

7 Citizenship in an era of globalization: commentary on Held

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The literature is replete with discussions of the impact of globalization on us as workers, consumers, investors, or as members of cultural communities. Less attention has been paid to its impact on us as citizens – as participants in the process of democratic self-government. This is a vitally important issue, for if people become dissatisfied with their role as citizens, the legitimacy and stability of democratic political systems may erode.

This question in fact arises at two levels – domestically, and transnationally or globally. David Held's chapter provides a clear and balanced assessment of the possible consequences of globalization for citizenship at both levels. In effect, Held argues that globalization is eroding the capacity for meaningful democratic citizenship at the domestic level, as nation states lose some of their historic sovereignty and become "decision-takers" as much as "decision-makers." If meaningful citizenship is to exist in an era of globalization, therefore, it will require democratizing those transnational institutions which are increasingly responsible for important economic, environmental, and security decisions.

In this short commentary, I would like to pursue a couple of Held's points in more depth. While I do not disagree with any of his substantive claims, I would like to suggest that there is more room for optimism regarding the prospects for domestic citizenship than he suggests, but perhaps less ground for optimism about global citizenship.

Domestic citizenship

First, then, let me consider the impact of globalization on citizenship at the domestic level. Like many commentators, Held argues that globalization is reducing the historic sovereignty of nation states, and so undermining the meaningfulness of participation in domestic politics. There is obviously some truth in this, but how extensive is the problem? Held gives a nuanced account of this process of globalization, and explicitly

distances himself from the more exaggerated claims about the "obsolescence" of the nation state which are made by the "hyper-globalizers" (p. 97, above). Yet I think that Held too, in his own way, may overstate the situation.

It is certainly true that industrialized nation states have less elbow-room regarding macroeconomic policy today than they did before. (It is doubtful whether Third World states ever had much elbow-room in this area.) This became painfully clear to Canadians when a left-wing government was elected in Canada's largest province (Ontario), and announced a policy of reflationary public spending to reduce unemployment. The response from international financial markets (and bonding services) was rapid and severe, and the government quickly dropped the proposal. This made all Canadians aware of how truly dependent we had become on the "men in red suspenders," as our finance minister called Wall Street brokers.

But there are two possible explanations for this phenomenon. Some people see the loss of control by nation states over macroeconomic policy as an inherent and permanent feature of the new world order, which we simply have to learn to live with. This, implicitly at least, is Held's view. But other people argue that the dependence on international financial markets is not an inherent feature of globalization, but rather a contingent result of international indebtedness. On this view, states which run up large foreign debts lose control over their macroeconomic policy. We are now so accustomed to governments running up billions of dollars in deficits every year that we take it as normal, even inevitable, that governments owe hundreds of billions of dollars in debt to people outside the country. But it is insane to think that a country can run up such debts for twenty years, and not have it affect their fiscal autonomy. If you put yourself in massive debt to other people, you lose some control over your life.

We will shortly be in a position to test these two hypotheses, since we are witnessing a steep decline in international indebtedness in many countries. What we see in Canada today, for example, as in many other countries, is a shift towards balanced budgets, and a reduction in the debt-to-GDP ratio. As a result, Canada is less dependent on foreign capital today than it has been for any time in the last fifteen years. As of 1998, the Canadian government will not have to borrow money from the men in red suspenders, and in 1999 will actually have a budget surplus. I believe that Canada is now regaining much (though not all) of its earlier macroeconomic autonomy, including the option of adopting a jobs-creation program, which is being seriously debated in Canada.

