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Title: Citizenship Learning : Contextual, Material and Political

Year: 2022

Version: Published version

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Please cite the original version:

Kontinen, T., & Holma, K. (2022). Citizenship Learning : Contextual, Material and Political. In K. Holma, & T. Kontinen (Eds.), *Learning, Philosophy, and African Citizenship* (pp. 17-38). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94882-5_2



Citizenship Learning: Contextual, Material and Political

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we discuss learning in relation to citizenship, ultimately presenting an account of citizenship learning. Both concepts are continuously contested and redefined in multiple academic traditions. When it comes to citizenship, historical reviews frequently begin description with the governance practices in the cities of Ancient Greece, quickly proceeding to the Enlightenment, with an overview of the French Revolution and citizenship rights, and the Constitution of the United States—both of which exemplify the birth of modern democracies—to more recent stages of neoliberalism and globalization. Notwithstanding the wide diversity of theoretical approaches to citizenship, whether liberal, republican or communitarian, the narrative follows similar lines. Introductions to theories of learning, for their part, examine everything from

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brain dynamics, through cognitive aspects of individual learning, to social learning and accounts of collective critical learning aimed at changing societal power relations, covering a wide terrain of psychological, socio-psychological, educational and sociological perspectives. In this chapter, our aim is not to offer a thorough review of these approaches but, rather, to conduct a selective reading to establish a particular account of citizenship learning.

What motivates us to discuss the concept of learning in relation to citizenship is that, although citizenship practices, competencies and capacities are considered central to the future of societies, there seems to be a kind of reluctance to bring the notion of learning to citizenship discussions. This might be because learning is often associated with the psychological and cognitive processes of an individual, whereas citizenship is fundamentally a societal and political phenomenon. While citizenship education is quite widely discussed both in the philosophy of education and in the studies of educational practices, learning, especially in informal settings and everyday encounters, although mentioned, is rarely conceptualized in detail. Our account of citizenship learning contributes to this lacuna.

Citizenship education, especially when conducted in institutionalized school settings, is often geared toward teaching citizens' rights and duties in a particular state, or promoting a specific ideal type of citizenship. Contemporary studies of citizenship, however, have broadened the common idea of it as a relationship between the individual and the state, inclusive of civil, political and social rights (e.g., Marshall, 1950), toward taking into account multilevel local and global spaces and communities where citizenship is performed. Novel ideas of citizenship challenge the possibility that it may be taught and its contents transmitted merely by means of formal schooling. Instead, they call for an account where citizenship is continuously learned in diverse spaces.

Additionally, as suggested by recent accounts of citizenship education (Peterson et al., 2020), the ideals of citizenship that are taught are intertwined with the contexts where they emerge. Most accounts of citizenship education are, explicitly or implicitly, located in Anglo-American or European liberal democratic worlds. To counteract this tendency, in this chapter we discuss our general account of learning citizenship in the context of Africa, the home of over a billion citizens—a choice which provides a reminder of the partiality of the typical narrative of citizens' evolution from Ancient Greek to contemporary multicultural societies, and the close relationship of concepts such as citizenship with

modernity and colonialism (Bhambra & Holmwood, 2021). From an African perspective, the story of citizenship is different, as institutions of citizenship as currently understood have not ‘evolved’ from African processes but are entangled with coloniality. To date, the colonial mindset continues to appear in discussions about citizenship in Africa that suggest it as something incomplete; indeed, it is as something in a continuous need to import from the more developed world (Boatcă, 2021). While a decolonization of the concept has been suggested (Isin, 2015), our attempt in this chapter is more modest. We merely aim to promote dialogue between citizenship studies and African contexts. Based on our research experience and reading, it is clear that what is understood as citizenship—both in scholarship on Africa and in lived experiences on the continent—is a dynamic mixture of concepts, institutions and ideas stemming from pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial times, and we see a certain resonance between it and current citizenship debates.

