The ‘Multi-Layered Citizen’

CITIZENSHIP IN THE AGE OF ‘GLOCALIZATION’

NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS
University of Greenwich, London

Abstract

The paper argues that citizenship needs to be understood as a multi-layered construct, in which one’s citizenship in collectivities in the different layers – local, ethnic, national, state, cross- or trans-state and supra-state – is affected and often at least partly constructed by the relationships and positionings of each layer in specific historical context. This is of particular importance if we want to examine citizenship in a gendered non westocentric way. The paper explores some of the central issues which affect contemporary citizenships, in particular those relating to constructions of borders of boundaries, starting from the boundary between ‘private’ and ‘public’ and then looking at state borders and collectivities’ boundaries. The effects on citizenship of the new modes of communication and transport, as well as the contradictory expansions and defensive closures of people’s identities states are also explored.

Keywords
citizenship, community, policy, borders, boundaries, fundamentalism, women, private/public

The debate on women’s citizenship has developed considerably during the last few years, with a multitude of papers and books examining the gendered character of citizenship (e.g. Pateman 1988; Vogel 1991; Walby 1994; Jones 1997). Such discussions have pointed out, among other things, that women are not just late comers to citizenship, as many would like to believe, but that their exclusion and association with the domestic ‘private’ domain, has been part of the more general political character of the ‘fraternal’ enlightenment project. Moreover, social citizenship has been dependent on gender divisions of labour within the familial as well as the public civil and state domains. As O’Connor and Orloff explain, the distributive function of the welfare state, as
well as its caring facilities, which constitute the basis of much of what is known as ‘social citizenship’, has been dependent on gender divisions of labour within the familial as well as the public civil and state domains (O’Connor 1993; Orloff 1993).

These insights, while crucial in themselves for the understanding of issues of contemporary citizenship, have been limited by two interconnected constraints. First, they have very often been westocentric, dealing exclusively with western modes of citizenship that exclude the majority of the world’s population, and second, much of this writing has tended to relate to the category ‘women’ as basically homogeneous, moulded in some idealized notion of a white, heterosexual, often middle class, western woman.

Two recent conferences have taken place under the title ‘Women, Citizenship and Difference’ – at the University of Greenwich in London in July 1996 and at the Australian National University in March 1998 (see Feminist Review 1997 and Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999 for papers delivered at the Greenwich conference). These conferences signal a new stage in feminist thinking on citizenship which has broken through the above constraints. The papers in these conferences attempted to deconstruct the category of ‘woman’ and to discuss the varied and multi-layered ways in which women’s citizenship is constructed.

The present article pursues issues raised in these conferences, concentrating in particular on those relating to contemporary constructions of borders and boundaries, starting from the boundary between ‘the private’ and ‘the public’ and then looking at state borders and collectivities’ boundaries. These issues, I would argue, are crucial as a frame of any contemporary analysis of women, citizenship and difference. The main argument of the article is that in order to understand the relationship of people in general, and women in particular, to politics and society at the end of the second millennium, there is a need to separate analytically citizenship from the ‘nation-state’. At the same time the underlying view in the article is that it is important to keep – and expand – the notion of citizenship rather than abolish it. However, citizenship in this article is defined as a multi-layered construct not limited to the so-called ‘nation-state’. This is because it is important to differentiate between identification and participation in collectivities and polities – a differentiation that identity politics usually fails to make.

WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP?

Citizenship is a contested concept (Lister 1997: 3). Historically, the notion of citizenship first appeared in certain cities – the Greek polis – where it was defined by the Aristotelian notion of ‘ruling as well as being ruled’ (Allen and Macy 1990). Other models of western citizenship developed in the Roman empire and in Medieval cities (Shafrir 1998). The association of citizenship with the ‘nation-state’ first appeared in the French revolution, although the
connotation of the French word ‘citoyen’ is much wider than a formal right to vote or to carry a passport of a particular state. It depicts a more total relationship between the individual and society.

