

***Citizenship in a Post-National World: Australia and Europe Compared*, Bronitt, Simon and Kim Rubenstein (eds.). The Federation Press, Leichhardt, 2008, pp.73, ISSN: 9781862877016.**

The general thrust of this excellent new edited collection is that globalisation is challenging the formal bonds between state and citizen, raising a series of fundamental questions on the future of citizenship. In doing so it explores contemporary notions of rights and responsibilities, interrogates the role of citizenship in enhancing political legitimacy, and questions the necessity of linking political rights to citizenship, or indeed the necessity of binding citizenship to the nation state.

In the opening contribution, Bruno Mascitelli and Simone Battiston review the changes to Italian citizenship legislation that have allowed expatriate Italians and their descendents to vote in Italian elections. Their insightful analysis explains the political background to this historic decision and illustrates the resulting inequity in the distribution of political rights in Italy. The Italian diaspora has always had the right to vote in Italian elections, they were just previously denied the opportunity to exercise it from abroad. Mascitelli and Battiston argue that the 2001 legislation which extended the vote to expatriate Italians was ultimately possible due to the dramatic changes in the post-cold war Italian political landscape.

What makes Italy's decision to extend the vote to citizens abroad so controversial, as the authors point out, is the unlimited transfer of citizenship to subsequent generations of Italian emigrants. Although the Italian citizenship policy is not strictly *jus sanguinis*, citizenship acquisition for foreigners residing in Italy is comparatively restrictive, evidenced by nationality conversion rates that are amongst Europe's lowest. This establishes a disturbing inequality within Italian society that politically marginalises resident immigrant communities, while extending full political rights to the Italians residing abroad. Italy may not be alone in encouraging the expatriate vote, but it is alone in Europe in its promotion of such an inequitable citizenship policy.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of 'Italianness', an ill-defined concept which is taken to mean a positive identification with the Italian nation. The argument here is that the narrowing of the ideological cleavage which paved the way for a political consensus on expatriate voting, has also made possible a surge of patriotism which underpins the current citizenship policy (the steep rise in immigration might also have played a role in this). The extension of political franchise to the expatriate community is conceived not as a new, post-national model of citizenship, but rather as an example of ethnic-nationalism.

Expatriate voting challenges the tradition understanding of citizenship as a contract of rights *and* responsibilities. Citizens who reside beyond national jurisdiction and pay no taxes seemingly have few responsibilities to their country of origin: why then give them political rights within a country that they may well have little or no ongoing interest in? Graeme Orr takes up these

questions from an Australian perspective. He reviews the provisions for Australian citizens residing abroad to participate in Australian elections, claiming that despite increased pressure for greater extension of franchise to the Australian expatriate community, there is unlikely to be any significant change to the current legislation. Orr argues that the present arrangements – Australians retain voting rights for six years after departure, with possible extensions for those planning to return – are not considered ungenerous, and seem to strike the right balance between political rights, citizenship and residency.

Kim Rubenstein maintains the focus on Australia, offering a lucid overview of recent changes to Australian citizenship policy. She illustrates how these changes are creating legal and practical challenges for scholars and practitioners. The 2002 amendment to Australia's citizenship policy to recognise dual citizenship has tested the clarity and continued relevance of the term 'alien', as many holders of dual citizenship could be considered alien-citizens, a label that diminishes the value of both statuses. More controversial is the 2007 Australian Citizenship Act that introduced citizenship testing. Testing is justified on the grounds that it promotes a commitment to Australian values and a critical knowledge of our society: why then is the test restricted to 'new Australians'? Shouldn't all registered voters be required to do it? Rubenstein rightly criticises the assumption that those born and raised here will be automatically imbued with such knowledge.

As Rubenstein further points out, the name change from The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship highlights a key concern: that citizenship is being reduced simply to a mechanism for integrating immigrants into Australian society. She argues in favour of a broader debate regarding citizenship's function of promoting diversity and cohesion, and establishing an equitable understanding of rights and responsibilities. She recommends as a first step the removal of the citizenship portfolio from the immigration department.

The final contribution is by Michael Longo, who provides an erudite discussion of the European Union's citizenship policy. He analyses EU citizenship in terms of its role in the evolution of European identity and its function in guaranteeing European citizens' rights. He questions the success of Brussels elites' attempts to utilise EU citizenship as a means of addressing the EU's legitimacy and democratic deficits, arguing that continued exclusion of non-European residents from direct access to European citizenship is undermining its potential benefits.

As foreign residents must first acquire citizenship of a member state to be eligible for EU citizenship, Longo argues for the harmonisation of member states' national citizenship policies. Currently each state has their own requirements for citizenship with substantial inconsistency between them. The suggested amendment would provide clear and consistent paths for acquisition of EU citizenship and would do much to promote basic rights, inclusive forms of European identity and, as an added bonus, enhance the legitimacy of Brussels elites.

Although at around 80 pages this volume is slight, it nonetheless succeeds in making a substantial contribution to contemporary debates regarding the changing nature of citizenship. While the papers tend towards legal analyses – the volume is published in association with the ANU's Centre for International and Public Law – it also contains much of interest for political scientists and students of contemporary European studies.

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