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Online publication date: 27 July 2010

To cite this Article Vega, Judith and Boele van Hensbroek, Pieter (2010) 'The agendas of cultural citizenship: a political-theoretical exercise', Citizenship Studies, 14: 3, 245 — 257

To link to this Article DOI: 10.1080/13621021003731773

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13621021003731773

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INTRODUCTION

The agendas of cultural citizenship: a political-theoretical exercise

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Cultural citizenship has been receiving quite some attention for over a decade now. The concept has appeared in fields like migration studies, media studies, arts education, museology, cultural policy, and at times in general cultural studies and sociology. One might even be tempted to speak of a new ‘cult on cit’, if one allows such American shorthand, but we will not be flippant. We think that the concept has elicited interesting debates, and has pertinent contributions to offer to the theory and practice of citizenship. This special issue will place the concept specifically within a political-philosophical context, which allows us to probe into a range of analytical as well as normative issues that the concept raises. The articles collected here elucidate how the concept fares in different political-philosophical milieus, among which the liberal, Marxist, Arendtian and (otherwise) republican ones.

In this introduction, we reconstruct a brief history of the intellectual discussions that led up to the current, explicit concept. We will identify several pertinent questions and tensions in the debates. We will furthermore argue our own angle, pleading a political-theoretical approach beyond the, according to us, too narrow conceptualisation of cultural citizenship that ensued from its elaboration in a liberal theoretical framework. We finally explain how such an angle is illustrated by the various contributions to this special issue.

To talk about cultural citizenship means to articulate some kind of link between culture and citizenship. The concept thus broaches a very general problematic, as it is not too difficult to bring several such links to mind. But it also broaches a very specific problematic. It brings citizenship into a new area of concerns, compared to its classic conceptualisations – it infers that citizenship has other than merely political connotations. Such an extended meaning constitutes a challenge for political philosophy. How do we deal with an originally typical political concept as citizenship suddenly going cultural? It is not self-evident that this would be an easy endeavour. Brian Turner (2001, p. 12) was aware of this challenge when he wrote: ‘The absence of a robust tradition of political theory on culture and citizenship is problematic.’ The articles in this issue, however, beg to differ. They evidence the ways in which various political theories and philosophies have reflected on some conception of cultural citizenship, if not the concept, and explore a number of angles – both historical and contemporary ones.

What do the many conceivable links between culture and citizenship look like? From what debates and practices did the concept of cultural citizenship result? Let us survey the sundry options, as ‘cultural citizens’ actually appear in many guises. They may be citizens...
with ‘cultural’ claims on politics, like immigrants from non-western countries, women with headscarves, (other kinds of) feminists, gay rights activists, and so on. They may be citizens involved in the pluralisation and interculturalisation of the arts, attempting to increase social participation or community bonding. They may also be the citizens of the media society, glued to the television or the internet, or of consumerism, celebrating lifestyle over politics, or turning politics into a lifestyle. They, alternatively, appear in (e.g. feminist) criticisms of the classical citizen as an unembodied, ‘rational’ subject, who left subjectivity behind in order to become a universal citizen-being, and who is politically active only in a narrow meaning of politics. The critique takes issue with the unwarranted claim to universality of such subjects, blind to the always particular (‘cultural’) character of their politics. This last perspective is conceptually the most radical: when it comes to the crunch, everyone is a ‘cultural’ citizen.

Politics meets culture, one cannot avoid concluding, in present-day public and theoretical debates. Citizenship seems cloaked in culture. But as the examples above show, in what senses citizens are thought to have a ‘politico-cultural’ identity is far less clear. The often muddy debates of multiculturalism prove that the concept of culture has become framed in a directly political way. In many instances, they show that to inject ‘culture’ into discussions of politics and citizenship obfuscates more than it elucidates (see also Phillips 2007). Still, there are many respects in which the notion of cultural citizenship offers a specific and important angle for considering the various issues. We think this is especially the case when the generic civic dimensions of that notion are kept in view, and when we refrain from funnelling it into a mere ‘multicultural’ application.

