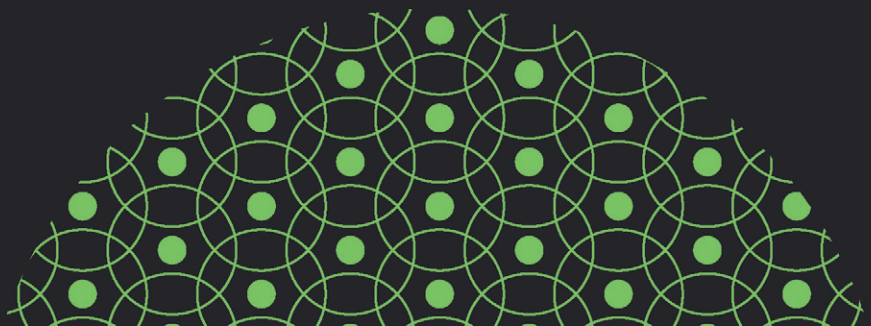
EMERALD POINTS

EMERGING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP REGIMES

Postpandemic Technopolitical Democracies

DR IGOR CALZADA



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Postpandemic Technopolitical Democracies

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emerald PUBLISHING

United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-332-4 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80382-331-7 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80382-333-1 (Epub)

ISOQAR certified Management System, awarded to Emerald for adherence to Environmental standard ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research for the elaboration of this book has been funded by WISERD ESRC Programme ES/S012435/1.
https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/view/2498171-calzada-igor
https://wiserd.ac.uk/research/research-projects/new-emerging-citizenship-regimes

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INTRODUCTION: DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP REGIMES IN THE POSTPANDEMICS

ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the book by revolving around its core concept: digital citizenship. This introductory chapter on digital citizenship regimes in the postpandemics could be established by including several brief discussion points that gradually introduce and lead us comprehensively to the chapters of the book previously introduced. These discussion points are informative and attempt to introduce progressively to the key chapters of the book as follows: (1) Urban-Digital Citizenship Nexus; (2) Advancing Recent Literature on Citizenship; (3) Rescaling Nation-States: Pandemic Citizenship and Algorithmic Nations; (4) Beyond the Smart Cities; (5) Exploring Digital Citizenship Towards Technopolitical Dynamics; (6) Borderless and Pandemic Citizenship; and (7) In Summary: Towards Future Research and Policy Avenues in the Postpandemics.

Keywords: Pandemic citizenship; nation-states; city-regions; rescaling; postpandemics; COVID-19; technopolitics; algorithmic nations; smart cities; people-centered smart cities; sustainable development goals; borderlessness; digital citizenship; citizenship

The purpose of this book is to contextualise the digital citizenship regimes in the postpandemic times in urban realms. In the context of COVID-19, the production and governance of urban space has experienced a rapid digitalisation and datafication, creating new challenges for citizenship (Granell et al., 2022; Isin & Turner, 2007; Leszczynski, 2020). The urban realm is the

environment where a new standard for digital development is set. Since the dawn of the digital age, which got increasingly exacerbated in the post-pandemic times, decision-making in finance, employment, politics, health care and human services has undergone revolutionary change. This book therefore explores the roles played by digital citizenship in the context of the technopolitical, social and economic aftermath of COVID-19. The main objective of this book is to reframe the concept of digital citizenship amidst the rescaling of nation-states in Europe by connecting it to the increasing digitalisation of urban environment as a corollary of pandemic (Calzada, 2020a).

Furthermore, the aim of this book is to explore the complex interaction of social and political variables shaping offline and online civic practices and their intertwined relation to the urban environment, and the way it is produced and governed in the COVID-19 new context (OECD, 2020). In doing so, this book examines a taxonomy encompassing five emerging digital citizenship regimes (pandemic, algorithmic, liquid, metropolitan and stateless) (Chapter 3) and introduces the term 'algorithmic nations' in the postpandemic era by critically analysing the aftermath for citizens and communities (Chapter 4). The former provides a plethora of case studies consisting of Tallinn (Estonia), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Barcelona (Spain), Cardiff (UK), Glasgow (UK), and Bilbao (Spain), whereas the latter applies the 'algorithmic nation' framework to the case of the Northern Ireland. It provides contemporary insights to better understand the mutual interlinkage of the postpandemic and algorithmic crisis by interrogating how emerging digital citizenship regimes may be rescaling nation-states (Chapter 2), which suggests a number of trends, aftermaths and emancipatory civilian movements worldwide (Chapter 5) and critically offers future research and policy avenues (Chapter 6) to better understand from policymakers the ongoing challenges of postpandemic technopolitical democracies (Calzada & Ahedo, 2021).

