

A Reflection on Material Citizenship

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The concept of citizenship is central to European history and has great resonance. It does however bear the weight an 'original sin', its derivation from the idea of the nation: a relationship worth reviewing in the light of the dynamics of present-day society. Furthermore, the polysemic nature of citizenship can diffuse its meaning and reduce effective analysis. With this in mind, the present paper, after having explored the origins of citizenship and reviewed its development, proposes a definition in material terms. The question of status, pre-eminent in the juridical approach, is of lesser importance in the present sociological interpretation of citizenship, concentrating as it does on individual practices. Rights allow the individual access to certain social resources (which ones?) but capitals determines the quantity of social resources the person may draw on (how many?). Together, rights and capitals shape the capabilities that each person converts into functionings in daily life – that is into the practices of citizenship, but only in those cases when the individual's behaviour is compatible with the norms of the community.

The 'original sin' of citizenship

Despite its importance, citizenship – the great democratic reward of post-war Europe and an additional value in today's European Union – is the institution that seems most under threat in relation to the ongoing social processes (Shachar 2009, Joppke 2010). The last century's leading instrument of social inclusion is being weakened by the difficulties encountered in updating it sufficiently for it to play a socially positive role in the present day. We focus on the context of the European Union, and in particular on questions of economics and identity. The welfare institutions that have made possible the effective inclusion of the citizen, rooted as they are in the different national societies (Esping-Andersen 1996), suffer from the centralisation of monetary and fiscal policy (Crouch 2000), from the rigid control of budgets (Seymour 2014), and from the restrictions imposed by the crisis affecting the entire planet (Krugman 2008). This means that, despite the formal recognition of rights, the services necessary to the individual are being curtailed. The progressive hybridisation of society raises questions of identity recognition and the formalising

of new rights (or at any rate of *ad hoc* services), i.e. it requires solutions for the coexistence of different ethnic and cultural groups according to the principles of equal dignity (Kymlicka 1995, Wieviorka 2001, Goldberg 2009) – and this means not only economic migrants and refugees, but all those whose life styles are innovative or different from those adopted by the majority. Related to this is the question of perceived insecurity, propagated by proximity between different groups and charged with the ambiguity of the meeting/conflict between cultures (Chebel d'Appollonia 2012). Inevitably, those who find themselves at the interface between these dynamics and citizenship, in its present form, sometimes seem incapable of summoning sufficient resources.

It is however necessary to take a step backwards in order to understand the origin of the tensions that today surround the notion of citizenship, tensions that would seem to derive from the fact that citizenship is the key to relations between the individual and the state. It is well known that modern citizenship developed and consolidated itself in parallel with the growth and structuring of the nation-state (Bendix 1996, Bosniak 2001). More precisely, the free exercise of civic rights is dependent on belonging to a nation. In other words, the citizen is such because he or she is a member of a national group that by means of its own institutions defines and concedes to the single member a particular status that is both individual and universal: individual because it is proper to the subject *per se* and not as a member of particular social subsets (such as class, family, gender, generation or profession), universal because it is the same for everybody. In reality, such status is individual only because the subject belongs to a well determined social system, the national one, and moreover it is universal only to a limited extent, because it is shared only by those who are members of the same nation.

The modern aspect of citizenship consists in the fact that the individual, no longer a subject, is granted a membership – the most elevated in the national perspective – which involves certain specific rights and duties. The ending of subjecthood – that is to say dependence on somebody or something that imposes his or its will on others by virtue of a higher position – coincides with the beginning of belonging to a community of formally equal members. From this it follows that the enjoyment of certain rights is possible only within the framework of a specific community: the bond of subjecthood is thus transformed into a new kind of social bonding, which is of an ethnic or republican type. So, if it is the state that formally grants the title of citizen, it is from the nation that such a status in practice descends. This is not all: it is postulated that such belonging helps to a considerable extent to define what the subject is as a *zoon politikon*, for whom the community network becomes an essential part of individual subjectivity (Mulhall and Swift 1996). From this it follows that the rights and duties that pertain to this status, which are generally regarded

as universal, are in fact linked to a certain community, so that other cultures and nations can legitimately retain valid completely different values. It is for this reason that national institutions consider the citizen a 'special' subject and one intrinsically different from any other.

