



CPRN RCRPP

Building Citizenship: Governance and Service Provision in Canada

Essays by:

Jane Jenson
Jean Harvey
Will Kymlicka
Antonia Maioni

and

Eric Shragge, Peter Graefe, and Jean-Marc Fontan

PRÉCIS

CPRN Discussion Paper F|17 is available at <http://www.cprn.org> or on request at (613) 567-7500

*Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.
600-250 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 6M1*

Introduction

In the last decades, we have seen a resurgence of attention to *citizenship*, as fundamental questions about both its design and its content appear on the public agenda, in the North as well as the South. A number of states have established new ministries and put aside time to celebrate citizenship. The European Union has put a “citizenship clause” into its fundamental treaties, while Canadians and many others worry about the consequences of new international agreements about trade for their capacity to maintain some of the defining elements of their citizenship, such as social and health services. Thus, both states and citizens have participated in proliferating claims explicitly framed in citizenship terms. Despite this level of interest, or perhaps because of it, there is not always agreement about the meaning of this notion.

As Ronald Beiner (1995: 1) puts it, citizenship is about “what draws a body of citizens together into a coherent and stably organized political community, and keeps that allegiance durable.” Citizenship is, then, about many more things than the passport one holds – it goes far beyond nationality. Questions about the ties that bind sometimes arise because of ethnic, national or religious differences within political communities that affect social cohesion in diverse societies. These are questions about who can be called “us” and who is “them,” about who *belongs*. But citizenship is about even more than that. It is relevant for matters of distribution of economic and social well-being and security. The terms of citizenship determine in part who has access to goods, services and resources and how they are *distributed* within a community. They also affect how intergenerational and other forms of solidarity are constructed, that is, the ties that bind members of the same community so they have some measure of responsibility for each other’s well-being. As well, rules of citizenship determine who can participate, who can *decide* about matters of diversity and of distribution, about inclusion and exclusion.

Therefore, while citizenship is a useful concept, sometimes it is also a confusing one. By way of introduction and clarification, this paper begins with a definition that is employed, with slight variations, by all four research papers written for this project.

Another theme that has attracted a huge amount of attention in recent years is that of *governance*. Too often, this word is used as a synonym for “government,” which we will argue below it is not. Others use it as a way to import models and values from corporate governance to the public sector, with little reflection on the differing purposes of the two sectors. So, again, we see that there is little agreement on what governance is, and why it is important. Therefore, the paper also provides a brief overview of this concept.

Then, the paper turns to a consideration of the appropriateness of this special initiative by the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC). It looks at some of the reasons why Canada’s historic and current experience of citizenship might advance IDRC’s thinking about a “citizenship entry point” for its research agenda, and its attempt to answer the key question: To what extent does the Canadian experience – past and present – have anything to say about options for Africans?

The next section provides a brief overview of the four commissioned papers and what they have uncovered about the links among, citizenship, governance and service delivery in Canada, past and present. It concludes with an overview of lessons drawn from the Canadian experience.

The four policy areas selected are the Canadian *health care system*, service delivery via the *social economy*, policies for *sport and recreation*, and policies to *accommodate diversity*. These policy areas are all relevant for Africa. Health has long been identified as a basic need, and one that can only be provided equitably if the state is involved in some way in its provision and distribution. In Canada as well as in developing societies, the economic and long-term social and political consequences of deepening poverty and polarized income structures is of profound concern for policy-makers as well as ordinary citizens. As the public provision of services is reduced as a result of structural adjustments, and social exclusion threatens the basic values of citizenship, the social economy is often identified as source of new well-being. The health and well-being of children and youth – those categories of the population most drawn to sport and recreation – is of concern to every society, as is the issue of which activities are likely to foster learning about citizenship. Finally, Africa just as Canada, faces hard choices about whether and how to recognize and accommodate ethnic, religious, linguistic and other forms of diversity.

Are There Lessons from the Canadian Experience?

Table 1 provides a synthetic overview of the Canadian experience with the three concepts that this project works with – service delivery, governance and citizenship. From the table, we observe that there are indeed some lessons that can be drawn about the interconnections of these elements. The intuition that feelings of belonging can be fostered via the provision of public services is sustained for all four policy realms. Public policies for health care have contributed to feelings of solidarity via the mechanism of shared risk, and therefore have become a cornerstone of Canadian identity. Public policies supporting social economy initiatives can help that sector achieve its potential to reduce social exclusion and foster full citizenship. Lively and varied sports and recreation programs, with sufficient financing, do contribute to the teaching of citizenship and capacity building within communities. Canada's experiments with policies of multiculturalism and interculturalism have helped to build attachments to the political community within ethnocultural communities, while the recognition of national minorities calms more radical demands. Therefore, these case studies do point to the capacity of public services with a variety of governance structures to build citizenship.

However, there are other lessons that also emerge from these studies. In particular, three of the four have identified *new* governance practices of off-loading to not-for-profit agencies and for-profit firms as constituting potential threats to citizenship. In areas as dispersed as health care (which addresses basic needs), the social economy (which addresses employment and income security), and sport (which addresses physical activity), the last several decades have brought the popularization of governance structures that magnify the distributional role of markets and reduce the role of states.

Therefore, Canada has, as many African countries, engaged in decentralization of service delivery, to the private sector as well as to local communities. Moreover, as do many African countries, it faces issues of affordability and sustainability of services. Two lessons emerge from all the case studies that focus on access as a key dimension of citizenship. One is that decentralization of services may have many advantages, but when it is done in a context of cutbacks in financial resources, the consequences for the terms of citizenship tend to be negative. The second lesson is that, important as local mobilization is for fostering engagement of citizens and creating legitimacy of institutions, as well as designing appropriate programs, it cannot relieve the state of the responsibility that it has had since the French Revolution of assuring equality and solidarity as well as liberty.