

# Citizens of Our Time: A Foreword

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Citizenship is a very topical issue, not only as a concept, but also an institution which relates to a number of social issues: old and new rights, collective memberships, economic inequalities, cultural differences, welfare and identifications. Today, status differences seem to pose barriers once again. At the European level, citizenship reflects benefits and threats, the ‘other modernities’ do not seem attracted by citizenship, while the cuts to welfare reduce the effectiveness of citizens’ actions and undermine their quality of life. Not surprisingly, citizenship is today hypothesized to become ‘light’, although still hard to access by foreigners. Still, ‘citizenship’ is a widely used concept in the social sciences, because of its great evocative power, as a kind of a summary of Europe’s social and political quintessence. Citizenship is evoked when discussing civiness, participation, nationality, or community. As a consequence we risk an abuse of a suggestive and almost monumental concept. In effect, citizenship and its inherent contradictions are now not only a source of conceptual wealth, but also of confusion. It appears to be a semantically dense concept, a sort of ‘conceptual cluster’, indispensable for deciphering a complex world traversed by contradictory sets of social dynamics.

Since the Second World War, however, the affirmation of citizenship, in the fullness of its rights and in the efficacy of its services, has achieved a fundamental social objective: it has helped to reduce inequality<sup>1</sup>. There has not

<sup>1</sup> At the end of the Second World War, when Europe had to be almost entirely rebuilt on its democratic and economic foundations, the establishment of the Welfare State was undoubtedly crucial for the affirmation of citizenship (Flora P. and Heidenheimer A.J. (eds.), *The Development of the Welfare State in Europe and America*, Transaction Book, New Brunswick 1981; Titmuss H.S., *Essays on Welfare State*, Allen and Unwin, London 1986) – though in this connection it is only fair to record that there are also some highly critical interpretations (Bartolomew J., *The Welfare of Nations*, Biteback Publishing, London 2015). Today, the Welfare State is increasingly the Welfare Society, i.e. it involves all sectors of society, and not just the public sector, in the

simply been an attempt to reduce poverty, but a far more complex one to promote a higher degree of social inclusion. It is thanks to citizenship that we have seen the entry of the masses into the State, as the result of the diffusion of material resources and of cognitive instruments guaranteed by individual and universal rights. These allow people to act on the basis of a higher degree of availability, of competence and of awareness. The expansion of citizenship both in quantitative terms, with the formulation of universal suffrage (the enfranchisement of women), and in qualitative terms, with the formulation of social rights (the launching of an articulated system of social protection, for the benefit of the disadvantaged), has resulted in the extension of minimum conditions of protection and, above all, of equal dignity for all members of the same society. This has meant a progressive attenuation of gender and class differences through the formal possession of a single univocal status. These differences no longer constitute a crucial discrimination, and are no longer a serious impediment to living a worthwhile life; everyone is guaranteed the right to a real income that does not depend on his or her market value. This shows that citizenship is not merely an analytic category, but an institutional given that is both politically and socially active, the efficacy, or inefficacy, of which is tangible. Citizenship, with its scope quantitatively and qualitatively increased, that is to say increased with reference to that portion of society that enjoys it and to the range of rights that belong to it, sets into motion an inclusive dynamic that guarantees prosperity and social integration. The erosion of citizenship, on the other hand, undermines the cohesion of the body politic and impoverishes personal agency.

But the coming of the global and individualised society in our own times has revealed the emergence of many kinds of inequality. The mission of citizenship thus becomes more complicated, having to take into account the old inequalities (educational, economic, social) and to deal with differences that create new inequalities (generational, gender-related, cultural). Because of the falling birth rate and increased longevity, European society is undergoing a transformation in its generational composition that disturbs the financial equilibrium of the health and social security systems, but also affects the lifestyles and expectations of the various age groups. Relations between generations become the subject of discussions and the question of social equality is re-examined, with regard to access to the workplace, the quality of work opportunities, the maintenance of pension agreements and the standard of assistance. This demographic transformation is rendered less burdensome by the

politics of social security and emancipation (Rodger J.J., *From a Welfare State to a Welfare Society: The Changing Context of Social Policy in a Postmodern Era*, Macmillan, London 2000).

