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Civic Learning through active citizenship in diverse societies

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Abstract

In response to the growing heterogenous populations in urban areas, and the important role of civic engagement and active citizenship for the promotion of democratic processes, this paper discusses the active participation of resident foreign citizens and/or persons with a history of migration, in urban areas. The theoretical connections between active citizenship, lived citizenship and civic learning are outlined and then linked with the results of an applied research project focused on various aspects of gender. In conclusion, active – lived – citizenship, in particular 'performative' acts of citizenship, generate civic learning as subjectification. Public spaces as learning opportunities for active engagement should take into account aspects of diversity as well as inequalities in a diverse society in order to promote inclusion and democracy for as many residents as possible regardless of their citizenship status.

Keywords: migration, active citizenship, civic learning, public pedagogy, lived citizenship

Introduction

Cities are often perceived as engines for social change. They are discussed both as places where social change can be created and implemented, and as places that are at the fore front of social transformations. (Pietrzak-Franger et al., 2018). This is especially true in

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the case of demographic changes due to migration. Globally, most migrants live in cities (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2017). In Europe, migrants[1] settle in cities at a disproportionately high rate compared to the native-born population. In 2014, more than 85.2 % of immigrants born outside the EU, 78.8% of migrants born within the EU, but only 69 % of native born people were living in urban areas, (cities or towns) (Eurostat, 2017). The percentage of second generation migrants born in non-EU countries living in urban areas is even higher, and amounts to 90 % (Eurostat, 2017).

As cities become highly diverse, this development opens up new questions, topics and challenges. In this paper, we focus on the aspect of cities as starting points of many initiatives of civic engagement, a process referred to as 'active citizenship' (Bee, 2017). The people involved are 'active citizens', or – to illustrate the tendency of dissent towards the reigning social order – as 'activist citizens' (Isin, 2008; Newman, 2011). We will henceforth call this active engagement in urban areas, as a reference to the term of 'urban citizenship' (Schilliger, 2018) an 'active urban citizenship'. Both active and activist citizens are engaged in promoting more inclusion of undocumented migrants in cities (see the debate on solidarity cities or sanctuary cities, Wenke & Kron, 2019). Regardless of the specific cause, the active participation of citizens enriches socio-political debates and these are inherent to the democratic process (Biesta et al., 2014).

Another aspect of democracy is the inclusion of as many residents as possible in relevant processes, a significant challenge in times of growing mobility. Formal opportunities for democratic participation are greatly limited for non-citizens in most of the 56 countries that the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX[2]) measures worldwide, including the Member States of the EU and the OECD (Solano & Huddleston, 2020b). Nevertheless, many migrants use informal modes of participation. In the practice of active citizenship, gender plays an important role and the aspects of gender, age, racialization and sexualization must be considered in analysing acts of citizenship (Newman & Tonkens, 2011b).

In the field of civic engagement and active citizenship, informal learning processes are widely researched (Foley, 1999; Duguid et al., 2013), in the last decade the specific processes of *civic* learning have been brought to the fore (for example Trumann, 2013; Caris & Cowell, 2016; Fleischmann & Steinhilpfer, 2017; Sprung & Kukovetz, 2018). Despite this, the literature provides little insight into the conditions surrounding the promotion of active citizenship and civic learning through engagement.

Thus, in this paper we aim to analyse civic learning processes that take place during the practice and pedagogical promotion of active citizenship, especially for women living in diverse settings. We will start by outlining our theoretical framework. From the wide range of approaches to active citizenship, we focused on concepts that we believe to be applicable to the living conditions of marginalized groups, especially of migrants, and which stem from a critical theoretical framework (such as feminist theories). After some general points on active citizenship, we will focus on the concept of lived citizenship (Lister et al., 2007). This feminist approach also draws attention to forms of engagement that are rooted in people's everyday actions, often in the domestic sphere or in local (e.g. ethnic) communities. Due to our focus on marginalized individuals who often do not even have citizenship rights, engagement mostly takes place beyond the 'traditional' spaces of active citizenship and is therefore at risk of being overlooked. In order to include the structural conditions for political participation and the spatial dimension of active citizenship, considerations of urban citizenship will be discussed in the theoretical part of the paper. This perspective will also be important in understanding our empirical case study. A dynamic understanding of citizenship rather than a constant and static one, will form the basis of our analysis. In addition, we will focus on civic learning processes

through and in the interest of active citizenship, and their connection to public pedagogy and the approaches of lived and urban citizenship. After having outlined the theoretical framework we will present a case study of civic participation processes involving migrants in the city of Graz, Austria. We will highlight the current situation as well as the efforts of the municipality of the city of Graz, to include residents, and particularly migrants, in civic engagement processes. With an innovative example of promoting active citizenship we will highlight connections between lived citizenship and the concept of civic learning. We will conclude with conditions, that we consider to be important for equitable and need based reinforcement of active citizenship and civic learning in diverse societies.

Active citizenship

A number of terms have been used to describe people's societal involvement, such as social or civic participation/engagement/involvement, (political) activism and active citizenship. In this context, the last term is of particular interest, because the reference to 'citizenship' allows us to discuss the peculiarities of civic participation in societies shaped by migration.