Culture has become a new field of contestation both nationally and globally. To think about this field from the perspective of citizenship means choosing an explicitly normative perspective on these debates. We take this to be the main import of the concept of cultural citizenship. This does not mean that the concept as such necessarily implies a social ideal – it may well be seen as a descriptive or analytical tool with no substantive normative charge as such. The contributions to this special issue indeed take different views in that respect. For example, whereas Boele van Hensbroek proposes to use cultural citizenship as a normative activist notion, Vega discerns a descriptive and tautological concept which alerts to the ways in which citizenship is always co-defined by a cultural factor. Bhandar analyses it as an instrument for disciplining and normalising citizens in multicultural societies, while Stevenson sees it as arising from citizens’ contestations. These differences do not contradict our view of the fundamental normative thrust implied in the concept of cultural citizenship. To study culture from the political-theoretical concept of citizenship allows us to ask the normative political question: what do the novel national and global constellations in which ‘culture discourse’ functions mean with respect to inclusion and exclusion, participation and marginalisation? A crucial topic for reflection is whether and how cultural citizenship could and should provide an extension of the national category of citizenship to newcomers in the public sphere. And we note that this may concern various kinds of newcomers: they may for instance come from abroad, or from privatised sexual or lifestyle practices.

The discussion of ‘cultural’ questions in political philosophy is not new – several of its traditions have addressed such questions. They have a prominent place in conservatism and communitarianism, from Carl Schmitt to Amitai Etzioni and Alasdair MacIntyre. They also form a core interest of continental critical theory, with philosophers such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse addressing the cultural transformations in industrial capitalist society, and its present-day representatives like Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser continuing that interest. It can be found, in certain
respects, in classical Marxism (as argued by Vega, this issue), and was present in Antonio Gramsci’s discussions of hegemony. And it has been a concern of liberal political theory, both in its historical (John Stuart Mill) and contemporary varieties. In this introduction we restrict ourselves to ways in which a ‘cultural turn’ in political thought came about specifically in the last two decades; we discuss the – uneven – terrain of debates where the current interest in cultural citizenship germinated.

Citizenship as substantial practice – cultural capital or cultural difference?

In the early 1990s, two debates emerged that, in different ways, amended standing approaches to citizenship by drawing attention to the ‘substantial’ dimensions of citizenship – over and above its politico-legal status. While cultural citizenship had not already grown into an explicit concept, culture did become a key term for this endeavour, next to ‘identity’ and ‘subjectivity’. We see various moments of that ‘cultural turn’ in the debates on citizenship.

The first type of debate centred on citizens’ capacities for civic virtue, or, responsible civic action. The idea propelling this debate was that citizenship was poorly conceptualised as a mere legal status, and rather depended on the actual practicing of civic qualities or virtues, needing ‘cultural capital’. We find such interventions in work by Lolle Nauta (1992) and Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (1994). The latter two authors, for example, state ‘that the health and stability of a modern democracy depends, not only on the justice of its “basic structure” but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens’ (pp. 352–353). They take care, meanwhile, to distinguish republican and liberal answers to such calls for citizens’ ‘virtue’, contending that the republicans overstated the issue of participation. Kymlicka and Norman place the call for a substantial citizenship within a discussion of how to reach a ‘common identity’ in increasingly pluralist, multinational or multicultural states. Nauta, too, alerts us to the fact that citizenship cannot just be a ‘status’ but is always also a practice. In that light, he distinguishes three different ‘cultural resources’ of modern citizenship: models of practicing rules that orient people’s actions. Next to the distinct and competing models of the market (economic interaction) and the forum (political or public interaction), he points out ‘identity-formation’ as a third context of citizens’ interactions. For it ‘hardly makes sense to inquire into the nature of public interaction and to neglect its subjects’ (Nauta 1992, p. 31) – as these subjects do not come from nowhere into modernity’s central arenas. ‘Crucial for identity-formation is a learning process where the individual acquires the ability to deal with the interests of other human beings in a non-violent way’ (p. 30). Proffering this idea, Nauta at once emphasises the problem of the unequal distribution of the cultural capital necessary to face modern society.

Second- or third-class citizens in the modern ‘welfare states’ are citizens who never had the opportunity of such an education and who are sometimes not even able to read a newspaper or understand a talkshow. Because of their lack of cultural capital, they can become easy victims of nationalism, racism or some other form of mass-manipulation. They are treated as the enemies of democracy, but in many cases democracy has been an adversary of theirs. (Nauta 1992, p. 31)

In this first strand of argumentation, a ‘cultural factor’ is judged to be pivotal for citizenship to be practised well, or even at all. Citizenship is related to culture in terms of the citizen’s ability to grasp and recognise his or her own as well as others’ interests. The theme is still being taken up, and now in the explicit terms of ‘cultural citizenship’, for instance, by Gerard Delanty (2002, 2007), who accentuates the meaning of cultural citizenship as
a ‘learning process’. Nick Stevenson, in this issue, similarly focuses on learning. He reminds us that cultural theorist Raymond Williams’ ‘long revolution’ (1965) meant ‘the struggle for a learning and communicating society’ (Stevenson, p. 282, this issue).

