1. Introduction

The division of the former Soviet Union into various independent countries, as well as the rise of democracy in these countries was one of the major changes of the last decade. These changes have in many ways actualised the issue of citizenship, which gives an opportunity to discuss changes of the conceptions of citizenship during periods of transition, as well as of nation-formation. However, the 1990s have also involved changes in countries in the west. These changes have to some extent affected the public sector, which actualises in turn changes in rights associated to citizenship in these countries. This paper aims to discuss the meaning of citizenship, today, in our recent past, as well as historically.

A theoretical introduction is presented for an understanding of citizenship, as well as of the rights connected to varying conceptions of citizenship in different social contexts. Particular emphasis is given to ways of gendering citizenship in democratic transition. Is citizenship gendered in new ways in the new democracies? Are women as citizens expected to fulfil different obligations compared to men during periods of state-formation? Are the rights connected to citizenship different for women than for men, when actually put into practice, in spite of formally being gender-neutral?

2. Citizenship in Liberal Democracy

It is widely considered that the transition in the post-socialist states was carried through in a mental atmosphere characterized by a strong belief in the values of liberalism. The change from a socialist economic system to a capitalist one also gave many proofs of raw capitalism. Privatization of the means of production was a highly disordered process, with a minimum of public control. Thus capitalism was introduced before the possibilities of democratic control had been established.

Today when we receive information on social problems in these countries, particularly in the three Baltic states, it would not be far-fetched to analyse these problems in the light of the theories of liberalism formulated in the 17th and 18th centuries. These theories stressed the right to private property, but also the right to individual freedom and to self-government. In her analysis of theories of citizenship, Yeatman (1994) points to the renewed interest of these original theories, brought into politics at the present time in the claims for the small govern-
ment/minimal-state by advocates of new liberalism. The parallel between the transition of the former socialist countries and the changes in the capitalist democracies is also drawn in a survey on public opinion in countries around the Baltic Sea. It is stated that “all societies around the Baltic Sea have become increasingly dominated by the anonymous market forces, often referred to as an invisible hand” (Moskalewicz & Tigerstedt 1998:5).

According to Yeatman, one important reason why these original theories have maintained their potential for explaining the relationship between the state and the citizen is the fact that natural right has remained the “dominant account” in theories of citizenship (1994:58). Thus, when in these theories the idea of freedom of action was first formulated, it relied on the “natural” right of each individual to freedom. In Yeatman’s analysis this was first and foremost a right to act, and consequently a claim to self-government. In those days, this claim was directed against “the traditionally legitimate authorities of absolute monarchy, scholasticism, the church, and kinship” (1994:59). Instead of submitting to such authorities, the free individuals were supposed to form a common public authority by means of a social contract. The freedom of the individual included the right to property. This right was at first limited to those products of one’s labour that were for one’s own use. With the introduction of a monetary economy this right was extended to allow the accumulation of capital.

There are traits in this theory that appeal to contemporary societies, but it is obvious that they have to be reinterpreted to fit a modern social context. Thus, when advocates for new liberalism in the West turn to the origins of liberalism for new definitions of the relationship between the citizen and the state, the authorities that they oppose are not the traditional ones of absolute monarchy, the church, or kinship. Instead, they oppose the “strong” modern state with an extended power of taxation, and a wide range of activities interfering with civil society. They describe the modern state as struck by overload and inefficiency. By way of solving this crisis of the state they envisage a minimal state. Their critique is directed against the welfare state and its recipients. However, though they emphasize the right of the individual to personal freedom and private property, to be exercised without state interference, they assume that the minimal state will ensure economic stability, the validity of contracts and other necessary conditions for private economic activities. They are also in favour of a strong state, when it refers to the repressive forces of the police and the military (Liedman 1982).

