Learning Citizenship

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21 July 2014
Abstract

Learning citizenship in post-conflict settings involves the development of new forms and relationships of solidarity that link individuals and the collective in ways that are not associated with previous conflicts or divisions. In this chapter, we describe learning as a socio-temporal process through understandings of relationships and new ways of being are developed and sedimented through habits and customs. Learning, in this sense, does not refer to teaching through formal or informal education, but rather refers to a process by which perceptions and relationships are changed. Our concern in this chapter is with the ways in which young people learn new forms of citizenship, as manifested in the relationships between individuals and collectivities. Efforts to promote, or to teach, citizenship often emphasize particular forms of behaviour and active participation in civil society; these behaviors are associated with civility. But in learning citizenship, normative expectations of civility and relationships in civil society are often reworked, questioned, disrupted, and challenged. As these questions and challenges are thereby raised, we can glimpse the kinds of solidarities that youth might imagine, yearn for, and seek to stabilize or to change.
In Bosnia-Herzegovina, an event that was simultaneously remarkable and unremarkable happened in 2013: a census was held. It was the first census since 1991, before the war and the peace process that, in combination, created and solidified a new ethnic geography in the country. The census was promoted by the international community as part of a reconciliation process, but it was highly contentious. The questionnaire forced respondents to classify themselves in accordance with ethno-religious categories that many people believed shoe-horned them into categories that did not describe their identities and the ways they wanted to be recognised as individuals and citizens. Rather than identifying along ethno-religious lines as Bosniak, Croat or Serb, many people sought other identities, such as Yugoslav, Bosnian, Roma or a completely different identity that was not bound up in war. Indeed, it is estimated that in a trial of the census form, nearly 37% of young people chose an identity other than an ethno-religious identity or did not answer that question at all (Pasic, 2013).

In Lebanon, a different struggle over identity and citizenship is also being waged. In that country, ‘personal status laws’ assign individuals to religious sects based on paternity. The sect cannot (easily) be changed, but often bears no relation to an individual's religious beliefs or identity. While often irrelevant to one’s faith, the sect that is indicated on identity cards (such as birth certificates and passports) can limit one’s options in important ways. Most controversially, perhaps, it is difficult to marry a partner outside of one’s sect, without leaving the country or renouncing citizenship, which in turn is both difficult and dangerous unless able to claim a second nationality. The ability to act as a full citizen without a sectarian identity is folded into many activist movements in which young people (as well as others) participate. Yet in many ways the Lebanese government and nation depend on this sectarian scaffolding, thus pitting a particular collective identity (that of the sect) and national interest against those who claim the right to chose their own identity as citizen.

In South Africa, the dismantling of the Apartheid regime required a new language to talk about its citizenry. There was a keen desire to imagine a new way for all South Africans to be named and recognised as members of the community, as being in the world. Ubuntu was offered as a way of expressing this new relation between individuals who are recognised as citizens by virtue of their basic humanness and the bonds that link humans to each other. It is an optimistic, even utopian, way of imaging a new South Africa no longer divided by past racial classifications. Yet by invoking ubuntu, the lingering persistence of racialised identities and racialised opportunities seems
unspeakable. If everyone shares a common humanness, what can explain the conditions of existence that remain divided and deeply unequal? A language developed in the 1990s and early 2000s to describe this division as between ‘previously disadvantaged’ and ‘previously advantaged’ groups; this was followed later by a language of ‘cultural communities.’ The language, however, fails to describe the embodied difference – and perhaps identities – that remain significant in the social locations and opportunities for South African citizens.

These three examples may seem unconnected, yet each country is witnessing the articulation – tentative and incoherent, perhaps – of new relationships of citizenship. These are relations between individuals, communities, nationality, states and they are positioned within complex topographies of social, economic, and political locations. Those locations, however, are also material, meaning that these relationships are built, experienced and contested in the homes, streets, and cities in which people live and that also contribute to the ways they see and learn their worlds. That they are each emerging from recent violence and conflict lends a particular sharpness and urgency, even as there are efforts to dull and blunt the ways in which conflict and politics are waged. And in each case, the struggles to define a new imaginary of solidarity involves the intervention of international and translocal entities that may not have been directly involved in conflict.

