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How do Spanish young people become active citizens? Some reflections about life-long learning for democratic citizenship

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Abstract

Spanish young people have a positive idea about democracy, but they have many difficulties in identifying themselves as active citizens. There is a tradition of apathy public life, consequently policy makers emphasise participation and citizenship education. This analysis of Spanish policies for citizenship education suggests that the contribution of education authorities is complemented by Social Affair and Culture authorities. Objectives include the promotion of democratic citizenship in a non-formal educational context. Non-Governmental agents are also active role, traditionally working against social exclusion.

Research points out that young Spanish people have a positive view of democracy (Jóver, 2000; INJUVE, 2007). However, they have many difficulties to identify themselves as active citizens. This is not a new panorama. In fact, there is a tradition of apathy and absenteeism of public life. In this context, some policy makers (governmental and non governmental) have emphasised the interest in participation and citizenship education in order to develop a vital civil society. Hence, in line with the European policy initiatives and the Council of Europe's proposals, they assert the importance of youth policies and non-formal education to create the conditions necessary for young people's effective participation in society and to ensure their well-being.

This paper focuses on the educational proposal for youth citizenship education in Spain. It is part of a research study carried out by Deusto Education Department, as members of a trans-national team which was funded by the Grundtvig programme (2004/6). The project's title, Stocktaking Study on Lifelong Learning for Democratic Citizenship through Adult Education (LLL-EDC), reflects the main aim of the project: to provide an analytical review of policies and practices on adult learning and democratic citizenship.
This paper presents a summary of Spanish reports, mainly focused on young people. It is organised into different parts. Firstly, it focuses on the description of the LLL-EDC project. The following sections present some results concerning research and policies on LLL-EDC in Spain. These sections include descriptive aspects and a summary of the principal actors involved in LLL-EDC policies. Finally, the last part deals with the analysis of Spanish young people and their relationship with citizenship. In this section the involvement of the young population is discussed from a global citizenship perspective.

Stocktaking Study on Lifelong Learning for Democratic Citizenship through Adult Education (LLL-EDC): the project

The rationale of this project is based on the insufficient evidence and absence of any analytical review of policies and practices on adult learning for democratic citizenship at a European level. So far, within the contexts of the Council of Europe and the European Union, reviews in this area have focused mainly on learning for citizenship in the formal school system or in the children/youth field (Council of Europe, 2001; Eurydice, 2004). As a consequence, little attention has been paid to LLL-EDC. Some actions, such as seminars, research or European communications have taken place recently and have contributed to widening the general understanding of lifelong learning beyond its contribution to economic development[1].

This project, Stocktaking Study on Lifelong Learning for Democratic Citizenship through Adult Education[2], aims at collecting evidence and providing an analytical review of policies and practices on adult learning for democratic citizenship at European level, as well as at strengthening evidence-based policy making and advocacy in this field at a local, national and European level (e.g. EU Lisbon process). It complements similar studies in other educational areas, particularly those carried out by the Council of Europe. The Danish University of Education is the leader of the project and the other nine European institutions are involved in it are:

- Education Institute. London University (UK)
- Leopold-Franzens Universitat Innsbruck (Austria)
- Universidad de Deusto. Departamento de Educación
- University of Ljubljana (Eslovenia)
- University of the West Timisoara (Rumania)
- Södertörns University College (Sweden)
- Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE)
- European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA).

The partners from different countries, universities and European/international organisations complement each other in terms of adult education traditions, practical experience, own networks and thematic interests. This diversity broadens the spectrum of approaches, enriches analyses and guarantees the interdisciplinary interpretation of findings. In summary, this research is collaborative and trans-national. It has been organised around four complementary work blocks:

- Documentary review,
- Policy analysis, at national and European levels,

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[1] We could mention some relevant initiatives, such as seminars on Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult learning organised by the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) from 1991 onwards; UNESCO Institute for Education seminar on Citizenship, Democracy and Lifelong Learning, 2003 or EAEA conferences on Adult Citizenship Learning at their General Assemblies in 2002 and 2003.
Concerning communication the European Commission's Communication on lifelong learning, (2001) or the interim conclusions of Working Group G, (Autumn 2004) should be mentioned.
[2] Web site: http://www.dpu.dk/site.aspx?p=8795

- Practices analysis,
- Final synthesis.