As Carol Pateman (1988), Rebecca Grant (1991), Ursula Vogel (1991) and others have pointed out, these ‘individuals’ were constructed in a specifically gendered way that originally, at least, excluded women. Other excluding dimensions of the construction of ‘the citizen’ concerned class and race. Pateman links the ‘social contract’ of the republican ‘fraternity’ with the sexual contract which gave men the right to rule – and represent – women and children in the public domain. However, it is important to note that in spite of the deeply exclusionary nature of citizenship, the actual couching of the discourse of citizenship in universal terminology would prove a lever that was later used by a variety of social movements of the excluded, including women. Such a lever would gain them at least partial citizenship rights in a growing historical trend which Charles Taylor (1994) has called ‘the politics of recognition’.

As Brubaker (1992) pointed out, however, the construction of citizenship as a relationship between individuals and the ‘nation-state’ has not been universal. In the German tradition, for instance, the carrier of rights has been not the individual but the ethnic national collectivity. In the debate between the liberals and the republicans (e.g. Sandel 1982; Roche 1987; Oldfield 1990; Peled 1992) the argument has also been about whether the collectivity’s ‘common good’ should have priority over those of the individual’s.

T. H. Marshall (1950, 1975, 1981) has given the debate a different twist. For him the question has been not whether the relationship between the individual and the state or the collectivity and state should have priority. Marshall defines citizenship as the ‘full membership’ of the individual in the collectivity, which he calls ‘the community’. Although Marshall in his own work did not question what he perceived to be the automatic overlap between the boundaries of civil society, the nation and the state, his definition enables the problematization of such an automatic assumption of overlap, as was pointed out by Hall and Held (1989).

If citizenship, this ‘full membership in a community’, expresses itself in terms of rights and responsibilities, as Marshall and others have argued, then to the extent that those rights and responsibilities are not determined by the state but by other polities and collectivities, citizenship cannot be understood exclusively in terms of the ‘nation-state’. The hegemony of nation-state citizenship versus citizenship in other polities would be historically specific to certain times and places. It is not incidental that people who have been working on the development of the EU, such as Soysal (1994) and Delanty (1995) have been particularly articulate in pointing out the limitations of conventional perceptions on citizenship as exclusively bound to nation-states. In a recent presentation, Bryan Turner (1998) differentiated between ‘Fordist’ and ‘post-Fordist’ citizenships, the first confined to the nation-state, the second, contemporary one, transcending it (see also Holton 1998).
My own argument has been (1991a and 1997a, 1997b) that citizenship needs to be understood as a multi-layered construct, in which one’s citizenship in collectivities in the different layers – local, ethnic, national, state, cross- or trans-state and supra-state – is affected and often at least partly constructed by the relationships and positionings of each layer in specific historical context. This is of particular importance if we want to examine citizenship in a non-westocentric way. The constraints on the state in many of the post-colonial states, by local and traditional communities on the one hand and multinationals and international agencies on the other hand, would be even more noticeable than in the West. Recent technological, economic and political developments have enhanced the need for such an analytical perspective.

INTIMATE CITIZENSHIP

In constructing citizenship within the realm of the political community, the traditional discourse on citizenship has excluded the ‘private sphere’ from the realm of relevance. This is one of the major reasons, as feminist scholars like Carol Pateman (1988) and Ursula Vogel (1991) have argued, why women have been excluded from discourse on citizenship for so long. And yet family, kinship relations as well as friendships and ‘old boys’ (and increasingly girls’) networks’ have played a crucial role in establishing access to citizenship rights and obligations. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, feminists who studied the welfare state, like O’Connor (1993) and Orloff (1993), have pointed out that the distributive function of the welfare state, as well as its caring facilities, which constitute the basis of much of what is known as ‘social citizenship’, has been dependent on gender divisions of labour within the familial as well as the public civil and state domains.

