

The Dilemmas of Performative Citizenship

Shirin M. Rai

Citizenship is a many-splendoured thing—it is a marker of belonging, an aspiration to participation and a key element through which the state brings into being the citizen and regulates her life within its boundaries. Citizenship is also constantly performed and reconstituted—through everyday and popular struggles, on local and global stages, as well as through changes in the law—national and international. The aspirations of a global citizenship are articulated in normative theory but even more in the everyday politics of concern—for those in unjust wars across the world, for those living in grinding poverty in a world of plenty and for those who are abused and excluded from their rights to freedom. And yet, such wider citizenship concerns are limited by not only state-bounded discourses of exclusion, but also exclusions in the name of cultural and social cohesion.

In this chapter I reflect upon this changing form of citizenship and examine the inclusions and exclusions, entitlements and risks that different groups of citizens experience in performing citizenship. I also reflect upon whether a focus on performance can provide for a more nuanced approach to the study of citizenship: key to performance is ‘reflexivity: to

S.M. Rai (✉)
Department of Politics and International Studies,
University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
e-mail: Shirin.raï@warwick.ac.uk

perform is to be aware of the act of doing something, and to show doing it. Performance always bears the traces of this reflexivity—it “knows” it shows. Not all performance is confined to individual subjects—institutions also perform... [and] all performances are transactional—between the performer(s) and the spectators or recipients of the act’ (Rai and Reinelt 2015: 4).

MARKING CITIZENSHIPS

Documents—both state and non-state—form a critical materiality of citizenship (Foucault 1972): passports allow us to cross borders; licenses, to drive, to trade and to regulate. Cards mark our station as economic and political actors: for example, in India the BPL (below poverty line) card allows access to state welfare but also marks the citizen/carrier of the card as poor and therefore dependent; PAN¹ cards, on the other hand, underline our economic citizenship, as tax payers who contribute to and do not scrounge off the state. There are also donor cards (blood, body parts) that mark us as good/giving members of the community and voter cards to exercise our democratic right. We also have identity cards—the Indian state makes the following claims for the newly rolled out AADHAAR card, which was introduced in 2009²:

Aadhaar will be:

- Easily verifiable in an online, *cost-effective way*
- Unique and *robust enough to eliminate the large number of duplicate and fake identities* in government and private databases³
- A random number generated, *devoid of any classification based on caste, creed, religion and geography*⁴ [my italics].

Through this one document the state promises value for money, eliminating fraudulent identities that undermine good residents and undermining hierarchies of identities for all Indians. We also have non-state identifiers of belonging—loyalty cards to stores and supermarkets, membership cards of clubs and societies and of course the ubiquitous credit and debit cards, all of which mark us as consumers/citizens of goods and services within national boundaries but also, as global customers, allow us to slip out of the fetters of the state and range free in global markets.

All these documents also allow information about us to be collected, collated and analysed for closer surveillance; accumulation of data that allows the state to regulate, to survey and to discipline more

effectively—governance of populations made easy. All these identifiers continue to tell us apart as citizens of one state rather than another, of a region, of a group, a class, a sect; they invest us with some rights rather than others, make us susceptible to state and increasingly non-state surveillance, construct us as minority or majority, upper or lower caste, black or white or another hybrid ‘race’, and enmesh us in laws that circumscribe us as well as create particular spaces in which we live our lives. Both legally and discursively the promise of citizenship also demarcates the reach of the citizen, as it does of the state.

While citizenship continues to be attached to the power of the state—in its gift, its purview and surveillance—belonging is a much more capacious concept. While struggles for belonging may lead to struggles for and attainment of citizenship, citizenship does not automatically generate belonging. Belonging often attaches itself to our everyday practices, membership not in an abstract, imagined community of the nation, but in the immediate community that purveys the rhythms, norms and performed relationships of our daily lives (see Yuval-Davis 2006). Passports are attached to statehood—they allow us spatial (territorial and residential) and temporal [(un)limited leave to stay] rights, they also to make factual claims, such as: ‘I am a British citizen; I have a British passport.’ A claim to ‘Britishness’, on the other hand, is a complex claim that encapsulates a particular understanding of identity politics, political history, a social positioning that is recognisably inscribed in the public imaginary, and a relational matrix which might place ‘the British’ in contrast to ‘the Other’. Alternatively, the factual claim might put a person in a constant state of anxiety about identity—does my British passport override my ‘feeling Indian’? How long do I need to reside in Britain to feel British? In the context of changing political landscapes of (in)security these questions come to impinge on our everyday lives—our dress, language, spaces of ease and anxiety. The gap between belonging and citizenship then is affective; it is also performative. Famously, the UK Conservative MP Norman Tebbit laid down the test of citizenship. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* in April 1990, he said: ‘A large proportion of Britain’s Asian population fail to pass the cricket test. Which side do they cheer for? It’s an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from or where you are?’ (Farrington et al. 2012: 87), suggesting that immigrants/citizens had failed to integrate into British society. Racism, exclusion and intolerance by white conservative, exclusionary sections of British society were of course not in question: they are the natives to the migrants at the gate.