A second strand of debate was initiated by Iris Marion Young, who in her *Justice and the politics of difference* (1990) elaborated the idea of ‘cultural politics’ or ‘politicising culture’ as an indispensable dimension of struggles for social justice. Her complaint was that theories of justice worked with an idea of egalitarian politics that was too abstract, in that it neglected the problem of social and cultural power and dominance. Her concept of cultural politics took a stand against what she called the ‘depoliticisation’ of struggles for justice and of public life. She pleaded to reclaim the meaning of difference – as a function of social relations rather than as a description of essential group features – in view of the actual social marginalisation of racial, gender, age- or ability-based groups. This second view of the ‘cultural substance’ of the practices of public life goes well beyond the general notion of the need for an active citizenship. It relates citizenship to a broad issue of dominance and marginalisation, and thus prefigures the later debates on identity politics, difference and multiculturalism. As Nauta’s quoted formulation testifies, his approach, as well as his earlier work (1987) on the ‘cultural factor’ in various social and neo-colonial relationships, actually joins a similar agenda.6

Neither strand in the early attention to culture and citizenship explicitly articulated the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’. But both argued for the substantive contents of citizenship, rather than its legalistic status – while not denying that the latter will generally frame the former. They cleared the way for the later conceptual formulations of a ‘cultural citizenship’ – and foreshadowed its various interpretations.7

**Beyond a liberal cultural citizenship**

A third strand in the debates on citizenship and culture that took off in the early 1990s came about with Charles Taylor’s long essay ‘Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”’ from 1992. In it, he critically assessed and amended established philosophical notions of equality and equal respect, surmising that in certain cases liberalism should be more hospitable to difference, i.e. claims for cultural distinctness. Still mostly preoccupied, despite its title, with the language wars in Canada, the essay was followed in 1995 by Kymlicka’s book on multicultural citizenship and minority rights. Between them, these titles procured a marked turn in the debate. Staging a concept sounding like cultural citizenship, ‘multicultural citizenship’, Kymlicka’s book applied it to one specific concern – the multicultural society (of the west) and cultural rights for minorities. Explicitly intending a ‘liberal theory’ of such rights, the book may be placed in the indeed liberal – and laudable – tradition of John Stuart Mill’s plea for minorities’ protection from majorities. It is also to be placed in a – somewhat different – liberal tradition concerned with a legalistic approach to issues of discrimination. Whereas the two strands discussed in the former section formulated rather ‘universal’ issues of the relation between culture and citizenship, this third one reduces it to one particular aspect, applying it to the cultural groups in multicultural societies.

We will not enter here into Taylor’s and Kymlicka’s works and the manifold discussions they elicited. Many a study of cultural citizenship indeed either builds on or critically relates to this work.8 In several of the following articles, the argument refers to Kymlicka’s book, as one landmark in the discussions relevant to cultural citizenship. We recognise its groundbreaking status, and merely want to mark our own interest in the potential of the concept of cultural citizenship as of a different flavour. We position the
type of discussions we favour rather in the second strand of the initial discussions mentioned above, exemplified especially by Young. We take cultural citizenship to be a tool for addressing issues of cultural and social dominance rather than lack of rights. It may serve to keep on the agenda the very issue of difference as being conceptually (and socially) ascribed to some citizens rather than others. We would have the concept safeguard the study of the ‘broad’ political aspects of the ‘cultural factor’ in citizenship, and keep the normative political question as indicated above at the centre stage of the discussions on citizenship.

