

Multi-level Citizenship, Identity and Regions in Contemporary Europe

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) is the most developed set of transnational political institutions anywhere in the world. Europe is therefore a logical place to search for signs of transnational democratisation. There has been much debate about Europe's 'democratic deficit', but most discussion has focussed on the institutions of the EU, such as the European Parliament, rather than considering the complex European political system as a whole as a potential medium for the development of transnational democracy.

Most democratic forms of governance have a concept of citizenship at their core, and this chapter is concerned with the nature of, and prospects for, transnational citizenship in Europe. In common with recent commentators, I shall argue that Europe's emerging transnational citizenship should not (and probably cannot) be based on the conventional nation-state model. Instead it should be a 'multi-level citizenship' reflecting individuals' simultaneous membership of political communities at a variety of spatial scales (local, regional, nation-state and European) and perhaps of non-territorial social groups, such as religions, sexual minorities and ethnic diasporas.

The chapter is organised in three main parts. In the first I examine the link between citizenship and identity, arguing that, while citizenship and democratic rights should not be based on cultural identities, identity does affect the acquisition and practice of citizenship. The second part focuses on debates about the existence and nature of a specifically European identity and their influence on proposals for the development of transnational European citizenship. I suggest that since citizenship cannot be wholly divorced from identity, care needs to be taken to ensure that any definition of European identity is inclusive and supportive of ethnic and cultural

difference. One way to do this is through the relatively new concept of multi-level citizenship. In the third part I consider the implications of 'new regionalism' (Keating 1998) for multi-level citizenship in Europe and suggest that while the regional scale is central to the definition of multi-level citizenship in theory, it is likely to make aspects of it highly problematic in practice, not least because of the ambiguous relationship between citizenship and identity to which I have already referred.

Citizenship and Cultural Identity

In recent years that has been a remarkable growth of academic interest in citizenship, reflecting some urgent practical political problems in the (re)constitution of political communities and the preconditions of democracy. This growth has been marked by the establishment of a new journal, *Citizenship Studies* in 1997 and by numerous books, articles and collections of essays (for example: Beiner 1995; Brown 1997; Dauenhauer 1996; Holston and Appadurai 1999; Kymlicka 1995). Globalisation, the development of supra-national polities, ethnic tensions, demands for group recognition and group rights, and the restructuring or retrenchment of the welfare state, have all contributed to pressure for a rethinking of the concept of citizenship, and in some cases to a questioning of its continuing relevance. As Michael Ignatieff notes, there is a 'tension between the republican discourse on citizenship and the liberal political theory of market man [sic]' (Ignatieff 1995). Currently, this tension has been particularly acute in the context of the apparent hegemony of neo-liberal market economics.

Since the abandonment in 1954 of the proposed European Political Community, the development of the European Community (now the European Union) has placed more weight on economic integration and the development of the Common Market, and subsequently the Single European Market, than on building a political community based on the principle of citizenship. It is thus somewhat ironic that the EU should explicitly create a formal concept of European Citizenship (in the 1991 Maastricht Treaty) just at the time when the very idea of citizenship is increasingly seen as problematic.

Citizenship is commonly defined as 'membership of a political community', but the basis of that membership is a matter of considerable debate (Beiner 1995; Dauenhauer 1996; Kymlicka 1995). The difficulties begin with the very constitution of the community: where do its boundaries lie? who may belong and who is excluded and by what criteria? Most conceptions of citizenship work with territorial definitions of community. While these may have the merit of simplicity and can provide the basis for efficient practical administration and institution building, they do not necessarily reflect the complex geographies of the actual social and political relations that are in other circumstances thought of as constitutive of community. Moreover, as the spatial structures of politics and governance become increasingly elaborate, the merits of simplicity and seeming practicality no longer always apply, as we shall see.

Demarcating the political community in question is by no means the only problem facing the analyst of citizenship. There is also much debate over the nature of the relationship between the citizen and society; over the *terms* of membership, in other words. In the literature at least two major themes can be identified. First is the idea of citizenship as a formal relationship between an individual and a polity. Here the emphasis is on citizenship rights and duties and the procedures for defining these. Second is the idea of citizenship as a cultural identity involving a feeling of belonging to an 'imagined community' (Painter and Philo 1995). Liberal political theory typically emphasises the former theme, while communitarian writers emphasise the latter.

