

Book Review

Recasting the Social in Citizenship. Engin F. Isin (Ed). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8020-9637-1

Recasting the Social in Citizenship evolved from a collaborative effort: two SSHRC projects undertaken by Engin F. Isin and a team of innovative and accredited scholars in the field of citizenship studies, who have drawn attention to the urgent need to revisit the concept of citizenship and social governance following the tumultuous years of neoliberal restructuring that has led to significant shifts in the dominant paradigm of citizenship. *Recasting* calls into question the traditional assumptions, representations and dominant ideologies that have shaped and influenced the concept of citizenship, moving beyond dualistic positions of rights and responsibilities predicated on the static legal status of abstract individuals in nation-states. In a systematic attempt to bridge the gap between citizen and state, this volume proposes to *recast* citizenship as a social *practice* rather than a status or institutionalized condition bestowed upon the individual by the state. It is in the very sense of “enactment” that citizenship is *social* (p. 7).

This volume presents comprehensive and well-structured arguments that are approached from multiple angles ranging from urban, multicultural and transnational citizenship to the gendered and ecological implications of citizenship grounded upon a supposition of the necessity to *recast* (rather than to *rethink* or *reframe*) the “social” in citizenship insofar as it provides a broader, deeper conception of the social understanding of how rights and obligations develop as social claims and demands. Furthermore, the book invites readers to rethink the notion of citizenship beyond its abstract, universal and static aspects and seeks to re-cast light on the “social” dimension that has been eroded (if not destroyed) in postmodern times. Subsequently, the “social” in citizenship (which is determined by social behaviours, rather than civil or political affiliations) has taken the back seat to cultural and identity politics, while the ties that traditionally bound people to the state have weakened, leading to the inevitable demise of the welfare state, as rampant individualism advanced by neoconservative and neoliberal governance has taken precedence over collective interests.

The scholars (Janine Brodie, Danielle Juteau and Paul Kershaw, amongst others) who have contributed chapters to this volume are devoted to a thorough and insightful investigation that invokes the problematization of citizenship through the social lens, though not merely limiting the arguments and debates over citizen rights and responsibilities; rather, the authors approach citizenship as a multifaceted, ever-changing process responsive to changing political and economic circumstances, and deploy the “social” as an adjective – as expressed by the terms “social cohesion,” “social capital,” “social exclusion” (and inclusion) and “social economy” – that they propose to recast by bringing distinct and “seemingly unrelated aspects of debates over various forms of citizenship into a sharper and shared focus” (p. 3). In an attempt to bring these important and complex issues of citizenship within a theoretical framework of *the social in citizenship*, the authors not only adopt – as points of departure – the traditional debates over social citizenship that have been called into question over the last two decades “under the umbrella terms of ‘retreat’ and ‘decline’ of the welfare state” (p. 3) but also scrutinize debates on multiculturalism, cohesion, integration and diversity, as well as debates over the *nature* of the social. In other words, to recast the social in citizenship involves a thorough-going interrogation

of existing normative, essentialist and idealist assumptions and truth claims by casting light on new emerging truths, thus subverting commonly held assumptions about citizenship.

The chapters presented in this volume reflect the substantial and unrelenting tensions in contextualizing and historicizing citizenship. Janine Brodie retraces the formative years of the rise of social citizenship, from the nineteenth century through to early twentieth-century Canada, and examines the changes in social policy and ideology, pointing to historical accounts marking the emergence of the “social” as a distinctive idiom (p. 28), and scrutinizing and moving beyond the popular but highly contested Marshallian paradigm of citizenship, which is defined by membership and entitlements (civil, social and political rights). Brodie discusses the contemporary shift in social governance from a regime of social citizenship rights and redistributive politics to new emerging concepts of social inclusion, social capital and social economy, and explores the obstacles in recasting the social in citizenship in this era of neoliberal globalism that only aims to subordinate social goals to economic ones, “relegating the very ideas of the social and social citizenship as we have come to understand them to history’s dustbin” (p. 39). Brodie concludes that the social has dissolved into material logics and individualism, and that the new way of thinking (about) the social is crucial to contemporary citizenship studies.