The enjoyment of determined rights is thus placed in relation to belonging to the national community and it is by virtue of this distinguishing feature that the institutions differentiate between the condition of 'citizen' and that of 'man', i.e. a subject who not being a citizen – in most cases, apart from those of statelessness, he will be a citizen of some other nation-state – can clearly be indicated (stigmatised) as a foreigner. To consider the formal aspect of this question, the citizen possesses the guarantees of citizenship (civil, political, social and industrial rights, and potentially cultural and cognitive ones too), whereas the foreigner has a more restricted and less easily enjoyable range of rights, the so-called human or personal rights. At a time when emphasis is increasingly placed on the importance of these latter – of protection for individual autonomy and realisation, of the dignity of the subject per se and irrespective of his memberships, habits or beliefs – and on the need to perfect them and integrate them with the entire range of available guarantees, the positive relation between citizenship and inclusivity is being weakened by the fetish of nationality.

The rigid codifying of this diversity, examined through the lens of cosmopolitan democracy and in the light of the process of globalisation, considerably reduces the inclusive character of citizenship and reveals the increasing limitations of its theoretical and substantial reference within the nation-state (Held 1999). It follows that, in the complex multi-ethnic context of contemporary society, of new types of identity and of new modes of individual and collective action, new requirements and new guarantees become the focus of the individuals and groups who are operating in a society that is beginning to acquire postnational forms and directions (Habermas 2001). If the status of citizen is seen principally as a collective-individual guarantee that aims at a tangential social equality and that postulates a tangential cultural uniformity, a growing proportion of people will remain excluded because of the changes in the dynamics and structures that today distinguish national (or rather, no longer national) society.

Citizenship, linked as it is to a nation and its territory, no longer seems suited to contemporary reality, or rather no longer seems to respond to the varied requirements of the many and varied people who live in today's society (Butler and Spivak 2009). The formal border between the included and the excluded that citizenship delineates has now become less tolerable and, from being a synonym for commonality, has become a mechanism for discrimination. With the increase in mobility and the growing awareness of universalisation, reference to national character, especially in terms of quality of life and

of democratisation of institutions, appears ever less adequate and ends up by conferring on the citizen exclusivist privileges in relation to the non-citizen; in other words, the idea of superiority enshrined in the old idea of nation – superiority over other nations and over rival social realities – comes up against the restricted horizon that such a world-view necessarily involves. To a certain extent, the nation is the ‘original sin’ of citizenship.

Moreover, today the tensions of citizenship do not derive only from the denial of fundamental rights to foreigners, because the citizens themselves experience a reduction in the quantity and quality of services as the result of ever increasing government cuts, of the contraction of the welfare state and of the spread of precariousness. The current weakness of citizenship would therefore appear to depend on the overall change in the society that is its parent, a problem solvable only by uncoupling the inclusive function from the national dimension and from the prevailing support of the state structure.

The polysemy of citizenship

As we have just said, and despite the great symbolic value of citizenship, there is a strong risk of a decrease in its concrete social value. This evident paradox dwells non only in its ‘original sin’, but also in the ambiguous polysemy of citizenship – it is often compared with nationality or civic-mindedness, while also bordering with law and migration issues. It is therefore necessary to scrutinise systematically its use in social theory. This leads to single out *active*, *identitarian*, *formal* and *material* dimensions of citizenship.

Active citizenship emphasizes duties instead of rights, aiming for solidarity rather than autonomy. Its pedagogic and prescriptive content underlines the value of social and political participation, assuming individual action as public oriented and reliable. It assumes a typified lifestyle: the ‘ideal citizen’ is engaged in building public welfare and civic ethics, giving a deeper sense to the meaning of formal and material citizenship. This dimension brings value to the participatory meaning of citizenship.

Identitarian citizenship concerns the identification of the individual with a particular community – that is, his/her own. It depends on affective and emotional criteria – even though rational criteria are not excluded – thanks to which, but not necessarily, it becomes possible to lay the foundations for the legitimacy of formal citizenship and the deployment of material citizenship. This involvement expresses loyalty to the community and trust in institutions. It leads to the interiorization of citizenship as a common legacy and precludes to the integration of the individual in the place she/he lives in. This dimension idealizes the communitarian quality of citizenship.