I think that Held also exaggerates the issue of capital mobility – i.e.,

the fear that companies will move their operations to whatever country offers the lowest taxes or wages. This is supposed to put dramatic limits on the extent to which countries can adopt more generous unemployment insurance programs, health and safety legislation, parental leave, or minimum wages. Here again, there is obviously some truth to this concern, but we need to keep it in perspective. A reporter in a large US city recently selected at random a number of companies in the Yellow Pages and asked each of them whether they had thought about relocating to another country. The number who said "yes" was negligible. The option of moving overseas is irrelevant for large sectors of the economy – health care, education and training, construction, most retail, most services, agriculture, and so on. The issue of capital mobility is most relevant for mid-to-large manufacturing companies employing low-skilled workers. This is not an insignificant portion of the economy, but it has been a declining percentage for a long time, and it is difficult to see how Third World countries can ever develop except by competing in this sector. The loss of some of these low-skilled manufacturing jobs is inevitable, and perhaps even desirable from the point of view of international justice so long as there are fair transition programs for those people thrown out of work; but there is no reason to think that large numbers of companies in other sectors will pack up and move if the government tells them to provide better parental leave to their workers.

So there remains considerable scope for national policy-making. Moreover, and equally importantly, countries continue to exercise their autonomy in very different ways, reflecting their different political cultures. Even if globalization puts similar pressures on all countries, they need not – and do not – respond in the same way. In his survey of social policy in OECD countries, Keith Banting notes that globalization puts great pressure on nation states both to respond to the social stresses created by economic restructuring and to the demands of international competitiveness. None the less, despite fears of a race to the bottom or an inexorable harmonization of social programs, the share of national resources devoted to social spending continues to inch upwards in OECD nations. While all welfare states are under pressure, "the global economy does not dictate the ways in which governments respond, and different nations are responding in distinctive ways that reflect their domestic politics and cultures" (Banting 1997).

I believe that citizens often care deeply about maintaining these national differences in social policy, and they provide considerable motivation for political participation in domestic politics. For example, the differences between Canadian and American approaches to social

policy are increasing, not decreasing, and for Canadian citizens, these differences are worth keeping, and fighting for.

This points to another overstatement in Held's analysis. He argues that globalization is undermining the sense that each nation state forms "a political community of fate" (p. 102, above). I think he is vastly overstating the situation here. It is certainly true that "some of the most fundamental forces and processes which determine the nature of life chances" cut across national boundaries (p. 103, above), but what determines the boundaries of a "community of fate" is not the forces people are subjected to, but rather how they respond to those forces, and, in particular, what sorts of collectivities they identify with when responding to those forces. People belong to the same community of fate if they *care* about each other's fate, and want to *share* each other's fate – that is, want to meet certain challenges together, so as to share each other's blessings and burdens. Put another way, people belong to the same community of fate if they feel some sense of responsibility for one another's fate, and so want to deliberate together about how to respond collectively to the challenges facing the community. So far as I can tell, globalization has not eroded the sense that nation states form separate communities of fate in this sense.

For example, as a result of NAFTA, North Americans are increasingly subjected to similar economic "forces and processes." But there is no evidence that they feel themselves part of a single "community of fate" whose members care about and wish to share each other's fate. There is no evidence that Canadians now feel any strong sense of responsibility for the well-being of Americans or Mexicans (or vice versa). Nor is there any evidence that Canadians feel any moral obligation to respond to these challenges in the same way as do Americans or Mexicans (or vice versa). On the contrary, Canadians want to respond to these forces *as Canadians* – that is, Canadians debate amongst themselves how to respond to globalization, and they do so by asking what sort of society Canadians wish to live in, and what sorts of obligations Canadians have to each other. Americans ask the same questions amongst themselves, as do the Mexicans.

The economic forces acting on the three countries may be similar, but the sense of communal identity and solidarity remains profoundly different, as have the actual policy responses to these forces. Despite being subject to similar forces, citizens of Western democracies are able to respond to these forces in their own distinctive ways, reflective of their "domestic politics and cultures," and most citizens continue to cherish this ability to deliberate and act as a national collectivity, on the basis of their own national solidarities and priorities.

So I do not accept the view that globalization has deprived domestic politics of its meaningfulness. Nation states still possess considerable autonomy; their citizens still exercise this autonomy in distinctive ways, reflective of their national political cultures; and citizens still want to confront the challenges of globalization as national collectivities, reflective of their historic solidarities, and desire to share each other's fate. These facts all provide meaning and significance to domestic political participation.

