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National procedures: Naturalisation ceremonies in France and Germany

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Abstract

Naturalisation ceremonies in the European Union are national domains with effects on all member states. If a nation state awards citizenship this includes the right of entry, work and settlement in all member states of the European Union. By the national certificate of naturalisation the change of status to European citizenship is automatically implemented. This double status passage is visible neither in the naturalisation acts nor in the ceremonies and often new citizens don't even know that they have gained European citizenship as a result of the national proceedings. The article is arguing that a European representation should be made visible in the national naturalisation ceremonies.

Keywords: *double status passage, European gift, Third space, inclusive European citizenship*

A team of French and German researchers has taken a closer look at naturalisation ceremonies in France and Germany. These ceremonies are organised regularly by cities and regions often with the attendance of national representatives, especially in France. It is an obvious fact that European representatives are not present in national naturalisation acts. Moreover European citizenship has not even been mentioned in analyses of the long-established national procedures. Nevertheless the welcoming of new citizens is an opportunity to think about inclusive European Citizenship. European citizenship is not a well defined matter but a construct that needs to be interpreted or in the words of Deborah Poole to be represented as an *empty (but existing) space*. One of our main findings is that new citizens, usually entangled in a long struggle for citizenship with the national states, request European initiatives for the recognition of their professional qualifications. Our research group founded by the Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk discussed European citizenship and the possibilities of implementing an appropriate passage in the national procedures and celebrations. In our view national naturalisation ceremonies give a chance to generate more cohesive understanding in Europe. They could also have an impact on education for sustainable development and global interconnectedness. The cities and regions run basic integration programs sometimes funded by the European Union. They are also represented in the ceremonies and have the possibility of creating a decentralised European perspective. In my paper I would like to suggest a European contribution to in the naturalisation ceremonies held by regional authorities. Urban environments in which most of the new citizens live can be inclusive if they put more emphasis on the qualifications of newcomers. As the nation states have a tradition of devaluing immigrant qualifications, German intercultural education speaks about *neofeudal demarcations*, and European initiatives would be more than appropriate.

1. Naturalisation: Does it have to be a national act?

Traditionally France is thought to have an assimilatory naturalisation procedure based on the state and its institutions. This seems to be contradictory to the ethnic cultural understanding of integration in Germany. But as Heike Hagedorn points out, convergent strategies in both nation states probably exist. In France and Germany a utilitarian bias based on economic success dominates immigration rules. This leads to very ambivalent structures. On the one hand quick naturalisation and integration processes are thought to minimise costs. On the other hand unlimited immigration is considered to be a risk. Therefore in France and Germany naturalisations create highly ambivalent administrative processes that are combined with examinations and other risk minimising strategies. In Germany language, culture and naturalisation tests aiming to prove knowledge on the part of the new incoming citizen have been devised. In France citizens are interviewed by the local prefecture that issues a certificate of integrity. During the naturalisation procedure a second interview about the motivation of the candidate is held. There are no official guidelines to these interviews, but as my sample shows, immigrants know what is preferred to be heard in certain local prefectures. Thus this part of the French naturalisation procedure remains an act of interpretative authority and a demonstration of power in the sense of Michel Foucault. In both countries the process of naturalisation lasts a long time (8-12 years) and is considered to be an activity of assimilation to a more modern life. These topics, not individual strength or capacities based on migration experiences, are the turning points of the so called efforts of the naturalisation candidates. Naturalisation is considered in France and Germany to be a genuine national domain. This discourse has even been strengthened with the obvious relaxation of administrative power by the nation states. Although nation states become *leaking containers* as Charles Taylor points out national administrations hold on to their position as the main actor in naturalisation processes in the European Union. Naturalisation procedures are seen as a national duty that has to be fulfilled in regional institutions. A European perspective is neither thought of nor performed. France almost automatically gives citizenship to children of naturalised immigrants. Germany combines permission of residence for both adults and children. So if the adults in a family have different legal immigration status so too may the children. That's one reason why the living conditions of immigrant families in Germany are precarious. Children with a migration background in the German school system are sometimes for a number of years threatened by deportation. There is no double citizenship in Germany, a fact which leads to late and unwilling naturalisation based on the renunciation of the original citizenship. A status passage from the starting point of immigration to a promised naturalisation is a lack in German immigration law. As in France, naturalisation ceremonies are not individually predictable and are matters of administrative arbitrariness.

2. Ceremonies after the Procedure. Celebrations for new citizens in France and Germany

A research group of the *Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk* has considered carefully questions of inclusion and citizenship. My work contains empirical material relating to

