

Transnationalism and migrants' imaginings of citizenship

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Abstract. Recent academic debates on transnationalism, immigration, and citizenship have largely ignored migrants' perspectives on citizenship. On the basis of ethnographic research in Germany and the United States between 1998 and 2001, we examine the values and meanings contemporary migrants assign to national citizenship and their citizenship practices. We argue that dominant discourses of liberal democratic citizenship and migrants' situated subject positions condition and mediate in complex ways their imaginings and practices of citizenship. We discuss how and why migrants' perspectives conform in significant ways across these two countries, while also varying among migrants. National citizenship remains meaningful in their struggle for mobility across borders, for equal protection under the law, and for equal access to social and political rights. However, migrants are also aware of the discrepancy between promises of equity and fairness associated with liberal democratic citizenship and the reality in which even naturalized migrants experience discrimination. Issues of belonging to and identification with the national community render national citizenship complicated for migrants as they negotiate multiple identities and allegiances, with varying outcomes. Differences among migrants notwithstanding, the majority can and do identify with multiple communities, and desire to participate and become members in more than one national community, suggesting that migrants challenge conceptions of bounded national citizenship. This does not entail, however, a deterritorialization of citizenship and identities.

Introduction

For the past ten years, scholars have heatedly debated how globalization, transnational migration, and migrant transnationalism are transforming the structure and meaning of citizenship and nation in the contemporary world. A core theme in these debates is the threats posed to nation-states as political and sociocultural units, 'from above' by economic and political globalization (Habermas, 2001) and 'from below' by transnational migration and migrant transnationalism—that is, migrants forging and sustaining familial, economic, cultural, and political ties and identities that cross national borders (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998). Scholars agree that these developments challenge the ability of nation-states to guarantee rights, enforce obligations, and uphold traditional notions of identity associated with national citizenship (Tambini, 2001). They disagree, however, on whether these developments render the national model of citizenship irrelevant, and on whether it is being or should be replaced by transnational and postnational forms of citizenship.

At the same time, contemporary public policy discussions about immigration in major receiving states have focused on the dangers of migrant transnationalism, particularly migrants' multiple identities and allegiances. Conservative politicians, policy analysts, and journalists have argued that multiple allegiances and citizenships form obstacles to the integration of immigrants and undermine the host country's national identity (Geyer, 1996; Renshon, 2001). In the United States these discussions

frequently depict contemporary immigrants as less willing to integrate into US society, as less disposed toward identifying with and committing to the US polity than their early-20th-century counterparts, and as primarily concerned with homeland politics (Foner, 2001). Some policymakers even talk about a degrading of citizenship, arguing that immigrants are increasingly becoming citizens for purely opportunistic reasons, without showing commitment and loyalty to their country of residence.

Migrants' perspectives on citizenship are rarely examined in either academic or public policy debates, which concentrate instead on broader legal–political aspects of citizenship—changes in national citizenship laws and policies and/or normative arguments about how citizenship should be conceived—making claims about immigrants' attitudes towards citizenship from afar (Bauböck, 1994; 2003; Miller, 2000; Soysal, 1994). In this paper we seek to redress this oversight by examining migrants' perspectives. Rather than talking *about* immigrants and citizenship in the contemporary period, we talked *with* migrants to gain insights into the meaning and value they assign to formal membership in a national polity, and into the imaginings of citizenship they enact through citizenship practices in their local and transnational lives.

We draw on our own ethnographic research, conducted independently with Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in Duisburg, Germany, and with Somali, Sudanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mexican, and Central American immigrants in Minnesota, USA. During this research, migrants discussed their experiences, identities, civic participation, and dispositions towards acquiring citizenship in their country of residence. We find the feminist concept of positionality useful for understanding how migrants create the meaning of, ascribe value to, and practice citizenship. Positionality marks the social situatedness of individual subjects within particular sociospatial contexts and relations to others that shape their knowledge, views, subjectivity, identity, imaginary, and conditions of existence (Nagar and Geiger, 2007; Rose, 1997). Positionality also involves power relations, in the sense that uneven power is associated with the placement of individuals in social, cultural, and material space, and within nation-states and the global economy. Yet, as positionality is also continuously enacted, it may not only reproduce but also challenge existing power relations (Sheppard, 2002).

Our research shows the importance of migrants' positionalities in conditioning and mediating their imaginings and practices of citizenship. On the one hand, contrary to our expectations, we find striking commonalities in migrants' perspectives on citizenship in both countries, which reflect their shared marginal positionality and dominant discourses of liberal democratic citizenship within receiving states. On the other hand, differences in positionality among immigrants—who inhabit multiple subject positions and identities with respect to gender, race, education, formal immigration status, age and generation, length of stay, and the migration experience, which interact with one another in complex ways—produce varied dispositions towards, for example, acquiring citizenship in their place of residence.

We begin by summarizing competing empirical and normative arguments about immigration and changes in the form and meaning of citizenship. We then describe and contextualize our ethnographic research in Germany and the United States, and discuss how migrants' positionalities help us understand their imaginings and practices of citizenship. We discuss three salient aspects of these—security, protection, and mobility; equality; and identities—examining commonalities and differences, and how these are conditioned and mediated by migrants' positionalities. We conclude with reflections on the implications of these findings for debates on citizenship and immigration.

Immigration and citizenship debates

National citizenship has been the prevailing norm for most of the 20th century. In its ideal terms, national citizenship provides equality and protection under the law and grants all citizens residing within a national territory equal access to social, civil, and political rights (Marshall, 1950).⁽¹⁾ In exchange for these rights, the nation-state demands from citizens the fulfillment of certain obligations (such as paying taxes), and loyalty and allegiance to the political community of the nation-state. This liberal democratic conception of citizenship is distinct in that it assumes membership in only one nation-state (Bosniak, 2001; Gustafson, 2002).