The term citizenship refers mainly to legal status (including rights and responsibilities) of an individual within the national state (Sassen, 2002). While it is connected to the idea of inclusion, it is also linked to the idea of an exclusive community with boundaries, usually the nation-state (Bosniak, 2006). Considering the rise in international mobility and the new social realities that follow, citizenship scholars have developed refined approaches such as transnational citizenship or inclusive citizenship. Three main aspects make up citizenship-membership, rights and participation (Giugni & Grasso, 2021) The concepts that highlight migration are mostly found under participation. This goes along with Isin and Nielsens's (2008) focus on 'acts of citizenship' (Isin & Nielsen, 2008), as opposed to the mere status of citizenship. Such 'acts constitute actors who claim and assert rights and obligations' (Isin, 2008, p. 39) and by doing so 'enact themselves as activist citizens' (Isin, 2008, p. 39). These acts of citizenship have more than a mere political dimension. They exist in a framework of an ethical, cultural, social and sexual dimension, as a result of their origin in the individual background of their actors. By performing these acts, the actors themselves are transformed in addition to transforming the acts of citizenship, the forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) as well as the modes (being performed by citizens, strangers, outsiders or foreigners) (Isin, 2008). Isin defines these actors as '*activist* citizens'. This distinction between 'active' and 'activist' citizens could be fruitful in the understanding of the '"Janus face" of active citizenship' (Newman & Tonkens, 2011a, p. 198). Janet Newman and Evelien Tonkens refer to the idea of Ruth Lister et al. (2007), who describe citizenship as janus-faced, simultaneously possessing an inclusionary and exclusionary, emancipatory and disciplinary quality (Lister et al., 2007). Similarly, *active citizenship* can at once be both emancipatory and disciplining: On the one hand, active citizenship can be seen as practice and recognition of social movements demanding participation in and transformation of politics and policies. On the other hand, it is often argued, that active citizenship is a new form of governance, turning active engagement into a duty of citizens, compensating for state services (Newman & Tonkens, 2011a).

A feminist approach: Lived citizenship

Gender is an important factor in the context of citizenship, even though it has been neglected in theory for a long time. When analysing gendered consequences of policies, it is important to keep in mind the everyday lived experiences of people (Newman & Tonkens, 2011b). The concept of *lived citizenship* takes into account not only the demands and pleas for justice expressed by civil society, but also the everyday actions of people in the intimate/domestic sphere. Such actions can have a political dimension and can in fact be political acts (Lister, 2007). In response to the feminist claim 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970, p. 76), Lister points out that citizenship is a lived experience and cannot be separated from its social or cultural context, nor from its spatial dimension. Citizenship *influences* and *is influenced by* 'people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances' (Lister, 2007, p. 55). It negotiates and creates practices of inclusion, exclusion, responsibilities, belonging and participation (Lister, 2007). In this sense, Lister includes these cultural and social acts as political – similarly to the understanding and definition of acts of citizenship of Isin and Nielsen (Newman & Tonkens, 2011c). This perspective also helps to shed light on other marginalized groups in society who often are not recognised as political subjects.

In order to grasp and analyse lived citizenship, Kallio et al. (2020) differentiate between four dimensions. First, the dimension of spatiality implies that both the more local level of citizenship and the development of transnational forms of citizenship must be considered. Several aspects could be interesting here when looking at the situation of migrants – for example, they often live in segregated areas with subpar infrastructure and poor housing conditions. It is fair to assume that residents of marginalised districts have many concerns related to the infrastructure and the spaces available. At the same time they lack ways to voice their concerns, ideas or dissent in regard to these issues. The second dimension of lived citizenship is the one of intersubjectivity, referring to how citizenship is shaped interpersonally and intergenerationally. Kallio et al. (2020) talk about the 'intersection of relationships with significant and strange others' (p. 717). Here, a clear link appears to learning processes that could potentially take place through negotiating topics within and beyond the boundaries of the own community. Public spaces, open for encounters (such as community centres), are relevant in this context. The third dimension of lived citizenship is the relationship to affective experiences, meaning the 'deep significance of the feelings associated with being a citizen' (Kallio et al., 2020, p. 718). The fourth dimension highlights the performative aspect, pointing out the practices and actions associated with citizenship (Kallio et al., 2020). These four dimensions provide the tools to comprehend lived active citizenship as a locally rooted, personal, emotional and performative act carried out by urban residents.

We want to use these approaches as a basis for presenting and analysing civic learning, with regards to active citizenship in the chapter 'Civic Learning'.

Active citizenship in the urban context

The origins of active citizenship can often be found in cities. As previously mentioned, cities are becoming more diverse, and migration is the main driving force behind urbanization (United Nations Human Settlements Programme [UN-Habitat], 2020).

Against this background, it is interesting to consider how opportunities for active citizenship develope in urban space, which face the challenge of constant change and a scarcity of resources. Cities become political spaces, where questions of access to

resources, power, belonging and rights/responsibilities are continuously negotiated. Thus, developments unfold in which actors draw public attention to their concerns and interests.

In view of an increasingly diverse society, Schillinger refers to these collective practices of struggle for civil rights, as urban citizenship (Schilliger, 2018). To name only two examples of attempts at taking back the city, people in many places campaign for the rights of refugees (Solidarity Cities) or resist gentrification projects (Schilliger, 2018; Wenke & Kron, 2019). Sarah Schillinger (2018) describes the concrete utopia as a common feature of these movements. Referring to people becoming active beyond political constraints and finding ways out of a defensive and paralyzing situation, like current migration and asylum policies.

