Somers, Margaret (2008): Genealogies of Citizenship. Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to have Rights. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

„Citizenship at its most basic is a mechanism for inclusion and exclusion, and thus a means for establishing or prohibiting membership in political entities that vary in scale from supranational to local.“ (p. 21)

“Large numbers of immigrants and their descendants have become permanent denizens of advanced industrial societies, yet the status of full citizenship remains either beyond reach or available in less than complete form.” (15)

“One of the most interesting challenges for citizenship has been that of “post-nationalism” (Bosniak 2006; Cohen 1999; Sassen 1996, 1998, 2001, 2006a; Soysal 1994). Several iterations of the idea have been generated by transformational dilemmas of the last decades.” (16)

Abstract Ch1: Introduction

* Citizenship and market-fundamentalism (MF): Citizens as rights-bearers and full members of society are under attack from an idea inspired by market-fundamentalism: That rights should be contractual, thus conditional upon merit.
* Citizenship is an instrument of inclusion as well as of exclusion
* Citizenship is the right to have rights, following Arendt’s and Earl Warren’s conception. Citizenship is empirically unthinkable without social recognition of all members as morally equal. Institutions defend the right to have rights against the market powers.
* Somers’ analytical idea is to give a genealogy of citizenship to understand the time-variant interplay of ideas and empirical manifestations of citizenship. She wants to denaturalize the present in order to proof the historical contingency of social realities.
* Social movements for equal rights can be framed as economically motivated class struggles or as identity politics along other fissures such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, race … Somers endorses the latter conception because it allows the consideration of rights for specific *groups*. (17) The identity aspects of citizenship are yet to be examined.
* The concept of civil society emerged to open up a third sphere besides state and market. (18-19)
* Somers’ **architectonics of citizenship**: “Metaphorically, it is a continuous relational triadic assemblage among the state, market, and civil society, in which the site and direction of power is the subject of constant struggle – a struggle mediated through the public sphere. This shifting model represents the analytic infrastructure at the heart of my citizenship theory.” (35)
* She provides two contrasting models of citizenship

1. a dystopian model of citizenship imperiled

* “from a triadic balance of power, in which the social state protects citizens in civil society against full exposure to the market, to one which citizenship collapses into a dyadic instrument of unbalanced power pitting an alliance of state an market against individuals – now bereft of both state protection and membership in civil society.” (37)

1. a democratic socially inclusive model of citizenship

* “In direct contrast to a market fundamentalist one, a democratic citizenship regime requires a recalibrated balance of power in which the state, market, and civil society all coexist in a pluralist universe, each able to sustain its own discursive logic. The one twist is that the discourses of civil society must be a little “more equal” than those of market and state.” (42)
* Her three most important references are: Polanyi, Arendt, T.H. Marshall
  + Polanyi: social naturalism is market-fundamentalism’s ally against state-protected civil society. Institutions are there to defend civil society.
  + Arendt and T.H. Marshall: without social recognition there are no full citizenship rights

Abstract Ch2: Genealogies of Katrina

“It should not surprise us that when Hurricane Katrina hit, the cries of New Orleanians for help and rescue would go unanswered for days. Katrina simply conformed their status as surplus, disposable, and unrecognized. Katrina briefly opened a window onto the socially excluded.” (116)

Katrina shows the result of market fundamentalism intertwining with a tradition of racism. The contractualization of citizenship hit hardest the most disadvantaged. According to the contractual logic, people are responsible for their fortune and if they fail to avoid poverty it’s their fault (“blaming the victim”). Black people are particularly disadvantaged in that race because they already started from a lower position and fight their way up under harder conditions.

Part of the contractualization is the cut-back of (unconditional) welfare programs. This is justified by MF’s preachers (p.81) using the rhetoric of “perversity thesis”, “culture of dependency” (p.80)., and “welfare narcotic (p.99f). Somers terms MF an ideational movement because of the use of anti-welfare rhetoric. MF is not to be confused with slim state ideals; while they may use the same rhetoric, MF-logic does not reduce the size of the state but changes who supports it and who benefits from state expenditure. One important dichotomy is that of security/military state and social state where MF obviously favors the first.

The Katrina disaster is a proof of MF’s success. The history of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mirrors MF’s logic. Funding for the agency was decreased over the years and it was misused by presidents to offer positions to their (inexperienced) cronies.

Abstract Ch6: Civil Society vs. Social Capital

“Dazed by the golden glitter of the Trojan horse, we have been dazzled by the social in social capital to collude with a tragicomedy of social science – one in which social capital is bereft of the social, and Solidarity’s [Solidarnosc] vision of civil society has been turned into a neighborhood bowling league. Social capital is bad for reducing poverty or elevating civic cultures; and it is bad for sociology – as a discipline and as a social project. Above all, it is very bad for democratic citizenship.” (p. 253)

“But there was a distinction between the civil society movement and the others, a distinction so great that the social capital would come to represent a deep and abiding oppositional threat to that of civil society. Whereas the motivational logic behind the social capital movements was to identify an antistatist site of the social, with perhaps the single exception of the “Putnamites” this was a utility-generating view of the social that put it in firm alliance with the market. The vision of civil society carried by the democratic left was also deeply antistatist. In contrast, however, their conception of civil society equally demanded autonomy from the market.” (p.217)

The social can only be thought of as relational, the concept of capital assumes individual agents at its basis. Thus, social capital is a contradiction in itself. Bourdieu is an exception to this. He introduced the concept of social capital as part of his relational concept where agency is always thought as related and contingent on the structure action is confined by. Other proponents of social capital theory like Becker and Coleman claimed that the whole of society can be analyzed as markets (cf. 229). While well intended, Putnam ignores the significance of political power when explaining democratic citizenship and its conditions. Somers’ alternative to social capital is the idea of civil society.

* civil society vs. social capital
* civil society vs. “the end of history” (1989/90)

Why neo-conservatives and market fundamentalists prefer SC of CS and how SC contributes to marketizing the social (p242ff):

1. the community is a site where responsibility can be situated
2. SC implies moral responsibility for self-help
3. SC pronounces duties instead of rights (argument also used by new labour etc.)
4. SC to safe the market from its excesses: market’s bitch and safeguard

SC ignores the role of unions in civil society’s success

SC has ideational destructive power

SC is a devil in disguise