This book explores roles played by digital citizenship in the contemporary urban realm affected and reshaped by the COVID-19 outbreak:

- On the one hand, it delves into the manifestations of and changes in digital citizenship and the uneven implications of the pandemic through a wide range of geographic case studies underlining the planetary extent of universal but selective 'pandemic citizenship' uneven patterns (Calzada, 2020c).
- On the other hand, it critically scrutinises digital citizenship as an approach stemming from 'technopolitics' highlighting the risk of conceiving (smart) citizens as passive data providers rather than decision-makers without digital rights amid postpandemic surveillance panopticon inter-twingled by

nation-states and Big Tech corporations (Bauböck & Orgad, 2019; Calzada, 2015, 2018a, 2020a, 2021a; Calzada, Pérez-Batlle, & Batlle-Montserrat, 2021).

COVID-19 has altered the way citizens learn, work and live and the extent to which the pandemic has exacerbated and reconfigured existing inequalities and social divisions (Eubanks, 2017). This book therefore looks beyond the pandemic to set out new research avenues to renew those areas of technopolitical and city-regional implications by which citizens actively engage in social and political activities to shape the conditions of digital citizenship regimes in several city-regional locations around the globe (including case studies addressing Tallinn, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Cardiff, Glasgow, Bilbao and Belfast).

At present, postpandemic crisis is stressing the growing impact of digital technologies in political and social life (Bignami, 2021). Digital citizenship and the growing influence of platforms on the urban environment has accelerated during the pandemic, equally affecting nation-states around the world (Zuboff, 2019). Contact-tracing applications are raising vibrant debates around 'pandemic citizenship' and epitomise the magnitude of contemporary trends to incorporate digital computation into the governance of urban areas and border controls among nation-states (Amoore, 2021; Calzada, 2022). These trends foster growing concerns regarding 'platform extractivism' and algorithmic 'surveillance' pursued by means of digitisation (Barassi, 2017; Cheney-Lippold, 2017; Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). As a result, the pandemic accelerates the need for new understandings of potentials and risks of 'technopolitics' in political and governmental practises of smart cities and city-regional case studies (Calzada, 2017; Ruppert, Isin, & Bigo, 2017).

Consequently, the aim of this book is to use the notion of citizenship as a privileged perspective to explore such a transformation from the viewpoint of the subjects that are experiencing the growing digitalisation of all aspects of their lives (Isin & Ruppert, 2015). To this end, this book connects digital citizenship to the accelerated process of platform urbanisation (Brenner, 2018; Calzada, 2020b; Hanakata & Bignami, 2021). This book will then assess how this form of 'digital-urban citizenship' is affected and fostered by uneven geo-localised 'pandemic citizenship' regimes by interrogating whether nation-states might be clearly rescaled accordingly (Calzada, 2015).

This introductory chapter on digital citizenship regimes in the postpandemics could be established by including several brief discussion points that gradually introduce and lead us comprehensively to the chapters of the book previously introduced. These discussion points are informative and attempt to introduce progressively to the key chapters of the book as follows:

1. URBAN-DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP NEXUS

Many scholars theorise the concept of citizenship in the digital age through the lens of the evolutionary character of its classical concept or by drawing upon the narratives regarding the democratising potential and risks of the Internet (Buente, 2015; Dumbrava, 2017; Goode, 2010; Isin & Turner, 2007; Mathiason, 2008; McCosker, Vivienne, & Johns, 2016). The early literature conceptualised 'digital citizenship' merely as 'the ability to participate in society online' by using the Internet effectively and focused on how technology facilitates or reduces citizen participation, on digital education and on the 'digital divide', framing the access to the Internet as a pivotal digital right (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Hill & Hughes, 1998; Howard, 2006; Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008; Ohler, 2010; Papacharissi, 2010). 'Analogical' uses of the concept of citizenship based on its mere translation into the digital environment raise new forms of digital optimism. Yet, the increasing societal and political relevance of digital technologies progressively fostered growing concerns on the advent of a homogenised society based on dataism (Harari, 2016). Thus, the evolution of the digital realm from something we 'use' to an environment in which we live has fostered broader conceptualisations of digital citizenship, which nonetheless still remains a vague, ill-defined and contested notion (Hintz & Brown, 2017; Isin & Ruppert, 2017).