These developments show how cities are confronted with the increasing complexity inherent in highly differentiated and diverse societies (Bollow et al., 2014). Many urban policy makers are becoming aware of the importance of creating and implementing need-based policies that are aligned with the demands of the residents, and that include the knowledge and the experience of various actors while considering the social needs and aspirations of all citizens (Vanolo, 2016). Consequently, urban development and planning, in connection with the structural-spatial, social, ecological, economic and/or cultural aspects of an area, should be perceived as joint tasks that are shaped by a multitude of actors, including citizens (Selle, 2013).

Hence, public authorities need active citizens in order to develop and implement urban policies. However, the idea of what the role and legitimate power of active citizens should be varies. Thomas Mattijssen et al. (2019) summarizes the challenges faced by active citizens in urban governance and points out that active citizenship often remains limited in scope and simply reproduces existing power relations. Furthermore, ‘citizens often experience a lack of support from authorities or are even constrained by existing policies, which prevents them from realizing substantive outcomes.’ (Mattijssen et al., 2019, p. 2). To address these challenges, Diana Mitlin (2021) calls for a political understanding of participation, rather than a purely functional or technical one, an understanding that takes into consideration political relationships and existing hierarchies. She calls for the promotion of ‘collective priorities and political voice, community self-organisation, peer support and solidarity to enhance the levels of inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups and thereby improve democratic control over urban policy and planning’ (Mitlin, 2021, p. 3). In this respect, governmental promotion of active citizenship must not always be an instrumentalization of citizens and their capacities and competencies, but could also contribute to ‘summoning, constituting and supporting collective solidarities’ (Newman & Tonkens, 2011b, p. 221). Subsequently, questions related to how governments and administrations could acknowledge the importance of lived citizenship might foster the civic learning processes going along with practices of lived citizenship. This topic will be elaborated further in the empirical case study.

Civic learning

Learning through and for active citizenship

Acts of citizenship, including the activities of volunteers (both in the framework of established non-profit-organization and privately organized), foster several learning processes. This is especially true if they are performed in a group, and mainly take place informally – both during work and leisurely activities, in neighbourhoods, families, and between acquaintances. In many cases, personal, social and pedagogical competence,

practical skills in areas like project management, information and communication technologies, and other specialized knowledge is acquired (Kukovetz & Sprung, 2020; Duguid et al., 2013; Trumann, 2013; Foley, 1999).

Engaging in active citizenship presents a solid opportunity for civic learning. Active citizens may become aware of social, political and economic developments and take on new responsibilities in response to these. In this way, they foster their social and political consciousness (Trumann, 2013). The studies mentioned above elucidate how some people start their engagement within associations promoting predefined actions for good causes. As a result, the activists begin to pay more attention to changing political and social policies (Kukovetz & Sprung, 2020; Wlasak & Wonisch, 2019).

From a different angle, civic learning can promote active citizenship. It is helpful to use Gert Biesta's (2014) differentiation between a *socialization* and a *subjectification* concept of civic learning for the analysis of civic learning processes in the context of active citizenship. According to Biesta's theoretical approach, the acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions required 'to become part of an existing sociopolitical order' (Biesta, 2014, p. 6), means that civic learning takes place as *socialization*.

Educational processes might not only have the function of qualification – the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to do *very specific things* – or of socialization in the above-mentioned sense, but also of 'subjectification' (Biesta, 2019, p. 14). From our point of view this third dimension is especially relevant for civic learning within active citizenship, as it describes how people 'become subjects of action and responsibility' (Biesta, 2019, p. 14). This concept is strongly linked to an understanding of education in the sense of the German notion of *Bildung* by Hans-Christoph Koller. *Bildung* means to be related to the world and to question the existing world orders (Koller, 2012). In Gert Biesta's description of human subjectivity, we also find a reference to the social/natural world. Biesta does not understand subjectivity as self-centred, but rather as taking responsibility for other human beings and existing in relation to the world (Biesta, 2019). He links the civic learning process as subjectification to his considerations relating to democracy. Therefore, he refers to Jacques Rancière and characterizes politics as always democratic, stating that political actions which imply the idea of equality interrupt existing social orders. Through these actions people engage with the so-called *experiment of democracy* (Biesta, 2014).

As we aim to include the perspective of lived citizenship, the everyday actions of people, we want to expand the concept of civic learning by Biesta. We argue, that subjectification may arise when personal experiences serve as the starting point. Firstly, concerning the *affective connectedness*, *Bildung* may happen, if people are emotionally involved (Dirkx, 2008) and if they are unsettled by their experiences (Schäfer, 2017). Secondly, people need a social environment, as in relationships to others, to learn – a need comparable to the necessity of *intersubjectivity* for engagement in lived citizenship. Finally, subjectification can be initiated by *performative* actions and conducted in public *spaces.* They have the potential to interrupt existing social practices.

Even though the experiences of marginalised people might be confined to the intimate and domestic sphere, civic learning presents a connection to others, or the public. We will therefore move on to explore the connections to public pedagogy.