This special issue, then, aims to stretch the political-theoretical discussion of cultural citizenship beyond the narrow agenda of contemporary liberal discourse on that subject, and explores the substantive dimensions of citizenship beyond mere multicultural citizenship. This endeavour keeps with various other works that, on this account, have endeavoured a more self-reflexive approach to liberalism. In an incisive inquiry into contemporary political theory’s preoccupation with culture and difference, David Scott (2003, p. 96) offers a sceptical look at liberal theory’s attitude towards difference:

> for thinkers such as Walzer, Kymlicka, Kukathas, Carens, and Taylor, what is at stake is rethinking liberal democracy – or, to put this another way, rethinking from the standpoint of liberal democracy. For them, in other words, the privileged status of liberal democracy is not itself in question. All that is required is a revaluation of difference so as to enhance the claims of this particular organization of modern political community. (emphasis in original)

He continues to plead for a more ‘genealogical’ account of the very concept of culture, an attention to ‘the terrain of culture-discourse as such’ (p. 105). This, he suggests, may atone for political theory’s self-acclaimed progressive ‘discovery’ of a constructivist, ‘hybrid’ and ‘internally divided’ approach to culture – over and against the ‘old’ political theories. For this may be merely one more historical way of conceiving ‘otherness’ and putting the other in its cultural place: ‘the new culture was no longer the object to be problematized (by a specialist discipline) so much as the constructed space or idiom in terms of which other problematizations or the problematizations of other objects took place’ (Scott 2003, p. 108). Scott’s concern is that this liberal-pluralist approach to culture has the function of establishing ‘a post-ideological conception of democratic pluralism’, fitting for an ‘end-of-ideology’ climate, in which the Other ‘could now be understood conversationally, anti-essentially, ironically, as mere difference … [I]n culture-as-constructed-meaning political philosophy has at last found the conceptual means of liberating itself from its service to imperial power’ (Scott 2003, p. 111).

With this cliffhanger, we may return to the premises of the present special issue. It takes up such an invitation for a self-reflexivity of discourses on citizenship, concerned with their social and ideological roles, and aims to attend to political-theoretical approaches to cultural citizenship beyond the liberal paradigm. One of these is republicanism, consistently discarded in Kymlicka’s various works. We would especially break a lance for reviving the possibilities of this alternative, as it actually could comprise both the substantial issues broached already in the early 1990s.9 Firstly, given the republican concern for civic virtues, it allows for attending to citizenship’s cultural resources. Secondly, in its engagement with freedom from coercion, republicanism is affinitive to the politics of difference that are directed to issues of dominance (also Vega, this issue). The attention to difference brings out the problems of national citizenship’s honorary status: it is to debunk many of its theoretical and politico-cultural assumptions. The politics of difference then becomes a novel rationale for the democratic actions this very citizenship stands for, or should stand for.
One more interesting approach for grasping the substantive dimensions of citizenship is developed by Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen (2008). They propose to study ‘acts of citizenship’, and state their intention to see this as a way of focusing on the ‘deed’ rather than the ‘doer’. They thus, among other things, circumvent a mere legalistic approach, which involves only the citizens-that-be. This option would mean:

- investigating everyday deeds that are ordinarily called politics. But acts of citizenship are also ethical (as in courageous), cultural (as in religious), sexual (as in pleasurable) and social (as in affiliative) in that they instantiate ways of being that are political. (Isin and Nielsen 2008, p. 2)

We think that a thus formulated attention to the ‘pragmatics’ of citizenship nicely elaborates one potentiality of the kind of approach we give preference to. This amounts, however, to a perception of participation with a twist. As Delanty (2002, p. 65) remarks,

As a learning process, citizenship takes place in communicative situations arising out of quite ordinary life experiences. It appears that an essential dimension of the experience of citizenship is the way in which individual life stories are connected with wider cultural discourses. What I think interesting is this cultural dimension to citizenship, which goes beyond the institutional dimension of both rights and also participation.

These authors claim that what citizenship acts are, probably cannot be best understood within the classical takes on participation or ‘active’ citizenship. These terms as such need to be revised, in order to take account of their border cases. We may think of civic acts exercised by legally improbable citizens (the undocumented), or life story narratives which lead to forms of civic awareness. Or we may look at types of linguistic performativity that are not easily recognised as a public discourse (understood as e.g. ‘private’ or ‘cultural’), or which are realised apart from its traditional vehicles foremost journalistic mass media.

Further noteworthy contributions come from cultural studies involved with citizenship. Two examples serve to illustrate this work. Aihwa Ong (1996) analyses the construction of immigrant communities. She offers sophisticated studies of processes of subjectification and of the re-formation of immigrant communities in the North American context. Toby Miller (2007) focuses on cultural citizenship as produced and exercised in the media society. In two respects, such works add substantially to the discussions on cultural citizenship. They take the debate far beyond the limited agenda of the situation of minorities in western multicultural societies. Moreover, they offer a Foucauldian attention to the ‘political’ in society at large, taking the understanding of cultural citizenship beyond the formally political domain.

