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EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP OR NARROW NATIONALISMS? THE CHALLENGE OF GENDER

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ABSTRACT

Much of the discussion around the current state of democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe is, understandably, located within the context of European Union enlargement. There is speculation about the likely two-way impact of enlargement: on the individual new member countries, and on existing EU member states. Central to such analyses, quite aptly, are questions of national identity, citizenship, minority rights and the limits of national sovereignty vis-à-vis supra-national institutions of governance such as the European Union. The relevance of social and economic changes within the region on the one hand, and processes of globalisation on the other, are pertinent to this discussion. What kinds of limitations do the combined impact of EU enlargement and globalisation place on the power of the nation states within the region to implement citizenship rights? Can there be such a thing as 'European citizenship'? Is this a real possibility? What does the EU offer in terms of rights? Is it really the panacea to locally experienced discriminations and denials of rights? What about those – minorities, refugees, illegal immigrants – who are excluded from the exercise of citizenship rights within the EU? Could a putative European citizenship transcend national(ist) particularisms? In all of the dilemmas under scrutiny, the constitutive role of gender in constructions of citizenship continues to be underplayed. This paper addresses that lacuna.

KEYWORDS

Gender citizenship nationalism European enlargement

INTRODUCTION

There are substantial differences of opinion about the relative importance, for post-state socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe, of nation-building based on a revived sense of national identity as opposed to a more political espousal of democratisation as the basis for establishing the newly self-determining nation-states of the region. Graham Smith et al argue that these two things may not be incompatible. For them 'the problem arises when national or ethnic identity is predicated on a form of imagined community that reifies the importance of national or ethnic boundaries to the detriment of the wider political community' (Smith et al, 1998: 1). Yet they observe that the quest for national identity in what they call the ex-Soviet borderlands 'is being shaped as much by the ethnic politics of exclusion and division as it is by inclusion and coexistence' (Smith et al, 1998:1). In their view Ukraine, for example, has bypassed a form of national self-definition that espouses 'a modern-day multiethnic Ukrainian society' of the kind epitomised in the historical Kievan Rus', relying rather on 'the narrower ethnographic conception [that] …appears to be winning ground' (ibid.). Padraig Kenney presents the contrasting case that in Eastern Europe 'state-centred nationalism has weakened since 1989' (Kenney, 2006: 47). The nationalism that 'has been rediscovered … all across the continent' is, he argues, a relic of communist regimes that had instrumentalised nationalist sentiments in the interests of their own legitimation (on this, see also Rogers Brubaker, 1996). From this Kenney extrapolates the view that in the post-1989 period too - for example in the case of the 'velvet divorce' between the Czech Republic and Slovakia – nationalism is less of a factor than 'political manipulation' (Kenney, 2006: 70).

One could argue with some justification that the difference of position between these theorists merely reflects the difference between the countries that were part of the Soviet Union such as Ukraine, Belarus, or the Baltic states, discussed by Smith et al, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on which Kenney focuses his attention. Yet Kenney's view that nationalism is waning in the region seems to fly in the face of the recent evidence. In both ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe, far-right nationalists would appear to be gaining ground. In Austria in October 2006, the extreme right, campaigning on an anti-immigration ticket, won more than 15% of the vote; in Denmark in 2001 the ultra-right Danish People’s Party entered parliament as the third-largest party with 12% of the vote. Swiss elections in 1999 and 2003 made the anti-immigrant Swiss People’s Party the largest political force in the country; and in the UK the racist British National Party won three local council seats in the May 2006 elections (Burke, 2006: 38). In Belgium in October 2006, the Vlaams Belang party gained 33.5% of the vote in local elections in Antwerp, and 21.5% across all of Flanders (compared with 14% in 2000) on a programme of nationalism and anti-immigration. They hope to increase their share of the vote in the federal elections of May 2007 (Burke, 2006: 38; and www.flemishrepublic.org, accessed 26 January 2007).

In Serbia, the ultra-national Radical party celebrated massive electoral victories in 2003 and in January 2007. Jonathan Steele berates the EU and Nato for ‘wooing Serbia on all fronts’ and consequently failing to insist on the Kosovan independence that was arguably the goal of their earlier military intervention. In Steele’s view, the fatal mistake, which could precipitate further violence and bloodshed in the region, lies in ‘the western illusion that Serbia is divided into “nationalists” and “pro-Europeans”’ (Steele, 2006: 33). In the EU itself, the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU in January 2007 has enabled an East-West alliance of extremist politicians for the first time to form an official far-right caucus within the European Parliament (Traynor, 2007: 3). This level of influence has become possible despite the fact that the is seen as a one-man band of no great influence within Bulgaria itself.

