CITIZENSHIP

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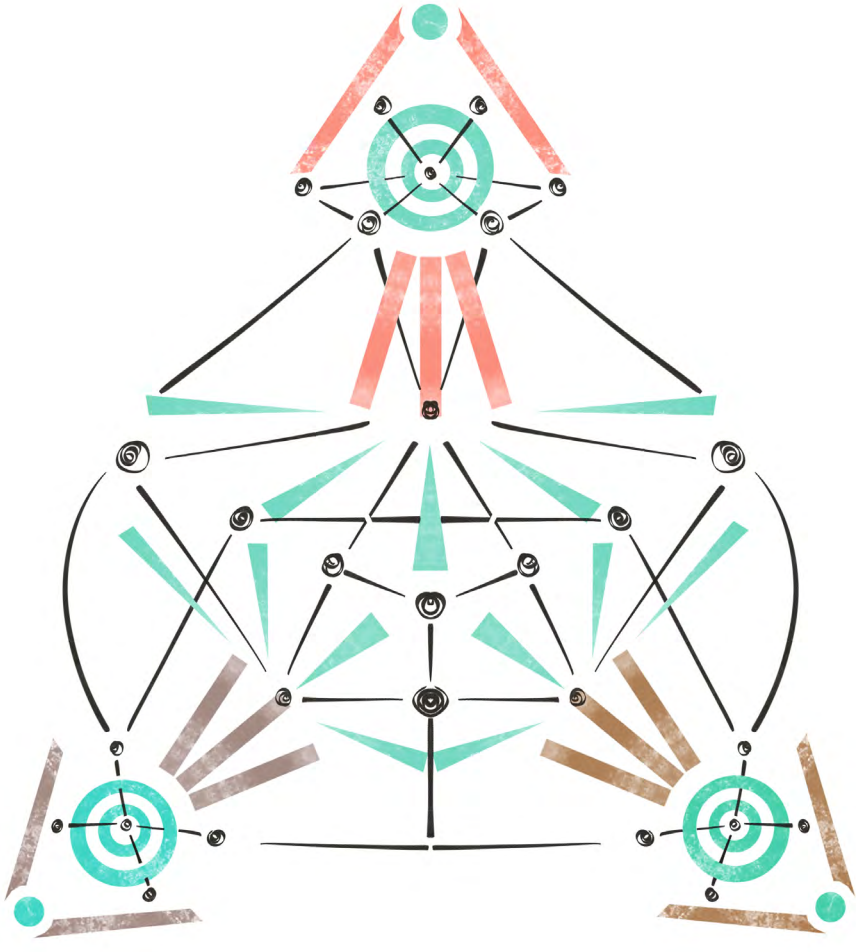

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Cécile Giraud and Camile Aghokeng Dongmo[1]

Citizenship creates a link between an individual and a community living in the same region and governed by the same laws. It also refers to political, social, and ethical practices that focus on the common good. For example, eco-citizenship refers to citizens' commitment to the environment. However, interpretations and practices of eco-citizenship vary. They range from support for the green economy, to challenging the systems responsible for environmental degradation, to a radical paradigm shift that reasserts knowledge and worldviews that have been discarded by modernity.

Concept

Citizenship is an idea that dates back to the cities of ancient Greece, where certain residents, such as free men over the age of 30, were allowed to manage public affairs and participate in the debates of the assembly. These citizens had rights and responsibilities and were equal before the law. Later, the Roman Empire adopted this concept but modified it slightly. Roman citizenship included political, civil, and legal rights, as well as duties such as military service and the payment of taxes. However, unlike the Greeks, it did not include active participation in the management of public affairs (Schnapper, 2018). The word citizenship in English or *citoyenneté* in French derives from *citezein* in Old French, from the Latin civitas, meaning the *right to citizenship*.

[1] Note: Artificial intelligence tools were used to simplify the terms used in our scientific texts, making them easier to understand.

Although the concept of citizenship has changed over time and varies by location, it has traditionally been associated with an individual's *membership* in a group, community, or nation, a *territory* defined by borders, and a *political organization*. Within this territory, there are common laws and a political authority that guarantees citizens' rights and ensures that their duties are fulfilled. Depending on the political system, citizens may participate directly or indirectly in the management of public affairs.

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The concept of citizenship has been studied and applied across a number of disciplines, each adding its own nuances. For legal scholars, it primarily refers to a legal bond between the individual and the state, representing membership, civic duties, and the protection of one's rights by the state (Kivisto and Faist, 2007). In this sense, *citizenship* is virtually equivalent to *nationality*.