Civic Learning of active citizens as public pedagogy

According to Gert Biesta (2012, 2019), public pedagogy can appear in three different forms. First, he names a pedagogy *for* the public, which aims to instruct citizens. This includes influencing the thinking, acts and existence of people. In terms of civic learning,

examples could be telling people how to act in law abiding or tolerant ways, or how to become active citizens.

Though this form of public pedagogy does not allow the promotion of pluralism and difference, it is more feasible in a so-called pedagogy *of* the public, meaning it is executed *by* the public itself. According to this, citizens should be empowered in their awareness of democratic processes and practices. People are not taught *what* they should learn, but a pedagogy *of* the public wishes *that* people acquire political agency and get active (Biesta, 2012, 2019). The downside of a pedagogy *of* the public is that it 'brings democracy under a 'regime' of learning' (Biesta, 2019, p. 138). That is, social and political problems are turned into learning problems and are no longer the responsibility of the collective, but rather the individuals (Biesta, 2019). Biesta (2012, 2019) refers to Paolo Freire (1970/1993) when he states that a pedagogy *of* the public seeks the *conscientization* of people. Agents of education act as facilitators and aim to build critical awareness and *critical consciousness* (Freire, 1970/1993).

In the third understanding of public pedagogy described by Biesta, pedagogy makes plurality of the people visible. Biesta states that in this 'mode' of public pedagogy it 'appears as an enactment of a concern for 'publicness' or 'publicity', that is a concern for the public quality of human togetherness and thus for the possibility of actors and events to *become public*.' (Biesta, 2012, p. 693). Biesta describes this form of public pedagogy as a rejection of both the logic of the market, and the private sphere. He refers to Marquand when he sees the domain of the market, characterized by trading interests and incentives, and the private domain of personal connection (Biesta, 2019). However, in the public sphere, the values of collective interest prevail over the values of self-interest and strangers come together as equal partners to discuss the definition of public interest and to produce public goods (Biesta, 2019). Thus, a public pedagogy is committed to solidarity, sustainability, cooperation and living together in plurality and difference. It *demonstrates* how alternatives to the logic of the market and the private can be put into practice, and therefore it can be called a 'pedagogy of demonstration' (Biesta, 2019, p. 139) that is entirely public.

This definition of public pedagogy, highlights active citizenship as a meaningful possibility for public pedagogy. Community learning und civic engagement care about well-being and social *togetherness*, and address topics such as freedom, democracy and human rights (Popović et al., 2018). Thus, they fit the idea of the third form of public pedagogy according to Gert Biesta. Popović et al. (2018) demonstrate that public pedagogy does not just mean turning public spaces into learning opportunities, but the focus has to lie on civic engagement: '(…) it is about collective action and civic initiative as the learning process itself' (Popović et al., 2018, p. 274).

One particular form of active citizenship, especially relevant for the project presented below and connected to the performative aspect of lived citizenship, can be described as 'artistic citizenship' (Caris & Cowell, 2016, p. 480). People are given the opportunity to 'manifest themselves as subjective members of society, to present themselves as citizens' (Caris & Cowell, 2016, p. 480) through art. This idea follows a concept of art that considers the situation itself, the interaction between the artist and the immediate surrounding, as artistic – a so-called *situation art*. The artist becomes an interlocutor who raises questions and allows the citizens to develop new ways of interventions and alternatives and thus to emerge as political subjects (Caris & Cowell, 2016). Arthur Caris and Gillian Cowell describe learning processes they found within projects of such situation art, as corresponding to the idea of learning as subjectification, as per Gert Biesta. This kind of public pedagogy opens up a public space that interrupts the rational

order, empowers people to speak with their own voice and generates social togetherness with the possibility of freedom within the community (Caris & Cowell, 2016).

These concepts of public pedagogy are not only fruitful for an analytic perspective, but also helpful both for policy makers and pedagogues, who initiate learning processes within civic engagement. In what follows, we will present a case study that we conducted in Graz, Austria in 2020/2021. It is a study of active citizenship and civic participation respectively, and it outlines political and pedagogical consequences.

A case study: Civic participation of migrants in Graz

In comparison to other EU or OECD countries, Austria has rather restrictive naturalization laws and provides few opportunities for formal political participation for newcomers. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) points out that political participation for migrants in Austria is unfavourable as migrants 'have no voting rights, few local consultative bodies and weak support for immigrant organisations' (Solano & Huddleston, 2020a). Austria achieves only 20 out of 100 points on the index.

Against this background, we were interested in the question of how migrants, especially migrant women, develop political agency, despite the aforementioned conditions, and how they practice active – lived – citizenship in their local environment. The project will be described in greater detail after a more general exploration of political and civic participation in Graz.

Political and civic participation of migrants in Graz

The city of Graz, situated in south-eastern Austria, is continuously growing and had 291,134 inhabitants at the time of our empirical study (Land Steiermark, 2021). International migration has been changing the demographic structure of the city continuously for centuries. Over the last ten years, the percentage of people with a foreign citizenship of the total population of the city, increased from 14.9 % in 2011 to 24.6 % in 2021 (Land Steiermark, 2021). 31.2 % of the population were born outside Austria, and/or hold non-Austrian citizenship (Land Steiermark, 2021). Migrants – on average – are more likely to live under disadvantaged and precarious circumstances than people without a history of migration. Examples of this are a greater risk of unemployment (especially amongmigrant women), overrepresentation in low-income and precarious segments of the labour force, and an increased risk of poverty, as well as worse positions in the housing market (Statistik Austria, 2021).

