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INBAL OFER AND TAMAR GROVES (EDS.), *PERFORMING CITIZENSHIP. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE*, LONDON/NEW YORK, ROUTLEDGE, 2016.

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For several decades now, debates around the concept of citizenship have been raised in the academic community. Today, authors frequently contest the traditional conceptions advanced by legal specialists or researchers in political sciences. The notion of citizenship as strictly related to the idea of belonging to a political or a civic community, or as related to the status, the rights and the responsibilities of nationals has become ever more complex: now, it is the very nature of citizenship, as well as its place and role in the community that is at the center of the work of scholars of various disciplines, ranging from sociology to cultural anthropology. Moreover, traditional definitions have several difficulties to assimilate empirical evidence that shows that citizenship is not a fixed concept: the recent protest movements that have sprayed out around the globe, from the Arab Spring to the Indigenous movements and other anti-austerity protests, strongly challenge traditional definitions and suggest that citizenship is no longer strictly confined to the national framework, triggering reflections on the global dimension of the concept.

Under the influence of these developments, the book *Performing Citizenship, Social Movements Across the Globe*, edited by the historians Inbal Ofer and Tamar

Groves, contributes to the contemporary quest for a redefinition of the notion of citizenship, fitting in the lineage of recent work on new social movements and global protests. The book constitutes a collection of case studies that stretch from the 1960s to the beginning of the twenty-first century and spreads across various continents. Dealing with the multidimensionality of citizenship, it embraces an ambition to retrace the transformations undergone by the concept in the recent history, conceiving citizenship not as a status, but as a practice that arises from the actions of a community.

As announced in the very title of the book, authors attempt to analyze how social movements, by performing citizenship in different ways and through different means, have transformed this very notion. And the book does this with proficiency, avoiding simplistic approaches of any kind. For instance, by choosing not to present the analyzed cases chronologically, authors cleverly avoid falling into the trap of presenting the transformations of the notion of citizenship as a linear evolution of a paradigm. Moreover, they also avoid making a comparative compendium, and the format of the collection makes it possible to approach all these experiences simultaneously, without necessarily confronting them.

Authors divide their cases into two types of citizenship performances: as a participatory practice or as community building, treating them in two thematic sections. The first bloc presents three chapters that analyze the organization and the mobilization of citizens and it raises two essential questions that are often at the heart of the debate about citizenship: firstly, who is a citizen? And secondly, what forms of participation can be understood as an exercise of the rights on the part of that citizen? The second section treats the question of activism, analyzing how it can create new forms of commonality and therefore, how it can displace the notion of citizenship towards the idea of fraternity.

This sensible division is not only practical for the reader, but it also allows the authors to illustrate a point of central interest in their analysis, which is related to the larger debate surrounding the national, post-national or trans-national nature of citizenship in the world today. All the examined cases exemplify how social activism is situated in between the global and the local: while the first three cases show how the goals of local activism or national movements have been transformed or curbed by global factors, the next three show the opposite logic, that is, how global movements or organizations have affected and altered the local and the national scene of social engagement.

In the first chapter, Pamela Radcliff discusses Spanish citizen activism in the 1970s, shortly before the end of Francoism. The author describes how local communities, associated in a strategic coalition with oppositional political movements, were capable to reinvent their role as citizens and even rephrase the very definition of the term, channeling demands for democratization. Nevertheless, Radcliffe also claims that the commitment of these citizens in search for democracy was also the indirect result of the very contradiction of a regime that was facing internal crises and increasing economic liberalization. At the end of the transition process, she demonstrates, the participative forms of citizen engagement that had arisen during

the protests drowned permanently into the new government practice of parliamentary democracy, having to meet the requirements of international neoliberalism.

The second chapter of the book also addresses the impossibility of implementing participatory practices that work at the local level at the state level. Paul Haber analyses the relation between local indigenous and environmental social movements to the new left-wing governments that came to power in Latin America during the 2000s. Focusing mainly on the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil (the text is clearly previous to the recent political upheavals in Brazil), Haber seeks to demonstrate how citizen movements that have helped to bring left politics in power end up feeling alienated from these new governments, which in order to meet their promise of social equality are often forced to neglect the identity and the environmental claims of the same activists who helped them rise to power. He thus shows that in response to this perception, different groups of citizens tend to relocate their practice in what he describes as sub-national islands of resistance, disconnecting from the state.

The third analyzed case constitutes yet another example of failure to transpose a local citizen movement to the national level due to global problems and influences. Zeev Rosenhek and Michael Shalev discuss the Israeli 2011 Summer of Discontent and its attempt to create a national movement with broad claims of social justice that could surpass identity, religious and class cleavages that are present in Israel. While the authors argue that this civic protest is exemplary because it is the only recent movement that addressed social demands instead of identity issues, they also insist on its shortcomings, which they attribute to its incapacity to create an inclusive identity. According to the authors, the movement was the result of the discontent of the middle classes, who had lost their privileged place in Israeli society due to drastic austerity measures taken as a consequence of the global economic crises, which posed several obstacles to its development.