The chapter uses learning as a central concept in exploring the constitutive tensions between two aspects of citizenship that these efforts must traverse: as individual (in the sense of identities, rights, and political subjectivity) and the collective (in the sense of communal identities, solidarities, and alternative subjectivities). Through learning, we argue, we can analyze youth activism around politics, citizenship and new ways of being and acting. The very term ‘citizenship’ embeds the constitutive tension in efforts to promote it and in the ways that young people learn to be citizens. The suffix ‘–ship’, for instance, connotes both individual attributes or qualities and the state of being in a collective. Our concern in this chapter, then, is in the ways that young people learn citizenship, traversing its individual and collective aspects.

We understand learning as a socio-temporal process through which understanding of relationships and ways of being are developed, perceptions of communities and societies are changed, and goals and expectations are formed and acted upon. Learning, in this sense, is not a direct outcome of teaching through formal and informal education systems. Rather, it is a process by which new information and
experiences interact with sedimented habits and understandings to change perceptions and ways of being in the world. It is, in some ways transitional, but also cumulative and potentially transformative. And if learning conditions the ways in which people imagine themselves in the world, we can expect there will be efforts by external agents to change those imaginations through teaching, or in other words, by efforts to intervene in sedimented habits and understandings.

Our concern in this chapter is with the ways in which learning citizenship involves a negotiation of citizenship as a relation between individuals and collectivities. In those negotiations, we expect that young people will question – and perhaps challenge – the existing order of the collectivities in which they live (e.g., communities, cities, states, ethno-religious groups, and so forth). In other words, these negotiations may involve efforts to teach particular forms of citizenship, but that these are subsequently reworked as citizenship is learnt. In those questions and challenges are thereby raised, we can glimpse the kinds of solidarities that youth might imagine, yearn for, and seek to stabilize or to change.

The chapter is organized in three further sections. In the first, we elaborate our conceptualization of learning as a process in which information is translated and made relevant to people’s lives and new habits are internalized. The second section of the paper explores the emphasis on teaching and learning within civil society that is evident in international and translocal efforts to create new citizens in countries that have been marked by division. We argue that the ways civility (as ordering and as behavior) is taught and learnt are critical to the ways that youth imagine, renegotiate and perhaps seek to reorder citizenship. Finally, we argue that rather than necessarily solidifying forms of state citizenship, the practices and consequences of learning citizenship mirror and embody the precarious and contingent nature of political life in diverse locations. The argument is based on a multi-sited ethnographic analysis of youth and citizenship in Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina and South Africa.

**Learning to be a Citizen**

In each of the countries mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there is a concerted effort to produce a new generation of citizens who can help the country overcome division. These efforts are premised on a belief that it is possible for young people to learn to be good citizens. Learning is an important word in these efforts, because there is an unquestioned belief that good citizens will not emerge without
programs and curricula to encourage new habits and values. In the absence of such efforts, it is feared that old enmities and bad habits that allowed – and that sometimes emerged from – conflict will surface, perhaps in more virulent form. Politicians, communities, and families are often indicted as permitting or even encouraging un-citizenly behaviors, such as intolerance, bias, disengagement from public affairs, or corruption, and so they are unlikely to foster this new generation of citizens (see Staeheli and Hammett, 2010; Hammett and Staeheli, 2011). To create such citizens, a loosely organized network of non-governmental organizations, think tanks, government agencies, academics has emerged to teach and encourage citizenship. But young people are not likely to passively accept such teaching, so the question is raised: what does it mean to ‘learn’ to be a citizen?

