

Rethinking Migration and Belonging in the 21st Century: An Introduction

Rebecca Ehata and Fabiola Mieres
University of Manchester

In recent years, migration has gained prominence not only in government policy agendas but also in scholarship. Far from being new, migration has historically shaped the evolution of societies worldwide. Migration matters less for the number involved – an estimated 214 million people representing 3.1% of the world's population (UN 2008) are international migrants – but rather for its impact in the rise of multiethnic societies within nation-state borders. Even those places which ten years ago boasted homogeneous populations – Japan or Korea, for example – are increasingly being forced to come to terms with the reality of ethnic minority workforces (Castles and Davidson 2002: 157). Furthermore, changing geopolitics, a globalised production regime and the lure of political stability, democratic freedoms and comparatively high standards of living in Western states have all resulted in larger flows of migrants around the globe in general, and towards industrialised nations in particular, thereby exacerbating changes in dynamic growing societies.

We have already learned much about the mechanisms that drive and sustain migration thanks to a vast migration literature (Castles and Miller 2009, Massey *et al* 1998, Massey and Taylor 2004, Hirschman *et al* 1999 and Phillips 2011) which emphasises micro and macro explanations of international and internal migration. However, our understanding of the processes of migration, and how it is changing our conceptions of the local, the global and the role of the state, is still far from complete. At the same time, migration brings into focus notions of belonging and membership, challenging the privileged outcomes of birthright citizenship and arguing for a more sophisticated interpretation of what it means to 'belong'. Consequently, the link between states and their citizens are irrevocably weakened (Bhabha 1999) and the speeding up of interconnectedness sometimes called 'globalisation' (Castells 2000) has put enormous pressure on states and traditional understandings of identities.

To what extent is migration shaping/shaped by globalisation? How does migration help us theorise individuals, states and international regimes? Can new readings of citizenship lead to more inclusive societies? Where do we end up if we problematise belongingness? Such questions beg critical reappraisal from across the Social Sciences, and the articles in this special issue of Political Perspectives make a start on disclosing some of the political and cultural forces which impede a more truly equal experience of human mobility.

In the first paper of this issue, Helen Williams looks at immigration from the perspective of governmental law- and policy-making. The matter of how states should set immigration and integration policy has been at the top of political agendas in most European countries for the

last decade or more. Williams' article draws a comparison between government policy in the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany over the last decade using a discourse analysis approach. The reading of the elite discourse which emerges indicates that each state has experienced a u-turn in its attitudes to the integration of immigrants into the fabric of their communities, with Germany -after decades of denial- finally conceding that it is truly a country of immigration, and that it must therefore take account of its immigrant populations. In turn, the UK establishment's steady move away from its formerly open immigration stance to a new era of restrictive policy with an emphasis on the need to recast immigration as an economic tool (or economic burden) in contrast to its hitherto social or political domain is also analysed. Of great interest in this article is the way in which Williams charts the pattern by which the discursive shifts that have enabled the change of direction to occur, so that initial 'shock' introduction of previously unthinkable policy positions, followed by withdrawal and subsequent reintroduction of the same or similar terms – this time without the shock value – has enabled the previously unthinkable to become government policy. In the German case, the shift has meant that the prevailing mantra of ethnic citizenship has mutated into "constitutional patriotism and conscious effort to increase naturalisation rates" (Williams, this issue; 6), while the UK has distanced naturalisation from the realms of the common immigrant to a selective and discriminatory site that will be more easily entered by the wealthy and powerful than others.

In both these cases, the issue of cultural compatibility has been a fundamental, if often understated, factor in attitudes surrounding the integration and naturalisation of immigrants. In the UK, the belief that leaving immigrants to live separate lives equalled 'multiculturalism' meant that in the aftermath of the Northern riots of 2001, multiculturalism could be deemed to have 'failed'. The overwhelming response of politicians and political commentators has been to conclude that it is immigrants and their collective failure to facilitate their own assimilation into an elusive 'Britishness' (an ill-defined and ill-definable concept) which is the problem, and for which remedial measures such as enforced knowledge and language testing and a period of 'probationary citizenship' will ensure that naturalisation is properly 'earned'. Germany's prior resistance to the idea that its *Gastarbeitern* should be considered as equal citizens has been based in some measure on the perceived incompatibility of its predominantly Turkish, Muslim immigrant population to integrate without compromising the country's Christian, liberal-democratic values and outlook, a perception which despite post-war Germany's best efforts to shake off its history nonetheless still contains traces of notions of racial and ethnic purity. By this logic, cultural compatibility must go hand in hand with ethnic commensurability.

