

## Conference Proposal

# Cultural Citizenship

In the last decade there has been, as one recent essay puts it, "A Return to the Citizen." There are a number of reasons for this renewed interest in one of the most longstanding political concepts. An increasingly globalized economy has challenged the sanctity of national boundaries and thus raised questions about the importance of national citizenship. For instance, it is likely that an average of 25 % of workers in industrial countries will not be national citizens. As a result, efforts are underway to imagine regional, urban, and even diasporic citizenship. Within Europe especially increased political and economic unification, signalled most poignantly by monetary conversion to the Euro, has caused many Europeans to ponder the fate of national citizenship and to speculate on what "European citizenship" might look like. For instance, Jürgen Habermas has written an essay called "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe" in which he argues for a nation of citizens which does not derive its identity from some common ethnic and cultural properties, but rather from the *praxis* of citizens who actively exercise their rights. This argument is developed in view of the challenges posed by the vision of a future Federal Republic of European States. For Habermas, ethnic and cultural traditions have to find ways of coexistence in such a Republic, but, considering the diversity of such traditions in Europe, they cannot possibly define citizenship. Consequently, for Habermas the only possible criterion for defining citizenship consists in the idea of what he calls constitutional patriotism ("Verfassungspatriotismus").

The influential essay by Habermas is part of a lively debate over the concept of citizenship itself. Condemned by some as an ideological tool by which the state interpellates obedient subjects, citizenship is also seen by advocates of "radical democracy", like Chantal Mouffe, as an alternative to the trend to treat everyone as simply consumers in a global marketplace. Indeed, much recent work on citizenship has pondered how to promote active citizenship when the tendency is towards diminished civic participation. That work directly and indirectly responds to T. H. Marshall's writings in the 1950s. Marshall felt that it was important to add the "social rights" of a welfare state to the political and civil rights traditionally granted to citizens. As important as Marshall's argument was --and is-- it has become increasingly clear that a concept of citizenship based on entitlements --social as well as political and civil-- has contributed to a diminished sense of citizenly responsibilities. Thus, the very liberal democratic welfare states that most pride themselves in providing rights and freedoms to their citizens are experiencing a demise in citizenly participation. Work in addition to Mouffe's that addresses this diminishment of active citizenship has developed concepts such as "thick" or "deep" citizenship.

Renewed interest in citizenship has captured the attention, not only of political theorists, but also of those working in the humanities as well. If, for the most part,

responsibility for civic education in the schools has been taken over by the social sciences, humanists are starting to ask themselves what role the humanities might play. Even the political scientist Rogers Smith, whose monumental *Civic Ideals* traces legal determinations of citizenship in the United States, acknowledges that national membership is determined not only by legal means but also by what he calls "civic myths," "compelling stories" explaining "why persons form a people, usually indicating how a political community originated, who is eligible for membership, who is not and why, and what the community's values and aims are." Appropriately, the word "citizen" is appearing in more and more titles of cultural studies, as scholars try to work out the relation of culture to conceptions of citizenship. One result is the development of the concept of "cultural citizenship" to supplement traditional notions of political citizenship.

If full citizenship is the true test of equality, scholars advocating the concept of cultural citizenship argue, then the concept of citizenship has to be expanded in its definition to include cultural difference, because cultural difference has been a major reason for discrimination and a lack of recognition in the past. As developed in the United States, the concept of "cultural citizenship" is closely aligned to advocates of multiculturalism. For instance, a major proponent of the notion of cultural citizenship is Renato Rosaldo who works in Chicano/as Studies. Rosaldo argues that many Chicano/as who are legally United States citizens are not considered "truly" American because of cultural differences. Rather than advocate an older ideal of "cultural assimilation," Rosaldo argues that American citizenship needs to be inclusive enough to embrace the cultural differences of its many citizens. Thus if in the 1950s Marshall insisted on "social rights" as a privilege of citizenship, at the beginning of the twenty-first century multicultural advocates insist on the right of cultural membership as a privilege of citizenship. In this context the question seems pertinent whether the concept of cultural citizenship can be usefully applied to the situation of the Turkish population in Germany.

The purpose of our conference on "Cultural Citizenship" is to assess the usefulness of the concept and to conduct comparative analyses of the use and meaning of the concept of cultural citizenship from the different point-of-views of the U.S.A., Canada, and Germany. In a global world, determinations of citizenship not exclusively on the basis of national citizenship seem to become increasingly important. From the point of view of the advocates of the concept of cultural citizenship, rather than ensuring a plurality of cultures within the nation, "universal" determinations of citizenship such as the Habermasian idea of constitutional patriotism subtly work to generate a common culture that makes some legal citizens appear less acceptable than others. In its seemingly 'neutral', universalist meaning, the concept of the citizen thus cannot provide a normative base for claims of cultural recognition. Hence, the attempt to expand the notion of citizenship to the concept of cultural citizenship which would make cultural identity (in contrast to national identity) a criterion of gaining full membership ("first-class" citizenship) in society by means of the recognition of one's culture. However, the concept of cultural citizenship raises theoretical questions on how to define and determine cultural identity in order to make it the basis for citizenly rights

and entitlements. While Rosaldo, as a typical proponent of the concept of cultural citizenship, regards culture as a crucial source of identity formation based on cultural inheritance, those arguing for civil rights as the only possible mode of political integration into the nation state, share a concept of culture as “modern” in the sense of being highly differentiated and pluralized, so that identity formation through cultural inheritance must be understood as a rhetoric of self-empowerment which cannot become the normative base for determining citizenship.

American and German perspectives have developed at cross-purposes at this point in the debate. In its attempts to get away from a national identity based on cultural identity, German society has taken American political culture as one of its models. This model character, however, lies exactly in an aspect current American Studies want to overcome: a definition of citizenship in political and not primarily in cultural terms. Democracy should be able to accommodate cultural difference but it should not make it an integral part of the definition of citizenship. Habermas, for example, acknowledges the role of cultural difference in modern nation states but employs the reference to American difference as an argument for the possibility of a “common denominator” in spite of difference, not as an argument for the need to widen or transform this common denominator. Ironically, then, Germany looks at the U.S. for a definition of citizenship based on consent and not on descent, while this model is challenged in the U.S. itself.

**In order to discuss these issues, our conference wants to deal with the following four areas of debate:**

- 1) Discussion of the concept of cultural citizenship**
- 2) Canadian perspectives**
- 3) Turkish-German perspectives**
- 4) Discussion of the theoretical issues of cultural identity and cultural inheritance.**

**The conference is scheduled for June 20-21 at the John F. Kennedy-Institute for North American Studies of the Free University Berlin. Suggestions for papers should be submitted to**

**Prof. Dr. Winfried Fluck**

**Freie Universität Berlin  
John F. Kennedy-Institut  
Lansstr. 5-9  
14195 Berlin**

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