In recent years, scholars have argued that globalization, transnational migration, and transnational practices of migrant populations have been undermining this conception of national citizenship. They argue new forms of citizenship are emerging that are no longer bounded by the territory of a single nation-state. These have variably been labeled as flexible (Ong, 1999), global (Falk, 1994), transnational (Bauböck, 1994), cosmopolitan (Held, 1995), and postnational citizenship (Soysal, 1994). The debates about the changing form and nature of citizenship have emphasized three major trends: the decoupling of rights from formal membership, the recasting of rights as universal human rights, and the deterritorialization of identities.

Based on her analysis of guest-worker rights in postwar Europe, Soysal (1994; 2000) argued that immigration has led to a progressive decoupling of rights from membership in the national polity—that is, formal citizenship. European nation-states have been extending civil, social, and, in some cases, political rights to noncitizen immigrants residing within their territory. Immigrants in Germany, for example, have access to welfare and public services without possessing German citizenship. This decoupling of rights from formal citizenship allows migrants to enjoy citizenship rights in more than one nation-state. It also enables immigrants to become engaged in civic organizations and actions across national borders (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003). Indeed, an increasing number of migrants engage in transnational social movements and non-governmental organizations. For example, Kurdish migrants in Europe have organized in Europe to claim minority rights and to end the Turkish state's violence against Kurds in Anatolia (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2001).

Scholars further observe that immigrants and immigrant organizations increasingly make appeals to universal principles of human rights to justify claims for immigrants' rights within receiving societies as well as rights within their home country (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). Some have interpreted this recasting of citizenship rights as universal human rights as a denationalization of citizenship (Soysal, 1994). We find this interpretation problematic. As Koopmans and Statham (1999) have shown, claims making framed within a universal human-rights discourse continues to be directed towards the nation-state, and does not necessarily imply a denationalization of citizenship. Furthermore, Bosniak (2001) and others (Bauböck, 1994; Miller, 1999) have pointed out "there are real limitations to the international human rights system, and individuals still face serious constraints in enforcing their rights" (Bosniak, 2001, page 242). The nation-state continues to matter as a guarantor and enforcer of human rights, even as human rights are increasingly defined at the global scale.

Finally, postnational theorists have argued that migrants' identities and allegiances are becoming deterritorialized. Scholars of migrant transnationalism have documented that migrants maintain identities and commitments (Glick Schiller

⁽¹⁾ Marshall (1973) distinguishes civil, social, and political rights. Civil rights include equal treatment under the law and freedom of opinion and expression. Social rights regulate access to a state's welfare-state programs, and political rights entail the right to vote and/or to stand in elections.

and Basch, 1995; Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998) that transcend national boundaries. They hold multiple allegiances to national, ethnic, and religious communities. Some of these authors suggest that other communal allegiances are at least as important as national identities and allegiances (Soysal, 2000). In other words, the national community is not the main 'community' in which individuals are embedded and participate, and identities are not just anchored in one national collectivity. The existence of multiple identities and allegiances notwithstanding, we question that this amounts to the deterritorialization of identities that some authors claim (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996). Although contemporary migrants' practices and identities are multiple and cross territorial and communal boundaries, this does not imply that identification with territorially defined national polities or locales is disappearing. As Guarnizo and Smith (1998, page 15) put it, "transnationalism, far from erasing local identifications and meaning systems, actually relies on them to sustain transnational ties."

While there is agreement that these transformations constitute a challenge to the nation-state model of citizenship, scholars differ in both their assessments of these transformations and their normative proposals for how citizenship at the contemporary historical moment should be conceived.

Miller (2000), for example, insists that genuine citizenship is possible only within a territorially bounded political community. He opposes conceptions of postnational or cosmopolitan citizenship, and defends a model of national citizenship that emphasizes the importance of a common national identity rooted in a common culture that holds citizens together. Citizenship, according to Miller (2000, page 89), is "a valuable status, and states therefore naturally wish to restrict its possession to those who identify themselves with the nation and are carriers of the right cultural identity." Giving citizenship and citizenship rights to all newcomers would risk undermining community identity and commitment to the community. Moreover, he argues that national commitments must not be displaced and that national identities and allegiances need to remain primary. This privileging of identification and solidarity with fellow nationals is problematic. It assumes that "the people with whom we happen to share formal nation-state membership and territory should be the objects of our identification and solidarity more than others with whom we are joined through other affiliative ties" (Bosniak, 2001, page 248). Miller's normative ideal of national citizenship also ignores the salient desire of immigrants to maintain their multiple identities, and fails to acknowledge that engagement in multiple polities and communities is a normal feature of immigrant life (Ehrkamp, 2005; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; Glick Schiller et al 1992; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004).

To accommodate the realities of contemporary migrants' lives better, Bauböck's conception of *transnational citizenship* (1994) expands citizenship beyond the nation. He emphasizes the rights aspect of citizenship, and highlights the importance of the state as guarantor of such citizenship rights. He rejects postnational or cosmopolitan citizenship as there is no world state that could enforce citizenship. Instead, he argues that, in transnationally mobile societies, national citizenship needs to be reformed to make it more inclusive for transnational migrants. In order to make citizenship more inclusive he proposes that states should change their immigration and citizenship policies. States need to reduce qualifications for naturalization, tolerate dual citizenship, and establish a formal status of local/urban citizenship that is based on residence and disconnected from nationality (Bauböck, 2003), and to provide external citizenship rights for nonresidents. His proposal implies that the inclusion of transnational migrants can be achieved only by extending membership beyond national and territorial boundaries.