arrival of young migrants, though it brings in its wake a cultural transformation that involves increased linguistic, religious and behavioural diversity, the direct result of the economic and forced migrations of recent decades (refugees from war zones, from dictatorships, from famine and climate change). All this brings into prominence the themes of acceptance and coexistence, revealing an increasing multiplication of cultures within the European space that goes far beyond the pluralism, 'limited' to the continental level, which is implicit in the very structure of the European Union. This complexity resolves itself only in cases where recognition of the other, and of his or her needs, is combined with respect for the existing laws and institutions. These transformations, demographic and cultural, are related to the question of gender, which regards 'the other half' of society and concerns both citizens and immigrants, both young and old (even though the question of gender is a wider one and, beginning with male and female identity, goes on to embrace transgender and neutral gender issues). In these years the subject of equal opportunities has become important as never before, bringing about transformations in gender relations. This is not so much a revolution as the formation of a new sensibility. In the domestic and professional workspace, in caring, in family relations, and in the times and spaces of society, there is now (albeit more in theory than in practice) more attention paid to gender differences and thus to the role of women in society.

It seems evident how all this appears as a question of citizenship, and how formal citizenship, i.e. a title to a common status, with equal rights and duties, can be translated individually into different versions of material citizenship, thereby shifting the question onto the subject of individual capabilities and thus to the acts and practices of citizenship. The growing complexity of contemporary society thus seems to highlight the importance of the material aspects of citizenship. In our time, to be citizens means to be free to think, to choose and to do, without our freedom hindering other people's freedom to think, to choose and to do.

Citizenship is above all social inclusion: it is education, work, social security and healthcare, it is freedom, protection, and political representation. In substance, it is that complex system of rights, services and institutions that makes a modern democratic society function. Citizenship is a flexible lay institution that is defined by two simple fixed points, apparently antithetical (a bit like freedom and equality), but not negotiable (except at the expense of a reduction in the importance and significance of citizenship): universality and individuality. In those contexts where universalism and attention for the person are not prized as values, it becomes difficult even to speak about citizenship: in other words, democracy itself becomes difficult.

The only, albeit conspicuous, aspect of citizenship of a cultural nature is its being the product of European history, i.e. the fruit of a long sequence of political and social struggles, and of seminal episodes in the medieval city-states, right up to contemporary constitutionalism. The project of society that (liberal/social-democratic) citizenship presupposes is as inclusive as possible and takes as its point of reference the basic unit of every human group, the person: the elemental and indivisible portion of every community, association, institution, club or family. The person has ‘the right to have rights’, and has the right to see his or her acquired rights defended, and to see new rights safeguarded as they are acquired with the passage of time; for this reason, the person has the right to support, and where necessary to defend, the community that makes all this possible, i.e. that makes possible the free and pacific exercise of the citizen’s faculties.

Any definition of citizenship makes constant reference to the themes of belonging and of rights. Belonging to a certain community simply means respecting the rules of social coexistence, in other words respecting that society which in its turn confers value on the person through rights and services. Rights are guarantees that safeguard the dignity of the person, human rights, but are sedimented inside a certain community according to a particular historical, political and social process, and for this reason are citizen rights. To practise citizenship one is therefore held to peaceful coexistence, and to honouring a sort of pact that reciprocally binds both the person and the democratic State. Citizenship is therefore a lifestyle, not a cultural heritage<sup>2</sup>, and it is for this reason that the sociology of citizenship is principally to be understood as an analysis of the life chances of a given person, or of a given group, within a given social context. It is worthwhile emphasising this ‘symmetry’ in citizenship, the analysis of which has as its inseparable and simultaneous points of reference (a) the individual, whether a citizen or not, and (b) the society in which the individual operates.

