

## **(Im)mobility, ‘Hard to Reach communities’ and the practice of citizenship education**

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### **Introduction**

Our aim in this short conceptual chapter is to explore current understandings of the designation Hard to Reach when applied to communities, and issues arising from the development of interventions targeting such groups. By exploring the meanings attributed to the term in relevant literature, we will attempt to identify the ambiguities present in the definitions and understandings of Hard to Reach, also seeking to summarise those ambiguities that raise key questions about the designation. We will then associate these questions with conceptualisations of citizenship and citizenship education, and explore their implications for our understanding of the relationship between Hard to Reach spaces and the mainstream, and for the implementation of citizenship education interventions designed within the mainstream, intended for Hard to Reach groups.

Our discussion will then attempt to identify some characteristics of the spaces from which the identification of Hard to Reach communities and groups usually proceeds. We will suggest that one of the key characteristics of the groups occupying these spaces is (im)mobility, manifest in a variety of forms, and the level of this (im)mobility informs the group’s philosophical distance from those deemed Hard To Reach.

We will suggest that the identification of certain groups as Hard to Reach, and the notion of intervening and re-educating these groups might imply a simplistic understanding of education, a problematic understanding of citizenship education, and an ethically and

politically questionable understanding of the needs of marginalised groups and the process of marginalisation.

### **Towards a definition of 'Hard to Reach'**

A clear-cut and universal definition of hard to reach is indeed 'hard to reach'. Moreover, ambiguity and vagueness are common to underlying attempts to define, understand, and then design interventions for hard to reach groups. Our consideration of the designation, Hard to Reach, commences by highlighting some of these ambiguities. In the next section, we move on to discuss how these opacities could affect the approaches directed towards hard to reach groups, in particular the attempts to design appropriate citizenship education interventions for them.

When searching for definitions of Hard to Reach, it quickly becomes apparent that the term is very frequently associated, and often used interchangeably, with other terms used to describe populations in a disadvantaged social position or suffering exclusion. This is in essence rather inconsistent to the literate meaning of the term. This is because the challenges implicit in the term Hard to Reach seem to relate to the efforts of such groups to be reached and achieve inclusion, while the other terms seems to refer to opposite processes and forces, defining the isolation and marginalisation of groups. Common to both cases is that the point of reference from where groups are recognised as hard to reach or as excluded, is external to the groups themselves. Indeed, relevant literature seems to be written from the perspective of the occupants of the social space from which these groups have been excluded, with apparent intent to reach out and re-include them (Freimuth and Mettger 1990, Crozier and Davies 2007).

Constructed from within such spaces the efforts to re-include and reach the hard to reach seem to assign to those occupying these spaces (mainstream), not only the power to exclude, but also the roles of advocate and protector of the excluded. Moreover, in those cases where attempts to reach the hard to reach aim to offer a kind of re-education involving altering the behaviours and attitudes of the hard to reach, those making them seem to take on a missionary role. This is reflected in the assumptions about these groups that seems to permeate the literature, referring to ‘beneficiaries’ of the efforts to reach these groups. What remains unquestioned in the reviewed literature is that the effort to reach the hard to reach stems from concerns shared by those who apply this effort; they expect to achieve advantages, not principally for themselves, but rather for those who are to be reached. Certainly, nowhere in the literature searched did we encounter any expression of doubt concerning the scope of the efforts being exerted, from the point of view of the hard to reach. Thus, it might not be paradoxical then, to suppose that preconceptions about hard to reach groups that ‘perpetuate myths about groups that are discriminatory, fallacious, and patronizing’ (Freimuth and Mettger 1990: 234) are often held by those developing the interventions aiming to include and emancipate them.

Another area of ambiguity that arises with regard to the use of the term Hard to Reach relates to the plethora of groups that are included under this umbrella term. The scale and diversity of the designation is widely apparent in literature discussing hard to reach groups (Freimuth and Mettger 1990, Doherty *et al.* 2004, Brackertz 2007). Considering the stance from which hard to reach groups are viewed and relevant issues discussed, it is apparent that it is important not only to answer the question of how to identify ‘who’ has to be reached, but also to accept that the term implies a notion of homogeneity across distinct groups that may well be erroneous (Brackertz 2007: 1).