It is important not to attribute too great a power to such extremist nationalist trends. Nevertheless, the contexts of supra-national institutions of governance like the European Union and economic globalisation tend to reinforce the yearning for collective identifications closer to home. It is in this context that national identity exerts, as Anthony Smith’s stresses, ‘a more potent and durable influence than other collective cultural identities’ which ‘is likely to continue to command humanity’s allegiances for a long time to come, even when other larger-scale but looser forms of collective identity emerge alongside national ones' (Smith, 1991: 175-176). And as for the future of a democratic Europe, as Yudit Kiss argues powerfully, 'a continent in which identity politics, exclusion and xenophobia become accepted political currents would be easy prey for radical extremist mobilisation and attacks' and hence a threat to liberal democratic politics (Kiss, 2007: 28).

However one evaluates the dangers of the growth in extreme rightwing nationalist politics in Europe, it is notable that these otherwise interesting discussions appear to miss the salience of gender in constructions of both national identity and individual citizenship.

This paper addresses some tensions in current discussions around ideas of nationalism and the nation-state, EU enlargement and citizenship, positing gender as its central variable. The first section discusses the power of new nationalisms in the region of central and eastern Europe in gender terms. The next two sections consider questions of political agency, in terms of the potential for the realisation of gender equity, as they are offered through identifications based on national identity and on citizenship. The paper goes on to look at arguments about the often hypothesised weakening of the nation-state in the face of EU enlargement and globalisation. Is the EU more able than the national state in the new member countries to implement gender equitable policies and mechanisms? The EU's current strategy of gender mainstreaming is taken as a case in point. Finally the argument is made that despite the potential dangers of 'radical nationalisms' (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002: 142ff), paradoxically it is still the nation-state that has greater power to deliver gender-equitable citizenship rights.

THE POWER OF NEW NATIONALISMS

A variety of factors combined in Eastern Europe after the demise of the state socialist regimes to encourage the rise of ethnic nationalisms. The combined impact of fundamental political and economic change resulted in severe social dislocation in the context of a political vacuum. Gerard Delanty and Patrick

O'Mahony point out that 'nationalism thrives in periods of rapid and dislocating social change' and that 'with communism also defeated, it would appear that nationalism has no major ideological rival today' (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002: 137, 161; see also Hobsbawm, 1983: 4,7). EU enlargement and global economic pressures added to the sense in the region that national self-determination was being undermined in the wake of state socialism's repression of national self-determination. This combination of factors opened up the space for nationalist responses. As a reaction to the repressive regimes experiences in these countries prior to 1989, nationalism as the expression of the desire for 'radical freedom' (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002: 160) is perhaps not surprising. However, what is potentially – and in some cases has been actually – dangerous and destructive is the exclusionary and xenophobic character of the radical forms of nationalism to have emerged in the post-communist period (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002; Einhorn, 2006b).

What is the problem of nationalism from the perspective of gender equality? Nations tend to be imagined as a community of insiders defined less in terms of their distinctive identity than in contrast to putative Others who do not share that identity. These outsiders are commonly bordering nations, but often also minority groups within the national body itself, which – contrary to nationalist rhetoric - is usually neither homogeneous nor united. Such disunity within the national community reveals the struggle for the power to define what constitutes 'authentic' national identity (Einhorn, 2006b: 197). Such power struggles invariably involve discourses of gender, sexuality and race. They set dominant 'insiders' against 'enemies within' (Kofman, Phizacklea, Raghuram and Sales, 2000: 37). Such 'outsiders', 'Others' or 'enemies within' can be minority ethnic groups, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, gays and lesbians, or even the female half of the population (Allen, 1998: 55; Dwyer, 2000: 27-28). This is because, argues Tamar Mayer (2000: 6) the nation was 'produced as a heterosexual male construct, whose "ego" is intimately connected to patriarchal hierarchies and norms'. National communities are conceived of in gendered terms as extended families, as 'metaphoric kinship' (Eriksen, 1993:108; Smith, 1991:79), as 'family-writ-large' (Golden, 2003:85).