Formal citizenship is gained through membership to a state, by birth on the national territory (*ius soli*) or by parents' nationality (*ius sanguinis*), but also by domicile (*ius domicili*) or by marriage or adoption (*ius communicatio*). From this membership stem rights and duties for individuals, distinguishing citizens from foreigners as a consequence of a bureaucratic concession. This membership, and the related status, turns out to be the same for any citizen. It is universal and homogeneous, but does not tell us anything about social differences between citizens, neither about the active or the identitarian dimensions. Obviously, this is a status which is qualitatively different from that of European citizen, of non EU citizen or stateless individual. Further differences can be outlined with regards to the status of legal alien or illegal alien. This dimension highlights the institutional meaning of citizenship.

Material citizenship is the point of arrival of a complex process of reduction of inequalities and social integration and informs us about the practical enforceability of the citizen status. It is not the sum of citizens' rights and duties only, but the way in which they can use them. This dimension highlights the effective individual capability – of a 'real citizen' and not of an ideal one, or of a group of people who share the same social condition – to put into practice the citizenship status, for example in the areas of property, work, health, education, participation, consumption or information. This allows exploring the inclusion/exclusion dynamics related to the socioeconomic conditions of individuals and the centrality/marginalization dynamics related to their political and cultural standing. This dimension embodies the sociological meaning of citizenship. This way, it is possible to better define the active and the identitarian dimensions.

This short overview shows the different meanings of citizenship and evidences its multitasking functionality. Each one of these meanings points out to the link existing between the individual and society, stressing that the citizen and the State are the actors of the social and institutional contract that grounds modern democracy. It is noted that if active and identitarian citizenship highlights symbolic aspects, formal and material citizenship have a stronger analytical import.

Not only, it is possible to note that active citizenship is substantially synonymous of participation, as well as identitarian citizenship is synonymous of belonging. On the contrary, formal citizenship and material citizenship have their own distinct meaning which justifies an autonomous heuristic use. They describe the status (formal citizenship) and the capacity (material citizenship) of an individual. For a better comprehension of the citizenship dynamics, it is worth analyzing these dimensions in parallel, as if they were two sides of the same coin.

Furthermore, I am arguing that the material dimension is the real added value of the sociological interpretation of citizenship (Baglioni 2009). It is an

extremely flexible conceptual tool, which can be applied to any individual separating the subject of action from his/her social status. The aim of material citizenship is to show what someone can do starting from his/her own resources (the capitals) and from those provided by national and local institutions (the rights). In fact, there is no need to be formally a citizen in order to benefit from some of the essential rights, to gain access to specific services, to receive support from voluntary organizations or simply to live and to reside in a city.

From rights to practices through capabilities and functionings

In this theoretical exploration of the sociology of citizenship, I think can be useful to move from the seminal reflection of Thomas Humphrey Marshall. «Citizenship is a status bestowed on all those who are full members of a community. All those who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed» (Marshall 1950: 28-29). In the aftermath of Second World War, individual rights and social belonging are evoked as the core of the citizenship definition. Marshall's aim is clear and meritorious – to reduce social inequalities and to strengthen societal integration – but nowadays his definition cannot be considered as completely satisfying. In fact, if we assume sociology as the science studying human societies, focusing on power and social conditionings, it is necessary to point out the effective consequences of individual use of rights.

More recently, Bryan Stanley Turner makes a step in this direction. «Citizenship may be defined as that set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups» (Turner 1993: 2). Marshall's reflection on collection of citizen's rights is so up-to-date. Putting rights into effect, individual action develop practices that mark out personal life chances.

The person is the real focus of citizenship. Anthony Giddens gives a description of the individual as an actor whose behaviour is conscious, but not necessarily intentional, is open to influence, but not determinable. Her action emerges in everyday life from individual dispositions, from available resources and from external conditions shaping a flow of actions: «a stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world» (Giddens 1979: 55). This flow of actions is based on agency: the faculty of each individual to act freely. «Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place» (Giddens 1984: 9). Agency is a «transformative ca-

capacity» (Giddens 1984: 15) that raises power through «the capacity to achieve outcomes» (Giddens 1984: 257) and affects the level of individual welfare.