Given that only residents of other EU countries can part take in municipal elections, one of the few opportunities of representation of citizens of non EU-countries is through what is known as the Migrants' Council of the City of Graz, established in 1995. The council advises local political and administrative bodies through recommendations and statements. It also provides information and services for migrant communities. The council has a total of nine representatives (of which currently eight identify as female) who are elected within the framework of the municipal council elections, by non-EU citizens. Since the Council has no decisive voice in political procedures, it has a rather limited scope of influence on city policies. The very low election turnout – under 5 % during the latest elections in 2021 – is likely a reflection of this problematic situation.

To expand democratic representation, the City of Graz has been working on developing further structures for the inclusion of its citizens, in planning and decision-making processes, and thus institutionalized various participation models over the past 50 years (Brunner, 2008).

These activities can be characterised as top-down processes of civic participation, and do not specifically address migrants, but rather the population as a whole. Civic participation in this context mainly concerns the field of urban development and urban planning.

Due to the lack of statistical data on the representation of migrants in relevant projects, we draw on expert interviews with three representatives of the Migrants' Council, the Department for Citizen Participation and the City Planning Department which we conducted in 2021 (in addition to the study presented below). All experts shared the impression that migrants have been underrepresented in participatory models. In most projects, the point of reference is a specific neighbourhood, and thus the immediate living environment of the residents. Not all citizens would accept an invitation to participate in public discussions to the same extent. Various factors seem to play a role here. In addition to general relevant aspects such as individual issues, or varying levels of education and socio-economic background, there may be additional barriers specific to citizens with a history of migration. Limited knowledge of the system, or a lack of fluency in German may contribute to this, but also a potentially precarious legal status, lack of trust in public institutions or little to no experience with citizen participation. A significant number of these processes take place in settings that can be inappropriate for some groups, such as information events held in large halls. The aforementioned disadvantages such as a lack of language skills and of cultural, social and symbolic capital, may have an even greater impact in these large settings. Past experiences of the interviewees show how the Migrants' Council can play an important role in bridging top-down approaches with more accessible modes of participation in city projects. Accessibility could be improved by adjusting the information to better fit the target group, identifying potential social multipliers and participants and inviting them personally, but also by providing translation services and smaller venues in order to create safe spaces for discussion. Women with migrant backgrounds in particular, are underrepresented in public spaces compared to men, they therefore require more specialised approaches to be developed to be successfully reached.

Apart from the rather formalized and top-down model described above, there is of course a range of more or less informal ways for citizens to participate. Self-organized initiatives use a variety of paths to articulate their concerns to the city's decision makers. Some of them also gain the support of official bodies, for example in the form of an invitation to introduce themselves on the homepage of the Department for Citizen Participation, or on the homepage of the Migrant's Council. None of the 30 initiatives listed on the Department for Citizen Participation indicate the promotion of women's concerns specifically, as their goal, and only one of the 60 migrant (self-)organisations listed on the homepage of the Migrant's Council indicates a focus on women in their name.

Against this background we will now highlight a project, in which we tried to create a more open and experimental space for exploring active citizenship and articulating ideas for urban changes by female residents, in a district with a high percentage of migrants.

'Active Urban Citizenship' – a project at the intersection of art, civic learning and research

In 2019, the city government of Graz invited artists, as well as representatives from the scientific community and civil society, to submit proposals for the contribution to a *Cultural Year 2020*[3]. The public call for proposals had a motto 'How we want to live'. We felt inspired to address specific social groups whose voices are often unheard and highlight the extent to which these groups can engage and put forward their ideas for

(co-)shaping their living space. We were particularly interested in how active citizenship is articulated against the backdrop of social change through migration. To address this, we suggested the project 'Active Urban Citizenship' (01/2020-04/2021) and invited female citizens to participate in a specific setting.