However, the relevance of the familial domain to issues of citizenship does not concern only issues of welfare. Queen Elizabeth justified her delay in coming to London and talking to the people after Princess Diana’s death by her need to give first priority to her role as a grandmother comforting her grandchildren. In the British society in which children were traditionally supposed to be seen and not heard this was a significant change of public political discourse indeed. In Egypt, on the other hand, where women Ministers have to get the written permission of their husbands to be in paid labour at all, in the first instance, and additional specific ones before every trip abroad, prioritizing familial discourse over state discourse – at least where women are concerned – would be seen as a given.

Different states and societies (and the same society in different times) differ in the extent to which the institutions of the family, the market and of public administration have access to the decision-making processes of the state (Yuval-Davis 199a: 78–83). At the same time the actual delineation of particular spheres as private or public, civil or political, can vary widely among
states, among different cultural and religious communities within the same states and also among the different classes (Suad Joseph 1997). Families of the poor and the unemployed would usually suffer from much more scrutiny in their daily lives and intimate relationships than people of the middle classes.

Questions of sexuality, ability and reproduction play important roles in the ways communities and states construct the rules and regulations of membership in communities and states. No consideration of contemporary citizenship can be complete without examining the varied and changing ways in which people’s intimate lives, their families and their networks of friendship affect and are affected by their activities as citizens. The gendered body is often a site of multi-layered rules and regulations.

Technological developments have affected not only relationships between people and communities, but also the most intimate aspects of people’s lives – their health, their sexuality, their reproductive capabilities and many other aspects of their bodies’ appearance and functions (Plummer 1995). What used to be considered as the private arenas of life are being progressively penetrated and constructed by state and trans-state agencies (albeit in a differential manner in different sections of the population and in different places). These developments affect the rights and obligations of people to the different layers of communities in which they are members. One arena that is of particular importance to women’s lives and reproductive health is the use of new and highly sophisticated methods of contraceptives (like Depo-Provera and Norplant) for the purpose of population control. Familial, religious, ethnic and national positionings can affect not only the access of women to these means of birth control but can also construct, often in contradictory ways, what would be seen as their moral duty as citizens – to have as many children as possible or just the opposite – to have, at most, one child (Yuval-Davis 1996). Another issue, with the spread of the practice of surrogate motherhood, is the growing separation between the three components of motherhood – conception, gestation and rearing. As Patricia Hill-Collins (1997) points out, this separation is constructed by racial and class divisions among women in countries like the USA. As Janice Raymond (1993) points out, however, this division of labour is not only intra-national, but also international. It includes many things from mass adoptions of babies from poorer countries (but with as light skin as possible) by western middle class couples to ‘exports’ of babies' and children’s organs. According to Bakan and Stasiulius (1997), this international division of labour and ‘trade’ is crucially affected by the relations of power between the ethnic and national collectivities in which the women are members, as well as their country of origin.

CITIZENSHIP, BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES

The international division of labour among women in the domestic sphere is just one manifestation of the multi-layered environment in which people
exercise their citizenships. This environment relates to specific spaces and geographies, both physical and imaginary.

While some borders in some states are constructed along natural delineating signs such as the sea, a river or a mountain chain, other borders have been constructed as a result of complex negotiations between states, often even not the states directly concerned but the superpowers of the day. These borders were outlined as a result of the particular state of affairs and international relations at the time of negotiation. Grievances and claims by one state for bits of territory that are included in a neighbouring state are more common than not and tend to increase in intensity with any destabilization of the international balance of power. Since the fall of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s, for example, there have been more than a dozen changes of borders in Europe itself. The situation is particularly volatile around borders of ‘nation-states’ constructed after the disintegration of empires and post-colonial states in which significant national groupings reside that do not belong to the dominant national grouping in the state. Even when explicit irredentist struggles do not exist, citizenship of people who belong to minority national groupings on the borders or in specific regions relate as much to membership in their own community or the neighbouring nations as to the states where they live. Political changes such as the development of the EU or the dissolution of former Yugoslavia can accelerate such processes (Delanty 1995). It is not incidental that the Scottish devolution is taking place these days rather than some years ago.

