

Notes for a presentation on
Supra-national citizenship?
A comparison of NAFTA and the European Union

Jane Jenson
Director
Institute for European Studies
Université de Montréal and McGill University

Presented to
2000 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Citizenship 2020
Institute for Canadian Studies
McGill University

Montreal, 20-21 October 2000

Why supra-national?

Answer will be perhaps too banal. Questions posed by the organisers seem to call for wide-ranging and speculative assessment of IT and globalisation.

Instead, I will talk concretely of a **supra-national citizenship** that is being constructed and a **supra-national citizenship** that is **not** being developed.

Two cases - NAFTA and the EU

Both are constitutive of as well as results of economic globalisation and "post-national consciousness", at least on the part of economic elites.

Both set out to build a wider economic union in order face up to globalisation.

In terms of citizenship, however, we see **immense differences**.

In essence, NAFTA does nothing to enlarge citizenship on any of its dimensions. It creates an economic zone in which **states have agreed to pool sovereignty**, but in which **citizens do not have the capacity to participate democratically**. They participate neither directly nor indirectly.

Indeed, in terms of citizenship, NAFTA has **diminished citizenship**.

States have given up sovereignty, without creating any effective new mechanisms to manage it jointly. They have tied their own hands, and reduced the space for political discussion about directions.

It is **judicialisation of politics taken to the extreme**. The treaty and its interpreters in the dispute resolution mechanisms prevail.

Therefore NAFTA is closer to the WTO than to EU.

In contrast, the pooling of sovereignty in the EU has been accompanied by creation of political institutions in which citizens participate.

One of the most important is intergovernmental, and therefore citizens' participation is expressed indirectly through their governments. Nonetheless, the **Council of Ministers** is a **institution for making political decisions about economic matters**, and therefore begins to share - in a supra-national version - some of the characteristics of a democratic polity.

Beyond that, of course, the EU has been building citizenship on all three dimensions of citizenship for individual Europeans. The result is an increase in democratic participation as well as other elements of citizenship.

Rights - right to vote for Europarliament and in municipal elections; workers rights, equality rights, anti-discrimination, free movement within the EU, right of establishment.

History is one of **extension** from narrowly work-related (because of terms of the Treaty of Rome) to broader and broader. Treaties now can speak confidently of the rights of European citizenship AND of a European social model of solidarity.

Access - access to all parts of the Union - for establishment, for education, for travel.

History is one of deepening access -

- from European rights accessed in one's own country to European rights which are portable for citizens of the Union
- fostering of political institutions of access - elections and intermediary associations.
- fostering of redistribution across regions as well as social categories **in order to** increase equity and even equality

Belonging - active creation of sense of European identity. Symbols but also practices. Example, the burgundy cover. Example, Erasmus.

The point ?

NOT that the EU is perfect. Democratic deficit, partial, certainly will be difficulties with enlargement. European social model limited and always threatened by competing ideological positions.

POINT is that these were all political choices. Pooled sovereignty in response to globalisation but did so with the existing model of **equitable, accessible and democratic citizenship** in mind. Governments demanded a benefit in exchange for the reduction of their sovereignty.

The result is a vision of the future different from the paragraph in the programme.

Refused to accept the **impoverishment** of Southern Europe. Sought to redistribute wealth on a continent-wide basis, rather than to allow pockets to vacuum-up the wealth and lock it away in **gated communities**. Made **better communication** - via language and education - a "European value". ETC. ETC.

Again, the point is that citizenship, whether national or supra-national, involves choices. Exercise of choice in a political community.