

Review Essay

Citizens, Denizens and Exiles

ANTHONY H. RICHMOND

The New Diaspora: The mass exodus, dispersal and regrouping of migrant communities

Nicholas Van Hear

London, UCL Press, 1998, ISBN 1-85728-837-6

The Citizenship Debates: A Reader

Gershon Shafir (Ed.)

Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, ISBN 0-8166-2881-5

The global system is in a state of flux. An estimated 70 million people work outside their country of birth. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees indicated that, in 1997, 12 million people were designated refugees, asylum applicants, or were in the process of resettlement or repatriation. This number has fallen slightly in recent years due, in part, to the policies of exclusion and 'humane deterrence', adopted by advanced industrial countries designed to discourage Third World migrants from seeking employment, or asylum, outside their own immediate region. In addition there are many people internally displaced as a result of civil wars sustained by the global arms trade. Environmental disasters and massive development schemes sponsored by governments and corporations, sometimes employing mercenary armies, compel more people to move. Terrorists continue to threaten those whose ideologies they oppose, or whose territorial claims they dispute, thereby forcing people to flee. Retaliative measures generate more chaos.

Nicholas Van Hear examines the theoretical and practical issues raised by mass movements of population. He describes the situation in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe Central America and the Caribbean. Altogether, he investigates 10 examples in the six regions, providing a detailed historical account of their causes and consequences. He places them in comparative perspective and draws general conclusions concerning the nature of migrant communities, and the transnational networks to which they give rise. Among the many questions raised by the 'new diasporas' are those relating to membership status in the receiving countries, and the consequences for the social integration of both sending and receiving societies, as well as those to which migrant populations may eventually return. Eligibility for citizenship, the right to remain or to return,

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and the nature of 'transnational' or 'post-national' communities, are questions also addressed in the book edited by Gershon Shafir.

The Citizenship Debates contains 13 chapters by different authors, as well as an introduction by the editor. Topics covered include classical ideals of citizenship, the liberal model and the communitarian alternative, the nationalist perspective and the multicultural critique. Some of the chapters are well-known articles by Max Weber, John Rawls, and T.H. Marshall. Others include more recent contributions to the debates by writers such as Will Kymlicka and Michael Walzer. All are reprinted from various sources. Shafir's introduction provides the connecting links between them. As well as the theme of citizenship there are discussions of related issues concerning justice, democracy, community and nationalism. An interesting perspective is provided by Kathleen Jones who approaches these questions from a feminist point of view. Since women (and children) are often among the victims of war, and other major convulsions, this is a dimension missing from Van Hear's examination of diasporas. Unfortunately, neither book deals with the critical questions of rape, gender discrimination, sex slavery, and the exploitation of women, as grounds for asylum.

Diasporas and Citizenship

Originally, the term 'diaspora' simply meant 'dispersion', but it later came to be associated with the Jewish exodus, and other catastrophic migrations by particular ethnic or religious groups. Van Hear adopts three criteria viz dispersion to two or more territories, enduring stays that may, or may not, include visits to the country of origin, together with exchanges between these scattered populations. Such exchanges have been made much easier in recent decades. The end of the 'Cold War' has opened many avenues for contact with homelands, and modern communication technology has rendered the preservation of links with the former country, and with other scattered populations, much easier. In his theoretical discussion Van Hear elaborates on the distinction (Richmond, 1994, pp. 47-74) between *proactive* and *reactive* migration, noting that there is an element of constraint and enablement in all cases, resulting in a continuum between extreme coercion, at one end, and rational choice at the other, with most migration decisions falling somewhere between. The old dichotomy between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration is no longer adequate to explain the complex nature of these population movements. Van Hear extends the idea of a continuum to include different types of geographic mobility from tourists and visitors, through labour migrants and asylum seekers to those who remain in one place. He does not mention the idea of transience which describes the multi-way flows of skilled, professional, managerial and other migrants (Richmond, 1994, p. 31).

The importance of networks is mentioned by Van Hear. He notes that they may sustain migration flows and also link with the exploitive traffic in illegal migrants. Network theory is also relevant to any understanding of transnational citizenship, and has wider implications than in the study of migration. Neither of the books reviewed here refers to the valuable contribution to network theory made by Manuel Castells in his three volume study of *The Information Age*:

Economy, Society and Culture. In The Power of Identity (Castells, 1997, p. 357), he notes that ethnicity may be an ingredient in both oppression and liberation. It may reinforce or transcend territorial identity. The multicultural city-state is characteristic of contemporary globalization, and challenges the hegemony of former nation-states. Even those who never move cannot escape the political, economic and social consequences of the multicultural communities in which they find themselves, often against their will. This helps to explain the resurgence of neo-Nazi movements, and anti-immigrant sentiment, in Europe and elsewhere. Furthermore, through secession or annexation, stationary populations may find themselves in another country altogether! It is in connection with the processes of globalization, and the communications revolution, that the question of citizenship becomes controversial.

