



CITIZENSHIP AND ECOLOGY: A CLOSER LOOK AT OBLIGATIONS, RIGHTS AND EXPECTATIONS TO AND FROM NATURE

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ABSTRACT – This article tried to take a closer look at citizenship as well as the interaction of human and nature from the lens of ecology. Citizenship and ecology are two concepts that are closely linked as they try to view the rights, responsibilities and expectations of individuals to and from their communities and environment. This paper aimed to: understand and make sense of citizenship from the ecological perspective; examine the converging and diverging nature of citizenship and ecology; and analyze the citizen's obligations, rights and expectations to and from nature. Understanding citizenship from an ecological perspective provides a broader view of making sense of citizenship since it allows us to see the interdependence and interrelatedness of the members of a community. Citizens can no longer be concerned with his or her immediate environment and community only, but should be conscious of the various ecosystems and how these ecosystems affect them.

Keywords: Citizenship, ecological perspective, community, environment

INTRODUCTION

The concept of citizenship is viewed differently by people, groups, society and culture and continues to evolve over the years. Historically, the term citizenship entails exclusivity. For the Greeks, citizenship was an inherited privilege which carried with it the right to vote; to be elected and appointed in government offices; to be part of juries; and to be able to participate in political debates among equals (Bachmann and Staerkle, 2003). During those times, a large number of residents of Athens were not able to avail of their rights and were restricted to become citizens. According to Smith (2002) in Bachmann and Staerkle (2003), the first and oldest meaning of citizenship is a person with political rights and allowed to participate in processes of self-governance. Abowitz and Harnish (2006) noted that the term citizenship has a complex and evolving history. Isin (2009) noted that the challenge to scholars is to ask the right question of 'what is called *citizenship*' implying a plural and contested way of interpreting this term.

According to Abowitz and Harnish (2006), in theory, citizenship "confers membership, identity, values, and rights of

participation and assumes a body of common political knowledge." Marshall in Gans (2005) highlighted the following key attributes of citizenship: political equality with citizens having a say in political decision making; legal equality with citizens having access to court of law that are manned by co-citizen; and socio-economic participation for all people.

Globalization, changes in political system, and the advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have considerable impact on how citizenship is viewed. In the past, citizens of a nation state are limited to their respective internal affairs and concerns. With globalization and increase in migration of Filipinos abroad, this view has been transformed. There is a need to look at a broader and more macro perspective of citizenship.

Unlike citizenship, the study of ecology has fairly been stable. However, its components and subsystems continue to evolve over the years. Cunningham and Saigo (2001) defined ecology as the scientific study of relationships between organisms and their environment including the "examination of life histories, distribution, behavior of individual species, structure and

functions of natural systems at the level of populations, communities, ecosystems, and landscapes.” The term ecology (from the Greek word *oikos* which means dwelling or house or home) was first used by natural scientists in the late nineteenth century (Crumley 1998). According to Begon, Townsend and Harper (2006), ecology deals with three levels of biological hierarchy: organism (concerned with how individuals are affected by the environment and vice versa); population (deals with the presence or absence of species as well as their abundance, rarity, trends and fluctuations); and community (deals with the composition and organization of ecological communities).

Due to recent environmental disasters, the issue on environmental challenges made it high in political agenda. This article tried to take a closer look at citizenship as well as the interaction of human and nature from the lens of ecology. Citizenship and ecology are two concepts that are closely linked as they try to view the rights, responsibilities and expectations of individuals to and from their communities and environment. This view argues that the focus is not on the effects of the environment and the person with each other but on the shared nature of the relationship between organisms and their environment (Greene, 2008).

This paper aimed to:

- 1) Understand and make sense of citizenship from the ecological perspective;
- 2) Examine the converging and diverging nature of citizenship and ecology;
- 3) Analyze the citizen’s obligations, rights and expectations to and from nature.

METHODOLOGY

The authors gathered and analyzed literature from both published journals and unpublished graduate thesis on citizenship. These literatures on citizenship were analyzed using the ecological view or perspective. The ecological thinking used in this study was adapted from the work of Berkowitz, Ford, and Brewer (2005). This view proposes five key ecological systems that somehow departs from current and traditional

ecological view: ecological neighborhood or ecological address; ecological basis of human existence; the ecology of the systems that sustains us; the globe as an ecosystem and our impacts on it; and genetic or evolutionary system.

Themes or categories were constructed based on the convergence and divergence of citizenship and ecology.

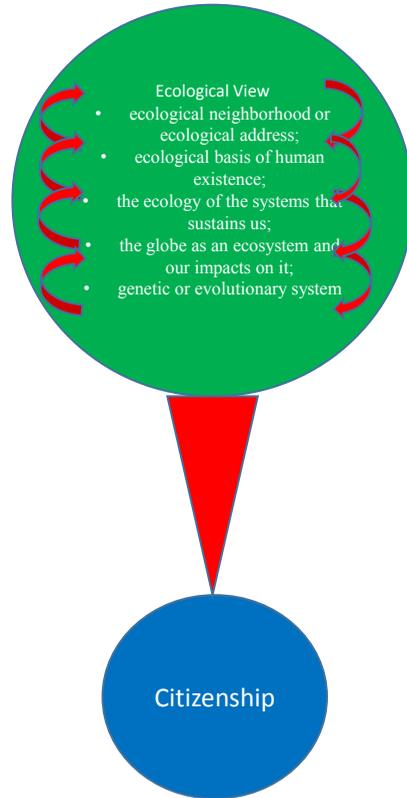


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Citizenship from the Ecological Perspective

Citizenship and ecology are two concepts that may seem quite different but are

somehow closely linked. Both concepts view the world in terms of interrelated and interdependent systems with all members having their own individual roles to play, and contribute to a bigger goal for the community and society.