Political scientists view citizenship as the right to claim freedoms and rights and to participate actively in the management of public affairs, whether at the local, regional, or national level. In 1950, Marshall documented the evolution of citizenship rights in England from the 19th to the early 20th century, highlighting the gradual transformation of citizenship. He described the civil rights that are essential to guarantee individual liberties, i.e., freedom of expression, belief, and thought, as well as the right to own private property, equal access to justice, and the freedom to contract. In addition to these civil rights, there are political rights, which manifest themselves in the ability of citizens to elect representatives or assume political roles. This political dimension is rooted in the very origins of the concept, dating back to Greek times, but it has been the subject of repeated struggles by

excluded groups fighting for the right to participate in public affairs. The struggle of the suffragettes is an excellent example. Finally, a third level, that of social rights, completes the picture. This social dimension encompasses the rights that are essential for collective well-being: social protection, economic security, and the right to well-being, thus expanding the scope and depth of the concept of citizenship (Dang and Letablier, 2009).

For sociologists and anthropologists, citizenship goes beyond its simple legal definition and is embodied in everyday practices. They explore what they describe as the *"substantive"* or *"processual"* dimension of citizenship (Waldis, 2010), emphasizing not legal status but people's active participation in the common space. This perspective also differs from the political approach in that it does not focus on the formal rules of political participation. Central to this processual vision is a focus on the norms, practices, meanings, and identities that shape social life, regardless of whether one formally possesses citizenship or nationality (Isin, 2002). For example, sociologists analyze social movements and citizen demands that change the content and form of citizenship. The struggle for LGBTQ+ rights, protests against austerity measures, or the occupation of public spaces, are all manifestations of citizenship that redefine "the right to have rights".

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In the field of education, citizenship is seen as a goal of education, which is expected to produce free, critical, and independent citizens capable of contributing to public life. It is therefore assumed that citizenship is a subject that can be taught, for example, through the school curriculum. In practice, however, citizenship education often takes the form of learning to *live together* by teaching individuals to adopt the behaviors and attitudes that society values (Audigier, 2007). This includes, for example, basic principles such as speaking in turns, doing one's

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work conscientiously, respecting schedules, and being non-violent, among others.

Finally, a new, more recent form of citizenship has emerged: ethical citizenship (Giraud, 2017). This form of citizenship goes beyond traditional legal and political frameworks and focuses on individual and collective empowerment in favor of ethical causes. This is reflected in actions such as respect for the environment, international solidarity, and volunteering, which reflect an active citizenship focused on global issues. Some examples of this type of ethical citizenship are environmental citizenship or eco-citizenship, and global or cosmopolitan citizenship. These forms of citizenship redefine not only what we do, but also how we perceive our role in an interconnected world.

Case study

As with the other concepts in this lexicon, the concept of citizenship is often invoked in controversial debates by a variety of actors in a variety of ways. To explore how it can encompass conflicting realities, we turn to the case of eco-citizenship as promoted by the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Eco-citizenship, or *environmental citizenship*, is rooted in the idea of ethical citizenship discussed above. It is reflected in educational programs that focus on sustainable development, environmental awareness, and climate change. These programs have been widely implemented in school curricula around the world since the beginning of the 21st century (Considère and Tutiaux-Guillon, 2013). They are considered essential to enable young people to understand and respond to a global challenge that is crucial for the future.

Promoted in particular by the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), ESD underlines the importance of local commitment to

the environment. The question of citizenship, with its ethical, theoretical, and epistemological implications, remains central to these educational projects, since achieving sustainability requires a change in behavior that cannot be achieved without the active participation of citizens (Alpe & Girault, n. d.).

Alpe & Girault (ibid.) thus formulate three fundamental missions for ESD: (1) to encourage active participation in sustainable development initiatives; (2) to equip future citizens and social partners with the skills to debate, decide, and act collectively for sustainable development, thus embodying active and effective citizenship; (3) to support vocational guidance by introducing jobs and innovations related to the green economy and social development.

In the same vein, Champagne St-Arnaud and Samson (2022) point out that educational activities related to the environment or climate change enrich environmental knowledge while cultivating fundamental skills such as critical thinking and leadership. According to Sauvé (2014), the combination of these ethical and scientific skills is crucial for the formation of a robust eco-citizenship.

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Eco-citizenship thus emerges as an outcome of ESD. *Eco-citizens* are perceived as individuals who are fully aware of environmental challenges, armed with in-depth knowledge of the issues at stake, their origins, and their implication in the social, environmental, political, and economic spheres. These citizens are therefore equipped to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors (Georgiou et al., 2021).