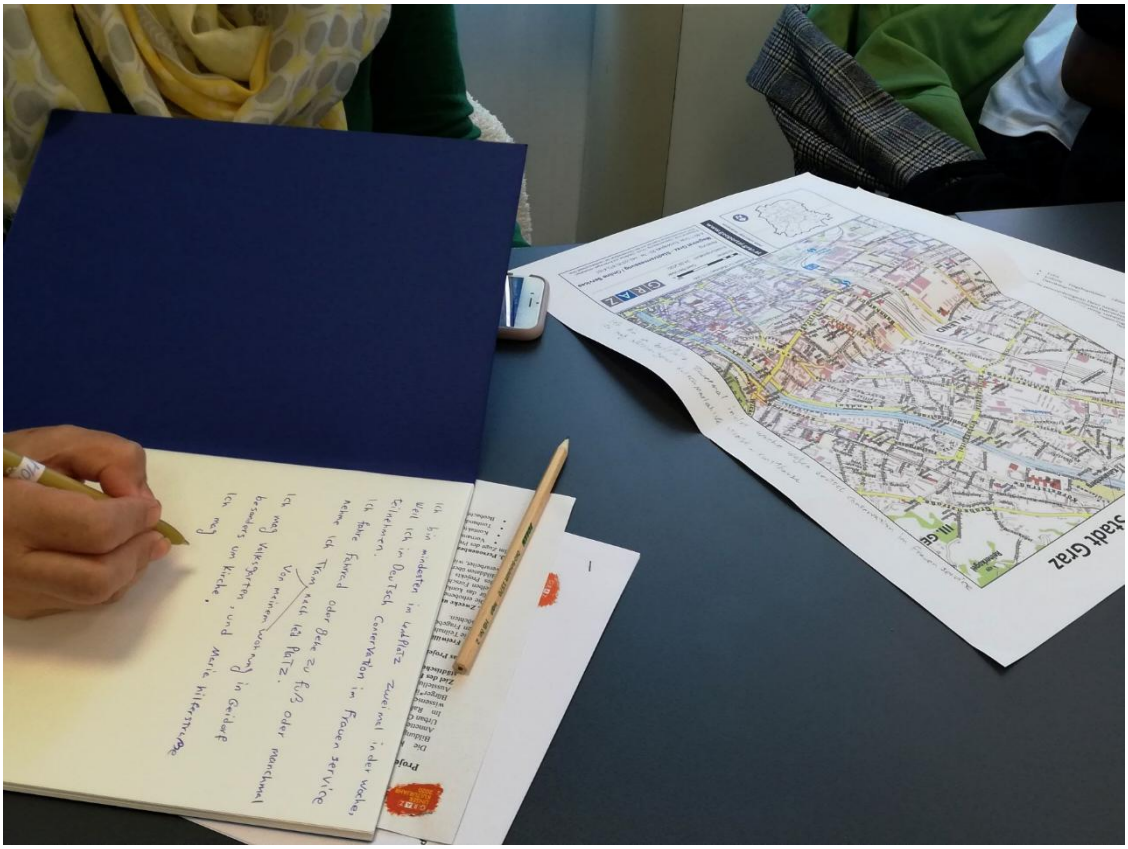
Subsequently, a group of thirteen women with a wide range of personal backgrounds (the majority, but not all, had migrant experiences) explored their urban district and shared ideas and utopias with regard to their living environment in a so-called 'living lab' (Malmberg & Vaittinen, 2017). Together with two artists, the women created a photo exhibit which was presented to the public in shop windows in March and April of 2021. The living lab (four workshops in total) was accompanied by a research team. Our leading research questions addressed the visions of the participants in terms of engaging politically within the local community and explored how the women negotiated ideas, roles and relationships of power within the group. Furthermore, we were interested in the potential of participatory, art-based methods to facilitate learning processes in the context of active citizenship. The mixed-methods research design included theoretical analysis and the following empirical survey methods:

- a standardized short questionnaire on the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants
- participatory, open observations of group work and discussions in the workshops, these were documented in observation protocols
- a photo-voice survey (Kolb & Lorenz, 2009) based on the participants' photographs in the district, their talking about their photos, and on recorded conversations that took place during the joint city walks
- a group discussion in the last workshop, in which the entire process was reflected upon
- the intermediate results of the analysis were presented to the participants and their feedback was then incorporated into the final analysis.

The theoretical framework of our research was based on theories and concepts around active (urban) citizenship (Wenke & Kron, 2019; Isin & Nielsen, 2008), civic learning and learning that takes place in social movements (Biesta, 2014; Duguid et al., 2013) as outlined above, in the first part of this paper.