When these original theories of liberalism are used to interpret the transition in post-socialist countries, the authority opposed is firstly the Soviet domination of these countries. The claim for self-government is translated into a claim for national sovereignty. Secondly, the right to private property is contrasted with the socialist economy. In the years before and of transition it was well-known that the standard of living was much higher in the neighbouring capitalist countries. An illustration of this is given by a survey in Latvia, where a majority of the respondents agreed to the proposition that the standard of living would be higher, if Latvia had remained independent like Finland in 1945 (Zepa 1996/97). Thus, in the period of transition to democracy, great hopes were connected to the privatization of capital and production, and to the benefits of a free market.

When we receive information which indicates that women more than men suffer the consequences of the transition in the post-socialist countries (Kutsar 1997:98-100), we could also turn to the theories of liberal democracy for an explanation. Yeatman points out that the right to property included individual men’s jurisdiction over his “wife, children, and his household servants” (1994:62). As other feminist theorists have shown, this exclusion of women and children is often implicit also in modern theories of citizenship (Moller Okin...
Thus, political theories tend to exclude from their analysis those who are not conceived to be the signers of the social contract. Consequently the theories of liberal democracy may allow us to conclude that the citizens who really matter in a democratization process are men who own property, while women, children and men who own nothing may be excluded.

This would allow us to suggest that any exclusion of women and poor men from the events of democratization is a logical consequence of the political ideas that guided the transformation in the post-socialist countries.

### 3. Transition in the 1990s

In contrast to the above, my claim is that the old theories of liberal democracy do not give us much guidance to analyse what has actually occurred during the 1990s. Thus, neither in the Nordic countries nor in the three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, did the theories of neo-liberalism gain such overwhelming support. This becomes clear when we look more closely into the processes of change.

It is generally recognized that in the 1980s the rhetoric of the neo-liberalism gained support in the well-established welfare states. In the words of Yeatman (1994:4f.) this implied that “Western-identified state societies (...) abandoned the rhetoric of social citizenship”. I would not describe the changes in such a drastic wording, at least not in the case of Sweden. Instead, the rhetoric of social citizenship was largely maintained, but the institutions providing welfare were increasingly described in terms of an economic discourse (Municio-Larsson 1999). In order to increase the economic efficiency of public institutions, great efforts were made to describe the activities of these institutions in market terms. In addition, elements of private entrepreneurship were introduced into the public sector. However, even privately administered welfare activities generally continued to be publicly financed. Likewise, the political support for the state’s responsibility to provide basic resources in order to guarantee the citizen’s autonomy and participation in society continued to be strong (Rothstein 1994).

With reference to the transition in the three Baltic countries, available facts show that this responsibility was not questioned there either. Instead, the main goals of transition were national sovereignty and democracy of a Western type. To these goals were added the changes necessary for the introduction of a capitalist economic system, i.e. private property and entrepreneurship, free markets, as well as a stop to state subsidies to industry and agriculture. It was widely expected that these changes, taken together, would resolve the economic and social problems that these countries had been struggling with for decades. It was also expected that the wealth thus produced would allow for maintaining public welfare measures for those citizens who could not manage on their own in the new economic system. As we know today, what happened instead was that these countries were struck by “high inflation, increasing unemployment, a notable differentiation in the income of residents, a stratification of society, and declines in the standard of living of a large share of society” (Dobelniece 1996/97:205).

Thus, though the transition was characterized by a belief in the values of liberalism, this did not imply a retreat from the ambitions of a welfare state. People expected the social security previously provided by the totalitarian state to continue during the democratically-elected government. The reforms of the social protections systems in the Baltic states, during the 1990s, illustrate state ambitions to guarantee economic security after independence to
“the increasing part of the population who need support from the state and social security resources” (Venesaar and Hachey 1995:33). These reforms cover pension insurance, children’s benefits, medical insurance and sickness benefits, as well as housing allowances and social protection of the unemployed. In an analysis of the political elite of Latvia, it is stated that the failure of the economic transition was actually due to an inconsistent orientation “toward property and the role of the state in society”. Thus, a “significantly socialist thinking” survived the transition and therefore “Latvia’s political elite has exaggerated the significance of the state in the economic and social process” (Lakis 1996/97:163).