In Ukraine, for example, ‘nation and family (the latter traditionally associated with women) are seen as cornerstones of a new Ukraine’ (Taraban, 2007: 119). Svitlana Taraban considers the widespread phenomenon of Ukrainian women who offer themselves as internet brides, accentuating ‘the qualities and attributes that portray them as prefeminist, vulnerable and docile’ (ibid: 118). These women present themselves as offering reliable submissive wife and mother potential as well as the ability to fulfil the sexualised imaginings of the putative (Western) customer/husband. Taraban suggests that nationalism plays a (perhaps subliminal) role in their identity formation, in that ‘Ukrainian women come prepared to create their virtual selves in accordance with all-too-familiar to them traditional gender imagery’ (Taraban, 2007: 121). That this is a tightly imbricated dialectical relationship is evident from the formulation of Tatiana Zhurzhenko, namely that: ‘in the framework of Ukrainian neo-traditionalism the solution of family problems is being linked to the revival of the Ukrainian nation, and vice versa – the revival of the nation starts within the family’ (Zhurzhenko, 2001: 6).

The nation-as-family metaphor was also the assumption underlying the debate about reproductive rights in Poland during the 1990s. Anne-Marie Kramer analyses the way that the line taken by two different Polish newspapers on the issue demonstrated two competing visions of the future Polish nation: as primarily Christian (Roman Catholic) or as international and secular (Western). In the course of this political (and highly politicised) debate, the Polish media reported the Polish Pope as stating that ‘the nation which kills its own children, [is] a nation without a future’ (Kramer, 2005: 131, 135). In this latter statement, the conflation of nation with family is particularly clear.

Anthony Smith argues that ‘the metaphor of the family is indispensable to nationalism. The nation is depicted as one great family, the members as brothers and sisters of the motherland or fatherland, speaking their mother tongue…’ (1991: 79). Smith – perhaps unconsciously - utilises the language of gender difference to describe the nation. In the introduction to his book on *National Identity* Smith actually links recognition of gender as a key component in (individual and national) identity formation to relationships of unequal power within the nation, conceding that ‘if not immutable, gender classifications are universal and pervasive. They also stand at the origins of other differences and subordinations’. Ina cogent critique of this work, Linda Racioppi and Katherine O’Sullivan See conclude that Smith, while not quite sharing the gender-blindness of most other mainstream theorists of nations, nationalism and national identity, nevertheless ‘does not pursue ..[his]… crucial insight about the centrality of gender (Racioppi and O’Sullivan See, 2000: 26).

To summarise then: The problem with radical nationalisms from the perspective of gender equality is, first, that they are centrally defined in terms of gender, in ways that are not necessarily enabling (Einhorn, 2006b). Second, the type of nationalism that has emerged is a form of ethnic nationalism that defines itself not positively, but negatively, in terms of what it is not. This negative identification is expressed in terms of rigid ethnic, gendered and sexual norms. Thus, in terms of gender, ‘despite many nationalists’ ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender *difference*’ (McClintock, 1995: 353). The purported national collectivity turns out not to be homogeneous but composed of the nation’s citizen-subjects (expressing norms of hetero-masculinity purportedly embodied in the dominant ethnicity) and its others, effectively denying ‘the other within the self’ (Delanty and O’Mahony, 2002: 163). While national identity so defined denotes a metaphoric or symbolic order, in practice this symbolic order translates into unequal power structures enforced through behavioural norms designed to perpetuate male-dominated, heterosexual, ethnically defined social structures. The gendered divisions of the *symbolic* national identity signal *material* social relationships of unequal power. Women, ethnic, migrant and sexual minorities are disempowered in this value economy (Einhorn, 2006b). Cynthia Cockburn argues that exclusionary nationalisms can only be overcome by changes in the gender order, for just ‘as patriarchy and ethno-nationalism are partners in theory, sexism and racism are partners in practice’. She feels that ‘women stepping out of line in terms of gender can be specially effective activists for change in the ethnic order' (Cockburn, 2004: 198).

Delanty and O'Mahony emphasise the fact that nationalism 'is collective both as a form of identification and as an orientation to collective action … a kind of collective identity' (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002: 44). In this, its emergence could in part be read as a form of resistance to the centrality of individualism in the neo-liberal paradigm that has replaced socialist notions of collective endeavour. Smith et al observe that in those countries that form the borderlands of the former Soviet Union 'there remains a predisposition among dominant national groups and minorities alike to recognise and overemphasise the importance of collective rather than individual actors as the constitutive elements of political community' (Smith et all, 1998: 2).