For many years work on citizenship was framed by the work of Marshall (Marshall 1950), who argued that the development of citizenship since the eighteenth century had involved the successive acquisition of civil rights, political rights and social rights. Civil rights include such innovations as the right to a fair trial, freedom from arbitrary detention and violence, freedom of speech, the right to hold property, and rights of contract. The emergence of these rights was particularly associated with the development of the institutions of the judicial system and a free press. Political rights include the right to vote and to stand for election. These are associated with the development of institutions such as an elected parliament and payment for Parliamentary representatives. Social rights include rights to health care, education and a subsistence income, and arise with the development of the institutions of the welfare state. Marshall regarded social rights as of vital importance (indeed his work was partly aimed at promoting the development of the welfare state). He insisted that citizenship that was limited to civil and political rights would exclude many from full membership of society, because people who were struggling with poverty or disease, or who were poorly educated, would not have the time, resources or capacity to exercise their citizenship rights in practice.

The Marshallian model has been widely criticised on a variety of accounts (Turner 1989), but it still remains an important reference point for rights-based approaches to citizenship.

The concept of the 'imagined community' is usually associated with work on national identity and nationalism and particularly the writings of Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1983). However, it has important implications for theories of citizenship too. As Kofman (1995) points out, the ability to exercise one's *de jure* citizenship rights depends in part on being recognised as a citizen in daily life by other members of society, which often in practice seems to mean sharing some of the same cultural values or identity. Those whose faces do not fit with the majority collective perception of the 'imagined community' may find that they are excluded *de facto* from full participation in social life. Institutionalised racism in the welfare state, for example, means that members of minority cultural and ethnic groups have worse access to health care, education and welfare benefits than others despite equal citizenship status in law. Citizenship laws can also be framed explicitly or implicitly along cultural or ethnic lines, such that those who do not belong to the imagined (ethnic) community are excluded from citizenship altogether. Even where

citizenship laws are framed along civic, rather than ethnic lines (as in the United States, for example), it is still possible for them to be applied in discriminatory ways.

The affective, or identity aspect of citizenship is both about feeling part of society and about being accepted as a member of society, though this does not necessarily require ethnic homogeneity. Individuals who lack one or both of these elements are likely to find it difficult to gain the full benefits of formal citizenship rights. Legal rights, in other words, while essential, are not sufficient. Identification with an imagined community also underwrites a further aspect of citizenship, namely citizenship as active participation in society. Citizens will be more likely to contribute to society in a variety of ways and to participate in its political processes if they have an emotional identification with the wider community, developed through cultural affiliation. Finally, theories of citizenship commonly refer to the obligations of membership as well as its rights. Again, those with an affective attachment are more likely willingly to undertake these obligations.

Some seek to divorce the formal rights of citizenship from issues of identity for the good reason that legal rights should not be made dependent on adopting a particular cultural identity. If that path were followed, it is argued, citizenship could be denied to all kinds of groups on highly discriminatory or even fascist lines. Such concerns are understandable and justified, but the argument here is not that formal rights should be dependent on acceptance of a particular ethnic, national or other identity. Rather I am suggesting that in practice the capacity to take advantage of formal rights already allocated is influenced positively or negatively by cultural factors. The relationships that underpin citizenship are not only legal but also inevitably social and cultural.

Until recently it was taken for granted by most writers that the political community of which citizens are members is the nation-state. The nineteenth century saw the consolidation of the sovereign territorially-bounded nation-state as the pre-eminent political institution (Giddens 1985). This seemed to offer the prospect of territorial congruence between the imagined community of the nation and the institutions of the state so that citizenship in the sense of formal rights would coincide with citizenship as a cultural identity and feeling of belonging. In practice this neat fit was always limited. Formal rights were distributed unequally (for example women often acquired the right to vote much later than men), state borders have always split some national groups into two and there are many multi-national states. Nevertheless, the model provided by the nineteenth century ideal of the nation-state had enormous power, both because it defined the terms of debate and because the states involved were what, in another context, Brubaker has labelled 'nationalizing states' (Brubaker 1996). Nationalising states are states engaged in the propagation of nationalism in order to generate a sense of belonging and collective identity; in short they are nation-building states.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the idea that there is or should be a congruence between national identity, territoriality, statehood and citizenship is being challenged and undermined in three related ways. First, the pre-eminence of nation-states as institutions of governance is being eroded (Camilleri and Falk 1992),

although at present they are still the most important sources of political authority. According to Jessop (1994) the nation-state has been 'hollowed out' with power moving 'up' to the European Union, 'down' to the local and regional level and 'out' to inter-regional networks. Governance in Europe is increasingly polycentric and multi-layered. For Anderson (1996) this involves the emergence of overlapping spheres of political authority at several spatial scales (local, regional, national and European). Anderson's argument develops that of Hedley Bull (1977) who suggested that one alternative to the contemporary states system was a 'new medievalism' in which

sovereign states might disappear and be replaced not by a world government but by a modern and secular equivalent of the kind of universal political organization that existed in Western Christendom in the Middle Ages. In that system no ruler or state was sovereign in the sense of being supreme over a given segment of the Christian population; each had to share authority with vassals beneath, and with the Pope and (in Germany and Italy) the Holy Roman Emperor above. (Bull 1977, p. 254)