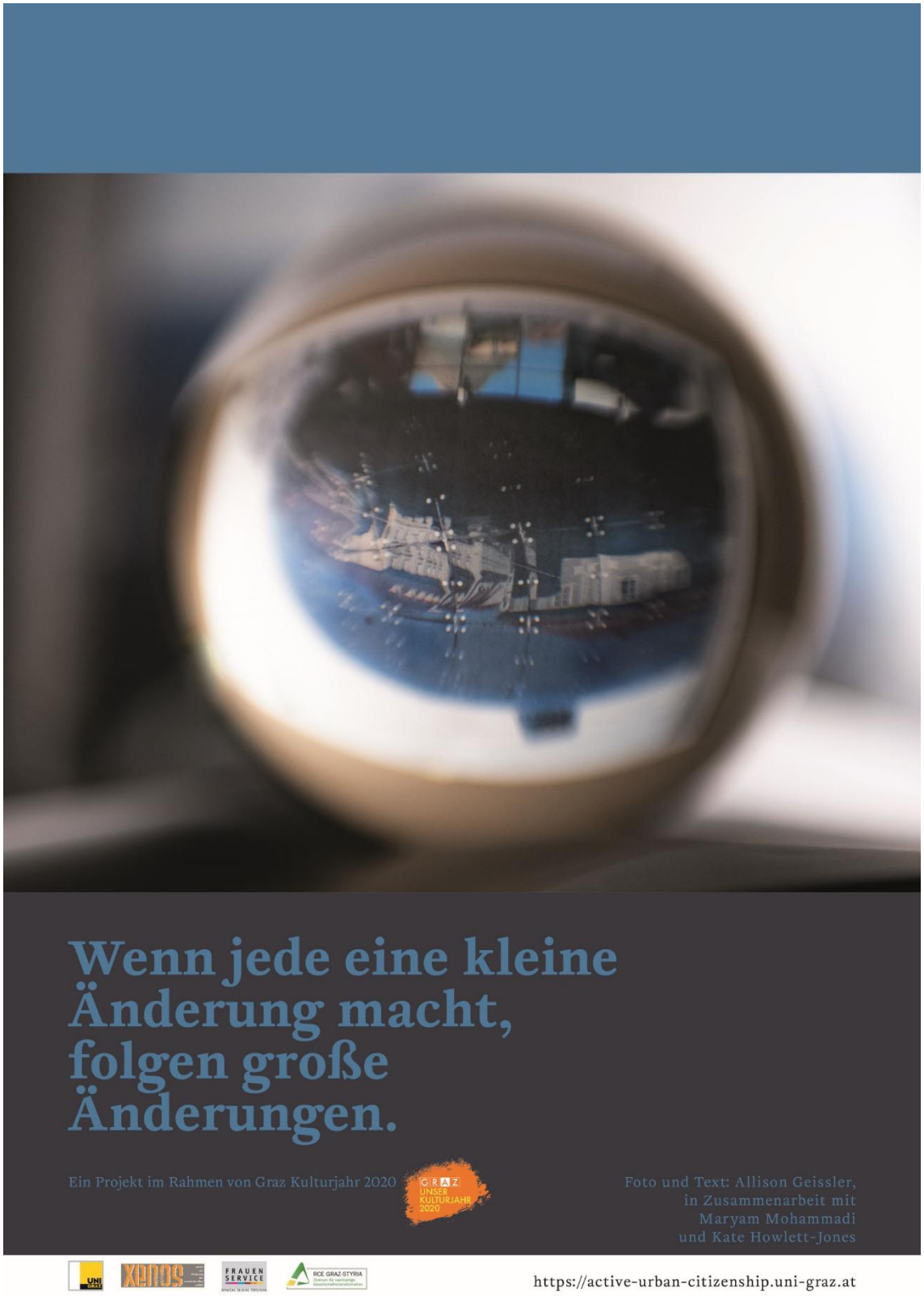
The living lab connected the private experiences of its participants, experiences of personal significance, with the public space and dimensions of active citizenship. The women in the living lab experienced the intersection of four dimensions of lived citizenship according to Kallio et al. (2020). They mapped the places in the district (see Figure 1), marking positive or negative moments/happenings as remembered, they then visited these in groups and talked both during the walks, and in the workshop setting that followed, about their emotional connectedness to these places.

Figure 1. Activity within the Living Lab: Mapping the district. Source: Maryam Mohammadi



In doing this, the *spatial* dimension of their lived citizenship was brought to the fore. Multiple women mentioned the traffic situation, and how they felt discriminated against or even threatened as pedestrians. Furthermore, they articulated a need for safer and more comfortable bus stops: 'The situation at the many bus stops is totally uncomfortable with all the cars directly there, a very small sidewalk, no shade at all, and then you are standing there with little children.' (woman MAN, workshop [ws] 2^4). In discussing their needs and emotions in connection with certain issues and places in the city, the *affective* aspects of being a citizen became visible. The women talked about their positive experiences with local NGOs and community centres in the area, where they liked to go to meet new friends, take language or sport classes and participate in dance festivals during summer. The *performative* dimensions of citizenship were demonstrated through taking ownership of their district, and by creating a public exhibit to reflect their utopias. To illustrate this, one object from the exhibit is depicted here (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Exhibit within the project. Source: Allison Geissler, in cooperation with Maryam Mohammadi and Kate Howlett Jones



The statement below the photo states: 'If every individual makes a small change, big changes will follow'. This demonstrates the core idea of our project – creating and discussing alternative outcomes of urban development (utopian visions), and thinking about how residents can actively involve themselves. Furthermore, the results of the process itself were also intended to inspire dialogues with the broader public, by creating a public exhibit open to visitors from the district and beyond. One woman reflected on the exhibit in the following words:

> We were bringing awareness to changes taking place in Graz. So, like this project, for me it was super, because it brings awareness (…) And the pictures, they are a universal language (…) and how we can bring a positive change. (woman BON, ws 4).

Finally, the fourth dimension of lived citizenship, *intersubjectivity,* played an important role within the group of women. Characterized by various common needs, but also by heterogeneous backgrounds (such as age, educational and social background, language skills, legal status, parenthood, etc.) the group atmosphere remained open and respectful in the living lab. The power structures and hierarchies, rooted in the structures of society at large, were to some extent reflected in the interactions of the participants. Visible, for example, as a hierarchy of language use and the privileged role of Austrian-born women with native language skills. However, working in smaller groups and using creative and non-verbal artistic methods provided marginalized participants a greater chance of equal inclusion. Plurality (in various respects) is vital to democratic processes, it should not be forgotten though, that plurality often is intertwined with inequalities, that also play out in groups of volunteers and active citizens. Therefore, it was interesting for us to understand how the participants negotiate and cope with these differences, and what role the facilitators can/should play in reducing potential barriers and enable equal participation in the process.

