PART V

TERRITORIAL SCALES, GEOGRAPHIES

52. Cities and citizenship: The multilevel governance of social policy

Introduction

Cities are the birthplace of citizenship. Being part of the Greek *polis* or of medieval cities in Europe had important implications in terms of inclusion and exclusion and of duties and rights. This still holds true in Mainland China where the *hukou* system differentiates rights between urban and rural populations. When the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) provided the nation state with sovereignty, it provided the basis of legitimacy to become the main actor, defining jurisdictions and inclusion/exclusion mechanisms at the national level. From this point onwards, cities started to partly lose their relevance and began to change their role. However, citizenship is inherently and conceptually related to cities. Weber (1921/1978), referring to the European city and the contrast between countryside landlords and urban rising classes, identified in the mechanisms of participation of the *Bürger* to the decision-making process a key change in the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. This change pertains to the *civitas* as the very nature of cities, that is, the city being an association of *equal* citizens (Isin, 2007) who contribute to define the rules that regulate their interactions.

Despite these urban origins, this territorial dimension of citizenship as a crucial dimension of social inclusion policies has been neglected at least since the French Revolution, when national governments were strengthened *vis-à-vis* local authorities. This occurred not only in France, but also in all the territories the French conquered (Prak, 2018: 3). This scarce consideration of multiple territorial configurations was reflected both in comparative welfare studies as well as in urban studies during their consolidation as disciplines. Welfare studies did not consider the role of cities as building blocks of citizenship and urban studies underplayed the role of national regulatory systems within which cities were embedded. The few exceptions rarely focus on the relationship between cities and citizenship. This is most probably due to the fact that the civil and political dimension of citizenship and a large part of the social dimension were defined, regulated and even implemented nationally.

Cities and citizenship through territorial lenses: An analytical perspective

In order to better understand the relationship between cities and citizenship we need to identify the analytical dimensions that play a relevant role in their dynamic and to disentangle how the different spatial scales contribute. From an analytical point of view, to grasp the role of cities in the production of specific citizenship arrangements, we need to distinguish between four key analytical elements: 1) sovereignty; 2) policy; 3) context; and 4) politics (Kazepov et al., 2022: 2–3). 1) S*overeignty*, pertains to the territorial organization of regulatory jurisdictions, their legitimacy, and the distribution of powers and responsibilities within multilevel institutional arrangements. At least since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) it pertains to the nation state. Cities can be passive receivers of policies defined at a national level or be more active actors with some degree of freedom within their own jurisdictions, defined by administrative boundaries to design, finance, manage and implement specific policies. In particular, in federal systems the subnational level has higher degrees of autonomy. 2) *Policy*, pertains to the institutional design of *single policy instruments* connected to specific regulatory principles. Their foundation and legitimacy – rooted in certain ideas of justice, deservingness and freedom – translates into precise mechanisms that tend to produce specific outputs and which have spatial implications. For instance, policies based on universal access criteria are more inclusive than those based on the payment of contributions or those that are means-tested, besides the varying spatial implications that these can have. This is particularly true when they are regulated, financed, managed and implemented at different spatial scales in varying mixes. A policy might be regulated at the national level, co-financed by the national and regional level and managed and implemented by municipalities. Each of these mixes contributes towards defining specific *borders* of citizenship that include or exclude

(institutionally) not only individuals and social groups, but also territories, recognizing rights and redistributing resources within distinct bounded communities. Here borders and bounded communities can be equated to jurisdictions, even though their symbolic meaning is much wider.

These first two – more institutional – elements are complemented by: 3) the *context*, which provides the actual configuration of needs with which regulatory jurisdictions must cope, and within which policies are implemented and their effects exerted. Context influences the impact and effectiveness of citizenship arrangements. A particular measure might produce different effects when implemented in a local context with a dynamic labour market and a strong social and institutional infrastructure providing access to benefits and services compared to the very same measure in a local context characterized by a stagnating labour market and weak institutions and a civil society less able to mobilize. Likewise, a specific socio-demographic structure in some territorial contexts might produce different needs and exert more (or less) pressure for healthcare and pension schemes. This is why context-sensitivity should be considered from an analytical point of view in order to understand the relationship between cities and citizenship.