Commenting on Bull's prescience, Held *et al.* note that 'the existence in medieval times of an array of authority structures from the local to the transnational and supranational, coexisting with an evolving system of territorially defined political units, has similarities to the contemporary period. This is not to argue that nothing has fundamentally changed. Rather, it is to suggest that a "new medievalism" may be a useful metaphor for thinking about the present era' (1999, p. 85).

This restructuring of governance, with its multiple, overlapping and sometimes conflicting and competing extra-territorial and intra-territorial flows of political authority, has considerable implications for citizenship. It challenges the assumption that the 'political community' of which citizens are members is the nation-state, and raises the intriguing possibility of multi-layered citizenship. To add to this complexity, in post-communist central Europe several newly independent nationalising states appear to aspire to precisely the form of statehood that is declining elsewhere (Brubaker 1996). In some cases this involves forms of citizenship that link territory, state and identity tightly together again.

Second, in many parts of Europe state-based national identities are challenged by regionalist or minority nationalist identities. These challenges undermine the fit between identity and nation-state. In addition successful mobilisation behind regionalist goals can lead to increased political autonomy or secession, intensifying the restructuring of governance and potentially reconfiguring both the rights-based and the identity-based aspects of citizenship. Prominent examples include demands for Catalan, Basque and Galician autonomy or independence in Spain, while in the United Kingdom, Scottish, Welsh and Irish identities have provided the basis for nationalist challenges to the unitary United Kingdom state. In both Spain and the United Kingdom a degree of devolution and decentralisation has been effected in response.

Third, international migration has increased cultural diversity. In some cases members of diasporas form distinct regional populations, such as the Russians in north-east Estonia (Smith and Wilson 1997). In other cases they may be dispersed more evenly. Both situations undermine the link between citizenship and national identity. In Estonia, Russians are denied even formal citizenship, on grounds of ethnicity. In other cases the attribution of citizenship to ethnic minorities weakens the link between identity and *de jure* citizenship, though minority groups may still be subject to *de facto* discrimination.

These processes are producing a geography of citizenship that marks a break with the nineteenth century ideal of territorial congruence. The twenty-first century seems to be ushering in a phase of territorial dislocation.

European Citizenship

Nowhere is the complexity of twenty-first century citizenship revealed more clearly than in the European Union. Europe was the cradle of modern ideas of citizenship, and it is in Europe that we can see most clearly the simultaneous effects of polycentric governance, regionalism, national separatism, migration and cultural diversity. In the face of this complexity, the European Union has inaugurated the concept of European citizenship. European citizenship can be related to both the aspects of citizenship outlined above – formal rights and cultural identities (Delanty 1997). The European Union's publicity material describes formal EU citizenship as 'the most important innovation of the [Maastricht] Treaty' (Fontaine 1993). By establishing a transnational citizenship in this way the EU has arguably made a essential first step towards transnational democracy.

Formal EU citizenship consists of a package of rights. The *Treaty on European Union* was agreed at a meeting of the European Council in Maastricht in 1991. It was signed in Maastricht in February 1992 and came into force in November 1993. While the proposals for Economic and Monetary Union form its centrepiece, the Maastricht Treaty is wide-ranging, and one of its innovations was the formal introduction of European citizenship, by an amendment to the Treaty of Rome. Article 8 of the amended Treaty states that 'every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union' and goes on to set out the rights of citizenship. These are the rights to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States; to vote and stand for election in municipal and European elections in the member state in which the citizen is resident; to receive protection from the diplomatic and consular authorities of any member state in any country where the citizen's own state is not represented; and to petition the European Parliament and refer matters to the Ombudsman. Article 8e allows these rights to be strengthened by unanimous agreement among the members state of the EU. Indeed the Treaty of Amsterdam of June 1997 did add the further right of citizens to bring cases in the European Court of Justice against EU institutions.