In contrast, the article by Christin Hess, which looks at Germany in comparison with Greece, demonstrates the fallacy of such a position. Hess examines the way in which ethno-culturally construed nations have been forced to reconsider their notions of belonging and citizenship in light of their experiences of welcoming co-ethnic 'repatriates' following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both states had long held ethnicity to be the defining characteristic for citizenship, which led to the inclusion of overseas co-ethnics within the national imaginary. The seismic geopolitical shifts of the early 1990s saw both Greece and Germany welcome their exiled brothers 'home' to the motherland on highly preferential immigration terms, which led in many cases to an almost automatic issuance of legal citizenship. Hess's analysis of interviews with repatriates and policymakers together with press clippings, statistical data and opinion polls illustrate her account of how co-ethnic citizenship as an ideal fares in

practice, and how such experiences impact on a nation's self-perception. The failure of 'repatriate' citizens to live up to expectations of instant integration illustrates that shared blood and ethnicity alone cannot sustain shared culture and concepts of nationhood and has led, as Hess argues, to the wholesale re-evaluation of the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Nonetheless, in the case of Greece, the experience of repatriate immigration appears rather to have reinforced the ethno-cultural idiom, so that in her view, "Greece remains faithful to its identity as a culturally homogeneous nation" (Hess, this issue; 25).

In a similar vein, Bruce's article examines the complex interplay between 'sending' and 'receiving' countries' strategies to integrate Muslim immigrants into receiving societies. Bruce scrutinises state efforts in France and Germany to promote the integration of Muslim immigrants and their children through the creation of two institutions specifically designed to represent Islam: The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) in France, and the German *Islamkonferenz*. He traces the symbolic importance of Islam in both countries while also analyzing how these institutions engage in dialogue with representatives from the main Islamic federations and other Muslim public figures in order to promote a greater sense of national belonging amongst Muslim citizens. Bruce argues that the main issue at stake is the capacity of receiving states to treat Islamic-related issues as internal problems pertaining to the society as whole so that the demands of Muslim citizens are integrated and fully understood. These demands need to be considered by public authorities first and foremost as the demands of citizens who belong to the national polity, and not as demands of a citizenship-blind category of Muslims (Bruce 2010:58). However, the ambiguity that has overshadowed the idea of the Muslim citizen, at once insider and outsider, has led to paradoxical policies on the part of the French and German states. These policies have sought to de-transnationalise Islam and domesticate it within national political and legal frameworks through a process of institutionalisation with the goal of promoting a sense of national belonging. However, receiving states have failed to treat Islam as a question of internal politics and this has led to the heightened involvement of sending states in the internal Islamic religious affairs of each country. In this way, Muslims (regardless of whether citizens or not) remain in an ambiguous no man's land for the French and German states, which justifies the continued reliance on foreign governments as intermediaries.

Migration within the European Union (EU) is the subject of Cara Uccellini's paper. Uccellini scrutinizes how Europeans constitute each other as 'insiders' and 'outsiders' by examining the case of Romanian migration to Italy. One of the great EU promises has been an end to internal discrimination on the basis of nationality, so that an individual from any EU member state should find him/herself treated on an equal basis to nationals of all other EU states, including the host state in which s/he may be residing. This has created an expectation of comparable treatment for all EU citizens, though this paper demonstrates the falsity of such expectations. Although Italy is host to the largest Romanian community outside Romania, Uccellini shows that neither common EU membership nor shared linguistic and cultural features have resulted in the acceptance of Romanians as 'insiders' in the Italian national imaginary. In a preliminary study of reporting on Romanian migrants to Italy in *La Repubblica*, Italy's most widely-read newspaper, Uccellini finds that, contrary to the European Union rhetoric of equality for the citizens of all its member states, accession to the EU has not led to a post-Accession shift to 'insider' status for Romanian migrants. While here no claims to co-ethnicity are made, the issue of linguistic and cultural similarity acknowledged by political leaders on both sides only serves to accentuate the 'illogical'

