Britons abroad or European citizens? The negotiation of (trans)national space and citizenship by British migrants in France

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This paper uses the concept of 'ordinary citizenship' (Staeheli et al., 2012) to explore the relationship between mobility, citizenship and political space in the European Union. Drawing on in-depth interviews with Britons living in South West France, the paper examines the ways in which citizenship is meaningful to migrants as a complexity of legal frameworks, normative structures and everyday activities. While EU citizenship has been advanced to underpin the formation of a closer Union, we demonstrate that contemporary forms of citizenship among these lifestyle migrants are shaped to a large extent by performances of national belonging, and individual interactions with other people at the local or community level. We argue that a bi-national structure of citizenship, or one based on domicile better accounts for the experiences of these migrants than supranational EU citizenship.

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1. Introduction

Migration and mobility are important components of citizenship (Cresswell, 2006a, 2006b; Yarwood, 2014). A citizen's identity is related to the spaces that he or she can move through, rather than just an association with a fixed territory (Ho, 2008; Staeheli et al., 2012). Citizenship grants people a right to be mobile and, in turn, the privileges and duties afforded to them as they move across and between spaces. Citizens of the European Union (EU) have the right to move between, reside and work in its constituent states (Fligstein, 2008; Rother and Nebe, 2009), and those who avail themselves of these rights may also strengthen European unification through their everyday lives, as enthusiasts and actors of a borderless Union:

> Enjoyment of permanent residence by Union citizens who have chosen to settle long term in the host member state would strengthen the feeling of Union citizenship and is a key element in promoting social cohesion, which is one of the fundamental objectives of the Union.
>
> [Directive 2004/38/EC]

EU citizenship and the mobility it confers are part of a broader political project to strengthen European integration through legislation and socio-cultural strategies. These ideas are encapsulated

in Staeheli et al's (2012) concept of 'ordinary citizenship' that conceives citizenship as the ways 'in which law and ordering are normalized through daily life' (p. 640) and then '"located" or "mapped" at different sites' (p. 641). Citizenship is defined and negotiated through *de jure* rules and regulations as well as the *de facto* everyday practices that constitute belonging to a particular state or community. Yet, while an emphasis on laws and social norms entwined with routine practices implies a sense of order, mobility is often conceived as disruptive to such norms (Aradau, 2010). Although mobility may be used in an effort to create new political spaces, it is not a foregone conclusion that citizens will necessarily align themselves as members of these places.

In order to understand more fully how mobility contributes to citizenship, we use Staeheli et al.'s (2012) concept of 'ordinary citizenship' as a starting point to examine the relationship between mobility, citizenship and political space. Specifically, we use a case study of Britons living in France to examine how legal frameworks, normative structures and everyday activities help to shape their identities and experiences as citizen subjects of the EU. In doing so, we address three questions. First, we attempt to distinguish the relative significance of political-legal frameworks and everyday activities to transnational citizenship. We examine how migrants negotiate formal structures and informal practices in relation to different territorial scales. Second, we question how migrants form their own subjectivities to identify themselves as citizens, the places they associate with their citizenship and how these impact on multiple senses of belonging. Finally, we question whether new forms of EU citizenship have emerged, at what scales, and the

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extent to which these might legitimise further call for citizenship as underpinning formation of a closer Union. In doing so, we argue for a reconsideration of local and community as spaces of citizenship that are linked to the principle of domicile (Bauder, 2014), and for a broader conceptualisation of 'ordinary citizenship' that acknowledges the messiness of citizenry spatialities and modalities that stretch and morph on a daily basis.

In the following section, we review the resurgence of interest in the geographies of citizenship and what this means in terms of the promise of citizenship in the European integration project. Our case study population is introduced in the third section and, in section four, analysed through the lens of 'ordinary citizenship' and informed by other geographical literatures to examine the legal, normative and everyday practices that shape migrants' senses of who they are.

2. Everyday citizenship and mobility

Citizenship is enjoying a resurgence of interest in geography (Bauder, 2014; Staeheli et al., 2012; Yarwood, 2014) and is recognised as something that has significance to people and places above, below and beyond the framework of the nation state (Desforges et al., 2005; Staeheli, 2008). It has been speculated that mobile populations are contributing to new forms of transnational citizenship (Ong, 1999; Castles and Davidson, 2000; Desforges et al., 2005; Ho, 2008; Castles and Miller, 2009; Staeheli, 2011), reflected in Bauder's (2014 p. 93) comment that 'citizenship...associated with bounded territory, seems ill equipped to accommodate populations that are mobile and transcend the geographical boundaries of these territories'. Such views have challenged the notion that the nation-state is the only or main reference point for citizens. Instead, ideas of postnational (Soysal, 1994; Painter, 2002) and flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999) have drawn attention to a range of spatial scales in which individuals hold simultaneous membership of political communities at local, regional and supranational levels.