As Shaw points out in her comprehensive discussion of EU citizenship:

It will quickly be seen that this catalogue of citizenship rights is exceedingly limited and rather specific, and hardly comparable with domestic (generic) conceptions of citizenship. In fact, one of the key concessions made to Danish sensibilities after the first referendum, which narrowly rejected the Treaty of Maastricht, was a declaratory confirmation by the European Council that nothing in the provisions of the Treaty of Maastricht in any way displaces national citizenship. Furthermore, it is not an 'independent' status of membership: EU citizenship attaches to those with the nationality of the Member States, and it is *prima facie* the Member States who determine – as sovereign states under international law – who are their nationals. (Shaw 1998, p. 246)

Thus formal EU citizenship is *supplementary* to citizenship of a member state; to be a citizen of the EU one must first be a citizen of a member state. Notwithstanding this proviso, or the rather 'thin' conception of citizenship involved, EU citizenship is an important development, because of the open-ended nature of EU constitutional policy-making. The EU is a work in progress and the concept of EU citizenship is likely to evolve further.

Citizenship and European Identity

The treaties say almost nothing about the affective aspect of citizenship; that is citizenship as membership of an imagined political community and as a subjective political identity. This dimension of citizenship is often regarded as a *sine qua non* of durable legitimacy for political institutions and of meaningful democratic participation, and can therefore be seen as a crucial step towards transnational democratisation. Furthermore, despite the neglect of the issue in the treaties, the development of a common European identity has long been a goal of those steering the processes of European integration, dating back to the vision and idealism of Monnet and Schuman, who saw that a sense of shared values and cultural norms (rather than a stress on national differences) might contribute to the aim of bringing peace to a war-torn continent. Moreover, it has been argued that the future sustainability and development of the European project will depend in part on the legitimacy provided to EU institutions by a popular sense of European identity (Garcia 1993; Leonard 1998a; Leonard 1998b).

Today, the importance of this affective dimension is recognised in principle by the EU. According to EU publicity, 'common citizenship is forged over time, through shared experience and the *affectio societatis* which unites individuals and gives them a sense of belonging to a collectivity. Until people have a clearer idea of the real issues in the political debate at the European level, there is bound to be a lack of information and civic commitment which has to be overcome' (Fontaine 1993). In one speech, Marcelino Oreja, then European Commissioner with responsibility for culture, declared that 'our aim is to bring to the fore the cultural features shared by Europeans, which are to be found in the fundamental values adhered to by the vast majority ... [and] to show Europeans what unites them, and to show them the strength of their common cultural roots, despite the wide variety of cultures that Europe has produced' (Oreja 1997). To date, however, practical steps to develop

European identity have been limited. The 1973 Copenhagen Declaration on European Identity referred to shared values of representative democracy, civil rights and the rule of law. In the mid-1980s the Adonino Committee proposed a range of initiatives to give a European identity concrete form, including a common television area, European sports teams, greater cooperation and interchange in education, and a flag and anthem. However, 'the implementation of these measures has been patchy' (Leonard 1998b, p. 36).

For Delanty (1997) and Leonard (1998a) these attempts to develop both the rights and identity aspects of European citizenship are deeply flawed. The formal citizenship provided by the treaties is both limited and subordinate to national citizenship: 'a second-order citizenship' (Delanty 1997, p. 296). In addition, it has been introduced at a time when the rights model has itself been criticised for its concern with procedures rather than outcomes, for its individualism and for its exclusionary character: 'European citizenship is in danger of becoming an even more formalised kind of citizenship than national citizenship currently is and, moreover, is pointing in the direction of becoming an exclusionary supranationality defining Europe by reference to the non-Europeans' (Delanty 1997, pp. 296-7). At the same time, the idea of European identity fostered by the EU is based on the essentialist model provided by the nineteenth century nation-state. The development of the modern nation-state, especially in the 'long 19th Century' (1789-1914) saw the mutual constitution of sovereign, territorially-centralised states (Mann 1984) and national political identities through mechanisms such as the education system, the suppression of minority cultures and languages and preparation for and prosecution of warfare. Although the end of the 20th century saw this close tie between state formation and the development of national identities break down, the framework it provides seems to continue to set the agenda for the EU.

Moves to promote European identity have tended to focus on high culture (classical music, fine art, theatre, philosophy) and on Renaissance and Enlightenment thought and values:

Europeans are defined [...] by reference to a cultural discourse whose reference points are: the geopolitical framework of the European continent, the cultural heritage of Europe, and a strong sense of the uniqueness of Europe. [...] Europeanness is constructed in opposition with the non-European, in particular Islam' (Delanty 1997, pp. 297-8; see also Morley and Robins 1995, pp. 43-69; Tassin 1992).