Concerning its methodology and geographical scope, the study is exemplary and a pilot rather than exhaustive and representative. It combines empirical collection of data and events, which ensures the participation of relevant stakeholders (meeting with practitioners, policy dialogue meeting, national consultations). The final report will carry out a comparative analysis of national policies, a transversal thematic analysis of European, national and local practices including viewpoints of practitioners.

Documentary review: Spanish State of Art

Although in the past some experiences of great interest in adult education took place during the Second Republic (1931-1939), in general terms, the fight against illiteracy was the main priority, practically until the Seventies. During the late phase of the Francoist period, the expansion of education policies created the Permanent Adult Education Program (1973), institutionalised in the Ministry of Education and Science. This project, heir of the resources of the recently terminated National Literacy Campaign, was intended to provide a literate population with a basic education. At the same time, it provided a network of centres of permanent adult education (Educación Permanente de Adultos. EPA), whose curriculum is very close to that of the formal sector. The connection between the two programmes has led to the identification of different concepts: illiteracy, adult education and permanent education – a terminological confusion that has continued until the present day (Cabello, 2002).

The development of these official programmes did not prevent the creation, at this time, of other non-formal education programs, together with district and cooperative cultural movements. They were led by the Latin American current of pedagogical renovation and inspired by the writings of Paolo Freire. These initiatives tried to replace the lack of educational resources with voluntary work and citizen commitment to reach those strata of the population who were not reached by the official initiatives. Its objective was to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of these groups.

With the arrival of the democratic regime in Spain, the increase of resources assigned to the education of adult persons meant that these popular initiatives lost strength compared with the official programmes promoted by the public institutions (state, regional or municipal). This situation led to a reduced prominence of civil society in adult education. The literature echoes this development and regrets the loss of the dynamic character of these centres, questioning their participative nature as schools of participation and democracy.

Regarding literature on LLL, the first thing to be said is that there was a large group of publications relating to ongoing adult education, until 1995. Nevertheless, the majority were descriptive materials, which in spite of their undeniable value, showed an important gap in empirical, refutable and comparable works of research, which respond to fundamental questions about adult learning processes. This affirmation is endorsed by authors like Albarrán and Aristu (1995). After reviewing 500 references on adult education in Spanish (all published between 1970 and 1995), they found more

instrumental, didactic-pedagogical proposals than reflections able to design the future. In their opinion this was because, in spite of not lacking educators with great creative impulse, traditionally in Spain there has been a certain deficiency of researchers in this field. The short history of adult education as a university subject explains this deficit. Basically, it has been restricted to the isolated research of certain professors of education with sensitivity to the social arena.

This trend began to change with the beginning, in 1993, of the degree of Social Education, linked to the Departments of Education. Since then, the concern for life-long learning in all scopes of knowledge was increased. We should emphasise, therefore, the role of Social Education as a relevant space of research and thought in these fields. In the first years of its implementation in Spanish universities, the main lines of research in this discipline were focused on contexts of exclusion and social conflict. From this perspective its scope has been extended and it has paid more attention to the population as a whole and learning aimed to habits of democratic coexistence (Caride, 2004; Pérez Serrano, 2003). Most authors agree to point out education as an essential tool to promote some given values and attitudes. In other words, it is a tool to raise the conscience of citizenship (Flecha, Puigvert, Santos & Soler, 2002).

Concerning research, it seems clear that lines of research have not dealt extensively with the issue of citizenship, at least until recently. We can also affirm that it is dominated by the formal education system and the obligatory states. The related research and literature proposes to recover the civic impulse, as an element that consolidates democracy, also in relation with the people who, due to their political, economic or social circumstances, seem to be left out of full citizenship (Roca, 2004; Oraisón, 2005). From this discourse, citizenship is considered as a political category that operates from the logic of inclusion-exclusion. The point of departure is as follows: at present the great problems cannot merely be solved by the state, so an active, informed, politically and ethically responsible citizenship becomes necessary. As was mentioned, the influence of Latin America and, in particular, of the liberation pedagogy of Paulo Freire[3], is important in this issue.

