

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79061-1 - *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*

Margaret R. Somers

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## Genealogies of Citizenship

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As market fundamentalism has moved from the margins of debate to global doctrine, three decades of market-driven governance is transforming growing numbers of rights-bearing citizens into socially excluded internally stateless persons. Against this perilous movement to organize society exclusively by market principles, Margaret Somers argues that the fragile project of sustaining socially inclusive democratic rights requires the countervailing powers of a social state, a robust public sphere to hold it accountable, and a relationally sturdy civil society. In this original and path-breaking work, from historical epistemologies of social capital and naturalism, to contested narratives of civil society and the public sphere, to Hurricane Katrina's racial apartheid, Somers alerts us that the growing moral authority of the market is distorting the meaning of citizenship from noncontractual shared fate to conditional privilege, making rights, inclusion, and moral worth dependent on contractual market value. *Genealogies of Citizenship* advances an innovative view of rights as necessary public goods rooted in an alliance of public power, political membership, and social practices of equal moral recognition – in short, the right to have rights. A remarkable rethinking of freedom, human rights, and social justice, this is political, economic, and cultural sociology and social theory at its best.

MARGARET R. SOMERS is Professor of Sociology and History at the University of Michigan. A leading figure in historical, political, economic, and cultural sociology and social theory, she recently received the Inaugural Lewis A. Coser Award for Innovation and Theoretical Agenda-Setting in Sociology.

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“Margaret Somers’ *Genealogies of Citizenship* is a profound and original defence of socially inclusive democratic citizenship. It combines a sophisticated theoretical and philosophical defense of the normative foundations of this moral ideal with compelling explorations of the conditions for its robust sustainability. The book’s provocative thesis – under-regulated, expansionary markets constitute a deep threat to this form of citizenship – is powerfully and convincingly argued. It deserves to be widely read and debated by anyone worried about the future of democratic society.”

Erik Olin Wright

Professor of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

“This book is required reading for anyone interested in how neoliberalism redefines social boundaries. With characteristic elegance, breadth, and theoretical mastery, Somers develops a complex analysis of social exclusion and inclusion. Knowledge cultures, narratives and the law figure prominently in this new account of citizenship. A *tour de force* that will be long remembered . . .”

Michele Lamont

Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies, Professor of Sociology and African and African-American Studies, author of *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*.

“Disinterring histories of the market-fundamentalist present, this is a devastatingly trenchant, profoundly creative, critique of privatized citizenship. Reclaiming the right *to have rights*, Somers puts critical social theory to work in what amounts to a radical new vision for social justice and progressive politics.”

Jamie Peck

Canada Research Chair in Urban & Regional Political Economy, University of British Columbia

“Margaret Somers is a renowned polymath. In *Genealogies of Citizenship* she obliterates common divisions among sociology, history, moral philosophy, and politics to fashion an exhilarating new form of social inquiry that advances long-standing debates in social theory and offers a searching meditation on contemporary citizenship *in extremis*.”

Charles Camic

Professor of Sociology, Northwestern University

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“*Genealogies of Citizenship* might well provide the definitive sociological and political critique of the era of market fundamentalism. Building on Karl Polanyi, T. H. Marshall, and Hannah Arendt, Margaret Somers demonstrates that civil society rests on the right to have rights. But this right has been swept away by three decades of market-dominated discourse and policies. Somers brilliantly shows how Hurricane Katrina’s devastating impact on New Orleans was the culmination of this dynamic.”

Fred Block

Professor of Sociology, University of California at Davis

“With extraordinary erudition and theoretical acuity, Margaret Somers examines the dominant ideas, legal and economic practices that link many of us together as a community, and marginalize others of us. She argues that market fundamentalism assaults democratic rights and profoundly threatens democracy.”

Frances Fox Piven

Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Sociology, Graduate Center of the City University of New York

“*Genealogies of Citizenship* offers many intellectual rewards. Somers provides, at once, an incisive analytic for approaching the internal exclusions of liberal democratic societies, a sophisticated meditation on the citizenship concept, and an eloquent indictment of a ‘market fundamentalism’ which ultimately subverts citizenship’s highest aspirations.”

Linda Bosniak

Professor, Rutgers University School of Law

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Resignation was ever the fount of man's strength and new hope. Man accepted the reality of death and built the meaning of his bodily life upon it. He resigned himself to the truth that he had a soul to lose and that there was worse than death, and founded his freedom upon it. He resigns himself, in our time, to the reality of society which means the end of that freedom. But, again, life springs from ultimate resignation . . . Uncomplaining acceptance of the reality of society gives man indomitable courage and strength to remove all removable injustice and unfreedom. (Karl Polanyi)

We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights . . . and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights. [S]tateless people could see . . . that the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger . . . It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man. The loss of home and political status became identical with expulsion from humanity altogether.

(Hannah Arendt)

By social citizenship, I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society . . . which in turn means a claim to be accepted as full members of the society, that is, as citizens.