There are several difficulties with this approach. First, by combining an 'abstract and heavily political conception of European identity' (Leonard 1998b, p. 35) with the cultural forms of the European social elite, this model of identity is likely to alienate the majority of Europeans rather than unite them. By contrast, current work in cultural studies emphasises the significance of everyday and popular culture in constructing identity (Billig 1995). Second, it excludes (by definition) non-western (and to some extent non-Judaeo-Christian) cultural and political traditions which are now firmly part of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith Europe. Third, despite a heightened emphasis on respecting cultural diversity (Oreja 1997), this

approach still tends to imply the construction of a shared, universal, and unitary identity. The nineteenth century nation state depended on an essentialist conception of political communities (nations) coterminous with and grounded in homogeneous and spatially contiguous cultural communities. By contrast, much contemporary work in political theory and cultural studies emphasises the theoretical and political problems with this perspective. In its place recent approaches stress pluralism, multiculturalism, ethnic and cultural hybridity, multiple and fragmented identities and spatial complexity and transnationalism (Benhabib 1996; Kymlicka 1995; Morley and Robins 1995; Mouffe 1993). The cultural diversity within Europe is such that it is highly unlikely that a single, homogeneous European identity could be a lived reality for more than a small minority of European citizens, unless it was so thinly developed as to be an ineffective basis for the development of citizenship. As Leonard puts it:

Too often European leaders seem to be trying to construct a European identity on the nation state model. ... In fact, any European identity that does emerge will have to be radically different. ... It must take its place in the multiple identities and social roles ... that most Europeans recognise as central to their lives. (Leonard 1998a, pp. 23-4)

The power of the nation-state model may also explain why the EU also seems to see *national* identity (defined as identification with one of the 15 member states) as offering the only other possible claim on citizens' loyalties in addition to 'feeling European'. For example, the regular Eurobarometer opinion polls ask respondents to measure their sense of European identity only against their sense of national identity. Yet, in many parts of Europe, minority national, regional and local affiliations are as, or more, important than state-national ones.

Multi-level Citizenship

In the light of these difficulties with the idea of a unitary European identity, its use as the foundation for European citizenship has been greeted sceptically by many academics. For Tassin there can be no common supranational European identity. He proposes instead the development of a 'European fellow-citizenship' that 'requires citizenship to be broken away from nationality' in contrast with the 'nation-state principle of citizenship [...] based on an amalgamation of nationality and citizenship' (Tassin 1992, p. 189). Kofman (1995) suggests that rights could in future be accorded on the basis of 'denizenship' (residence), rather than (identity-based) citizenship. Delanty (1997, p. 299) argues that 'something like a multileveled framework of citizenship will emerge, incorporating the subnational, the national and the supranational'. For Leonard, 'if there is to be a true Euro-identity, it will be a supplement to national identity, and other regional, local and associational affiliations, not a replacement for them' (Leonard 1998b, p. 38). Morley and Robins (1995) identify three scales of identity and claim that 'to be European now is to be implicated in all three - continental, national and regional - and being European is about managing some amalgam of these' (1995, p. 20). Finally Meehan (1993) and Gamberale (1997) suggest the idea of multiple citizenship. As Meehan argues, 'a new kind of citizenship is emerging that is neither national nor cosmopolitan but

that is multiple in the sense that the identities, rights and obligations associated [...] with citizenship, are expressed through an increasingly complex configuration of common Community institutions, states, national and transnational voluntary associations, regions and alliances of regions' (1993, p. 1).

In different ways all these proposals represent attempts to break with the assumption that citizenship, national identity and the national state territory are, or should be, congruent; and instead to fashion and theory of citizenship that is more complex, less exclusionary and better suited to an era of polycentric, multi-level governance and increasing cultural pluralism.

Regions and Multi-Level Citizenship

There is thus an emerging consensus that multi-layered governance and multiple and overlapping political communities in Europe will both enable and require the development of multi-layered identities and forms of citizenship. However, to date there has been little research on whether such complex, multi-layered identities are in fact emerging, what form they might take, what processes generate or undermine them, how they relate to the restructuring of governance and institutions and how they vary across Europe. Multi-layered governance will hardly deserve the name if it involves only the two layers of the European Union and the Member States and most writers on the subject give a significant role to the subnational scales of the region and the locality.

