

Introduction: Exploring the links between language, everyday citizenship, and community

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Abstract

The so-called migration and refugee ‘crisis’ has seen a wide-spread phenomenon across the world where people come together to build relationships to enact their visions of community, regardless of different ways in which they are included in or excluded from the citizenship regime. This special issue contributes to the studies of these political struggles to explore how such encounters of people are facilitated, negotiated, and contested, from the angle of language. In particular, we use the everyday as a lens to explore how spaces for agency are mobilised and practices of community-making take place. Drawing on a range of geographical locations as well as disciplinary backgrounds, the contributions look at multiple sites of seemingly uneventful and mundane social interactions. The authors collectively demonstrate the critical role language plays in these various everyday interactions, through which the boundaries of community, between ‘us’ and ‘them’, are contested, reproduced, and negotiated.

Keywords: language, the everyday, community, citizenship, community-making

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Introduction: Exploring the links between language, everyday citizenship, and community

The new materialist ontology

Since the new materialist turn, there has been a growing critique of anthropocentrism in the social sciences to examine in what way the assumption of human superiority over nature constructs a specific way of doing politics (see, for example, Bennet 2010). One important aspect of new materialism(s) is to reject the ‘human/animal/mineral’ hierarchy (Coole 2013, 454). Instead, it presents the view of the world as ‘new assemblages and unstable hybrids’ characterised by ‘irreducible imbrication of human/nonhuman or natural/social processes’ (ibid.). The current COVID-19 pandemic signals the need to push this line of inquiry even further to explore a ‘radically non-anthropocentric’ ontology of new materialisms (ibid.). Viruses, which essentially consist of nucleic acid molecules, can have far-reaching effects on human society (e.g., Zimmer 2015), revealing the illusion of the anthropocentric way of living.

This special issue is broadly situated in this new materialist ontology. Building on the acts of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen 2008) scholarship, this issue starts from the assumption that the human-centred approach to language is embedded into a particular way of understanding citizenship and community, and challenges this assumption by exploring different ways of thinking about community. The scholarship introduces the idea that citizenship is not a given status but ‘acts’ through which people claim their legitimate belonging to community. As Isin put it, studying ‘acts’ ‘requires a focus on those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens – or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due’ (Isin 2008, 18). Understood in this way, the acts of citizenship scholarship invite us to look at a contested moment over whose voice is heard and whose is ignored when claims for citizenship are at stake. Some

voices are counted as intelligible to other ‘human’ ears, while others are rendered as the unintelligible cries of ‘animals’ – both literally and figuratively. It is through such an animalising process of voice that the exclusionary logic of community is perpetuated to reinforce the monopoly of political speech of those who are deemed legitimate members of the community. As we will discuss further in the next section, the scholarship not only reveals how a particular notion of citizenship is based on a distinction between humans and animals alongside citizens and foreigners, but also highlights how people challenge such division to demand their voices be heard and taken seriously.

Despite the critical role of language in theorising acts, the link between language and acts has been thus far discussed little in the existing studies. One of the key features of this special issue is, therefore, to invite contributors from sociolinguistics, discourse studies, and translation studies alongside those from political philosophy and politics, to generate conversation around acts and language and to critically unpack the link between language, citizenship, and community. As Fortier (2016, 1040) argues, acts of citizenship are ‘performative instances of making or (un/re)making citizenship that can come from a range of institutional, organisational, collective, or individual actors’. In this regard, the papers collected for this issue come from different scholarly fields but share a common interest in unpacking the role of language in these ‘performative instances’ of citizenship.

Acts of citizenship and language

The questions of what ‘citizenship’ means and what sort of community ‘citizens’ envision are deeply entrenched in the way we understand language, how we use it, and what it does to us. For example, the modern imagination of citizenship, of who are ‘citizens’ and ‘foreigners’, is based on the separation of humans from animals, that the former alone possess the ability to speak while the latter do not. Thomas Hobbes imagines the inside of the community as a

space of intelligible speech in contrast to the outside as that of an animal cry. While humans form a community through language intelligible to each other, the outside of the community is inhabited by ‘Lyons, Bears and Wolves’ (Hobbes [1651] 1981, 100). Through intelligible speech comes order. Meanwhile, the outside is left in ‘the state of nature’ where chaos and violence loom large. Jean-Jacques Rousseau similarly uses language as a key spatial device to separate the inside of the community – as a space of humanity – from the outside: ‘Speech differentiates man from the other animals: language differentiates one nation from another; where a man is from is known only once he has spoken’ (Rousseau 1997, 248). The possession of language is considered unique to humans, and hence a fundamental sign to separate humanity from animality alongside that of citizens from foreigners.