In this chapter, we suggest an account of citizenship learning that builds on three dimensions central to contemporary debates on citizenship: the *contextual*, the *material* and the *political*. Our account does not draw on a particular theoretical position on citizenship but, rather, seeks to articulate an idea of learning that encompasses these dimensions and can be further developed for empirical examination in diverse contexts. Previously, drawing from John Dewey’s (; b) philosophical pragmatism, we have elaborated on a framework of *growth into citizenship* (Holma & Kontinen, 2020; Holma et al., 2018). This approach holds that citizenship is constructed through participation in practices where certain habits of citizenship are acquired and potentially transformed and, thus, learned. Inspired by Lave (2012: 161–162)—who advocates on behalf of traditions that resist the theoretical and empirical treatment of ‘learning’ as an individual, mental exercise produced only in the institutional arrangement of schooling and teaching—we turn to some of these practices and their relationship with the three dimensions of citizenship. The outcome of such learning is best understood as new capabilities which strengthen one’s ability to exercise citizenship in relation to one’s rights, obligations, identity and belonging within diverse communities.

First, to address the contextuality of citizenship, we draw on the socio-cultural tradition that pays attention to the historical and cultural context of learning and the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment and introduces the notion of a zone of proximal development in defining the possibilities and limits of learning in particular

situations. Second, to consider the materiality of citizenship, we build on socio-material ideas of learning that focus on how learning occurs in practices and activities that entangle human beings with technologies, infrastructures, artifacts and other material objects. Third, to reflect the political dimension of citizenship, we discuss the role of politics and power in citizenship learning and explicate how the socio-cultural and socio-material account should and could involve the political dimension central to citizenship. We conclude with an articulation of our account of citizenship learning and reflections on its implications for the future.

2 CONTEXTUALITY IN LEARNING CITIZENSHIP

The emphasis on the contextual nature of citizenship is one of the main characteristics of current studies in the field. Contextuality is discussed from various angles, all of which have an effect on how learning should be conceptualized. First, *multidimensionality* has been underlined (Shachar et al., 2017: 7; Leydet, 2017) in definitions of citizenship, with the assignation of different roles to legal status, rights and obligations, participation, identity and the sense of belonging. Second, there are multiple accounts with a specific focus, such as economic, sexual, cultural and ecological citizenship (see chapters in Isin & Turner, 2002; Volp, 2017). Third, there are various articulations of how to conceptualize citizenship vis-à-vis polities or communities other than nation states, such as cosmopolitan citizenship (Kymlicka & Norman, 2007; Linklater, 2002), indigenous citizenship (Gover, 2017) or multilevel citizenship (Maas, 2017).

The idea of performing or exercising citizenship simultaneously in multiple communities is a common trend. For instance, Maas (2017: 646) argues for multilevel citizenship that acknowledges the coexistence of multiple polities even in the same territory. He refers mainly to simultaneous belonging in municipal, federal and state polities and argues that citizenship, in distinction from subjecthood, entails the idea of participation in decision-making. In a similar vein, Isin and Nyers (2014: 2) refer to citizens' membership in overlapping and nested polities, and Yuval-Davis has posited citizenship as a multi-layered (1999) or multitiered (1997) construct, given people's memberships in different local, national and transnational collectivities.

While some authors, such as Kostakopoulos (2008), have argued for a post-national framework and 'anational citizenship' based on domicile,

most constructs of multiple citizenship consider that the state is still an important and significant polity, particularly for the status of citizenship. However, citizenship enacted through claiming rights (Isin & Saward, 2013), for instance, can also be performed by those who do not have the official status of citizenship in a state (Rumelili & Keyman, 2016). Critical of the view that citizenship can solely be practiced vis-à-vis a nation state, Clarke et al., (2014: 141) suggest the notion of communities of citizenship: articulations of imaginaries of people and places, and the everyday experiences of their connections, in which citizenship is enacted and where citizenship, literally, takes place. Each community entails a different degree of recognition of connections and commonalities, and, hence, belonging, rights and obligations.