The prevailing ambiguities embodied within the concept have not always appeared prominently in working definitions of Hard to Reach, nor do these definitions offer a clear justification for selecting the term over others, such as ‘excluded’, ‘non-mainstream’, or ‘marginalised’. In fact, our search for such a justification led us to Health Science literature and studies discussing the dissemination of certain services to particular societal groups, then to discussions about research methodologies in the social sciences particularly concerning the sampling of marginalised groups, and finally to social marketing literature from which the term appears to have originated (Beder 1980).

Verifying the links between the concept Hard to Reach and marketing, Brackertz (2007) refers to the inconsistencies and other ambiguities identified above, pointing out that the use of the term covers anything from ‘minority groups, such as ethnic people, gays and lesbians, or homeless people; it can be used to refer to ‘hidden populations’, i.e. groups of people who do not wish to be found or contacted such as illegal drug users or gang members; while at other times it may refer to broader segments of the population, such as old or young people or people with disabilities’ (Brackertz 2007: 1).

Brackertz rightly observes that at the heart of the decision to use the term Hard to Reach, is a difficulty communicating with particular groups that remain hidden. By recognising this, the agency of hard to reach groups is acknowledged, accompanied by the possibility that becoming and remaining hidden may be not (only) the outcome of a process of exclusion, but also a choice exercised by those who hide.

Therefore, one can identify several ambiguities embedded in the use of the terminology, which can be summarised in the following questions:

- How can hard to reach groups be identified?

- How do certain societal groups become hard to reach?
- Under which conditions can a decision for such groups to be reached be made?
- Who will benefit from reaching the hard to reach?

### **Citizenship Identity in Hard to Reach spaces**

In this section, we return to the implicit assumption, referred to above, that hard to reach groups are homogenous entities. After interrogating this assumption, we will examine the relevance of the questions posed above in relation to citizenship education for hard to reach groups.

We aim to relate the assumptions about the homogeneity of the hard to reach groups to the concept of ‘citizenship’, and by extension, ‘citizenship education’. In doing so we will draw on the conceptualisation of communities as socially constructed and ‘imagined’ by people who they perhaps will never meet, but who perceive themselves as part of this larger ideological entity (Anderson 1991). Although Anderson’s (1991) concept of ‘imagined communities’ primarily referred to nation building processes and emerging ideas of ‘citizenship’ across Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it continues to influence present-day policy making aimed at implementing strategies of inclusion and citizenship. For example, David Cameron’s (much criticised) idea of a ‘Big Society’ in the UK, that relies on the engagement and empowerment of local communities and groups to create national cohesion, social mobility and togetherness (Alcock 2010).

In the case of policies aimed at harnessing community-based citizenship, and in line with Brackertz’s critique of the notion Hard to Reach, the key problem to emerge is an increasingly blurred image of ‘what’ or ‘who’ communities are and how we can best define

them, let alone how we can 'reach' them. At best, we can equate 'hard to reach groups' with 'disadvantaged', 'disconnected' or 'minority' communities, comprised of immigrants, gays and lesbians, the unemployed, single parents, non-mainstream religious/faith groups, 'sub' or 'counter cultures', etc. Although frequently ill-defined, discussions of such 'communities' still assume that these groups are fairly coherent and that can, with some effort, be located and 'reached' out to. The coherence attributed to these groups reflects that assumed to exist in the 'mainstream' (among the non-marginalised, those that are not hard to reach). Thus, by adopting this view we can suggest that the term Hard to Reach refers to those citizens whose 'Otherness' is necessary to render 'mainstream' meaningful.

The expression of Otherness in contrast with the mainstream is also illustrated in definitions of citizenship, which draw our attention to the interplay between subjective and normative aspects of citizenship. As Kymlicka and Norman (1995) have suggested, citizenship not only confers status or a set of rights and responsibilities, but also an identity shared by members of a political community. Subsequently, Osler and Starkey (2005: 19) attributed a triadic nature to citizenship, linking it to status, practice and a feeling (of belonging). We consider that the lived experience of citizenship is present in the interaction between these three elements in a process that we could term the 'cycle of citizenship'. With status often (but not always) operating as a starting point (either given or as an objective); citizens' continuous practice (understood as inevitability attached to socialisation) leads essentially to a restructuring and renewal of the community within which the practice takes place, leading to the development of feelings of belonging among those who practice.