Whereas rights pertain to normative relations between persons and institutions, capabilities represent the behaviours attainable by each individual. There is a finite range of possibilities for what a person is able to do or to be, or prefers not to do or to be. This introduces, alongside the theme of satisfying the wellbeing of the individual, that of the awareness of what the subject means by individual wellbeing. A person who is not aware, a person who is not sufficiently informed, cannot in fact adequately choose what is best for himself or herself, cannot find the right path towards development. As Amartya Sen writes, «development can be seen [...] as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy» (Sen 1999: 3), and for this what is needed is «a broader informational base, focusing particularly on people's capability to choose the lives they have reason to value» (Sen 1999: 63).

Within the range of behaviours effectively at one's disposition, or within one's «capability», the person chooses the behaviour that he or she considers most appropriate, translating it into «functioning», or into the concrete action that helps to determine the level of individual wellbeing. The translation into functioning of the rights available to the person, and more in general of his or her own resources, constitutes the value added by the capability-based approach. As Martha Nussbaum emphasises, this «give us a benchmark as we think about what it is to secure a right to someone (Nussbaum 2000: 98), provided always that «it is not strongly linked to one particular cultural and historical tradition» (Nussbaum 2000: 99), so as to extend the meaning of such an affirmation, and of citizenship itself, beyond restricted national boundaries.

The capability-based approach allows us to understand whether, how and why a right is being exercised, shifting the question of citizenship from the formal to the material plane. Reference is thus made to the quality of life and to the interactions of persons who, on the basis of their economic, social and cultural condition, and according to their individual inclinations, each have different ideas of wellbeing, different available resources and different possibilities of operating in concrete terms; that is to say, they each have different ways of interpreting, of desiring and of being able to put into practice their being citizens, where this being citizens means being to the fullest extent persons capable of realising themselves. In the context of a fully worked-out sociology of citizenship, the rights-based approach and the capability-based approach are not mutually exclusive, but on the contrary complement one another. In other words, although rights allow access to resources, it is the capacity to use these resources that concretely translates into functionings, thus developing practices of citizenship, or rather developing behaviours compatible with the life of the community within which the persons operate.

Through the theoretical stages indicated above, that is to say from rights to capabilities and functionality to practice, and focusing our attention on individual action, we come to understand the relational significance enclosed within the sociological definition of citizenship. If this is a tendentially egalitarian individual status that helps to give form to the actions of individuals in society, it also induces us to perceive societies in their true nature, i.e. as functional contexts composed of interdependent individuals (Elias 1978: 60-65). This amounts to delineating the contours of two versions of individual action, the institutional one (aimed at institutions) and the societal one (aimed at other people), which can be separated only theoretically as they are closely connected to one another. According to the intuitions of Norbert Elias, we can imagine that this relation gives place to a very particular «figuration», embracing society in its entirety. This attains to the individual experience and concerns power relations, with respect to the «differentials» in play and to the actors involved.

From this perspective, citizenship represents in synthetic fashion the dynamics that animate everyday life and, in the complex relations that link State and citizen, accompany personal, collective and institutional interaction. More specifically, it is held that citizenship represents an extremely complex type of figuration. In its entirety it gathers the essence of the relations in the context of a determined society: as the status that informs the link between individuals, collectives and institutions, as the capacity that exposes the socially relevant choices and actions. In the sociological understanding of citizenship, in fact, attention is paid to a procedural element, strongly interactive and constantly changing: the person is necessarily brought into relationship with the surrounding social environment. We can therefore imagine citizenship, in its double formal and material *vis*, as the most typical figuration of modernity.

So citizenship constitutes a «resource of authority» that affects both the organisation of the social body (in its formal aspect and as an emanation of the State), and opportunities for life (in its material aspect and as a guarantee for individual action), and it is for these reasons, as a vector of power and in its double nature as structure and action, that it is directly linked to reproduction and change in society (Giddens 1984: 257-262). The distinction between formal citizenship and material citizenship thus appears fundamental, because it enriches the significance of the concept in sociological terms. Material citizenship is not limited – as is the case with its formal counterpart – to taking note of the possession and extension of rights but, raising the question of capabilities, it makes possible a deeper, more useful and more sociologically oriented reflection on individual action in the social context.