These three elements constitute the arena within which the fourth element unfolds: 4) *politics*. Actors and stakeholders, both public and private (i.e. for- and not-for-profit), interact within set jurisdictions. They use specific policy instruments in (re)producing historically and spatially situated forms of citizenship and its patterns of inclusion and exclusion and the peculiar forms of inequalities. Obviously, the resulting spatiality of citizenship is not fixed over time, but might change according to the transformations within the four analytical dimensions briefly sketched out. These transformations might range from explicit reforms in jurisdictions and policy instruments, involving devolution or decentralization processes, to changing relevance of specific policies organized at different territorial levels, or changing socio-economic contextual conditions and policy orientations and shifts in power arrangements.

The four analytical elements define the relational space within which cities are embedded and contribute to both the definition (through the use of their jurisdictionally designed degrees of freedom) and enactment of citizenship (through the implementation and practices related to single measures). In particular, it is from their dynamic – with *politics* playing a mediating role of the others – that specific opportunity structures are produced and specific outcomes emerge.

Disentangling the urban dimension of citizenship

There are multiple definitions addressing urban citizenship from a *civil* or *political* perspective. However, if we concentrate on the *social* dimension of citizenship and consider social policies as an adequate proxy, we have to acknowledge that there is no explicit definition of "urban" citizenship. Strictly speaking, we might define it as a set of social policies that are regulated, financed, managed or implemented within spatially limited jurisdictions (cities) that include or exclude citizens from being part of a redistributive community. This view does not neglect the importance of other approaches, which emphasize cultural (*recognition*) and political (*representation*) forms of citizenship. It rather implies that to substantiate their claims we might need to consider *redistribution*.

This understanding of "urban citizenship" hides substantive debates in urban studies on how to grasp the relational element of cities with other scales and with rural areas that we won't address in this chapter. What we are concentrating on is the truism that social policies require jurisdictions. This poses several critical issues. For instance, on the one hand, we might have cities growing beyond jurisdictions and creating agglomerations without democratic representation (political citizenship), in need of specific (social policy) solutions, but which are difficult to govern. On the other hand, we might have municipalities that are too small to be able to intervene (e.g. financially) in relation to the needs of their populations. Building intermunicipal aggregations in order to be able to provide social services to a critical mass of inhabitants (e.g. *Ambiti territoriali* in Italy) or allocating jurisdiction over social policies to territorial levels other than the municipal in order to provide them (e.g. *Departments* in France) are just some of the possible multilevel governance arrangements. Much depends on the

type of policies considered, their interaction with other policies and the way in which the subsidiarity principle is translated into their institutional design. The link with jurisdictions, however, becomes not only crucial analytically, but also part of politics, that is, of conflicts and negotiations concerning those that are to be included or excluded from given redistributive communities, which are often also – but not exclusively – territorially defined.

In most cases, municipalities just manage and implement policies regulated and financed at supra-local scales (regions, nation states). However, the degree of sovereignty that cities enjoy in defining their own social policies depends on the state form and the way in which jurisdictions are designed territorially. Decentralized systems entrust more power to territories than centralized ones, which conversely exert control over their territories through local branches of national authorities – for example, prefects (Kazepov and Barberis, 2017). Nationally regulated policies can also address specific urban problems, which might eventually be connected to spatially determined agglomeration effects that the policy addresses. What we can safely affirm is that in all countries there is a complex mix of scales and functions that interact and produce context-bound outputs both in terms of policies and social stratification.

Historically, social policies and other public interventions stem from processes of socio-economic modernization that are both stratified in time and subject to change. The urbanization process connected to the process of industrialization has been pivotal in defining the contours of *social citizenship* built through social policies (Polanyi, 1944). The *social question* and *pauperism*, which emerged in early industrialization, was in fact first and foremost an "urban question" and historically, social citizenship developed as a set of policies that aimed at coping with those social risks.

Of course, policies addressing poverty already existed before the industrial revolution: they had a much wider territorial scope and were managed at the parish level. The origin of social policies ("as we know them") – the English poor laws – gained an urban focus only in the nineteenth century, driven by the process of industrialization and its social costs. This paradigm shift brought the institutionalization of welfare policies in the form of the *welfare state*, in which access was a *right* and not a *charity*. The nation state thus became the key redistributive (and decision-making) arena meant to cover risks in areas "left behind" or overrun by fast social transformations. This trajectory was mostly Western and, more precisely, European. In other contexts, different trajectories of modernization, power and institutional configurations may well have had the effect of limiting the primacy of urban social policy in favour of other types of interventions (e.g. charities of all religions).

