Ecological citizenship: a disruptive influence?

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Abstract

In this article two distinct but related questions are addressed. First, can the politics of ecology be articulated in terms of citizenship? An affirmative answer is given to this question, and an outline of ‘ecological citizenship’ is presented. This gives rise to the second question: how does ecological citizenship affect the idea of citizenship itself? This question is answered through the articulation of an ‘architecture’ of citizenship theory, organised around the oppositions of rights and duties, public and private spheres, active and passive citizenship, and ‘territorialised’ and ‘deterritorialised’ conceptions of citizenship. It is argued that the idea of ecological citizenship disrupts standard citizenship architecture by emphasising citizen duties over citizen rights, by suggesting that the private sphere is as much a legitimate site of citizenship activity as the public sphere, by denying the usual association of ‘passive’ citizenship with the private sphere, and by endorsing ‘deterritorialised’ conceptions of citizenship. Finally, ecological citizenship is presented as contributing to a ‘remoralising’ of politics, and some of the resulting tensions with the impulses of liberal democracy are outlined.

1 A version of this paper was presented to the ………….. Politics Department in November 1998, and it has been read by …………… I am grateful to all of them for helping me to move on from where they found me.
Introduction: the revival of citizenship

Interest in citizenship comes and goes. Peter Reisenberg’s comment on eighteenth century France is, mutatis mutandis, applicable to much of the post-Second World War period in the western world:

From the era of Louis XIV until the Revolution citizenship was not a major concern of French political theory ... Although a few traditional moralists might debate the issue, and although there continued to be debate over the proper relationship between the private and the public interest, there was no serious question any longer of Western civilization's dedication to the pursuit of wealth. (Reisenberg, 1992:253)

But for a number of reasons citizenship has made a palpable comeback in recent years. It is now commonplace to find it used to articulate political projects across the political spectrum, and a considerable amount of intellectual effort has been devoted to positioning those projects in the complex conceptual field that ‘citizenship’ has become. In contrast to this, no systematic attempt has been made to relate the themes of ecological politics to those of citizenship. This is suprising, given that since its contemporary re-emergence ecological politics has been habitually associated with citizenship-sounding issues such as the reinvigoration of the public sphere, the commitment to political participation, and the sense that individuals can make a political difference. The first objective here, then, is to see whether ecological politics can be expressed in terms of citizenship.

The second objective follows from the first. My view is that ecological politics can indeed be articulated through what I come to regard as citizenship’s conceptual ‘architecture’, but that the effect of this is to rearrange that architecture in quite specific and novel ways. In this sense, the present article is a contribution to ‘citizenship studies’, and in this context the objective is to contrast ecological conceptions of citizenship with other, more familiar, forms.

Finally, I suggest that a number of the conditions for the realisation of ecological
citizenship are already in place, but that governments should take a lead in promoting it. However, the normative nature of ecological citizenship is in tension with liberal democratic governments’ ostensible commitment to neutrality as far as the ‘good life’ is concerned, and in this wider sense the increasingly popular notion of ‘environmental education’ stands in a tense relationship with the liberal project.

These are the main lines, then, of the investigation that follows, and I shall, first, outline the shape of the revival of citizenship and begin to locate ecological politics in relation to it.

It has become common to write about citizenship in terms of a series of what postmodern theory has come to call ‘binary oppositions’, the most common of which are public and private, active and passive, and rights and duties (Burchell, 1995:541) – to which I would add ‘territorialised’ and ‘deterritorialised’ conceptions of citizenship. I shall refer to these oppositions as constituting the ‘architecture’ of citizenship theory. Much of all this is due to Bryan Turner’s pathbreaking 1990 article where he contrasts public and private citizenship and active and passive citizenship. Crucially, Turner believes that these two oppositions are not independent of one another, and that, rather, public and active citizenship are ranged against private and passive citizenship. My view is that the notion of ecological citizenship disrupts oppositions like this and gives rise to a new type of configuration which is of considerable contemporary political importance.

Surprisingly little attention has been given to the idea of environmental, or ecological, citizenship. Bart van Steenbergen has devoted an essay to it (van Steenbergen, 1994c), but his dependence on Marshall’s influential three-fold typology of citizenship (civil, political, and social citizenship) – to which van Steenbergen tries to add a fourth dimension in the guise of ecological citizenship (van Steenbergen, 1994c:142) – prevents him from seeing what is genuinely interesting in ecological citizenship. Marshall’s is notoriously a rights-based typology, while one of ecological citizenship’s most crucial contributions to contemporary theorising is its focus on the duties and obligations that attend citizenship. Van Steenbergen’s use of Marshall as an organising framework makes him miss this, and his implicitly affirmative answer to the
question of whether Marshall’s typology can cope with current developments is given too hastily (van Steenbergen, 1994b:3).

Similarly, the promise of Fred Twine’s decision to devote one whole part of his book on citizenship (1994) to the theme of ‘environmental interdependence’ rather evaporates as, instead of telling us what environmental or ecological citizenship might actually be about and comparing and contrasting it with other sorts of citizenship, he merely points out that the redemption of Marshallian social rights claims is more problematic than ever due to the ‘growing environmental and therefore material limits’ to the basis for redeeming such claims (Twine, 1994:4). Interesting – and even true – this may be, but to limit the fallout produced by bringing environmentalism and citizenship into contact to this seems to me to be a missed opportunity.

In his recent book (1998), Mark Smith gets much closer to what I think is interesting and important in the idea of what he calls ecological citizenship when he refers to a ‘new politics of obligation’ (Smith, 1998:99), according to which ‘human beings have obligations to animals, trees, mountains, oceans, and other members of the biotic community’ (1998:99). Many political ecologists will agree with Smith when he writes that, ‘[T]he limits that this places upon human action are severe’, and they may also agree that, ‘no existing political vocabulary has managed to capture this transformation in the relationship between society and nature’ (Smith, 1998:99). My point is that the political-ecological view of the society-nature relationship is transformative not only of that relationship itself, but of the vocabularies we use to articulate it. ‘Citizenship’ is a case in point, and the idea of obligation to which Smith refers is certainly central to what I would regard as a defensible articulation of ecological citizenship. Smith devotes only four pages at the end of his book to ecological citizenship, and there is therefore much more to be said than he manages.