Sometimes the number of communities and states involved and the boundaries of membership drawn can become quite complex. I recently visited, as part of an EU working group on national minorities, the borderline zone between Austria, Italy and Slovenia. The German minority in Northern Italy had good relationships with neighbouring Austria, especially the Carinthian region. The Slovenia speaking community, living in the same village, used to keep their distance from the German community and to be in a certain rival relationship, because sometimes people from the same families would define themselves as German-speaking or as Slovenian-speaking. The relationships between the two community organizations changed, however, a couple of years ago when a couple of priests from new-founded Slovenia came to the village and wanted the people, as ‘Slovenes’, to speak ‘proper’ Slovenian and to stop speaking it in the particular local dialect. These days the main support the Slovenians in the Italian village receive comes from the Ministry for Minority Affairs in Austrian Carinthia where most of the Slovenians who speak in this dialect live. Describing the citizenship of these people living in the border zone only in terms of the state in which they formally live, would be a partial story at best.
The association of citizenship with ‘nation-states’ constructs an image in which the globe is divided into different territories, each of which belongs to a nation, which ideally has its own state. The reality, of course, is very far from such a fiction. There have always been waves of immigration of populations from one country to another, as a result of wars, natural disasters, persecution of particular religious or ethnic minorities and poverty.

Many people whose countries were under European rule before and after independence, immigrated to western countries. They, and other migrants from marginal European and Middle Eastern countries were recruited to work in western countries in the post-Second World War expanding economies, and became its new ethnic minorities from the 1960s onwards (Castles and Miller 1993). The members of these new ethnic communities established themselves in new diasporic communities and their membership in their states of residence needs to be understood from their specific historical, cultural and often legal positions in the country, as well as in their relationships to their countries of origin (Brah 1996). The demise of the ‘iron curtain’ and the many regional wars in Southern Europe, the Middle East and in Africa, have added and accelerated these waves of international migration of both labourers and especially refugees. The rise of new ‘tiger economies’ has directed immigrants to countries which traditionally were not used to recruiting external migrant labour.

As Castles and Miller point out, contemporary international migration tends to be globalized, to and from a broad spectrum of countries. It is growing in scale and is led by a variety of motivations, skills and countries of origin. Women play an increasing role in all regions and in all types of migration. At the same time there are also gender-specific types of migrations. These often put women in extra vulnerable positions, as is the case when women migrate with no independent legal position as dependent on their husbands, other male relatives and in the case of domestic servants, or the sex and entertainment industries, on their employers (Phizacklea 1996). Women constitute the majority of world refugees, but in western countries the political refuge is usually given to the men even if the wives were also politically active and persecuted, and, if the husband dies they run the risk of deportations (Bhabha and Shutter 1994).

Formal citizenship is normally associated with the right to carry a passport of a specific state, which normally identifies individuals as ‘belonging’ to a specific nation-state. One of the signals of the super-state nation building of ‘Europe’ has been the issue of a European passport for all EU members. While the formal intention has been to establish a ‘borderless Europe’, the transfer of responsibility of illegal immigration to the flight and shipping companies, has resulted in many cases in even more scrupulous checking of passports than before. An international system of stratification has been created, at the top of which are found western passports which can almost always guarantee
their carriers the right of free international movements and at the bottom of which are those who have no right to carry any passport at all. There has also been a growth in the number of people who carry two, three or even more passports of different states. Interestingly, the practice of issuing passports, although so thoroughly ‘naturalized’, is only about 100 years old and the use of passports as a way of controlling immigration is even younger. In many parts of the world there exist immigrant communities which are culturally and politically committed to continue to ‘belong’ to their ‘mother country’ – or more specifically to the national collectivity from where they, their parents or their grandparents, have come. At the same time they see their own and their children’s futures as bound with the country where they live.

The rise of these ‘committed diasporas’ and their effects on their members’ citizenship in both country of residence and country of origin needs to be explored (Cohen 1997). Central to this is the question of ‘group rights’ versus ‘individual rights’ as well as the wider interrelationship between citizenship rights and questions of ‘culture and tradition’. Multi-culturalism is a double-edged sword in this regard, especially in relation to women – offering an acceptance of diverse positionings on the one hand, homogenizing and reifying these differences on the other (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: chs 2, 6; Yuval-Davis 1997a: ch. 3).