This analysis implies that it was precisely the lack of determination as to definitely leaving the paternalistic, socialist state behind that is the real cause of the economic deprivation that the people of Latvia are now experiencing. Consequently, the solution would be to abolish state welfare measures and to give market mechanisms unrestricted free play. It could be suggested that this drastic conclusion finds no support in the existing welfare states. In the Nordic countries, for example, the welfare state still coexists with a comparatively thriving economy. Additional evidence against such a conclusion is shown because, in the economic sectors of the countries in the west, private initiatives intermingle with state interventions.

4. Three Stages of Citizenship Rights

Another way of analysing the changes in citizenship involved in the democratic transition in the Baltic states is to turn to the traditional conception of citizenship as divided into three consecutive stages, occurring during the development of democracy. According to a theory developed by Marshall, citizenship has three parts, or elements, civil, political and social. The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech and thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice (...). This shows us that the institutions most directly associated with civil rights are the courts of justice. By the political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body. The corresponding institutions are parliament and councils of local government. By the social element 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. The institutions most closely connected with it are the education system and the social services. (Marshall 1964:71-72)

These rights were considered to be successive steps in a democratic development, first civil rights, then political, lastly social. The situation in the former socialist countries could probably be described as following an opposite chain of development. Thus, basic forms of economic security were provided during the socialist era, while on the other hand indispensable parts of the other two forms of citizenship were severely limited. One goal of the transition in the Baltic region towards independent and democratic states has been the reinstatement of rights corresponding to the first two stages, i.e. the rights of individual freedom, as well as the right to exercise political power in free elections. However, the present situation of the right to basic forms of economic security is uncertain, because more often than not the benefit levels of the different systems of social protection are merely symbolic (cf. Dobelniece 1996/97:205-211, Eglite 1999:35, Rungule 1997:318 and Viies 1998:53-60). Neither is there any guarantee of the future development of this right.

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As has already been commented on, this uncertainty does not follow from any decision by the new political elites to abolish these rights. Instead, it was widely expected that national sovereignty, democracy and private ownership of property would result in economic means to guarantee each citizen of these countries a minimum. Instead, these difficulties are generally considered to be a consequence of the lack of taxation capacity of the newly formed states.

In his categorization of different stages of citizenship, Marshall did not raise the issue of gender. As is usual in political theory, he assumed that the citizen is a man and that the rights acquired are only for men. That is why he ignored that in the order described by him, these rights were acquired by white adult males, while they were still denied to women. In addition, his Anglocentric view made him disregard actual deficiencies as to the rights granted to minorities in the countries that he described. Later theorists have untangled the assumptions underlying Marshall’s and other political theorists’ descriptions of the relationship between the state and its members. An alternative approach to citizenship has been suggested, where a key feature is “the differential access of inhabitants of a given territory to civil, political and social citizenship” (Walby 1997:171). This refers to women, but also to minorities.

What is then the relationship of women to citizenship? Recent feminist work has also questioned the workability of a notion of a single model of citizenship for the analysis of women’s rights as citizens (Pateman 1991; Lister 1990). Instead, they suggest that “(t)he different experiences and structural position of women (...) militate against their full access to the rights of citizenship” (Walby 1997:173). In addition, they suggest that the notion of social citizenship is of particular importance to women. In view of the fact that social rights are closely connected to gainful employment and contributions, women obtain less welfare provision than men. The disproportionate share of obligations that women have towards those who require care places them at a disadvantage in relation to political and social citizenship (Walby 1997:173). A welfare state, as we know it in Britain or Sweden, is not a sufficient guarantee for equal access by women to the rights connected to social citizenship. Instead, three fundamental changes are required (Lister 1990). The first is to change “to individual rather than household entitlements”, the second to disconnect benefit from contribution, and the third to supply child care “to facilitate women’s participation in the labour market” (Walby 1997:174). However, a first premise for social citizenship, for men as well as for women, is the very basis of a welfare state.