However, the concept of eco-citizenship, like other forms of ethical citizenship, is based on universalist ideals and normative perspectives that often mask profound differences in how the term is interpreted. It is therefore crucial to disentangle these nuances.

To this end, it is necessary to explore how different interpretations of eco-citizenship address fundamental questions such as: 1. How do we define sustainable development? 2. What kind of sustainable world do we want to create? 3. What does it mean to be an eco-citizen? For the sake of clarity, we will use the categories defined by Pashby et al. (2020) in relation to global citizenship education (see also Giraud, 2020). These categories serve as ideal types; actual practices are often more nuanced and interconnected.

From a neoliberal perspective, sustainable development is seen as the responsible use of natural resources, considered as a collection of goods, to maintain living conditions for the future (Kopnina, 2020). This model promotes a "sustainable world" in which economic growth is maintained according to liberal principles, albeit with a "greener" tinge. This includes practices such as the use of market-regulated pollution rights mechanisms and corporate environmental responsibility. In this vision of sustainable development, education aims to train young people to navigate the new *green economy* (Bessant et al., 2015). It seeks to equip them with the knowledge and technical skills of sustainable development that are in demand in the labor market. Thus trained, eco-citizens become key players, armed with the knowledge to *green* the human, financial, and industrial spheres, and driven by the desire to drive this change in their professional and private lives.

From a liberal perspective, sustainable development takes a more holistic approach, encompassing the economic, social, and environmental spheres. It is based on principles that are considered universal – such as intergenerational equity, equality, peace, and social justice – and that take different forms depending on the context (Unesco, 2012). The aim is to build a sustainable world that manages its resources wisely to preserve them for future generations, meets humanity's basic needs, and respects humanistic values such as dignity and human rights. In this vision of sustainable development, education must teach young people about global challenges such as the environmental crisis. It must also instill fundamental values such as democracy,

human rights, tolerance, and respect for nature. These principles will help future generations build a more sustainable world. Eco-citizens are therefore individuals who behave responsibly and respectfully, for instance by reducing their carbon footprint or favoring local products.

From a critical perspective, sustainable development requires a rethinking of the lifestyles and mindsets that led to environmental crises in the first place. It requires a radical change in our economic and consumption habits, as well as a reassessment of our relationship with the world and with nature. Such a perspective also raises questions about the dynamics of domination in human/non-human and North/South relations. Such an initiative seeks to build a world based on social justice, where human and environmental relationships are guided by cooperation and mutual care (Blewitt, 2005). In this vision of sustainable development, education is not so much about teaching sustainable development in the traditional way, but rather about fostering a critical ecology or *ecopedagogy*. This approach encourages deep reflection on our perception of the environment, our role in it, and the interconnections between local and global issues. It also emphasizes essential principles of solidarity, especially in the context of North-South relations and the systems that contribute to the degradation of our planet (Kahn, 2008). In this way, eco-citizens develop a critical approach to the economic, ideological, political, and social systems responsible for the destruction of nature and living conditions on Earth. They question and deconstruct dominant paradigms and consider alternative solutions. Armed with systemic thinking skills, they understand the interconnections and promote innovative changes for a more sustainable global future.

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The post-critical perspective challenges the idea of sustainable development as a profoundly Western and modern concept, ill-suited to global realities because of its universalist claims and its view of nature as a mere collection of resources. This post-critical approach advocates dismantling the traditional tenets of sustainable development, such as the human/non-human distinction, and reinventing our perception of the world by integrating non-Western epistemologies that enrich and diversify our understanding of well-being (Vasquez-Fernandez and Ahenakew pii tai poo taa, 2020). It aims to create a "desirable world" by creating a plural fabric of knowledge and relationships with the world in which the diversity of cultures and lifestyles is valued and preserved, without imposing hierarchies. In this vision, education for eco-citizenship is a form of empowerment. It aims to deconstruct the dominant narrative about the causes and solutions to environmental problems and to highlight worldviews, practices, and lifestyles that have remained on the margins of modernity. Eco-citizens are thus individuals who adopt alternative lifestyles that profoundly transform their interactions with others and with nature.

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This analysis of the different interpretations of eco-citizenship suggests that citizens' commitment to the planet, and the different types of education that foster this commitment, are by no means neutral. While the term eco-citizenship may refer uniformly to environmental activism, visions of sustainable development and ideas about what a more sustainable world should look like vary considerably. Therefore, when developing educational policies to promote sustainable development, it is essential to analyze the beliefs and worldviews that underlie the proposed programs and activities.

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