When examining issues of citizenship of those migrants, therefore, one needs to take into consideration not only their formal and informal status in the countries where they live, but also that of their countries of origin as well. Probably most important in determining it would be the relationships between the two countries and their relative position of power in the international social order. A comparison between the situation of, for example, an American student and a Somali refugee living in London, could illustrate this most forcefully.

INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

Another whole set of citizenship issues is related to indigenous minorities in settler societies. The age of western imperialism and colonialism has created ‘settler societies’, sponsored by European empires in South and North America, South and North Africa, Australia and New Zealand (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995). In these states the indigenous populations were often persecuted, exploited, exterminated and in some cases until today have not received full citizenship rights. Moreover, indigenous peoples’ movements have tended to challenge the whole basis of legitimacy of the settler societies’ states and see themselves as citizens in the communities of the stateless societies which existed in these countries before colonialism (e.g. Dickanson 1992; Reynolds 1996).

However, it is not just that in many societies indigenous populations have been very late, if at all, entrants to the formal citizenship body of the state.
It is that if their claim on the country in the form of land rights – was to be taken seriously and in full, this would totally conflict with the claim of the settler national collectivity for legitimacy. Attempts to solve the problem by transforming the indigenous population into another ‘ethnic minority’ have usually met with a strong and understandable resistance (de Lepervanche 1980). Formal treaties, which would institutionalize and anchor in law the relations between what Australian Aboriginals have been calling ‘the imposing society’ and the indigenous people, often create a complex situation in which there exist two national sovereign entities over the same territory. One that owns the state and one that attempts to establish a sovereign stateless society within it. We need to explore the implications of such conflicts for the citizenship of both the ‘indigenous’ and the settler communities, both in relation to their own communities and in relation to the state. Of particular interest for us here are the implications for the voices of indigenous women. It has been argued (Vargas and Yuval-Davis forthcoming), that the need for collective solidarity among indigenous groupings tends, sometimes, to silence dissenting voices of women within the community.

Somewhat similar, if less racialized, struggles are present in the many regionalist secessionist or irredentist movements which claim the right of national self-determination vis-à-vis their states which themselves have been constructed as nations. Such movements can be found both in and outside of Europe (e.g. in Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia, Quebec, Kurdistan, Northern Sahara). The legitimacy and state of the struggle would determine the relationships between the citizenship of people in the two contesting collectivities. Their fate might be determined these days more and more by intervention of international NGOs and governmental agencies.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AND SUPRA-NATIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AGREED MORAL AND LEGAL CODES

Citizenship and human rights are often discussed as two separate arenas – the first as associated with the national level and the second with the international one (Pateman 1996). However, human rights discourse and legislation need to be viewed as a specific layer of supra-national citizenship – the global level, which progressively affects more and more the national level and most importantly, individual citizens. This is done both by mobilizing politically around human rights discourse and by the growing use of human rights litigations in regional (e.g. the European Court of Human Rights) as well as international (e.g. the International War Crimes Tribunals) judiciaries by individuals, ‘class acts’ and international agencies (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1996). People’s membership in supra-state polities is therefore, as in states, partly direct and individual, and to a great extent mediated by their membership in other collectivities and states.
The establishment of the League of Nations after the First World War and even more so the United Nations after the Second World War, have launched an era of supra-state institutions and legislations. These institutions have acquired a growing amount of moral and legal authority over individual states and provided an important arena for new, especially post-colonial states, to make their voices heard while not obliterating the political reality of the unequal power relations of international politics. The growing visibility and effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in recent United Nations conferences – on the environment in Rio, human rights in Vienna, population policies in Cairo and women in Beijing, have added the important element of new social movements into international politics. Feminist activists, who for many years have been part of autonomous movements, started to find themselves listened to, and sometimes recruited by the UN, the World Bank, official aid organizations, etc. This has presented opportunities as well as dangers of incorporation and cooptation for these activists. However, it is clear that even if sometimes the change is only cosmetic, there has been a change of style, and occasionally of substance in hegemonic discourses concerning a variety of important policy issues (e.g. the linkage of population policies with women’s reproductive rights and health).