35 naturalisation ceremonies published by You Tube. I have also interviewed 60 new citizens shortly after their naturalisation ceremonies. The results are gained by discourse analytical approaches and documentary analysis of narrative interviews. The research project has focused especially on forms of national representation in the naturalisation celebrations. The relation between regional or state representatives and new citizens has also been examined. In the short time of my presentation I can only give you a short overview of the results and perspectives of this study. The data shows that the national states are represented in the ceremonies by their hymns, flags, books and other symbols. In all the naturalisation ceremonies surveyed musicians played classical music or people began to sing mostly hymns in order to create a new collective identity. In the German sample classical music by so-called German composers was played. Heterogeneous elements that recognise the countries of origin of the new citizens are not represented in the ceremonies of either country. Clear distinctions in representing the French republic or the Federal Republic of Germany can be seen in the sample. While in Germany naturalisation ceremonies are fairly administrative routine in France festive military clothing and rooms with republican decoration and flags are prevalent. Also the double-bind character of naturalisation that Didier Fassin and Sarah Maszouz stress can be seen in the videos. The dialectic of naturalisation being inclusive and exclusive at the same time can be reconstructed in You Tube videos showing immigrant groups and their relation to the state officials. The status of new citizens is distinguished from that of immigrants without national citizenship. They are in the words of Pierre Bourdieu going to form a status group with its own differentiation marks. In France a commemorative speech is given and a formal act celebrated. New citizens in France are generally dressed well and individually addressed. Usually the celebrations in France take part in little groups. German naturalisation ceremonies are only held when a big group of usually more than 20 persons is gathered. Naturalisation ceremonies are generally public events. In our research we didn't encounter any mention of informal German or French guests. So the welcoming society was only represented by the officials and in some cases the musicians. Therefore new citizens don't have a chance to present themselves in the naturalisation celebrations. In France it is possible to publish a short CV and Photo in a local official gazette. Germany has no public announcement. As nearly all new citizens describe, contact with locals is a difficult issue. That's probably why the Netherlands are promoting a Mentoring program initiated by regional administration that offers contact and language skill exchanges with locals. In Germany the cities or regions organise the naturalisation ceremonies and their representatives donate gifts and information-material. The national gift usually is a book, most likely the German constitution. There is no European gift, nor is there in the dialectic of Marcel Mauss a gift in return by the immigrants. The status *European* is not mentioned in the ceremonies. New citizens gain naturalisation usually after a course of years. They remain sceptical about the nation states. This is due to long naturalisation procedures with tests and interviews and the obligation in Germany to give up one's original nationality. Usually European citizenship is fairly abstract to the new citizens and they don't know that they could claim European rights. In our interviews young new citizens describe their understanding of what *European* means for them. They also explain how they would like to celebrate their arrival in Europe. Presenting themselves in society and giving a guest gift are the most common visions. We also surveyed some expectations about what European rights would mean for new citizens. Their ideas emphasise the important role of regional and urban integration initiatives combined with access to the labour market. They feel fairly

insecure as to whether they can make a living in Europe and they wish for more individual support and professional perspective. The actual naturalisation processes in France and Germany certify that the citizen deserves to be naturalised. The responsibility for the integration process is left to the individual candidate. The wide range of different integration courses doesn't show a common dramaturgy. That is why they are evaluated by the new citizens as being only partially helpful. Regions, nation state and Europe offer courses which are not combined and focused on naturalisation as the end of a status passage.

3. European Citizenship in naturalisation acts

Naturalisation ceremonies show the lack of a European gift. Even though European citizenship is conferred it is not represented. As the relation between new citizen and nation states is strained after the immigration procedures European citizenship could play a cohesive role. European citizenship with a performative and integrative character can open perspectives for new citizens. Pedagogic ritual research has given some hints on performing intersections and changing status. European Citizenship could be represented as an open contract, still in an exploring phase in which it is worthwhile to participate. The local actors and urban representatives have the chance to pick up the potential of new incoming citizens. Migration processes could also be seen as resources rather than risks. We have historic examples especially in the growing cities of the late Middle Ages in which migrants were honoured because of their capacities- language skills and neutrality in local conflicts. That's why migrants have been asked to be judges or other highly accepted professionals in late middle age towns. This is an approach contrary to the obvious *Brain Waste* experienced by France and Germany as a result of their failure to recognise the potential and the qualifications of the new citizens. After being naturalised, securing recognition of their qualifications is often the next struggle for new citizens. The passage of status for immigrants could be better adjusted by regions, nation state and European Union and could contain a clearer offer of naturalisation combined with labour market access in a short time. This would probably allow European citizenship to initiate dialogue without strict cultural hierarchies as Homi Bhabha points out in his concept of a third space in intercultural encounter. Bhabha tries to open intercultural encounter for diversity experiences and hybrid identity constructions. The Third Space is not conceived as being in-between cultures but in the encounter and negotiation of difference. The experience of encounter in the so-called Third Space in Bhabha's concept can be chaotic, surprising and unexpected. Thus Bhabha's concept aims to destroy old-fashioned observation habits and exclusive practices such as national naturalisation proceedings.

4. Conclusions

European approaches could be made visible in the ceremonies by improving the recognition of the formal and informal qualifications of the new citizens. This would create more opportunities and reduce unjust asymmetries to newcomers in European societies. It would also affect schools because pupils with a migration background would suffer less from the diminution of status of their parents. New citizens emphasise living

and working perspectives in Europe. Especially the new citizen promotes European Citizenship which can contribute to cultural heterogeneity and an acknowledgement of globalisation processes. They should be given space to represent themselves and their ideas about Europe in urban surroundings. This would mean not only permitting migrants to be represented in local administration but allowing them to make active contributions to citizenship with global responsibilities.

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