"(Re)Defining Citizenship: Changing Conceptions of Belonging in the United States, 1865-Present"


If enough citizens display a robust sense of belonging to the same political community, social cohesion is obviously strengthened. As we will see, differences between conceptions of citizenship centre around four disagreements: over the precise definition of each element (legal, political and identity); over their relative importance; over the causal and/or conceptual relations between them; over appropriate normative standards. At first glance, the two models present us with a clear set of alternatives: citizenship as a political office or a legal status; central to an individual’s sense of self or as an occasional identity. Aiming to realize the original republican ideal in the present context would be a disaster, as was the Jacobins’ attempt during the French revolution (Walzer 1989, 211).