**Ecological citizenship: duties and responsibilities**

It is by now well established and widely accepted that, 'the view of citizenship that is implicit in much postwar political theory ... is defined almost entirely in terms of the possession of rights' (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:354, and see also Roche, 1992:20). Citizenship duties receive some attention in Marshall’s seminal work – duties for the
employed to make compulsory contributions, to look for work, to use the strike weapon sparingly, and of the state to secure and defend individuals’ rights and so on – but they are understated. Recently the focus on citizen duties and responsibilities has become more explicit and a number of commentators have talked of the ‘need to supplement (or replace) the passive acceptance of citizenship rights with the active exercise of citizenship responsibilities and virtues, including economic self-reliance, political participation, and even civility’ (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 355), and the way in which, ‘[T]he welfare state can be argued to have appeared to promote a rights-based and relatively duty-free and unreciprocal conception of citizenship' (Roche, 1992:31; see also Rees, 1995:316).

Attempts have been made to rehabilitate the idea of citizen duty and responsibility, most recently by Anthony Giddens: ‘[O]ne might suggest as a prime motto for the new politics, no rights without responsibilities. Government has a whole cluster of responsibilities for its citizens and others, including the protection of the vulnerable. Old-style social democracy, however, was inclined to treat rights as unconditional claims’ (Giddens, 1998:65). This is all regarded with some suspicion by the Left because of the way in which obligation has been read as the duty to seek work, a reading which has as its apparent corollary that social security claimants are lazy, feckless individuals. The unfortunate consequence is that versions of citizenship which place an emphasis on the responsibilities of citizenship are regarded by sections of the Left as ‘debased’ (Phillips, 1991:77). The idea of ecological citizenship, though, reasserts the importance of citizenship responsibilities in a way that contrasts vividly with neoconservative versions of the ‘return to duty’, and it is to this that I now turn.

The neoconservative linking of citizenship rights and workfare obligations relies on what amounts to a contractual view of rights and obligations. Citizenship is regarded as a contract between the citizen and the state, in which the citizen claims rights against the state, but according to which the citizen also undertakes to contribute to the state’s ends by paying taxes, for example, and by seeking work when unemployed. This contractual view of citizenship is very common – so common, indeed, that it is rarely explicitly articulated, let alone explicitly defended. Maurice Roche, for example, suggests, as we have seen, that, '[T]he welfare state can be argued
to have appeared to promote a rights-based and relatively duty-free and unreciprocal conception of citizenship’ (Roche, 1992:31). I agree with the broad sentiment of this, but what is interesting for our present purpose is Roche’s implicit subscribing to a reciprocal understanding of the relationship between citizen rights and obligations: the citizen has rights against the state, but these rights entail reciprocal obligations. Roche underpins this with what he calls a ‘common sense notion of morality’ (Roche, 1992:31) involving the ‘interactional reciprocity between people involved in moral action’ (Roche, 1992:31, and see also Stewart, 1995:71).

The ecological contribution to this debate lies in its severing the connection between rights and obligations. The source of the ecological citizen’s obligations does not lie in reciprocity or mutual advantage, but in a non-reciprocal sense of justice, or of compassion. The obligations that the ecological citizen has to future generations and to other species – of which I shall speak in more detail later – cannot be based on reciprocity, by definition. Ecological citizens can expect nothing in return from future generations and other species for discharging their responsibilities towards them. It is this detaching of obligations from rights that opens the door to talk of citizenship as obligation without subscribing to the neoconservative ‘workfare’ view of obligation. The workfare view is founded on the link between rights and obligations: the right to social security entails the obligation to work, or to look for work. Ecological citizenship involves a different type of obligation: one owed to strangers, who may be distant in time as well as space.

From the point of view of notions of citizenship based on reciprocity, ecological citizenship is hard to envisage, let alone articulate. The contractual view runs very deep, and this may be the principal obstacle to the recognition and understanding of ecological citizenship in liberal democratic societies. At times the focus on citizenship-as-contractualism borders on the fetishistic, as in Michael Ignatieff’s discussion of what he calls the ‘myth of citizenship’. He obsessively views citizenship as a bargain between the individual citizen and the political community, and he argues that if citizenship is under strain, that’s because the bargain is a bad one – by which he means that the individual citizen isn’t getting enough out of the bargain. The nodal point of this argument is, of course, taxation, and Ignatieff locates the onset of the ‘crisis of citizenship’ at the point where ‘[P]eople begin to ask why they are paying more for
declining levels of public service' (Ignatieff, 1995:69-70). In contrast with this, ecological citizenship is explicitly non-contractual and has nothing to do with bargains between citizens and the political community. It has much more to do with the other end of the spectrum of human relationships, described in the following way by Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon: ‘American thinking about social provision has been shaped largely by images drawn from civil citizenship, especially images of contract. The result is a cultural tendency to focus on two, rather extreme, forms of human relationship: discrete contractual exchanges of equivalents, on the one hand, and unreciprocated, unilateral charity, on the other’ (Fraser and Gordon, 1994:91). It is the unreciprocated and unilateral nature of the obligations of ecological citizenship that distinguishes it most clearly from more dominant forms of citizenship in liberal democratic societies, and in this sense it disrupts these dominant forms. Once ecological citizenship comes into the frame, the success of attempts to express the general content of citizenship through the ages is called into question. David Held’s gloss on citizenship, for example, seems unimpeachable at first sight: ‘[F]rom the ancient world to the present day, all forms of citizenship have had certain common attributes. Citizenship has meant a reciprocity of rights against, and duties towards, the community. Citizenship has entailed membership, membership of the community in which one lives one’s life. And membership has invariably involved degrees of participation in the community’ (Held, 1991:20). I shall return to the issues of participation and membership shortly, but for the moment I want simply to point out how ecological citizenship disrupts the common view that ‘all forms of citizenship’ involve the idea of ‘a reciprocity of rights against, and duties towards, the community’. There is nothing reciprocal about the rights and duties of the ecological citizen.