<sup>2</sup> In this very connection, Thomas H. Marshall, the founder of the sociological study of citizenship, traces the emergence of a «material culture» that is based on the sharing of customs and lifestyles of lay and cross-class inspiration, constituting the rational basis for coexistence in a democratic society, and depending on the integrative capacity of a fully effective citizenship, i.e. one endowed with a full range of rights and services (Marshall T.H., *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1950). This means attributing an entirely secondary integrative role to culture *tout court*, classically understood as the traditional, religious and linguistic network, and finding new ways of understanding the collectivity in terms of the sharing and practice of democratic citizenship. In any case, ‘materiality’ is a characteristic that non-European cultures, especially oriental ones, have for centuries associated with the West (Tagore R., *Nationalism*, Macmillan, London 1917; Chih A., *L’Occident chrétien vu par les Chinois vers la fin du XIXe siècle*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1962; Tanaka S., *Japan’s Orient*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993).

When citizenship fails, and it can do so in tragically spectacular fashion (as in cases of political terrorism or of religious fundamentalism), it fails in its inclusive aims and coexistence falls to pieces. Social exclusion (unemployment, discrimination, ghettoisation, etc.) ignites the rejection of the community's (universal) laws and (majority) values<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, when citizenship succeeds it cannot fail to have a beneficent effect on the whole society<sup>4</sup>.

The questions linked to citizenship are therefore many and they are all of the utmost topicality. The object of this special issue is to take stock of the concept, of its significance, of its use, of its theoretical and empirical worth, while drawing attention to the added value of a sociological analysis of citizenship. It is well known that citizenship is an object/subject of analysis shared by many sciences, both human and social. Philosophy, law, economics, politics and history each have their own take on citizenship, but they do not seem capable of fully evaluating its many facets. Today, sociology can perhaps say something useful about citizenship, because compared with other disciplines it is better equipped to comprehend and unravel the polysemy and the antinomies that are intrinsic to it. That is to say, in this epochal age of transition, of change and of social readjustment, sociology identifies with greater certainty the various citizenships of our time. This is because sociology is a science that, in parallel with theoretical reflection, has always developed empirical inves-

<sup>3</sup> Analysis of recent acts of religion-related terrorism in France suggests precisely this interpretation (on 7 January 2015 against the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, on 9 January at Hypercacher in Porte de Vincennes, on 13 November at the Bataclan theatre, at the Stade de France in Saint Denis and in three Parisian restaurants). Second-generation immigrants from North Africa, dropouts from French society, re-Islamicise themselves and become fundamentalists, searching for their far-off cultural roots and utterly rejecting the lifestyle of citizenship, attacking the symbols of western culture (in these cases freedom of the press, concern for diversity, music, sport and leisure). More complicated is the interpretation of the events that took place in Cologne and other German cities last New Year's Eve (31 December 2015). The society of acceptance would seem to have become the society of extreme permissiveness, robbery and violence. Criminal acts were carried out by hundreds of foreigners, many of whom came from the ranks of those Syrian refugees who only a few weeks previously had been received into Germany with open arms, at a time when other European countries were re-introducing border controls and closing their frontiers. This is what is so shocking: the betrayal of a trust that a community had bestowed on its new guests, coming from afar and in need of protection.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see the results of recent research conducted by the University of Stanford in Switzerland – a country where one inhabitant in four is non-native and where there is little openness towards foreigners – which shows how the acquisition of citizenship favours the political and cultural integration of immigrants (Hainmueller J., Hangartner D. and Pietrantuono G., *Naturalization fosters the long-term political integration of immigrants*, in «Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences», vol. 112, n. 41, 2015).

tigation, examining the power relations and the social conditionings within human society. It observes, it reflects and it 'dirties its hands' with social data.

The articles collected here reflect this basic approach and, in line with the requirements of the call for papers, privilege the theoretical dimension or evaluate the empirical one, but always keep open the connection between the two dimensions. By the same token, this special issue has been subdivided into two thematically consistent parts, the first devoted to theory and the second to research, where articles of a purely sociological tenor are flanked by contributions from scholars of other social sciences. Each of the two parts ends with an interview on the critical points of this concept-institution through a dialogue sharply focused on the social dynamics of the contemporary world, especially the European world, involving Rainer Bauböck and Tommaso Vitale.