This leads us to a still more specific angle on the substantive dimensions of citizenship. If cultural citizenship is about negotiating the very terms of citizenship, it harbours a politics of language next to, or perhaps coincidental with, all kinds of institutional addresses and reforms. This ‘linguistic politics’ includes forms of ‘speaking’ in places not usually designated as ‘public’. It points to the various discursive means and orders in which the cultural is configured. The literature on cultural citizenship provides interesting reflections and conceptualisations in that respect, which already have been partly hinted at above. Delanty (2007), for instance, has offered the concept of ‘discursive citizenship’, or alternatively ‘narrative citizenship’ (following an idea by Margaret Somers (1995)). This he contrasts with the ‘disciplinary citizenship’ found in policy documents and which increasingly coincides, in his view, with the dominant liberal discourse of citizenship. Discursive citizenship is about ‘learning to give new definitions to work, social relations, and the material environment’ (p. 7) in order to voice experiences of deprivation or disrespect and to counter demoralisation and social pathologies. In grasping
culture especially as the realm of the contestation of meaning, the further idea of ‘semiotic citizenship’ may be advanced, in the wake of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 12), who took culture to consist of ‘socially established structures of meaning’. This idea proceeds from the normative notion that citizens are to be co-authors of the cultural context or contexts in which they participate (Boele van Hensbroek, this issue).

The attention to citizenship as related to forms of linguistic culture and power has in turn elicited critical reflections. Laurence Pawley (2008) distinguishes (next to multicultural citizenship) two kinds of approaches on that specific account, partly coinciding with the ones we mentioned in the last two paragraphs. First the cultural studies of the cultural text or cultural product, and second the idea of a communicative or dialogical cultural citizenship. Both develop an account of culture beyond the multicultural and rights discourse angles. The first focuses on culture as the space of mass media products, and variedly concentrates on either its commercially manipulated consumer choices or popular culture’s potentials for novel political strategies of presenting information and employing narrative approaches. The second approach understands culture as the ensemble of acts of communication that impact on political relations and citizenship’s status. Pawley argues that both strands of thinking cultural citizenship hold their own risks. While the focus on the cultural text and isolated conflicts may lead to ‘a conceptual “ghettoisation”’ that obscures the broader aspects of citizenship, pleas for communicative citizenship often neglect to formulate their dependence on ‘a more bounded conception of politics and rights’ and want concrete accounts of its functioning in practice (Pawley 2008, p. 605). Pawley subsequently pleads an integration of these approaches’ respective attention to specificity and universality.

We have sought to point out a variety of conceptualisations which lead us beyond the liberal focus on rights, and which problematise pertinent issues of cultural citizenship beyond multiculturalism. This may involve identifying new forms of belonging or new civic presences that come from everyday life. Here one may think of the articulation of new sexual or intimate knowledges and new ways of democratising personal relationships (Weeks 1998). It may involve focusing on struggles about the definition of group culture or the content of social or intellectual memories (Boele van Hensbroek, this issue). It may mean engaging with cultural citizenship as an object of governmental or/and disciplinary politics (Ong 1996, Bhandar, this issue, Boomkens, this issue). Such approaches, in brief, study symbolic power in its manifold manifestations and relate that study to citizenship as a practice of social inclusion and exclusion.

We have argued that the concept of cultural citizenship offers a promising angle for thinking about pressing issues of contemporary public spheres. As has by now often been argued, it prominently captures one of those issues: the range of global social and discursive transformations that resulted in (what is perceived as) an increasingly diverse citizenry. But precisely on that account the concept also readily reveals a tension in the debates that ensued. On the one hand, it provides a conceptualisation of the ‘politicisation of difference’ explicitly from the perspective of citizenship. It thus complements, or competes with, notions such as ‘cultural rights’, ‘cultural capital’, and the ‘consumer-citizen’. It allows a critical relation simultaneously to the classic concepts of citizenship and to cultural studies views of culturally active subjects which identify ‘the cultural’ primarily with the media and its products. In such confrontations lies the concept’s innovative potential. On the other hand, ‘culturalising’ questions of citizenship may bring more dangers than benefits. The very act of relating politics and culture may be problematised: the concept could be seen to prematurely decide ‘political’ issues to be ‘cultural’ in nature. It may result in disciplining forms of governance. Or it may link...
cultural citizenship to a variety of social identities, risking affirming these uncritically while bypassing the social and symbolic relations in which these identities are formed.