Indeed, some of Bauböck's proposed policy changes, especially the toleration of dual citizenship by receiving states, are already being implemented. A number of European nation-states have eased their previously strict prohibitions on dual nationality. The Netherlands introduced new rules for dual citizenship in 2002, and Sweden passed new legislation allowing full dual citizenship in 2001 (Gustafson, 2002). The major impetus for allowing dual citizenship comes, however, from sending states, an increasing number of which now recognize dual citizenship (Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer, 2001). Granting dual citizenship to their citizens abroad encourages remittance payments and helps to bind the citizens to the sending state (Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003). Smith (2003, page 467), for example, documents how the Mexican government courts its 'extraterritorial citizens' in order to receive support for specific political agendas such as development projects.

Yet, dual or multiple citizenship remains hotly contested in many receiving states. Despite research that suggests otherwise (Foner, 2001; Hammar, 1985; Schuck, 1998), especially conservative politicians and journalists have warned that multiple allegiances and citizenship will impede the integration of immigrants and undermine a common national identity. Thus a recent publication by the Center for Immigration Studies, a policy think tank in Washington DC, argues against allowing migrants to hold dual or multiple citizenship on the grounds that it is likely to hinder the integration process and the development of identification with the host polity (Renshon, 2001). Such arguments are highly problematic in the light of other scholarship demonstrating that dual citizenship, rather than impeding the integration of immigrants, is likely to facilitate it "by imparting a sense of... belonging, reinforcing their attachment to American values and improving their English language skills" (Schuck, 1998, page 164).

The majority of these arguments in the academic and public policy debates on immigration and citizenship have paid little attention to migrants' perspectives, even though migrants have been central actors in these transformations (for exceptions see Evans, 1988; Foner, 2001; Phalet and Swyngedouw, 2002; Yang, 1994). This tendency to overlook the meaning and value assigned to citizenship from below, namely the perspectives of ordinary citizens and migrants, has been a major limitation of the extensive historical, theoretical, and normative literature on citizenship and immigration (Phalet and Swyngedouw, 2002). Furthermore, many of these debates have been rather state centered, focusing on rights accorded by, and obligations and allegiances to, the nation-state, while paying little attention to citizenship as a social practice—that is, the practices that migrants engage in beyond the state through organizations of civil society and civic actions across national boundaries (Benhabib, 1999). In recent years geographers have started to examine and theorize the intricate local, national, and transnational interconnections that shape both contemporary practices and legal conceptions of citizenship (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; Kofman, 2002; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004; Secor, 2003; Waters, 2003). For example, they have shown that migrants practice citizenship at multiple scales and engage with multiple public spheres across national borders, as they (re)negotiate relations between their old and new homes. This suggests that migrants' practices of citizenship exceed the boundary and jurisdiction of the nation-state.

In this paper we attempt to contribute to this body of research by examining the value and meaning that migrants assign to legal national citizenship, through an analysis of their dispositions towards naturalization, and the alternative imaginings of citizenship they enact, through citizenship practices, in their local and transnational lives.

Contextualizing and conceptualizing migrants' perspectives on citizenship

The analysis in this paper is based on two research projects on the experiences and identities of contemporary migrants and their transnational ties, and their dispositions towards the host polity and citizenship, which we conducted independently in Germany and the USA.

In Germany, we⁽²⁾ carried out ethnographic research among multiple-generation Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in Duisburg-Marxloh. This research was conducted over a period of ten months between 1998 and 2000. The neighborhood case study in Germany's heavy industrial Ruhr region included participant observation, fifty-nine intensive interviews, five focus groups, and informal conversations with more than 200 Turkish, Kurdish, and German neighborhood residents. Kurdish and Turkish residents were comprised of three generations of immigrants. Former guest workers, their children and grandchildren, as well as Kurdish asylum seekers and Turkish political refugees were interviewed. The sample reflects the vast diversity of Germany's immigrant population of Turkish and Kurdish origin. Migrants interviewed came from different regions in Turkey, were members of different religious communities (some of which are organized nationally and transnationally) and political parties, and participated in a variety of civic organizations. Research participants further differed according to their transnational practices and ties, the length of their stay in Germany, citizenship status, gender, class, age, and educational backgrounds.

In the US context, we conducted ten focus groups and informal conversations with first-generation Somali, Sudanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mexican, and Central American immigrants in a small town (20 000 residents) in rural Minnesota in 2000–01. Altogether, eighty-two immigrants participated in these ten focus groups, which lasted approximately two hours and were held in a community center in the heart of town. Participants were selected to include different age groups (aged 20 years and older) and were, by and large, gender balanced. Focus groups were complemented by individual intake questionnaires to gather information on demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and the migration history of focus-group participants. Participants in the focus groups were an extremely heterogeneous population. Their length of residence in the United States varied from almost forty years to less than one year. The youngest participant was 20 years old, and the oldest was in the sixties. With the exception of Mexican migrants, who were either legal or undocumented immigrants, the majority of the other nationality groups came to the United States as refugees. Only a small number of participants (nine out of eighty-two) were already naturalized US citizens. Focus-group participants were recruited through community organizations and through workplaces. We chose focus groups over intensive interviews, because focus groups—with minimal interference from the moderator—allow for open conversation among participants to voice opinions, narrate experiences, and make sense of these in relation to others through social interaction (Pratt 2002). Furthermore, focus groups provide opportunities to observe how opinions and beliefs circulate, get enhanced, and get contradicted in social interaction. At the same time, the complex multiple narratives of focus groups present methodological challenges. The interactive nature of these discussions often gets lost if only quotes are extracted from these texts, as is the case in this paper where we emphasize the comparison across research contexts.

