

Institution: The Open University

Unit of Assessment: C23 Sociology

Title of case study: Enacting citizenship: collective activism as a modern form of citizenship that transcends the state in Europe

1. Summary of the impact

Enacting citizenship research at The Open University's (OU) Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance (CCIG) is helping to re-define the idea of citizenship by contributing to policy and public debates across Europe. These research ideas are being used by European policymakers to reform European citizenship policies. Activists across Europe are increasingly using the research to give them a vocabulary through which they can understand their collective activism as European citizenship.

2. Underpinning research

Enacting citizenship refers to a series of research projects and initiatives at the OU that mark the emergence of citizenship as a political research area. It comprises the European Union Seventh Framework Programme funded project **Enacting European Citizenship (ENACT)**, the European Research Council funded project **Citizenship After Orientalism (OECUMENE)**, and the **ENACTMENTS** Programme – all based in the Centre for Citizenship, Identity and Governance.

Enacting citizenship investigates some of the most urgent questions raised by the growing field of citizenship studies in the past two decades. Citizenship has become one of the most debated issues in the social sciences and humanities. If the post-war social sciences and humanities were dominated by class, it is now becoming dominated by citizenship. As editor of *Citizenship Studies*, a leading peer-reviewed journal, Isin (Principal Investigator of ENACT and OECUMENE) has been at the forefront of the field.

Enacting citizenship defines citizenship as those acts of collective activism that enable people to perform citizenship, regardless of whether or not they hold the legal status of members of a given state. These performances produce claims to, and demands for, citizenship and thus articulate new rights as well as deepening the meaning of existing rights. The research supplements the received view of citizenship as membership of a polity such as a nation state. ENACT developed the idea of European citizenship as enacted by those who are marginalised by the existing citizenship regimes, such as Roma, Kurds, and Muslim women. OECUMENE expanded the idea outside Europe and began investigating how people claim the right to have rights as citizens. ENACTMENTS is investigating how people take up positions of 'activist citizenship' in streets and squares in popular struggles.

Enacting citizenship explores how people around the world have developed dynamic and effective practices inside, outside and alongside the nation state [3.6]. These include Kurds using the European Court of Human Rights to make claims to Turkish citizenship; lesbian and gay groups challenging the Latvian regime of citizenship; sex workers struggling against criminalisation; and migrants claiming rights to citizenship. The methodological underpinning of Enacting Citizenship is a shift of the object of investigation from membership to acts, thereby shifting attention from static rules and norms to dynamic actions. So far, it has accomplished its aims by three innovations:

(1) Theoretical innovations. Field research and the development of theoretical tools to understand the underlying idea of citizenship both as enacted and after orientalism [3.1]. In other words, we demonstrate that citizenship – as the capacity to demand the right to have rights – cannot be considered as a uniquely western phenomenon or achievement.

(2) Methodological innovations. OECUMENE and ENACT both developed cumulative expertise in providing innovative methods of inquiry into the new ways people around the world act as citizens.

(3) Scope innovations. Given its starting point, the research then aims at discovering where and how these capacities exist in latent or manifest forms. This has been done through investigating non-citizens and how they use various repertoires of rights to claim rights. There are currently six main research programmes and three PhD programmes in OECUMENE, including field research in

Argentina, Spain, Jordan, India, Israel, Japan, the UK and Turkey. The project also provides an online platform for reportage by a group of seven activists.

3. References to the research

1. Isin, E. (2002) 'Citizenship after orientalism', in Isin, E. and Turner, B. (eds) *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, London, Sage, pp. 117–128. Grant: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada. N°410-2002-1500.
2. Isin, E. and Nielsen, G. (eds) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*, London, Zed Books.
3. Isin, E. (2011) 'Ottoman waqfs as acts of citizenship', in Ghazaleh, P. (ed.) *Held in Trust: Waqf in the Muslim World*, Cairo, American University in Cairo Press. Grant: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada. N°410-2006-2282.
4. Huysmans, J. (2011) 'What's in an act? On security speech acts and little security nothings' *Security Dialogue*, vol. 42, no. 4–5, pp. 371–83.
5. Isin, E. (2012) *Citizens Without Frontiers*, London, Continuum. European Research Council N°249379.
6. Isin, E. and Saward, M. (eds) (2013) *Enacting European Citizenship*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Grant: European Research Council, FP7, Enacting European Citizenship (ENACT), N°217504

4. Details of the impact

There are three domains in which Enacting Citizenship has made an impact:

(1) Giving EU-level activism greater influence: Activists and MEPs are campaigning to protect and expand civil, political and social rights made possible by European citizenship. They are resisting a narrower interpretation put forward by some Member State governments and some European policy makers that EU citizenship principally gives mobility rights that are largely of economic benefit. Our research provides empirical evidence for this broader definition. It also shows how vulnerable groups have used European citizenship to access these rights when they are denied them by their governments and in doing so have strengthened the EU as an institution.