5. The Baltics in the 1990s

Minorities. If we turn again to the Baltic countries, we find an illustration of the differential access to citizenship in the limitations given by the citizenship laws. After independence, Estonia and Latvia chose different paths to delimit their citizenry, as compared to Lithuania. All three countries opted for the restoration of the pre-war citizenry. However, with respect to the Soviet era migrants and their descendants, they were offered the right in Lithuania to choose unconditionally which citizenship to acquire, either Lithuanian or another post–Soviet citizenship. In Estonia and Latvia, unconditional citizenship was offered neither to the migrants of the Soviet era, nor to their descendants. Instead, they had to apply for residence permits, and for naturalization as citizens. The conditions imposed remain a severe obstacle to citizenship.

This has resulted in approximately one third of the inhabitants of Estonia, and one fourth of Latvia, not yet having acquired full citizenship rights (Statistical Yearbook of Latvia...
In both countries, this primarily affects political rights, but recent language laws also impose conditions on the access to a wide range of professions and occupations. This adds to the exclusion of those who have been defined as being outside the framework of the citizenship laws.

Women and freedom. If we now turn to the gendering of citizenship, and to the three stages outlined by Marshall, we find evidence to question whether the democratic transition has brought individual freedom and participation in political power to women, to the same degree as to men. As to individual freedom, an important part of this is the “liberty of the person”. This right is generally conceived of as a contract between the state and its citizens, in which each citizen accepts the authority of the state and in turn receives state protection against violence from other citizens.

Thus, according to the well-known definition of state authority by Max Weber, the monopoly of using violence within a given territory is retained by the state. Feminist theorists have questioned if this right to state protection against violence was ever extended to women. Instead, this protection has covered men’s violence against other men, while in the family the state’s monopoly has traditionally been paralleled with men’s monopoly of violence against his wife, children and servants. In Sweden, as well as in other countries of the west, this problem has increasingly been recognized as the most extreme expression of patriarchal structures, which constantly benefit men at the expense of women.

The issue here is whether the transition of the post-Soviet states has affected violence against women and children. According to a recent UNICEF Report, “...violence against women was largely under-recognized and undocumented” during communism. In spite of this lack of data for comparisons, it is concluded that after transition women are “surely” exposed to greater risks, because of the “expanding culture of violence” (Women in Transition 1999:16). As an illustration, it reports extremely high levels of domestic violence, particularly against divorced women, in Moscow in 1996. Varying, and in some cases very high levels of violence against women in the workplace are also reported from 11 post-Soviet countries. Similarly, high levels of unwanted sexual contact and harassment have been reported by adolescent girls and boys in Ukraine (Women... 1999:18). These data may well lead to the conclusion that women have not gained in transition, with reference to the first stage of citizenship rights, which in part refers to individual freedom and protection against violence. Instead, women may experience increased risks of violence in the post-Soviet period.

In Latvia, official statistics report a very low incidence of rape, 3.4 per 100 000 population, as compared to 19.1 in Sweden, while other types of violence against women are not specified (Crime and Social Deviance in Latvia 1999:21). In a study covering gender-based violence, more men than women say they have been victim of physical violence (24.5% as compared to 9.4%), while more women than men report psychological violence (18.7%...
and 15.2%). Also as regards sexual violence, women give evidence of higher levels than men (6.6% as to 0.4%). In an analysis of these figures it is concluded that violence against women is underreported both in official statistics and in large-scale surveys, “while small-scale surveys and informal research (...) have in fact yielded results more in line with global statistics”. The underreporting is said to be due to “an insufficient understanding in society of what exactly violence is”, as well as “an unwillingness to discuss violence by both victims and society as a whole” (Gender and Human Development in Latvia, 1999:25).