At the same time, however, as Yasmin Soysal (1994) has pointed out, there is a certain paradox in the growing importance of the supra-national authority of human rights declarations and treaties. While they are aimed at controlling and guiding state agencies, the executors of these international codes of rights and the members of international bodies are still the states, and no international agency has the right to ‘interfere in the internal affairs’ of these states. Nevertheless, given that most recent wars have taken place within states between different ethnic/national groupings and not between states, and that the UN or other supra-state forces such as NATO have gone to these countries as ‘peace keepers’, even that accepted rule seems to be crumbling. The viability of states as representing the only significant political frameworks of populations is crumbling with it.

NGOs and networks of women have been very active in all these processes (Ashworth 1995). It is probably not incidental that the new post of the UN Director of Human Rights is Mary Robinson, who, as a president of the Republic of Ireland, has done a lot to transform the nature of women’s citizenship there. Women often benefit most from the lever supra- and interstate organizations and funding can give them, as often patriarchal social and economic structures deny them any effective autonomous access to money and power.

It is important to remember, however, that it is not only the UN and its associated organizations, NATO or even regional organizations like the EU or, much weaker ones, like the Arab League, for instance, which constitute the international forums affecting people's memberships in their communities and states. International religious organizations/projects like the Catholic Church or the Muslim Khalifa have important normative as well as political
projects which affect people’s affiliations and ways of life. Constructions of womanhood often play central symbolic roles in the cultural reproduction of national, religious and other collectivities. They are seen as the embodiments of the collectivity, its symbolic borderguards who, in their behaviour, carry the honour of the collectivity as well as transmit its cultural heritage to the next generation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997a: ch. 3). As such, they are often central targets of the normative and political projects of international religious movements. This may have crucial effects on the nature of women’s participation and membership in these collectivities.

**THE SHIFTS IN THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF TIME/SPACE THROUGH TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS, ESPECIALLY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Globalization is not a new ‘post-modernist’ phenomenon. It has existed in a variety of forms and to a lesser or greater degree as a side-effect of imperialism and international capitalism. However, modern technologies have enabled the transfer of people and goods in a fraction of the time that used to be required before the age of the aeroplane. The development of mass communications, especially of radio and then television, has also exposed a growing percentage of the global populations to similar images and messages. The development of cable TV and the CNN-type of world news has had the effect of presenting events such as wars, famine and massacres in an immediate, supposedly unmediated, form which has brought them to the daily agendas of people from societies and places located physically very far away. It has also enabled immigrants and their children to continue to be exposed to news and films from their countries of origin.

The development of the Internet and the possibility of interactive communication in ‘virtual communities’ have accelerated that process in an unprecedented way. Bangladeshi people from East London have been telling how they manage to keep in touch with all their village news in Bangladesh and to take part in the decision-making processes there, thus continuing their effective citizenship in those communities. At the same time it has also enabled new communities to emerge in ways which transcend boundaries of time and space (*Geographical Review* 1997). Some of these communities relate to political projects of existing ‘imagined communities’. Others are created across such boundaries. The Internet sites of women’s networks pre- and post-the Beijing UN conference were highly effective (Rodgers 1998) as is at the moment an Internet site set up by UNIFEM to gather information on violence against women internationally.
Up to now I have discussed factors and processes which construct people’s lives and citizenship in general and women’s in particular in diverse and multi-layered ways. However, it is important also to mention that many people feel insecure and threatened by this complex and unstable social and political environment. While many celebrate the richness of multi-cultural societies, hybrid ‘travelling cultures’ and the ability to challenge authoritarian cultural and political traditions (Clifford 1992; Gilroy 1997), others look for ways to defend themselves from what they foresee as complete social disintegration and loss of cultural heritage and political autonomy (Stolcke 1995). Majorities fear being ‘swamped’ by racial and ethnic minorities and minorities fear assimilation and collective disappearance. In the context of the growing rate of mixed marriages among western Jews the term ‘demographic holocaust’ has been known to be mentioned (Yuval-Davis 1987). At the same time racism, immigration legislation and what the Canadian government calls ‘visibility’ of minorities can often trap people in enforced identities from which assimilation, as a strategy of self-defence, is not possible. If citizenship is defined as full membership in the community, the lived experience of such people would often be dominated by encountering the varying ways and measures by which they are excluded from such membership (e.g. Wrench and Solomos 1993).