2. ADVANCING RECENT LITERATURE ON CITIZENSHIP

Orgad and Bauböck (2018) have described the rise of global dimensions of citizenship emerging from the activities of 'cloud' communities in cyberspace but without referring to the stringent debate occurring around rescaling of nation-states in regional studies, state theory, citizenship studies and political geography. Following recent trends in (critical) citizenship studies, other scholars have applied to the digital sphere a conception of citizenship as expression of agency: Isin and Ruppert (2015) have described a 'new ontology of the citizen' brought into being by performing digital acts (McCosker, et at., 2016; Moraes & Andrade, 2015). Hintz, Dencik, and Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) have stressed that the tools used to enact digital citizenship are owned by commercial platforms that commodify digital acts and reduce users to customers with very little agency – or subjects of a 'datafied citizenship' based on profiling and sorting populations (Barassi, 2017; Couldry et al., 2014; Hintz

& Brown, 2017). Cheney-Lippold (2011) has spoken of '*jus algoritmi*' and 'algorithmic citizenship' to describe how citizen identities can be assigned through data analysis. The notion of 'algorithmic nation' though (Calzada, 2018b) expanded this notion by including city-regional dynamics and holding that citizen realm should be entirely sovereign to exercise to right to decide the technopolitical future of the nation as an outcome of deliberative democratic discussions rather than agendas necessarily imposed by politicians. A chapter of this book particularly applies this novel notion to the case of the post-pandemic and post-Brexit Northern Ireland (Calzada & Bustard, 2022).

Arguably, studies on citizenship have combined the right of soil or birth-right citizenship (*jus soli*) and the right-of-blood citizenship (*jus sanguinis*) (Isin & Turner, 2007). While the *jus soli* principle states that a person's citizenship is determined by the place where the person was born, the *jus sanguinis* principle states that citizenship rather is granted when one or both parents are citizens of the nation-state. Moreover, recent post-COVID-19 biopolitical dynamics demand further empirical, timely and ambitious inter-disciplinary research on the right to algorithmic transparency, borderless residency, digital rights and privacy, data co-operatives, donation and altruism, data sovereignty (*jus nexum*) and overall democratic city-regional accountability (*jus algoritmi*). Such approaches have advanced our knowledge of the relationship between the rescaling of nation-states and the emergence of new forms of citizenship in Europe (Arrighi & Stjepanović, 2019; Calzada, 2022; Isin, 2007; Linklater, 1998a, 1998b; Ong, 2006; Ratto & Boler, 2014; Sassen, 2017; Shachar, 2020).

3. RESCALING NATION-STATES: PANDEMIC CITIZENSHIP AND ALGORITHMIC NATIONS

Against the backdrop of this literature advancements, this book includes a central chapter, Chapter 3, which presents an introductory taxonomy as a way to experiment and anticipate emerging digital citizenship regimes. The Chapter 3 argues that although digital citizenship is typically defined through people's action, rather than by their formal status of belonging to a nation-state and the rights and responsibilities that come with it, by contrast, it aims to challenge the existing interpretation of how five emerging digital citizenship regimes together are ubiquitously rescaling the current conceptualisation of European nation-states in relation to datafied and surveillance societies. Positing a new taxonomy, Chapter 3 provides a framework for further research to better

understand the transformations in the political authority of nation-states in the face of digitalisation and rapid datafication processes. Despite these limitations, in the selection of the case studies and the regimes, this taxonomy encourages future research that not only (1) uses a similar approach to identify other regimes and broaden the taxonomy but also (2) adds new cases to the existing regimes and (3) deepens the analysis of the presented cases (Calzada, 2022).

As a result, along the fault lines of citizenship that manifested in the identities of religion, class, gender and geographies, and on questions of technopolitical and city-regional rights amid planetary urbanisation case studies, this book opens a debate inaugurated by coining the term 'pandemic citizenship' (Calzada, 2020a). Although COVID-19 affected the globe, its impact was felt directly but not equally by all nation-states. One of the initial observations regarding the pandemic was the divergence among national capacities to use technology to effectively administer urban governance. The place was once again important, emerging as a prominent marker of citizenship and also towards a particular type of territoriality in the context of overlapping digital and non-digital conditions that fuse the algorithmic with the national (Calzada, 2018b). Contextually, the city-regional scale is fast emerging as a site in which algorithmic transparency, data sovereignty and democratic accountability are demanded leading to the conceptualisation of *jus algoritmi* after the fashion of *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* has gained credibility (Calzada, 2020b; Cheney-Lippold, 2011, 2016).