The first part is devoted to theory. In sociology, as we have seen, the theoretical dimension is inseparably rooted in the empirical analysis of reality and of its transformations, which confers on it consistency and explicative capacity. This explains the vitality or the obsolescence of certain sociological categories: some of them show a 'longevity' in the face of the changing social dynamics that attests to their heuristic fecundity, while others have a 'rigidity' that condemns them and relegates them to oblivion. In particular, the category of citizenship has a notable potential for analytic extensibility. It is this potential that explains the vitality of the concept, and its co-presence in the lexicons of different disciplines. The notion of citizenship is located in an area intermediate between scientific analysis and political praxis, an area that explains the possibly more authentic significance of sociological research as an instrument that interweaves knowledge with good praxis, in this case, with social development in the framework of a democratic political culture. The concept of citizenship came into being in close synergy with the need to democratise industrial society and to attenuate its inequalities.

Among its other aims, this special issue seeks to clarify the vocabulary regarding the notion of citizenship in its polysemy. In this context, the theoretical part is undoubtedly the more useful. The route taken emphasises different forms (and definitions) of citizenship. Societal citizenship, material citizenship, citizenship from below: attempts are made to reconstruct their significance, their heuristic resonance, the interdependencies that concur to lend depth to the concept in its permanent complexity. Because of its semantic density, there are found in citizenship different areas of application and different levels, connected and distinct, that are historically and politically important: local citizenship, national citizenship, European citizenship and finally global or cosmopolitan citizenship. Still situated in the theoretical domain are the terms of the debate linking the language of citizenship to specific problems,

such as Keynes's characterisation of the Welfare State and its reconfiguration in neoliberal terms. A sociological-type reflection must however also consider, and certainly not marginalise, the values that lie at the base of the principle of citizenship, the relation between culture and human rights, and the ensemble of social, economic and political conditionings by which citizenship is formed and transformed. Citizenship, finally, must never lose sight of the centrality of the person, whether or not he or she be a citizen *de jure*, lest it should become a mechanism for exclusion.

Giovanni Moro opens the theoretical section with a fully rounded reflection on citizenship as the key to democracy. The analysis of its evolution (from urban to European citizenship, from gender to multicultural citizenship, from active to digital citizenship), both in continuity and in discontinuity with the democratic paradigm itself, problematises the role and the transformations of citizenship within the increasingly complex framework of contemporary society.

Pierpaolo Donati draws attention to the importance of societal citizenship, a citizenship of social autonomies based on a complex of rights and duties, not only of individuals, but also of social groups, arranging civic life into a number of universalistic autonomous social networks capable of reconciling self-management practices and collective goals, identity issues and solidarity.

The editor concentrates on the concept of material citizenship, sorting out the polysemy of citizenship and using in complementary fashion the approach based on rights and the approach based on capabilities. There emerges a definition of citizenship which, starting with the rights and capitals of the person, focuses on individual practices and offers itself as an analysis of life chances.

Maurizio Ambrosini reflects on the processes and praxes, developed especially at local level, by which migrants – despite the political and legal obstacles strewn in their path – assume active roles, make themselves heard, acquire rights, and gain access to social benefits and services. This is a citizenship ‘from below’ that can generate forms of coexistence, of ‘citizenisation’, that contradict and can even overturn the domination of citizenship ‘from above’.

Patricia Mindus explores arbitrariness in relation to citizenship and migration policies. Political exclusion is the vertex of a chain of other forms of exclusion: the denizenship of the politically powerless is particularly troublesome because states lack incentives to promote their rights. The arguments proposed to sustain non-national disenfranchisement is not framed in derogatory terms and shifts the burden of proof from the state over to the individual.

Alessandro Pinzani presents a reflection on the transformations of welfare, focusing on the discourses that justified this process and that provided a major shift in the political vocabulary from the grammar of social rights to the grammar of performances and services, in other words on the change of

paradigm from a Keynesian model of Welfare State to a neoliberal model of personal responsibility. This change of paradigm seems to threaten the very idea of citizenship as we have known it for centuries.