However, contrary to what Hobbes and Rousseau might have assumed, language is not necessarily a marker to separate humanity from animality. The language objection – the belief that humans alone monopolise language – fails to appreciate the tenuous connection between humans and language (see also the reading of Jacques Derrida by Youatt 2014). The critique of the anthropocentric view of language, and its implications for the idea of citizenship, is evocatively described by Mary Shelley and in her novel *Frankenstein* (Shindo 2019, 31–33). Shelley shows not only that the line between humans and animals can be transgressed but, perhaps more crucially, that such transgression is embedded into the way ‘foreigners’ are defined in opposition to ‘citizens’. She argues that there is a disturbing proximity between ‘foreigners’ and animals, suggesting that anyone can be animalised once relegated to the status of foreignness.

Written at the time of the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment in Europe, Shelley’s work poses a formidable antithesis of the belief held at that time that *man* was able to discover and control nature in the name of science (Hindle 2003, xxiii-xxiv, xxix-xxx). In *Frankenstein*, her criticism of anthropocentrism can be observed in the fading line between

humanity and animality in the realm of language. Born out of Dr Frankenstein's scientific experiment, the monster is ascribed to the status of animality with no linguistic ability (Shelley [1818] 2003, 106). Despite its non-human status, the monster attempts to acquire the ability to command the human language so that it can be welcomed by humans and be part of *their* community. Importantly, the monster's language acquisition is guided by foreigners in two ways. Firstly, the monster compares its progress in learning language with another human, a foreign figure called Safie (Shelley [1818] 2003, 120). She is an exiled Turk. As a foreigner, Safie is unable to speak the language spoken in the community where she lives (France), just like the monster. Indeed, the monster masters the human language so well that it eventually speaks the language better than Safie (Shelley [1818] 2003, 121). By showing that the monster acquires the very skill that separates humanity from animality, Shelley's novel not only disturbs human subjectivity built upon humans' exclusive monopoly over language. It also equates the status of animality to that of foreignness, since a 'foreigner' fails to speak the language as well as the monster.

Secondly, Shelley introduces another foreign figure to further suggest that the line between humanity and animality is interlinked with that of citizens and foreigners. Unknowingly, the language the monster learns is the 'foreign' language. To learn the human language, the monster observes an exiled German family living in France (Shelley [1818] 2003, 139). In other words, the language the monster happens to learn is a 'foreign' language (German) spoken by 'foreigners' (Germans) who live in a place (France) where the monster also hides and observes 'humans'. Somewhat tragicomically, the monster later discovers that the language he masters is not the language spoken by the locals (Shelley [1818] 2003, 139). In this way, the monster and the 'foreigners' end up sharing the same language.

The disappearing line between humans and animals alongside that of citizens and foreigners indicates that the danger of losing the 'human' status derives from the loss of the

citizenship status. As Nyers argues, citizenship is linked to political speech through ‘an immanent connection between subjectivity and the social order that sovereignty makes possible’ (Nyers 2006, xi): whether or not one is recognised as a political being, a being whose voice is recognised as intelligible, determines ‘possibilities for a political subjectivity’ (Nyers 2006, 75). Drawing on the example of Jewish refugees, Hannah Arendt (1968) writes about the connection between the status of animality and citizenship: being stateless means being stripped of not just the legal status to belong to the political community of the state but also the human agency to speak and act. Being outside of the statist territorial entity, anyone can be animalised and fall into the category of what Malkki calls the ‘speechless emissaries’ (1996) – those whose voices are not recognised as voices but remain unintelligible to ‘human’ ears. To be clear, the target of animalisation goes beyond the citizen-foreigner division: anyone, with or without citizenship status, can be stripped of human subjectivity and rendered silent. In other words, as Nyers (2018, 23) put it, ‘the unmaking of citizenship’ is ‘an activity and a process that requires dynamic creative energy . . . People are not irregular; people are made irregular – irregularised, by power relationships (including relations of struggle)’.

In this regard, the studies centred on the act-based approach to citizenship ‘fundamentally refuse to take the division between humans and non-humans as a starting point for politics’ (Shindo 2019, 34). The studies implicitly or explicitly follow what Isin and Nielsen (2008) call ‘the acts of citizenship’, where citizenship is understood as an ‘act’ through which people challenge their silenced position and take back their voice in deciding their relationship to the political community (e.g., Tyler and Marciniak 2013; Nyers and Rygiel 2012). The scholarship looks at different ways in which people are included into political community with different degrees and investigates various moments of encounters, including mundane everyday interactions, through which people are confronted with the

question of who is entitled to speak and whose voice is counted as an intelligible ‘human’ voice.