Based on this idea, one of the most important ethical-educational challenges of our time seems to be the development of the appropriate conditions for a rational debate that allows for consensus on norms and mobilises the will for participation. Critical reflection and the transformation theory of Jack Mazirow, are some other of the axes to which some authors who emphasise the importance of adult education in the formation of critical persons retort to. Nonetheless, educational experiences that stimulate analysis are not enough; thereby, what is needed is an education that involves the citizens in the construction of guidelines of values and a model of desirable life (Benedicto and Morán, 2002; Oraison, 2005). The contribution of non-formal learning contexts to the

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[3] Freire remains an indispensable reference to understand education as an element of social change and transformation. His educational model permits the encounter with the other, from which to reflect on our conditions of life through dialogue between heterogeneous voices. His thought implies an ethical reference to develop an education based on the critical comprehension of reality, with a process of conscience-raising which allows people to face their reality and to start transforming it.

educational process by supporting the development of youth skills is addressed by some authors (Jover, 2000; Morán & Benedicto, 2003; Benedicto & Morán, 2002; INJUVE, 2007).

Participation, in its different degrees and levels, from attendance to educational programmes to the involvement of individuals in the planning and accomplishment of shared projects, constitutes a concern that is shared by many approaches to the analysis of social reality. The panorama in this field is ample, plural and diffuse, as corresponds to the diverse forms of participation (to be part, to be part, to take part, García Roca, 2004). The discourse defends participation as an ideal policy of local democracy and the predominant opinion is that participative democracy is only possible as a complement of representative democracy. In this case, we consider an evolution from an education *for* citizenship to an education *in* citizenship. That is to say, it incorporates the exercise of citizenship as an educational process (Rebollo, 2002).

In the discussion, the model of radical democracy based on citizen participation in decision-making has been strengthened. Most theorists and researchers prescribe that participation of all citizens is seen as the solution to generate a more vital civil society. Participation is also seen as a way for social and personal development. In general, those pieces of research have a socio-critical and hermeneutical frame. As one could expect, those proposals for intervention tend to be based on practical experiences in different educational contexts. In fact, there is an important volume of publications that investigate adult education and citizenship education at a descriptive level. It could be said that many of the investigations are contained in the section of case studies or analysis of certain practices of citizenship.

LLL-EDC policy analysis

This section includes a brief description of the evolution of adult education and its relationship with citizenship education. This historical inheritance is important to understand past and current aspects of Spanish adult education system and the configuration of civil society's involvement in education.

At the beginning of the democratic period, education generated public and political discussion in Spain. Demand and supply increased. Just as the Education Ministry remembers, a great number of different actors began coordinating and cooperating more and more (MEC, 2002). In the late 1980's and early 1990's educational policy changed. The edition of the *White Books of Adult Education* (1986) by the Ministry of Education meant a movement towards the criteria of UNESCO and the Council of Europe. It emphasised learning based on experience and on the need to take part in active and social life through a lifelong process. At the same time, it included a concept, namely LLL, adopted by those institutions. In 1990, the Law of the General System of Education (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo: LOGSE) was passed. LOGSE focused mainly on the formal sector and aimed primarily to raise the standards of school and professional education. Nevertheless, an important change was made regarding adult education. Chapter III was entirely devoted to Adult Education. Since then, Adult Education has no longer been regarded as part of the school system but an activity of personal, social and professional promotion. Dealing with citizenship education, LOGSE

stipulated the following aim: *'to develop their abilities to participate in social, cultural, political and economic life'* (art. 521.2).

We may agree that this is very close to citizenship education objectives, even if the words 'citizen' or 'citizenship' do not appear. In any case, these proposals went beyond merely academic aspects and sought to incorporate social actors, in coherence with the educational goals of citizen education proposed by the European Union, the Council of Europe or UNESCO.