Maria Cristina Marchetti makes a comparison between European and national citizenship, revealing the lights and shadows of an intrinsically complex relationship. The relation between the two, since the first formulation of European citizenship, is the main topic of debate on its statute. At the present time, the freedom of member States to assess the criteria to hold national citizenship sets up a mechanism of differentiation that traverses the entire European Union leading haphazardly to the goal of European citizenship.

Vittorio Cotesta offers an ample excursus on cultures and rights that embraces the West, Africa, Islam and the East, in search of identities and differences in the various conceptions of human rights. In the global world and in local societies, pluralism of values is everywhere a reality, albeit with varying intensity: it thus becomes fundamental to set up dialogues between these diversities which, not always deliberately, contaminate one another. A vision restricted to citizenship could become a point of reference for the establishment of a shared idea of human rights.

Marta Picchio proposes a reflection on global citizenship, which for some years has been part of the vocabulary and of the political agenda of the United Nations. In the international forum, in humanitarian and environmental crises, the principal subject at law is the person, not the citizen. This is the premise for the construction of a global citizenship, whose fundamentals, prospective strategies and operative experiences are here illustrated.

The second part of this special issue is devoted to research. The notion of citizenship, because of its flexibility and its explicative capacity in the face of economic, political and cultural change, requires an empirical exploration of its social dimension. This is not all: it also requires a critical reflection on the specific techniques and methods suited for working in so vast, and at the same time so specific, a field of research. Hence the need for an empirical study of the capacities of citizens (national, European and of other countries), carried out in a comparative fashion and applied to the different societal contexts. The adoption of case studies, and their dialogue at a distance, is the heart of this empirical part, which helps to identify the themes, the contexts and the actors of the dynamics that, in practice, make up the citizenships. One example is the European citizens who move around the various states that compose the European Union. The notion of citizenship is interwoven with a set of motivations that can explain the most authentic roots of individual and collective actions that induce the actors to plan their 'citizenship', to protest it and even to reject it. Here we find some empirical data on the aspirations, on



the needs and on the efficacy of the policies that are associated with the question of citizenship, in terms of their elaboration and implementation. Within this same empirical context is located the great theme of education for citizenship, which involves the identification and hierarchising, on an empirical basis, of the political and religious values that are crucial for the national and European identities. The relation between political agenda and the institutions that traditionally take decisions and publicly support the policies of the citizenry, i.e. the parties, deserves a separate empirical space. The different ideas of citizenship ventilated by the parties represent an important subject for research, because it is also through them that questions of identity, of coexistence and of the European project are aired, first in political debate and then at the concrete administrative level (or rather levels).

Women, young people and migrants are the (often overlapping) social categories that today seem to suffer marginalisation as regards citizenship. The analytic perspective that uses gender as a study filter is a very important instrument for interpreting, in parallel, the processes of change and the supplementary value of citizenship itself, in terms of acts and praxes, especially in relation to associationism. The sociological key appears indispensable also for verifying in the field the condition of the actors in migratory processes (the non-citizens *par excellence*) and the specificity of their action in their destination countries, especially in local everyday life, where the migrants seek solutions for their most pressing problems. By the same token, evaluation of the relation between youth and citizenship is extremely important, in particular by emphasising the instruments of participation adopted by special actors, whose expectations (and frustrations) are of the utmost importance. This also means predicting the citizenry's capacity to transmit themselves from one generation to another, and thus continue to feed the public democratic sphere.

Laura Leonardi and Gemma Scalise open this part devoted to research and, through an analysis of the interviews conducted during the last European Social Forum in Florence, they give new impulses to the theoretical reflection on the social dimension of citizenship as a distinct issue, although related with the concept of citizenship. Social citizenship is still seen as a tool that can limit the market regulation of social life and strengthen the capabilities of citizens, but it needs to be reframed transnationally across regional, state and European borders.

Justyna Salamońska, using Eurobarometer data, focuses her attention on a very particular type of migrants: the mobile European citizens. This is an opportunity to analyse the attitudes towards immigration from European Union countries on the part of other European citizens: the residents. Higher levels of transnational practices lead to more positive attitudes towards mobile citizens, and on the other hand more vulnerable socio-economic conditions

lead to negative attitudes. These attitudes also seem to be a consequence of the difficult present situation and the current state of the national economies.