The sociology of citizenship has therefore to deal with the modality and the quality of the individual's inclusion in the setting of a determined society,

and consequently has the aim of revealing what a person can or intends to do *materially* in the social context, on the basis of the faculties for action that he is *formally* granted by his own status. Citizenship is however something much more complex than the sum of the actions and choices made by individuals and of the rights and services granted by the institutions: it corresponds rather to the realisation of the person, and thus has a psychological aspect. It is for this reason that everyone – and not only the collective movements or the institutions of Marshall’s doctrine – possesses «an image of ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be measured» (Marshall 1950: 29). Once the rights and services belonging to formal citizenship have been assessed, material citizenship takes concrete form in an analysis of the opportunities for life that takes account of individual social conditions and reveals the choices and actions made possible by personal capabilities.

Material citizenship explained

In the interpretation proper to the material approach to citizenship, the person’s action develops in everyday life not only thanks to the rights (and duties) recognised by the State (Dworkin 1977), but also in consideration of «capitals» (earned or inherited) acquired over time (Bourdieu 1986). Rights represent normative relations between persons, groups and institutions providing guarantees, prescribing behaviours and establishing services, giving rise to a certain ‘standard of citizenship’, envisioning in ideal form a modern and democratic society. Capitals represent the person’s baggage at the cultural, economic and social level. It is also worth bearing in mind that while rights are universal, i.e. they are the same for each citizen, capitals are existential, varying in accordance with individual conditions. In extreme synthesis, while rights grant access to well identified resources, capitals determine their scope: ‘which?’ and ‘how many?’ respectively. The functional difference between the two structural elements of material citizenship gives way to profiles of citizenship that emerge as individually defined. Citizenship is however a *prius*, whether with respect to the range of rights that connote it, or with respect to the amount of capitals that support it, being capable of producing genuine consequences. Sharing in citizenship, in all its different dimensions, is therefore a fundamental social experience.

Rights are an essential component of this experience, both in relation to what is or was involved in the struggle to obtain them, and in relation to the everyday nature of their enjoyment or the potentiality. Considered in its entirety, the itinerary of citizenship includes ancient (the *polis*), medieval (the

free city-states), modern (the liberal revolutions) and contemporary society, and thus is characterised by extremely diverse historic and social phases, which have seen expansion and contraction of citizens' guarantees and of the numbers of people considered citizens, from the first medieval *iura* to post-national constitutionalism. Today's list of rights comprises the now classic rights of the civic, political, industrial and social types, but there are also new types, such as scientific and cultural rights.

Civil rights constitute the nucleus of the so-called «negative liberties» (Berlin 1969), which are central for citizenship, even though they really apply to the person as such and not to the citizen. Civil rights appear as a spurious summation of the rights of individual liberties (liberty and intangibility of the person, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, etc.), of rights to private autonomy (concluding contracts, recourse to law) and of rights to property (legitimation of the right to own and acquire private property). On the contrary, the political rights are genuine citizenship rights, i.e. those rights that classically define the border between the citizen and the person, allowing the citizen – and only the citizen – to choose his or her representatives and to be in turn elected (active and passive franchise).

Industrial rights translate civil rights into collective terms, giving place to kinds of pressure and participation similar to those allowed by political rights, and giving rise to forms of individual protection and support in the spirit of social rights. Such rights apply to the trade unions and corporations and concern the world of work in its entirety (right to work, right to strike, right to collective bargaining and to the defence of sectorial interests, right to health and education in the workplace, etc.). The social rights allow access to positive public services in the welfare sector (subsidies, pensions, social services, health, education), i.e. they are rights that envisage determined services for the person. Because of their nature as «conditional opportunities» (Barbalet 1988), it is no easy matter to formalise them as rights, just as it is complicated to define the procedures directed at the requirements, and to satisfy the demand. It is clear however that these rights and services are the very heart of the Welfare State (Marshall 1981). The social and industrial rights therefore allow the citizen to live the societal dimension fully, conferring a more complete significance of a 'social character' on individual liberties (Oppenheim 1961).

