



Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique

French Journal of British Studies

XXI-1 | 2016

Citizenship in the United Kingdom

Foreword

Avant-propos

Nathalie Duclos and Vincent Latour



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/892>

DOI: 10.4000/rfcb.892

ISSN: 2429-4373

Publisher

CRECIB - Centre de recherche et d'études en civilisation britannique

Electronic reference

Nathalie Duclos and Vincent Latour, « Foreword », *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* [Online], XXI-1 | 2016, Online since 20 July 2016, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/892> ; DOI : 10.4000/rfcb.892

This text was automatically generated on 1 May 2019.



Revue française de civilisation britannique est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

Foreword

Avant-propos

Nathalie Duclos and Vincent Latour

- 1 It is the aim of this issue to put the notions of “citizen” and “citizenship” into a theoretical and historical perspective and to determine to what extent the British conception of citizenship has been influenced or indeed shaped by philosophical and political exchanges and transfers, notably cross-Channel ones, while gauging the impact of the political context in all of the periods considered.
- 2 For centuries, the concept of “citizenship” was far more uncertain and fluctuating in Britain than in France, mostly because people were first and foremost considered as “subjects”. The term, derived from French, first appeared at the time of the Norman Conquest. It was used throughout the Middle Ages, until the pre-modern era. In most cases, it designated city dwellers endowed with certain rights and privileges and was virtually a synonym for “burgess” or “freeman”. However as early as the 14th century, the term came to designate either the inhabitant of a city or of a country as a whole (e.g. John Wyclif, *circa* 1380, Thomas Starkey, 1538)
- 3 The 17th century may be viewed as a watershed, as civil wars revealed that the monarchy could no longer be taken for granted. A major turning point came with the Glorious Revolution and the adoption of the Bill of Rights. That era saw the materialisation of political principles that had taken shape in the previous decades: a questioning of the divine right of kings; the extolling of the right to resist a monarch depriving his / her subjects of their liberties and the assertion of the parliament’s sovereignty through the emergence of a so-called constitutional monarchy. Political modernity, notably embodied by Locke, came to be defined by such principles, as well as by “toleration”. Freedom of worship was granted to dissenters in 1689, but they remained deprived of civic rights until 1829: freedom of worship cannot therefore be equated with full-fledged citizenship.
- 4 In the 18th century, the word “citizen” appeared in the political writings of Hume, who used it extensively in reference to the Republics of Classical Antiquity or to Italian city-states, his reflection acquiring a universal dimension (e.g. “A too great disproportion

among the citizens weakens any state”; “A continual succession of wars makes every citizen a soldier”, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, 1752).

Later on, the American Revolution revived the Republican and Machiavellian tradition of citizen-soldiers. Citizenship and political liberties were intertwined: weapons were the means of defending political rights. The French Revolution also reinvigorated the use of the word “citizen” in Britain. The so-called “British Jacobins” had two chief grievances: the civic emancipation of dissenters and a broad extension of the franchise, i.e. an increase in the number of citizens (a lowering of property qualifications to take part in the electoral process; the abolition of “rotten boroughs”, etc.). Such demands were to be gradually met between 1832 and 1928, with women in particular being gradually enfranchised between the mid-Victorian period and the interwar years, although real male-female political “parity” is still a far cry from what John Stuart Mill, Millicent Fawcett and the Suffragettes might have expected.