The current debates on new conceptualizations of citizenship have mainly been articulated in the context of the global North, as a response to increasing multiculturalism, to a growing number of people not being citizens due to their migration-related legal status and to the overall effect of globalization in weakening the role of nation states, the traditional locus of citizenship. Definitions of citizenship and its practical manifestations receive greater nuance when such debates are raised in the context of Africa, where multi-ethnic and multi-religious states have been rather the norm than the exception. Conceptually, stands on citizenship can be situated anywhere on a continuum ranging from claiming the universality of the concept, making it valid and applicable globally, to arguing for extreme African particularity by highlighting, for instance, autochthony (being of the soil) as central to citizenship as belonging (Geshiere, 2009). Moreover, some accounts emphasize African communality and the philosophy of Ubuntu, an understanding of shared humanity particular to Africa (Moyo, 2021) that implies that citizenship is inherently communal and not individual, while others suggest that in many African contexts, state citizenship is less relevant than the rights, moral obligations and belonging inherent to social orders revolved around ethnicity and kinship (Englund, 2004; Kelsall, 2008). Although these arguments critique the liberal, individualistic idea of citizenship as status in a state (Robins et al., 2008), they are nevertheless conversant with recent discussions in the citizenship literature.

The shared feature of these contemporary approaches is that citizenship is increasingly framed in ways other than the state-citizen relationship with its status, rights and responsibilities (Lazar, 2013). Following ideas of the multilevel or multi-layered nature of citizenship (e.g., Isin & Nyers,

2015; Maas, 2017: 646; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 1999), one is expected to exercise citizenship or perform the acts relevant to citizenship in various local, national and transnational contexts. Therefore, it can also be argued that learning citizenship is contextual and potentially realized in relation to multiple communities or polities simultaneously. How can such learning be conceptualized? This brings us to socio-cultural approaches to learning, which draw on a wide variety of theoretical inspiration, particularly the cultural psychology of L.S. Vygotsky (1896–1934). His legacy to socio-cultural approaches revolves around three main ideas: human learning originates in social, cultural and historical interactions; learning occurs in the ‘zone of proximal development’; and learning is mediated by psychological tools (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The zone of proximal development refers to a space where learning takes place in interaction with more experienced peers and, in Vygotsky’s account of children, with adults. Therefore, an overall idea in socio-cultural approaches is that learning and other processes categorized as ‘mental functions’ are intertwined with cultural, historical and institutional contexts through mediational means such as language (Wertsch, 1993).

Therefore, the notion of context is at the core of socio-cultural learning approaches (Danish & Gresalfi, 2018) wherein learning is located between individual and context and new knowledge is co-constructed in dynamic interaction with others, mediated by language and concrete tools. Here, the unit of analysis is the individual in context. These approaches to learning resonate with the contextual notion of citizenship which focuses on learning citizenship in interaction with the context rather than adapting or internalizing abstract principles of, for example, the nature of rights and duties stated in a nation’s constitution. They also resonate with Delanty’s (2003) definition of ‘cultural citizenship’, which refers to a continuous learning process whereby individual, social and cultural learning intertwines. The construction of meanings as shared interpretations of the world, beliefs and values is central to cultural citizenship. Meanwhile, the notion of zones of proximal development in learning citizenship relates to the notion of exploring citizenship as it is experienced and practiced in everyday lives (Kabeer, 2005). Here, learning that is potentially transformative of citizenship is not triggered by dissemination of new information about abstract ideas of citizenship distant from everyday life; rather it departs from citizens’ current ideas and practices concerning their rights, duties, belonging and identity, vis-à-vis the communities of which they are members.

So far, in taking the contextual nature of citizenship as a starting point, we suggest an account of learning citizenship which locates learning in interaction and encounters in social, cultural and historical contexts and takes place within a zone of proximal development. For educators, policy makers, NGOs and others who wish to promote citizenship learning, this implies that the ideas of citizenship imported from other historical and cultural contexts and from beyond the zone of proximal development are not potential objects of learning. Conversely, attempts to promote learning should start from the careful analysis of the context and current situation and be planned in negotiation with local views of the capabilities that would be worth learning.

3 MATERIALITY IN LEARNING CITIZENSHIP

If context is understood as mainly cultural, special attention must be paid to the role of language, beliefs and values. Additionally, however, we want to highlight the role of contextual material elements related to citizenship and citizenship learning. First, we suggest that the very material conditions that enable the exercise of citizenship require reflection. Second, we propose a view where learning occurs in practices in which human and material elements are firmly intertwined.