Although the acts of citizenship scholarship offer a critical link between citizenship and political speech, it has yet to fully explore the analytical and political implications of incorporating language into the analysis of citizenship (for exceptions, see McNevin 2012 and Shindo 2019). The act-based approach to citizenship undeniably has an aspect of visibility: acts ‘*create a scene*’ (Isin 2009, 370, original emphasis), and as such, citizenship is about ‘*being there*, legitimately, in public space, and *being seen* to be there’ (McNevin 2012, 167, original emphasis). At the same time, claiming citizenship has an aspect of audibility. While people make themselves visible by appearing in public, interacting with their neighbours, joining policy debates, and leading discussions in the digital space, they also need to make their voices intelligible to the general public, the media, policy makers, and even local activists who work with them in solidarity. It is through the medium of language that specific demands are put forward, individual migratory experiences are communicated, personal emotions are expressed, and thus, the line between humanity and animality is challenged. The struggle for citizenship takes place in

... a linguistic battleground where noncitizens’ visibility is contested together with their audibility. Struggles for citizenship take place both at the visibility-invisibility front as well as the audibility-inaudibility front. (Shindo 2019, 39)

Citizenship as a community-making process

This issue will look at different sites of citizenship struggles where language plays a key role. In this issue, language refers to both spoken and written communication. In both its spoken and written forms, language is rooted in each society’s interaction order, which determines

the way in which language is used and the normative expectations and assumptions that lie underneath (Blommaert 2013). In some cases, language becomes an object of citizenship struggles itself. For example, as Milani et al. in this issue illustrate, in Sweden, the ability to speak the Swedish language is increasingly linked to the exclusionary politics where linguistic competency is prerequisite not simply to become a 'Swede' but also to live in Sweden as a resident to begin with. Chowdhory and Poyil's article explores the case of Chit-Mahal on the Indo-Bangladeshi border, where language and the capacity to speak the language of the 'other' have become a crucial part of people's identity that enables finding something shared beyond political and religious boundaries. In other contributions, language becomes vital as a medium of communication to determine how citizenship struggles are carried out. For example, as Shindo discusses, in multilingual activism, where people do not share the common working language, such as English, activists rely on translators who facilitate interactions. In the context of Finnish urban areas, Puumala and Maiche explore how daily practices of language use open a negotiation of the community's boundary between variously positioned people. In the digital space, verbal interactions are conducted in a specific manner to construct racialised images of who are 'citizens' and who are 'foreigners', as Määttä, Suomalainen, and Tuomarila illustrate.

These two aspects of language – language as an object of, and a medium of communication for, citizenship struggles – are intertwined to tell us about the broader ethos of community, as discussed by Peled in this issue. As such, they help us to investigate the link between citizenship and language in multiple sites. We hope that, with the focus on language, the special issue will contribute to the 'globalising' trend of the act of citizenship scholarship (Isin and Nyers 2014). Migration and linguistic diversity are firmly tied to one another in the specific geographical localities discussed in this issue including Finland, India, Japan, and Sweden. This is a unique feature that may be difficult to detect in places including

Canada, France, the United Kingdom and United States, where noncitizens and local people often have a shared language, such as English and French, because of the colonial history or the domination of English as a global lingua franca. Some articles in the issue highlight the futility of English as a global lingua franca (see Puumala and Maïche, and Shindo); others show that language carries strong emotional attachments that go to the heart of citizenship struggles (for example, see Milani et al., and Chowdhory and Poyil).

Furthermore, thinking of citizenship in relation to language, this issue helps us to inquire about different ways in which language can ‘liberate’ the idea of community from ‘statist spatio-temporal orientations, and assumed subjects’ (Nyers 2012, 226). As Closs Stephens and Squire (2012b, 554) argue, ‘the modern liberal imagination binds citizenship and community together in a distinct geographical unit, in the sense that citizenship is conventionally understood in terms of a political community that is territorially defined’. Built on the image of community as a static territorial entity, the traditional approach to citizenship regards citizenship as rights and status given by the state (Marshall 1964; Hammar 1990). Assuming people with rights and status are the only authentic figure of political subject, the Marshallian-inspired understanding of citizenship fails to appreciate a contested nature of ‘community’: there is no taken-for-granted way of being together. Meanwhile, the act-based approach to citizenship offers a more nuanced reading of community in which community emerges and takes shape through acts (e.g., Balibar 1998; Closs Stephens and Squire 2012a, 2012b). The boundary and the nature of community, of *who* belongs to community and in *what* they belong, are constantly re-written through competing claims put forward by various people.

Thinking of language in relation to the act-based approach to citizenship, this special issue aims to highlight how language works as a spatial device of making a claim to community. On the one hand, as some papers in this issue will show, language works as a

sort of 'inscription', like 'various pieces of paper, devices, graphs, and computer programs' (Best and Walters 2013, 332), through which the messiness of the world is being 'translated' into a neat order. In the context of citizenship struggles, such disorder involves the process of categorising people as either 'citizens' or 'foreigners' and drawing a line between who is entitled to belong and who is not. Language is used to guard the community's boundary.