It is there that the need arises for a firm attention to cultural citizenship as a term for contesting practices vis-à-vis prevailing social meanings of identities (Boele van Hensbroek, this issue, Vega, this issue), for the different roads that establishing the content of national identities may take (Boomkens, this issue), for practising novel ‘local’ forms of cosmopolitanism that erect democratic public spaces for ‘overlapping communities’ (Stevenson, this issue), or for culture as the object of governance strategies (Bhandar, this issue). The concept may moreover be used to open a further discussion, on general modes of political culture. It may be made to highlight how the rhetoric of emancipation (whether liberal or otherwise) harbours its proper dialectics and unforeseen effects (van Oenen, this issue).

Political theory has generally become associated with reflections on rights and state institutions, that is, with a liberal political paradigm, also in the debates on cultural citizenship. However, the concept of cultural citizenship precisely challenges political theory to become – or remain – a reflection on the limits of its proper concept of politics, or, to become a reflection on what actually constitutes the political in our times.

Contents of the special issue

The first section of this special issue, ‘Political philosophy goes cultural’, opens with an article by Judith Vega that sets out to map different ways in which the cultural and political can be conceived to relate to each other. Vega does so by analysing exemplary discussions from key classical political thinkers, i.e. Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill. This prepares for a critical assessment of a recent Dutch report on cultural policy. The analysis results in four models of thinking about the political-cultural interface: a strong positive, a strong negative, a weak negative, and a weak positive view of the relation. According to the strong positive view, to be involved culturally – either in terms of one’s cultural belonging or of cultural activity – enhances one’s citizenship. The strong negative view sees culture as a mere anti-political force – conceived of either as the ‘culture industry’ or as group cultures. The weak negative view also criticises hegemonic and capitalist configurations of culture, but seeks to empower people in the realm of culture and media in the face of such forces. Finally, the weak positive view diagnoses a historical reality of a ‘confluent citizenship’, i.e. a citizenship being generally co-defined by a variety of cultural factors, and holds that everyone is a cultural citizen. Vega opts for this weak positive angle, which may back the neorepublican approach of cultural citizenship she subsequently outlines. This approach allows for a selective politicisation of cultural issues. A neorepublican ‘politics of difference’ attends to problems of socio-cultural domination, and circumvents liberalism’s a priori divisions of public and private, politics and culture. However, in order to acknowledge the many faces of ‘culture’ that such politics describes, it needs to supplement its notion of civic politics with a conception of ‘symbolic order’ – the cultural and psychological contexts of coercion and constraint.

Such a call for publicly addressing hot and contested matters of culture and value is also elaborated in the article by Nick Stevenson. Stevenson argues for a programmatic political philosophy of cultural citizenship which can sustain the argument for a ‘good society’ of a cosmopolitan, communicative kind. Political philosophies that focus on the procedurally ‘right’ societal arrangements, such as in the Kantian tradition, and refuse to engage in positive arguments for the ‘good’, leave us empty-handed. Political philosophy can and should do more and map out normative principles and societal prescripts in terms
of ideas on education, media and limits to commercial and state power which can specify conditions and principles for a society that is inclusive while respecting agency and difference. His own argument in this regard proceeds by way of a critical analysis of Hannah Arendt’s idea of the requirement of citizens to think for themselves and to share a responsibility for the maintenance of the public realm. This argument is further enriched by Bernard Williams’ analyses of the social and institutional arrangements which can facilitate such civic thinking and communicative action for an educated and participatory democracy. However, the new challenges of multiculturalism, globalisation and the dominance of neoliberalism require an expansion of the argument towards a cosmopolitan position, which is the subject of the last part of the article.