(T. H. Marshall)

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## Preface

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In *After Virtue* the moral philosopher Alasdair Macintyre suggests that all moral and political philosophy presupposes a sociology. To argue for how the world *ought* to be, one must have a set of assumptions about how the world already *is*. Unfortunately, sociologists have all too rarely returned the compliment to philosophers. To this day there exists no such thing as a real sociology of rights. Since its nineteenth-century origins, sociology has self-consciously and militantly carved out for itself a separate professional identity as an empirical science in contrast to the “normative speculations” of philosophy. Because questions of what counts as right or just are seen as normative, not empirical, worries, a division of labor and turf divides sociologists who write about people who fight *for* rights from philosophers who worry about the *meaning* of those rights. The philosophical and sociological traditions have rarely been joined. Although sociologists too cautiously respect this distribution of intellectual turf, one of the most popular subjects of our discipline – social movements and their participants – have displayed no such cautious professionalism. Social movement actors have almost always articulated their motivations and goals in (often competing) languages of justice, entitlement, and above all rights. Disciplined by the discipline, however, students of social movements have by and large not focused on the meanings and normative impulses behind these rights-based desiderata; instead they have concentrated on the structures, resources, mechanisms, and “frames” of mobilization, organization, and contentious politics. To be sure, organizational mechanisms and the dynamics of power are of critical import to the work of making sense of the social world. But they should not crowd out attention to the more normatively driven powers of justice and rights. In a pluralist knowledge culture, the empirical and the normative are mutually interdependent.

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This volume is intended to contribute to a new sociology of rights. Its goal is to identify the processes and relationships that support or disable democratic citizenship regimes, which requires historicizing rights. Throughout the chapters, I aim to identify the conditions – institutional, associational, cultural, normative, economic, etc. – that can account for varying genealogies of citizenship and rights over time and space. By putting together a picture of the different frameworks that have embedded the claims, violations, and support for citizenship rights, we can gain critical glimpses into a sociology of human rights more broadly.

My passion for citizenship theory did not begin as such. Rather it began with an abiding ache and an unrelenting itch – an ache for social justice and human rights, and an itch to understand why they always seemed to be increasingly distant possibilities. First as an undergraduate and then in graduate school I, like so many others of my generation, turned to sociology to salve that ache and scratch that itch. I turned to a sociology of citizenship only when I recognized its signature role as a proxy and sublimation for a sociology of rights. In so doing, however, I discovered that the two are really one, for citizenship rights and rights as such are inescapably mutually implicated and constituted. Citizenship is the *right to have rights*.

Without an existing sociology of rights from which to draw, mine is also by necessity a project in the invention of knowledge. While I am by training a historical sociologist, the scholarly work in this volume is wide-ranging and eclectic, and the research does not fit neatly under any single area in sociology. I consider myself in equal parts a practitioner of sociolegal studies and citizenship formation, a sociological theorist, an economic sociologist, a sociologist of knowledge and ideas, a political sociologist, and a critical theorist. Beyond sociology, my work draws from the fields of legal theory and history, political and social theory, British, American, and French economic and cultural history, anthropology, historical demography, and politics. My methodology is eclectic and includes comparative historical, theoretical, epistemological, philosophical, and cultural approaches.

Still, there is a unifying impulse to this multiplicity. It is that same preoccupation with social justice and human rights with which I began, a belief in the necessity and power of history to provide alternative futures, and a deep conviction that the work of building a sociology of rights is through the genealogies of citizenship. In this respect, my work is clearly more than academically detached. I am motivated by the urgency of holding back the corrosive impact on democratic citizenship and human rights of both market fundamentalism and the overreaching of

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state power today. Rather than passively accepting the current erosion of citizenship and rights, we need to reclaim their original promise, and to address the racial, ethnic, and gender injustices submerged beneath their beneficent sheen. And as rights are inexorably matters of the public sphere, it is also a project in public sociology. I aspire to work as a public sociologist to bring to the surface for inspection and demystification all the complexities of citizenship and human rights. I thus take on board the mandate of Michael Burawoy, recent president of the American Sociological Association, in his exhortation to include that of public sociologist among legitimate sociological practices. This book was written with this vision of the public sociologist clearly in mind.

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In 1998–9 I was honored to be appointed to be the A. Bartlett Giamatti Faculty Fellow at the University of Michigan’s Institute for the Humanities. So many people contributed to that rewarding year, starting with Tom Trautman, then the Director, as well as Mary Price and Eliza Woodford – the Institute’s two spectacular administrators and friends, who made my year not only productive but also fun and funky. Over the

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course of the same period, some critical research needs were met by a small grant I am grateful to have been awarded by the Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline, under the auspices of the American Sociological Association and the National Science Foundation. In 2000–1, I was awarded a residential Research Fellowship at Yale University's Program in Agrarian Studies. James Scott (one of my long-time intellectual heroes) directed the program and led the legendary Friday seminar with a flair, generosity, and attention that made the year so intellectually gratifying. Several colleagues and lasting friends made my stay in New Haven even richer, especially Arun Agrawal, Debbie Dacunto, Rebecca Hardin, Donald Moore, Sylvia Tesh, and Carol Rose. During this time I was surprised and delighted to incur yet another debt from the George and Eliza Howard Foundation (located at Brown University), which awarded me their generous "Outstanding Mid-Career Fellowship." It is an award that I especially cherish as I shared the honor with only one other sociologist, Roger Gould, a friend and great social scientist who died so tragically young in 2001.

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“Beware Trojan Horses Bearing Social Capital: How Privatization turned *Solidarity* into a Bowling Team.” In *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences*, ed. George Steinmetz: 346–411. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

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