The Emergence of New Regionalism

Regions have featured in the rhetoric of advocates of European integration since the Second World War and for many years the EU's structural funds have placed considerable emphasis on assisting the development of less prosperous regions. However, it was not until the Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force in November 1993, that regions gained formal representation. The Maastricht Treaty made two innovations on the regional front. First it allowed representatives of regional governments, such as Germany's *Länder*, occasionally to take the place of national ministers in the Council of Ministers. Second it set up the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The CoR, established in 1994, is an advisory body made up of representatives of the regions and localities of the EU who are nominated by their respective Member States. The establishment of the CoR gave some encouragement to proponents of a 'Europe of the Regions', a suggestive but vague term favoured by those regionalists who look forward to a Europe consisting of a federation of autonomous regions. However, the CoR is in many ways an example of 'top-down', rather than 'bottom-up' regionalism.¹

¹ Keating Keating, M. (1998). *The new regionalism in Western Europe: territorial restructuring and political change*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. uses the term regionalism to refer both to popular mobilisation within regions for greater autonomy ('bottom-up') and to national and EU policies to promote regional development and representation ('top-down'). Loughlin, on the other hand, argues that the term regionalism should be reserved for the bottom-up variety and labels top-down measures 'regionalisation' Committee of the Regions (1999). *Regional and local democracy in the European Union*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities..

Keating distinguishes between 'old' and 'new' regionalism in Europe (Keating 1998). As the modern state emerged in Europe from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries it did so in the context of a much older and more complex pattern of territorial politics, in which regional identities, interregional differences and decentralised authority played important roles. This pattern had developed haphazardly and largely without central coordination over centuries. It left a legacy of regional variation that partly limited the integrating tendencies of the process of state formation, but was also reworked by it (Keating 1998, p.29). In addition there are important differences between states as to their degree of integration and centralisation.

The development of the welfare state during the twentieth century saw the extension of social citizenship and a growing reliance on planning and technocratic approaches to social and economic management. In many cases this modernisation led to attempts to downgrade regions, though in the new democracies of Germany and Italy, 'regional decentralization was associated with democratization, pluralism and stability, and was written into their new constitutions' (Keating 1998, p.39). Regionalism in the heyday of the welfare state took the top-down form labelled 'regionalisation' by Loughlin, as regional development policies were introduced in an effort to ensure balanced economic progress across regions. They were thus clearly an instrument of central policy and by the early 1970s this centralisation increasingly came to be challenged by bottom-up regionalist movements (Keating 1998, pp.49-50).

However, it was not until the late 1980s that a new form of regionalist politics emerged in the context of globalisation and European integration, and the concomitant erosion of the power of the state:

This has produced a new regionalism marked by two linked features: it is not contained within the framework of the nation-state; and it pits regions against each other in a competitive mode, rather than providing complementary roles for them in a national division of labour. The new regionalism is modernizing and forward-looking, in contrast to an older provincialism, which represented resistance to change and defence of tradition. Yet both old and new regionalism continue to coexist in uneasy partnership, seeking a new synthesis of the universal and the particular. (Keating 1998, p.73)

Many of the practices of the new regionalism, and much of the academic commentary on it, have been couched in resolutely economic terms. The 'competitive mode' referred to by Keating is above all an economic competition and 'regional economic competitiveness' has become a shibboleth of policy makers throughout Europe. This economic emphasis has gained impetus from developments during the 1980s and 1990s in regional economic theory and economic geography that stressed the importance of intra-regional networks, regionalised production systems, local milieu and regional cultural assets in the development of globally competitive regional economies (Putnam 1993; Scott 1996; Storper 1995). One influential interpretation of these arguments is that the goal of regional public

policy should be to foster the soft assets of regions (social networks, institutional relationships, skills and knowledge, cultural vibrancy) on the contestable assumptions that such assets are now the necessary (perhaps even the sufficient) condition of regional prosperity and that because there appears to be a link between soft assets and prosperity in some well known 'successful' regions, such as Italy's Emilia Romagna, this link can be replicated through deliberate action in Europe's presently impoverished areas.

This thinking forms the current regional policy orthodoxy. Politically it suggests that regions can (and perhaps should) increasingly influence their own economic destinies; that regions' economies are now linked more directly to the European and global scales and that decision-making about the nature of those links will be most effective if decentralised to the regional level. This is the economic argument for devolution. However, it does not necessarily follow from this economic argument that devolved governance will be democratic or accountable or that devolution itself is inherently more democratic than more centralised forms of authority. To address these issues we must consider the politics, as well as the economics, of the new regionalism.