⁽²⁾ We merge our research experiences and continue to use 'we' even when describing individual research projects because our aim is to contribute our combined interpretations and research findings. For a similar writing strategy and further justification see Elwood and Martin (2000).

As we started analyzing the information on migrants' transnational ties and disposition towards the host polity and citizenship, we were struck by commonalities in migrants' perspectives across these two countries. These appeared striking at first, because the specific legal frameworks and immigration and citizenship policies differ substantially between the United States and Germany.

The United States considers itself a country of immigration and follows the principle of *jus soli*, which attributes citizenship to every person born on US territory. Immigrants are expected to assimilate and acquire citizenship within a short period of time. Permanent residents of the United States can apply for naturalization after five years. Germany, by contrast, did not consider itself a country of immigration until recently. Until 2000 German nationality law was based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which attributes citizenship based on descent. In 2000 the citizenship law was changed to accommodate Germany's immigrant population better, allowing children born to legal residents in Germany to obtain German citizenship and the citizenship of their parents upon birth, but requiring them to choose one of these two citizenships by the age of 23 years. In order to be eligible for German citizenship, migrants need to be legally resident in Germany for a period of at least eight years.

Citizenship rights accorded to immigrants by the state also differ to some extent between the United States and Germany. Nonnaturalized immigrants enjoy civil and social rights, but have no political rights in both countries. However, immigrants' access to social rights has been significantly curtailed in the United States since the 1996 Welfare Reform Act (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act 1996). Furthermore, in contrast to local governments in the United States, German local governments provide venues through which noncitizen immigrants are represented, such as immigrant advisory councils.

On closer examination, however, it became clear that the specifics of the national political context matter less for migrants' imaginings of citizenship than do common conceptions of liberal democratic citizenship and their shared marginal positionality within receiving states and the global economy. Liberal democratic citizenship, with its rights-based and obligation-based vocabulary, provides a common framework within which citizenship is understood in these two political contexts. It is, however, migrants' marginal positionality that conditions their common relations to citizenship. Immigrants participating in these two studies occupy (with a few exceptions) marginal social positions in the country of residence, holding primarily unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, despite individual differences in educational and skill levels. In both countries noncitizen immigrants do not enjoy equal protection and rights as citizens. Besides being excluded from participating in the formal political process, they generally face insecurity in residency status, and do not enjoy equal mobility and access to job opportunities as native-born citizens. In addition to formal exclusion, as a result of legal regulations and policies, immigrants face various degrees of informal discrimination—for example, on the housing and job market.

The shared marginal positionality as immigrants in the country of settlement is complicated, however, by differences among them. The participants in these two case studies were extremely heterogeneous, not only in terms of nationality but also according to their gender, age, generation, religious faiths, and length of stay in the country of residence. In the United States all participants were first-generation migrants, whereas in Germany we also interviewed second-generation migrants who were born and raised in Germany. They also migrated under disparate circumstances, occupy different legal statuses (refugees, documented, and undocumented immigrants), and had very different experiences of migrancy. Some fled oppression and persecution in their country of origin, whereas others crossed borders either legally or illegally to secure

and improve their economic livelihoods. Of particular importance are the emotional aspects of the experiences of migrancy. For example, conditions of war, civil strife, and experiences of persecution and violence by refugees fleeing their homeland bear on their identification with the state of origin and their disposition towards citizenship of the country of residence. As we shall see below, such experiences might sever identification with their state of origin, but not identifications with the places, communities, and cultural environments they were forced to flee. Migration scholarship has shown that these differences in migrants' positionalities, identities, and experiences shape both their transnational practices and their incorporation into the host society (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; Lyon and Ucarer, 2001; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003; Silvey and Lawson, 1999; Yeoh and Huang, 2000). Our research suggests that these differences also bear on the meaning and value they ascribe to citizenship, and on their citizenship practices.

Because of the space limitations of the paper, we are unable to explore this fully. We will, however, point out salient differences among immigrants that we observed in both countries. In the rest of paper we examine three dominant meanings of citizenship emerging from the migrants' narratives, and probe for how these are conditioned and mediated by commonalities and differences in their positionalities.

Citizenship: security, protection, and mobility

Processes of migration and immigration entail numerous uncertainties and many migrants do not take it for granted that their current place of residence is a permanent home. Complicated laws and regulations often inflict status insecurity on immigrants in their new country of residence (Nolin, 2002). Lacking formal membership in the host polity, migrants often question their ability to stay in their current place of residence.

Although documented immigrants normally need not fear deportation, both the USA and Germany have legal provisions for deporting immigrants for a variety of reasons (criminal offences, welfare abuse, and, lately, engagement in terrorist activities), and immigrants often fear being deported from the USA or Germany. The highly publicized deportation of 'Mehmet' (pseudonym), a 14-year-old Turkish boy, from Bavaria to Turkey in 2000, after he had accumulated a number of misdemeanor convictions, fueled such fears among Turkish immigrants in Germany.

In the USA immigrants were similarly aware and afraid of the possibility of being deported, as the following quotes from one of the Cambodian focus groups reveal:

Chantou: "If you are not a citizen, whatever you do, you will go to jail. Or they will deport you back to Cambodia" (20-year-old Cambodian female).

Sangha: "If I did something against the law with a felony charge in the US, and if they deport me back, I wouldn't know what to do" (37-year-old Cambodian male).

For our interviewees, citizenship of the place of residence would ensure personal security through the right to residence. Undocumented workers found this aspect of citizenship particularly important, but formal citizenship is seen as easing everyday life in many ways even for documented migrants. In Germany, for example, legal immigrants have to register with local authorities every six months in order to remain in good standing. The right to residence associated with citizenship thus makes life in migrants' current place of residence not only more secure but also less worrisome.

