

(Re)defining citizenship: governance of networked infrastructures, representations and everyday practices

Call for articles for the journal Flux

Coordinators: Francesca Pilo', Caroline Gallez, H el ene Nessi

Recent literature has drawn on the notion of citizenship to understand various political aspects concerning access to networked infrastructures (water, waste, energy, mobility, etc.). These aspects have included the recognition of users as political subjects, forms of mobilisation and claims, as well as the growing involvement of civil society collectives in transforming everyday practices in response to environmental emergencies. This special issue of Flux aims to expand these recent debates on citizenship and infrastructure by examining the uses, representations, norms, and practices that connect the notion of citizenship to contemporary infrastructural transformations in different geographical and socio-political contexts.

Since the "infrastructural turn" in the social sciences, infrastructures have been considered as socio-technical systems that shape and organise everyday life and political relations (McFarlane and Rutherford, 2008). Focus on infrastructures has enabled a better understanding of the "political materiality" of cities, particularly the role of objects in mediating power relations among humans (Pilo' and Jaffe, 2020). Furthermore, infrastructures are essential for organising the circulation of energy and material flows, which affect how people satisfy their basic needs. They have been the object of recurrent mobilisations by users or residents, notably to claim universal rights to essential services or to increase user participation in governance or decisions related to the transformation of networks and services. In recent literature, the notions of "citizenship" or "citizen practices" have been used in different geographical and political contexts to analyse and characterise these infrastructure mobilisations. For a long time, citizenship primarily fell within the domain of political science, approached from the perspective of legal status, membership in a national political community, or participation in electoral processes. Since the 2000s, anthropologists have proposed moving beyond citizenship as a status or state to address the question of "what is called citizenship" (Neveu, 2013) and how the discourses and practices of citizenship vary across geographical spaces and evolve over time. From this perspective, citizenship is understood through the ways in which people claim membership in a political community, whether national, international, or local (Lazar, 2019). Work on technical infrastructures has adopted these approaches to characterise how relations between the state, network operators, and users are changing.

The notion of citizenship has been used to qualify users' mobilisations in the face of inequalities in access to infrastructures and the forms of political recognition supported by access to infrastructures. In cities, infrastructures have been crucial in understanding the differentiated nature of citizenship, particularly between the formal status of citizenship ("formal citizenship") and the actual capacity of citizens to claim the rights conferred by this status ("substantive citizenship") (Holston, 2008). Infrastructures help challenge the modern liberal vision of

citizenship in terms of equal rights. Infrastructures have become important sites for observing forms of protest aimed at claiming rights from the state (Von Schnitzler, 2008). They also shed light on how people negotiate their access to essential services through informal networks, practices, and relationships (Anand, 2017) and how infrastructures become a vital means of political action and a tool in the formation of collective identities (Fredericks, 2018). Recently, the notion of "infrastructural citizenship" has been developed to explore how experiences and interactions with infrastructures (re)produce citizens' identities (Lemanski, 2018).

The notion of citizenship has also been used to refer to the (individual or collective) involvement of users and residents in transforming and managing infrastructures, as well as to the shift in everyday practices associated with mobility, waste sorting, electricity consumption, etc. The terms "citizen" or "citizenship" have also been appropriated by social movements to capture their role in the governance of infrastructures (e. g. energy cooperatives). This engagement has led to various conceptualisations in the academic field, such as "energy citizenship" which evokes the active involvement of individuals in the sustainable transformation of energy systems (Devine-Wright and Devine-Wright, 2004). Finally, the vocabulary of citizenship is also used by public authorities and operators seeking to promote practices such as waste sorting, recycling, and composting as "civic acts" (Audigier, 2007) and evidence of "good citizenship." This normative understanding of citizenship has been the subject of critical analysis, which notably denounces the invisibilisation of issues of inequality and exclusion (Lennon et al., 2020). As this brief overview highlights, the various uses and conceptualisations of citizenship have led to diverse interpretations of the relationship between citizenship, networked infrastructures and associated practices. The aim of this issue of Flux is to engage in a critical reflection on this notion and to deepen the debates on technical infrastructures and citizenship, with particular reference to the following three themes.

1. Non-State Governance of Infrastructures and Citizenship

In current literature, the link between infrastructure and citizenship is predominantly examined through the lens of the relationship between citizens and the state. Yet, infrastructures have been shaped and appropriated by various non-state actors who directly or indirectly impact the citizen-state relationship. Private providers, user or resident collectives, collective self-consumption organisations, and, in specific contexts, criminal actors such as gangs and militias, have received relatively limited attention. *How does the intervention of non-state actors in infrastructure governance redefine the concepts, discourses, and norms surrounding citizenship? To what extent does their involvement correspond to or compensate for the state's disengagement or reduced public power? How do these non-state entities, by stepping in for the state, challenge its role in network organisation and, at times, even undermine its authority?*

2. Representations of Citizenship and Infrastructures

Technical infrastructures are frequently associated with political representations, which, in turn, embody values, norms, and regulations designed to govern their use (Picon, 2018). For example, the traditional model of a large centralised grid representing the political ideal of universal energy access is now being questioned by "energy community" projects that seek to involve "citizens" in energy transitions. Residents, users, companies, the state, and local authorities all generate diverse representations of the citizen and their relationship to infrastructure. These representations manifest in various aspects, including infrastructure management, network organisation, and usage. These representations may emerge with the introduction of new devices that, through the institutionalisation of infrastructures, have the potential to either bolster the acknowledgement of specific rights or, conversely, be perceived as a form of control, thereby prompting protests (as in the case of electricity meters). *How do these representations tangibly influence forms of participation, rights, and responsibilities of users? Conversely, how do discussions about infrastructure organisation and evolution reveal varying representations of citizenship? In what ways do both technology and non-technical infrastructural elements*

contribute to materialise representations of citizenship? How does the notion of citizenship differ and circulate in different contexts depending on the state's role in providing access to network services?