In this chapter, we approach practice in its basic form, locating it in a continuum, in which the borders between the public and private sphere blur (Mill 1994), and based on the interaction between members of communities and groups that make it inescapable. Whether cognisant or not, practice affects and alters communities and the groups of individuals within

them, causing them to change themselves and others by interacting. These changes are indicative of practice and lead to the reformation of communities, and the establishment of new social realities within them, which are marked by the presence and interaction of individuals. Culture, as the product of this interaction, maps these changes and reflects negotiations, power relations, internal conflicts and collective ('emic') actions, which define communities' borders and groups' identities. Simultaneously, and relevant to the prevailing (and perhaps necessary) outsider definitions of Hard to Reach, culture is also the product of ('etic') authoritative orderings and moral judgements over 'Other' ways of life, deemed to have 'essential' elements, authentic features, as well as definable identities and boundaries (Clifford 1988).

Towards this internally and externally constructed culture, which bonds the members of the communities and fuels their feelings of belonging *in*, individuals develop another form of belonging, the belonging *of* (ownership), directed towards the community that accommodates practice. It is in this latter form that we locate the exclusive element of citizenship, i.e. the efforts (conscious and not) of citizens to protect their community from further expansion, i.e. from exposure to alien practices and consequent change. We also suggest that, in many cases, this exclusivity can offer a better indication of the subjective experiences of citizenship and be particularly valuable in our attempts to comprehend the process of marginalisation as it informs the construction of hard to reach minorities.

To attain such an understanding, we can shift our focus onto the role of Otherness in the construction of group identity and group cohesion, and enrich the discussion with observations about groups as 'categories of ascription and identification of the actors themselves' (Berth 1969: 10). Although made in reference to ethnic groups, we contend that Berth's observation can be applied to understandings about the formation of other groups also. However, it is not the aim of this chapter to engage in an extensive sociological

discussion about the role of Otherness and Othering in respect to understanding identity. What we choose to utilise from this discussion is the significance of the process of identity formation, and the role Otherness plays as a key role in group cohesion: ‘the only way that a community [...] can achieve common identification and solidarity is through discovering [...] some third group who can be the ‘Other’ for the whole community’ (Wetherell 2007: 10). By sharing common Otherness, individuals develop shared identifications and enhance their sense of belonging to the group to which these identifications refer. Meanwhile, they also develop a sense of ownership toward the group, its products and means of production (culture).

It is the sense of ownership described above, which is then translated into a tendency to protect the group from risks associated with the behaviours and practices associated with being Other. Furthermore, as Bialostok and Whitman (2012) have pointed out, it is within the shared understandings of, and cultural responses to risk, that social cohesion and order is maintained. When examining the literature about hard to reach groups, one can readily identify a plethora of risks associated with hard to reach groups’ behaviours and life choices, including offending, and threats to public health, etc. (Freimuth and Mettger 1990). In some cases, it is interesting to observe that behaviours and choices the adoption of behaviour associated with the exclusion and marginalisation of a group is subsequently recognised by the State as a risk. A characteristic example of this is the ‘choice’ of Gypsy and Traveller parents to educate their children at home, resulting in the children later experiencing isolation and other problems at school (D’Arcy 2014), which then lead them to be characterised as a ‘risk’ justifying external (State) intervention (Bhopal and Myers 2016).

Turning our attention to citizenship education, we would like to begin by observing that one can understand any intervention aiming to alter behaviours and attitudes among hard to reach groups (and indeed among any groups) as essentially a form of citizenship education.



However, while it may be relatively unproblematic to recognise altruistic and emancipating motives behind interventions promoting healthy lifestyles or facilitating access to public services, the case of interventions targeting political and civic attitudes is far more problematic. We can identify two reasons for this. The first relates to the fact that the starting point for any such intervention is the rejection of existing attitudes and behaviours demonstrated by the hard to reach groups as dysfunctional and unwanted. The second is the implications that this has for the meaning attributed to citizenship education and for the design of citizenship education programmes. In order to explore these implications we must return to the four questions asked at the beginning of this chapter, and challenge the deficit model of citizenship and citizenship education.