Learning occurs in a variety of settings and is not limited to a formal curriculum presented in a classroom. McFarlane (2011, 3) defines it as the “specific processes, practices, and interactions through which knowledge is created, contested, and transformed” and through which “perception emerges and changes.” In this way, learning requires engagements – practices and interactions – and is different to receiving information that is taught. Significantly, those engagements may involve contestation and challenges to an established order or accepted knowledges (Staeheli, Attoh, & Mitchell, 2013). McFarlane further argues that learning involves several processes. First, there is a process of translating knowledge as it passes from different spaces (e.g., from think tanks in the West to classrooms or programmes in post-conflict countries) and in different forms (e.g., a document to a project that is part of an ‘active citizenship’ program). Second is the process of coordination whereby materials and practices are adapted and mediated to suit and be made meaningful in particular contexts. This often requires some level of change or reconstruction of systems – such as a curriculum – but might also involve intermediaries; in this way, it is closely related to translation. Finally, learning involves some level of haptic immersion, lived experience, or relationships between individuals, other groups, and environments. In this way, our conceptualization of learning attends to the ways that it is embodied, felt, and practiced, often through everyday experience. Approaching learning from this perspective highlights the difference between information and how knowledge is constructed, given meaning, and shapes action, even as it is acted upon. It is an approach in which learning is signified by changes in perception and action, not necessarily by acceptance of what is taught. The
‘outcomes’ of learning cannot therefore be predicted, but instead are likely to be contingent and ambiguous.

The latter point is critical. Learning involves more than changing perceptions; it is active and even, perhaps transformative. It is also cumulative in the sense that it interacts with knowledges that have been previously learnt and accepted. Thinking about these interactions, American educational philosopher John Dewey (1922/2012) suggested that knowledge and the ideas and practices that sustain it constitute a form of habit, by which he means repeated activities or practices that take on meanings beyond the activities themselves. Habits, he argues reflect past knowledge, but also guide the future, as activities are both a reflection and reinforcement of knowledge. These habits become sedimented over time and are layered onto other habits. Knowledge and habits are not static, however, but instead change as they interact with other knowledges and other habits, often in unpredictable ways (Sullivan, 2001). Efforts to promote a new kind of citizenship in post-conflict societies can be thought of as attempts to change the habits of young people through the introduction of alternative and perhaps disruptive knowledges and ideas so that youth might act as citizens who create new habits and ways of being.

In encouraging these new ways of being, a pedagogy of citizenship is circulated by international organizations, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, governments, and academics that attempt to coordinate changes in the practices and outlooks of young people in post-conflict societies. Critical education scholars understand pedagogy as the production and maintenance of dominant discourses to achieve particular socio-political ends (Pykett, 2010). In this case, it provides the translations of different normative underpinnings of citizenship and attempts to coordinate them in a consolidated, democratic society and state. The pedagogy is a shared knowledge that circulates, and it is hoped, instills new habits. Yet the interactions with previously sedimented knowledges and habits lend an unpredictability to what is learned from this pedagogy (Staeheli, Marshall, Jeffrey, Nagel, & Hammett, 2014).

To encourage habits of engagement and tolerance, the pedagogy of citizenship that is promoted within post-conflict societies emphasizes forms of cosmopolitanism and engagement or participation in civil society (Staeheli, Marshall, Jeffrey, Nagel and Hammett, 2014). Across our three case study countries, we found myriad training courses in intercultural communication and opportunities for young people to discuss ideas and to build networks. These programs, however, move beyond opportunities for
encounter (such as through discussion) and ask that young people work on projects together; they are typically projects that involve action in civil society, rather than through the state. Learning new habits of citizenship required action, not just dialogue, according to the project directors we interviewed. Much as Dewey (1922/2012) anticipated, embodied, haptic forms of learning were seen as key to instilling new ways of interacting with other citizens, citizens who may be different to themselves.

To dislodge pre-existing norms and habits requires concerted effort (Sullivan, 2001), such as that reflected in the pedagogy of citizenship. These interventions, however, operate largely at the individual level and are indicative of the ways that citizenship is taught and only secondarily learnt. It is hoped that young people will participate in activities and programming and that their behaviors and ways of acting as citizens will change. In this way, it is anticipated that the habits of a new kind of citizen will be repeated and become part of the subjectivity of the individual. To the extent that they are habituated, they create norms that come to be “a given feature of reality” (see Lumsden, 2013, 73). The extent to which such individual changes might occur, new citizens might emerge, but effecting a change in the collective aspects of citizenship requires broader changes.