STARTING POINTS

My starting point in trying to understand the dilemmas of performative citizenship was the now famous case of the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan, India, in the 1980s, which was supported by the state, the UN and a regional gender studies programme. Voluntary women workers were recruited to promote women's empowerment by challenging dowry and child marriages. This work challenged the dominant caste and gendered norms in rural areas in Rajasthan and infuriated the local elite men. One of the voluntary workers, Bhanwari Devi, was gang-raped and paraded naked around her village as a performance of disciplining and punishment. The enactment of impunity led to the struggle for justice for Bhanwari Devi, and to the Vishakha Public Interest Litigation, which in turn resulted in the Vishakha Guidelines, 1997. Based on these, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 was passed. I have examined this case many times over because it helps me to think through performative agency as well as the risks involved in exercising it in hostile social contexts (see also Madhok 2012).

The second case underlying my interest in the performance of citizenship was when a few years ago I watched with horror as the story broke on Indian television of another 'honour crime'—the severe beating of a young man hung upside down from a tree in a village square by a serving policeman who, before meting out the beating, purified himself with ritual oblations⁵. It led to yet another round of political hand wringing, public commentary on the 'barbarity' of such practices and discomfort with the clashing discourses of culture and modernity in neoliberal India. For me, that graphically filmed case produced a moment of clarity about belonging and citizenship—here was a performance of authority, an exercise of institutionalised violence that was enacted through the 'judgement' on a digressive young couple by the *khap* (caste) panchayat and accepted by the community.⁶ The boundaries that had been crossed were those of caste rather than of state law, the *khap* panchayat was a governance body which derived its authority and legitimacy not from a constitution but from the membership of and the belonging to a caste community. The *khap* panchayat as a governance body had officers (the panchayat elders), a space to perform (the village square) and a discursive power that allowed for judgement to be made, passed and carried

out, in this case by a policeman; this challenges the Weberian notions of state sovereignty and points towards parallel sovereignties operating on the ground.

Both these cases alerted me to the importance of the performative in politics—why was Bhanwari Devi paraded around the village? Why was it important to mete out punishment to a young man in a public square? Where does it leave Foucauldian analysis (1977) of modernity and punishment by internment behind walls away from the public gaze? And what does it tell us about governance, belonging and citizenship? This led me to argue, (with Baxi and Ali) that:

Two axes might allow us to explore this complex nature of the interaction between modernity and tradition at the local, national and global levels of governance. The first is that of governance of politics (state statutory governance bodies such as panchayats, courts and the police). The second axis is the governance of communities (caste panchayats and jirgahs).⁷ The regulatory power of both is limited as well as complex. This power comes to be articulated at the intersection of disciplinary power of caste or community discourses of honour with sovereign, or as Foucault would say politico-juridical, discourses of crime and adulthood. The translation of caste or community transgressions into crimes shows us how the politics of honour captures state law, while the suspension of legal action against forced marriages allows the familial to escape legal intervention. The claims to citizenship in the realm of the domestic sphere must be understood in the interstices of the relationship between law, violence and governance. (Baxi and Ali 2006: 1241)

The argument here was that making visible the distinctions between the governance of communities and governance of politics shows that while citizenship may be attached to the state, belonging has more complex roots in the diverse social spaces of everyday life—local, national and global. And that the two often work together powerfully through the imbricated nature of state and non-state governance mechanisms that shape both formal citizenship and the informality of belonging to identity-based communities. As Joseph argues, ‘the lifeworld of citizenship entails a network of performed affiliations—private and public, formal and informal’ (1999: 4). Finally, I would also argue here that it is in the performance of citizenship and belonging that we can see the power of governance that frames the agency of citizenship.