Turning our attention toward the distinction between us and them, as implied in the design of citizenship education programmes for the hard to reach, we suggest such interventions do little to address the structural inequalities that lead certain groups to become excluded in the first place. In fact, we believe that the function of such programmes may be counterproductive, in that they possibly enhance the distinction between the mainstream and social margins; characterising them as hosting two separate fields of practice, and assuming that they generate senses of belonging and ownership that do not overlap. Not only do such distinctions obstruct the ultimate objective of such interventions (assuming inclusion is this ultimate objective), they also pose more immediate questions concerning the source of authority exercised when the mainstream evaluates, rejects and aims to alter behaviours and models of practice developed (and therefore may be functional) within groups that operate outside its margins. Therefore, the intention to intervene and alter attitudes and behaviours in the name of the reintegration of the Other might also result in a double paradox. On the one hand, the need for these attitudes to change is evoked only when they are judged from beyond the social context in which they have functionally developed, and on the other hand, once

such reintegration is achieved the newly expanded group will need to invent new forms of Otherness in order to restore their cohesion. Moreover, the development of citizenship education interventions, as a means to achieve the above, seem to imply an approach to education as a tool to address deficits, seeing citizenship education not as a route to inclusion but as an imposition (Kakos 2013).

Based on the above we propose that the development of interventions, particularly of citizenship education targeting hard to reach groups, resembles a form of civic imperialism. The target of which are groups, that after having been excluded by the dominant community, must then operate at the periphery of communities, developing behaviours and attitudes which are then identified as *risks* justifying interventions. Beneficiaries of the dominant community's engagement in this seemingly paradoxical cyclical process are the very mechanisms and structural inequalities that led to their original exclusion.

The next section looks more closely at the civic imperialism of dominant/mainstream communities, discussing the role of mobility and immobility in social exclusion and marginalisation in modern societies.

### **Mobilities, immobilities and Hard to Reach**

It is apparent that research and literature describing 'social mobility' in the context of primary, secondary and tertiary education is flourishing. However, this paper identifies and addresses more fundamental, and still largely unanswered questions about the physical, spatial, and 'everyday' mobilities that inform how we conceptualise the notion of 'Hard to Reach' in relation to young people/learners, and how we interpret (minority) 'communities' relative to the role of citizenship education. The addition of this 'mobility' dimension highlights an opportunity to conceptualise hard to reach groups in relation to current trends in social mobility, particularly in Europe, and the increasingly nomadic lifestyle of certain

groups. The dimension of mobility challenges conventional definitions of the Hard to Reach as place-based ‘groups’ or ‘communities’, moving towards a more critical evaluation of them as mobile, hybrid and constantly changing flows and entities. While (transnational) mobility and forms of nomadism act as barriers to building sustainable relationships with hard to reach learners and/or communities (e.g. Gypsy-travellers, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers), this chapter also addresses social immobility as a characteristic of Hard to Reach-ness and as a major barrier to developing meaningful connections (educational or other) with particular ‘communities’ and/or young learners.

Recent research already encompasses an interest in the role of mobility, relative to the context of social inclusion and education. For example, Caruana (2014) and Ploner (2015) analysed the autobiographical narratives of UK, international, and ‘non-traditional’ students, recounting their journeys through primary and secondary and on to higher education. The study showed that for most students, high mobility is a key factor informing ‘resilience’ leading them to succeed in their educational and professional aspirations. Such (resilient) educational mobilities take various forms and are generally characterised by passing through lengthy, and mostly non-linear, series of stages and places, i.e. moving (or being moved) from one country to another, from one city to another, and from one neighbourhood to another within cities and regions.

From an international perspective, it is important to note that the mobilities described are certainly not limited to members of a new global educational ‘elite’ who can easily afford to be mobile and who are supported by the financial capital to pay expensive fees and achieve desirable degrees at reputable ‘Western’ educational institutions. Indeed, mobility frequently occurs to supply the basic needs of young people seeking to gain social and economic capital in a ‘developed’ ‘Western’ country, such as the UK, but can be forced by political and/or ethnic discrimination and persecution in students’ native regions and countries of origin. The

difference between the two forms of physical mobility highlight the centrality of ‘the ways in which physical mobility pertains to upward and downward social mobility’ (Sheller and Urry 2005: 213). As Sheller and Urry indicated, ‘Moving between places physically or virtually can be a source of status and power; or where movement is coerced it can generate deprivation and untold suffering’ (2005: 213). Consequently, and dependent on their relevant experiences, individuals and communities tend to form different relationships with their mobilities. These vary from associating mobility and exclusion, violence and prosecution (Kirpalani *et al.* 2015), to viewing mobility as capital (Kaufmann *et al.* 2004) and a right for the migratory elite (Murphy-Lejeune 2002), practicing transnational mobility ‘to secure and extend their economic and social advantages while circumventing national policies designed to broaden educational access’ (Sidhu and Dall’Alba 2016: 1).