- 5 In the post-war period, decolonisation and (post)colonial immigration to the UK prompted changes in citizenship acquisition. Britain opted for an open, universalist definition of nationality and citizenship for Commonwealth nationals (*British Nationality Act*, 1948) to be contrasted with France’s much narrower interpretation towards its colonial subjects, notably within the framework of the *Union Française* and later, of the *Communauté Française*. This was especially true for Algerians, labelled as *Français Musulmans d’Algérie* and therefore, as second-rate citizens.
- 6 Nowadays, the question of “multicultural citizenship” is no longer taken for granted in the UK, where progress achieved through multiculturalism seems to be questioned. Since the Cattle Report (2001), one has witnessed a novel use of “citizenship” as a mode of incorporation or indeed integration of migrants and their descendants in Britain, notably through the setting up of measures initially devised abroad (e.g. *citizenship education*, *citizenship tests*, *citizenship ceremonies*).
- 7 Moreover new challenges to the State have appeared. They stem notably from the emergence of transnational or post-national forms of citizenship. Diasporic citizenship and the development of transnational allegiances are a case in point. Prevarications over the compatibility of certain religious beliefs with citizenship are not new. The current debates over the compatibility of Islam with liberal democracies sometimes seems to echo, in some extreme cases, the long exclusion of dissenters, Roman Catholics and Jews from civic rights, even long after the passing of the Toleration Act (1689). The State has also been challenged by enhanced European integration and, arguably, the subsequent development of post-national forms of citizenship.
- 8 In recent years such questions have frequently given rise to unashamed attempts at political exploitation, by extremist and by mainstream political parties, as shown in the often disgraceful 2016 EU referendum campaign.
- 9 This issue is divided into three main sections.
- 10 The articles featured in the first section, entitled “Historical Development of Conceptions of Citizenship in the United Kingdom”, offer diachronic illustrations of the various trajectories taken by citizenship across the Channel, whether in the 17th century (Luc Borot’s and Gaby Mahlberg’s papers, respectively on the criteria used for delineating the contours of citizenship in early modern England and on the political role played by republican exiles during the 1660s and 1670s); in the late 19th century (Pauline Collombier-Lakeman’s contribution on the notions of nationality and citizenship in the

Irish Home Rule debates, Joël Richard's study of how national identity and citizenship were put into words and music by Gilbert and Sullivan in their 1893 Savoy opera *Utopia Limited*); or in the late 20th century (Marc Lenormand's piece, which uses the concept of citizenship to examine the history of British trade unions from 1968 to 1997, and reciprocally uses the political debates in the British labour movement to clarify the various interpretations of the notion of citizenship).

- 11 The articles that appear in the second section, entitled "Citizenship, Social Policy and Political Representation", illustrate how citizenship in the UK has been confronted with (or incorporated into) other fundamental notions, such as nationality and multiculturalism (Catherine Puzzo's article on the increasingly drastic criteria for earning UK citizenship and 'the right to stay'; Romain Garbaye and Vincent Latour's contribution on the paradoxical prevalence of multiculturalism as a mode of incorporation in the UK, despite the terrorist threat and the promotion of "shared values" for the past fifteen years; Julien Gillaumond's piece on the complicated and sometimes contradictory emergence of Ireland as an immigration country); education (Anne Beauvallet's article on the various forms taken by the implementation of citizenship education in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland); social rights (Jean-Paul Révauger's paper on the ideological and political trajectory of the citizenship income, an old idea once cherished by progressive utopians and now seen as a possible companion for austerity policies; Jan Windebank's analysis of the reasons for the comparative continuity in work-family reconciliation policy under the 2010-2015 coalition government) and recent constitutional developments, notably devolution (Nathalie Duclos's article on the SNP's conception of Scottish society and citizenship, based on an analysis of the speeches made by Alex Salmond in the years 2007-2014; Karine Rivière de Franco's survey of the impact of devolution on the political representation and participation of women in the Scottish Parliament).
- 12 The third section, "Contemporary Challenges to the Founding Principles of Citizenship", strikes a different albeit complementary chord by emphasising a departure from traditional definitions of citizenship (such as that of T.H. Marshall), which have tended to stress State-individual relations. Emma Bell thus identifies and explores the emergence of "corporate citizenship", whereby some citizens are seen to be more equal/deserving than others, citizenship being no longer defined exclusively in relation to the State. David Fée comes to similar conclusions as regards housing which, in his view, has become an increasingly conditional right since the 1970s, or indeed, "a sustained governmental effort to redraw the contours of citizenship". The retreat of the State is also at the centre of Raphaële Espiet-Kilty's contribution, which examines the role and the scope of David Cameron's flagship programme for the 2010 British general election, the Big Society. On a different note, Gino Raymond argues that both the Scarman and the Macpherson Reports may have opened the door to an interpretation of racism which might be seen to challenge the principle of equality underlying the concept of citizenship, as shown in the Rochdale grooming scandal.
- 13 Finally, Réjane Sénac's article provides an enlightening insight into the French republican model. As cross-Channel dialogue seems particularly pertinent to the study of citizenship in the UK, we have asked her, as a leading figure in the study of citizenship in France today, to write a contribution that addresses the way in which the uses of parity and diversity question the dilemmas of "republican equality", along with the rise of

neoliberalism, the latter being also relevant to the fluctuating nature of citizenship in the UK in recent decades, as will be extensively documented in this issue.

¹⁴ **Ce numéro a été mis en forme par John Mullen et Shirley Doulière, utilisant le logiciel LODEL.**