In summary, it could be said that citizen education is not a new subject either in the educational system or in adult education, since it was contemplated in legislation and reflected it transversally. In the first place, we should mention how the previous Laws of Education (LOGSE and LOCE)[4] already indicated among the objectives of adult education *'to develop their capacity for participation in social, cultural, political and economic life'*. Since 2005, year of Democratic Citizenship through education, the Ministry has promoted the debate about citizenship education and some groups of University lecturers have edited a proposal for this topic. The recent Statutory Law of Education (LOE) has taken a further step in this sense. Proposed by the Socialist Party, in its chapter IX about Adult Education, article 66, Objectives and Principles, it specifically previews the creation of an area of personal and social education. Among the objectives of adult education, it indicates: *'to develop participation capacities for social, cultural, political and economic life and to make their right to democratic citizenship effective'*[5]. It seems evident that the Council of Europe resolutions and recommendations have been an important influence.

Today, education in Spain is experiencing a profound transformation. There are many changes taking place that have moved adult education and lifelong learning towards the centre of the whole education political agenda. In the words of Gómez: *'while during the nineties a key issue for adult education was how to increase access to educational resources and guarantee basic education for all, the new challenge we must face in the 21st century is how to democratise adult education in order to promote an Information Society for all the population. In fact this is the new challenge for adult education in Europe'* (2006: 3). A progressive alternative educative model has emerged and this implies important changes from scholar adult education towards a social adult education model[6]. The so-called social model implies a new understanding in which we could include active citizenship education. In fact, the social model extends adult education to all social groups (Gómez, 2005:30).

In the next paragraphs, we will deal with four key aspects: immigration process, new technologies, women's integration and citizen's participation. All of them have an important influence in the political context in which the Spanish debate about LLL-EDC is taking place.

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[4] General Statutory Law of the Education System (LOGSE) (BOE 04-09-1990). MEC
Statutory Law of Educational Quality (LOCE) (BOE 24-12-2002). MEC
[5] Statutory Law of Education (LOE) (BOE 04-05-2006).
[6] Two models can be pointed out: Scholar Adult Education model and Social Adult Education model.

First, Spain has become a country of migration. This situation is a recent phenomenon, which arrives after an uneven development. Between 1975 and 1985 the foreign population increased by 76,682 persons and twenty years later, between 1995 and 2006, the number of foreign residents increased by 2,304,530 persons. These trends have resulted in a growing representation of international migration in the Spanish population (around 9% in 2006). Spain is hosting a large number of people from Morocco, Ecuador, Colombia and Rumania. Predominantly, immigrants are working in the so-called 'underground economy', in a situation of irregularity, which makes them particularly vulnerable. To remedy this situation, six regularisation or extraordinary documentation processes have been introduced since 1986

The incorporation of migration into Spanish society is also having important consequences in adult education. For instance, there is a remarkable increase in the number of people taking courses of Spanish for immigrants (Vélaz de Medrano, 2005). Most people are Africans, Maghrebians, Eastern Europeans, Asians and even Latin Americans (who master reading but have difficulties with writing). According to the Education Ministry the number goes from 1,588 students in 1995/6 to nearly 32 thousand in 2002/3 (MEC, 2004). From a non-formal perspective, it should be mentioned that the third *Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration* (2007-2010) includes a chapter on participation. Added to that, the plan mentions the development of volunteering among migrants in order to promote integration and the development of citizenship.

Second, technological illiteracy is a real new phenomenon and as harmful as written illiteracy (Junta de Extremadura, 2001). The presence and ever-greater proliferation of technology in all aspects of society is being noted in LLL policies. There are numerous possibilities offered by Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for the improvement of teaching-learning processes in adult education. Nevertheless, as the Ministry of Education and Science itself recognises[7], there are still insurmountable barriers to gaining access to educational sources and resources in this format. Among them, they emphasise the lack of technological equipment in some centres and the lack of previous training of the students.

From the discourse of citizenship, attention is called to the barriers that prevent universal, equitable and accessible access to information (Gros & Contreras, 2006). Other citizenship competences, such as developing participation skills through the ICT are also mentioned. Besides, technological literacy of adults is not only possible, but necessary, with the purpose of also avoiding the creation of the so-called 'digital division', also present in the developed world among older adults and certain excluded groups like immigrants. In the case of the adult people with fewer resources, the role of political authorities is crucial in mobilising energies that would not be set in motion without an institutional boost.