New rights represent a possible response to the changing requirements of contemporary society, individual and global, presenting themselves as a possible way of updating citizenship. Cultural rights, formulated in varying ways from country to country, protect the growing variety of traditions (uses, customs, languages, religions, etc.) and life styles present in contemporary society. They operate with *ad hoc* guarantees for the maintenance of individual backgrounds, made up of personal experiences and of inherited factors, fun-

damental for the full development of individual liberty (Banting and Kymlicka 2006). Scientific rights, often still in the future, grant access to skills and information so as to favour a way of life and an interpretation of society that is responsible and aware. They aim to throw light on the complexities of present-day expertise (political, bureaucratic, ecological, scientific, technological, etc.), amplifying the possibilities for understanding and criticising the social processes (Leach, Scoones and Wynne 2005).

Now let us consider capitals. Capitals are socially enabling resources that help to define persons, allowing them determined kinds of action, of reflection or of status, to a degree that varies according to what is available to the individual. The availability of capitals corresponds to «the product of accumulated labour in the objectified state which is held by a given agent, depends for its real efficacy on the form of the distribution of the means of appropriating the accumulated and objectively available resources» (Bourdieu 1986: 241). A person can freely employ his or her own capitals, whether they have been acquired through his or her own efforts, or have been inherited. By all accounts the availability of capitals is subjective, non-uniform, scarce and desirable. For this reason, it is the source of mobilisation, of competition, of remuneration and of exchange, being capable of producing socially significant effects.

The social distribution of capitals is thus uneven, and in each social space it shows its own characteristics. Different persons thus have a different store of capitals to be used for economic, cultural, social and symbolic purposes. The fields are specialised social spaces that function as markets, where the distribution of resources is unequal and where the different individual positions are socially recognisable on the basis of the quantity and typology of the capitals that a person possesses. Consistently with the identification of these fields, there are capitals of economic, cultural, social and symbolic type.

Economic capital is classically based on the personal ownership of economic resources (moveable and immovable goods) and is therefore easily translated into monetary terms. Cultural capital is a cognitive resource that qualifies a person's cultural level (educational qualifications, linguistic ability, cultural interests, aesthetic preferences, acquired knowledge and skills). Social capital comprises the relations that a person enters into or can mobilise (friendships, contacts, influences, social favours and duties).

Last of all is symbolic capital, which we may imagine as a kind of summation of all the other capitals, manifesting itself in the person's social recognition, which derives from the ascertained ability to accede to goods, skills and relations, and which involves being inserted into a determined social position that is distinctive and personal – but is nevertheless shared with other people possessing similar capitals. It is therefore not exactly a capital in itself, but a sort of surplus in the form of social credit (or debit), reinforcing the aggrega-

tion of the capitals individually possessed and contributing towards the structuring of society.

Thanks to the aggregation of rights and capitals, the person is able to dispose his or her own capabilities, that is to say the range of behaviours that he or she can command (Nussbaum and Sen 1993). For there is a finite number of possibilities for what a person may do, be or have, and for what a person may prefer not to do, not to be and not to have. Within this range, the person adopts the behaviours that he or she considers most appropriate, translating them into functionings, resulting from the aggregation of the rights and capitals effectively utilised. He or she thus performs a determined action or series of actions.

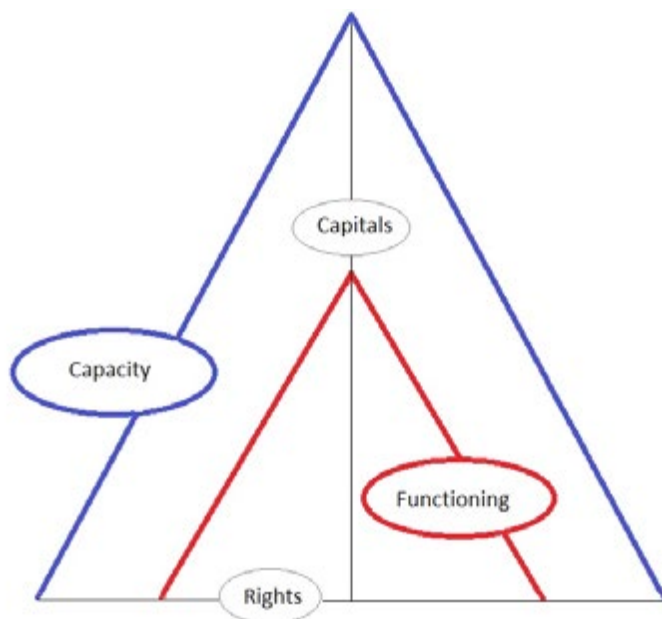
It is worth emphasising the parallelism between rights and capitals. In the absence of rights, or in the case of their reduction, the range of possible behaviours logically becomes diminished. The person is able to rely only on his or her capitals and endeavours to maximise the results of the residual behaviours, that is to say those behaviours that remain available despite the absence of rights. Despite this, some opportunities will nevertheless be denied: for instance, in the absence of the right to vote, it will not be possible to elect one's own representatives. On the other hand, in the absence of capitals, the range of behaviours will be that of the above-mentioned 'standard of citizenship', but many of these behaviours will be hampered or even made completely impossible, because of the lack of individual endowment. In substance, the person will be incapable of exploiting or enhancing the opportunities offered: for instance, he or she may indeed be able to vote, but will not be able to participate with full knowledge in the election of his or her representatives, or else will not take the trouble to vote at all.