Material elements, such as property, have been at the core of definitions of citizenship since classical times (Balot, 2020), when owning property was considered a prerequisite for status as a citizen and the right to participate in decision-making; the classical Lockean liberal view also considers the right to private property central to citizenship. In more recent debates, the notion of economic citizenship has referred to the realization of rights to own property, but also to make work contracts and, further, to have labor rights (Woodiwiss, 2002). From a gendered perspective, Kessler-Harris (2003) has suggested a definition of economic citizenship that would not only mention property and labor, but also care and reproduction. She suggests economic citizenship should cover issues such as social benefits, public transport and education, which would ensure the fulfillment of economic citizenship as a ‘standing or status that enables men and women to fully participate in the democratic polity’ (ibid.: 159).

In general, economic and material conditions that bestow dignity are considered central to citizens’ rights and also enablers for the exercise of substantive citizenship through participation. In her human development

approach, Martha Nussbaum (2011: 34) argues that material conditions—being able to hold property and seek employment—are among the central capabilities that should be secured to all citizens. Relatedly, in the definition of poverty as capability deprivation, as suggested by the capability approach (Sen, 1999: 86), economic facilities, political freedoms and social facilities all intertwine to enhance people’s capabilities. Accordingly, the multidimensional poverty index widely used by development institutions regards poverty as multiple joint deprivations in the fields of health, education and living standards (Alkire & Santos, 2014).

Hence, the material conditions constraining the practice of citizenship, poverty, do not only refer to low income, but also to wider deprivation of property and basic social services such as education and health care. In some African areas traditionally characterized as poor, owning assets like land, livestock, houses and household items can play a crucial role in local understandings of good life (Brockington & Noe, 2021: 3) and, consequently, in gaining the agency to participate fully, at least in local communities of citizenship. In sociological citizenship studies, Baglioni (2015; 2016), for example, draws on Sen’s capability approach and posits a concept of material citizenship. He points out that while citizenship is a status, its realization is embedded in material resources, in which he includes not only tangible assets but also cultural and social capital. He argues that it is vital to examine how material resources and diverse forms of capital turn into capabilities to enact citizenship—and how the lack of them diminishes these capabilities.

A full account of citizenship learning processes, therefore, must pay attention to the material conditions in which citizenship is taking place. In light of this observation, here we turn to socio-material approaches to learning which make more fundamental arguments concerning materiality, claiming it is not only a condition of learning but an inseparable element in learning processes. Socio-material approaches to learning (Fenwick, 2015)—inspired by a number of theories, including actor-network theory (Latour, 2005; Law, 2009), cultural-historical activity theory (Engeström & Sannino, 2021), complexity theory (Davis & Sumara, 2006) or posthumanism (Coole & Frost, 2010)—generally pay attention to ways in which the material, the immaterial and the human constitute what is called ‘everyday life’ (Fenwick, 2010: 105) and, therefore, comprise inseparable elements of what it means to be a citizen and how learning happens.

Consequently, learning is understood as embedded in material action and interaction, and as a process where knowledge emerges from that action (Fenwick, 2010: 111–112). Materials like artifacts, tools, infrastructure, bodies and buildings are elements of any action and thus, can enable or constrain both the action itself and, in consequence, the learning that ensues. For example, Orlikowski (2010: 135) argues that capacities for action are enacted in practices characterized by ‘entanglements’ of humans and technologies. Actor-network theory (Latour, 2005) considers learning as ‘translation’, whereby human and material elements change each other in a process of creating new links and new actions. Activity theory (Chaiklin et al., 1999; Engeström, 2014) focuses on the ways in which learning as change is mediated by the concrete and symbolic tools and artifacts with which humans work on the objects of their activity. Therefore, in general, learning in socio-material perspectives refers to an enactment of a socio-material collective rather than the mental processes of an individual or something taking place solely in the interaction between individuals. Hence, the unit of analysis is the practice from which learning emerges.

The socio-cultural and socio-material approaches we have so far discussed both emphasize learning as taking place in joint practice, in contrast to learning that happens in a pedagogical relationship between educator and learner. In organizational learning, widely cited ‘practice theory’ (Ghedardi, 2000; Gherardi & Strati, 2012) emphasizes an understanding of learning as participation, something that takes place in the ‘flow of experience, with or without awareness’ (Ghedardi, 2000: 214). Practice, in this approach, is historical, material and indeterminate (ibid.: 220). In a similar vein, the notion of situated learning that takes place in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) emphasizes learning through participation: apprenticeship and learning in participation with more experienced others. Learning is understood as an ‘integral and inseparable part of social practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 53), a process in which practice and participants’ identities are continuously co-constructed. Approaches employing activity theory (Engeström, 2014) argue that learning takes place in a system where the joint work is geared toward a certain object, mediated by symbolic and material tools and characterized by particular division of labor and rules. A specific kind of expansive learning occurs when all the elements of an activity change as a consequence of contradictions within activity systems or between them.