It might be objected that if there isn’t, then we’re not talking about citizenship at all any longer. As John Horton has put it (1998),

why … call ecological duties matters of citizenship? The reason why reciprocal/contractual models of citizenship are attractive is precisely because they try to explain how the rights (and duties) of citizenship are circumscribed to citizens. The point about citizenship relations is that they only hold between citizens, and not, for example, between parents and children or peoples of one state
and another … If one wants to talk about being a citizen of the world, say, then this
is effectively to deny any specific content to citizenship as contrasted with the
general rights and duties associated with being a human being.

Horton’s point is that citizenship is tied to the notion of a political entity, and in the absence
of such an entity any use of the idea of citizenship is perverse – even Kant’s ‘world civil
society’ was underpinned by the idea of a world state. This point is important, but not, I
think, fatal to my argument. It depends for its force on the assumption that the kinds of
political entities that would allow us to talk of non-state citizen relations do not exist – but
this assumption can be questioned. Those who talk of cosmopolitan citizenship in today’s
globalised world are open to the same objection, and they would probably meet it by
pointing to incipient regional and global political entities such as the European Union and
the United Nations through which the idea of trans-national citizenship can be exercised.
Ecological citizenship’s internationalism might make use of the same argument, and its
intergenerationalism can be thought of as operating through both national and international
political entities. In other words, even if we cleave to the view that there is an ‘essence’ to
citizenship, and that an important part of that essence is that we can only talk about
relations between citizens where we can identify a political entity, we can indeed see the
kinds of political entity in the contemporary world that enable us to talk sensibly about non-
state citizen relations.

The ecological citizen’s principal duty is to act with care and compassion towards
distant strangers, human and non-human, in space and time. This duty may be grounded in
arguments from justice, but not, I think, necessarily so. As I have discussed elsewhere
(…………, 1998), it is hard to predicate justice of all the entities towards which the
ecological citizen should act with care and compassion. This is particularly true of non-
human entities, but some commentators even have trouble with the notion of justice
towards future generations of human beings. These arguments need not detain us here,
since it is enough to underscore the attitude – one of care and compassion – that helps to
define ecological citizenship, without seeking to provide foundations for it.

The parallels with some of the discussions of feminism and citizenship are
striking. Ruth Lister has pointed out, consonant with one of the themes of this article,
that, 'the "rights discourse" of the dominant post-war paradigm has come under challenge from a "duties discourse"', and she goes on to say that, ‘[T]he issue of citizen obligations vs citizen rights is not the focus of [her] paper but the gendered nature of those obligations, particularly in relation to the family and labour market, will be noted' (Lister, 1995:6). This is as much as to say that there are a number of different types of citizenship obligation, and some of them are (or have come to be) both gendered in themselves (that is, regarded as ‘womanly' obligations) as well as carried out in practice by those of a specific gender, i.e. women. In this context, Lister very suggestively refers to the idea of ‘citizen the carer’ (Lister, 1995:33, and 1997:177), a notion which resonates strongly with ecological citizenship as I have been describing it here. Lister, like many feminists, has well-grounded reservations about the idea, but she does suggest that, '[W]ithout subscribing to the "maternal thinking" thesis or essentialist notions of women's moral superiority, it is possible to argue that politics could be enriched by the concerns and ways of working that women can (which does not mean that they always do) bring to it' (Lister, 1995:13). Caring is, of course, a gendered activity, and the task of ecological citizenship would be to take that activity and degender it: to reclaim it as a citizenly, rather than a gendered, virtue.

This will worry feminists (and others) who balk at the idea of ‘female’ values and the notion of ‘feminizing’ public life (even in inverted commas), and it will also worry those who believe that citizenship is definitionally about the public sphere, and that it is definitionally not about care and compassion. This latter view is most fiercely held by Michael Ignatieff who writes that, '[T]he pell-mell retreat from the language of justice to the language of caring is perhaps the most worrying sign of the decadence of the language of citizenship among all parties to the left of Mrs Thatcher' (in Rees, 1995:321), and that, ‘the language of citizenship is not properly about compassion at all’ (Ignatieff, 1991:34). It seems too inflexible, though, to reserve citizenship to justice, only. The ecological citizenship point is that some of the obligations of citizenship – a regard for distant strangers, for example – may only uncomfortably be expressed in terms of justice, and that therefore other citizenship virtues need to be canvassed. It is not that justice should be replaced by these other virtues, but that it should be supplemented by them, so as better to capture the requirements of citizenship in an ecological age. Ignatieff himself gives no clear reason why compassion should not be part of the language of citizenship, except to say that...
‘compassion is a private virtue which cannot be legislated or enforced’ (Ignatieff, 1991:34). This seems something of a non sequitur, since not many will argue that public virtues can – or should be – legislated or enforced either. The point is not whether the virtue of compassion is enforceable or not, but whether it captures an essence of ecological citizenship. Given that ecological citizenship is at least in part about regard for vulnerable others, and given that this regard cannot always be expressed in terms of justice, then care and compassion can legitimately be regarded as citizenship virtues. Once again, the idea of ecological citizenship disrupts the standard vocabulary – or discourse more generally – of citizenship, and this is also true of the time-honoured distinction between the public and private spheres, to which I now turn.