This is evidence of a historical paradox. It would appear that an element of continuity with the state socialist period can be identified as the pressure for individuals – both men and women - to subsume their own needs and aspirations to the common good, with the difference only that the definition of what this comprises has shifted (Einhorn, 2006a). State socialist ideology enjoined citizens to subordinate their 'individualistic' desires to the construction of socialism and thus, purportedly, a rosier future for the whole of society. Nationalist discourses too demand that members of the national body put the needs of the nation before their own self-realisation. In contrast, neo-liberal democracy validates individualism as a core principle of the market. Nationalist discourse posits starkly gender-differentiated notions of allegiance to family and nation. The most fundamental problem with nationalist discourse is that it casts women as symbolic markers and policy objects, not as active political subjects. Women feature as vessels of national reproduction or as rationale for national contests, but rarely as national actors (Kandiyoti, 1991; McClintock, 1995; Peterson, 1994). The essentialist difference-based discourses and exclusionary practices of nationalism label women both within and outside the nation as Other, setting women against men but also compliant women against dissenting women. In this process, they also limit women's ability to attain political subject status, to access citizenship rights, and to engage in collective struggles for gender equality (Einhorn, 2006b). In contrast, liberal democracy claims a universal citizen subject, and the opportunities afforded in the neo-liberal marketplace purport to be gender-blind, suggesting a paradoxical parallel to the ostensibly ‘gender-neutral’ citizen of state socialist rhetoric. In practice, the Soviet citizen-as-worker translated to citizen-as-worker for men, but citizen-as-worker-mother for women. Similarly the economic actor with the capacity to exchange contracts in the marketplace turns out to be male in the absence of the social provision of care under the neo-liberal paradigm (Einhorn, 2006a). In their practice, all three systems are marked by gender inequalities of agency and power.

NEGOTIATING (GENDER/NATIONAL) IDENTITIES:
THE QUESTION OF AGENCY

Recent analyses of the transformation process pay allegiance to the idea that democratisation has brought choice to the inhabitants of this region who were formerly unable to become political subjects in their own right, but were mere objects of central planning and dirigist forms of government. Thus they propound the concept of negotiated (gender, political and social) identities as being new in the current era (Johnson and Robinson, 2007; Lukic et al, 2006). This leads to a focus on (political) agency as not only key to the development of citizenship status, but characteristic of the opening up of these societies to the civil rights that come with political pluralism.

In this vein, some recent studies critique earlier analyses of transformation, interpreting them (often mistakenly) as positing women solely as victims or losers in the process. Disregarding the simple fact that the gendered impact of the transformation was in fact more stark in the first 10 years and has been mediated and ameliorated – not least by the aspiration for EU accession – in the past 5-7 years, they construct a binary according to which early analysts are – in their focus on the negative aspects of transformation for gender equality - in some sense lacking as feminist scholars, in that they neglect to see women as agents of their own destiny. Hromadzic (2007) for example argues that the various discourses on Bosnian war rapes elide individual women's voices and their authentic accounts of survival, thus that even in these extreme circumstances of ethno-nationalist violence, women retained some degree of agency.

It could be argued that this need to highlight the positive potential of the transformation process indeed acts as a necessary corrective to earlier analyses. An alternative view might be that the current emphasis on (individual) agency rather than on (institutional, political or discursive) structure or on gender regimes – and hence the insistence on negotiated gender identities as manifestations of empowerment - itself merely mirrors the currently dominant discourse of neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on individual civic *responsibility*, rather than (social, political and economic) *rights* as the basis of citizenship. Thus for example authors like Heyat (2006) and Tohidi (1996) in analysing Azerbaijani women's responses to pressures to conform to nationalist traditions in both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, and Taraban (2007) on the self-presentation of Ukrainian women as internet brides, insist that far from being constrained or subordinated by neo-traditional discourses, women *perform* stereotypical gender role expectations, leaving space, at least inside their heads if not acted out, for the development and expression of alternative identities.

Taraban (2007:109) describes the 'strategic' deployment of neo-traditional discourse as a way to 'simultaneously confirm and defy' gender stereotypes. In the case of the internet bride market she analyses, she argues that new technology (on the internet) acts to facilitate such gender *play*(fullness). Nonetheless, she does acknowledge gender scholarship that questions the room for manoeuvre offered by the internet in terms of the ability to play with gender identities, and concedes that the internet brides are also 'being performed' (2007: 119).

Many analysts point to the gap between appearance and reality. Taraban points out, for example, that while Ukrainian women are selling themselves as docile traditional housewife and mother material, social surveys have found that they are open (more open than men?) to alternative family structures. Lyon (2007) points to a similar gap between the housewife fantasies and the family realities of Russian women. Thus the appearance of conformity with neo-traditionalist gender roles as an expression of nationalist identities hides, it would seem, a growth in more equitable gender sharing of domestic tasks (see also Pascall and Lewis, 2004: 376 who refer to the European Foundation’s findngs on increased egalitarianism in the distribution of care work in the twelve accession and candidate countries).

DEMOCRATISATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe has been simultaneously economic, involving marketisation and privatisation, and political, involving democratisation. It is significant that both processes have been constructed within the parameters of neo-liberal understandings that privilege the economic over the political, and hence the individual economic actor over the citizen as political subject. Neo-liberalism in its more extreme versions posits the market as the sole and sufficient regulator of society. Consequently the state has been forced to retrench, with the massive loss of social entitlements and public welfare provision in most countries in the region. The neo-liberal paradigm as applied during the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe is thus revealed to be based on an individualistic concept of citizenship and a market-centred economic model that systemically tend towards social exclusion rather than social inclusion.

In the transformation process, although the civil and political rights associated with citizenship were discursively validated, in practice they became subordinate to the assertion of economic rights. This begins to explain the enormous increases in economic inequalities and social disparities between citizens discursively constructed as equal. It also helps us to understand the relative scholarly and activist neglect until recently of mainstream political representation in the region as a key gender equality measure. It is important to understand how the economic changes were embedded in – and have themselves shaped - an altered political landscape, in which the discourses used to describe and understand the accompanying social and cultural changes have been fundamentally reworked. As already suggested, neo-traditionalist discourses have been applied to legitimate these shifts.

Ruth Lister has pointed out that while civil and political rights are commonly ‘seen as a necessary precondition of full and equal citizenship. .. they are not, however, a sufficient condition, for they need to backed up by social rights’ (Lister, 1997: 33-34). This insight has formed the basis of much of my theorising of citizenship in the context of democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe. For the privileging of market mechanisms and the idea that the state should take a back seat have had severe consequences for the possibility of realising gender equitable citizenship. I have argued elsewhere that without social entitlements to social welfare, for example to publicly provided and affordable childcare – in other words, without the enabling structures that link state, market and household and acknowledge social responsibility for the provision of care - the possibility of women accessing the marketplace as the arena in which citizenship is realised and thus exercising the citizenship rights they possess on paper on an equal basis with men is dramatically curtailed (Einhorn, 2000; 2006a; see also Pascall and Lewis, 2004). These developments have also increased the differences between different women in terms of their capacity to become active citizens.

Despite the neo-liberal emphasis on market mechanisms, the power of the state has not ceased to exist. Julia Szalai demonstrates – using an example from Hungary - that the national and the local state continue to influence women’s agency and capacity to become full citizens. It also illuminates the gulf opening up between women, on the basis of both social class and ethnicity through women officials acting in the name of the state in practice discriminating against others in a weaker position. In arrogating to themselves in their official function the power to act as the arbiter of who qualifies as ‘deserving’ poor, local women welfare officials in a Hungarian town have no qualms in applying gendered and racist discourses in judging Roma women welfare claimants as ‘irresponsible’ mothers, for having too many (of the ‘wrong kind’, ethnically speaking) children. In excluding these women from welfare entitlements, these women officials actually deny them the social rights that would render them equal citizens with the majority Hungarian population. Julia Szalai argues persuasively that this example demonstrates how discourses of *cultural* (ethnic) otherness are translated into *structural* discriminatory practices (Szalai, 2005; see Magyari-Vincze, 2006; and Woodcock, 2007 for similar examples from Romania).

This discussion serves to underline the fact that market, state and household are intimately interlinked, both in conceptualisations of national identity, and in the democratisation process in Central and Eastern Europe. It also highlights the ways that the transformation process encompasses these two, potentially competing, discourses of newly emergent of national identity on the one hand and liberal democracy on the other. In the process, as the last example shows, differences and inequalities (of gender, class, ethnicity, and between different women) have grown, leading to increases in discriminatory practices.

CITIZENSHIP AS THE CONCEPT BEST SUITED TO ENCAPSULATING (INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP) AGENCY

Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis remind us that ‘although historically coexisting within a single social field, democratic citizenship’s overt stress on rationality, individuality and the rule of law has frequently been in tension with, and even antithetical to, nationalism’s appeals to communal solidarities and primordial sentiments of soil and blood’. Furthermore, they argue that while nationalism is trapped in a backward glance, finding its legitimation in ‘past myths of common origin or culture, citizenship raises its eyes towards the future, to common destinies’ (Werbner and Yuval-Davis, 1999: 1, 3).