For example, as Milani et al. show in this issue, the Swedish 'citizens' are imagined in contrast to people from 'Arab countries' in terms of what they eat, drink, and their closeness to nature: while the former are imagined as a 'healthy' and 'nature-conscious' people, the latter are perceived as 'unhealthy' and 'ignorant' about environmental issues. In the digital space, the boundary that separates the inside of the community from the outside is drawn discursively. By drawing on the examples of Finnish, Danish, and French online discussion boards, Määttä, Suomalainen, and Tuomarila show (this issue) a remarkably similar way in which particular words and phrases are used to construct the category of 'the other' as being different from 'us', and a particular image is associated with 'the other' to make this differentiation appear natural and pre-given. To say that language works as an 'inscription', however, does not mean that language only functions as a device of control. Devices can be used strategically, just as language. Some engage in language practices to take their voices back, demand their voices be heard and, in this way, put forward a new claim for belonging. For instance, Chowdhory and Poyil's article (this issue) demonstrates how people build their own sense of belonging through a shared language across state borders.

Furthermore, just as devices can be out of control, language can also become ungovernable, purposefully and sometimes inadvertently. In such a disorderly moment, language can create a space where people break their silenced position to present a new claim for belonging. For example, Shindo's article (this issue) challenges the assumption of community through failed translation practice, where language fails to serve its purpose as a

medium of communication. For Shindo, the failure of communication is a welcoming opportunity to imagine community through relationality of not understanding each other: it challenges the assumption of community where differences are expected to be ‘understood’ and ‘resolved’. Either as a device to control or contestation, language is a site of citizenship struggles to take place over who belongs to the community and on what terms. To investigate the link between citizenship and language is to examine the claim-making process of what and how people demand, from the perspective of language. Thus, to investigate the link between citizenship and language is to examine the claim-making process to community, the way in which community is guarded, controlled, and imagined anew.

By looking at different language practices in relation to citizenship, this special issue is interested in exploring various ways in which language constructs our understanding of what it means to belong to community and how such a sense of belonging is produced, circulated, contested, and reimagined. In this regard, the papers collected for this issue are different from the previous studies that address either the ‘languages of geographies’ or ‘geographies of language’. While the former addresses ‘spaces and places of various languages’, the latter focuses on ‘the constitutive role language play in the construction of geographical knowledge’ (Desforges and Jones 2001, 261). Instead, this issue bridges the interests of both. While each contributor of the issue looks at a specific site of citizenship where different languages meet, each paper examines how the meetings of different languages take place to make sense of the space around us and shape our sense of being part of ‘community’. Furthermore, as the contributions from Määttä, Suomalainen, and Tuomarla and Peled will show, the special issue connects these combined interests in the ‘languages of geographies’ and ‘geographies of language’ with the studies that look at the use of language, the language metaphors, in producing certain meanings and creating discourse (Desforges and Jones 2001, 262).

Enacting citizenship in the everyday

This issue explores the link between citizenship, language, and community from the angle of everyday practice: it looks at various ways and arenas in which claims for community, belonging, and participation emerge and unfold. Sometimes citizenship struggles are manifested as visible events. At other times, these struggles unfold in places where seemingly nothing more than ordinary life or mundane, routine-like practices of governance, negotiation, and disruption take place. It is the latter that the contributions to this special issue focus on.

The contributions investigate, from different angles, how the ‘common’ ground of ‘community’ is (re)defined, (re)constructed, and negotiated; how is the stage of everyday citizenship set? The notion ‘common’, here, denotes the commonness that is assumed to be shared between the members of the given community and which often leads to the perception of community as a subject in its own right (Young 2016, 18). Instead of starting with a static understanding of community, we want to ask what becomes shared between people when they take part in the process where a ‘community’ is formed and the claim for belonging is put forward (Nancy 2016, 9; Claviez 2016). Furthermore, we want to explore how that act of sharing takes place in terms of language use and what kinds of negotiations are involved therein.

A focus on the everyday allows us to multiply the sites and scenes in which citizenship is being articulated (also Guillaume and Huysmans 2018). Together with the pandemic, the rise of populist movements and the emergence of bottom-up organised social movements around topics such as climate change and social justice illustrate the need to rethink how political life unfolds and citizenship can be enacted. Inspired by Ayse Caglar (2015, 641), our aim in this special issue is to blur the distinction between ‘citizenship from above’ and ‘citizenship from below’. Blurring the distinction between citizenship from

‘below’ and from ‘above’ represents an epistemological take where citizenship is as much a question of individual and reciprocal perception, events, and struggles as a political and legal status and, furthermore, that both dimensions are present in the everyday (Guillaume and Huysmans 2018; Ghisleni 2017). For instance, in their article, Puumala and Maïche (this issue) address the claims made by people with a migrant background to counter and question practices of exclusion that are enacted or repeated in the everyday.