**Ecological citizenship and the public-private divide**

It is surely no exaggeration to say that citizenship has always been associated with what has come to be known as ‘the public sphere’. As Pocock remarks, Aristotle’s dictum that ‘man is a political animal’ ‘depends upon a rigorous separation of public from private, or polis from oikos’ (Pocock, 1995:32), and not only this, but he judged the public to be more worthy than the private: ‘he did insist specifically that the realm of oeconomia - the household realm in which the material necessities of daily life were reproduced - was a lesser realm than the public’ (Ignatieff, 1995:56). In citizenship theory this separation has been handed down virtually intact, to the point where the much-commented recent revival of citizenship has revolved almost entirely around the ‘rehabilitation of elements of what could be called in shorthand form the ”classical civic tradition” ... the conception of citizenship stemming from Aristotle which sees the citizen first and foremost as an active participant in the public affairs of the polis’ (Burchell, 1995:540, and see Walzer, 1989:211). For ecological citizenship, this separation of public and private cannot hold. For one thing, the household is the site of much ecological citizen activity, and for another, it may even be that the virtues of ecological citizenship are learned there. In general, indeed, the ecological citizen operates at many different levels of society. As far as ‘sites of activity’ are concerned, ecological citizenship has more in common with the New Right notion of ‘voluntary service within the family, the neighbourhood, and the wider society’ (Bellamy and Greenaway, 1995:475) than it does with civic republicanism. This involves a
renegotiation of the meaning of ‘the political’. Anne Phillips criticises Douglas Hurd’s late 1980s notion of the ‘active citizen’, ‘who picks up the litter but never gives a thought to the political issues of the day’ (Phillips, 1991:84). The word ‘litter’ is carefully chosen to produce the parody that Phillips wants, but if we replace it with ‘waste’, an apolitical issue becomes a political one – from an environmental point of view at least. In common with the New Right, ecological citizenship is ‘strongly in favour of reasserting and re-establishing the importance for modern politics and social life of “civil society” (that is, leaving capitalism aside, the role of voluntarism and the role of family and community)’ (Roche, 1992:49, and see also Lister, 1997:22). It is therefore wholly opposed to the Rousseauian and Jacobin view that civil society (families, associations, and so on) are a threat to citizenship (see Nisbet, 1974:619, 624, 633-4).

Of these various sites of activity, though, the private realm is perhaps the most transgressive of received ideas about citizenship. The general point is neatly captured by Paul Clarke, who suggests the possibility of private actions having virtuous public implications. In connection with what he calls ‘deep citizenship’, he writes that, ‘[W]hat makes it an action of civic virtue is the degree to which, while being possibly private in origin and particular in concern, it nevertheless sets selfishness, sectarianism and sectionalism aside in favour of acting into the universal’ (Clarke, 1996:117). This is entirely in keeping with the spirit of ecological citizenship, as is Clarke’s rider that, ‘[A]n act that is merely and without consideration private is not, however, an act of deep citizenship’ (Clarke, 1996:117). There is obviously an echo of feminism in this focus on the private realm, the importance and relevance of which is fiercely contested within feminism itself. For nearly all feminists, though, the personal is political in that every private act is a microcosmic encapsulation of the gendered political world and its relations of power. For ecologism the personal is political in that many private acts have political consequences. Far from being a lesser realm than the public, then, the private sphere of the household is a crucial site of ecological citizenship activity.

‘Consider the many ways that public policy relies on responsible personal lifestyle decisions’, write Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, ‘the state cannot protect the environment if citizens are unwilling to reduce, reuse, and recycle in their own homes’ (Kymlicka nd Norman, 1994:360).
This perspective raises profound questions for the nature of citizenship itself. For those who cleave to the definitional idea that citizenship entails activity in the public sphere or it is not citizenship at all, ecological citizenship’s disruption of the public-private divide and its insistence that the private sphere is a site of citizenship activity, disqualifies it from being a form of citizenship. Without declaring his own hand, Pocock neatly summarises the options:

If one wants to make citizenship available to those to whom it has been denied on the grounds that they are too much involved in the world of things - in material, productive, domestic, or reproductive relationships - one has to choose between emancipating them from those relationships and denying that these relationships are negative components in the definition of citizenship. If one chooses the latter course, one is in search of a new definition of citizenship, differing radically from the definition articulated by Aristotle, a definition in which public and private are not rigorously separated and the barriers between them have become permeable or have disappeared altogether. In the latter case, one will have to decide whether the concept of the ‘public’ has survived at all, whether it has merely become contingent or incidental, or has actually been denied any distinctive meaning. And if that is what has happened, the concept of citizenship may have disappeared as well. (Pocock, 1995:33)

So does ecological citizenship entail a 'new definition' of citizenship - modulating the public-private distinction - or is it not a citizenship at all, because it does away with the foundations of the Aristotelian notion of citizenship? To put the question at all is to imply that there are certain immutable definitional features of citizenship with which any body of thought and practice must comply before it can properly lay claim to the term. I am reluctant to subscribe to this idea, if only because the entire discussion up to now has involved an implicit calling into question of the terms and boundaries normally associated with the citizenship debate. In the context of this section, it is not a question of abolishing the public/private distinction, but of reforming it – and our notions of citizenship – in the light of ecological concerns. So I prefer to take a more pragmatic line, according to which the constellation of ideas that go to make up ecological ‘citizenship’ are allowed to come into contact with longer standing themes in citizenship studies; time will tell whether this
contact results in piecemeal inflection or mortal infection.

**Ecological citizenship, ‘activity’, and ‘passivity’**

The disruptive influence that ecological citizenship has on general themes in citizenship continues in the context of another much used and abused distinction: that between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ citizenship. At first sight this distinction has much to commend it, particularly if it is placed alongside the one discussed earlier regarding rights and duties. From this perspective, active citizenship has to do with the discharging of duties and responsibilities to the political community and its members, while passive citizenship is associated with sitting back and claiming the rights that are due to the individual *qua* citizen.

The distinction between activity and passivity begins to unravel, though, with the recognition that it is tendentious to regard a ‘preoccupation with formal rights’ as a purely passive business. The then Prime Minister John Major’s idea of the ‘Citizen’s Charter’ was much derided at the time. Rooted as it was – and is – in the New Right conception of citizens’ rights – the right to have services delivered economically and efficiently – it appeared to have little to do with the kinds of social entitlements that had come to be synonymous with citizenship. It also seems to be a prime example of the kind of ‘passive’ citizenship referred to by Burchell, above. But a moment’s reflection leads us to see that the ‘citizen as consumer’ is a very active individual, comparing prices, demanding satisfaction from public services, and chasing up failures of service delivery when they occur.