I would not deny that many citizens in Western democracies feel dissatisfied with their political participation, but I would argue that the main sources of dissatisfaction with citizenship in Western democracies have little to do with globalization, and in fact long predate the current wave of globalization.¹ In Canada, for example, we have an electoral system which systematically deprives smaller regions of effective political representation in Canadian political life. We have also been unable to regulate campaign financing, with the result that the political process is increasingly seen as heavily skewed towards wealthy individuals and pressure groups. Nor have we changed party nomination procedures to reduce the systematic under-representation of women, Aboriginals, visible minorities, or the working class.

Moreover, Canada has a ridiculously centralized legislative process, in which the real power rests in the hands of a few people in the inner cabinet. We have no meaningful separation between the executive and legislative functions of government, and we have rigid party discipline. As a result, individual members of parliament, whether they are in the governing party or the opposition, have no real input into legislation – at least, much less influence than their counterparts in the American Congress. Parliamentary committees are supposed to provide a forum for input into the legislative process, but they are widely seen as a joke. For most Canadians, therefore, their elected MP is important only for constituency service, not as a conduit to the legislative process. What is the point in making one's views known to one's MP, when individual MPs seem to have no role in the legislative process?

These are the real problems with the political process in Canada – these are at the root of people's increasing sense that they have no real voice in political life. So far as I can tell, they have little to do with globalization. Globalization is not the cause of these problems, nor is there anything in globalization which prevents us from dealing with them.

¹ The following discussion draws in part on Kymlicka 1997.

Consider the fate of the recent Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, which studied these issues in depth, and which issued a number of perfectly sensible recommendations about how to make our political system more equitable, and more responsive to the needs and opinions of Canadians (Royal Commission 1991).² There is nothing in the discipline of economic globalization or the rules of international regulatory agreements which prevent us from acting on these recommendations. There is nothing in NAFTA, or in our commitments to the UN or the WTO, which prevents us from adopting these recommendations tomorrow.

Yet little has been done to implement them. This is partly because it is rarely in the interest of governing parties to reform a process which put them in power; but it is also partly because we citizens have not demanded that government make it a priority. Whether as individual citizens, members of advocacy groups, or commentators in the media, Canadians have let the government off the hook for improving the democratic process. There is much we can do to protect and enhance our role as citizens, and if we decide not to, the fault lies not in globalization, but in ourselves.

I have focused on the flaws in Canada's political process, but I think we would find very similar problems in other countries – i.e., electoral systems which systemically produce unrepresentative legislatures; over-centralized legislative decision-making; excessive role of wealth in determining power and influence; and so on. These are the real causes of citizens' dissatisfaction with the political process. Globalization is not the cause of these problems, nor does it prevent us from solving them.

Indeed, far from depriving domestic citizenship of its meaningfulness, globalization may actually be helping to renew it in important respects. For example, globalization is opening up the political process to new groups. Existing legislative and regulatory processes have been captured by entrenched interest groups for a long time now, but their traditional power bases are being eroded by globalization, and previously excluded groups are jumping in to fill the void (Simeon 1997: 307).

Also, globalization, far from encouraging political apathy, is itself one of the things which seems to mobilize otherwise apathetic people. Consider the vigorous debate over free trade in Canada, or the debate in Denmark over the Maastricht Treaty. This should not be surprising, since decisions about how to relate to other countries are themselves an important exercise of national sovereignty.

² I discuss some of these issues in more depth in Kymlicka 1993: 61–89.

This is perhaps clearer in the European context than in North America. It is quite clear, for example, that the desire of Spain or Greece to join the EU was not simply a matter of economic gain. It was also seen as a way of confirming their status as open, modern, democratic, and pluralistic states, after many years of being closed and authoritarian societies. Similarly, the decision about whether to admit new countries from Eastern Europe to the EU will be decided not just on the basis of economic gain, but also on the basis of moral obligations to assist newly democratizing countries, and on the basis of aspirations to create a Europe free of old divisions and hatreds.

In other words, decisions by national collectivities to integrate into transnational institutions are, in part, decisions about what kind of societies people want to live in. Being open to the world is, for many people, an important part of their self-conception as members of modern pluralistic societies, and they autonomously decide to pursue that self-conception through various international agreements and institutions. Such decisions are not a denial of people's national identity or sovereignty, but precisely an affirmation of their national identity, and a highly valued exercise of their national sovereignty.