Ethnic and religious fundamentalist movements feed on such feelings of threat and helplessness (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis 1992). People seek assurances in definitions of identities and cultures which are fixed and immutable, an inherent characteristic of people who belong to a specific community of origin. Anybody different or external to the boundaries of the community thus defined would be perceived as inherently incompatible, and thus any mixing would inevitably end in disaster – in ‘rivers of blood’ to use Enoch Powell’s famous (false) prediction (Barker 1981).

It is the same Enoch Powell who is rumoured to have defined a nation as ‘two or more males defending a territory with the women and children’. Women often are constructed as symbols of the collectivity, its biological and cultural reproducers (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997a).

As such, women, their bodies and their behaviour usually occupy centre roles in fundamentalist rules and regulations concerning women’s ‘modesty’, ‘honour’ and domesticity (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis 1992). Processes of globalization often offer women autonomous access to the money economy for the first time, although usually in very exploitable and vulnerable ways (e.g. Pettman 1999). At the same time these changes seem threatening to traditional male domination and the traditional family. While changes in women’s traditional roles often symbolize processes of modernization, their confinement to symbolic traditional familial roles are often at the heart of fundamentalist projects (Yuval Davis 1997a: ch. 3).
As Gita Sahgal and I have commented elsewhere (1992), some multiculturalist notions of difference create a space for fundamentalist leaderships to rise and gain legitimacy as ‘representing’ the community. This is a result of the tendency of multiculturalist policies to often homogenize minorities and to attribute to all their members the same relationship to their ‘culture and tradition’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).

This clearly has to be rejected. At the same time, as Iris Marion Young (1989), Balibar (1990) and Kymlicka (1995), among others, have shown the classical liberal – and Marxist (Marx 1975) – notions of citizenship that adopt an individualist ‘universalist’ approach in which differences among citizens are seen as irrelevant, becomes, as a result, exclusionary and discriminatory. People’s membership in a state, their rights and responsibilities, are mediated by their membership in other collectivities and polities, sub-, cross- and supra-state. Therefore, their positioning in that respect, as well as in terms of their class, gender, sexuality, stage in the life cycle, ability, etc., have to be acknowledged in any citizenship project that in principle, at least, would be inclusionary and democratic. The Marshallian social welfare state catered for some class differences, but other modes of differences have been largely ignored.4

In our introduction to the book Women, Citizenship and Difference (Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999), Pnina Werbner ‘imported’ an anthropological theory by Dumont (1972) on ‘encompassment’. This theory points out that often (in the case of Dumont he was discussing the Indian caste system), contradictory value systems, do not exclude each other socially, but rather encompass each other. Essentialist notions of difference, promoted by ethnic and religious fundamentalist movements, are very different from the notions of difference promoted by those of us who believe in the importance of incorporating notions of difference into democracy. In the first case notions of difference replace notions of equality – in the second case they encompass it.

Notions of difference that encompass notions of equality are not hierarchical and assume a priori respect to others’ positionings – which includes acknowledgement of their differential social, economic and political power. This is the basis for dialogical transversal citizenship (Yuval-Davis 1994, 1997a, 1997b); the ‘grammar for democratic conduct’ (Mouffe 1992: 238). As the Italian feminists in Bologna taught us, such a grammar has to include ‘rooting’ and ‘shifting’ (Yuval-Davis 1994) – acknowledgement of one’s own positioning(s) while empathizing with the ways others’ positionings construct their gaze at the world.

