Introduction

Citizenship is a dynamic concept! The citizenship experience fluctuates between concerns for status and the reality of praxis, and in so doing, engenders certain dilemmas for the individual. There exists the dilemma between equality and uniqueness, couched as universalism and particularism, where the former requires assimilation/homogenization (i.e. national citizenship) and the other group, identity (i.e. tribalism). A further dilemma is that between the passive or private citizen (the top-down state option) and the active or public citizenship (in terms of local participatory action or institutions) involving bottom-up, grass roots, political discourse. A third dilemma views citizenship as a tense interaction between the values and demands of the public and the private arenas within civil society.

Little wonder that these dilemmas exist, as citizenship is both an exclusionary and a privileged experience, involving a reallocation of scarce resources and a discerning process of building identity on the basis of a common or imagined solidarity typically based on assumptions of ethnicity, religion and culture. As such, citizenship signifies not only a legal, political and national identity, but also an emotional and physical experience determined by who is included in and who is excluded from a particular community, especially that of the nation state. Additional to the complexity of meanings, citizenship also assumes notions of democracy, for in the developed world it is positioned to act as the platform to realize ‘community well-being, personal engagement and democratic fulfilment’ (Bosniak, 1998, 29).

Whether resulting from the dilemma, resource or building identity perspectives, citizenship today clusters around the notion of nation
Whether the present-day nation state as a foundation for sustainable and satisfactory citizenship is still viable is questionable, bearing in mind diminishing resources and the ever greater adoption of the military option using war as the mechanism for controlling the directional flow of precious oil, gas and metal ore-based commodities on which our societies currently depend. As a result, many question whether the greater pursuit of armed conflict for the purpose of resource acquisition will better the citizen experience. Many have begun to consider whether nationhood and its need for ever greater citizen loyalty is simply a smoke screen for very particular interests to engage in resource and wealth redistribution to their own favour.

On the basis that consideration of citizenship periodically requires re-examination as much due to the effect of changing circumstances, such as advances in information and communication technology (ICT), developments in military technology and the turmoil that can result from global financial transactions, this chapter explores and contrasts two divergent perspectives, those of world citizen and global citizen. In so doing, we contrast the notions of cosmopolitism and globalism, as world order philosophies, each having an impressive history emanating from Athenian participatory democracy and Roman representative democracy. We argue that representative democracy is on the ascendency leading to ever greater conflict and an ever greater wealth divide, which ultimately will undermine the democratic foundations of our society. We conclude that for democracy to survive and for the citizen to feel once more enfranchised to participate in the affairs of his or her community, the path conscientious citizens must take is to strengthen cosmopolitism. The chapter concludes by highlighting seven key considerations favouring cosmopolitism enhancement as a prelude to world citizenship becoming the democratic platform of the future.

World citizen vs global citizen

Throughout history, ancient (Socrates, 469–399 BCE; Aristotle, 384–322 BCE; Stoics, 334–262 BCE – see Vlastos, 1991), modern (Kant 1795/1963; Krause, 1811) and contemporary (Russell, 1957; Habermas, 2003) philosophers, religious leaders (Bahá'u'lláh,2 1844; Charles Taze Russell,3 1897/2008), statesmen (Marcus Aurelius, c178/1949; Winston Churchill, 2007), jurists (Hugo Grotius, 1625), pacifists (Gandhi, 1900/2007), political activists (Thomas Paine, 1776/1986; Emery Reves, 1945), poets (Dante Alighieri, 1468; Lord Alfred Tennyson, 1842), military men (Ulysses Grant, 1886), scientists (Albert Einstein) and scholars