In this vein, the special issue uses the everyday as a lens through which it explores how spaces for agency and practices of community-making are negotiated and produced (also Gilbert and Dikeç 2008; Ghisleni 2017; Guillaume and Huysmans 2018). In this, we draw on the idea of ‘everyday citizenship’, which has its origin in the anthropology of citizenship (Lazar 2015; Caglar 2015). The anthropology of citizenship looks at the multiple sites and ways of producing borders, exclusions, and boundaries and how these sites and bordering practices are contested through everyday practice: in encounters where identity claims and claims to the ‘common’ are made, instances where surveillance appears as a routine-like practice, or at times when misrecognition is enforced and carries the weight of authority (see Hopkins, Reicher, and van Rijswijk 2015, 100). Thus understood, the sphere of everyday citizenship can range from the ways in which the structural and bureaucratic violence of the nation-state is enacted through mundane acts of governing and administering (see, for example, Näre 2020; Puumala, Ylikomi and Ristimäki 2018), the ‘minor’ circumstances of everyday life (see, for example, Harrison 2000), and encounters in which people engage during their daily lives (see, for example, Väyrynen et al. 2016; Williams 2015).

Everyday citizenship enables us to explore how citizenship regimes and their meanings materialise through mundane encounters, chance interactions, and routinised practices. It relies on understanding identities, citizenship, and community as being in the process of constant emergence that is shaped through interactions. Therewith, the notion of

everyday citizenship calls attention to unpredictable and ‘minor’ sites and scenes of citizenship, boundary drawing, and community-making (Beveridge and Koch 2019, 153; also Caglar 2015).

Importantly, everyday citizenship engages with the idea that has been central to the acts of citizenship scholarship – namely, that citizenship emerges in practice, through enactments and ‘in the claims and counter-claims of what it means to belong’ (McNevin 2012, 167; Nuijten 2013; Caglar 2015). In their everyday lives, people enact their presence and make a claim to the ‘common’, of what it means to belong to a place, to be present in a place at a certain point of time, and to participate in public life (Beveridge and Koch 2019, 150). Furthermore, Beveridge and Koch (2019, 150–51) claim that such politics emerges in multiple locations and thus is not focused on institutions or their perspectives. Temporally, it is not limited to the procedures of state bureaucracy but unfolds through the rhythms of everyday life, as an act of negotiating the shape and space of the ‘common’. Hence, everyday citizenship can disrupt the notions of citizenship that are tied to the state, its institutions, and state-centric notions of politics.

As this special issue illustrates, the scenes of everyday citizenship are multiple. The contributions range from ephemeral encounters in the urban space (see Puumala and Mäiche) to online fora (see Määttä, Suomalainen, and Tuomarla), from interactions among participants of activism (Shindo) to civic orientation courses for newly arrived migrants (Milani et al.). Thus, this special issue highlights citizenship practices that are located in everyday social relationships, whenever people come together. It is through these social relations that we coexist with others ‘in and through conflict and cooperation that undergird norms, laws and customs’ (Isin 2008, 282).

Each article of this issue looks at multiple sites of everyday citizenship to examine how communities and belonging are negotiated and constructed in the ‘this, here, now, alive,

and active' (Harrison 2000, 502). What is key here is that everyday citizenship regards agentic and relational processes of community-making: while some claim to be recognised as legitimate members of a community or subjects of rights in a community, some may well resist such demands. Everyday acts of citizenship bear a normative aspect when it comes to their relational nature: not all claims and acts are regarded legitimate or valid; some are not recognised as claims in the first place. To understand how voices become heard or ignored, the everyday represents a relevant perspective. It allows an examination into how belonging is formed, community takes shape, and prevailing order and power emerge and operate. Rather than suggesting that everyday citizenship forms an independent research area, a distinct site, or a certain practice, we wish to suggest that it is an emergent epistemological horizon within citizenship studies (Guillaume and Huysmans 2018, 280, see also Lazar 2015).

In other words, we see a much-needed synergy between the act-based approach to citizenship and an anthropologically based approach to citizenship. First, both have highlighted the importance of practices and processes in studying citizenship by pointing out that despite their citizenship status, marginalised groups and subjectivities can be outcast from the sphere of citizenship. Second, theorists of everyday citizenship have convincingly illustrated how the everyday can evoke a distinct analytic to citizenship: the everyday does not merely refer to the small scale, but it annihilates levels as analytical tools (Caglar 2015; Guillaume and Huysmans 2018).

Crucially, anthropological studies of citizenship hold language in an important place in the 'repertoires of citizenship' (Lazar 2015; Caglar 2015). As Caglar (2015, 640) points out, the language of rights and responsibilities is context dependent, which makes it important to study how citizenship and community are constituted and transformed in the practice of everyday life. In this vein, everyday citizenship refers to citizenship as

experiential and lived, and with the capacity to express the everyday realities of political belonging among variously positioned people (Nuijten 2013, 11; Lazar and Nuijten 2013; Caglar 2015; Lazar 2015). Similarly, Lazar (2015) has called attention to the ways in which the ‘conceptual language of citizenship’ is used in everyday life through bureaucratic procedures and mundane interactions to claim the right to community or to guard its boundary. A focus on everyday citizenship invites us to look at the way in which people are governed through language: namely, who are the subjects in the language of rights through which legitimate presence in a community can be claimed and enacted (Caglar 2015; Lazar 2015; Williams 2015).