In transversal citizenship politics, therefore, difference encompasses equality and perceived unity and homogeneity are replaced by dialogues that give recognition to the specific positionings of those who participate in them as well as the ‘unfinished knowledge’ (Hill-Collins 1990: 236) that each such
positioning can offer. Crucial to such an epistemological and political approach is the differentiation between identification and participation as well as between identity and positioning. Group identities – ethnic, national, racial – tend to repress or marginalize differences among the members of the groupings – whether identified as ‘us’ or ‘them’. However, the nature of participation – of the membership – of the citizenship of people in these groupings, is thoroughly affected by their positionings – social, economic, political and legal.

Much of the impetus of the development of the identity politics of social movements, including the feminist movement, has been driven by such a recognition on a national scale. There is growing acknowledgement that nation-state citizenships are gendered, racialized, heterosexualized, as well as class differentiated. Such differences exist and affect the mode of participation of people also in the other intersecting layers of collectivities in which people operate. And as mentioned above, what affects people’s citizenships in the nation-state is influenced not only by their individual positionings but also by the positionings of the other collectivities in which they are members, whether these are other nation-states, local communities, cross- and supra-states. Religious codes can affect the lives of women just as much – and often more – than state legislation, and soliciting the support of an international agency can sometimes be the recourse of women who are disempowered within their local communities. This is the reason why to continue and relate to citizenships only in terms of the nation-state and not membership in other collectivities/polities, makes incomprehensible the dynamics of contemporary nation-states’ citizenships themselves.

Transversal dialogue, therefore, is crucial for common political action. Transversal politics, nevertheless, does not assume that the dialogue is boundary free, and that each conflict of interest is reconcilable – although, as Jindy Pettman points out ‘there are almost always possibilities for congenial or at least tolerable personal, social and political engagements’ (1992: 157). The boundaries of a transversal dialogue are determined, however, by the message, rather than the messengers. In other words, in addition to differentiating between identity and participating, transversal politics differentiate between social identities and social values (Assiter 1996: ch. 5).

It is for these reasons that the discourse of citizenship, of multi-layered memberships in collectivities, with all the rights and responsibilities this involves, has become so attractive to feminists in the last decade, especially around and after the Beijing UN conference. It offers us an alternative to the discourse of identity politics that fragmented the women’s movement. It offers us a relational contextual tool within which to situate specific campaigns such as on reproductive health, poverty or political participation. It also offers us a particular way of dialogue and coalition building across, at least, three levels of difference – among women in different positionings within one country, among women’s networks and NGOs in different countries and among women’s movements and the state – local, national, supra-national. This latter issue has been the most important – and perplexing – in societies, like in Latin
America, in which the women’s movement has been for many years completely autonomous from the state, governed by military dictatorships. The gradual transition of these states into parliamentary democracies introduced fresh opportunities – and challenges – to the women’s movements in these countries (Vargas and Yuval-Davis forthcoming). However, the same basic questions of how to cooperate without being coopted, to participate without stepping beyond the boundaries of compatible values – is common to feminist movements everywhere.

The notion of multi-layered transversal citizenship in which difference encompasses equality might not answer all those questions, but, I believe, it poses them within the right frame.

Nira Yuval-Davis
Professor in Gender and Ethnic Studies
School of Social Science
University of Greenwich
London SE9 2UG
UK
Tel {0}181-331-8934
Fax {0}181-331-8905
Email: N.Yuvaldavis@gre.ac.uk

Notes
1 This is a revised version of the keynote address to the ‘Women, Citizenship and Difference’ conference at Australian National University in March 1998.
2 For other important recent feminist work on women and citizenship see, for example, Lister (1997) and the special issue of Hypatia (1997).
3 For more elaboration of this point see ch. 6 in my book Gender and Nation (1997a).
4 For further elaboration of this point see Yuval–Davis (1997a: ch. 4 or 1997b).

References