placement of Romanians in the category of 'outsiders' in the Italian media, which is dominated by a discursive linking of Romanian nationals with agendas of security and criminality. As Uccellini's analysis demonstrates, Romanians are still routinely viewed in a category with other EU 'outsiders', rather than being placed alongside 'proper' Europeans such as French or German nationals.

Continuing the theme of outsider status, Raphi Rechitsky explores the impacts of social exclusion in Ukraine on transnational migrant belonging and challenges binary conceptualizations of migrant identity that rest on cultural, social and political belonging as a dualism between the society of origin and the country of settlement. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research conducted with Afghan, West African, and other migrant communities in the cities of Kyiv and Kharkiv in 2009, this paper shows how experiences with marginalization, such as barriers to legal residence and work, restrictions on mobility, and racial discrimination and violence, shape the formation of identities of belonging not only with respect to the host community, but also to countries of origin and potential alternative destinations. In this way, belonging is not just a product of collective memory and social imaginary, but is structured by membership in migrant-receiving societies. Furthermore, certain social practices such as Slavic nationalist and Euro-centric racism and xenophobia, together with a lack of options to regularize legal status leaves migrants and refugees in Ukraine unable to integrate into society. Belonging to the nation, the city of residence, as well as neighborhoods and communities is negotiated by way of these subaltern lifeworlds through both accommodation and resistance. Moreover, transnational migrant belonging to homeland and alternative destination societies are not just prefigured by diasporic memory and media imagery, but are also grounded in everyday experience of social marginality.

Lastly, 'binaries' within globalization are also challenged in the paper by Smith. The 'global' versus 'local' divide that has characterized traditional globalization approaches is put into question by looking at how the 'local', women, 'grass-roots', marginalized peoples and minorities are reconstituted in light of gender, race, nationality, religion, sexuality and class within globalization. Drawing on 'alternative globalization theory, transnational feminism and the hybridization literature, Smith highlights the unevenness that result from globalization in notions of identity and belonging that tend to be obscured by conceptualizations of the 'local' versus the 'global'. Four categories of identity are presented as alternative theoretical lens to rethink the dynamic forces and contradictory trajectories that constrain and impinge on identity formation in a globalised world.

New scholars bring fresh perspectives and new modes of critique to the study of migration and belonging, and in the meantime patterns of mobility and fixity continue to be transformed by national, regional and global developments. Thus the debate over what it means to 'belong' and the role of the nation-state in defining this is ongoing. We hope the contributions in this issue prompt further reflection on the role of migration in reshaping notions of belonging and citizenship in an era of 'globalisation'.

Rebecca Ehata and Fabiola Mieres

Manchester, November 2010

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Katy Allison and Ralph Young from the Editorial Board of Political Perspectives; all the reviewers who contributed to this special edition, and especially to the authors for their precious time and patience in all the editing stages.

REFERENCES

- Bhabha, J. (1999) 'Belonging in Europe: Citizenship and post-national rights', *International Social Science Journal* 51 (159):11-23.
- Castells, M (2000) *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* Vol. I. Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Castles, S and M. Miller (2009) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movement in the Modern World*, 4th Edition, Basingstoke: MacMillan Press.
- Castles, S. and A. Davidson (2000) *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging*, New York: Routledge.
- Hirschman, C., P. Kasinitz and J. De Wind (1999) (eds.) *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Massey, D. and J. E. Taylor (eds) (2004) *International Migration: Prospects and Policies in a Global Market*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Massey, D., J. Arago, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino, J.E. Taylor (1998) *Worlds in Motion: Understanding Interntional Migration at the End of the Millennium*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Phillips, N. (ed.) (2011 forthcoming) *Migration in the Global Political Economy*. International Political Economy Yearbook series. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- United Nations (2008) Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/migration>.