Immigrants' experiences prior to or during migration also play an important role for the value they attach to citizenship of the country of residence. Cambodian refugees, in particular, talked about traumatic experiences of persecution and violence forcing their departure. These figure prominently in their desire to acquire US citizenship. Given these

refugees' experiences with violence and persecution, they fear further harm should they return to visit the country they fled. Hence, for refugees, US citizenship implies not just status security in the USA but also protection abroad, as Chantou and Silong put it:

Chantou: "They [the US government] will protect you every possible way; if you go to any country and they are hurting you, if you die they will bring your body back to the USA" (20-year-old Cambodian female).

Silong: "If we wanted to travel or visit Cambodia, if there are any problems they [the US government] will help us get back. Even if they close the roads, or close the airports, if we die in Cambodia they will bring the body to my wife and kids also" (43-year-old Cambodian male).

Silong and Chantou expect US citizenship and the US passport to provide protection from bodily harm when traveling abroad, particularly when visiting their home country, and to ensure the integrity of their bodies in the event of death.

The literature on migrant transnationalism, which has tended to focus on well-off professional migrants, has created the misleading image of highly mobile migrants moving with ease across national borders (Ong, 1999). Transnational mobility is not equally available to all migrants, however (Al-Ali et al, 2001). For less well-off, undocumented migrants and refugees, in particular, transnational mobility is fraught with difficulty, danger, and bureaucratic obstacles. Rosita, a 42-year-old undocumented Mexican woman explained:

"[I would like to get US citizenship] [f]or the simple reason that you can leave and come back. ... [Y]ou could come through the open door. Come and go as you please. Without having the need to save for the 'coyote'. ... That is the best."

Rosita's aspirations can be understood only from the perspective of her experience of migrating without papers. For her, US citizenship would render experiences of having to pay the 'coyote', a smuggler, to enter the country a memory of the past. The US passport literally would open doors for her and facilitate mobility.

Continued volatility in Somalia, but also institutional constraints placed upon refugees by the US resettlement process, limit the transnational mobility of Somali refugees. If they left the USA without receiving advance permission from the US Bureau for Citizenship and Immigration, their visit to Somalia would be interpreted as voluntary repatriation, and would result in denial of readmission to the United States regardless of their refugee status. It is therefore not surprising that Somali refugees regard possession of a US passport as a means for securing travel abroad, especially to visit their home country.

Similarly, Kurdish refugees in Germany were keen to obtain a German passport in order to be able to return to Turkey to visit their families. Kurdish asylum seekers, still waiting for their German citizenship, reported that they had been unable to enter Turkey on their Turkish passports since they left. By contrast, Turkish immigrants who left the country under different circumstances (as guest workers) emphasized the increased convenience a German passport entailed for travel. They commented that a German passport made it much easier for them to travel within the European Union (EU), and especially when they wanted to travel to the USA or Canada, because German citizens do not require an entry visa.

Family ties and the well-being of family members left behind also influence migrants' perspectives on citizenship. Acquiring citizenship of the country of residence allows migrants to extend their own security to the wider family. Cambodian refugees, as well as other immigrants in the United States, discussed that they wanted to naturalize in order to bring family members left behind in Cambodia and other places to the United States. US law allows US citizens to sponsor family members to enter the country. As Kannitha (37-year-old Cambodian woman) stated:

“I want to become a US citizen for the future, so that I can sponsor my mom and dad. If you are not a US citizen, you cannot sponsor them.”

In sum, migrants’ narratives suggest that citizenship, and thus a passport from the host country, is seen as affording much-desired security in the place of residence and abroad, facilitating transnational practices such as visiting or returning to their home country, and allowing them to reunite with and extend this security to their loved ones. The great value assigned to national citizenship of an advanced industrial country such as Germany and the United States can be understood only given the marginal positionalities within the global political economy of poor migrants from less developed states, fleeing poverty, civil war, and persecution, and given the limited rights within receiving states. These positionalities also shape how migrants conceive of citizenship as guarantor of equality, which we explore in the following section.

Citizenship and equality

Immigrants in both Germany and the United States saw acquisition of citizenship as a prerequisite for equal participation in the economic, social, and political spheres of the receiving society. This desire for equal participation has to be seen within the context of their experiences with discrimination in their current place of residence. Labor-market discrimination—whether perceived or experienced—and difficulties in finding and keeping employment were central themes for immigrants. Crista, a 38-year-old Guatemalan woman suspected the following:

“I think that that [discrimination] is the factor that most, that affects us all. Because for example, where I work, the, maybe 99 percent, 99.99 are Americans, there are very few of us Hispanic and you can see it. You can see... that if there is a position, they prefer the American, because if one as a Hispanic tries to grab it, they put every hair up on account of not giving them the position.”

In Germany, where Turkish and Kurdish migrants, as so-called Third Country Nationals, are eligible for job vacancies only if no suitable Germans or EU citizen can be found, formal German citizenship becomes crucial for obtaining employment in a tight labor market. Some immigrants identified employment as the primary reason for obtaining German or US citizenship, even when they expressed reluctance to naturalize. Ferdane, a 31-year-old Turkish woman, summarized her reasons as follows:

“I am practically forced to [naturalize]. If they tell me, as a foreigner, after 30 years in Germany no, you have no possibility of finding work because first in line are Germans, then the EU countries and then it’s the Turks’ turn, then I’m practically forced to do that [naturalize]. Indirectly I’m being forced.”