As we have pointed out the participants of this project realized all four dimensions of lived citizenship. A multitude of civic learning processes affiliated with these actions took place during our project. The women expressed their wishes, their negative experiences, and their own ideas of opportunities to change the district. Articulating not only needs, but also critique can, contribute effectively to a process of empowerment among marginalized people. Marginalized communities are rarely ever asked what they do not like or wish to change in their living space. Their voices tend to remain unheard – be it due to their legal status or other aspects of marginalization. This is perhaps one of the most important points with regards to civic learning, based on lived citizenship, as a process of subjectification. The activities within the living lab showed the women that they themselves *have the right to* and *are able to* criticize and actively engage in the development of the district. One participant reasoned that working together as a group gave the individuals a 'stronger power for change' (woman TAS, ws 4^3). As these changes do not concern the individuals, but rather the responsibility for others, these processes of subjectivation are part of an active engagement in democracy. This is expressed by one woman, who summarised her experiences in the last workshop:

> A steady drip wears away the stone, so if you really want something, then you can change something. Yes, and different women with a lot of similarities, what does that mean for you? I found it extremely exciting to work in such an intercultural group, to get to know different views, perspectives and ways of thinking a little and to look beyond my own nose. That's my opinion. (woman BEZ, ws 4^3)

Active citizenship itself presents an opportunity to learn. The ambivalence of the project due to its framework (financed by the local government and developed and initiated by

researchers and an NGO) on the one hand, and its open orientation toward the utopian ideas of the participants and the forms of representation of these ideas on the other hand, is interesting. It places the project somewhere between a governmental strategy of fostering active citizenship, and bottom-up *acts of citizenship*. Thus, the project includes aspects of both a pedagogy *of* the public by aiming at promoting the (political) agency of the participants and setting the framework for it, and a pedagogy with a concern for 'publicness' resp. a 'pedagogy of demonstration' (Biesta, 2019, p. 139) fostering 'artistic citizenship' (Caris & Cowell, 2016, p. 480) by providing the women with resources to create their own utopia of their neighbourhood.

If it can be assumed that active urban citizenship is deeply connected to the daily lives and experiences of people in the city, lived citizenship highlights the contribution of personal actions within the domestic sphere to an extensive understanding of active citizenship. This is enmeshed with (feminist) politics of everyday life, that 'challenges definitions of what is properly a personal matter and what is a matter for public debate and collective provision, drawing attention to the public value created by informal labour in family, civil society and community' (Newman & Tonkens, 2011b, p. 224). Even though this seems to conflict with Gert Biesta's argumentation of a public pedagogy, which focuses on the aim of *becoming public*, we think that the concept of *lived citizenship* may be helpful in describing different levels of issues, predominantly framed as private, that could be rendered relevant for a public debate. In order to exert active citizenship, it is essential that there are public spaces where citizens have the opportunity to articulate and express themselves, speak with their own voices, and experience the creation of social movements and formulate political demands.

Conclusion

This paper asked how civic learning processes can take place within active citizenship and participatory processes – especially in the case of (often) marginalized groups such as migrant women. Applying a feminist perspective, together with the concept of *lived citizenship* (Lister, 2007), we analysed the case study of the Austrian City of Graz, focusing on institutionalized possibilities for the participation of migrants, as well as trying out new forms of artistic, active citizenship together with migrant women. With the living lab, our project 'Active Urban Citizenship' sought to provide a space to enable these patterns of active citizenship. In order to make the living lab as inclusive and accessible as possible, an inclusive, experimental and creative methodology and a continuous awareness and reflexion of existing hierarchies as well as different privileges of the participants, were crucial.

However, there is a need for more resources, including space and time for experimenting with new forms of civic learning, and enabling new approaches to active citizenship for marginalized groups. Furthermore, the learning outcome of such processes, in the sense of public pedagogy, must be included in reforming urban policy structures. On the one hand, the city itself must provide such opportunities, to experiment with new forms of citizenship, on the other hand, the demands and claims of bottom-up initiatives must be heard and considered by the city on a regular and institutionalized basis.

In general, we can say that the City of Graz has developed a variety of top-down urban structures and approaches to promote active citizenship. However, Graz still struggles to be inclusive (with regards to migrants and in particular migrant women), socially just, and to demonstrate the ability to respond to claims, rather than asking for active input by citizens. In addition, the City of Graz occasionally, but not systematically,

funds possibilities – such as one off projects – to present possibilities for civic learning through active citizenship. The challenge of working on more inclusive and sustainable concepts of participation and civic learning, in which marginalized groups can participate despite their legal and national status or their socio-economic situation remain as issues, as do access to resources and gender related positions in society. Citizens with migrant backgrounds in particular, especially women, are often left out, due to the barriers they face, such as deficits in information, socio-structural disadvantages, or the limited scope of impact that result from the possibilities for participation given to migrants.

Even if these aspects were addressed, the dilemma resulting from the democracy-promoting aspect of active citizenship and the peril of governmental instrumentalizations of active engagement, in the sense of privatising formerly public services and incorporating ideas and strategies of active citizens, persists. In the latter case it is again the active – or, as per Isin, *activist* – citizens who are challenged to point to respective developments.

However, the right to vote for non-national citizens remains one of the main challenges to recognition as active citizens, with the same rights as any other urban resident. To be acknowledged in this respect opens the doors to feeling entitled to one's city, enhances the development of a sense of ownership and encourages people to perform as active citizens. As cities grow due to migration, and urbanisation continues across the world, cities cannot afford to leave out crucial population groups in their urban development strategies, if they are committed to providing needs-based urban structures in a democratic and inclusive political system.

Notes

1 We use the term *migrants* instead of *immigrants*, because in the German speaking context this term also highlights aspects of transmigration.
2 https://mipex.eu
3 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the funded projects were finally realized in 2021.
4 Translation from German by the authors.

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The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

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