Following Lumsden (2013, 72) it also, however, requires a change in customs. If habits are individual, customs are “modes orientating practice … at the collective level” (Lumsden, 72) or “widespread uniformities of habit” (Dewey, 1922/2012, 58). Much as program directors might wish otherwise, programs to promote citizenship to youth rarely achieve a change in customs; directors, instead, recount ‘success stories’ of changes in the way that individual young people behave and the norms that they have internalized or learnt. Returning to the definition of citizenship presented in the introduction, it seems that young people might have learnt to be citizens – to have internalized and habituated norms of acting as citizens – but that the broader, uniformities of habit are more difficult to achieve and typically require interventions in social, economic, and political structures to make them more democratic and inclusive. Such changes are difficult to achieve in any context, but are arguably more difficult to achieve in states and societies that have emerged from entrenched conflicts, precisely because the causes of division are rarely addressed through war, through reconciliation processes, or through post-conflict pedagogies (Jarausch and Geyer, 2003). Instead, post-conflict pedagogies often suppress discussions of the past, and involve a forward-looking perspective, seeking to create new opportunities that might ease tensions and create new, non-conflictual collective
identities as citizens grounded in place, but participating in the world (Osler and Starkey, 2005). Central to this effort has been the coordination of opportunities for interaction that transcend difference and that might create new habits of cooperation. Civil society has been prioritized as the ‘location’ for such interactions, reflecting long held beliefs in western society that civil society can be a realm where citizens engage, discuss and build identities that are not encumbered by difference, but instead are enriched by it. As we argue in the next section, it is hoped that new solidarities and forms citizenship may take hold in individuals, and through aggregation, create customs that are consonant with the habits of presumably democratic citizens.

**Civil Society, Civility in Society and Citizenship**

Efforts to promote a particular kind of citizenship have assumed that the reinvigoration of civil society is critical (Putnam, 1993). In all three settings under consideration in this chapter, civil society has been central to the pedagogy of citizenship, through internationally sponsored donor initiatives, promoting social movements (albeit within certain ranges), and nurturing domestic discourses of democratisation. Indeed, international interventions in the post-Cold War era have repeatedly emphasised the need to foster civil society organisations as a means for resolving conflict, establishing a counter-weight to the state and/or developing popular support for new sovereign institutions. In this respect civil society is a flexible signifier that allows a celebration of renewed forms of public, collective action, while also removing such public competences from the state itself. Consequently it is a term that celebrates the collectivity while also emphasising the requirement for certain forms of individual behaviour and comportment; in terms used previously, it encompasses both habits and customs of civility. In the ideal, the pedagogy of citizenship in civil society traverses the two, allowing the possibility of alternative articulations of the political and social ideas and action, the fertilization of social capital, the development of a post-conflict political society, and even the possibility of insurgency.

In all three of our case studies, civil society remains ontologically significant despite its seeming lack of conceptual consistency. The imaginaries of civil society voiced by the interview respondents illustrated – and in some senses celebrated – alternative and shifting interpretations of this term. These interpretations could be mapped on to different understandings of learning at the individual level that hold the potential to
incorporate new collective identities signified by inclusive citizenship. In particular, we have observed how agents involved in both teaching and learning citizenship often cleaved civil society into two, often complimentary, concepts. The first was a social understanding, where nurturing civil society stands as a means through which associations could be fostered that were distinct from state or the family. This sense of the potential of an arena of associations has been recounted in many liberal accounts of the political role of civil society, perhaps most notoriously in Alexis de Tocqueville’s in *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (Democracy in America) (1835) which rated ‘associational life’ as a key democratic expedient (Kaldor, 2003: 19). But following Boyd (2006) we argue that this narrow focus overlooks a different understanding of civil society, not as a realm of associative life but rather as an arena within which practices of civility – in the sense of particular behaviors – are debated, practised and learnt. Recalling classical interpretations of civil society as a realm in which difference is negotiated without recourse to violence, a focus on civility draws attention to moral and behavioural interventions that are made under the banner of fostering civil society and citizenship. Parsing the civil from society allows us to analyse how these different interpretations of the term both cohere and diverge, but perhaps most importantly using this separation serves as a means through which the expectations and contradictions of civil society may be examined and in some senses coordinated. In this way, it traverses a topographic relationship similar to that between the individual and the collective embedded in citizenship.