For Ferdane, national citizenship emerges as a central prerequisite for economic equality. Her desire for equal access to employment leaves her little choice but to naturalize. Rather than *wanting* to naturalize, Ferdane *had* to naturalize to overcome the exclusion from employment imposed by citizenship laws.

Migrants’ struggles to secure affordable housing also figured prominently in their narratives. Discrimination on the housing market has different faces. Somali migrants attributed their rejection to being black:

Alaso: “Personally I do have problems finding housing. I put down application with several places. It is possible that they don’t allow you to rent if you are black or they let whites to rent it” (33-year-old Somali female).

Khalid: “It is our perception only that they discriminate against us because of color. Nothing has been said or shown to us” (25-year-old Somali male).

Alaso and Khalid share strong perceptions of racial discrimination in their efforts to rent a place, even if they cannot prove that racism played a role. Similarly, Turkish residents in Germany reported that they were told by landlords that a particular place had been rented already, only to learn later that the apartment in question was still open when a German friend inquired. Rental classified ads in one local German paper even advertised a rental vacancy only to a "single older *German* woman" (*Wochen-Anzeiger* 1998).

It is not surprising, then, that experiences of discrimination lead immigrants to place specific emphasis on equality in terms of rights and political representation in the host polity. Many immigrants place a high value on the right to vote, and to have a voice in the host polity, as the following quotes from Christa and Consuela exemplify:

Christa: "If I am a citizen I can vote and my vote counts. It could be that this person [candidate] wins to better the country, to better my town. What motivates us to become citizens is to have the right to vote, to have more rights to speak in many communities, to make your presence felt so that they are going to listen to you more. It sounds ugly, but a citizen will be heard more than a resident" (38-year-old Guatemalan woman).

Consuela: "And if you are a person who is a citizen and you have good ideas, well you can also contribute for the good of our Hispanic world, that you are American it doesn't matter, but they listen to you more" (38-year-old Mexican woman).

For Crista and Consuela it is not enough to reside in a place, one has to be a citizen to make one's voice heard, to claim rights, and to promote the community's welfare. Their comments are representative of other immigrants' understanding of voting, as a means to participate actively in the host polity for both individual and community empowerment.

Despite considering formal citizenship as a prerequisite for equal rights, immigrants remained skeptical that citizenship would automatically entail equality. Abdullah, a Somali male in his twenties, suggested that being afforded the same rights does not erase difference:

Abdullah: "I would like to be a citizen because once I become a citizen that would allow me to enjoy the same rights as other Americans though I know we are not going to be the same."

Silong, a 43-year-old Cambodian male, elaborated that, in particular, differences in physical appearance and difficulties with the English language would continue to matter, as they make immigrants appear less valuable in the eyes of the host society, regardless of formal citizenship status:

"[If you are a citizen] [t]hey won't look down at you, but if you don't know the language, they will still look down at you. Our hair is black. It will still be difficult."

Although acutely aware that formal citizenship neither erases differences and racism nor guarantees equality, migrants still aspire to acquire formal citizenship and articulate undiminished interest in and commitment to civic participation in both home and host societies. Women and men talked about the importance of forming community organizations to provide support for other migrants getting settled with housing, jobs, basic needs, and maintaining their cultural identities. They also expressed a desire to identify better ways of educating themselves in the language of their place of residence and in their rights and responsibilities in the host society. Although immigrants themselves did not necessarily think of these social practices as citizenship, these ideas, desires, and practices that individuals engage in beyond the state, through organizations of civil society and civic actions, are at the core of a more agentic definition of citizenship (Benhabib, 1999; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; Lister, 1997).

Citizenship and identities

Scholars of migrant transnationalism have shown that contemporary migrants identify with multiple communities—nations, ethnic, and religious communities—across borders (Ehrkamp, 2005; Geaves, 2003; Guarnizo and Diaz, 1999; Kosnick, 2004; Lyon and Ucarer, 2001; Saint-Blancat, 2002). Our research similarly suggests that migrants engage in complex negotiations of multiple and sometimes conflicting identities in relation to their old and new places of residence, ethnic and religious communities, and nations. The outcome of these complex negotiations is conditioned and mediated by migrants' subjects positions and lived experiences, leading to differences among migrants in allegiances and dispositions towards acquisition of citizenship in the state of residence.

Some refugees in our research who experienced oppression and violence by their state of origin have severed their allegiance to the state of origin. For them, giving up citizenship of the state of origin poses little problem. In the case of Kurdish refugees we cannot assume that they ever felt allegiance to the oppressive Turkish state that persecuted them for such acts as speaking Kurdish languages in public. In the US research, Cambodian refugees, traumatized by fleeing the Khmer Rouge regime, and by losing their belongings and loved ones, expressed no allegiance to the state that persecuted them and forced them to flee. Formalizing their membership to the current place of residence through naturalization⁽³⁾ meant finding closure and symbolized starting over:

Nath: "When you become a citizen, you forget about the Khmer" (42-year-old Cambodian male).

For Nath, the act of becoming a US citizen almost becomes therapeutic, providing a break with an emotionally difficult past, and relief from memories of oppression and persecution. Severing identification with the nation-state, however, does not imply breaking with one's national community or culture. All Cambodian focus-group participants continued to strongly identify with Khmer culture and their homeland.

Somali refugees, whose home country (and national community) has been torn apart by decades of civil war and unrest (Samatar, 1992), also did not display strong identifications with their country of origin. In the absence of a Somali nation-state, Somali identity has become strongly associated with being and acting as a Muslim, making religious identities more salient than national identities. Strong identification with their religious community, however, complicates some Somali migrants' dispositions towards acquiring US citizenship. Some Somali women and men mentioned that, as Muslims, they felt out of place in the United States and therefore had no desire to acquire US citizenship.