What we need to consider is a time- and place-sensitive approach in the interface between social policies and their spatial articulations, considering the latter as a constituent part of the analytical frame needed to understand the relationship between citizenship and cities.

The relevance of cities' citizenship over time

Housing, unemployment, health, class conflict, segregation and other citizenship struggles were not always specifically urban. However, when industrialization initiated rapid urbanization processes, cities became the place where new needs and risks emerged in a more evident and pressing way. A context in which community support was lacking – due to the migration to industrializing cities – and the spread of commodifying market relations was the breeding ground in which the first forms of social policies emerged. In fact, the structuration of many of the policy fields of contemporary western welfare systems owes much to the socially disruptive development of modern (industrial) society.

In the meantime, the nation state has constantly increased its regulatory outreach and financial efforts, curbed both by two world wars and the post-war economic boom. Until the second half of the 1970s, welfare policies were predominantly defined, regulated, financed and often also managed at the national level through local branches. The territorial dimension of social policy was mostly managed via national redistribution.

After the *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–1975) we witnessed several relevant changes from a territorial point of view, displaying important rescaling processes: from decentralization and devolution processes

to supra-nationalization or recentralization ones. These changes were the result of an interaction between multiple forces. The deep structural changes occurring since the end of the 1970s – from the socio-demographic structure of the population to socio-economic changes in labour markets and production systems in Western capitalist countries – have challenged the way in which social risks are produced and addressed by social policies. Particularly since the 1990s, social policies have undergone important reform processes in those countries, re-drawing the boundaries of "social citizenship" and giving a more prominent role to cities and local social policies (Kazepov and Barberis, 2017). This also occurred thanks to the expanding role of social services for some targeted groups (elderly care, labour market activation, social assistance schemes coupled with integration policies, …). The intense reform activities from the 1990s onwards have addressed social policies in two ways: 1) by changing the level of territorial jurisdiction at which social policies have been designed, managed, funded and implemented; and 2) by increasing the number and type of actors involved in designing, managing, funding and implementing policies.

The joint effect of these two processes – also called *subsidiarization* or the *silent* revolution – brought about in many western capitalist countries (and beyond) a decentralization of regulatory powers (vertically), and increased the role of non-governmental actors (horizontally). This trend was also supported by international organizations in the Global South – like the OECD or the World Bank – and has been accompanied by increased coordination efforts among public actors in different policy areas often regulated at different levels.

Even if the 2008 Great Recession has not (yet) remodelled the architecture of local and regional authorities, decentralization processes came to a halt. A vivid debate has been engendered regarding the benefits and costs of decentralization. Processes of recentralization began to emerge in some countries in view of an increased need to control their financial commitments. However, the current dynamics are still unclear, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic after 2020 and multiple other intersecting elements including – among others – policy specificities, state form and degree of decentralization prior to the crises.

This brief outline of the territorial dynamics implies that it is not possible to address "urban" forms of citizenship in isolation from other scale dynamics and governance relations. This is particularly true when the jurisdiction of cities is defined by other levels of government, highlighting the importance of understanding the embedded nature of cities in relational spatial configurations that change over time and are related to actors' constellations and power configurations.

Multilevel governance and inter-scalar relations: The role of *politics*

In multilevel governance arrangements, *politics* play a crucial role, in particular through multiple stakeholders at different scales (Benz, 2021). The political dimension is relevant not only in setting agendas and goals, and in approving laws, but also in deciding *if* and *how* to decide, and in the implementation phase. Conflicting views and strategic agency emerge throughout the whole process, including implementation (Lipsky, 2010). For this reason, it is important to disentangle how politics and policy relate to multi-level and multi-stakeholders' perspectives. Conflict over decision-making and implementation may well be located at different scales and jurisdictions. This is true both in terms of the political agency of policy actors, and in terms of pre-structuring and influencing actors' strategies and agency in wider public arenas.