One of the strengths of citizenship as a concept relevant to the aspiration for gender equitable societies in Central and Eastern (and indeed in Western) Europe is its stress on the arena of mainstream politics, until recently a relatively neglected area of (not only) feminist activism and analysis. In the early 1990s, Anne Phillips reminded us of the importance of this sphere of action in her book *Democracy and Difference* (1993). She argued passionately that ‘we do need to reassert the importance of the specifically political; and we do need to campaign for more active involvement and control’. In her view, ‘the value of citizenship lies in the way it restates the importance of political activity’ (Phillips, 1993: 87). Baukje Prins more recently insists that ‘a liberal democracy is a political community, whose common good cannot be found at the level of substantive beliefs, but must be located at the level of agreed-upon procedures for articulating conflicts and attaining temporary agreement’ (Prins, 2006: 246). Similarly, Ruth Lister argued in her influential *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (1997; 2nd ed. 2003) that the concept of citizenship is useful in that it denotes both a status *and a practice* [italics added, BE]. In other words, it does not merely circumscribe a bundle of legally enshrined rights and responsibilities. Rather its realisation is dependent on the active agency and political participation of citizens themselves (Lister, 1997:13-41; 196).

Several authors argue that the state socialist notion of citizenship ‘put the gender-less working class above all other groups or interests’ (Bitusikova, 2005). Indeed the 1960 Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic states that ‘in the working class society each individual can reach full development of his/her own skills and interests only by active participation in the development of the whole society, mainly by taking part in work for the society’ (cited in Bitusikova, 2005). The notion that the individual is worthless unless subsuming their own interests to the welfare and development of the whole society is one that has understandably been rejected since the collapse of state socialism. Such total subordination of individual needs and aspirations to social goals is extreme. It suggests an obvious corrective – one which has indeed emerged since 1989 – namely the adoption of a focus on recognition of individual or group differences rather than on issues of economic redistribution, social justice or political equality.

One of the central and immediate effects of economic restructuring and privatisation in the region as expressed through the so-called ‘Washington consensus’ imposed by the World Bank and the IMF manifested itself in the disproportionate female share of high unemployment levels. Another was the embrace – by international agencies such as the UN as well as foreign governments and donor agencies – of the revival of civil society as a – if not *the* - central plank of democratisation. This has led to the phenomenon I have called the civil society 'trap', whereby women made redundant by economic restructuring step in to run NGOs and civil society associations that increasingly provide the social and welfare services from which the state, following neo-liberal guidelines, has retreated (Einhorn, 2000; 2006a). In other words, what we see here is a step backwards from the assumption of full-time paid work for women as an accepted societal norm, to a situation where much women's work is socially necessary, but unpaid and thus rendered invisible. In addition, the reduction of civil society activism to a form of social provision contains the danger of diluting the political edge of potential feminist organising that has an agenda of social transformation.

The invisibility of (unpaid) women's work is not simply a case of lacking recognition, but, as Nancy Fraser (2003: 215-216) has emphasised, rather the direct and systemic effect of neo-liberal capitalist economic mechanisms which exclude many from the labour market altogether while discriminating on the basis of gender and other markers of difference against many of those within it. This insight is relevant to the processes of structural adjustment occurring in the 'transition' to capitalist market-based economies in Central and Eastern Europe. It is just as important for our understanding of the issues impeding genuine gender equality in civil and political participation in the region and indeed within the EU as a whole.

Nancy Fraser makes this argument in the context of a discussion with Axel Honneth about the relative merits of prioritising issues of (cultural) recognition over questions of (economic) redistribution. She argues that 'reducing all social subordination to misrecognition, rooted in hierarchies of cultural value' fails to allow for 'distributive injustices that do not simply reflect status hierarchies'. In her view, the attainment of social justice requires the adoption and application of a '*perspectival dualism*' that combines cultural recognition claims by particular social groups who are marginalised or discriminated against on the basis of gender, 'race', class or disability, with 'struggles for egalitarian redistribution' (Fraser, 2003: 217; italics in original).

What this stance implies is a re-turn from the 'cultural turn' to a more balanced approach that integrates the cultural with the social and economic – and by extension, suggests a re-validation of the need for political participation. Such an approach in turn requires a critical re-evaluation of neo-liberal strategies that draw attention away from the social and political arenas (in which issues of redistributive justice could be raised) in their focus on the individual (male, white, social- and economic-capital-rich) economic actor in the marketplace. In other words, it questions the globally dominant neo-liberal paradigm that privileges the market and vilifies the state, historically the actor with the power to facilitate 'egalitarian redistribution' and to improve levels of social justice. It also leads us to reconsider the arguments about the relative merits of a difference-based approach as opposed to one based on the quest for greater (gender and) social equity.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AS GUARANTOR OF GENDER-EQUITABLE FORMS OF CITIZENSHIP

There has been much discussion about whether the political process of EU enlargement combined with the economic impact of globalisation undermines and limits the power of the nation-state to govern its citizens (Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, 1995; Held, 1995; Held et al, 1999; Hirst and Thompson, 1996; Ohmae, 1995; Waters, 1995). This discussion frames the further debate about whether supra-national institutions of governance such as the European Union can herald and facilitate new forms of transnational citizenship.