In the same report it is pointed out that the legal system in Latvia fails to protect women from violence. Domestic violence is not recognized by the legislation as a special crime under the Criminal Code. Instead, it is treated as common assault, and only on rare occasions are the offenders brought to trial. Neither is psychological abuse, which is suffered by many women, recognized in the law. A parallel case to the point is the recent regulation on prostitution, in which prostitutes are addressed, but not their clients (Gender and Human…, 1999:27).

In conclusion, there is a lack of awareness of the specific character of violence generally suffered by women. The right of women to justice is limited, when it refers to domestic violence, which is the form of violence most commonly suffered by women. Consequently, the legal protection for women and for their rights to “liberty of the person” is insufficient. This confirms the assumption that access to this part of the civil element of the citizenship rights is differentiated between women and men. With reference to other parts of civil rights, i.e. the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, these are indispensable ingredients of the democratic transition. However, the opportunities for entrepreneurship given in the new economies are predominantly taken by men. Likewise, women benefit less than men in labour contracts. This is expressed in lower wages, less labour security, and a segregated labour market (Gender and Human… 1999:13-15). These expressions of the fact that society values the work of women less are also apparent in the west. In Sweden, the labour market is segregated by gender, and women’s wages are approximately three fourths of men’s (Women and Men… 1998).

Women and political rights. The second stage of citizenship rights refers to political rights. We know that in general the access of women to the assemblies where political decisions are taken is limited. In Latvia, this is illustrated by the election to the Saeima, in 1995 as well as in 1998. On the first of these elections, eight of 100 elected members were women. On the second occasion, the women’s share had doubled to seventeen members (Statistical Yearbook 1996 and 1998). Women fared better in the elections of local governments in 1997. They constituted 39 percent of the deputies elected. However, women’s possibilities of being elected seem to be related to the importance of the government they join. In cities they constituted 19 percent of the members elected, in towns 30 percent and 41 percent in civil parishes (Latvian Women and Men… 1997:90).

In the UNICEF Report mentioned above, figures of women’s political representation before and after transition are referred to. The conclusion is that “the share of women elected dropped substantially across the full region – from the 30 percent or so imposed by quotas under communism to somewhere between 4 and 14 percent in most countries” (Women in Transition 1999:19). This refers to the mid-nineties and is close to the figures for Latvia given above. A higher proportion of women elected to local governments is also reported in other countries of the region. Another conclusion of the UNICEF Report is that women are under-represented in “senior government posts at the ministerial and sub-ministerial levels” (Women… 1999:20). In the Baltics, the share of women in these positions was 13.1 percent.
in 1996, which is the same as in the non-Nordic OECD countries, but below 22.3 percent, the average in the Nordic countries. These data lead us to the conclusion that women do not benefit from political rights to the same degree as men. Instead, after transition, similar patterns of exclusion to those observed in the western democracies appear in the post-socialist countries. Thus, we may conclude that with reference to the political element of citizenship rights, citizenship is gendered in new ways in the new democracies.

*Women and social rights.* As to the access of women to welfare, there are many reports from Estonia, as well as from Latvia, that testify to the losses of welfare in the 1990s (for example Estonian... 1994 and Aasland 1996, Dobelniece 1996/97). Due to the larger share women have of caring, they are more exposed to poverty, which is a new but widespread phenomenon in the Baltic states (Venesaar and Hachey 1995:168).

According to the UNESCO Report cited previously, a general characteristic of transition is that “the umbrella of family policies is removed” (Women... 1999:11). Different measures of state support for families are still in force, but the levels paid are generally too low. They do not compensate for the costs incurred for each new child born to a family, nor for the loss of income that often follows increased caring responsibilities in the family. However, a more pressing problem in Latvia seems to be that women who take parental leave risk losing their job, in spite of the formal right to return (Eglite 1997:52, Rungule 1997:318). Another problem facing mothers with young children is the lack of day care provision, which is reported to be lowest in Latvia, as compared to other European countries, and almost non-existent for children younger than three years (Eglite 1998:22).