The best example of this, perhaps, is the desire of former communist countries to join European organizations. It would be a profound misunderstanding to say that the decision by Baltic states to join the Council of Europe is an abridgment of their sovereignty. On the contrary, it is surely one of the most important symbolic affirmations of their new-found sovereignty. One of the most hated things about communism was that it prevented Baltic nations from entering into such international alliances, and acting upon their self-conception as a "European" country. Latvia's decision to join the Council of Europe was a way of declaring: "now we are a sovereign people, able to act on our own wishes. No longer can anyone tell us who we can and cannot associate with." Sovereignty is valued because it allows nations to act on their interests and identities, and the freedom to enter European organizations is an enormously important example of this sovereignty for Baltic nations.

These examples show, I think, that globalization often provides options which nations value, and decisions about whether and how to exercise these options have become lively topics for national debate. Globalization does constrain national legislatures, although the extent of this is often exaggerated. But globalization also enriches national political life, and provides new and valued options by which nations can collectively promote their interests and identities.

Cosmopolitan citizenship

So globalization need not undermine the scope for meaningful democratic citizenship at the national level. By contrast, I am rather more skeptical about the likelihood that we can produce any meaningful form of transnational citizenship. I think we should be quite modest in our expectations about transnational citizenship, at least for the foreseeable future.

I heartily agree with many aspects of Held's conception of "cosmopolitan democracy." In particular, I endorse efforts to strengthen the international enforcement of human rights, and I accept Held's idea that the rules for according international recognition to states should include some reference to democratic legitimation. Principles of democracy and human rights should indeed be seen as "cosmopolitan" in this sense – i.e., each state should be encouraged to respect these principles.

But I am more skeptical about the idea that transnational institutions and organizations can themselves be made democratic in any meaningful sense. Can we even make sense of the idea of "democratizing" such institutions? When thinking about this question, it is important to remember that democracy is not just a formula for aggregating votes, but is also a system of collective deliberation and legitimation. The actual moment of voting (in elections, or within legislatures) is just one component in a larger process of democratic self-government. This process begins with public deliberation about the issues which need to be addressed and the options for resolving them. The decisions which result from this deliberation are then legitimated on the grounds that they reflect the considered will and common good of the people as a whole, not just the self-interest or arbitrary whims of the majority.

Arguably, these forms of deliberation and legitimation require some degree of commonality amongst citizens. Collective political deliberation is only feasible if participants understand and trust one another, and there is good reason to think that such mutual understanding and trust require some underlying commonalities. Some sense of commonality or shared identity may be required to sustain a deliberative and participatory democracy.

But what sort of shared identity? If we examine existing democracies to see what sorts of commonalities have proven necessary, I think we would find that deliberative democracy does *not* require a common religion (or common lifestyles more generally); a common political ideology (e.g., right versus left); or a common racial or ethnic descent. We can find genuinely participatory democratic fora and procedures which cut across these religious/ideological/racial cleavages.

When we turn to language, however, things become more complicated. There are of course several multilingual democracies – e.g., Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Canada. But if we look at how democratic debates operate within these countries, we find that language is increasingly important in defining the boundaries of political communities, and the identities of political actors.

There is a similar dynamic taking place in all of these countries, by which: (a) the separate language groups are becoming more territorialized – that is, each language has become ever-more dominant within a particular region, while gradually dying out outside that region (this phenomenon – known as the “territorial imperative” – is very widespread);³ and (b) these territorialized language groups are demanding increased political recognition and self-government powers through federalization of the political system. (These processes of territorialization and federalization are of course closely linked – the latter is both the cause and the effect of the former.) Political boundaries have been drawn, and political powers redistributed, so that territorialized language groups are able to exercise greater self-government within the larger federal system.