Learning can also be conceptualized as ‘retooling’ in a context of an activity system (Miettinen, 2006).

So far, based on the contributions from socio-cultural and socio-material approaches to learning, we have suggested an account in which citizenship learning takes place in the course of everyday participation in the practices of the diverse communities of citizenship to which people belong. These practices are embedded in socio-cultural contexts that shape the zones of proximal development which include the infrastructures, buildings, artifacts and resources that enable diverse kinds of practices to take place. Further, tools and artifacts play an essential role in learning, in addition to interaction between human beings, and learning can be seen as an accomplishment of a socio-material practice. Based on these principles, learning citizenship is embedded in everyday practices in which people participate, rather than in acquisition of information at an education or training event about statuses, rights and responsibilities as citizens of a certain state. For those engaged in citizenship education, a focus on what people do together in their interactions with nature and available infrastructure, technologies and tools, and what kind of citizenship those enable and constrain, is a beneficial starting point.

4 THE POLITICAL ELEMENT IN LEARNING CITIZENSHIP

The third important dimension for citizenship learning is related to politics and power. Despite the multiple conceptualizations, citizenship remains an inherently political concept. In this chapter, we discuss two important aspects related to politics and power: the political conditions that enable and constrain the realization of certain kinds of citizenship and the power relations related to exclusion from and silencing within everyday practices.

One of the most used definitions in current citizenship studies revolves around the notion of *acts of citizenship* (Isin & Nielsen, 2008), where citizenship is understood as political subjectivity and political agency in the multiple social groups and polities in which people simultaneously participate (Isin & Nyers, 2014: 9). People can undertake acts of citizenship across these contexts, thus enacting and performing citizenship by making rights claims (Isin, 2017: 505, 501). In this account, citizenship is essentially about claiming rights and claiming the right to claim rights (Isin & Nyers, 2014: 8); it refers to something that enables subjects to become active claimants, rather than remain passive recipients. To be able

to perform acts of citizenship, one needs to have both the capacity and the authority to exercise rights and duties in a particular regime of citizenship—whether North-European, Anglo-American or postcolonial—which all have historically formed constraints on enacting citizenship (Isin & Nyers, 2014: 3): that is, particular political and legal institutions that shape the constellation of rights and duties and the space available for claim-making.

The current constraints in postcolonial citizenship regimes in Africa are partly based on the colonial legacies reflected in local legal and administrative state structures, initially established by colonial powers. Additionally, the colonial experience that full citizenship status can be granted only to the administrative elite, whereas most of the population would be considered subjects rather than citizens, continues to shape the imaginaries of citizenship (Mamdani, 2004). Today, most African countries are democracies and citizenship rights are determined in constitutions and include practices such as voting in multiparty elections; however, many are also what Tripp (2010) calls hybrid regimes where authoritarianism is the de facto form of governance. Notwithstanding multiparty democracy, opposition parties can be ignored, silenced, harassed or violently crushed, and citizens' critique and claim-making vis-à-vis the government silenced and restricted for decades. Consequently, the existing civic habitus (Pettit, 2016)—or habits of citizenship (Holma & Kontinen, 2020)—is geared toward fulfilling responsibilities rather than claiming rights. Moreover, when democratic institutions are weak, power is distributed through a system of patrimonialism (Cheeseman et al., 2020), whereby people enter personal patron-client networks to ensure their connections with economic and political power. Such networks are the main source of social security in situations where state provision is limited. In general, in the African context people can simultaneously identify as subjects, clients and citizens, which establishes a particular dynamic for performing citizenship (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012).

