

.....

**What kind of Europe: Multiculturalism,  
Migration and Political Community – Lessons  
from Canada (?)**

**Oliver Schmidtke and Constantin Chira-Pascanut**

Immigration has emerged as one of the most important and controversial issues in contemporary European politics. European societies have struggled to come to terms with two major challenges: the task to develop an immigration and citizenship policy in countries that, often until very recently, have been countries of emigration themselves. And second, European countries have struggled to find an appropriate response to the socio-cultural implications of an increased ethnic-cultural diversity and the political reactions it has sparked. In the current issue of the *Review of European and Russian Affairs* the authors shed light on these two challenges discussing the European experience of dealing with migration issues in light of the legacy that shapes Canada in this respect. The question mark in the title of this issue indicates that one could have doubts whether the Canadian tradition as an immigrant society and its decades of experiences with one of the most advanced migration regimes in the world is indeed a good reference point in trying to understand developments in Europe. The authors of this issue are as divided over this issue as is the wider scholarly and public debate: While some base their arguments on the assumption of incomparable experiences other contributors work at least implicitly with the idea that Canada and European societies have to face very similar challenges in terms of the transformation of national immigration and citizenship regimes.

However what the articles do share is, from different perspectives, the question as to how migration challenges traditional forms of (nationally defined) political community, citizenship and sovereignty. It is one of the most remarkable developments in this respect that the provisions established by the nation-state tend to be increasingly dysfunctional or, may be better, overly narrow to cope with trans-border mobility and practices of migrants. Yet at the same there do not seem to be any politically or socially feasible options available to replace the nation-state as the

exclusive reference point in determining inclusion and exclusion, granting rights and in providing a sense of political community. The growing incongruence between social and political space raises some fundamental questions about how to redefine the notion of political community. The very idea of politics as the collective self-determination of citizens in a spatially defined community and the alleged universalism of the nation state is in question. The nation-state as it emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seems to have become too narrow to serve as the exclusive spatial and social container of modern democratic politics.

The ambitions of the European Union to move migration and asylum policies to the community level can be seen as one promising approach to deal with this reality. Yet, the very idea of depriving nation-states of sovereignty in this field and relegating power to European authorities generates a host of important questions: Is the envisioned European citizenship regime a feasible alternative to the seemingly inadequately prepared nationally defined notion of community? What form of a collective identity does this supra-national political community invoke to generate trust, loyalty and solidarity among its citizens? How deeply entrenched are patterns of an emerging European identity into national contexts?

Migration thus can be seen to be at the root of the current transformation of political community and citizenship in Europe. This issue brings together articles that focus on three major issues of this transformation: the changing images of national identity and community, the politicization of migration in political discourse, and the political response in terms of redesigning citizenship provisions at the European level.

*The transformation of collective identity and national community*

Although modern societies are increasingly less able to portray themselves as closed, ethnically or culturally defined communities, a clear sense of “Us” and “Them” still forms the indispensable cultural basis for community membership. Regardless of whether they are built on consensual, territorial, or primordial notions of nationhood, societies have always had a cultural, particularistic understanding of what makes their own community distinct from neighboring ones. In Europe, however, such standards of societal inclusion and exclusion can no longer claim the status of an unquestioned fact. The boundaries between what legitimately divides "Insiders" and "Outsiders" have become increasingly blurred in these times of an unprecedented degree of transactions and socioeconomic practices beyond national borders. Thus it is not surprising that questions concerning nationhood and citizenship have been the focus of political and scientific discussions throughout the 1990s and up to the present. The renewal of post-communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe, the formation of an ever-closer European Union, and the increasing ethnic pluralization of modern society have fueled debate over how to re-conceptualize the boundaries of the political community and the viability of established forms of collective identity.

Anna Vorobyova's article *Integrating Immigrants through the Policy of Multiculturalism as a State's Response to the Sovereignty Challenge* looks at how Canada and its legacy of multiculturalism have faced this challenge. From a theoretical perspective she argues that pursuing a sense of national homogeneity is an integral – and so far indispensable – part of state sovereignty. In stark contrast to popular perceptions of Canada as a (post-) national community characterized primarily by diversity Vorobyova argues that multiculturalism, although being a rather benevolent form of dealing with internal cultural plurality, essentially can be

seen as a policy protecting and further cementing the idea of a culturally homogeneous, sovereign nation. Vorobyova claims that even the Canadian version of multiculturalism is still fundamentally committed to the idea of nation-building. Based on her theoretically driven argument she sees multiculturalism as not having made any serious inroads into developing a truly “post-national” sense of community and sovereignty.

Historically European societies seem even less well prepared to deal with the challenge of internal diversity and its implications for notions of national community. The headscarf debate or the recent riots in France in which mainly young immigrants were involved have indicated the conundrum that even the – seemingly – most tolerant and open immigration regime in Europe has to face. The French Republican approach to integrating immigrants and assimilate them into *citoyens* has repeatedly been portrayed as the more benign way of including newcomers (e.g. as compared to Germany that traditionally employed a more ethnically based mode of selecting and integrating immigrants). Yet the public was surprised to find a great degree of frustration and alienation among young immigrants in France as well. Their sense of being discriminated against and not having equal access to the life opportunity in French society is an indication of how deficient the whole process of social integration has been.