Danielle Juteau and Sirma Bilge formulate a critique on the exclusionary underpinnings of multiculturalism, but approach multiculturalism from different angles. Juteau moves away from the dominant philosophical perspectives of mosaic-like and “ready-mix” multiculturalism that have effectively and essentially failed to address structural inequalities, and adopts a sociological account that focuses on the multidimensionality of social relations that acknowledges the existence of power relations and differentiated social positions. In an attempt to reunite the concepts of “recognition” and “redistribution,” Juteau scrutinizes the shortcomings of Nancy Fraser’s arguments rejecting recognition and redistribution as mutually exclusive alternatives. Bilge, on the other hand, engages in a critique of multiculturalism and discusses the ideological underpinnings of the dominant representation that portrays multiculturalism as a threat to minority women and attempts to explore how gender equality has become a definite ground upon which to challenge the legitimacy of multiculturalism (p. 102). Bilge further argues that “the feminist project has become instrumental for advocating withdrawal from multiculturalism” (p. 102) and aims to “disrupt the growing consensus over the culpability of multiculturalism” (p. 102) as she sets out to unravel the ideological foundations of the most efficient and widespread critique that renders multiculturalism perilous and threatening to women.

Paul Kershaw’s chapter nicely complements Juteau’s and Blige. Kershaw examines the caregiving model of citizenship and recasts the social in citizenship by adopting a feminist perspective; he brings into focus the persistent patriarchal division of care that represents extensive male “free-riding” on female care, which consequently perpetuates exploitative male dependency on this particular kind of “feminized” labour, and which ultimately undermines equality of opportunity by placing women at risk of economic insecurity and marginalizing them from important social areas. Through the concept of “carefair,” Kershaw turns the spotlight on governments, which have a duty to encourage and facilitate an equitable distribution of caregiving across sexes, classes and ethnic groups, and urges fathers to “rescind their patriarchal dividend” (p. 55) and undertake their “fair share” of caregiving responsibilities. Kershaw seeks to resist the private/public dichotomy and aims to establish a balance between earning and caring, work and life, men and women. Kershaw also explores caregiving in developing

countries and investigates the relationships amongst caregiving, identity and social inclusion “to illuminate the significance of care for struggles of recognition” (p. 55).

Daiva Stasiulis explores social citizenship through the lens of transnational mobilities and discusses how globalization has fuelled the growth of migration, leaving many people in host countries with partial, limited or no access to citizenship rights, while Xiaobei Chen adopts a Foucauldian perspective of biopolitics to consider children as independent bearers of citizenship rights. Deborah Cowen discusses the marginality of military citizens and how the soldier is understood to be a “peripheral and exceptional player” (p. 16). Kim Rygiel smoothly transitions to a chapter that discusses the securitization process. Alluding to the “war on terror,” Rygiel discusses the shifting patterns of migration and immigration and border-control detention practices as “securitization processes,” implemented across the globe after 9/11, that have marginalized groups of people as “threatening” or “undesirable.” Such processes, claims Rygiel, “reveal the contested nature of citizenship” (p. 212). Lastly, Alex Latta investigates the very crucial and under-theorized topic of environmental citizenship, criticizing the existing literature on environmental citizenship from an ecological perspective by drawing attention to the fact that we not only inhabit social spaces but ecological spaces and that attention must urgently be paid to ecological spaces and identities.

Engin Isin wraps up the volume by emphasizing that citizenship is social before it can be civil or political, a reversal of the Marshallian conception of citizenship that puts the civil and the political before the social. “The idea that citizenship is social before civil or political,” adds Isin, “rests on the idea that the social produces subjects who have the right to have rights” (p. 282).

Recasting the Social in Citizenship is an important volume for the study of social citizenship, which remains an elusive and complex, yet salient and promising, area of study. However, the array of arguments and perspectives presented in this volume indeed cast – re-cast – light on the often-blurred conceptions of citizenship. This book is sure to appeal to a broad range of readers studying in the fields of political science, sociology and social policy, from students and academics to policy makers, particularly those concerned with issues related to the child, soldier and ecological citizen, to gender and cultural equality, and to citizenship and immigration, and provides different and unique approaches in investigating citizenship.

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