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Dialogue: Citizenship  
Track: Integration

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### 1. What theoretical alternatives to the traditional model of citizenship can we envisage?

If we want to make citizenship a useful analytical concept in social science and if we want to make it the central focus of democratic reform, we must avoid defining it either too broadly or too narrowly. A too narrow definition equates citizenship with the legal status of nationality as defined in international law, i.e. as a formal linkage between an individual and a sovereign state. This definition is historically inadequate because it ignores the much older roots of citizenship that developed in ancient city polities long before the era of state sovereignty. It is also inadequate today because it blinds us to the many ways in which citizenship as nationality is challenged by globalization, supranational integration, transnational migration and minority nationalism. Too broad definitions describe as “citizenship” all kinds of membership-related entitlements and obligations in social groups and organizations, such as economic corporations, kinship networks or civil society associations. This leads to a conceptual overstretch that deprives citizenship of its essentially political meaning. Individuals have affiliations in many different kinds of associations or organizations. What is distinctive about citizenship is that it refers to a status of equal membership in a self-governing political community.

Starting from this (traditional) core definition we can expand the meaning of citizenship to include the rights and obligations attached to this status (pioneered by T.H.Marshall's analysis of civil, political and social citizenship in 1949) and we can address the contemporary revival of the civic republican discourse on virtues of “good citizenship” through which the individual contributes to sustaining a democratic polity. Many authors who focus on citizenship as rights, duties, practices and virtues tend, however, to forget that the prior and more basic questions of inclusion and exclusion: Who is a member and what are the boundaries of the polities?

I believe that the strongest challenges to a conception of citizenship as membership in nation-states arises from boundary questions. In this regard, the traditional model of citizenship has relied on a number of questionable assumptions: a) that states are the only relevant polities within which citizenship can be realized; b) that states represent closed societies with a stable intergenerational membership; c) that citizenship in democratic states entails equal individual rights that disregard all particular affiliations of individuals to groups; and d) that it entails obligations of loyalty that override all other duties in case of conflict. I believe that each of these four assumptions of a traditional model needs to be questioned in the light of four contemporary developments.

(1) International migration creates multiple affiliations and stakes of individuals in sending and receiving countries. This undermines traditional conceptions of citizenship as singular membership in closed



societies. Residential citizenship for foreign nationals, external citizenship for expatriates, and formal multiple citizenship reflect a trend towards overlapping boundaries of political community between territorially separate states.

(2) Demands for self-determination or self-government by historic national minorities and indigenous peoples challenge the linkage between citizenship and nation-building. From the perspective of groups engaged in alternative projects of nation-building, the territorial borders, the dominant languages and the historical narratives of political community that define the public identities of states cannot be accepted as a neutral background for common citizenship, but reflect histories of conflict and oppression. Demands for devolution, political autonomy and, in some cases, secession and independence undermine the internal homogeneity of citizenship in multinational democracies and replace it with an alternative model of nested communities with contested boundaries and highly asymmetric relations to each other.

(3) The need for nested models of citizenship emerges not only from conflicts over nation-building, but also in the contexts of globalization, supranational European integration and autonomous local and regional self-government. First, the ancient idea of *cosmopolitan* citizenship referred to a sense of belonging to humanity that complements, or sometimes even supersedes the sense of belonging to a particular polity. What is new and different today is that there is a much greater urgency and potential for creating or strengthening institutions of global governance that transcend the Westphalian system of sovereign states and give some institutional substance to the idea of a *global* citizenship. Second, supranational political integration in the European Union is a historic development that creates a level of thin, but already legally institutionalized citizenship above the nation-state. The relation between Union citizenship, citizenship in a member state and third country citizenship is complex and still evolving and represents a novel type of federal citizenship. Third, processes of globalization have simultaneously strengthened regional and local identities and political communities and their desire for increased autonomy from the state. The ancient origins of citizenship were in the self-governing city and we may today witness a revival of urban citizenship as a result of “glocalization”.