Thinking of language as a strategic device to make a claim to community, the special issue investigates the way in which different linguistic practices and different ways of language use shape citizenship in various environments and encounters, whether informal or administrative/bureaucratic. The contributions will discuss practices of inclusion and exclusion, both of which are central to the constitution of citizenship (Caglar 2015). For instance, Peled (this issue) rephrases the ‘boundary problem’ in democratic theory as the ‘linguistic boundary problem’ because, she argues, language plays an integral role in determining where the boundary of the demos lies. Chowdhory and Poyil (this issue) address the relationship between language, identity, and belonging to unpack how post-colonial state formation in the Indian subcontinent has affected who is considered ‘us’ and who becomes one of ‘them’. By engaging with different contexts, the special issue investigates daily practices and discourses where claims for citizenship are at stake.

Everyday citizenship and emerging communities

Decoupling citizenship from the formal rights granted by legal status makes it possible to acknowledge that there are different social and institutional grounds for claiming rights

(Hopkins, Reicher, and van Rijswijk 2015, 85). Furthermore, there are various social and institutional arenas where these rights are negotiated, compromised, and contested during daily life. We claim that an exploration into the processes and practices of negotiating and contesting what it means to belong, participate, and claim a voice is more than an empirical effort. It has significant conceptual potential to (re)think the ground and meaning of community. This special issue invites the readers to think of community as both an ethical and an existential sphere, and as a political space through which forms of governmentality, struggle, and resistance operate. This entanglement turns community into a simultaneous question of both ethics and politics, as it represents the way of organising and thinking about people's relations to each other beyond static notions of identity and belonging (see Appiah 2018). Community becomes a question of communicating and articulating the 'common' (Nancy 2016).

Everyday citizenship as a site and means of community-making is as much about hierarchies and power relations as about people's intimate and mundane lives. Like in the acts of citizenship scholarship, a focus on everyday citizenship considers acts and practices representing a rupture in the everyday and a possibility to overturn social-historical patterns of power through lived experience (Isin and Nielsen 2008). In the context of everyday citizenship, the question of community is a question of the terms and conditions of membership. It is not only about contesting and negotiating those terms and conditions, but equally about upholding and strengthening them. Thus, everyday citizenship represents an effort to understand and scrutinise how the community's boundary is dismantled and upheld through practices (see also Gilbert and Dikeç 2008, 254–56). Hence, the special issue is dedicated to thinking about how – from the angle of language – everyday citizenship enables an exploration into the way in which citizenship materialises both as claims to rights and equal participation and as connections, policies, and entitlements.

Investigating citizenship in the here and now as constantly unfolding and evolving implies that context matters in two respects. On the one hand, studying everyday citizenship is not possible without paying attention to its situated nature. On the other, everyday citizenship enables us to unravel different understandings of community: depending on the context, community can have multiple and sometimes overlapping or even contradictory meanings. The special issue explores what is the community that is guarded or articulated *in* the everyday, but also *through* it and *as* mundane. What kinds of emergent constellations of the ‘common’ become detectable when an emphasis is placed on everyday citizenship as an arena of community-making?

Community is an elusive and hard-to-define concept. People belong to and affiliate with diverse, sometimes conflicting, communities, and communities are also sites of exclusion. Notions such as citizenship, community, and belonging are not innocent, but inherently normative and rooted in complex histories that can be violent, colonial, and discriminatory in multiple ways that are relevant to the everyday. A focus on everyday claims puts forward a relational understanding of citizenship and subjectivity in general. Following Philippa Williams (2015, 164–67), we understand citizenship as the right to the city and the right to equal recognition, as well as in terms of relational justice. Rights, as Isin (2009, 376) has accurately pointed out, are not substances but relationships that inherently reflect the dominant citizenship regimes and socio-historical order. To emerge as a subject of rights, then, necessitates that the subject is embedded in a collective: neither one exists independently of the other.

Following Isin, Williams (2015, 168) argues that in making a claim to community or to the ‘common’, people actually make an ethical and political claim upon the other. Instead of individual acts of claim-making as community-making, this special issue calls for attention to the dialectics between the making of and reception of such claims (also Hopkins, Reicher,

and van Rijswijk 2015, 99). What kind of claims are not understood as claims? And furthermore, whose claims are not understood as speech or are framed as ‘animalistic’ cries to be excluded from the sphere of the ‘common’?

Through the special issue, we promote a grounded understanding of citizenship practices with a focus on concrete encounters and interactions between people. We argue that this is needed to illustrate the relational and always unfolding nature of a community. In advocating such a take on community, we follow Jean-Luc Nancy’s interpretation of community. For Nancy, community does not represent a ‘commonness’ that is shared between us but an existential relation where ‘we’ can only come into being in relation to others (Nancy 2000). Nancy’s thought opens up a way to think of community in terms of sharing (*partage*). The French term *partage* can also be translated as ‘parting’, to emphasise the double meaning of the word. Community-making is both an act of *taking part in* and *parting from* something. Hence, community can be understood as a relational act where both dividing and sharing coincide. In defining who belongs to the community and what its identity is, a simultaneous move takes place to exclude some others from the defined space of the ‘common’ (see Puumala 2016). Thus understood, community represents continuous negotiation between the sharedness of the human condition and the political constellations that define our rights and responsibilities as humans. The processes of community-making become understandable as scenes of citizenship.