PERFORMING CITIZENSHIP

Studying politics and political concepts such as citizenship and belonging through the lens of performance reveals that the two are in fact co-constitutive. Politics is as it is performed; performance has its own political affect that can have real effects (Rai 2015).

If the two axes of governance are important to understand the dissonance as well as congruence between belonging and citizenship, two axes of performance are also important to such an assessment (Table 2.1).

I have argued elsewhere that along one axis we can map the resources and space that individuals garner to perform—the body, the space/place, words/script/speech and performative labour. Along the second axis we can map the modalities and effects of performance—authenticity, the mode of representation, liminality and resistance (of and to) political representation (Rai 2015).

The presence of different bodies in public and institutional spaces challenges the operative somatic norms. Bodies in and out of place can be more or less affective as well as effective as they are read as ‘coded text’ which ‘attend[s] to complex politics of representation’ (Anagnost 2004: 192). How identity—of citizenship or belonging—is performed reveals the layered identities of political actors. It also invokes new identities—identities in the making. Sex, colour, caste, class or sexuality all play out differently in bodily performances and their reception. The body on view does not, however, perform in a vacuum; it does so in space/place/time, which are co-constituted as the performance takes form. At the same time, the performing body also brings the stage into being—by

Table 2.1 Performance and politics

The body	*			
Space/place/ stage				
Words/Scripts/ Speech/Voice				
Performing/ performative labour				
Reception/ Audience	Authenticity of representation	Mode of representation	Representative liminality	Resistance to representation

*The boxes represent the different aspects of this framework that can be combined to empirically research how claims are made

occupying it, speaking from it and creating an aesthetic marking it. Declarations and rhetoric, ceremony and ritual—institutional and individual—require scripts and speech, which are learnt and reproduced for affect but also have effects in the Austinian sense. We labour/rehearse to perform—how we learn to do this varies from informal training in homes, in kinship and friendship networks, formal institutional training and ‘on the job’ learning; rehearsal time is also dependent upon social relations—women responsible for domestic work, for example, would find setting aside time for rehearsing more difficult than those men who do not contribute so much to domestic work; people with particular disabilities might find it more tiring to put in hours of rehearsal/training. By focusing on performative labour we can factor in the human costs of performance of citizenship.

In terms of affect, authenticity plays an important role; the fact that the *khap* panchayats command obedience is in part because of their claim to authenticity as interpreters of caste relations. However, this claim is not secure; Homi Bhabha (1983: 22) has called the colonial stereotype a ‘complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive, [that] demands not only that we extend our critical and political objectives but that we change the object of analysis itself’. The challenge that those young people who cross caste norms delineated by the *khap* panchayats pose to the governance of communities underlines these anxieties as well as political mobilisations against such norms. It also underscores the moment of liminality, a threshold when political actors are in a space/place/time when disruption of the stable, though not inevitable, is possible (Turner 1970: 97). We also evidence resistance to this claim-making. Some claims are accepted, others neglected and still others mocked or rejected outright; Bhanwari Devi’s refusal to back down in the face of concerted social pressure is such a rejection of governance of communities, and assertion through a performative mode, of her right to citizenship.

Finally, we need to understand performance in the context of its audience, which ‘sits’ at the junction, between the performance and its affect/effect; on the one hand, performance can bring an audience into being; on the other, the audience shapes performance. The dialectical relationship between the two is what allows a performance and its politics to reveal itself. The performance of governance of community by the *khap* panchayat elicits a compliance of the immediate ‘judgement’ but also evokes acquiescence in the audience/citizen of the community that views it.