In truth, ‘activity’ and ‘passivity’ in the context of citizenship are political rather than analytic categories. What lies behind them is an intention to relate them to the public and private spheres in such a way that activity is associated with the public sphere (good and progressive), and passivity with the private (bad and conservative). Bryan Turner makes this explicit: ‘A conservative view of citizenship (as passive and private) contrasts with a more revolutionary idea of active and public citizenship’ (Turner, 1990:189). Sometimes, activity and passivity are associated with the categories of duty and entitlement, respectively, as well as (or instead of) with those of...
the public and the private. Will Kymlicka, for example, begins by echoing a theme of this article: ‘the view of citizenship that is implicit in much postwar political theory ... is defined almost entirely in terms of the possession of rights’, and then goes on to say that, ‘[T]his is often called "passive" or "private" citizenship, because of its emphasis on passive entitlements and the absence of any obligation to participate in public life’ (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:354-5). So now the virtuous circle is made up of activity, understood as carrying out social duties, in the public arena, and this is contrasted with passivity, understood as the claiming of rights and entitlements, in the private arena. Quite apart from the fact, though, that the claiming of rights and entitlements is a very active business, as we saw above, and that it is very hard to do so anywhere but the public arena, the idea of ecological citizenship also shows us that active citizenship in the private arena is entirely possible, and is indeed a core definitive feature of the idea. Although this is counter-intuitive in respect of the vast bulk of work done on citizenship in general, it is absolutely consistent with what political ecologists take citizenship to be about. Ecological citizenship is an encumbered citizenship, far removed, on one level at least, from civic republicanism and its contemporary manifestations: ‘the ideal citizen of classical republicanism .. was largely freed from the necessity to labour and to meet his bodily requirements ... unencumbered by the demands of everyday living’ (Lister, 1997:32). Ecological citizenship, in contrast is all about everyday living.

So to the extent that activity and passivity are useful categories at all, ecological citizenship disrupts their normal usage by asserting that active ecological citizenship can be carried out in the private arena. The household is an important site of political activity for the political ecologist, and to restrict the idea of activism to the public realm is to create a blind spot as far as ecological political activity is concerned, and therefore to restrict unnecessarily the remit of citizenship itself.

Ecological citizenship and the role and (ir)relevance of membership

Much of the recent interest in citizenship is due to the complex and plural nature of modern societies, and the consequent conundrums as far as entitlements are concerned. If entitlements are due only to citizens, then the criteria for citizenship are clearly of crucial importance. Ecological citizenship swims against the tide here, and it
stands out for its notable lack of interest in the question of membership. There are two reasons for this. First, the importance of the membership issue for traditional notions of citizenship is due to the tight relationship between membership and entitlement: no membership, no entitlement. Ecological citizenship’s focus on duties rather than entitlements, on the other hand, makes for a much less specific relationship between the citizen and what s/he ought to do as a citizen. The duties of ecological citizenship are owed non-specifically. Once again this may seem perverse to those for whom citizenship is either bound up with membership or it is not citizenship at all. But my point is not that ecological citizenship pays no mind to membership at all; it is simply that - in common with contemporary notions of cosmopolitan or global citizenship, for example - it is less demanding in terms of its ‘entry fee’ to citizenship talk. For cosmopolitan and ecological notions of citizenship, incipient transnational political authorities, as well as fully constituted nation states, provide the context within which it is legitimate to talk of citizenship.

Second, the relations of citizenship according to the ecological conception differ from those envisaged in the traditional entitlements model. According to this latter model, the principal relationship is that between the individual citizen and the constituted political authority: the individual citizen claims entitlements from and against the constituted political authority. Ecological citizenship, in contrast, is about the horizontal relationship between citizens rather than the vertical (even if reciprocal) relationship between citizen and state. To this extent, the importance of membership of the nation-state is downplayed, and the Rousseauian idea that the individual-state relationship is the most important one is rejected.

Ecological citizenship is therefore part of a wider recognition that ‘national’ citizenship needs to be supplemented by non-national features:

The period in which it was possible to conceive of citizenship in general and social citizenship in particular in national and welfare-state terms is clearly coming to an end. New positive myths and ideals of citizenship rights are developing, such as those involving notions of ‘the Earth’s rights’, the ‘rights of the unborn’ and ‘world citizenship’. They both enrich and complicate the more conventional modern myths
and ideals relating to citizenship, such as those involving notions of human equality, of place and territorial identity, of nation and of heritage. (Roche, 1992:244)

The ‘territory’ of citizenship, then, if we need to put it like that, is extended under the ecological conception beyond the nation-state to the international arena as a whole. The idea of world citizenship is not of course new. As van Steenbergen has pointed out, ‘citizenship was never tied conceptually to national identity and some vision of a world civil society was already developed by Immanuel Kant’ (van Steenbergen, 1994b:6). Kant, though, could not have envisaged the impetus that the environmental agenda was to give to this idea. David Held, among many others, has pointed out that, ‘[E]cological disaster …. does not acknowledge national boundaries and frontiers’ (Held, 1991:25), and the consequent growing realisation that, as Richard Falk put it, ‘[F]or the sake of human survival … some forms of effective global citizenship are required to redesign political choices on the basis of an ecological sense of natural viabilities, and thereby to transform established forms of political behaviour’ (Falk, 1994:133).

What ecological citizenship adds to all this, though, is the distinction between the ‘world’ citizen and the ‘earth’ citizen (van Steenbergen, 1994b:8). In part this is because a global reach and range does not in any way imply an ecologically responsible global reach and range: the global manager and the global capitalist have ‘no particular links with the planet’ (van Steenbergen, 1994c:150). More importantly, though, the idea of the earth citizen incorporates the old ecological adage about ‘acting locally and thinking globally’, whereby responsible local activity both contributes to, and is a model for, global sustainability. The earth citizen possesses a sense of local and global place, while world citizens make their deracinated way around an undifferentiated globe.