Held argues that globalization is undermining the territorial basis of politics, and that territory is playing a less important role in the determination of political identity (p. 99, above). I think this is simply untrue, at least in the context of multilingual states. On the contrary, language has become an increasingly important determinant of the boundaries of political community within each of these multilingual countries, and territory has become an increasingly important determinant of the boundaries of these language groups. These countries are becoming, in effect, federations of territorially concentrated, self-governing language groups. These self-governing language groups often describe themselves as “nations,” and mobilize along nationalist lines, and so we can call these countries “multination states.”

There are good reasons to think that these “national” linguistic/territorial political communities – whether they are unilingual nation states or linguistically distinct subunits within multination states – are the primary forum for democratic participation in the modern world. They are primary in two distinct senses. First, democracy within national/linguistic units is more genuinely participatory than at higher levels which cut across language lines. Political debates at the federal

³ On the territorial imperative in Belgium, see Lejeune 1994: 171–86 and Senelle 1989: 51–95; on Switzerland, see Mansour 1993: 109–11. For a more general theoretical account of the “territorial imperative” in multilingual societies, see Laponce 1987 and 1993: 23–43.

level in multination states, for example, or at the level of the EU, are almost invariably elite-dominated.

Why? Put simply, democratic politics is politics in the vernacular. The average citizen only feels comfortable debating political issues in their own tongue. As a general rule, it is only elites who have fluency with more than one language, and who have the continual opportunity to maintain and develop these language skills, and who feel comfortable debating political issues in another tongue within multilingual settings. Moreover, political communication has a large ritualistic component, and these ritualized forms of communication are typically language-specific. Even if one understands a foreign language in the technical sense, without knowledge of these ritualistic elements one may be unable to understand political debates.⁴ For these and other reasons, we can expect – as a general rule – that the more political debate is conducted in the vernacular, the more participatory it will be.

There are of course “public spaces” and forms of civil society which cut across language lines. However, these tend to be issue specific and/or elite dominated. If we look for evidence of a genuinely popular process of “collective will formation” – or for the existence of a mass “public opinion” – we are likely to find these only within units which share a common language (and a common media using that language). John Stuart Mill (1972 [1861]: 392), writing in the mid-nineteenth century, argued that genuine democracy is “next to impossible” in multilingual states, because if people “read and speak different languages, the public opinion necessary to the workings of representative institutions cannot exist.” The evidence from Europe suggests that linguistic differences remain an obstacle to the development of a genuine “public opinion.” As Dieter Grimm notes, it is the presence of a shared mass media, operating in a common language, “which creates the public needed for any general opinion forming and democratic participation at all,” and

the absence of a European communication system, due chiefly due to language diversity, has the consequence that for the foreseeable future there will be neither a European public nor a European political discourse. Public discourse instead remains for the time being bound by national frontiers, while the European sphere will remain dominated by professional and interest discourses conducted remotely from the public.⁵ (Grimm 1995: 296)

⁴ In other words, the sort of fluency needed to debate political issues is far greater than the sort of knowledge needed to handle routine business transactions, or for tourist purposes.

⁵ This same dynamic can be seen even within the various multilingual states in Europe, where it has become increasingly obvious that “public opinion” is divided on language lines.

There is a second sense in which these “national” units are primary – namely, they are the most important forum for assessing the legitimacy of other levels of government. Members of these national units may wish to devolve power upwards – to the federal level in multinational states, or to the European Union – just as they may wish to devolve power downwards to local or municipal governments. As I noted earlier, such upward (or downward) devolutions of power are to be expected, since they will often be in the national interest of these collectivities. But the legitimacy of these devolutions of power is generally seen as dependent on the (ongoing) consent of the national unit (and this consent will only be given if these devolutions of power do not undermine the ability of the national unit to maintain itself as a viable, self-governing society). Decisions made by larger units – whether they are federal policies in multinational states, or EU policies – are seen as legitimate only if they are made under rules and procedures which were consented to by the national unit, and similarly changes to the rules are only legitimate if they are debated and approved by the national unit. Members of these national collectivities debate amongst themselves, in the vernacular, how much power they wish to devolve upwards or downwards, and periodically reassess, at the national level, whether they wish to reclaim some of these powers. The legitimate authority of higher-level political bodies depends on this ongoing process of debate and consent at the national level. These decisions are made on the basis of what serves the national interest (and not on the basis of what serves the interests of, say, Europe as a whole).⁶

So the evidence suggests that language is profoundly important in the construction of democratic political communities. It has in fact become increasingly important in defining political communities, and these language-demarcated political communities remain the primary forum for participatory democratic debates, and for the democratic legitimation of other levels of government.

