenship*, edited by Rainer Bauböck, a start is made on a future research agenda. Several authors evaluate what is already known in this field of research and what topics require further investigation. In their contribution, Kraler and Perching respectively examine the access to formal citizenship and the different spatial levels to which questions of citizenship refer—issues that are raised by Bosniak and Koopmans *et al.* as well. Martiniello, in turn, discusses different forms of political

participation among first- and second-generation migrants. All authors call for more comparative research on these issues, including a focus on the migration and naturalisation policies in different European countries. Like Koopmans *et al.*, the contributors to this volume concentrate mainly on the institutional structure of nation-states; differences between political opportunity structures are considered highly decisive for the behaviour of migrants (Bauböck 2006: 104). In addition to this focus on institutions, more attention should be given to 'migrant attitudes, ties and practices with regard to citizenship: their senses of belonging to political communities, their involvement in different polities through social, economic, cultural and political ties, their choices with regard to alternative statuses of citizenship, their use of rights, their compliance with duties and their political activities' (Bauböck 2006: 13). Many questions are still open, especially with regard to the political membership of migrants in their countries of origin, or 'external citizenship' as Bauböck terms it.

Judging on the basis of the existing literature, Bauböck *et al.* state that it is not clear what kind of relationship exists between migrants' integration in their new political community and the maintenance of transnational connections. Contemporary studies, like those of Bosniak and Koopmans *et al.*, often pass over the ways in which migrants combine local, national and transnational activities and identities (Fennema and Tilly 2001; Morawska 2003). Bosniak and Koopmans *et al.* make a valuable contribution to the questions of the *who*, *what* and *where* of contemporary citizenship. However, future empirical research is needed to determine what local, national and transnational citizenship means to the daily lives of migrants themselves.

References

Barber, B. (1984) *Strong Democracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N. and Szanton Blanc, C. (1994) *Nations Unbound*. Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association.

Bauböck, R. (1994) *Transnational Citizenship*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Burgers, J. and Engbersen, G. (eds)(2003) *De Ongekende Stad 1: Illegale vreemdelingen in Rotterdam* [The Unknown City I: Illegal Immigrants in Rotterdam]. Amsterdam: Boom.

Engbersen, G. (2001) 'The unanticipated consequences of Panopticon Europe: residence strategies of illegal immigrants', in Guiraudon, V. and Joppke, C. (eds) *Controlling a New Migration World*. London: Routledge, 222–46.

Engbersen, G., Snel, E., Leerkes, A., van San, M. and Entzinger, H. (2003) *Over Landsgrenzen: Transnationale Betrokkenheid en Integratie* [Beyond Borders: Transnational Involvement and Integration]. Rotterdam: Risbo.

Etzioni, A. (1996) 'The responsive community: a communitarian perspective', *American Sociological Review, 61*(1): 1–11.

Fennema, M. and Tillie, J. (2001) 'Civic community, political participation and political trust of ethnic groups', *Connections, 24*(4): 26–41.

Guarnizo, L.E. and Portes, A. (2003) 'Assimilation and transnationalism', *American Journal of Sociology, 108*(6): 1121–1248.

Holston, J. (ed.) (1999) *Cities and Citizenship*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Itzigsohn, J. (2000) 'Immigration and the boundaries of citizenship', *International Migration Review, 34*(4): 1126–54.

Kymlicka, W. (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Marshall, T. (1950) *Class, Citizenship and Social Development.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Modood, T. (2007) *Multiculturalism.* Oxford: Polity.

Morawska, E. (2003) 'Immigrant transnationalism and assimilation', in Joppke, C. and Morawska, E. (eds) *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 133–76.

Levitt, P. (2007) *God Needs No Passport.* New York: The New Press.

Portes, A. (2000) 'Globalization from below', in Kalb, D., van der Land, M., Staring, R., van Steenbergen, B. and Wilterdink, N. (eds) *The Ends of Globalization.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 253–70.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. and Landolt, P. (1999) 'The study of transnationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 22*(2): 217–37.

Smith, M. (1992) 'Postmodernism, urban ethnography and the new social space of ethnic identity', *Theory and Society, 21*(4): 493–531.

Soysal, Y. (1994) *Limits of Citizenship.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

van Gunsteren, H. (1998) *A Theory of Citizenship.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Walzer, M. (1991) 'The idea of civil society', *Dissent*, (Spring): 293–304.

Zhou, M. (2004) 'Revisiting ethnic entrepreneurship', *International Migration Review, 38*(3): 1040–74.