Despite notable gains in the last few decades, gender inequality continues to impinge on women's ability to realise their rights and full potential as partners in the development of

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[7] http://ares.cnice.mec.es/informes/10/documentos/indice.htm

society. This is the third mentioned factor. The education enrolment figures for girls may be comparable with those for boys, even at the University level (50.26%) (Instituto de la Mujer, 2006). However, important questions surrounding citizenship and women confront this scenario. For instance, the ratio for political participation is quite low. That is why the Instituto de la Mujer and the Autonomous Communities have created numerous Women's Departments. At a local level, Town Halls are also developing educational polices in order to promote women in social life. It is not an overstatement to say that they are the main stakeholders in LLL-EDC for women.

The fourth factor is related to the challenge to promote citizens' participation through the structures of representative democracy and to develop other forms of participation. There is a feature that should be underlined concerning training for participation and active citizenship. The fact is that the youth sector policy makers (Instituto de la Juventud at a national level and the Youth services at a regional and local level) are the ones who promote solidarity and support programmes on those topics. NGOs give access to a package of learning opportunities and experiences.

Different policy makers have complementary roles. For instance, the national agencies (Instituto de la Juventud, the Instituto de la Mujer, Secretaria de Estado de Immigración y Migración and the Ministry of Education) raise the issue of setting priorities and implementing objectives and strategic plans. Sometimes they allocate some resources to develop activities or programmes. However, due to the decentralisation, the implementation is mainly made at a regional or local level.

The increasing interest in citizenship has heightened the need for a partnership between the different actors. Regarding main stakeholders, it could be said that with some exceptions, public authorities delegated the control of adult education and non-formal education to other stakeholders. As a consequence, we can see that one characteristic is the partnership model. Just as the Education Ministry remembers, a multitude of different actors began coordinating and cooperating more and more (MEC, 2005). This is a crucial question for most shareholders due to the fact that the public sector is the most important source of funds. In other words, the strengthening of partnerships between the state (mainly regional or local education authorities) and civil organisations is one of the main issues (Vélaz de Medrano, 2005).

Finally, we want to emphasise that the formation of citizens is a fundamentally pedagogical task, but in this field it is important to generate dialogue and cooperation among all the professionals involved. The different agendas of stakeholders and their different position produce a complex network of relations. As a result, the complexity and dispersion of the scope of action to which we refer, make it necessary to carry out studies where the interaction of professionals and interdisciplinary dialogue can provide integrated answers, fitting the social realities of our time.

In the ensuing section, the perception of young Spanish people concerning democracy and citizenship is discussed. Some data about participation and factors influencing participation and integration are also analysed, along with the main educational strategies developed in this field.

Spanish young people and citizenship: some reflections

This part sets out to gauge how young Spanish people perceive citizenship and democracy. It is based on the analysis of secondary data. The first thing to be said about this data is that young people have a positive idea about democracy. 45% of young population think that democracy is the best political system and 69% of them consider that the Spanish democratic system is good or very good (Jover, 2000). However, they have many difficulties in identifying themselves as active citizens. As Jover (2000) mentions, this is not a new panorama. In fact, there is a tradition of apathy and absenteeism of public life. Two reasons could be mentioned. The first point is the difficulty in identifying themselves with a political option (INJUVE, 2006). It is true that this argument could justify their lack of interest in elections and political parties; nevertheless, participation is broader and it includes other perspectives.

Second, the active engagement of citizens is based on the feeling of autonomy and participation. Spanish young people live in difficult conditions to obtain personal autonomy (labour market, housing, etc). According to Jover (2000), this panorama could explain the gap between the collective ideals and the concrete personal demands.
Democracy and citizenship are very close concepts. In our case, attitudes towards democracy are characterised by a high degree of legitimacy. However, it seems clear that active citizenship needs to feel part of democracy and become responsible for it. In the light of this data, the low concern levels on politics could also be explained as a certain failure in the education system (Jover, 2000; Moran & Benedicto, 2003) and different stakeholders (schools, NGO, families, politicians) should assume citizenship education and, what is even more important, stimulate an active citizenship.