(4) Even within the given boundaries of nation-states, citizenship is becoming increasingly group-differentiated in response to demands for protection from discrimination and respect for autonomous ways of life. Contemporary citizenship has become thoroughly gendered and multicultural through the impact of struggles of women, religious, cultural, ethnic, racially oppressed, religious and sexual minorities for positive measures against discrimination, for exemptions from public laws that create disadvantages for specific groups, and for public support and symbolic recognition.

## 2. What methodologies can we follow to produce our arguments (universalism vs. contextualism)?

The alternative between universalism and contextualism is a false opposition. The concept of citizenship itself cannot be grasped even at the most abstract level without combining the two aspects. First, citizenship is a universalistic idea inside a political community, but it is also a status of membership in a bounded community and thus intensely particularistic towards outsiders. Second, even the idea of global citizenship makes only sense if one combines the universalistic aspect of human rights with contextual accounts of historical developments of enhanced global interdependence between societies. Third, citizenship is membership in political communities with their own particular histories that have also shaped different conceptions and norms of citizenship. There is not one best model of citizenship that fits all societies. The plurality of historical paths and experiences is reflected in particular constitutional arrangements in matters ranging from electoral systems to the accommodation of ethnocultural minorities. This is no argument for moral relativism. Standards for critique of particular models of citizenship can be



derived both from universalistic principles of equality, liberty and justice, and from contextual analyses of internal traditions of resistance.

It is, however, a common mistake to associate global perspectives with universalism and local perspectives with contextualism. On the one hand, we need to analyse global interdependence in a deeply contextual manner and, on the other hand, we must develop stronger universal standards for minority rights that challenge state sovereignty in this area.

3. How can we translate the different proposals in a practical language so that they become a real political alternative?

All four challenges to the traditional model listed in section 1 are intensely debated and resisted. In recent years, there has been a tendency towards a real backlash against pluralistic and differentiated models of citizenship in some European societies, especially against transnational and multicultural conceptions of citizenship in contexts of migration. There is a new assertion of the need for homogeneity and overriding solidarity within nation-state communities. Those who defend a pluralistic approach will have to rethink theoretical and political weaknesses of models developed in the last thirty years. I suggest two guidelines for enhancing the theoretical consistency and political salience of analytically well-established arguments for pluralistic conceptions of citizenship.

(1) In the area of citizenship as legal status we need to recognize that four different types of interests are involved: those of states in maximizing their sovereignty in determining themselves whom they recognize as citizen; those of the international community in minimizing conflicts between states and their citizenship regimes; those of individual migrants and persons belonging to ethnonational minorities in increasing their autonomy and choice between alternative statuses; and those of democratic polities in maximizing inclusion, internal equality and cohesion. Political recommendations for reforming citizenship policies need to specify first to which extent each of these interests should be accepted as legitimate and must then suggest reforms that balance these legitimate interests against each other. This should improve the acceptability of reform proposals compared to standard approaches that defend only one of these interests without considering the others.

(2) In the area of group-differentiated citizenship rights in multicultural and multinational democracies we must remain aware that minority rights need the support of political majorities. In the 1990s, multicultural policies have been too often defended merely as special rights of disadvantaged minorities. The discourse of citizenship is, however, always concerned with what individuals have in common as members of larger polity. The compensatory-justice argument for minority rights can be easily turned around by arguing that special rights amount to unjustified privileges for a minority of citizens. In order to avoid such nativist backlashes it is important to develop positive conceptions of how minority rights can become catalysts for transforming the common citizenship in a larger polity in a way that preserves its unity, improves its democratic quality and strengthens its potential for shaping a common future. Such a focus on common citizenship entails opposing claims for those group rights that would seriously undermine the stability of nested and pluralistic democratic polities. As an illustration we can mention demands for national self-determination if these are understood as a unilateral right to territorial secession for national minorities even in the absence of severe oppression.