

Kalu N. Kalu, **Citizenship: Identity, Institutions, and the Postmodern Challenge**, New York: Routledge, 2017, 148 pp., \$67.17 (hardcover).

Reviewed by

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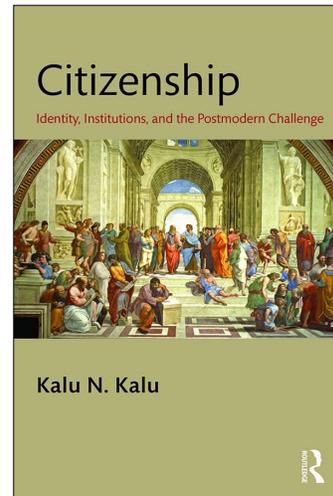
Kalu N. Kalu's work ***Citizenship: Identity, Institutions, and the Postmodern Challenge*** is focused on the construct of citizenship, demonstrating the ongoing challenges in both conceptualization and practice. Starting with the epistemological foundations of citizenship theory, his arguments and analysis are organized in nine chapters, evolving from a historical approach to Greco-Roman and liberal conceptions of citizenship to postmodern conceptions of identity, the sovereign state, and citizenship praxis.

The concept of citizenship has been much studied in the past 40 years, suffering, according to Kalu, from some misinterpretations and "continuing epistemological confusion" (p. 1). Main questions explore the ontology of citizenship, individual versus collective rights and responsibilities, and concepts of justice and fairness.

Citizenship is a construct. In a sociopolitical context, it is a constitutionally consecrated principle, fostered among the people by the Constitution. Considering the epistemological foundations of citizenship theory, citizens have a dual responsibility of consenting to the laws and obeying fellow citizens in their ruling authority. The balance between these two dimensions provides "a nourishing environment for the growth and vitality of the republic as well as citizenship" (p. 1). Yet daily life includes different levels of trust, information asymmetry, political power, limiting social structures and stratification, and "different sets of priorities, obligations and interests, and value judgments that may be both incommensurable and irreconcilable" (p. xi).

Kalu argues that "citizenship has traditionally been construed as a form of right in lieu of the state" (p. xi), deriving from democracy and justice, since "a citizen is someone who has democratic rights and claims of justice" (Kymlicka & Norman, quoted in Kalu, 2017, p. 2). However, this concept considers a passive acceptance of citizenship rights; in contemporary citizenship theory, it is crucial to reconcile the dimensions of citizenship rights and citizenship obligations, that is, the passive and active exercise of citizenship. Thus, the theory of citizenship has to be developed considering "substantive and procedural requirements" (p. 4) revolving around the construct of equality, obligation, right, and entitlements, shaped according to the interests of the state.

Therefore, the author's starting point "is the focus on the practice and experience of citizenship" (p. 17), conceived "as status, right and obligation" (p. 18). The author proposes four general environments of citizenship:



1. Political: Grounded in a state with defined geopolitical boundaries and sovereign authority regarding law, justice, entitlements, sanctions, and punishments, the state circumscribes the scope of free expression of citizenship. In addition, the political environment includes an economic system that provides income-earning jobs for citizens.
2. Individual: Embodied in individual autonomy and judgment, the conditions provide for the expression of rights and obligations.
3. Social: Tied to the individual environment of citizenship, the social environment comprises family, friends, neighbors, and society, among which citizenship may be expressed: "Although an individual can still express certain measures of autonomy, freedom and judgement, his position as a free moral agent is limited to those exercises of right that do not infringe on the rights of others" (p. 15).
4. Professional: Involves the roles of individuals in their professions.

The definitions of these environments highlight the need for a conception of citizenship that stresses the balance between societal demands and individual choices, between a normative right (law, rules) and an instrumental outcome (practice and its consequences). But this balance is also tainted by a never-ending discussion of the concepts of self-interest and public interest. In the political environment, public servants are elected and nominated with the mission of public service, which encompasses the public interest. Nevertheless, self-interest is a "generally inescapable aspect of human nature" (p. 40), and even when complying with the general interest, public servants are also serving their own interests tied to the maintenance of their income-earning jobs.