Yet the nation state continues to play an important role in the regulation, definition and conferral of citizenship (Isin and Turner, 2007). As Rubenstein (2003 p. 256) reminds us, 'while there has been considerable interest in the sociological, political and cultural aspects of citizenship, its legal foundations cannot be forgotten'. The bestowal of *de jure* citizenship, together with the rights and duties associated with it, is usually conferred by birth within the territory of a state (*jus soli* or 'law of the soil') or through family or ethnic descent (*jus sanguinis* or 'law of the blood') (Samers, 2010).

Recent work by geographers has made important contributions to reconciling these multiple scales of citizenship. Staeheli et al. (2012) discuss how citizenship is negotiated according to legal frameworks of the state as well as normative ideas linked to justice and care that are played out by citizen-subjects in particular spaces. They draw these ideas together through the concept of 'ordinary citizenship', which 'fuses legal structures, normative orders, and the practices and experiences of individuals, social groups and communities' (p. 631). These interactions play out through the 'behaviours, relationships and interactions of daily life' in a range of spatial settings including schools, homes, shops, nurseries and community groups that help to establish migrants as visible and valuable citizens in wider society. Everyday activities and performances allow 'ordinary citizens' to recognise and negotiate their citizenship in relation to wider judicial-political structures that seek to define it. According to Dickinson et al. (2008 p. 104), geographies of everyday citizenship are 'characterized by routinized "complex systems [which] generate both systematic orders and open, creative events."' (see also Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006). Such approaches have been successful in unpacking the agency

of citizenship, for example through daily practices of living within a community and engaging with others (Staeheli, 2008), and the idea that belonging is also about one's feelings and emotional attachments (Ho, 2008, 2009).

Staeheli et al. (2012) discuss such ideas in the context of migration and, in particular, where the legal status of a citizen is disputed. Their ideas are supported by a plethora of studies examining how immigrants negotiate their status as citizens though legal-judicial structures and daily practices (Al Sharmani, 2010; McIlwaine and Bermúdez, 2011; Elmhirst, 2011). In addition, these reveal citizenship to be messy, negotiated (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006), affective (Ho, 2008, 2009) and often out of sync and rhythm with nationalised norms (Favell, 2008b, 2010). For example, Bosco et al. (2011) trace how Latina immigrant women in Southern California work in a Neighbourhood Action Group to provide support for those attempting to gain US citizenship, advocate community needs and provide community services. As the authors point out, their position as citizens is contradictory: they are pushed out of public space as a result of their uncertain status as immigrants, yet they choose to participate in community affairs. These, as 'acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2008), draw attention to the way that individuals constitute their identities and belonging through creative activities that rupture the normalities of daily life and challenge social and political orders.

Yet not all migrants seek to challenge the established order. Some use citizenship in a strategic way to gain advantages from different economic and lifestyle opportunities (Ong, 1999; Favell, 2008b). For others, citizenship remains in the background; unrecognised until it is challenged. For example, in her analysis of lifestyle migrants to rural France, neither Benson (2011a) nor her respondents refer explicitly to citizenship and, instead, note the importance of achieving an 'authentic' French lifestyle. Citizenship appears not to matter but it allows them to fulfil lifestyle expectations.[1] Yet, whether migrants are conscious of it or not, legal frameworks of citizenship contextualise how migrants live out their daily lives. In this way, order and disorder are simultaneously constituting of migrants' experiences.

In this paper we extend the empirical scope of Staeheli et al.'s (2012) ordinary citizenship by applying it to the experiences of British migrants in France. In doing so we build upon existing analysis of Britons abroad (for example Buller and Hoggart, 1994; Scott, 2004, 2006, 2007; Beaverstock, 2005, 2011; Drake and Collard, 2008; Benson, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b) by considering the (in)significance of citizenship to their movements and daily lives. Examining citizenship through the framework of 'ordinary citizenship', we attempt to illustrate the role of normative ordering in the lives and experiences of intra-EU migrants. Politically this is important for participation at sub-national level should lead to the recognition of citizens through the principle of domicile rather than the *jus sanguinis* or *jus soli* principles frequently applied by states (Bauder, 2014). Everyday forms of citizenship and transnational mobility can challenge existing political spaces and are integral to the formation of new ones (Ehrkamp, 2006; Fligstein, 2008; Ho, 2008). These forms of citizenship have been particularly important to, and a central assumption of, the EU's political project to create 'an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe' as stated in the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The following section explores this context.

2.1. The case of the European Union

The 1957 Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC) with the political goal of achieving an 'ever

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[1] Compare their experiences to those trapped in makeshift camps at Sangatte (Rigby and Schlembach, 2012). Here citizenship is explicit and contested.