This is not to deny the obvious fact that we need international political institutions which transcend linguistic/national boundaries. We need such institutions to deal not only with economic globalization, but also with common environmental problems and issues of international security. At present, these organizations exhibit a major “democratic deficit.” They are basically organized through intergovernmental

⁶ In other words, the existence of political authority at higher levels is not seen as morally self-originating or self-justifying, but rather as conditional on the consent of the constituent national units. By contrast, the right of the national unit to self-government is seen as morally self-originating, and as not requiring the consent of any other level of government.

relations, with little, if any, direct input from individual citizens. Held suggests that this is a serious problem, which can only be resolved by promoting new forms of “cosmopolitan citizenship” which enable individuals and non-government groups to participate directly in transnational organizations (pp. 104–8, above). For example, in the EU, there is considerable talk about increasing the power of the Parliament, which is directly elected by individual citizens, at the expense of the Commission and Council of Ministers, which operate through inter-governmental relations.

I am not so sure that there is a serious problem here, or that Held’s suggestion is realistic. It seems to me that there is no necessary reason why international institutions should be directly accountable to (or accessible to) individual citizens. To be sure, if international institutions are increasingly powerful, they must be held accountable. But why can we not hold them accountable *indirectly*, by debating at the national level how we want our national governments to act in intergovernmental contexts?

It seems clear that this is the way most Europeans themselves wish to reconcile democracy with the growth of the EU. There is very little demand for a strengthened EU Parliament. On the contrary, most people, in virtually all European states, show little interest in the affairs of the European Parliament, and little enthusiasm for increasing its powers.

What they want, instead, is to strengthen the accountability of their *national* governments for how these governments act at the intergovernmental Council of Ministers. That is, citizens in each country want to debate amongst themselves, in their vernacular, what the position of their government should be on EU issues. Danes wish to debate, in Danish, what the Danish position should be *vis-à-vis* Europe. They show little interest in starting a European-wide debate (in what language?) about what the EU should do. They are keenly interested in having a democratic debate about the EU, but the debate they wish to engage in is not a debate with other Europeans about “what should we Europeans do?” Rather, they wish to debate with each other, in Danish, about what we Danes should do. To put it another way, they want Denmark to be part of Europe, but they show little interest in becoming citizens of a European demos.

This is not to say that increasing the direct accountability and accessibility of transnational institutions is a bad thing. On the contrary, I support many of Held’s suggestions in this regard. I agree that NGOs should have an increased role at the UN and other international bodies (pp. 107–8, above), and I support the idea of a global civil society, in

which people seek to mobilize the citizens of other countries to protest violations of human rights or environmental degradation in their own country. But it is misleading, I think, to describe this as the “democratization” of transnational institutions, or as the creation of democratic citizenship on the transnational level. After all, these proposals would not create any form of collective deliberation and decision-making that connects and binds individuals across national boundaries.

For example, I am a member of Greenpeace, and support their efforts to gain a seat at the table of UN organizations, and their efforts to mobilize people around the world to stop acid rain, the burning of tropical rainforests, or illegal whaling, but this does not involve anything which we could recognize as democratic citizenship at the transnational level. The fact that Greenpeace has a seat at the table of the UN or the EU, or that Canadian members of Greenpeace write letters protesting Japan’s whaling policy, does not change the fact that there is no meaningful forum for democratic deliberation and collective will-formation above the level of the nation state. I can try to influence Brazil’s deforestation policy, but that does not mean that Brazilians and Canadians are now citizens of some new transnational democratic community. Transnational activism is a good thing, as is the exchange of information across borders, but the only forum in which genuine democracy occurs is within national boundaries.