The role of ideology, discourse and normative frames in setting the tone of multilevel governance arrangements and in defining spatial conflicts is evident throughout various contentious policy areas (e.g. migration) and in the general politics of scale. For example, the use of the principle of subsidiarity is ambiguous. On the one side, it might lead to delegitimizing the national welfare state in favour of decentralization, hiding cost-avoidance strategies and offloading the financial burden onto cities. On the other side, it could be genuinely promoting democratic participation in a progressive approach. The flow of resources might unveil divergent political priorities, party cleavages and territorial divides, showing how cost-shifting games unfold across scales.

Embedding cities' citizenship into a multilevel governance scalar approach means, therefore, not only focusing on how the process works or on how actors act strategically. It means also examining the logic that frames *if* and *how* decisions are made (and the resulting flow of resources) defining the political space of the local, and the choice of urban actors. The result is an understanding of the spatial forms that institutionalized power may assume. Moreover, a local government does not necessarily limit its outreach to its own jurisdiction, as it may affect other spatial organizations as well. A national agency – and its branches – is not only national in scope, as it may interact and impact upon urban and supranational scales in various ways.

Such a perspective challenges the idea that urban citizenship is better *per se*, as much as it challenges methodological nationalism that maintains the nation state as the only relevant arena for policies and politics. Urban citizenship, exerted through local policy and local politics is not necessarily local, as it is influenced by a wide scope of trends cutting across multiple scales.

The challenges of cit(y)zenship

The relationship between cities and citizenship is characterized by multiple challenges that are related to them being embedded in complex processes that see scales – from local to supra-national – and actors – from public to private (for- and not-for-profit) – developing into complex multilevel governance arrangements and practices. Disentangling the multitude of implications of this process is crucial to understanding how the role of urban citizenship systems are redefined and what role local actors have in widening or restricting access to citizenship rights. The complexity of the processes at stake requires that we disentangle not only the implications for inequality arising from the transfer of sovereignty to lower (devolution) or higher (upscaling) jurisdictions. It also calls for a better understanding of the role of the different actors in this process and their strategic use of social policies in politics. How do these processes affect specific jurisdictions in particular cities? How does the *challenge of coordination* across scales and various actors play out in emerging complex governance arrangements? What is the role played by the contextual conditions in which policies are implemented? The need to consider contextual complementarities in the analytical framework forces us to pay attention to the relationalities involved and their spatial patterns, considering which actors operate at each scale and with what consequences. This also applies to the false dichotomy between *standardization* (in which the same rules apply to all) and *context-sensitivity* (the need to consider differences) that hides the need to understand, on the one hand, the multiple directions of rescaling, of *what* is rescaled *how* and *why*. On the other, it calls for the need to investigate new forms of coordination and meta-governance that are put in place, and with what consequences. What are the scale dynamics from the point of view of urban social policies? How much room to manoeuvre do local actors have? Would *ius domicilii* suffice to extend rights (and duties) broadening inclusionary options locally or would it increase spatial inequalities by institutionalizing different forms of in/exclusion? And does widening the options for local experimentation – for example, through participatory practices – increase the possibility for cities to be more inclusive and influence citizenship patterns at higher scales?

The drawbacks of such processes could consolidate territorial inequalities and undermine spatial solidarity (Keating, 2021) or even multiply potential conflicts across scales and between actors. These issues are still under-investigated and could be addressed – within different disciplinary domains – by studies on specific aspects such as accountability or discretion, highlighting the need to move towards a context-sensitive research agenda for local forms of citizenship. This agenda, however, should not only disentangle the definitory *conundrum* of what urban citizenship is, but also the different types of urban citizenship and how they interact in increasingly complex multilevel governance arrangements. Emerging approaches addressing these issues aim at understanding complementarities across policies and scales and how the new forms of governance of local forms of citizenship are embedded in their broader contexts. This latter aspect, in particular, is often neglected by the literature on social policies as a key building block of citizenship, despite its important territorial implications which might even affect the success of national social policies locally.

Territorial diversity, however, stresses the fact that the relationship between social policy design and different contexts also plays an important role in (re)producing territorial inequalities. This became particularly clear in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected some economic sectors – localized in different contexts – more than others (e.g. transportation, tourism, leisure, health, etc.). This leads to further questions regarding the future prospects for urban forms of citizenship and local social policies. What degrees of freedom will they have and how will they manage emerging demands for greater involvement of citizens in policymaking?

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