One aspect of this puzzle how to deal with religious, ethnic or cultural difference and thus to promote integration in pluri-ethnic societies is the issue of political extremism. How far can and should liberal democracies go in tolerating political claims that threaten to undermine their constitutive principles? In the Netherlands the murder of van Gogh has led to a backlash against multiculturalism and the alleged excessive acceptance of extremists activities. In his article on the

Danish cartoon affair Per Anders Rudling describes Islamic extremism as a test for Western universal values such as freedom of speech or freedom of religion. He interprets the reaction to the moral indignation over the publication of these cartoons as misleading tolerance of extremism in the name of accepting cultural-religious diversity. In his view the strategy of trying to appease radical Islam has undesirable political consequences (such as self-imposed censorship). Rudling develops the provocative hypothesis that multiculturalism interpreted along those lines is prone to weaken and undermine the foundations of liberal democracy.

*Politicizing migration in political discourse*

Another way of looking at the political consequences of migration and multiculturalism is to investigate its role in mainstream public and political discourse. Here we are faced with a telling paradox of how this issue is being dealt with in public debates in European societies: On the one hand, issues of immigration are closely linked to the - rational - debate about Europe's future labour market and its aging society. Here the overwhelming majority of parties show a surprisingly similar pragmatic approach to the issue of immigration: it is perceived to be an inevitable component for how European countries need to prepare for the future. On the other hand, however, this issue has been employed in a populist fashion designed to evoke emotional attachment to those allegedly defending national interests and identity. In times of an ever closer resemblance of two major catch-all parties, the issue of immigration has repeatedly been used as an effective political device to polarize the electorate and to re-instate strong party allegiances. In particular against the background of the process of European integration and globalization the issue of immigration and citizenship is one prominent field in which fears, concerns and

frustration with the current political realities can be articulated. Invoking strong symbolic patterns of national community and identity is promising stability in a world in radical transformation.

Andrej Zaslove's article *The Politics of Immigration: a new electoral dilemma for the right and the left?* focuses on the opportunity structures for political parties, on both the left and right, to politicize immigration. In his observation issues related to immigration, integration, exclusion, and multiculturalism have developed into a divisive element in electoral competitions in most Western European democracies. In particular appeals to law and order and security scares have provided an environment in which the populist use of the topic has flourished. At the same time, however, Zaslove shows that the left and the right have major difficulties in developing a coherent approach to issues related to migration mainly due to entrenched interests of their respective constituencies and the overall coherence of their ideological stand.

#### *The European response to migration and citizenship*

Europe and the European Union can be seen as the promising path towards overcoming some of the contradictions and challenges involved in conceiving of political community primarily if not exclusively in terms of a national one. And indeed, the EU has developed ambitions to generate a truly European approach to immigration and citizenship. In her contribution *Citoyenneté européen, transnationale ou globale: penser la citoyenneté au-delà de l'Etat* Elise Auvachez addresses the question of the likelihood and desirability of citizenship beyond the nation-state. From a theoretical perspective she develops an interpretation that primarily looks at what constitutes citizenship, or in her conceptual framework "citoyennisation" in terms of the political actors involved. With this perspective her focus rests on citizenship not as

a set of legal provisions but rather as a political project that involves constant negotiation between state authority and various social actors in civil society. She goes back to the essential meaning of citizenship as a constitutive part of the political community and a constant struggle over its meaning. In this respect she interprets the emerging pattern of a European citizenship status in terms of a struggle over what kind of political community the European Union will and should represent.

In her paper *Le désalignement des politiques d'immigration et d'intégration au sein de l'UE : Hardlaw versus Softlaw?* Aude-Claire Fourot evaluates the current EU immigration policy noting a different approach at the EU level when it comes to issues related to immigration policies (the regulation of admission of a third-country national to the territory of a Member State), on the one hand, and integration of migrants, on the other hand. By examining the evolution of EU immigration and integration policies (from the Treaty of Rome to the Hague Program), she identifies a progressive communitarization (Europeanization) of immigration policy. Conversely, the process of integration methods of migrants is left by the EU to the individual member states. As there is not a uniform EU model of integration of migrants, Fourot concludes that in practice the results of this process can be fairly different.

*What kind of Europe: Multiculturalism, Migration and Political Community –  
Lessons from Canada (?)*

The papers included in this special issue of the *Review of European and Russian Affairs* address timely questions on both Canada's and the EU's immigration and citizenship policies. As the EU embarked on the road of defining and 'inventing'



its first common immigration policy<sup>1</sup>, looking elsewhere for successful models of inspiration might be an appropriate approach. At this moment, Europe faces the challenges of a rapidly ageing population as well as of integrating millions of migrants already working in the EU. In this context Canada's immigration and integration policies ('immigration by invitation') might represent an attractive model for Europe. However, finding an agreement at the EU level on a common immigration policy is not an easy attempt. While some EU member states have decided to open their borders to migrant workers (see the recent decision of Italy) others have chosen to postpone the application of the principle of free movement of labour (the British decision for placing restrictions of free entry into the UK on Romanians and Bulgarians when their countries join). Yet, even if a European immigration policy is still in its infant stage Europe and Canada will face similar challenges in terms of re-considering their underlying sense of community in light of the increasing ethnic-cultural diversity of their population. It is with respect to both issues immigration policies and the challenge of dealing with ethnic-cultural diversity that this issue of *Review of European and Russian Affairs* seeks to encourage a trans-Atlantic dialogue.

---

<sup>1</sup> At the Tampere European Council (October 1999) the European leaders recognized the necessity to define an EU common immigration policy. The 'Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe' states in Art III-267 that "the Union shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring [...] the efficient management of migration flows [...]"