Considering world events with "impact on our traditional notions of citizenship, identity and the concept of the sovereign state" (p. xi), and sociological and political theory evolution, Kalu's reflection about postmodernism and postmodern conception of citizenship forces him to analyze how "stateness" and cultural identity examples make the contingent dimension arise, proposing a sort of "third way" in the practice of citizenship.

Because citizenship is an integrative phenomenon rooted in a matter of individual choice, it is also contingent. A community's development depends on its members' will, initiative, and compliance with rules. As such, communities are founded in fluid and somehow unpredictable frameworks: "Its sustainability depends on the mutuality of interests and the scope of distributive benefits and opportunities it offers" (p. 8) to each member. The contingent dimension encompasses individuals' rights to struggle for membership and participation and to gain degrees of autonomy and control over their lives (p. 67).

Related to postmodern contentions, a wide net of complex issues, including rights and obligations; the diversification and individuation of tastes, lifestyles, and ideological differences; the doctrine of state sovereignty and authority; ideas of justice and equality; citizen participation in

governance; and global citizenship, immigration, and the evolution of hybrid communities, "stand at odds with any assumed political consensus on the status and privileges of citizenship" (p. 53).

As a reactionary movement to the validity of universal principles, postmodernism operates in the logic of discontinuities and differences, casting doubt on concepts of truth and the existence of a shared objective reality. By deconstructing the concepts, postmodernism deprives them of corporeality and context. Citizenship, for instance, is seen as a form of consciousness that can be expressed anywhere, at any time, under different situations. "Citizenship is seen as a mindset that when collectively expressed . . . sets in motion the very social processes . . . that drive collective action" (p. 59).

Despite a somewhat emancipatory discourse around citizenship, Kalu reasons that citizenship is a social phenomenon that organizes specific political and social relations, validating collective norms and legitimizing activity. When exposed to postmodernism hermeneutics, "it loses its essential quality as a binding force that undergirds evolving reciprocal relationships between the state and citizen" (p. 59).

In sum, one must look at citizenship as transcending both the universality of rights and the pragmatism of individual obligation, since it implies general rules and a social contract between the state and the citizen. The state exists to offer an institutional basis for human actions and is made by individuals who get involved in activities within the context of existing institutions, laws, rules, and regulations, besides the fundamental social norms and traditions. Facing threats to their cultural coherence provoked by multiculturalism and transnational immigration, current democratic states are also challenged in their sovereignty and security.

Still, there is a constant call for citizen participation and engagement in governance. Citizenship is a means to an end: administrative responsibility and legitimacy. Yet doubts remain about the "effectiveness of citizen participation in governance and how it has been used to legitimize policies that may be detrimental to citizens' interests" (p. xi).

In Western democracies, citizens elect their representatives, and they also must hold them accountable for their governance actions. Citizens' participation is then tied to growing cynicism and lack of confidence in the political and administrative system (and elected actors), leading to changes in the way participation is envisaged. Besides voting and paying taxes, citizens get involved in recall petitions, public opinion polls, public hearings, advisory boards, citizen commissions, community task forces, protests, litigation, and so on, demanding effective representation and accountability.

It therefore remains in doubt as to what extent citizen participation is a contribution to the strength of democracy. Involving citizens in shaping public policy may create a sense of pluralism and legitimacy, since more people "participate," but it may impede innovation and does not reflect the broad social and political preferences of the larger society. As such, it may become "a celebration of the process (normative democracy) as opposed to what desirable end it can provide (substantive democracy)" (p. 89).

In addition, the state, as the basis for inclusion and exclusion, is under pressure, and the citizenship concept is not immune to a world of unfolding moral decline, where the boundaries between civility and despicability become narrower every day.

Kalu's work discusses and synthesizes several questions that surround the ontology and practice of citizenship in a volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous world, fixing his analysis in Euro-American centrism. Studies surrounding citizenship and the reconfiguration of the power and functions of Euro-American states have come to make complexity and changes even more difficult to understand. Kalu highlights how the essence of the concept of citizenship has not changed despite the postmodern hermeneutics and consideration of citizenship as a "state of mind." Nevertheless, the book urges reinstatement of individual moral obligations and revitalization of the social contract to lend support to hybrid communities and make it possible to build consensus and peaceful conviviality.