Howsoever these mobilities are shaped, they reflect the rapid emergence of ‘mobile livelihoods’, or what some social scientists term a ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (Hannam *et al.* 2006). Thus, mobility has become an important aspect of present-day life that has radically changed our conceptions of cultural diversity, social change and our sense of community in a globalised (predominantly urban) world. In this context, (intra-national as well as transnational) educational mobility and migration raise a series of questions about how to conceptualise ‘citizenship’, which in the classic political science tradition, and has been defined as a set of rights practiced and negotiated vertically between the state and the individual (Fog Olwig *et al.* 2010). This conforms to Banks’s (2008) observation that traditional approaches to citizenship education, to purposefully ensure internalisation of national values (glorified), national heroes, and history (as reflected in the UK ‘citizenship’ test for immigrants), are inconsistent with the role of global citizen, because a growing number of people have multiple national commitments, inhabiting and moving between multiple nation-states and cultural identities. Clearly, the recent calls to promote ‘global

citizenship' at all educational levels have helped render such a narrow definition more 'horizontal' and inclusive, moving toward a more normative ideal, based on the notion of societal membership (Banks, 2008; Reid *et al.*, 2010) and involving both available resources and subjective experiences of belonging. As Fog Olwig *et al.* (2010: 3) contextualise in reference to the Danish context, 'societal membership' as an approach to citizenship '...is socially mediated and shaped by not only the state but also by social policies and practices beyond the state that in various ways define and support informal norms of belonging that are different from those of the state.'

Whilst trans- and international educational migration and mobilities are growing, posing new challenges when defining citizenship and 'citizenship education', we also face the paradox that a significant number of young people are geographically immobile, finding it difficult to leave their own local neighbourhoods or social environments (Wacquant 2005, Prince's Trust 2011). This immobility poses a significant barrier to aspiring young learners who have a profound desire to 'escape' their own 'communities', where educational independence and achievement might not be highly valued, and where one can become an outsider despite former associations. Moreover, there is a risk that previously mobile populations, either geographically or socially, might enter into a period of immobility, unable to change their status (social immobility and financial crisis) or, escaping from wars to achieve not only a safer life, but to engage with their social life in new communities in a manner that reflects their education and skills.

In the UK, geographical immobility has garnered some attention, being clearly identified as an underlying cause of social immobility, especially during the recent years of economic crisis and austerity (McDowell 2012). The overlap of social and spatial immobility has also been confirmed by studies exploring young people's experiences of territoriality, which depict it as impeding mobility and imposing sanctions on access to leisure, education,

employment and social opportunities (Pickering *et al.* 2012). Such spatial/geographical immobility has also been linked to the reassessment of gang-related crime in major cities across the UK. For example, in a case study of Glasgow, Fraser (2013) argues that geographical immobility and limited spatial autonomy amplifies young people's claims on particular 'territories', frequently resulting in youth tribalism, gang-related rivalry, and/or criminal activity linked to the ownership and control of particular geographical spaces and localities (i.e. streets, neighbourhoods, etc.). Adding a mobility dimension to the formation of the identity of urban gangs, youth and subcultures pose further questions about how to conceptualise 'alienated milieus', i.e. as voluntarily 'hard-to-reach' groups, and how to approach the 'values' we associate with these groups, such as chauvinism, sexism, violence, and racism.