3. Citizenship and Everyday Infrastructure Practices

Several studies aim to grasp "citizenship in action" based on the everyday usage of infrastructures and network services. This particularly involves accounting for actions taken by users or groups of users, whether legally or illegally, to access infrastructures (such as negotiating connections to water and electricity networks, for example) or to propose alternatives to dominant systems of production and management. Faced with environmental challenges, an increasing number of civil society collectives are developing modes of sustainable consumption and production (e.g., mobility, waste recycling, renewable energies). By highlighting the shortcomings of existing systems, they act with the aim of becoming self-reliant in their daily practices, and playing a role in the ecological transition. To what extent can these individual or collective practices be considered as political acts? What values, forms of social inclusion, and societal visions are taken into account in these claims and collective mobilisations? In what way do these practices open up new perspectives in the analysis of citizenship?

This call invites the submission of articles based on in-depth empirical research that contribute to questioning and deepening our understanding of the relationship between citizenship and networked infrastructures. We welcome situated analyses that explicitly highlight differentiated approaches to the notion of citizenship and discuss its scope across different spaces, time periods, or social groups, and from varying disciplinary perspectives (urban studies, geography, anthropology, planning, history, etc.). The three proposed analytical themes are not exhaustive and can be interlinked.

Bibliography

Anand N., 2017, *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Audigier F., 2007, L'éducation à la citoyenneté dans ses contradictions. *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres*, n°44, p. 25-34.

Baptista I., 2015, We Live on Estimates?: Everyday Practices of Prepaid Electricity and the Urban Condition in Maputo, Mozambique, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 39, n°5, p. 1004–19.

Carrel M., Neveu C., 2015, Citoyennetés ordinaires. Pour une approche renouvelée des pratiques citoyennes. Paris: Khartala.

Devine-Wright H., Devine-Wright P., 2004, From Demand Side Management to Demand Side Participation: Tracing an Environmental Psychology of Sustainable Electricity System Evolution, *Revista de Psihologie Aplicata/Journal of Applied Psychology*, 6(3-4).

Fredericks R., 2018, *Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Holston J., 2008, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Princeton University Press.

Lazar S., 2019, Citizenship. Oxford Bibliographies.
<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0222.xml#>

Lemanski C., 2018, Infrastructural Citizenship. Spaces of living in Cape Town, South African, in Ward K., Jonas A. E. G., Miller B., Wilson D. (edited by), *The Routledge Handbook on Spaces of Urban Politics*, London: Routledge, p. 350–360.

Lennon B., Dunphy N., Gaffney C., Revez A., Mullally G., O'Connor P., 2020, Citizen or consumer? Reconsidering energy citizenship, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, Vol. 22, 2020 - Issue 2, p. 184-197. DOI : [10.1080/1523908X.2019.1680277](https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2019.1680277)

Mc Farlane C., Rutherford J., 2008, Political Infrastructures: Governing and Experiencing the Fabric of the City, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 32, n°2, p. 363–374. DOI : [10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00792.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00792.x).

Neveu C., 2013, « *E pur si muove !* », ou comment saisir empiriquement les processus de citoyenneté, *Politix*, n°103, p. 205-222. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pox.103.0205>

Picon A., 2018, Urban infrastructure, imagination and politics: from the networked metropolis to the smart city, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 42, n°2, p. 263-275.

Pilo' F., Jaffe R., 2020, The Political Materiality of Cities: Introduction, *City & Society*, vol. 32, n°1.

Shove E., 2010, Social Theory and Climate Change, *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 27, n°2-3, p.277-288. DOI : [10.1177/0263276410361498](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276410361498)

Von Schnitzler A., 2008, Citizenship Prepaid: Water, Calculability, and Techno-Politics in South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 34, n°4, p. 899–917. DOI: [10.1080/03057070802456821](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070802456821)

3. Submission Guidelines

Deadline for abstracts: December 16, 2023

Contributors must send an abstract of no more than 800 words, along with the names of the authors and their institutional affiliations, to:

f.pilo@uu.nl
caroline.gallez@univ-eiffel.fr
nessi.h@parisnanterre.fr

Contributors will receive feedback on their abstract by January 22, 2024

Deadline for complete papers (first version): May 20, 2024

The paper must meet the standards of *Flux*, i. e. an article of 8000 words, an abstract of 200 to 350 words in French and English, and a biography of the contributors of around 120 words..

For more information, please consult <http://revue-flux.cairn.info/recommandations-aux-auteurs/>

The publication of this special issue of Flux is scheduled for March 2025