Taking first the interpretation of society, the interviews illustrate that the mechanisms to cultivate civil society imposed a framework that divides a hybrid social and political life into clear political, economic and social sectors. Part of the reason for the durability of civil society is its imagined political positioning ‘outside’ state structures, which were often presented as corrupt, unreliable or captured by single-party interests. For example, a representative of an international agency in Lebanon explained the significance of investing in civil society:

>[We] work with state institutions as well as civil society. But there is mistrust in state institutions, while the state considers civil society to lack knowledge. On the other hand civil society is needed to promote mechanisms of accountability.

Erasing the possibility of overlaps between members of formal political structures and civil society organisations – what Ananya Roy (2010) might refer to as a ‘double agents’ –
civil society is presented in such comments as a virtuous sphere that holds the state to account (see Amoore & Langley, 2004). It is this enduring image of the external pressure emanating from civil society that stems from post-Socialist transitions of the late 1980s and continues into the present.

The simultaneous assertion that civil society “lack[s] knowledge” stalked a number of the interviews and echoed sentiments of international officials in BiH from previous research that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) do not know how to articulate their needs or comprehend the complexity of processes of state consolidation (see Jeffrey, 2012: 121). The response to this perceived lack of knowledge operated on two levels. In a first frame donors and government agencies sought to use civil society organisations as conduits through which ideas of citizenship may be conveyed. In a second, strategies were put in place to educate citizens about the democratising role of civil society itself. In these terms civil society was both conduit and apparatus for processes of teaching – and perhaps learning – citizenship.

The research has been replete with examples of the use of civil society as conduit for teaching or promoting new habits of citizenship, and thereby, they hope, customs of citizenship. In particular, interviewees often returned to the concept of civil society to emphasise the need for more ‘active’ understanding of citizenship roles. A youth organisation in Tuzla, BiH, sought to use its activities as a means to educate individuals about the possibilities of more transformative forms of politics:

[W]e’re trying in this past year, to let people know that's it's really important to be active in the civil society. Because things are not going to change by themselves. And not just because it's a really bad situation in Bosnia. […] I can tell you for sure in the past 6 years, we've always had problems with the fact that the people are really passive.

In these terms, the youth civil society organisation used its resources, in particular funding from a US donor, to cultivate a more active form of urban citizenship in Tuzla structured around ecological projects designed to improve the local environment. The respondent was particularly animated about the threat of passivity, stemming from a sense of anomie linked by the interviewee to both a legacy of a Socialist past and the post-conflict economic malaise in BiH. Civil society acts, in this case, as an educational conduit that seeks to motivate individuals to resolve local issues without recourse to
formal state structures. Yet program directors despaired of being able to document (for their annual reports to donors) that changes to individual habits were leading to new customs of citizenship at a collective level.

But there is another aspect to the social imagining of civil society. The presentation of civil society as an apparatus suggests that the very presence of associative life is a democratising force. The worrying allusion here is that the external promotion of civil society organisations, through donor initiatives and short-term programme funding, leads to democratic consolidation. Rather than the more practice-based attempts cited above, the creation of civil society as an institutional realm is treated as evidence of newly-learnt citizenship. In McFarlane’s terms, it assumes that the translation and coordination of information about citizenship would lead to changes in the habits and haptic experience of learnt citizenship. While this was a concern for program directors as they completed their reports, there is a deeper significance to this assumption that has important effects on the qualities of democratic governance.

One of the key criticisms of ‘gentrified’ civil society (Jeffrey, 2012) is that it acts as a means through which governmental mechanisms may penetrate society. Consequently the discourse of strengthening civil society may be read as part of a mechanism through which bureaucratic power is embedded in social structures (Ferguson, 1990). As opposed to fostering autonomous and potentially transformative forms of citizenship, this perspective emphasises the ways in which collective or individual agency is disciplined through reliance on particular forms of civil society; not all possible habits of citizenship are encouraged, it seems. Where civil society organisations begin to undertake governmental functions, slippages can occur as social activism shifts into the realm of sub-contracting state responsibilities and may soften or dull the political impact of their work. One NGO member in Lebanon, for instance, described this as a move from ‘demanding’ to ‘supplying’ change as a subcontractor to the state:

So instead of demanding, we supply change. This was the shift in the mind-set from demanding to supplying change. We want to supply them with change because when we were NGOs and went to demand for a reform of the Ministry of Social Affairs, they didn’t do it. But now they call upon us and pay us money so that we reform the Ministry of Social Affairs. It is a total shift of the paradigm.
This example illustrates the forms of social imagining that encircle discourses of civil society development and point to the close proximity, noted by Mitchell (2003), between civil society action and neoliberal practices of entrepreneurialism. From the perspective of some, learning citizenship entails the cultivation of customs that celebrate associative life that conforms with – rather than challenges – neoliberal governmentality. It is worth noting here that these visions of society cross-cut the framework of state/non-state. As agents – both citizens and NGOs – operating within civil society assume responsibilities that had been in the realm of the state, the boundaries between public and private spheres are blurred and even perhaps erased. These boundaries and their changed ‘location’ or nature also have implications for the habits of citizenship that are learnt and the relations between individuals, communities, and the state.

These accounts point to the forms of social and political segmentation (inside and outside the state) and solidarity (through associative life) that characterises many of the discussions concerning civil society, both in scholarly and practitioner fields. But studying the mechanisms by which particular forms of citizenship are taught in these diverse contexts highlights a second – though interlinked – aspect of the desire to embed these activities in civil society. Largely implicitly, the process of teaching citizenship also emphasises the requirement to nurture civility. These attempts remind us that civil society is not simply a social or political construct, but a relational process of individual interactions, within which there are certain norms of appropriate conduct or desired habits. As Boyd (2006: 864) has asserted, civility has both formal and substantive attributes: it emphasises sets of customs and behaviour while also gesturing at an individual’s standing within a political community. Necessarily, then, civility is always plural as the codification of behaviour is collectively established and reinforced. In this way – and this is Boyd’s point – civility is a form of minimal moral obligation within a particular political community where forms of political or ethical consensus are not possible. Mirroring ideas of agonism (Mouffe, 2005) or politics of propinquity (Amin, 2004), civility is a term that draws our attention to habits through which difference may be accommodated within a moral and political framework. Civil society invoked in these terms requires the cultivation of certain forms of political and social subjectivity and behaviors. From this perspective, political contestation is not necessarily inconsistent with civility, as long as debates and actions are conducted within socially recognized and validated limits, such tolerance and non-violence.
The cultivation of civility was a key aspect of the work of youth NGOs in the three sites under consideration. Mirroring Boyd’s findings, the organisations often blended the cultivation of civility with a sense of the individual’s position and responsibilities within a society, conceptualised across local, national and global spatial scales. For example, a youth development organisation based in South Africa saw the cultivation of ‘emotional intelligence’ as directly linked to transformative political action:

[We are] really looking at, sort of, non-cognitive skills and sort of self-awareness and those things so it’s very much based on […] emotional intelligence, and that’s a sort of what we hang our content on for the leadership development stuff, and then finally getting them to take all of that, and channelling it into a tangible action that they can take when they go home. And for us, that action that we are getting our young people to take is to come up with their own ideas and solutions to problems. By coming up with a project that they can run, they can make that actually happen.

This account of self-provisioning – of young people learning to rely on themselves to effect change – shares much with the ecological urban politics of the Tuzla-based youth NGO mentioned above. But the focus on the emotional intelligence links their practices to a politics of civility. In particular, the reference to ‘taking learning home’ locates the practice of learning citizenship within a nested set of spatial locations, from the civic association, the home, the city, and nation. In addition, the generic way in which learning is imagined adds a cosmopolitan scale to these processes, where the rights and responsibilities of community membership are inscribed through the recognition of duties to others.

But the cultivation of civility extended beyond the inscription of emotional conduct within society, it was also grounded in specific places. A second South African youth organisation linked the cultivation of responsibility with the establishment of a coffee shop:

[The founder started a place off as a coffee bar. So while they are selling alcohol and liquor and stuff next door, what you get here, well you walk in here, there’s a coffee bar. […] Just if you’re not into the alcohol and that, where is there that you
can go? [...] we want them to be responsible citizens because there are so many factors that impacts on that responsibility that they have.