Another important political element is inclusion. Citizenship, understood as membership of a state or any other community, always has an inherent tension between inclusion and exclusion (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). While some are included in rights, duties, identities and belonging, others are simultaneously excluded (Bhambra, 2015). The mainstream canon of the evolution of citizenship narrates how some groups, such as the illiterate, property less, women or the indigenous, have been included in formal citizenship over the course of history (Boatcă, 2021);

nevertheless, despite formal citizenship status, many groups continue to suffer from unequal opportunities for economic and political participation. Additionally, groups devoid of formal citizenship, such as migrants, are easily excluded from exercising full participation in the societies of their residence. In discussing the notion of inclusive citizenship, Lister (2007) recalls how struggles for social inclusion lie at the core, not only at the level of states, but also when the focus is on multitiered and spatially grounded citizenship in a variety of other contexts.

Therefore, sensitivity to power dimensions is central to all communities where citizenship is exercised, shared concerns approached and shared decisions made. For example, the theories of deliberative democracy, focusing on situations of equal speech opportunities and the possibility of consensus based on the best argument, have been criticized by radical pluralist theorists of democracy for bypassing the structures of injustice that may play a role in what is selected as the conclusions of consensus (Dryzek, 2005; Fraser, 1989; Wahl, 2018). In a similar vein, participatory and community development initiatives can fall into romanticizing communities as naturally democratic and egalitarian settings, whereas they may actually be characterized by local power asymmetries (Kontinen & Millstein, 2017). For example, local citizenship practices in Africa, such as the widespread women's saving and lending groups or local civil society organizations, are often governed by local elites who ensure that potential members fulfill certain criteria concerning livelihood level and general reputation as 'a good citizen' (Dill, 2010; Kilonzo et al., 2020). Thus, examination is needed of what Kontinen and Millstein (2017) call 'situated hegemonies'—the taken-for-granted ways of understanding good citizenship's relations to gender, income and other elements—and how they affect who can be included in communal practices.

Thus, politics and power are relevant to our account of learning citizenship. For instance, the proponents of radical pluralist theories of democracy stress that in citizenship learning one important dimension is recognizing the political nature of identities that play a role in the opinions and arguments presented in discussions (Ruitenberg, 2009; Kekki, this volume). In Biesta's (2011) account of learning citizenship, becoming a political subject in the first place 'includes explication of one's identity, criticality to the current order of society, claiming one's rights and contradicting the elite whatever its form: big corporations, powerful politicians and so on' (Kekki, this volume). In general, critical approaches to learning citizenship have focused on possibilities of

change and transformation through the promotion of active citizenship. Often based on Paolo Freire's (2000) 'pedagogy of the oppressed', critical approaches understand learning as a process geared toward conscientization: the identification of oppressive structures manifested in everyday life and initiating collective action to address them. Hence, pedagogy is perceived as a political practice that enables learners to be critical and engaged citizens (Giroux, 2010: 716), and learning requires education to avoid people being 'stuck with the local' and enable them to become conscious of wider power structures (Freire, 2014: 78).

It is also important to ask why—sometimes despite deliberate educational efforts—people do not transform into active and engaging citizens. In response, Pettit (2016) suggests that such learning requires changes in civic habitus, which is a longstanding, embodied way of being a citizen. Changing habitus is challenging, as the embodied enactment of citizenship takes place within collective experiences of power and oppression (Pettit, 2020). Thus, power here is something that is embodied in long-term experience, the realization and change of which should be the very content of learning new citizenship practices. Power positions can also guide the learning of other content. From a socio-cultural point of view, Chineka and Yasukawa's (2021) study of how an agricultural community in Zimbabwe learned to adapt its everyday practices in response to climate change showed how the zone of proximal development regarding agricultural practices was not so much about applying received knowledge of new, drought-resistant crops, but rather about avoiding a loss of social acceptance or power, or the risk of being ridiculed by other community members.

Overall, power has not been a central analytical category in socio-cultural or socio-material approaches to learning; rather, Contu (2014), for instance, has advocated paying attention to the power dynamics in and between communities of practice, and suggested a perspective wherein power is seen as a practical accomplishment embedded in practice. Similarly, Kontinen (2013) has shown that power is mentioned in activity theory as a feature of hierarchical divisions of labor and as the power to accomplish something emerging in activity but not systematically conceptualized. The notion of transformation prevalent in activity theory does not refer to change in power relations, but to something that is 'generated from below' with the co-creation of new forms of activities and the 're-orchestration' of social relations at work (Engeström & Sannino, 2021: 11). As Stetsenko (2021) observes, the transformations within an

activity system are not usually related to any particular historical-political struggles in the society where learning is taking place.