It is interesting to note in this context that both the national state and the European Union have recently been defined as having regulatory rather than provisory powers (on the former, see Delanty, 2000; on the latter, see Walby, 2004). Sylvia Walby defines the regulatory state as having the ability to deploy power by legislative means rather than through the provision of welfare or the ultimate recourse to violence (Walby,1999: 123). Gerard Delanty argues that in future, the EU will have the capacity to embody claims for citizenship based on residence rather than on nationality by virtue of birth (Delanty, 2000: 120). In this, he sees European citizenship as a positive potential counter to narrow national models of citizenship. He sees European citizenship, however, not as a form of supranational citizenship that replaces national citizenship, but as one element in a three-tiered conceptualisation of multi-layered citizenship existing at sub-national, national and supra-national levels (Delanty, 2000: 121).

A sticking point with the notion of European citizenship based on the EU remains the issue of social provision. Catherine Hoskyns had earlier pointed out that in EU policy, ‘from the beginning the social has been subsumed within the economic and only given a separate focus when this appeared functional or necessary to economic integration’ (Hoskyns, 1996: 207). This primary focus on economic integration means that many aspects of political and social citizenship rights are neglected (Barendt, 2002; Lohmann and Seibert, 2003). Sylvia Walby argues that things have changed and that the EU has transcended its earlier narrow confinement to the economic sphere: ’The social powers of the EU are underestimated and underevaluated in current social theory’ (Walby,1999: 118). She sees the EU as a supra-state that is in a position to issue directives on a number of social issues that intersect with the market. Through such means it is in a position, she asserts, to strengthen the capability of women to operate in the labour market.

Yet the EU’s continuing relative inability to regulate social care would seem to inhibit its capacity to produce a comprehensive model of gender equality. For Gillian Pascall and Jane Lewis, ‘the evidence of gender equality policies in practice highlights the need for policies involving collective provision across different dimensions of gender regimes’ (Pascall and Lewis, 2004: 379). Thus ‘an inclusive citizenship version of the dual earner-dual carer model would create a policy environment encouraging gender equality in paid work, care work, income, time and voice, while offering social support for care and for work’. Gender regimes that aim to produce gender equality require ‘significant public expenditure and provision' (Pascall and Lewis, 2004: 390). In my view this element of public expenditure and provision, implying public assumption of responsibility for care conceptualised as a social good, is key to the production of gender equitable outcomes.

In a later development of her argument, Walby lists the critiques that have been directed at six perceived limitations in the EU's approach to gender inequality. Nevertheless, she maintains that the EU has often taken the lead on equal opportunities issues. From this, she draws the conclusion that 'the EU as a polity is important in the path-dependent creation of a new model of gender regime' (Walby, 2004: 23). She cites the EU's adoption of the strategy of gender mainstreaming as evidence of this. The next section briefly discusses the introduction and implementation of this strategy in the process of EU enlargement.

EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

It is the contention of this paper that the EU's strategy of gender mainstreaming is flawed in its conceptualisation and in its execution. In the run-up to the first round of EU enlargement, the evidence, especially from the Czech Republic and Poland, indicates that failure to comply with the gender norms of EU legislation was likely neither to impede, nor to delay accession for those countries that joined in 2004 (Bretherton, 2001; Choluj, 2003; Graff, 2002; Jezerska, 2003; Karat, 2005; Lohmann and Seibert, 2003; Marksova-Tominova, 2003; Steinhilber, 2002; True, 2003a: 99-100; True, 2003b).

In practice, EU gender mainstreaming strategies tend to be formulated in terms of economic efficiency, hence as effective strategies for integrating women into the labour market, rather than within a framework of political transformation towards the goal of gender equitable societies. Maria Stratigaki claims on the basis of her eight year experience of working in the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission that there is evidence of 'cooptation by economic priorities' and that 'the use of GM to eliminate positive action can be found in EU labour market policy texts' (Stratigaki, 2005:176, 180; see also Rai 2003: 29). In the context of the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe, such an emphasis neatly parallels the neo-liberal emphasis on economic restructuring rather than democratisation.