Recalling a sense of the historic links between temperance and civility, coffee houses played a central role in historical accounts of European cultivations of civil behaviors and civil society, at least for bourgeois men (e.g., Habermas, 1991). Their prominence in contemporary accounts points to a potentially more exclusionary impulse within understandings of civility, where adjudications of civility are attached to bourgeois behaviour rather than impulses towards others. The significant issue here for our argument is the temporal framework within which both this and the earlier account place civility: it is a set of dispositions to be learnt collectively, through training activities in the first case and drinking non-alcoholic drinks together in the second. Civil society is not, then, a reflection of natural law, but a set of habits and customs that are cultivated through collective action. It is also the site in which the pedagogy of citizenship is activated and habituated, and that citizenship might be learnt, free from the pernicious influences of politicians, sects, the state, and family.

Yet the means through which ideas of citizenship are taught and practiced do not play out within a single normative framework. While some organisations emphasise civility in terms of affective politics of inclusivity and tolerance, others have interpreted civility as characteristics that assist the individual within the labour market. These neoliberal interpretations of civility – which intersect with earlier discussions of entrepreneurialism – were evident in a number of youth development NGOs in all three contexts, such as this organisation in Sarajevo, BiH:

[b]ecause our definition of empowerment would be, that you have young people that are not marginalized, that are not out of the job, and that are active in society. And so, you cannot be active in society and at the same time be poor and out of the labour market. So I would say that, somehow, it goes together.

Rather than self-provisioning, this account points to the sense that developing civility requires the correct forms of credentials that may be attractive to employers. This is a collective, though hierarchical, exchange of civility. Rather than the moral equality emphasised by Boyd and the youth organisations mentioned previously, this points to the ways in which concepts of civility may discipline individuals to comport themselves
in ways that are conducive to particular social norms. Here civility serves as a set of social and cultural characteristics as opposed to a more abstract set of moral obligations.

This section has outlined the ambiguous role played by ideas and practices of civil society within youth citizenship programmes. Though concepts of civil society are central to processes of learning citizenship, we have argued that this is not simply a reflection of the particular institutional context within which social interventions take place. Instead, the utilisation of civil society pointed to two, interlinked, manoeuvres. In the first frame international donors and social activists saw the construction and utilisation of civil society as a means through which social concerns may be aggregated and political influence channelled. As the evidence from the interviews attests, this was not necessarily a form of transformative politics; liberal governmental functions can be distributed through civil society agencies despite their imagined non-state status. But to focus on this alone would both reify an imaginary of civil society as a distinct sector of social and political life (which could be contested in all three cases) and overemphasise the significance of these institutional elements for learning citizenship. Instead, it was the focus on the civil aspects of civil society that framed many of the activities of the organisations under investigation. Though civility often conjures rather bourgeois notions of appropriate behaviour, the processes of teaching citizenship were often structured around shaping individual behaviour. Just as notions of citizenship conjure ideas of both collective and individual elements, attempts to intervene in behavioural practices point to the collectively-inflected ways in which individual behaviour is judged.

**Citizenship Learnt?**

On June 5th 2013 demonstrations began outside the BiH parliament in Sarajevo as a show of protest against the failure of the government to issue a Jedinstveni matični broj građana (JMBG, Unique Master Citizen Number in English) for new-born babies. The dispute itself stems from a well-established fault line in post-Dayton BiH: political parties in the Republika Srpska (RS) wanted a new law for the JMBG which would stipulate a baby’s origin in one of the two post-war Entities (the RS or the Federation of BiH). This would entrench the existence of the two entities, an arrangement that members of the Federation of BiH (and, in the main, international actors) would like to dismantle through constitutional reform. The next day, protestors – mostly young people coordinated through a series of youth NGOs with international funding to promote youth’s participation in the civic realm – blocked the entrance and exits of the parliament.
building. This move sought to disrupt the activities of the legislators and demonstrate their frustration at the state’s inability to pass a new JMBG law. During another round of protests on 11th June, where estimates suggest around 10,000 protestors were present, the deadline was set for 30th June for an adoption of a law on the JMBG, but this deadline was not met. The direct cause for the protests, organized primarily over the social networks, was the case of the three-month old Belmina Ibriševi, who needed a bone marrow transplant but could not leave BiH as she was prevented gaining the appropriate visa without a JMBG number. Belmina finally died in October 2013, despite eventually receiving treatment in Germany.