According to Pashby (2008), citizenship can be referred to as membership to a group or to a specific political community. Patten (2001) in Pashby (2008) identified the following key questions surrounding the debates on citizenship: first is on citizenship status and who can become a full member of the community; second relates to the entitlements a citizen can get as a result of that status; and third is about the expectation of the community on the full members. Viewing these issues from an ecological perspective means understanding how each one is connected to the local environment and how this interrelationship affects and is also affected by the people living within that community (Berkowitz, Ford, and Brewer 2005). It is the community, members of the community, and established structures and processes within the community that determine the membership status of an individual.

Viewing citizenship from an ecological perspective also means being conscious of the “essential movements of matter and energy that sustain human and connect us with both local and distant ecosystem” (Berkowitz, Ford, and Brewer 2005). Just like with citizenship, people are no longer just concerned with his or her immediate community but should be conscious with the bigger picture, especially with the rapid globalization. Everything becomes connected with globalization. This affects heavily the movement of citizens as well as the various systems needed to survive. According to Berkowitz et al (2003) in Berkowitz, Ford, and Brewer (2005), people need to start understanding the different systems such as agro-ecosystem, fiber-producing ecosystems, fish-producing ecosystems, waste-assimilating ecosystems, clean eater-providing systems, energy-yielding systems, and human settlements. With the increasing complexity of the relationship of human and nature, citizens can no longer be complacent and just rely on what the environment can offer without understanding the ecosystem. One major

advantage of globalization is the increasing awareness of citizens, on the global scale, of the challenges we face.

Citizenship and Ecology: Obligations, Rights and Expectations to and from Nature

Table 1 shows the themes that were identified showing the convergence and divergence of citizenship and ecology.

There were varying interpretations on the concept of citizenship. Different authors used different terms that were associated with the concept of citizenship. Some of the concepts synonymously used were nationalism, patriotism, national identity and civics.

Niche and Habitat

National identity is “an attachment, a loyalty or a sense of belonging to the nation-state” (Doronila, 1983). As in ecology, an organism is not treated as a separate entity but always viewed from its habitat or environment, the citizen as an individual cannot also be treated disjointedly from his nation-state. But as in various environments and habitats, citizens and their relation to nations and states vary according to their locations on the map. According to Lee (2010), Eastern societies tend to be relationalistic, which is more focused on how one relates to self and others such as family and friends, the nature and the state. Using this view, a person is expected to be a good individual to be considered a good citizen. Whereas in Western societies, citizenship is fundamentally political, the focus is on the individual and the state (Lee, 2010). This condition according to Bronfenbrenner (1994) states that the microsystem and macrosystem have a relationship on developing a person and the immediate environment. Direct contact and personal relations of one with others, which describe a microsystem, shows how an individual relates to other individuals in a political or apolitical manner that can affect the wider society. Macrosystems, on the other hand, are the totality of interrelationships of the people towards the state and society.

With the advent of changes in the physical and social environment, a thin line of demarcation exists between the micro and macrosystems. The citizens are expected to get out of their social, political and cultural habitat to order to dominate the society, which in turn affects the power distribution in society. Power is one intangible resource that affects the growth of a nation. People in power must continue to motivate the members of the state to sustain their sense of a

Table 1. Themes showing the convergence and divergence of citizenship and ecology.

<i>Common Theme</i>	<i>Citizenship Framework</i>	<i>Ecology Framework</i>
Niche and Habitat	Citizens have specific roles to play based on their negotiated role in their respective communities.	Each species has niche or role it plays in the environment as defined by what the species eats, how it reproduces and what it does (Sutton and Anderson 2010).
Resources	Citizens manage their resources and apply technology to improve production of resources needed. Cultural practices are key element in resource availability	Resource availability determines the population size of organisms. Left on their own, organisms interact harmoniously and symbiotically.
Community Participation and engagement	Citizens have to perform certain functions in a community, and participate and engage in community activities.	All species interact and are in some form of relationship with each other. This relationship could be mutually beneficial or not (Sutton and Anderson 2010).
Evolution and Adaptation	Differential persistence of behaviors of people through time as a response to the environment through collective behavior and/or technology (Sutton and Anderson 2010).	Organisms evolve and adapt to the changes in their environment through natural selection
Boundaries and laws	Created by lawmakers, voted by majority of the people; upheld and enforced by designated people	Organisms span enormous ranges that changes, when introduced in one area often affect the environment at great distance. Ecosystems generally work in widely separated function but essentially function as one great working whole. (Marsh and Grossa, 2005)

fulfill their obligations as global citizens and be part of the bigger global niche.