Gijs van Oenen executes a critical analysis of mainstream political theory from John Rawls to Will Kymlicka, exploring the insufficiencies of their ways of dealing with the cultural dimension of citizenship. In Rawls, the cultural premises of his argument on the ‘initial condition’ remain hidden, while in Kymlicka the cultural comes on the agenda in a rather restricted way. He pleads for attention to the cultural learning processes which sustain interactive citizenship practices, as thematised, for instance, by Jürgen Habermas. However, even this does not bring the full complexity of cultural citizenship today into the picture. Van Oenen argues that the ‘interactive’ citizenship practices in welfare societies since the 1970s have reverted into an ‘interpassive’ citizenship, a term borrowed from Slavoj Žižek and Robert Pfaller. The communicatively overburdened emancipated citizen, who in principle can live by the Kantian principle of autonomy, i.e. by self-set rules, starts to defect. Van Oenen calls this the ‘interactive metal fatigue’ of the interactive citizen. The interpassive citizen allows state and commercial mechanisms to manage and steer the necessary interactions. This results in a corollary of the Dialectic of Enlightenment, now in the form of a dialectic of interactivity, where the cultural citizen gets entangled in new relations of dependency on and opposition to a system that is principally of his or her own making.

The second part of this issue studies how ‘Cultural practice goes political’. The starting points here are various developments in society and culture, rather than political theories. René Boomkens traces the turbulent case of Dutch cultural politics in the past decade. In the context of rows around immigration issues and the sudden appearance of extremely conservative and populist movements, the focus of attention became Muslims and Islam. Politics took on the shape of a cultural war. This article studies how Dutch government policy tried to cope with this polarisation and distinguishes various stages in the reshaping of its cultural policy. Boomkens focuses on the Council for Culture that advises the Dutch government on issues of culture and the arts. It has advanced new conceptions of citizenship in which the cultural dimension is highlighted and the role of new media and of transnational cultural developments is put forward as crucial and unavoidable. The article outlines how the new cultural policy tries to do justice to the new cultural condition by covering five changes in the field of cultural policy: a shift from edification to participation; a shift from an instrumentalist to a more intrinsic definition of culture; a shift from multiculturalism to a politics of difference and experiment; the transnationalisation of national politics; and the redefinition of the concept of Dutch culture.

Linking the idea of cultural citizenship to cultural activism, Pieter Boele van Hensbroek explores the possibility of a notion of cultural citizenship that can function as an activist’s tool for formulating well-directed claims against cultural exclusion. He sets out to develop such a notion and advances for that purpose a specific definition of cultural citizenship as being able to co-author the cultural context in which one lives. The argument proceeds in several steps. First, it argues that the agenda of relevant cultural
issues should go far beyond questions of cultural groups and recognition as posed in most contemporary literature. For instance, cultural exclusion on a global scale as well as exclusion within groups and exclusions effected by commercialisation of cultural processes should receive equal attention. Second, the article argues for a ‘stand-alone’ notion of cultural citizenship that is defining cultural citizenship as citizenship in the cultural sphere rather than as concerning merely cultural aspects of political citizenship. Finally, it assesses the potential of the proposed notion of cultural citizenship as compared to several competitors in the field, namely Kymlicka’s liberal communalism, Sen’s idea of cultural liberty, and approaches focussing on cultural participation. It concludes that a citizenship vocabulary has definite advantages over its competitors.

Depicting cultural action only in terms of struggles for emancipation and pluralism would be rather one-sided. Taking the Canadian context as an example, Davina Bhandar explores the shifting discourse and government practices vis-à-vis increasingly culturally diverse and multicultural societies. In Canada, official multiculturalism has been celebrated since the 1970s but became heavily challenged by the discursive framing of the ‘war on terror’ since 11 September 2001. Bhandar investigates how, increasingly, the cultural has been constituted as a disciplinary discourse that has relied upon an ontologically fixed determination of ethnic differences. She does so by investigating the public media, policy and legal discussions which erupted during the ‘Sharia Law’ debates that took place in the province of Ontario, Canada, in 2003. The development of discourse in this case remarkably fits the logic outlined by Mahmood Mamdani as ‘culture talk’. Culture talk, in the Sharia Law case, proves to be much more than just a way of framing issues in public debates. It rather gives shape to a pervasive authorising discourse, shaping a government-authorised conceptualisation of cultural citizenship in the Canadian context.

The normative political question and cultural citizenship’s normative utility

These articles find their common ground in the concerns about conceptualising cultural citizenship as described above. They differ in respect of their normative outlooks. While all are concerned with the importance of analysing the relationship of culture and citizenship with an eye to its consequences for exclusion, marginalisation and disempowerment, in their appraisal of the normative meaning of that concept they diverge. That is, they formulate different answers to the question of where to locate the normative serviceability of the concept.