The relatively pessimistic conclusions of the first section transmit an almost consensual skepticism about the abilities of the down-top movements to reach the national scale, suggesting that their difficulties are often due to global factors. On the contrary, the second section of case studies observes the exactly opposite movement, focusing on how the global influences the local, and it offers thus a more positive outlook.

Jie Chen studies the role of international non-governmental organizations in China. This chapter aims to demonstrate the positive influence played by these organizations and transnational civil society on Chinese local activism, in an authoritarian context where any form of political commitment is forbidden. Chen shows how it is the international actors who paradoxically produce the tools necessary for the creation of a legal framework for local actions, helping people to organize themselves in a context that does not favor the development of civil society. Chen concludes with a positive note on the role played by international non-governmental organizations in China, offering only a shy criticism as to the capacity of these actions to frame genuine local needs. The author does not seem to consider the limitations of citizen activism in a context such as the Chinese: in particular, one should take into account that, by often formulating social needs without taking the risk of translating them into true political demands, citizen activism in itself has only a narrow potential to boost democratization.

The study by Simon Avenell is perhaps the most stimulating chapter of this collection, offering both an analysis of how certain social movements have influenced the notion of citizenship and a historically-minded reflection on the concept. Avenell argues that the creation of a transnational chain of equivalence between movements can be a way of enriching the notion of citizen in each local context. The Japanese context, he claims, is particularly thought-provoking in that regard. Until the end of the Second World War, the Japanese were not familiar with the Western notion of “citizen”, and throughout all

their modernization process, the Japanese were not designated as citizens but as “subjects” of the sovereign emperor. In 1945, a new term was created: *kokumin* – literally “people of the country”, which would designate the nationals with inalienable rights but without the urban or the civic connotation that the term has in the Western context. As this new term irrevocably linked the citizen to the state in a passive relationship, and consequently prevented it from engaging in a dialogue with the authorities, one of the militants’ tasks was to envision what would be the position of an active citizen. Therefore, they propose another word as a signifier for a civic and urban citizen: *shimin*, which literally translates as “people of the city”. The creation of this new identity and its inscription in the language allowed Japanese activists to disconnect their practice from the purely national context: *shimin* citizens were from then on able to connect with various struggles outside of their country and to build bridges with different social and political contexts. Avenell argues that interactions with anti-war activists in the context of the Vietnam War, as well as with environmental activists from other national contexts, allowed the local Japanese activists to take a deep look at their own practice and to further develop their engagement. In other words, they were capable of moving from an activism mostly led by a passive logic of victimization towards an activism now led by an active logic of responsibility, therefore becoming a transformative factor in their society.

Finally, Guimar Rovira’s contribution constitutes a depiction of the multi-dimensionality of the Zapatista movement which, thanks to the multiplication of communication technologies, has gone from being the local revolutionary movement of the indigenous people of Chiapas in Mexico, to become one of the symbols of the international alter-globalist struggle. Rovira is especially interested in the multiple connections between the transnational and local dimensions of activism, and she defines Zapatismo as a multi-scalar engagement. The author shows that if

transnational movements recover the local struggle and transform it into an identifier that appeals to actors on the global scene, the local struggle also benefits from this international influence, which can be used to strengthen and propagate its commitment on the local level. Rovira argues thus that the global mediation ends up serving the natives of Chiapas to renew their local citizen practice.

In general, the compilation *Performing Citizenship, Social Movements Across the Globe* offers most interesting perspectives on the subject of contemporary citizenship. It must however be said that the reader will find a certain inconsistency in the quality of the contributions, some of which fail to engage critically with the cases exposed. Furthermore, the book could also benefit from a critical review on the concept of citizenship, and a more critical approach to the emancipating potential of the new social movements, which some of the contributions take for

granted without further reflection. All of this tends at times to render the book excessively optimistic, losing touch with a current global context that shows many pessimistic signs with regards to the potential of citizen participation.

Nevertheless, the book offers stimulating perspectives on fascinating cases of study, which to a certain extent makes us reconsider the currently popular idea that citizenship has become a post-national phenomenon. The assembled contributions show, on the contrary, that the local and the national still remain unavoidable points of reference in civic engagement and practice, but that entanglements with the global and transnational dimensions make these initial experiences richer and more intricate. Hence, rather than speaking of “post-national” or “transnational” to describe the different scales of citizenship today, the authors invite us to “denationalize” the phenomenon to grasp it in its full complexity.