This has had an impact on how citizenship is understood and invoked by activist campaigns and European commission policy makers during the European Year of Citizens 2013. It has encouraged both to see the EU as responsible for fostering and supporting these rights claims by activists.

This was acknowledged when ENACT was highlighted for its impact by a recent EU policy review by the European Commission, which praised the fact that it went 'beyond juridical accounts of citizenship in attempts to explore the enactment of citizenship by ordinary citizens and residents.' Moreover, as Simon Schunz (Directorate-General for Research & Innovation at the European Commission) notes, '... the FP7 project ENACT has contributed to advance our understanding of some of the less explored processes of enacting citizenship. The terminology used by the project has been widely discussed, for instance as part of a 2012 Policy Review on EU citizenship published by the European Commission, and has sparked controversial debates at conferences'.

The European Commission (17/07/13) news report stated that 'Enacting European Citizenship has come to some highly original results based on using an innovative methodology involving activists and civil society directly in conducting the research, and not limiting the research to "traditional" forms of citizen participation, or actors who already consider themselves to be "European" citizens. European Alternatives has been involved in the research and thinks that it reflects very well the approaches that they have found productive and also the problems with which they are faced daily in their work promoting active European citizenship. They think the research is highly pertinent in the current European situation and in the context of the European year'.

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/news-events/news/17072013_enactingeuropeancitizenship_en.htm

Further evidence of impact comes from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation publication *Scientific Evidence for Policy-Making: Research Insights from Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities* (2013, EUR 25765) in which ENACT is cited in the section on 'The citizen in the European Union'. The issues addressed in this area relate to the

development of European democracies, to the rights and obligations of European citizens, and to the shared values in a diverse union. The report argues that ENACT ‘... shows how the actions of groups and individuals on the margins of the European Union, just as much as those of formal EU institutions, have an impact on EU identity and its policies on citizenship.’ [p. 267].

Isin was invited onto the working group for the European Year Citizenship Alliance (EYCA) to draft a manifesto to be presented to the European Commission in 2013, enshrining the principles of an ‘active European citizenship.’ Our role in this campaign stems from ENACT’s articulation of how European citizenship is enacted. As the only academic partner in the alliance, we provide an intellectual framework for the EYCA and other organisations that use a broad definition of European Citizenship.

During EY2013 we held joint workshops hosted by Rui Taveres MEP at the European Parliament and at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), attended by over 40 delegates. Irini Pari of the EESC stressed the importance of our research evidence for furthering the social aims of the European project, at a time when they are being marginalised by the ongoing economic crisis. This event was aimed at analysts (rather than senior figures) and sought to directly inform policy thinking on citizenship. Linda Ravo of the European Commission said of the workshop that it revealed ‘the importance of getting the European project closer to the citizens’. It built on previous policy workshops for ENACT in Brussels in 2010 and in Nijmegen in 2011.

(2) Enhancing intercultural understanding of citizenship through workshops designed to help non-academics in their work about citizenship. Directly through workshops and interviews and indirectly through published research, we inform public opinion about the creative ways in which people can be political and act as citizens in times of crisis.

Our articulation of citizenship informed Arabic language media coverage of the unexpected and inspiring activism produced by ‘the Arab Spring’. In a series of programmes broadcast in February 2012, Russia Today’s Arabic Service used our broader definition of citizenship and the symposium it inspired to inform their coverage of the impact of the Arab Spring. Salwa AbdelTawab, the journalist who proposed the reports, stated: ‘Any previous approach in the media tackled the social aspects of the protests in the Arab countries from a mere economic perspective. The idea of a new relationship between citizens and governments, new notions forming about identities and rights was new and gave more depth to the continuing discussion of the developments in the region.’

In February 2012, Isin was invited to discuss enacting citizenship on *Thinking Allowed* on BBC Radio 4 and *Nightwaves* on BBC Radio 4.