By definition, then, ecological citizenship is a citizenship of strangers – as is, in a sense, all citizenship: ‘citizens accept that in principle and in fact they are and will remain strangers to each other: there are more citizens in any nation-state than any individual could meet, let alone get to know well, in a lifetime’ (Roche, 1987:376). The additional point of ecological citizenship, however, is that we are strangers not only to each other, but to each
other’s place, and even time. The obligations of the ecological citizen extend through time as well as space, towards generations yet to be born. Ecological citizens knows that today’s acts will have implications for tomorrow’s people, and will argue that ‘generationism’ is akin to, and as indefensible as, racism or sexism. They will unequivocally endorse Maurice Roche’s view that,

[T]he dominant paradigm of social citizenship, including Marshall's version of it, rests on unspoken and usually barely recognized temporal assumptions. It tends to take it for granted that the only issues worth considering are those connected with the social rights and welfare needs of the contemporary set of generations ... Nothing reveals the outdated character of the dominant paradigm more than this. (Roche, 1992:242).

A further extension takes us beyond the human realm towards the ecological citizen’s obligations to other species, as well as to this one. As Paul Clarke has put it, ‘[T]he expansion of the circles of concern takes in self, others and world, both social and natural’ (Clarke, 1996:3), and this is entirely consistent with the idea of citizenship as care outlined earlier. Even one of Prime Minister Tony Blair’s senior advisers, Geoff Mulgan, recognises this ecological contribution to the increasingly popular idea of citizen responsibility: ‘[T]he green movement calls to account the responsibility not only of politicians and industrialists but also of the human species. Humans are held to bear responsibilities to other species and to life itself’ (Mulgan, 1991: 38). In sum, Clarke’s clarificatory comments on his idea of deep citizenship are applicable, mutatis mutandis, to the ecological conception:

While the actor is individual, the place and focus of the activity is less concerned with the individual than with the shared dimension of the activity. The consequence of that is that the model of deep citizenship is less concerned with rights per se than with an ethic of care. The care is towards self, certainly, but it is not merely for the self. As Kant rightly pointed out, self-respect is a requirement of an ethical outlook, but it is also, and equally significantly, guided by a concern for others and the world. (Clarke, 1996:4)
In this sense, ecological citizenship encapsulates all the challenges to dominant social citizenship conceptions that Maurice Roche has identified: ‘(1) emphasizing social duties as against rights and (2) extending social duties into previously relatively uncolonized non-state/"civil society" spheres, particularly the family ... but also into society's ecosphere ... and into society's historicality (inter-generationality, heritage etc.)’ (Roche, 1992:5).

The ‘deterritorialisation’ element of ecological citizenship is closely related to the issue of rights and duties discussed earlier in this article. As I remarked above, the duties of the ecological citizen are owed non-specifically across time and space. Once duties of care and compassion for distant strangers come into the frame, the rights-based, nation-state orientation of most historical and contemporary forms of citizenship begins to look incomplete:

This underscores the inadequacy of the dominant paradigm's mainly social-rights-based picture of social citizenship. Evidently to acknowledge the social rights of future generations is to call on present generations to recognize and accept considerable new social duties ... To argue for the social rights of future generations is necessarily to argue for considerable new social duties and constraints to be accepted by present generations with no possibility of compensation or reciprocation by rights claims against future generations. It will require substantial political rethinking and renewal across the political spectrum to digest this particular implication of the development of new social rights. (Roche, 1992:243)

The non-reciprocal, non-territorial, duties-orientated nature of ecological citizenship certainly places it in opposition to dominant social rights conceptions, and Mark Smith is surely right to say that, '[T]he prospects for the idea of ecological citizenship are uncertain and current political concerns with rights and entitlements suggest that any attempt to promote a politics of obligation will encounter considerable resistance’ (Smith, 1998:99-100). Smith goes on to say that ecological citizenship involves ‘significant shifts in human assumptions, behaviour and institutional structures’ (Smith, 1998:100), and, given the non-reciprocal, non-territorial, duties-orientated nature of ecological citizenship, one of the shifts that is surely most important is a revival of the idea of a politics of virtue.
This revival is connected to the contemporary ‘remoralization’ of politics of which ecological politics is a part. Remoralization is taking place wherever there is a belief that current social and political problems are not wholly amenable to what we might call ‘procedural’ solutions, and where it is thought that the normative framework within which procedures operate is itself in need of examination. In this connection Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman have pointed out that: ‘the health and stability of a modern democracy depends, not only on the justice of its "basic structure" but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens' (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:352). They cite environmental policy as one area where this remoralization is most absent and most required, pointing to ‘the failure of environmental policies that rely on voluntary citizen cooperation’ (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:352), and the reference to ‘qualities and attitudes’ points us in the direction of citizen virtues.

Ecological citizenship and the politics of virtue

The idea of ‘citizenship virtues’ has of course been around as long as the idea of citizenship itself, but while ecological citizenship has something in common with these long-standing notions, it both adds to and subtracts from them. Classical republican citizenship, for example, is defined by the virtues of ‘[C]ourage, devotion, military discipline and statecraft’ (van Gunsteren, 1994:42), none of which have much to do with ecological citizenship. It is important to put down a marker here, since the ‘masculine’ (van Gunsteren, 1994:42) republican virtue idea has been so influential that there is an observable tendency to regard any favouring of virtue in the citizenship context with suspicion. Jean Bethke Elshtain, for example, writes that, ‘[T]he problem with the tradition of civic virtue can be stated succinctly: that virtue is armed’ (Elshtain, 1986:102). Well, sometimes it is, and sometimes it is not, and Elshtain’s remarks are in any case directed at a territorialised form of citizenship where citizenship performs the function of ‘homogenizing … diverse societies’, such as America around the time of the First World War (Elshtain, 1986:105). We have already established that ecological citizenship is a deterritorialised form, and in that context the need for Elshtain’s subtle search for ‘features of an American community of memory that would locate us as civic beings, not within the frame of a
common good but through the shared sense of pathos and tragedy’ (Elshtain, 1986: 106) seems less urgent.