Compounding this skewed emphasis on the economic is the fact that – as in existing EU countries – the gender mainstreaming machinery in the accession countries remains systemically weak. Zuzana Jezerska (2003:167) points to the lack of definitional clarity about what gender mainstreaming actually means in practice. As a result, 'national machinery for women' can take a wide range of institutional forms, 'from NGO status to a very strong mandate within the government'. In Poland, the Equal Opportunities Officer appointed in November 2001 did not have an automatic right to attend cabinet meetings, nor to insist that her recommendations be translated into legislation or government policy. In November 2005, the newly elected conservative Polish Prime Minister abolished the office of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men and appointed instead a Family Consultant.

In Slovakia too, Alexandra Bitusikova notes that hierarchical structures in 'every institution … [have] a strong – and negative – impact on gender equality policies' (Bitusikova, 2005). Thus the Parliamentary Commission of Equal Opportunities and Status of Women established in 2003 'is only an advisory body of the hierarchically higher Committee for Human Rights, Minorities and Women, and its statements are only recommendations for this Committee' without binding force (Bitusikova, 2005). It is also striking that in the title of this 'higher' committee, women's rights as human rights are equated to those of minorities, in other words seen as somewhat marginal to the concerns of society as a whole, when in fact women constitute slightly more than half of the population of Slovakia (Bitusikova, 2005).

This unsatisfactory situation was reinforced by the Slovak government's March 2005 decision to abolish the Department of Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination and replace it with the Department of Family and Gender Policy. Such a move suggests a return to traditional notions of 'woman's place' as being confined to the family, a far cry from EU policies of gender mainstreaming designed to bring gender scrutiny to all legislation and introduce gender equality measures to all state institutions. Alexandra Bitusikova is right to fear that this move heralds the death of institutionalised gender mainstreaming in Slovakia (Bitusikova, 2005). Evidence from the correspondence and interviews she conducted showed that 'institutions responsible for gender equality … complain about lack of human resources and experts working in their departments on monitoring and enforcement of the new legislation'. Her conclusion is that 'the institutional structure of gender equality bodies is still very weak, which has a strong impact on both awareness of gender equality issues and enforcement of equality legislation' (Bitusikova, 2005; see also Karat, 2005).

It is obvious, therefore, that even where the formal machinery and legislation are in place, there are questions about the level of implementation and about continuity and sustainability. As in Western Europe, many countries in Central and Eastern Europe lack sufficient numbers of women in positions of power in legislatures and in trade unions who are committed to gender equality and might ensure that legislation, or EU gender-related objectives, become a reality. Furthermore, it is clear that the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies and the effectiveness of national women's machineries depends in large part on the existence of 'strong democratic movements holding these bodies accountable' (Rai 2003:19), in other words on 'the dynamic involvement of political, social and civil actors with high visibility' (Stratigaki 2005:172). Gender mainstreaming – like other EU directives – stands or falls on the integrally related issues of the level of mainstream political representation on the one hand, and civil society activism and lobbying on the other.

CONCLUSION

There is a difficulty inherent in the legally based citizenship approach adopted by EU. Like the neo-liberal paradigm, this privileges individual and not social responsibility on the principle of subsidiarity within a context where economic rights take precedence over social and even political rights. In contrast nationalism privileges group rights, but individual responsibility for the group. It is reactionary in the sense of being retributive rather than redistributive, and negates social responsibility on the part of the group or society as a whole in forward-looking care for the next generation as well as older and weaker members of the group. What is missing is the principle of social rights as claimable entitlements which in turn are a necessary condition for gender equitable citizenship (Einhorn, 2000;2006a). Citizenship rights can be claimed via the European Court of Justice, an instance very remote from most EU citizens' lives. In practical terms this means that the national state remains the most obvious address for such claims. As Pascall and Lewis (2004: 391) put it, 'the best prospect for gender equality in the new Europe is a model in which people's obligations to paid word and care as citizens would be underpinned with public investment in citizenship rights'. For the EU as supranational regulatory state to implement such a gender equitable 'European citizenship' would require substantively enhancing the EU's conception of its role and commitments. If the fraction of radical nationalist movements were to become stronger within the European Parliament, that could have augment an already feared dilution in current EU commitment to gender equality goals. That the potential for such dilution exists is conceded by Sylvia Walby when she writes that 'support for gender equality is seen as ebbing, because the draft of the new Constitution for the EU by the Convention proposed that gender equality was merely an objective and not the higher-order value' (European Convention 2003a, cited in Walby 2004:7).

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