Against this backdrop, the flagship Big Tech firms of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), such as Google and Facebook/Metaverse, have already assumed many functions previously associated with nation-states, from cartography to citizen surveillance, which has deterritorialised or liquified citizenship (Calzada, 2020a, 2021a; Orgad & Baübock, 2018) and thus posed the question around the need to better articulate postpandemic technopolitical democracies in Europe (Calzada & Ahedo, 2021):

- How can citizens react to the techno-control paradigm of the postpandemics without bypassing the core values around fundamental rights and values?
- Does the new 'people-centered smart cities' term coined by UN-Habitat flagship programme suggest any new insights on the 'right to have digital rights' (Calzada, 2021b; Calzada et al., 2021)?
- Can stakeholders articulate a complex set of responses beyond the participation, coproduction and governance in the so-called smart cities (Cardullo, 2021)?

- Can postpandemic technopolitical democracies be redesigned beyond wishful thinking and tackling civil repair paying attention to COVID-19 virus denials and the anti-vaccination collective and pervasive response?

4. BEYOND THE SMART CITIES

This book therefore is a clear attempt to think beyond the so-called term 'smart cities' and the associated literature about this term from the perspective of citizenship studies. As such, where did smart cities come from? There are several models of the evolution in the smart city concept leading up to today, using various terms and timelines. The relationship between technology and urban transformations has existed through history (Calzada, 2021a; Cardulo, 2021).

Technology played a major role in how people envisioned cities after World War II as argued by scholars like Rob Kitchin and Michael Batty, among others. The birth of the Internet in the 1960s, and growing use of computers in the 1970s, led to a rise in the use of computing technology to measure and quantify urban parameters, which can be traced back to the cybernetic movement of the 1950s that popularised the analysis of complex systems using computers. Researchers of the time focused on 'city science', and building new technology primarily to understand the dynamics of cities, studying it as you would a living organism. From the 1980s onwards, researchers began to explore the use of computation as tools for urban planning.

Over the past couple of decades, the concept of a 'smart city' has become central in various domains and the application of associated ICT within urbanisation has become inevitable. In 2011, IBM officially registered the term as its trademark while previously, scholars had been discussing the concept of wired, digital, telecommunications, informational or intelligent cities and urban informatics with similar connotations, announcing changes to urbanisation based on ICT for better or worse.

Briefly, despite the fact that initially smart city term was interchangeably used as wired, cyber and digital cities, the term emerged in media in the 1990s when big corporations such as IBM and Cisco, among others, began to stake their claim. Later, critical discourse gained momentum in 2011 with frontline of critical academics criticising the term.

Although the relationship between technology and the city is long-standing, only since the 1990s has a clear set of terms or definitions been widely used to define certain types of approaches to cities and technologies. The current

debate about the suitability of a participatory and representative democracy is timely in the evolution of smart city citizenship and inevitably reflects on citizens' awareness of (big) data and (big) data's technopolitical and psycho-political implications.

UN-Habitat acknowledges that according to various academics and experts in the field, the technocratic smart city term and vision so far has pervasively suffered several flaws and misconceptions:

(1) The lack of awareness of long-standing smartness in cities.

(2) Over-reliance on the optimisation narrative.

(3) The lack of evidence and key performance indicators (KPIs).

(4) The failure to engage residents in a meaningful manner.

(5) The privatisation of public infrastructure and services.

(6) The lack of transparent and structured data governance.

Consequently, in response to these flaws, the term *people-centered smart cities* (Calzada et al., 2021) is suggested as a strategic re-focus of the previous incarnations of the term 'smart cities' (Calzada, 2022). In a nutshell, *people-centered smart cities* suggest subverting the hegemonic sense so far of the technocratic smart city approach towards a further democratic understanding of the term in itself by embracing and articulating it through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The diversity of definitions shows those ranging from what elements a city needs to encompass to be deemed as smart, to what resources it needs to employ, what characteristics it needs to present and what are the smart city's goals, purpose and scope. While the term is increasingly being used in a variety of sectors, this plethora of scopes within the smart city definitions has led to confusion amongst urban policymakers, working on establishing public policies to enable the transition of smarter cities. This transition is considered as essential by policymakers and is reflected in the establishment of the United Nations (UN) SDGs. As smart cities are continually becoming more prominent, the confusion in their scope is becoming increasingly alarming and will have effects on the creation of public benefit and value. Against this backdrop, there is a significant gap in the literature related to what extent the scope of the SDGs are considered in the smart cities discourse.

Over the last decade, the increasing propagation of sensors and data collection machines in the so-called *smart cities* by both the public and the private sector has created democratic challenges around AI, surveillance