(3) Inform public opinion by articulating a vocabulary through which activists can understand themselves as citizens. Impact is the starting point of our research model: activists and their needs are integrated into the entire research process. Appointed as Canada Research Chair in 2002, Isin founded the Citizenship Studies Media Lab (CSML) based at York University. This network of activists and researchers became a model for the three projects based at the OU. ENACT led activists, lawyers and researchers to co-produce *Enacting European Citizenship* (2013), the culmination of a series of research reports designed to help policy makers understand the work of activists as acts of citizenship. OECUMENE and ENACTMENTS have spread this methodology beyond the study of Europe and North America, and to a self-sustaining and growing community of activists and researchers. Working with activists and policy makers was integral to ENACT. For example, our team included a judge, an aid worker with the Red Cross, and many other activists. Through workshops with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Riga and Istanbul in 2010, we ensured that our findings on activism as citizenship could be used to support the work of the very activists we researched. OECUMENE has reinforced these links by building up a network of over 20 civil society activists and a further 400 members of our website.

In February 2012, Net4Society used ENACT as a success story for Social Science and Humanities (SSH) funding by the European Union. Net4Society’s article on ENACT’s impact observed: ‘Before ENACT, any discussion of European citizenship was dominated by lawyers, who naturally stressed the legal aspect of citizenship. This has changed, thanks to the civil society organisation “European Year of Citizens 2013 Alliance”, choosing as its slogan “European citizenship is more than rights!” The European Commission is now explicitly seeking new research projects to investigate “how citizens claim and enact their rights”. This is recognition of ENACT’s role in supporting and marking

the importance of activism as an aspect of European citizenship.

Our research is contributing to a wider public discourse about activism both online and via broadcast media. We regularly contribute research-based articles to OpenDemocracy [5.1]. Each article has received over 2,000 views, and 51% of visitors are from outside the UK and USA. The average view time for our articles is over 6 minutes (compared to 3.5 minutes across OpenDemocracy as a whole). According to the online editor, Andrew Hyde, conversation strands on the website on our articles on topics such as EU immigration and the use of Sharia law in the UK reveal the disproportionately high interest our research has gained on a website well known for informing the work of activists and policy makers. Regular contributor to OpenDemocracy and author on Balkan and Russian issues Iannis Carris wrote, 'I thought the citizenship after orientalism partnership with the Open University was excellent – exactly what OpenDemocracy does best, staying close to current news, and at the same time getting behind it to look much deeper.'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Impact of partnership with OpenDemocracy website in informing public opinion. See the various statistics and testimonial provided in Section 4.

2. Impact on EU policy. Isin was invited to discuss how European citizenship is enacted by the Scientific Research Officer at the Directorate for Research & Innovation at the European Commission at a major policy event to mark the 20th Anniversary of the creation of EU citizenship: *Citizenship in the European Union: Twenty years after Maastricht* (27-28 June 2013, Budapest and Köszeg, Hungary).

The EU Policy Review of ENACT can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/co-creating_eu_citizenship.pdf

3. Impact on EU policy.

Net4Society's report can be found here:

http://www.net4society.eu/_media/Net4Society_SSH_Impact__Success_Story_2_ENACT.pdf

4. Impact on EU policy.

Feedback form completed by from Linda Ravo (see section 4)

5. Informing public opinion on activism.

Speaking of the impact of ENACT, a leading Latvian Gay Rights activist commented:

"The theoretical approach developed by the ENACT allowed us to identify and interpret the activities of the LGBT NGO Mozaika. The focus achieved allowed us to organise a constructive debate at the workshop hosted by the Riga Graduate School of Law, which contributed to our understanding of acts of assertion and extension by citizenship activists themselves."

6. Informing public opinion on activism. In January 2012, Isin was invited by the Chair of ECYA to assist their advisory board in drawing up a manifesto for civil society groups to be sent to the European Commission in 2013.

7. Enhancing cultural understanding of citizenship. An Egyptian Reporter with Russia Today's Arabic Service produced a series of short programmes on our Symposium on citizenship after orientalism in order to provide academic perspectives on how the events of the Arab Spring can be understood as acts of citizenship. The series of reports can be accessed here:

http://arabic.rt.com/news_all_news/news/578014/

8. Enhancing cultural understanding of citizenship. In February 2012, Professor Isin was invited to discuss enacting citizenship on *Thinking Allowed* on BBC Radio 4 and *Nightwaves* on BBC Radio 4. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01bb7jt>)