In a chapter titled 'A Postnational Model of Membership', Y.N. Soysal refers to the situation of 'denizens' as discussed by Hammar (1990) and others. Van Hear also deals with the question of those foreign workers who lack full citizenship rights (in many cases, as do their children born in the country in which their parent(s) are regarded as temporary residents). Such populations are extremely vulnerable at times of economic or political crisis. They face victimization, and the possibility of deportation. Meanwhile, they are deprived of the franchise, and many of the social benefits associated with a modern 'welfare state'. In the last resort the problem is one of inequality, within a global system, in which resources, economic opportunities and fundamental freedoms are scarce resources. Those that have them wish to keep them, they see 'foreigners', members of other linguistic and religious groups, (and even members of the opposite sex or a different age cohort), as competitors, threatening their present and future prospects—as in disputes about affirmative action, how to pay for pensions in the future, or who should have priority in the allocation of limited health care services.

From a sociological perspective neither the liberal idea of justice, as expounded by Rawls, nor the communitarian alternative discussed by Oldfield in the volume edited by Shafir, are satisfactory solutions to the problem of citizenship in a world system that consists of sovereign states, constrained by the economic clout of transnational corporations. Rawls begins with an unrealistic 'thought experiment' in which the participants are ignorant of their future status in a new society. In reality, the rich and powerful know who they are and pursue a course designed to preserve that status for themselves, and their descendants. Others seek to join the elites. The proponents of Communitarianism postulate an ideal society in which people know their place; there is a general commitment to fundamental values and conformity is enforced through shame (peer group pressure). How to respond to conflicting values, and violent opposition, is not made clear. Kymlicka tries to come to terms with the reality of multiculturalism in contemporary societies by adding collective cultural rights to the civil, political and social rights postulated by Marshall. This leaves unanswered the question of how to resolve fundamental conflicts, both materialistic and idealistic. Who owns what resources, who determines what is a fundamental human right, and who assumes the role of enforcer using what means? Recent efforts to establish a permanent, independent international court that will deal with

crimes against humanity have not met with universal support. Peacekeeping efforts by the UN have failed to prevent the horrors of 'ethnic cleansing'.

Neither volume deals with the question of indigenous peoples and their claims for self-determination and control over natural resources. There is a fundamental conflict of interest which is highlighted when transnational corporations wish to exploit the oil, minerals, trees or fish on lands and waters, that aboriginal populations claim as their traditional right. Such disputes bring to the forefront a fundamental difference between *human* rights and *property* rights. This distinction has been blurred by the republican view of democracy enshrined in the American Constitution, in which 'property rights' become sacred. It is exacerbated by the attribution of 'personhood', in law, to corporations, including limited liability joint-stock companies. This leads to such absurdities as managers of corporations claiming interference with their 'fundamental freedoms' when efforts are made to limit their exploitation of human and natural resources!

In an interesting essay, in the volume on citizenship debates, I.M. Young addresses questions concerning group difference, and the idea of universal citizenship. She notes that social movements of oppressed and excluded groups have not led to social justice and equality. Part of the answer, she suggests is that 'those social activities that most determine that status of individuals and groups are anarchic and oligarchic; economic life is not sufficiently under the control of citizens to affect unequal status and treatment of groups' (p. 264). She goes on to distinguish several different meanings that may be attributed to the idea of 'universality'. Above all, it cannot mean uniformity. It must incorporate difference, and cannot mean the same treatment for all because the latter perpetuates inequality. Young insists that 'supporting policies and rules that attend group difference in order to undermine oppression and disadvantage is... a part of the struggle' (p. 287). Unfortunately, in practice, the measures that states may adopt to rectify past wrongs, and compensate for discrimination, become newly institutionalized sources of privilege in themselves. One time winners become losers, and vice versa. Constant monitoring, and an eventual 'sunset clause', for compensatory programs may be necessary.

At one time, autocratic sovereigns could exile dissident individuals or groups, confident that an enemy would provide asylum. After World War II, this idea was institutionalized in the UN Convention on Refugees. The provisions were a response to the 'Cold War'. It emphasized *individual* experiences of persecution by reason of race, religion, nationality etc. The number of asylum applications to be dealt with remained small until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since then large numbers of people, from all over the world, have tried to escape the political and economic turmoil that has ensued. As Van Hear notes, more and more migrants seek to escape political persecution and/or economic exploitation by moving to other countries, giving rise to 'multiple identities, affiliation, membership or citizenship' (p. 264), creating a need for a 'post-national' alternative. Delanty (1995, pp. 159-163) makes a similar point in connection with the emerging European Union. 'The connection between national identity and citizenship is growing stronger today in the face of the threat of mass immigration ... Citizenship has become a synonym for nationality and a legitimation for nationalist xenophobia' (Delanty, 1995, p. 162). Delanty con-

cludes that 'Post-national citizenship is inexorably linked to cultural pluralism, which recognises the rights of ethnic minorities to their cultural autonomy ...' (Delanty, 1995, p. 163).

Some form of 'transnational' citizenship may eventually replace the ambiguous status that so many people suffer today, just as the 'Nansen Passport' rescued stateless persons under the old League of Nations. Meanwhile, there is no exodus from a world system. We must learn to live with diversity, and with mass migration, even when that may mean surviving the devastation caused by civil wars, mercenary attacks, terrorists bombs and what strategists now call 'counter-proliferation'! The search for a genuinely *civil* global society continues.

References

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