Sahra: "No, I am not intending to get a passport... I don't belong to this country and everybody can see that I am not American" (52-year-old Somali woman).

Alaso: "I will not be staying here either. Our country provides us an Islamic environment and it is our country" (33-year-old Somali woman).

More generally, the strong desire among all migrants in our research to retain and maintain their ethnocultural, religious, and/or national identities complicates decisions to naturalize. For the majority of migrants, the decision to naturalize, thereby giving up citizenship of the country of origin, was fraught with intense internal negotiations and

⁽³⁾ US and German citizenship laws and policies presuppose that immigrants assimilate to some extent to the dominant sociocultural system, shedding their attachment and allegiance to their home country in order to become naturalized citizens. In the United States, the first line of the citizenship oath makes this clear: "I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign ... state... of... which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen" (US Citizenship and Immigration Service, 2004, page 1).

emotional struggles between multiple, and sometimes conflicting, identifications and feelings of belonging. There were marked differences, however, in how these struggles were resolved based on migrants' perceptions of how the acquisition of citizenship of the country of residence might affect their ability to maintain these identities, and whether the nation is the primary source of identification and community. Particularly noticeable were gender and nationality differences.

For some male migrants, strong loyalty to their home country made acquiring the citizenship of the country of residence less desirable. In the US context, less educated Mexican men, in particular, saw renouncing their Mexican citizenship as betraying their country. These views are consistent with Jones-Correa's findings about Latino immigrants in New York in the early 1990s, many of whom were reluctant to become US citizens because it meant renouncing allegiance to their home country (Jones-Correa, 1998).

For similar reasons some younger Turkish men in Germany postponed their naturalization because they felt obligated to first complete their military service in Turkey. Osman, a 20-year-old second-generation immigrant, explained how he grappled with the question of naturalization:

Osman: "First [before I become a German citizen] I want to serve in the Turkish army..."

Author: "Why?"

Osman: "That's got to do with my pride. And, um, if you say, for example, with the military, when you're older, like 30, 35, then you'll like to talk about stuff, what you did in the military and that time. And even then, even if I can't say much, I can say I have served the fatherland. That's the real thing there... I tell myself, first the military service in Turkey, even if it is only a month. And after that, German citizenship."

Osman's thoughts also speak to the complexities of immigrant citizenship and identity. For him, naturalization is desirable because he lives in Germany and sees his future there. At the same time he has a strong desire to maintain his Turkish identity. He wants to have the shared experience of service in the Turkish military that he and his (male) friends might reminisce about later in their lives. Osman's decision to serve his 'fatherland' clearly indicates his sense of loyalty to Turkey and reinforces a sense of being Turkish that he deems important, notwithstanding his future in Germany.

Women migrants, by contrast, were less inclined to regard acquisition of citizenship of the country of residence as irreconcilable with their cultural identities and belonging to their home country. Having to renounce their citizenship was not taken lightly. But Mexican and Turkish migrant women, in particular, made a distinction between their emotional attachments to the national *community* of origin, and formal membership in a national *polity*. Hülya, a Turkish woman in her thirties, who had obtained German citizenship, and Consuela, a 38-year-old Mexican immigrant, insisted that naturalization does not obliterate their Turkish and Mexican identities:

Hülya: "Because, when you're asked about your nationality, ... especially when looking for work ... I didn't become German because I thought that was so super great ... I am, deep down, still Turkish, only, I live here. I have accepted that."

Consuela: "I don't stop being Mexican or having my roots.... Say that I am already American but, well I vote to Mexico... and I am Mexican down to my shoes and that has nothing to do with it [being a US citizen], no."

These migrant women did not view acquiring citizenship of the country of residence as diminishing or threatening their identification and loyalty to their home country

and other communal identities. Hence, their identities did not pose an obstacle for acquiring citizenship of the country of residence.

These observed gender differences between Turkish and Mexican male and female migrants are rather striking and need further exploration. Although there is no space to interrogate these fully here, these findings resonate with feminist scholarship on the gendered nature of nationalism and national identity. As Radcliffe and Westwood argue, “through national practice and discourse, women and men become embodiments of ‘the national’” (1996, page 141). In Latin America, nationalism and national identities have been explicitly linked to men, masculinity, and imagined brotherhoods, whereas women—as national mothers—have been assigned marginal and contradictory positions within the national project and nationhood. Such gendering of national identities shapes how citizenship is understood. Radcliffe and Westwood (1996) furthermore suggest that, in the second part of the 20th century, social movements, including women’s activism, have not only challenged patriarchy and women’s assigned place in the nation but also contested official nationalist ideologies that construct the nation as the main and primary source of identification and community. Such challenges are conceptualized in Anzaldúa’s (1987) figure of the ‘new mestiza’, who repeatedly crosses the borders of culture, nation, race, and gender, and thereby cultivates ‘divided loyalties’ that challenge liberal democratic ideals of undivided political loyalty.

If immigrants’ positionalities and multiple identities complicate decisions about acquiring citizenship of the country of residence, this does not mean that migrants are unwilling or unable to commit to societies in both their current place of residence and their country of origin. Immigrants emphasized that they are capable of making commitments to their new place of residence, describing various practices to reach out and contribute to the larger local community. For example, a group of Turkish seniors in Duisburg-Marxloh regularly celebrated their religious holidays with local German elderly people, and a local mosque community invited residents of the neighboring homeless shelter to the annual *Kurban Bayram* (sacrifice holiday), when traditionally food is distributed to the poor.

Similarly, immigrants in the USA proudly talked about their involvement and contributions to local communities. For example, Duong, a 60-year-old Vietnamese male, said:

“Personally... maybe there are a lot of issues I am proud of the community... .