Another set of virtues often canvassed in the citizenship context, particularly when liberals try to square their foundational beliefs with the idea of ‘civincness’, are those that relate to procedural norms of participation and debate. As Kymlicka and Norman have pointed out, there is a widespread belief that the 'liberal commitment to liberty or neutrality or individualism renders the concept of civic virtue unintelligible' (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:365). They counter this with the idea of ‘liberal virtue’, and give 'public reasonableness' as an example: ‘[L]iberal citizens must give reasons for their political demands, not just state preferences or make threats’ (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:366). Ecological citizenship is likely to endorse these procedural virtues, but not for reasons that are specific to the ecological component of the idea. This is as much as to say that however long the list of procedural virtues may be, it will not exhaust what ecological citizenship understands citizenship virtues to be.

The same goes for participation in the political life of the community - perhaps the most commonly regarded citizenship virtue of them all. Political participation can, notoriously, take many forms, but what is key to them all is activity in the public sphere. Very often, this virtue is expressed in terms of its lowest common denominator (in liberal democratic societies anyway) – voting in periodic elections. Kymlicka, for example, reports that, '[A]ccording to a recent survey, only 12% of American teenagers said voting was important to being a good citizen' (Kymlicka, 1995:236) – a situation he clearly bemoans, since he would like American teenagers to regard voting as an essential component of good citizenship. Ecological citizens will not quarrel with Kymlicka’s general sentiment, but they are unlikely to focus their normative attention, as far as citizen virtues are concerned, on voting – or indeed on political participation more generally. So if the virtues of liberal proceduralism and political participation are not key for ecological citizenship, what are?

Several times in this article I have referred to care and compassion as constitutive of ecological citizenship. In part, these virtues are generated by the peculiar nature of ecological citizenship duties. The duties of the ecological citizen are owed to distant strangers, and while what we owe these distant strangers might be couched in terms of
justice, it is notoriously the case that arguments from justice in this context are hard to
make. It is therefore the space beyond justice, so to speak, that ecological citizenship and
its conception of virtue seeks to fill. Typically, the virtues of care and compassion are
regarded as either irrelevant to citizenship, or a positive hindrance to its exercise. We
earlier saw Michael Ignatieff representing the first position (Ignatieff, 1991:34), and the
second is introduced by Iris Marion Young as follows:

Independence is an important citizen virtue in the modern democratic republic,
because it enables citizens to come together in public on relatively free and equal
terms. If every citizen meets the needs of himself and his dependents through his
own property, then citizens are immune to threats or particularist influence by
others on whom they depend for their livelihoods. With independence in this sense
they may deliberate on equal terms and consider the merits of issues in terms of the
general good. (Young, 1995:546)

But what, she asks, does this do for carers?

Attentive love disqualifies the nurturers of the individuality and autonomy of
citizens from the exercise of citizenship … because the character of mothers tends
to be emotional and oriented to particular needs and interests rather instead of to
the general good. (Young, 1995:546)

These are suggestive remarks. Young characterises citizenship as activity aimed at the
general good, and so carers’ focus on particular needs and interests puts them at odds with
the demands of citizenship. It is important at this point not to regard caring and
particularity as inseparable sides of the same coin. It is indeed true that citizenship of any
sort – including ecological citizenship – aims at the general good, but it would be wrong to
assume that caring necessarily stands in opposition to it. Young is in favour of the idea of
‘ends and goods’, and she insists that one appropriate end and good to be fostered is that of
‘caring for particular others’ (Young, 1995:552; my emphasis). Ecological citizenship, in
contrast, is about care for generalised others, for distant and unknown strangers. So, far
from being a hindrance to the exercise of citizenship, care is constitutive of it, and can
properly be regarded as a key ecological citizenship virtue.
All this might be viewed as part of the creeping ‘feminisation’ of politics, regarded with such suspicion by feminists. As Suzanne Moore pointed out in the recent and much-commented one-off issue of *Marxism Today*, ‘[I]ronically, the word you are most likely to read about these days is not feminism but feminisation. One advantage of the latter is that it can be achieved without women actually being present’ (Moore, 1998:20). Ecological citizenship can indeed be regarded as a form of gender-neutral feminisation, in which supposedly female ways of thinking and working acquire a generalised normative significance. Gendered notions of citizenship are not new. We have already referred to the ‘blood and guts’ virtues of classical republican citizenship, a tradition that itself borrowed from Aristotelian conceptions according to which: ‘the citizen must be a male of known genealogy, a patriarch, a warrior, and the master of the labor of others (normally slaves)’ (Pocock, 1995:31). From this point of view, ecological citizenship can be regarded as a polar opposite alternative to masculinist conceptions of citizenship and its virtues.

**Realising ecological citizenship**

Citizenships are not created ex nihilo; they are rooted in particular times, places, and experiences. David Burchell is surely right to complain of much political theoretical work on citizenship that, '[W]hat is altogether missing … is a sense of the citizen as a social creation, as an historical persona, whose characteristics have been developed in particular times and places through the activities of social discipline, both externally on the part of governments, and "internally" by the techniques of self-discipline and self-formation' (Burchell, 1995:549; see also Harrison, 1991:209-10). As a political project, then ecological citizenship must attend to the conditions under which, and the mechanisms through which, it might be promoted. I have tried to portray ecological citizenship as a disruptive challenge to traditional notions of citizenship, and so it might be right to suspect that standard guides to the development and fomenting of citizenship will not serve us well here. This suspicion deepens when we read Bryan Turner’s list of the ‘structural and cultural preconditions’ for the evolution of citizenship: ‘a city culture, secularization, the decline of particularistic values, the emergence of the idea of a public realm, the erosion of particularistic commitments and the administrative framework of the nation-state’ (Turner,
By now it should be clear that ecological citizenship’s reconfiguration of the public and private realms, and its global character, unsettle this list considerably. Those looking to realise, as well as articulate, ecological citizenship, then, may be best advised to look outside the city, beyond the public, and further afield than the nation-state.