Concerning citizenship educational policies with young people, the offer supplied by education authorities is complemented by the Social Affair and Culture authorities. Besides this, it is necessary to mention that they have greater possibilities due to some institutions that are specially concerned with citizenship education. For instance, the Instituto de la Juventud (Youth Institute) and Instituto de la Mujer (Women's Institute) are both attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Among their objectives they intend to promote youth and women's participation through the promotion of training for democratic citizenship in a non-formal educational context. Those policies are related to a model of adult education that incorporates the concepts of progress and social development, where the professionals work as facilitators and support the development of certain abilities that, later, young people will apply in their own community. The challenge is how to equip them with the abilities and knowledge they need for effective participation. Hence, many activities (publications, conferences, grants) are focused on policy measures to enable people to be active citizens.

Youth policies should provide a package of opportunities to increase the probability of becoming active citizens (Siurala, 2005). The personal learning elements of volunteering offer the possibility to develop one's abilities and learn citizenship skills and other competences through non-formal activities. The increase in the number of volunteering programmes can be attributed to the increase in the number of NGOs and the increasing interest of other stakeholders (policy makers) in providing opportunities to experience active citizenship. Two approaches can be pointed out: volunteering programmes and

international volunteering (cooperation?) programmes. Among their objectives, volunteering programmes are useful to emphasise active citizenship, while international volunteering (cooperation?) projects engage youth across national borders and usually focus on global citizenship. The question is, what do young people think about those proposals? And, are they interested in them? Recently a new study was published to reflect young people's opinions about those topics (INJUVE, 2006). This poll points out young people's opinions on three issues that, little by little, have obtained a greater prominence in the processes of young socialisation:

- The view young people have on solidarity,
- Young volunteering work,
- The perception that young people have on social inequalities.

The greatest agreement levels among young people in our country when defining solidarity are shown in the following statements: '*Solidarity is taking others into account*' (52%), '*Solidarity is dividing and sharing (time, money, whatever you have)'* (49%) (Injuve, 2006). This group is composed mostly of women, and its number increases as young people become older. The most frequent solidarity activities amongst the young people interviewed are related to the money donated to countries or people who need it (48%) and the more or less specific collaboration in solidarity actions – *helping neighbours, protection of the environment, etc* (39%) (INJUVE; 2006).

Active citizenship could be identified with the practice and the experience of useful activities for the benefit of local communities. Around a third of young people say that they have some experience in volunteering activities. Amongst these people, 10% of them say that they usually collaborate with voluntary organisations and 18% say they are ex-volunteers (table 1). The young people who spend part of their leisure time in activities related to helping others are mostly people who have high qualifications, young people who have higher socio-economic levels, who have studied in religious schools and those who are practising Catholics.

Table 1. Dedicating some spare time to an activity to help others. Source INJUVE, 2006

	Total	Sex		Age groups (3)		
		Men	Women	15-19	20-24	25-29
Base don: (N=)	(1475)	(757)	(718)	(393)	(498)	(584)
Never	70.0%	72.0%	67.8%	69.7%	71.7%	68.7%
Sometimes	21.4%	21.0%	21.7%	23.9%	18.1%	22.4%
Quite often	4.6%	3.7%	5.6%	3.1%	5.0%	5.3%
Many times	3.2%	2.5%	3.9%	2.5%	4.2%	2.7%
DK	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%		0.4%	
NA	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.6%	0.9%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The group of Spanish young people who say they have collaborated in solidarity actions when extraordinary events have occurred – *wars, natural disasters, etc*. - (34%) is smaller; together with those people who spend some of their leisure time helping other people (29%) and those who say they attend fund-raising concerts (26%). There are even fewer people who are blood donors (15%).

To conclude, it only remains to add that a major goal of citizenship education must be to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to participate in the mainstream workforce and in the mainstream society, but also to help transform and reconstruct society (Banks, 1995). As volunteers, young people make a meaningful contribution to the goals of the community at the same time as they gain new perspectives and insights. However, data suggests that the concept of active citizenship will need to take centre-stage in our future research and policies.

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