The evidence is this building ... is a building which I had a part of—to contribute and build this YMCA for this community.”

However, his contributions to the local community center pale in comparison with what he considers his most important achievement.

Duong: “And the thing which... I am most proud of is my family... five out of six children are serving in the United States military?”

Moderator: “Five out of six children, the five boys?”

Duong: “Four boys and a girl are currently serving the United States military.”

These examples show that immigrants do not simply consider citizenship as something to be piled up like chips on a card table, with no commitments attached. To live up to their commitments, immigrants envision participation in multiple communities and practice citizenship without perceiving a conflict of loyalty, by simultaneously being members in multiple national political, ethnic, cultural, and religious communities, reflecting their overlapping attachments.

Contrary to critics of dual citizenship, who emphasize conflicts of loyalty associated with it (Miller, 2000; Renshon, 2001), most migrants in our research, in Germany and the United States, did not perceive a conflict of loyalty in being members of two

national political communities, and were willing and able to participate in and commit to both societies and polities. Immigrants' multiple attachments and desires to participate in multiple (political) communities are important reasons for the value they place on dual citizenship. Most immigrants we interviewed thought dual citizenship was desirable, as Sangha, a 37-year-old Cambodian male, expressed:

"For me, I want to become a US citizen, but I want to keep my Khmer citizenship as well. I want to have both."

Most migrants considered renouncing the citizenship of the home country to be the highest 'cost' of acquiring citizenship of the country of residence, and dual citizenship may reduce dilemmas of emotional attachments and conflicting loyalties. Indeed, migrants view dual citizenship as a recognition of their multiple attachments and commitments (Kilic, 1994).

Conclusions

In this paper we have examined how migrants understand citizenship and what value and meaning they assign to different aspects of citizenship within their local and transnational lives in Germany and the United States—a perspective largely missing in the extensive recent scholarly debates on citizenship and immigration. The narratives above show that citizenship is a salient and far-reaching force in migrants' everyday lives, influencing their access to work and housing, their security, their transnational mobility, and their participation in the polity.

Migrants' perspectives on formal citizenship conform in significant ways across these two countries, while varying among migrants. We suggest that commonalities across Germany and the United States are rooted in migrants' shared marginal positionality and dominant discourses of liberal democratic citizenship that frame how citizenship should be understood. Migrants' social positionalities condition and mediate common relations to citizenship, namely how citizenship is understood, imagined, and practiced by migrants.

Migrants occupy marginal positions and experience various forms of exclusion and discrimination within both national polities and societies. In the light of this, migrants consider formal citizenship a prerequisite for personal security and protection under the law and equal access to social and political rights. Yet, they remain skeptical about whether formal citizenship will result in equal treatment. They are aware of the discrepancy between the expectations and promises of equity and fairness associated with liberal democratic citizenship, and of the reality in which many naturalized migrants are subject to discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. Despite this awareness, national liberal democratic citizenship continues to be meaningful in migrants' struggles for their mobility across borders, for equal protection under the law, and for equal access to social and political rights. The continued salience of national citizenship in immigrants' rights claims stands in contradiction to arguments in the postnational literature (Soysal, 1994; 2000) that citizenship and claims making of immigrants are increasingly focused beyond the nation-state. Migrants' perspectives also suggest that arguments in the postnational literature about the decoupling of rights from formal citizenship are overstated. Despite extension of formal citizenship rights to noncitizen migrants, they do not enjoy the same rights as citizens.

By teasing out differences among migrants, paying close attention to their positionalities within the nation-state and the global political economy, our research corroborates that images of highly mobile transnational migrants are greatly exaggerated. Refugees in our research faced clear limits to their mobility across borders, as others also have observed (Al-Ali et al, 2001; Nolin, 2002), and similar constraints affect undocumented migrants.

In considering formal membership in their country of residence, migrants negotiate multiple and overlapping identities and belonging in relation to their old and their new places of residence, ethnic, and religious communities, with varying outcomes. Our research suggests that differences in dispositions towards naturalization are conditioned and mediated by migrants' subject positions (particularly gender and nationality) and by the experience of migrancy.

These differences notwithstanding, the majority of men and women in our research can and do identify with multiple communities, and desire to participate and become members of more than one national polity. This suggests that migrants challenge conceptions of bounded national citizenship advocated by some (Miller, 1999; 2000), in which one nation-state is conceived as the primary source of identification and community. Our findings strongly support Bauböck's (1994; 2003) proposals for making citizenship more inclusive, and extending dual citizenship and urban citizenship to migrants as a means of both recognizing their multiple identifications and providing better opportunities for them to participate in multiple polities.

Finally, migrants' perspectives suggest that arguments about the deterritorialization and denationalization of citizenship and identities are simplistic and premature. The fact that transnational migrants' practices and identities are multiple and cross territorial and communal boundaries does not imply that identifications with territorially defined national polities and locales are disappearing. The women and men in our research talked about their attachments to and practices in the countries and places both of origin and of settlement. There is no question that migrant transnationalism implies a new spatiality of everyday lives. Yet, far from erasing territorial identifications and meaning systems, it actually relies on them to sustain transnational ties and practices.

In sum, normative conceptions of citizenship and empirical observations from a distance do not adequately explain changes, values, and meanings of contemporary citizenship. The contemporary scholarly debates on citizenship, immigration, and transnationalism thus need to pay closer attention to the positionalities, experiences, and emotional attachments of migrants. We contend that such scholarship will yield a much deeper understanding of the ways that citizenship is lived, practiced, and reshaped, in societies increasingly connected by migration and globalization.

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