Regionalism and Citizenship

Regionalism and regional governance in contemporary Europe take many political forms. Some nationalist movements seek secession and the establishment of the region as an independent nation state. Such nationalisms can take an atavistic, ethnic form, or a more inclusive civic form. In other cases regionalism is limited to regional autonomy within an existing European state. Yet other regions are principally administrative or planning units without decision-making roles, and some polities have no political structures at the regional scale at all, but may have regionally distinct cultures or communities.

Given this patchy picture, there is no immediate prospect that the regional scale of politics will form the basis of some new Europe-wide transnational democracy whether along the lines of the federation of regions associated with the 'Europe of the regions' concept or in some other way. What is clear, though, is that regions will certainly play an important role in Europe's developing multi-level polity ('Europe with regions'). Furthermore, if that polity is to be democratic and accountable it will in principle need to be associated with a multi-level form of citizenship which will stretch at least from the EU level down to the region.

In comparison with the welter of writing on the economics of regionalism discussed above, relatively little attention has been paid to regions as democratic spaces, or arenas for the practice of citizenship. The idea of 'regional citizenship', for example, has no real currency in either the academic or policy literatures, and while regional cultures have long been the focus of ethnographic and geographical research, more sociological notions such as 'regional civil society' receive less attention than 'regional economy'. Part of the reason for this may be the emphasis placed by EU institutions on the supposedly 'neutral' terrain of economic competitiveness at the expense of more politically sensitive issues such as the relative powers of the EU, the

nation state and the region. Whatever the explanation, the elaboration a model of multilevel citizenship requires that the relative neglect of the relationship between regions and citizenship needs to be remedied.

One exception to the general inattention paid to the issue is the recent survey of *Regional and Local Democracy in the European Union* prepared for the Committee of the Regions by John Loughlin and others (Committee of the Regions 1999). Most of the text consists of chapters outlining the condition of local and regional democracy in each of the member states (with the exception of Luxembourg). The introductory chapter, though, does cover more general issues of regional democracy. Loughlin argues, for example, that 'the Committee of the Regions is [...] an important factor for the strengthening of democracy in the EU, as it has the potential to bring the processes of European decision-making closer to the ordinary citizen' (Committee of the Regions 1999, p.10) and that 'many of the regional and local authorities surveyed in this report are experimenting with different methods of bringing citizens more into the political system at this level' (, p.11). These comments are echoed by the political commentator Jonathan Freedland, writing about the UK:

Putting the people in charge will require one enormous change in our political culture: a vast switch of emphasis from central to local government. [...] Genuine popular sovereignty means placing power with the people – in their own backyard. Moves towards self-rule in Scotland and Wales and a mayoralty in London represent a good start. The US, with its mini-parliaments in each of the fifty states, is a useful guide to how the distribution of power could go further. [...] The idea of democratic assemblies for each nation or region in Britain – with one or two chambers, it is up to them – is hard to oppose. (Freedland 1998, pp.214-215)

The argument that devolved decision-making is somehow intrinsically more democratic than more centralised forms because it is 'closer to the people' is longstanding, albeit contestable. While it may be true that people are more immediately concerned and thus more likely to be politically active about issues that affect them directly, not all such issues are local or regional in character. There is also a tension between universal democratic rights and devolution which may result in a greater emphasis on ethnic, national or regional particularism. Freedland's proposal, must therefore be balanced by the other elements of a multi-level model, in which the democratising gains of decentralisation are additional to, and not a replacement for, citizenship rights and participation at the EU and member state levels.

If fully developed, multi-level citizenship will have a variable geometry with citizens in some regions having different sets of rights than those in others. This is already apparent to some extent, with specific cultural and language rights often limited to one part of a current member state (official support for the Welsh language in Wales but not England is a good example). Multi-level citizenship will thus be unevenly developed across Europe as a result of the uneven development of new regionalism, though it is possible that interregional links, alliances and competition will tend to even things out.

I argued above that there was an important relationship between citizenship and identity. Citizenship is not only about rights and duties, but it also concerns membership, belonging, and mutual recognition; formal rights are of little use in practice if the citizen who possesses them is not accepted as a full member of the community. Effective multi-level citizenship will thus involve more complex and multiple identities in which citizens may feel a part of several political communities operating at a variety of spatial scales, from the local to the global. Despite the importance of the regional scale in this mix, links between regional identity and European citizenship are routinely ignored in official policy-making (as shown, for example, in the absence of questions on regional identity in the *Eurobarometer* polls), and bear further investigation.