We argue that a notion of citizenship learning based on socio-cultural and socio-material approaches needs to pay attention to power and politics related to practices where the learning occurs. This requires, on the one hand, investigation of their political context, and how power dynamics enable and restrict certain citizenship practices, hence shaping potential zones of proximal development and affecting access to material resources such as infrastructures. On the other hand, there is also a need to acknowledge power relations that are embedded in practice by, for instance, scrutinizing who is excluded, the hierarchies in divisions of labor, the symbolic and practical manifestations of power related to tools, the diversified access to resources and the co-construction of practices and power positions within practices. While citizenship is understood as multi-layered and taking place in diverse communities, politics and power also manifest in the different levels of colonial legacies, political space for citizenship acts and power positions in practices.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have proposed an account of learning citizenship which locates it in interaction and practice rather than focusing on it as the mental process of an individual, thus taking seriously the contextual, material and political conditions of citizenship. We have identified three dimensions central to contemporary citizenship research—the contextual, the material and the political—which resonate with our broad understanding of citizenship as enacted vis-à-vis different communities ranging from the state to local and global levels.

Contextuality suggests that, in each case, citizenship is enacted in a particular socio-cultural context that shapes the kinds of rights, duties, belonging and identities that are at stake where the citizenship takes place. To address the contextuality of citizenship, we drew on socio-cultural approaches to learning that understand it to take place in certain cultural-historical contexts, in interaction and by moving within zones of proximal development. By materiality, we mean the material conditions that enable the realization of citizenship within diverse communities in the first place. Further, based on socio-material accounts, we suggested that learning is embedded in infrastructures, technologies and material artifacts. Both learning approaches were combined in the notion of practice and, thus,

we proposed citizenship learning to emerge in socio-material practices. The political dimension related to power referred, first, to the societal power constellations that constrain citizenship practices and, second, the power relations that manifest in inclusions in and exclusions from local practices of citizenship. Therefore, learning citizenship in social and material practices always includes the reproduction or transformation of power relations and power positions prevalent in each tier of multi-layered citizenship.

Notwithstanding the multi-layered idea, we consider the state as one of the strongest historically formed communities of citizenship, with each state having its own state-citizen relationships as a result. The state as a community of citizenship has been central in framing both the legal and socio-cultural contexts for citizenship and in potentially ensuring the material conditions of dignity required to exercise citizenship, including education, health care, infrastructure and conditions of property ownership. The community, or polity, of a state also continuously shapes the kinds of citizenship acts which are possible. However, in terms of everyday lives, especially in postcolonial, African citizenship regimes, citizenship is often constructed in multiple, local communities, where the state might not be very visible as a service provider or in its exercise of political power (Jones, 2009). Therefore, we argue that learning citizenship needs to be understood more widely than the mere education and training of citizens in their rights and duties vis-à-vis the state, and encouragement to actively claim these, as this might fall outside the feasible zone of proximal development. Rather, an account of citizenship learning should include exploration of the acquisition and transformation of citizenship in everyday participation. In other words, learning should not only be understood as a consequence of education and dissemination of knowledge, but as something that emerges in practices, in places the educational theorists would call informal.

For *citizenship learning*, it follows that the unit of analysis is not an individual who, regardless of conditions, learns new citizenship capabilities, but on the contrary, the very socio-material practice wherein learning takes place. Furthermore, citizenship learning is not only learning new knowledge or information, but learning embedded in action, manifested in performing and exercising citizenship in new ways and thus better responding to situations where rights, obligations, identities and belonging are at stake. This implies that citizenship learning and change in contextual conditions and practices are inseparable: in order to learn

new citizenship capabilities, change in the very conditions of citizenship is necessary, while new capabilities of performing and exercising citizenship will certainly change existing practices. As the practices are deeply rooted in cultural and historical conditions, it follows that, in order to promote citizenship learning, the concept of the zone of proximal development is central; only by understanding the socio-material conditions, significant communities of citizenship and power relations which shape that zone, can one design programs to support potential ensuing steps for learning citizenship in any particular location.

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