Furthermore, there exist individual behaviours that are in line with citizenship, i.e. that are compatible with the norms and the life of the community, and there exist those that are not. When the State recognises rights and lays down duties, it circumscribes individual behaviours within the larger universe of possible behaviours, giving rise to an area of citizenship that identifies the behaviours which are licit for a person. The extension of this area differs in relation to individual status, being larger for citizens and smaller for foreigners (Benhabib 2004) – in the context of present-day Europe, there will thus be an area of national citizenship (national citizens), an area of European citizenship (European citizens) and an area of human rights (third-country nationals).

In the area of citizenship, established by rights, facilitated by services and subject to duties, the personal capitals determine the amplitude of behaviours available to the individual. A person's capability is therefore determined by the quality (in the case of rights) and by the quantity (in the case of capitals) of the behaviours that he or she can potentially realise. To put it crudely, if property rights allow someone to buy a house and to declare it his or her pri-

vate inviolable space, the value of that house depends on the capital required to purchase it: property is a socially recognised right, but the ‘how much’ of property is a function of individual endowment.

Figure 1 – *Citizenship into practice*



By selecting his or her own behaviours, a person sets in motion his or her own functionings, and if the behaviours are licit he or she puts citizenship into practice (fig. 1). It is evident that, on the basis of one’s own social conditions (capitals) and of one’s own status (rights), people can have different resources and therefore different possibilities of concrete action – and this is to leave aside the huge and important question of the formation of personal choices and motivations that lies at the base of all individual action. People, whether citizens or foreigners, thus possess different modes of wishing and being able to put their own ‘being in society’ into practice. Analysis of material citizenship helps to throw these into relief.

Conclusions

As we have seen, the concept of citizenship has been central to European history and still possesses great evocative power. It labours however under an

‘original sin’, its derivation from the idea of nationhood, and therefore needs updating in the light of the dynamics of contemporary society. This is not all: the polysemy of the concept is responsible for a genuine inflation of the term ‘citizenship’, in everyday usage, in political discussion and in scholarly debate, an inflation that tends to reduce its theoretic value and analytic efficacy. We have here proposed a material definition of the concept, one capable of restoring to citizenship the significance of a genuinely sociological interpretation.

The material approach to citizenship concentrates on individual practice. It is in fact the person that is the central reference for sociological analysis – irrespective of status, though taking due account of it. Proceeding in this way, we are able to leave to one side the concept’s so-called ‘original sin’. Identification of status, while constituting a sort of precondition for the analysis of citizenship, gives way to the observation of the practices of citizens (national and European) and of non-citizens, allowing us to explore in the round the social conditions of the person, beginning with the capitals that he or she possesses. The aim of the sociology of citizenship is thus to assess the opportunities for individual life: once the formal dimension has been thoroughly investigated, it is analysis of the material dimension that provides the best results. The polysemy of citizenship, seen correctly in context, thus becomes no longer confusing but enriching.

In short, while there are rights that allow the person access to certain social resources (which resources?), there are also capitals that determine the magnitude of the social resources a person can mobilise (how many resources?). Together, rights and capitals shape the capabilities that each person turn into functionings in his or her daily life. If such behaviours are compatible with the norms of the community, then they are practices of citizenship. From the sociological perspective, rights and capitals, translated in everyday life into capabilities and functionings, constitute the fundamental variables of citizenship, while practices and acts constitute its socially relevant expression.

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