Regional and minority national identities are not pre-given cultural phenomena, but are constituted through, in and against, cultural and political institutions, social movements and processes of governance, and evolve in relation to patterns of socio-economic development. Hechter (1975), Lijphart (1977) and Nairn (Nairn 1981) emphasise in different ways the relationship between regionalism and uneven development. However, for Smith (1981), these 'uneven development' arguments neglect the cultural basis of regional identities. Similarly, according to Keating (1988, p. 17) 'a sense of history does appear as an important element in many cases of regional mobilisation, with the sense of identity rooted in an independent past - but it does not have to be accurate history'. This view emphasises the discursive construction of identities. However, discourses are not free-floating, but embedded in institutions, and Keating stresses the role of institutions, such as the distinctive Scottish legal and educational systems, in the formation and shaping of regional identities.

Regional institutions are thus important to both identity and citizenship, but the relationship between citizenship and regional identity remains ambiguous. While strong regional identities may enhance the sense of belonging and participation that effective citizenship and legitimate governance requires, they may also become exclusive. They may work to exclude other ethnic or national minorities producing a regional polity in which 'regional citizenship' is denied to those whose faces don't fit. They may also exclude multi-level citizenship by becoming the singular focus of belonging to the neglect of the other levels in the system.

Conclusion

Ideas about multi-level citizenship are increasingly well developed as abstract concepts in the political philosophy and political theory literatures. In addition it has obvious attractions as a normative ideal in conditions of post-modernity. However, as I have suggested there are a number of major difficulties to be addressed before multi-level citizenship can be adopted as a description of an emerging political reality, or developed further as practical political project.

First, regionalism and regional identities vary widely in intensity around Europe. This suggests that the complexity of multi-levelled citizenship (crudely, the number

of levels) will vary widely too, which is likely to lead to marked uneven development in the package of rights and affiliations across Europe.

Second, regional identities are expressed in many forms, from rationalist civic nationalism to the barbarism of ethnic cleansing. Not all types are equally compatible with the vision of multi-level citizenship. Indeed both reactionary ethnic essentialism and rationalist civic nationalisms sit uneasily with the multi-level model. Ethnic nationalism is too particularist, denying the rights associated with other 'levels' of identity, or even the very existence of such other levels. Civic nationalism appeals to 'universal' values, but is in practice also particularistic, denying membership to those who do not share the civic values concerned, and being predicated on the idea of a single public sphere, rather than the complex overlapping and interlocking forums of debate and contestation implied by the multi-level idea.

Third, regional identities are themselves often complex, contested and internally heterogeneous, though the degree of such complexity varies greatly. Among other things this means that there will be conflicting understandings within regions of the potential for articulating regional and other identities, and competing visions of what such articulation might involve. An important element of the complexity of regional identities is their intersection with a range of other social cleavages and their associated identity, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, religion and so on. This raises the possibility that specific interest groups, such as elite class fractions with hegemonic aspirations, will seek to undermine, or in other cases to promulgate, multi-level citizenship.

Fourth, there is a close relationship between the emerging pattern of multi-tiered governance and the proposals for multi-level citizenship. However, the patterns of institution formation that constitute the developing map of European governance also vary widely from region to region. Some regions have strong and strongly autonomous regional government, others are mere statistical units. Some regions are within the umbrella 'top level' of the European Union, others are located outside the EU with presently much looser supranational or international governance structures. Some nation-states are authoritarian in character, and unwilling to countenance the develop of regional government, or even the expression of regional cultural identities, conversely others are already federal, or consociational in form. This diversity adds to the likely unevenness in any future development of multi-level citizenship as an expression of both rights and identities.

Finally, very little is known at present about the views of citizens themselves. What is the appetite for multi-level citizenship? Does the idea of multiplex identities linked to more variegated and fluid governance structures have any popular appeal? How does its appeal vary from region to region, particularly along the various axes differentiation between regions mentioned above? Are strong regional identities mainly associated with ethnic regionalism of an essentialist or primordial type, largely incompatible with the multi-level model? Answers to these questions are urgently required if the development of multi-level citizenship in Europe is to progress as a political project.

The European Union is the foremost and best developed example of a transnational structure of political authority. To be a vehicle for transnational democracy, it will need to develop greater legitimacy, accountability and transparency. It will also need to promote a sense of affinity among its citizens both with each other and with the EU itself. European citizenship appears to offer the prospect of this in theory. However, full citizenship involves a sense of identity as well as legal and political rights. The challenge for policy makers and Europeans is to develop both the rights and the identity aspects of citizenship in ways that are sensitive to the emerging complexities of governance in Europe and to the multiple identities that are now evident in Europe's regions and nations.

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