Some of them take the concept to offer a substantial contribution to thinking and practising ‘better’ forms of citizenship than the prevailing ones. Stevenson places it in the perspective of a ‘local cosmopolitanism’, something that could put us on the track again of thinking about ‘the good society’. Boele likewise sees it ‘as something to be strengthened and achieved’, and capable of attending to various forms of ‘semiotic citizenship’, including the democratisation of memory, dissidents vis-à-vis cultural collectives, and actions against cultural disempowerment. Boomkens analyses developments in advisory reports on Dutch cultural policy, supporting policies that increase citizens’ ‘media wisdom’ which may do justice to the new cultural and global condition of our societies.

Such angles on cultural citizenship as ‘empowerment’ are juxtaposed to approaches that rather employ it for analytical purposes, taking it to describe but not normatively orientate citizenship, or developing an outright sceptical stance vis-à-vis its normative usages. Vega views citizenship as having been crucially linked to cultural (particularist and subjective) aspects throughout its history, and sees cultural citizenship as a concept which may emphasise that very condition. It hence needs a further political framing – a
Bhandar voices the most sceptical angle in outlining the disciplinary applications of relating citizenship to culture. She describes a ‘governmentalisation’ of citizenship in which cultural policies have teamed up with a ‘culture talk’ discourse that results in a fixing of ethnic identities ‘from above’. Van Oenen also formulates a sceptical perspective, pointing out ways in which ‘cultural’ citizenship rather concerns a specific ‘political culture’, one prominently represented in liberal political theory. It is couched in a language of emancipation and welfarism, neglecting citizens’ cultural provenances, and paradoxically results in tired, ‘interpassive’ citizens.

We hope to have succeeded in putting together a collection of papers that offers a broad range of perspectives, which nevertheless converge in their commitment to broaden the range of political philosophy’s dealings with cultural citizenship and to keep alive a deep normative involvement in present-day’s cultural turnings of the political.

Notes
2. We want to add that this introduction expresses our own opinions, not necessarily those of the other contributors.
3. One might approach these levels of normativity through the distinction between the ontic and ontological levels of politics, that is, the difference between the many political practices a society harbours and the political as a principle of the very institution of society. This Heideggerian idiom is taken up by e.g. Chantal Mouffe (2005, esp. chapter 2). When we speak of the normative political question, we locate it on the ontological level where ‘the political’ makes possible what (and who) will come into social existence.
4. For the latter see Weeks (1998), Isin and Wood (1999), Richardson and Turner (2001), Lister (2003), who discuss the concept of ‘sexual citizenship’.
5. Kalberg (1993) is a further example.
6. We could add a related strand of discussion, which is the novel reception and further elaboration of the philosophy of recognition. Axel Honneth (1992, English translation 1996) is the seminal text here, revisiting in particular the Hegelian approach of social conflict. The normative stakes of this type of theory in many ways resemble Young’s. We cannot discuss here this branch of social philosophy, which itself has generated a vast debate.
7. For an overview of the many angles, see Stevenson (2003), the acclaimed first initiative to a systematic discussion of the idea of cultural citizenship.
8. See for instance Pakulski (1997). We should add that Kymlicka’s later title from 2001 has joined his 1995 book in the ensuing debates.
9. To avoid misunderstandings, we do not refer here to the ‘republican’ political ideology embraced by states like France, but to the political-theoretical tradition of republicanism or civic humanism. This obviously is a strained reference. As far as Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one of this tradition’s protagonists, he reveals one problem of this strand of political thinking for any theory of cultural citizenship. He thought that politics’ task was to bring the citizen back into a beneficial ‘wholeness’ – he called the citizen a fractional number who finds his denominator but in the whole of the citizens (Rousseau 1991, pp. 39–40). Such a communitarian detour, however, is a gratuitous impairment of republican thought. We may say that ‘cultural citizenship’ precisely assumes the citizen to be a ‘fractional number’: it targets the ideas of a civic commonality, assuming it a hegemonic, disciplining and excluding one, and of the classic citizen, assuming it a figure not beyond but affected by hybrid subjectivities. The concept deserves republican-inspired inquiries in deviation from communitarian ones. Republicanism has historically been a vital alternative to liberalism – which in the Taylor-Kymlicka kind, deplorably, makes advances only to communitarianism.
References