The JMBG protests illuminate the ambiguities of processes of ‘learning citizenship’ addressed through this chapter. Just as the discussion has interrogated the plural forms of learnt citizenship enacted through civil society, the forms of civic action on show during these days of unrest in central Sarajevo can be interpreted in a number of different ways. The first is to understand the protests as forms of ‘active citizenship’. As we have discussed, citizenship education emphasizes the importance of individual competences and self-motivation to the success of building civic institutions and forms of social solidarity. The ‘good’ habits of a civil society are similarly structured around a sense that there are certain forms of individual and collective disposition (i.e., civility) that are conducive to well-functioning polity. The central role of youth NGOs in the protests illustrate the inculcation of forms of active citizenship, where young people came together and sought to lobby parliament to change laws and to function with greater competence. The focus on the parliament building and surrounding streets emphasized the target of state-based formal political institutions. In this vein the protests can be taken as evidence of new forms of responsibility and collective action in BiH, especially if they are read as a desire to retain civic citizenship identifiers in the face of ethno-political pressure.

The protests have received alternative interpretations. The use of practices of civil disobedience -- in particular trapping legislators inside the government building -- point to the ways in which ‘learnt citizenship’ exceeds narrow spatial or behavioral templates. As argued earlier in the chapter, the competences and affiliations inculcated through learning citizenship are not spatially or socially bound: they often involve debates concerning rights and senses of justice that challenge existing institutional or territorial formulations. This sense of potential ‘rights to come’ is only underscored by the discursive position of youth as political actors whose citizenly identities and
behaviors remain in a process of becoming. The activism during the JMBG protests targeted the BiH government, but the appeals had a more complex geography than merely state territoriality. The claims to rights were simultaneously made internationally, both in terms of the message (the desire not to ethnically mark babies at birth) and the media (the use of social media to communicate the protest beyond the borders of BiH), and locally, in terms of reclaiming public space as a means through which rights claims may be asserted. In these terms the protests mark a radical shift in political strategy in BiH, in that claims to rights were disconnected with assertions of territorialized identity. But more significantly, they also point to forms of activist – and even insurgent – citizenship that looks beyond the existing nation-state structure as a locus of justice.

Rather than trying to assert neat categorizations of active or activist citizenship the focus on learning points to the interwoven nature of these two expressions of political mobilisation. As McFarlane (2011) asserts in relation to urban Mumbai, the lens of learning allows a focus on the embodied ambiguities of attempts to communicate, consolidate and practice citizenship. Rather than straightforwardly generating practices of acquiescence or resistance, the responses to citizenship programs in the diverse locations under examination have often exhibited complex mixtures of the two, where campaigning for changes in government policy sit alongside more radical attempts to provoke social or political transformation. In parallel, learning points to the tensions between individual and community contained within notions of citizenship. While learning is suggestive of forms of developing individual competence, these developments are only achieved, understood and given meaning within collectivities. In this way learning is a dynamic and situated practice that points to the potential inadequacy of some of the key tensions that have informed citizenship studies: between civic and ethnic, civil and insurgent, active and activist.

In sum, our concern in this chapter has been to chart the ways in which learning citizenship involves a negotiation of citizenship as a relation between individuals and collectivities. Focusing on learning captures the dynamism and plural ways that youth learn citizenship across the three case study locations under examination. Our approach to learning is not designed to look beyond these differences, but rather to emphasize the complex interplay between different understandings of solidarity, temporality and space that coexist within such citizenship initiatives. Crucially, the process of learning is not path dependent: the outcomes cannot be predicted in advance and in all three locations under examination the discourses of learning citizenship have not fed through to unitary
and uncontested ideas of civic identity. Instead, learning places an emphasis on the interplay between individual consciousness and the formulation of (potentially new) ideas of solidarity and collectivity. Consequently, and as we are seeing in the case study countries, the responses by young people towards such processes are contingent and ambiguous, at times reifying elite-narratives of civic identity and at others promoting alternative claims to justice or legitimacy.

References


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**Keywords:** Citizenship, Civil society, civility, learning, teaching, pedagogy, habits, nongovernmental organizations, identity, solidarity, collectivity