This inevitably leads to demographic changes. The most obvious one is the declining birth rate, which “indicates a trend towards the eventual extinction of the nation” (Reproductive Health in Latvia 1998:11). In Latvia the total fertility rate has fallen from 1.90 in 1980 and 2.02 in 1990 to 1.16 in 1996 (Latvian Women and Men 1997:30). If this trend continues it will inevitably lead to a cumulative loss of population, unless compensated by large-scale immigration.

As is well known, the challenge of decreasing fertility rates and ageing populations is also faced by countries in the west (Living conditions in Europe 1997). In Estonia and Lithuania, the fertility rates are somewhat higher (1.32 and 1.49 in 1996) but in Spain and Italy they are almost as low as in Latvia. In Sweden, the latest figure is approximately the same as in Lithuania, but as recently as 1990 it was as high as 2.1. This coincided with high child benefits and generous conditions for parental leave. During the 1990s the benefits for families and the conditions for childbirth were diminished, which was paralleled with decreasing birth rates.

The present Swedish government has announced renewed efforts to increase benefits for families, with the aim of favouring families with children. In other western countries, as for
example Italy and Spain, the economic burden of childbirth and child rearing, as well as other measures associated to a welfare state, are entrusted to the individual families, that is, to the mothers. This seems to be the path chosen in the Baltic countries as well.

The assumptions discerned behind these alternative approaches to family policy may be distinguished as either constructivist or essentialist. Sweden seems to have adopted a constructivist view to gender, according to which womanhood may be constructed with or without motherhood. Accordingly, women and men decide to have children, only if the conditions for raising a family do not involve unreasonable deprivation in time, money and work opportunities. Quite to the contrary, in an essentialist view womanhood is considered to be a biological condition, which inevitably leads to women having children, irrespective of the economic and professional consequences (Eglite 1997:52; Rungule 1997:319-320). This view has also been echoed in the political messages directed to women, during the period of transition in the Baltic countries. In these messages women are expected to take responsibility for reproduction, while renouncing professional ambitions. The future will tell which of these approaches women themselves use to define their destiny.

6. Universal Citizenship

We may conclude that data on the situation of women in the post-Soviet countries suggest that “the gender dynamic in the transition itself” works against women’s citizenship rights (Connell 1987:154). The newly-gained civil and political rights are gendered in ways that benefit men at the expense of women. Social rights, which were very much taken for granted in the socialist systems, have not kept pace with the increasing costs of living.

This leads us to ask which way to continue, when aiming for equal access for women and men to civil and political rights, a task common to citizens of the east and the west. Another question we pose is which way to go, when trying to remedy deficiencies in the delivery of social rights for women, as well as for men. In the west, we ask how to turn away from the dismantling of the welfare state, as suggested by advocates of the neo-liberalism. In the east, the mission seems to be to find resources for financing a welfare state, which guarantees “a modicum of welfare and security”, referred to by Marshall. The issue at stake is whether a universal citizenship is possible. The aim would be to offer equal civil and political rights to residents within a specific territory, as well as equal access to social welfare for women and for men, to meet their often differing needs.

In the by now old welfare state, a necessary solution might well be continued rights to social welfare, coupled to more opportunities for citizens to influence both the scope and the types of welfare measures received, by means of a contract. In the newly-formed Baltic states, the establishment of a welfare state, which gives benefits at a reasonable level to its citizens in need, has still not been accomplished. In this situation, it seems pointless to discuss the problems of the old welfare states. The challenge is, instead, to find ways to comply with the foremost condition of a modern state, which is the power of taxation (Pierson 1996:30). The total burden of taxes in the Baltic states is still more similar to that of developing countries. It remains behind that of “the developed industrial countries and Central European countries in transition” (Venesaar and Hachey 1995:99). Until this has been achieved, no state-formation will be able to guarantee the rights generally associated with citizenship in a modern state.


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