

Book Review

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ENACTING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

by Engin F Isin and Michael Saward (eds)

Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 9781107033962 (hb)

It has been 20 years since the introduction of EU citizenship by the Maastricht Treaty. Marking this anniversary, the year 2013 was announced as the 'European Year of Citizens' by the European Commission which looks determined to continue its activities during 2014, the year of the European Elections. During the closing conference of the European Year of Citizens 2013 in Vilnius, the European Ombudsman acknowledged that 'EU citizenship is now in crisis' and that:

The EU has been going through not only an economic crisis but an identity and legitimacy crisis over the past few years. This is a time therefore when we need to keep foremost in our minds those values and principles on which the EU was founded [...].¹

The Eurozone crisis and the rise of nationalistic and Eurosceptic political campaigns in many EU member countries, coupled with increasing public indifference towards European integration ring alarm bells about the European project. On the other hand, such crises may strengthen the EU by motivating self-criticism, problem-solving and creativity. Ultimately the EU-led integration processes can be credited for the ongoing peace and improved living standards on the continent. Whether EU citizenship has succeeded in forging a common identity and loyalty at the European level is another question. However, it is important to remember that the EU opposes a trade-off between national and European identity and insists that EU citizenship is complementary to national citizenship.

In this context, the edited volume *Enacting European Citizenship* by Engin Isin and Michael Saward seeks to correct several misleading tendencies that prevail in the relevant literature. First, it suggests studying Europe as a broader category (or 'assemblage') involving not only the EU but also other European institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe. Second, it defines citizenship as more than a formal arrangement or legal status granted by institutions. By petitioning European Courts, contacting European politicians, invoking European documents and norms, and attributing political and moral responsibility to European institutions, individuals 'enact' themselves as European citizens (p. 66). 'Enacting' is an uncommon term in European and citizenship studies but following the 'performative turn' in political and social theory, it puts forward a dynamic and relational understanding of European citizenship. This allows individuals who are not recognised by law as 'citizens' to break the existing institutional scripts (defined as 'rupture' in the book) and claim the right to take up rights as if they were European citizens (p.21). In other words: 'Acts of European citizenship are committed many times, in many

¹ Official website of European Ombudsman, 2013
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/activities/speech.faces/en/52763/html.bookmark>

places (in and outside the formal borders of the EU), by a great variety of groups and people (citizens and non-citizens, elites and the powerless)' (p. 231).

In this context, the book brings to the fore controversies arising from the complex interplays between the EU and its internal and external 'Others' in Europe, i.e. formal citizens of the EU who are marginalised from formal politics, and those who are not EU citizens but claim a European right to have rights (p.55). While mainstream literature assumes that these groups are merely passive 'objects of state acts', this book suggests taking the claims of these marginalised groups more seriously: those who become 'visible' in order to claim further rights and recognition are also enacting themselves as European citizens (p.195).

Chapters 1 and 2 set out the conceptual framework and tools (such as scripts or the difference between active and activist citizenship) that help to understand the innovative and critical thinking underlying this research. This conceptual framework is applied consistently to analysis in each of the following chapters. This may present a challenge to those readers who are unfamiliar with the performativity literature (based, for instance, on Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou) and the previous works of project leaders, Engin Isin and Michael Saward. For example, for the uninitiated, the difference between act and action (p. 24-25) or the difference between polity-activating and polity-constituting (p. 221) may look complicated. However, it is worth persevering. The volume covers the key debates on European citizenship but with a special emphasis on the need for methodological innovation. This is in line with the book's main theme: 'Enacting' implies that rather than starting with the question 'Who is the citizen?', researchers should focus on 'What makes the citizen?' and start with accounts of marginalised groups.

On this basis, the authors examine various cases, including sex workers in Italy (chapter 3), the Kurds and religious minorities of Turkey (chapter 4), an LGBT organisation based in Latvia (chapter 5), the stateless (chapter 6), the Roma and Sinti in Western Europe (chapters 7-9), and asylum-seekers in Hungary (chapter 10). The Turkish case stands out as the only chapter that deals with the case of people who are both non-citizens and non-residents but whose claims to European rights transform European citizenship. It explains how the thesis of European citizenship can be valid in the Turkish case, which is probably the least likely case given the high uncertainty about Turkey's future in Europe. Defining Europe in a broad sense, the chapter introduces the cases of Kurds and non-Muslims in Turkey as a case of 'Enacting European citizenship' through the European Court of Human Rights, informal networks and references to Europe. Chapter 8 provides a useful comparison of those Roma who are legally EU citizens (holding Bulgarian and Romanian passports) and those Roma communities who sought asylum in Europe after the Kosovo war and have been resident in European member countries for more than a decade. The deportation of Roma has violated EU law and customary international law. This chapter also discusses the national government's efforts to frame this deportation as 'voluntary repatriation' reinforced by the EU's approach to Kosovo. Both chapter 9 on Roma and chapter 10 on asylum-seeking stress the dualistic impact of the EU on European citizenship: it is simultaneously facilitating and hindering European citizenship. It helps non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and professionals (for example the judiciary) to expand rights and the scope of European citizenship even while it serves as a platform for national governments to 'securitise' and restrict these (p. 191, 203). In the final chapter, Michael Saward extends the debate to include the question of the 'democratic deficit' within the EU by providing a critical review of the European Citizens' Initiative introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

On a more critical note, the book could have treated the terms 'legitimacy' and 'global' more seriously. It is possible to read this book as a contestation of the EU's legitimacy (and its 'scripted citizenship') in representing the whole set of the formal and informal processes underlying European citizenship. Also, claims for the 'European right to claim rights' can be defined as a quest for being recognised as legitimate actors in the European system. Many chapters emphasise the 'universal' character of European standards and the cross-national solidarity, but they often exclude the global

from the set of 'scales' underlying the multi-layered citizenship. Additionally, *Enacting European Citizenship* demonstrates that European citizenship is not limited to activities in courts and governments. Accordingly, case selection could have better reflected this and included more cases that go beyond the courts and state institutions. Finally, there needed to be more visual materials, especially for chapter 8, to supplement its photograph of Romani children escaping deportation (p. 155).

The main strength of this book lies in its empirically rich cases based on interview findings, which uncover first the tensions between national governments and EU institutions, including the EU's criticisms against French deportation of Roma (chapter 9) and the EU's contestations over states' right to take away citizenship (chapter 6). It also brings to the fore the competition between different national institutions. For instance, chapter 10 reveals the competition between the judiciary and the immigration office in Hungary. Finally, the authors identified the need to posit the idea of an interesting competition between the different visions of European citizenship. Chapters 5 and 8 criticise those narrow, technical and depoliticised visions of European citizenship that pervade the literature and suggest a more humanistic vision that acknowledges the role of politics in legal processes and prioritises individual freedoms more than state security.

As a challenging but conceptually and empirically rich volume of work, this book is highly recommended to advanced students of European citizenship, minority rights, migration, and democracy.