Resources

In ecology, the growth and survivorship of organisms are greatly affected by resource exploitation. Competition over resources among species happens that influence their distribution and evolution (Begon, Townsend and Harper 2006). Citizens of a nation, just like in ecology, compete for scarce resources. These resources take the form of material and non-material goods. People would vie to take control of the economy in

community and sense of a nation. This sense of being a nation can be considered as a very important resource. It needs protection so as not to be controlled by others. The desire of a nation to obtain or maintain its independence and retain its distinct characteristics and interest has to be protected and propagated.

Community Participation and Engagement

Citizenship can be also viewed through civic education, which is the portion of the school curriculum that socializes learners to membership in their political community at all national and

local levels (Laboga, 1997). Its explicit aims usually include loyalty to the nation, knowledge of the history and structure of authority, obedience to laws and social norms, belief or fundamental value of the society such as equality, interest in political participation, sense of political efficacy and skill in analyzing political communications. Through civic education, students are taught how to participate in community life and to work for common good. It is the subject area that seeks to educate the future citizens as participants in a democracy (Grio, 2003). However, there have been questions on the level of participation and engagement of the citizens with the affairs of the state. With regards to political citizenship, voting is considered as its minimum equivalent, but other obligations are expected among citizens such as being engaged and informed individuals (Bueker, 2009).

Interdependence is one characteristic of ecology wherein each organism plays a very crucial role for the conservation and preservation of the environment. All species interact and are in some form of relationship with each other. This relationship could be mutually beneficial or not (Sutton and Anderson 2010). Citizens of a particular nation or state need to continuously interact with one another to foster the progress of their nation. This includes the various sectors and institutions of the society such as the government, the school, the church, the family, and the mass media. Each institution plays a particular function to enhance and develop the sense of citizenship among its people. The interrelatedness of these institutions is very important in nation building and in developing the concept of citizenship among its people.

Evolution and Adaptation

According to Greene (2008), the ecological approach does not focus on the effects of the environment and the person with each other, but on the shared nature of the relationship between organisms and their environment. One of the major concepts of ecological perspective is the ability of organisms to change and likewise change their physical environment. Mutual influence occurs between each other. Central to this

perspective is the concept of adaptation, which is highly evident when an individual adapts to the demands of his state in the form of policies and laws imposed among the people. In turn, the state is also shaped and affected by how people respond to these policies. Urbiztondo (1995) defined national identity as allegiance of people to the state or nation. Citizens owe allegiance to their state. The people retain the sovereign power and the state in return, protects the people's civil and political rights.

The ecological perspective also looks into how organisms survive and develop in their physical environment. Organisms evolve and adapt to the changes in their environment through natural selection. Individuals, as citizens, have also evolved through time. The oldest and most common definition given about citizenship is political citizenship and state membership (Bueker, 2009). Loyalty to one's state is the central issue of citizenship. However, worldwide changes have effected changes with the nation-states. Hence, global citizenship emerged from these changes. According to Kennedy (2008), global citizenship is seen as creating tension between the local values and increasing global commitments. This was driven by commitments to 'one world' philosophies or by the desire to break down the negative effects of nationalism (Kennedy, 2008). Furthermore, global citizenship is linked to global economic participation (Schultz, 2007).

Boundaries and laws

According to Marsh and Grossa (2005), all ecosystems occupy space on the surface of the earth, and these ecosystems are functionally connected to that space. This shows the interrelatedness of the organisms to one another and emphasizes the importance of biodiversity. Thus, environmental regulations are implemented to protect the ecosystem. The scope of these laws transcends nations. Nations have their own system of implementation according to their own needs and conditions. Citizenship, on the other hand, is viewed differently. According to Spencer (1995), acquiring full citizenship rights is based solely on one's nationality status. This did not matter so much before, but it is now an issue in the recent years because of the growing number of people who are staying outside their country. The onset of

migration has expanded the boundaries of citizenship. Individuals are subjected to the laws and regulations of the state that they are in, and yet still under the jurisdiction of their own nations. Crises arise with regards to issue of nation-state, globalization and multi-cultural movements since one can no longer draw the line between nationals, citizens, foreigners and nationals (Benhabib, 2005). This has been supported by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that all residents, whatever their nationality status may be are entitled of civil rights (Spencer, 1995).

Just like ecosystems which generally work in widely separated function but essentially function as one great working whole, citizenship of an individual must respond to the demands of both his or her local community and the wider global nation as well.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding citizenship from an ecological perspective provides an alternative and broader view of making sense of citizenship. It allows us to see the interdependence and interrelatedness of the members of a community. Likewise, it enables us to be conscious of the effects of each member on one another and on the environment. Citizens can no longer be concerned with his or her immediate environment and community only. Citizens should also understand the various ecosystems and how these ecosystems affect them. This research shows that citizenship does not only confer rights but also demands obligations and expectations.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

The first author conducted the literature search, identified the convergence and divergence of ecology and citizenship, identified the themes, and summarized the results and discussion. The second author initiated the concept, wrote the introduction and methods, and reviewed the paper.

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