Our approach highlights the appearing nature of community, but – crucially for this special issue – it also illustrates that community ultimately takes shape through everyday practices of communication (Shindo 2019). In Nancy’s approach to community, language is key because language ‘brings about the crucial moment of exposure to others, the exposure which realises the mode of “being-with”’ (Shindo 2012, 152). For Nancy, language is ‘essentially in the with. Every spoken word is the simultaneity of at least two different modes

of that spoken word; even when I am by myself, there is the one that is said and the one that is heard, that is, the one that is resaid' (Nancy 1991, 76; 2000, 86). Thus, for Nancy, 'every voice is in itself opened, plural, exposing itself to the outside world' (Devisch 2006, 6). This exposure of inevitable plurality in singular being – that 'I' can never be 'I' because 'my' voice needs others to hear, and without others, there will be no voice as 'I' to be heard – suggests the crucial role of communication at the threshold of community (Gaon 2005, 394; see also Edkins 2005).

Communication exposes the very moment of singularity articulated in plurality because 'by the very act of speaking, it [singular being] is exposed to the inevitability of "being-with" others in one's existence. Every voice is not a solitary act of expression but already a shared expression and expression of sharing' (Shindo 2012, 152). Thus, it is through communication that the mode of being-with – that is, community – emerges. To put it differently, thinking of everyday citizenship from the angle of language, our aim is to explore various strategies and sites of contestation to challenge the image of 'community-as-a-circle'. By 'community-as-a-circle', we refer to the idea that 'whatever type of community it is, there is always someone to be excluded' in order to include someone else to the inside (Shindo 2012, 151). By looking at the strategies and sites of contestation to challenge such an image of community, we hope this special issue explores in what way community can be regarded as being already exercised as 'a line woven by endless sharing of "being-with"' (Shindo 2012, 153).

Seeing citizenship and politics in the everyday requires paying attention to multifaceted and various patterns of government and self-government, and their underlying multiplicity of authorities and hierarchies. In this interpretation, we take after Beveridge and Koch (2019, 145), who, in their focus on urban politics, claim that politics is inseparable from the everyday. Similarly, we suggest, everyday citizenship opens as a site of community-

making and its ongoing patterns and processes of identity construction and negotiations of belonging. Community-making – at least as it unfolds in everyday life – is not about establishing a shared understanding. Rather, the focus enables thinking of community as emerging, as taking form and gaining its senses through encounters and interactions. With the contributions to this special issue, we wish to suggest that perhaps, more than a common ground, community necessitates communication.

Conversations within and beyond this issue

We invite readers to read this special issue as one piece. As discussed earlier, the articles collected for this issue are broadly centred on the acts of citizenship scholarship, but each article draws on different spatial contexts and comes from different research fields. As such, the issue is intended to encourage readers to go beyond their ‘comfort zone’ to get lost in unfamiliar examples, theories, and territories, and somewhere along the way, to find inspiration, perhaps in the most unexpected places.

Rather than offering a closure or complete account of these themes, the issue – much like this introduction – is meant as an open-ended invitation to think about the connections between community, everyday citizenship, and language. For this purpose, the articles have been arranged to ensure that they speak to each other. The opening article to the special issue, *‘Citizenship as status, habitus and acts: Language requirements and civic orientation in Sweden’* by Tommaso Milani, Simon Bauer, Marie Carlson, Andrea Spehar, and Kerstin von Brömssen, engages with Isin’s theorisation of acts of citizenship head-on to examine the contested process of claiming citizenship. It draws on the case of Sweden, where the image of what constitutes a ‘Swedish citizen’ has become a hotly debated topic in recent years. The article addresses citizenship as status, habitus, and acts and demonstrates how these three dimensions work together to govern the behaviour of newly arrived adult migrants. As the

authors argue, Michel Foucault's ideas of sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower are all present in such workings of governmentality, both at the discursive level and in everyday practices such as eating and drinking habits. Crucially, the authors develop the idea of 'acts' to include small-scale and less organized forms of resistance where newly arrived migrants subtly refuse to modify their behaviour when other migrants – who have already lived in Sweden for some time – tell them to do so. This hints that the making of a community takes place precisely in the encounters of people who are included into Swedish society to varying degrees.