Katarzyna Andrejuk, through the analysis of various case studies, shows reasons and context for the decision not to naturalise made by long-term immigrants to Poland, both European and non-European. The reasons for the lack of naturalisation are distinguished into psychological (insufficient sense of belonging), bureaucratic (cost, duration and complexity of the procedure) and legal-political (prohibition of dual citizenship by the country of origin, possession of status as permanent resident). So these are individual examples of the rejection of citizenship.

Flora Burchianti and Ricard Zapata Barrero examine the subject of education for citizenship in Spain, and emphasise the impossibility of providing a stabilised and consensual definition of national values and identity in the country. After providing a European contextualisation of questions of religious and moral teaching in Spain, they present a chronology of the controversy and analyse the public debate in terms of limits to tolerance, showing that the question of shared public values highlighted by this conflict is still unsolved and remains non-consensual in Spanish society.

Florence Di Bonaventura focuses her attention on the concept of citizenship held by the Italian political party called Lega Nord. The concepts of state, nation and citizenship are explored in depth and examined in the light of Italian social history. The idea of citizenship promoted by the Lega Nord is strongly linked to the reinvention of the nation and culture of 'Padania': a 'universally particularistic', homogenising, paternalistic and hetero-patriarchal citizenship, which is ultimately illiberal and exclusive.

Enrico Gargiulo reviews the numerous legal and administrative barriers that have sprung up in recent years along the migrants' path to the acquisition of Italian citizenship – barriers that have assumed the form of laws or decrees, or the less visible form of rules, ordinances and circulars, or 'simply' of bureaucratic praxis. This situation signals the emergence of a differentiated approach to the integration of foreigners, accompanied by more or less visible forms of institutional discrimination.

Simona Gozzo, making use of data gathered in Sicily, describes the development and limits of policies for the integration of foreigners. In particular, she focuses on how the acquisition of citizenship represents an effective means of inclusion into the host country, relating the differences encountered between formal and substantial equality to the modalities of reproducing relational dynamics.

Rosa Gatti, through the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted among migrant associations in Campania, concentrates on the practices of citizenship in the sector of women's associations, revealing the mechanisms

of deployment and participation used by foreigners within the public sphere. The actions of migrant women who are members of associations render explicit the ability to intervene politically and socially, even on the part of those who are not formally recognised as citizens.

Maria Grazia Gambardella, with qualitative research devoted to the instruments for promoting participation and citizenship among young people in the city of Milan, investigates the new practices of citizenship. In particular, she illustrates the ways and forms through which new generations reconstruct belonging, participation (social and political), and the public sphere. Local institutions, supported by the actors of the Third and Fourth Sector, can positively answer the questions about citizenship posed by the young, appreciating their role as interlocutors, capable of expressing their own interests and needs.

Daniela Trucco, analysing the semi-structured interviews she conducted in Genoa, investigates the relation between young people and politics, in the light of the social representation of citizenship. The models of citizenship identified help to orient individual action within the public sphere. In particular, the explanation of the difference between old and new policies seems to reflect the division between the old and the new generations of citizens and acquires a forecasting significance in respect of the image of citizenship in the near future.

The path of citizenship is continually trodden and is traced on every map, though not always clearly, nor is its destination always certain. Thus we often speak of citizenship, although in the majority of cases we mean by it something else: civic virtue, belonging, participation or collectivity. Undoubtedly these are all related to it, by they do not clinch its meaning. The risk is that of abusing a concept that is capable of great suggestion, evocative and monumental, but behind whose façade, if theoretical and empirical foundations be lacking, there may be bold but futile architecture – like a new Tower of Babel.

Through the interviews and many examples of theory and research gathered here, this special issue presents citizenship not merely as a datum but as a process, one that sees in the top-down aspect a crucial variable and in the social context an absolutely vital framework, but one that every day acquires meaning through being an individual and collective practice, a practice that arises from below, and in respect of which each one of us – as Thomas H. Marshall says – possesses an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievements can be measured and towards which aspirations can be directed.