One of the signal features of ecological citizenship is its connecting of the local and the global. This is to say that the activities of ecological citizenship can be carried out, literally, anywhere. At one end of this spectrum lies the private arena, and it is essential for the prospects of ecological citizenship that this arena be established as a *bona fide* site of citizenship activity. This takes two forms. First, the practical environmental habits of sustainability are learnt and practised at home, and second, the principal virtues of ecological citizenship – care and compassion – are archetypically associated with the private realm. In this sense, ecological citizenship stands another traditional citizenship intuition on its head: from an ecological point of view, good citizenship is learnt in private, not in public.

At the other end of this spectrum of ecological citizenship activity lies the world, or, following van Steenbergen, the earth. At one time, the idea of a ‘world citizen’ seemed to fly in the face of political reality, a reality that was founded on the nation-state, and in which senses of duty and obligation rarely extended beyond it. This is not the place to discuss the much-commented and often-vaunted phenomenon of ‘globalisation’, but it seems fair to say that developments during the past 40 years have given rise to a situation in which the idea of a global ‘civil society’ is no longer absurd: ‘a series of practical events is happening that is rapidly globalizing our horizons of outlook, including the contours of political life’ (Falk: 1994:131). Similarly, it is Jürgen Habermas’s view that Kant’s ‘world public sphere’ is coming closer, and ‘will become a political reality for the first time with the new relations of global communication ... The arrival of world citizenship is no longer merely a phantom, though we are still far from achieving it. State citizenship and world citizenship form a continuum that already shows itself, at least, in outline form’ (Habermas, 1995:279).

Of course not all global roads lead towards the kind of duties and obligations envisaged by the ecological citizenship agenda. We have already noted van Steenbergen’s remark that the global manager and the global capitalist have ‘no particular links with the planet’ (van Steenbergen, 1994c:150), and there are some who would apply this nostrum
even to those who take a managerial view of the global environment itself (Falk, 1994:138). In contrast to all this, it is likely to be argued that the ‘right kind’ of globalisation is that produced by the actions of the ‘transnational activist’ working for global NGOs whose principal duties and obligations are towards strangers, distant in terms of space, time, and even species: ‘[T]hese networks of transnational activity conceived both as a project and as a preliminary reality are producing a new orientation towards political identity and community, what cumulatively can be described as global civil society’ (Falk, 1994:138).

In this sense, the (pre)conditions for the flourishing of ecological citizenship are in place. One of them, the private realm, is as old as human experience itself, but entirely new as a defensible site of citizenship activity. The second, the planetary public, is new to human experience, but at least 200 years old as a putative – if not an actual – site of citizenship activity.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that what used pejoratively to be called the ‘state apparatus’ has a role to play in fomenting ecological citizenship. This will not come easily to liberal democracies which set such store by procedures rather than by politics. Ecological citizenship contains a political rather than a procedural view of the social world, in the sense that it harbours a view of the ‘good life’ for individuals. The liberal state, on the other hand, is supposedly impartial as to views of the good life, and is therefore inimical to the agonistic style of debate required by ecological citizenship. As Alasdair MacIntyre has put it:

What has become clear ... is that gradually less and less importance has been attached to arriving at substantive conclusions and more and more to continuing the debate for its own sake. For the nature of the debate itself and not of its outcome provides underpinning in a variety of ways for the fourth level at which appeals to justice may be heard in a liberal individualist order, that of the rules and procedures of the formal legal system. The function of that system is to enforce an order in which conflict resolution takes place without invoking any overall theory of the human good. (MacIntyre, 1988:344)

The liberal virtues of proceduralism and ‘public reasonableness’ (Kymlicka and
Norman, 1994:366), referred to earlier, are not the principal virtues of ecological citizenship, and while care and compassion might just be generated from the liberal virtue of tolerance, ecological citizenship will not regard them as virtues in themselves, but in regard to the ends they seek to realise – representing not so much, then, a proper way to live as a proper way of life. Ecological citizens will therefore agree that ‘the promotion of responsible citizenship is an urgent aim of public policy’ (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994:368), but they will regard this as an invitation to go beyond the ‘political competence’ notions of citizenship involved in Bernard Crick’s recent Citizenship report to the Government, towards a more fundamental debate about the normative content of citizenship activity.

Conclusions

Ecological citizenship has the overall effect of disrupting established ideas about citizenship and has a clear set of answers to Ruth Lister’s list of citizenship questions: is citizenship, ‘defined primarily by the rights or the obligations that it entails? Either way, what are the nature of such rights and obligations? Or looking at it from the perspective of the two great historical traditions of citizenship, is it in essence a status to which rights attach or a practice involving civic virtue and participation in the polis?’ (Lister, 1997:3). It will be clear by now that ecological citizenship is more about obligations than about rights; that these obligations are owed primarily to strangers, distant in both space and time; and that they involve the virtues of care and compassion, practised in both the private and public spheres.

It is the admission of citizenship activity to the private realm that is perhaps ecological citizenship’s most distinctive contribution to the development of the notion of citizenship. Michael Walzer has written that, ‘[C]itizenship is unlikely to be the primary identity or the consuming passion of men and women living in highly complex and differentiated societies, where politics competes for time and attention with class, ethnicity, religion, and family, and where these latter four do not draw people together but rather separate and divide them. Separation and division make for the primacy of the private realm’ (Walzer, 1989:218). Perhaps … but this no longer need signal the death knell for
citizenship. From the point of view of ecological citizenship, the private realm should not be regarded as a barrier to citizenship, but as a place where it can be carried out, where virtues can be learnt - a springboard to the international and intergenerational arenas.

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