Although the complex interconnections between social and spatial (im)mobility among young people continue to receive considerable interest in research and academic literature (Barker *et al.* 2009), policy makers on both the national and local levels often fail to address this problem sufficiently. For example, in the UK, the national institution aimed at addressing this issue was the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), set up by the Labour government in 1997 and later incorporated into the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in 2006, before its eventual abolition under the Conservative government in 2010. In a much-cited 2003 report on 'Transport and Social Exclusion', the SEU examined the links between social exclusion, transport and the location of social and educational services. Among other findings, the SEU highlighted that young people with driving licenses are twice as likely to get jobs as those without. Moreover, it stated that nearly one-half of 16-18 year olds experience difficulty paying for transport to get to their place of study; that almost one-third of car-less households have difficulty accessing their local hospital or better schools outside their immediate neighbourhood. In its conclusion, the report observes that, '...local authorities do not

routinely assess whether people can get to work, learning, health care or other activities in a reasonable time or cost' (SEU 2002 & 2003, quoted in Urry *et al.* 2006: 541). Although more recent UK-based studies have highlighted partial improvements in transport mobility to assure social inclusion (Lucas 2012), the rise in (youth) unemployment, and the 'austerity measures' imposed on both national and local services during the recent recession years are posing new challenges to the provision of sufficient mobility and access for disadvantaged and hard to reach communities. Therefore, unsurprisingly, it appears that the resilience of certain individuals and groups, who break the associations between forced mobilities and social deprivation by overcoming conditions that could hinder their progress towards attaining their goals, seem to be unrelated to the support they receive from their host communities, but rather to the aspirations shared by their original communities. Frequently, the presence of narratives about how education supports social mobility are of significance among these communities.

Despite the impact of spatial mobility and space on social mobility, and specifically of the role that education plays in social mobility, it has drawn relatively little attention from education researchers, with the result that its role 'remains somewhat under-theorised in education' (Allan & Catts 2014: 219). Following Allan and Catts (2014), this gap in our understanding can be bridged by Bourdieu's concept of 'field' (1998: 39), as the social space 'within which people engage in gamesmanship and practices that are circumscribed by a unique set of rules, norms and stakes' (Allan and Catts 2014: 221). Our attention to mobility equates to the study of individual's movement into such fields, 'into a locale, through specific bonding practices and the use of space in order to check the validity of rules and citizenship' (Allan and Catts 2014: 222). From a 'mobility-based' perspective, hard to reach-ness seems to account for individuals' and groups' immobility, their limited movement beyond their locality, and their lack of engagement in bonding, bridging and linking practices (Allan and

Catts 2014: 218-9) with individuals classified as Other or drawn from wider 'fields'. Consequently, citizenship education for the hard to reach might resemble a process of intrusion into certain domains of citizenship practice, with the aim of disrupting these practices and redefining the 'locality' of the field, or be viewed as a process or re-territorialisation of certain immobile and disengaged groups that have not bonded with other groups, including the 'mainstream'. What is common to both cases is the exercise of authority and power over certain groups, and the resulting questions about the ethical dimensions of the acts and role of the citizenship educator.

## **Conclusions**

Drawing on the above, and returning to the key theme of this publication, spatial (im)mobility is presented here as an important dimension that determines the ways in which we define (1) who can be termed Hard to Reach, and (2) how we seek to 'reach' disconnected, de-privileged or vulnerable individuals or groups. In this reading, the key issue at stake is perhaps less about how to access these persons and 'communities' from an 'outside' vantage point, but how to encourage innovative thinking and provide access and mobility 'on the ground' in order to promote social inclusion and connectedness to essential (social, educational, etc.) networks. Following Cass *et al.* (2005), this also implies that citizenship can no longer be confined to traditional models of civil, political and social rights, but that there are also 'mobility rights' that enable ('real', spatial) access to a range of activities, values and goods that determine full membership or citizenship.

Applying this conceptualisation of (mobile) citizenship as the interplay between practice and feeling, we argue that the objective cannot be the identification of hard to reach groups and/or the 'delivery' of an 'appropriate' model of citizenship education to them. This is because, the standpoint from which such a process would be justified is one in which



citizenship education appears bound to institutionalised practices (Kakos 2012), which understand it as a remedy to cure deficiencies (Kakos 2013). From such a position, the ‘Otherness’ of hard to reach groups is accepted and reinforced to benefit the assumed mainstream-ness of those who see a need for such education. Approaching citizenship education as an education intended to further democracy and inclusion, we suggest that the aim should be the expansion of the field of practice for the members of all groups posing an opportunity for the construction of mobile, flexible, and ever-expanding communities of citizenship practice.

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