Simo K. Määttä, Karita Suomalainen, and Ulla Tuomarla examine the exclusionary process of community-making where a specific group of people are considered legitimate members of the community. Their article, *'Everyday discourse as a space of citizenship: The linguistic construction of in-groups and out-groups in online discussion boards'*, looks at online fora in Finland, Denmark, and France to illustrate how the exclusionary use of language constructs communities around a 'we' that is founded on hatred, derogatory speech, and ethnonationalist views. It highlights the scenes where citizenship is enacted with the intention of closing some people off from the community and refusing to them not only the possibility to speak back, but also a position as audible subjects in the first place. As such, the article invites us to rethink the often-held assumption of 'acts' within acts of citizenship scholarship where enacting citizenship is regarded as a transformative practice to challenge the exclusionary logic of community. It opens up a perspective into the way in which language and exclusionary imageries are operationalised: people speak about 'we' in contrast to 'others' to negate the latter's 'rightful' presence in the community and to reserve the space of citizenship for the former.

While the first two contributions illuminate the image of a boundary that separates 'us' from 'them', Nasreen Chowdhory and Shamna Thacham Poyil's article complicates this

image. In *'Speaking the language of the "Other": Negotiating cultural boundaries through language in Chit Mahals in Indo-Bangladesh borders'*, Chowdhory and Poyil examine how language remains a central component of commonality and how it becomes a key medium of affirming and claiming belonging among the camp dwellers in the enclaves of Chit Mahal, between the border of India and Bangladesh. Their article explores how shared identities and a sense of the 'common' are constructed beyond state borders, in everyday contexts where people interact to build a common cultural understanding of identity. Chowdhory and Poyil thus claim that language emerges as the function of similarity between people, as everyone speaks the language of the 'other' both in practice and figuratively. In this way, they challenge the understanding of how statist borders determine the contours of community and one's sense of belonging.

The remaining three articles explore how we might start thinking about community differently to avoid reproducing the 'us' and 'them' binary. *'Whether you like it or not, this is the future!' Everyday negotiations of the community's boundary in urban space'* by Eeva Puumala and Karim Maïche discusses community as a multivocal and tensioned concept. Drawing on the case of Finland, the authors explore how the community's 'common' ground and boundary are articulated during everyday life in an urban context characterised by socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. In a similar way to Milani and his colleagues, Puumala and Maïche's article demonstrates that having a part in community relates not only to language skills but also appearance, culture, and habits. Puumala and Maïche argue that in the urban everyday characterised by diversity, this normative ground is put under strain, and the community's constantly evolving and tensioned nature is revealed. The article draws on Jacques Rancière's work to show how community is formed through both consensus and dissensus. It scrutinises the ways in which variously positioned people articulate 'we' and how exclusionary articulations of the community's boundary become negotiated in the

everyday. In this way, Puumala and Maïche pave the way for thinking about how the mundane and local negotiations of the community's boundary are connected to the possibility of claiming an equal position in society.

Taking up the theme of multivocal community discussed by Puumala and Maïche, Yael Peled's article, '*Democratic citizenship and the linguistic boundary problem*', engages with the question of the 'boundary problem' in democratic theory. Peled is critical of the existing debate in democratic theory because it misses the perspective of language. Peled argues that the multilingual realities of contemporary political communities urge us to rethink the communicative foundation of the demos. For Peled, the starting assumption of political community should be its own multilingual constitution. This assumption, she argues, ensures the creation of a linguistic culture where multiple voices – including non-verbal ones – are included into the meaning-making process in democratic societies. By presenting an image of community that is *already* multilingual as its foundation, Peled challenges the Habermasian thesis on communicative rationality where understanding each other forms a basis of community. Instead, Peled suggests that what lies at the heart of community-making is creativity centred on not knowing what is to come as a result of linguistic encounters.

In response to Peled's call to situate unpredictability and unknowability at the centre of community-making, Reiko Shindo's article, '*Translators as mediators of citizenship: Rethinking community in relational translation*', explores what sort of community might emerge if communication begins with the expectation that we are unable to know each other. Her article is based on the ethnographic fieldwork of multilingual migrant activism in Japan, where participants of activism speak various languages such as Chinese, English, Japanese, and Portuguese, and need to rely on translators to overcome language barriers. The article demonstrates that, accidentally or deliberately, the voice of speakers is manipulated through translation, and miscommunication and misunderstanding become key features of interactions.

Drawing on contemporary political thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek and Iris Young, Shindo argues that such communication failure is a productive feature of community-making: it builds relationality centred on a shared sense of not-knowing. She suggests that the boundary that separates ‘us’ and ‘them’ dissolves into a shared unintelligibility where ‘we’ come together through the sharing of our own inability to know each other.

To keep the conversational spirit of this issue alive, we finish with an afterword by Angharad Closs Stephens and Anitta Kynsilehto. Each article collected for the issue has been written in conversation with Closs Stephens and Kynsilehto. Based on their reading of the contributions, they further offer their own reflections on the special issue theme as a whole. By finishing the special issue with commentaries from Closs Stephens and Kynsilehto, our hope is to invite readers to engage with the topic from their own angles and to generate new conversations that go beyond this issue.

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