Transnational activism by individuals or NGOs is not the same as democratic citizenship. Moreover, attempts to create a genuinely democratic form of transnational citizenship could have negative consequences for democratic citizenship at the domestic level. For example, I am not convinced that it would be a good thing to strengthen the (directly elected) EU Parliament at the expense of the (intergovernmental) EU Council. The result of “democratizing” the EU would be to take away the veto power which national governments now have over most EU decisions. Decisions made by the EU Parliament, unlike those made by the Council, are not subject to the national veto. This means that the EU would cease to be accountable to citizens through their national legislatures. At the moment, if a Danish citizen dislikes an EU decision, she can try to mobilize other Danes to change their government’s position on the issue. But once the EU is “democratized” – i.e., once the Parliament replaces the Council as the major decision-making body – a Danish citizen would have to try to change the opinions of the citizens of every other European country (none of which speak her language). For obvious and understandable reasons, few Europeans seek this sort of “democratization.” For Danish citizens to engage in a debate with other Danes, in Danish, about the Danish position *vis-à-vis*

the EU is a familiar and manageable task, but for Danish citizens to engage in a debate with Italians to try to develop a common European position is a daunting prospect. In what language would such a debate occur, and in what fora? Not only do they not speak the same language, or share the same territory, they also do not read the same newspapers, or watch the same television shows, or belong to the same political parties. So what would be the forum for such a trans-European debate?

Given these obstacles to a trans-European public debate, it is not surprising that neither the Danes nor the Italians have shown any enthusiasm for “democratizing” the EU. They prefer exercising democratic accountability through their national legislatures. Paradoxically, then, the net result of increasing direct democratic accountability of the EU through the elected Parliament would in fact be to undermine democratic citizenship. It would shift power away from the national level, where mass participation and vigorous democratic debate is possible, towards the transnational level, where democratic participation and deliberation is very difficult. As Grimm argues, given that there is no common European mass media at the moment, and given that the prospects for creating such a Europeanized media in the foreseeable future “are absolutely non-existent,” dramatically shifting power from the Council to the Parliament would “aggravate rather than solve the problem” of the democratic deficit (Grimm 1995: 296).

In short, globalization is undoubtedly producing a new civil society, but it has not yet produced anything we can recognize as transnational democratic citizenship. Nor is it clear to me that we should aspire to such a new form of citizenship. Many of our most important moral principles should be cosmopolitan in scope – e.g., principles of human rights, democracy, and environmental protection – and we should seek to promote these ideals internationally. But our democratic citizenship is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, national in scope.⁷

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⁷ For further elaboration of this theme, see Kymlicka forthcoming.

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8 A comment on Held's cosmopolitanism

Alexander Wendt

In his thought-provoking chapter David Held argues that we need to rethink our traditional, state-centric understanding of democracy in a more cosmopolitan direction because the forces of globalization are gradually eroding the territorial, Westphalian conceptualization of political community upon which it is based. I agree with Held on both counts. However, I think he does not emphasize sufficiently the role that the institution of sovereignty will play in channeling the impact of globalization, creating path-dependencies which raise both empirical and normative questions about the possibility of cosmopolitan democracy. If a non-territorial democracy does evolve, for the foreseeable future it seems much more likely to be a democracy of states than of individuals, an "international" rather than "cosmopolitan" democracy, and this might even be normatively acceptable in a way that an analogous democracy at the domestic level based on groups is not.

I have divided my remarks into two parts, focusing first on how we get from the here of a world of sovereign states to the there of a non-territorial democracy, and then on some normative issues that arise when we get there.

From here to there

Held's chapter, and the book on which it builds (Held 1995), offers a strong and nuanced account of the many forces in the late twentieth century that are eroding purely territorial conceptions of political community and creating transnational "communities of fate." However, saying that national conceptions of community are being eroded by globalization is not the same thing as saying that transnational ones are being created. Here we need to distinguish more explicitly between the objective and subjective bases of community, between the reality of transnational common fate, which is increasing, and perceptions of common fate, which are lagging. It is perceptions of community that are crucial for democracy. Moreover, perceptions of transnational common