CITIZENSHIP AND AGENCY

Performance suggests action—and through that, agency. Agency has long been at the heart of the concept of citizenship. From the formal constitutional exercise of casting a vote to a more expansive Arendtian conception of ‘being political’ as the capacity to act—citizenship has been seen within the frame of active politics (Arendt 1961; Drexler 2007). Indeed, Arendt argued that ‘to be free and to act are the same...’ (1961: 153). She used the concept of ‘virtuosity’ to judge political performance: ‘an excellence we attribute to the performing arts [...] where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product’ (1961: 153). Similarly, Isin argues, ‘Citizenship is performed in the sense that it involves being and acting with others, negotiating different situations and identities, articulating ourselves as distinct yet similar to others in our everyday lives, asking questions of right and wrong and acting as citizens’ (2013: 22). Claim-making against the state and non-state bodies (corporations, for example) is here the essence of citizenship; the form that claim-making takes is its enactment. While Isin is correct to focus on the political struggles that bring people together in solidarity as citizens, what is missing is a focus on the state and its delimitations that also make up and indeed underpin citizenship. While I agree with him that ‘[a]ctions of bodies create events in space and time’ (2013: 23) so do, as we have seen above, the governance performances of the state and communities. Space and time are both shaped and reshaped through the interventions of those who make claims of authority and those who challenge them (see Sahai, and Parameswaran and Gluhovic in this section for further illustrations of this reciprocity).

Arendt’s insistence upon action in the public sphere also continues to trouble me; the realm of the public and the private often imbricate—the act of love, of marriage in the case of the couple disciplined by the *khap* panchayat sits awkwardly as a public act but it is a claim to freedom, to pursue happiness which then elicits a violent response through not a carceral state but a carceral governance of the community by the *khap* panchayat.

Further, most analyses of enactment of citizenship view it not only as ‘happening’ in public spaces but also ‘in time’; time is taken for granted as a resource that we can draw upon at will. Essential everyday needs of care and domesticity requiring labour and time are obfuscated by this

focus on the public sphere. As Ruth Lister has argued, time is a ‘highly gendered commodity that impacts on and is mediated by the public-private divide’ (2003: 132). Women with care responsibilities may not have the time to attend meetings and go on demonstrations, or those that are able to might be relying on the labour of other women—bought-in domestic labour or older relatives. This leads Lister to distinguish between social citizenship that includes issues of care in its formulation, and political citizenship that might be seen as political activism.

Making claims in negotiated public spaces also attracts different risks for men and women, for black and white bodies, for Dalits and high-caste Hindu persons; not thinking about these risks is not just failing to see half the picture of citizenship’s enactments and enchantments, it is also deeply irresponsible. If agency needs to be understood as a key feature of citizenship, so do the structures of power that frame it.

T. H. Marshall had in part addressed this issue of social and political citizenship when he alerted us to the fact that although there is an assumed compatibility between political rights and social inequalities, this can only lead to dissensus: that citizenship cannot be allowed to ‘itself become, in certain respects, the architect of legitimate social inequality’ (1950: 9). But the question posed by Gopal Jayal remains and troubles: ‘Is it possible for individuals to be primarily members of an ascriptive community and still profess adherence to the idea of a civic community?’ (2013: 3; see also Young 1990). My tentative answer to this important question is in the affirmative; the civic community is itself shaped by ascriptive identities and ascriptive identities are also shaped by civic communities.

PERFORMATIVE CITIZENSHIP

Feeling frustrated with my own engagement with the literature on citizenship because I could find only partial analyses, I will now sketch out how the two cases outlined above shape my understanding of a performative citizenship.

First, citizenship can and has been *framed, articulated and performed in many different ways*: ‘the inherently performative nature of citizenship is simultaneously learned, cultivated and improvised’ (Joseph 1999: 14). Joseph also underlines the notion of a nomadic citizenship in the context of movement of peoples in contexts of colonialism and globalisation: ‘Nomadic citizenship fractures coherent categories of belonging, offering

instead the incomplete, ambivalent, and uneasy spaces of everyday life through which migrant communities must forge affiliations with major constituencies' (1999: 17).

Second, *citizens perform in relation to others*—other citizens, other 'Others', individuals as well as nodes of power, the state as well as community groups. Citizenship is thus performed in specific contexts, in particular languages, even as it makes universal claims of equal rights for citizens. This take on citizenship is different from the concept of 'relational citizenship', which builds through solidarities of everyday life:

The relationship between citizens is friendly in the sense of feeling obligation and commitment to others [...] that go beyond the abstract legalism of rights, using the faculty of imagination instead to make a connection between people, united by, if nothing else, their human vulnerability. This kind of connection, which grounds the larger goals of inclusiveness and justice, is a significant achievement. It is certainly a great deal more than we now have, when we often simply refuse to see in another person the same aspiration to belong, to be at home, that we know we feel in ourselves. (Kingwell 2000: 175)

While Kingwell focuses on the solidarities of citizenship, my concern is not only the solidarity of citizenship that is performed for example in the Vishakha campaign⁸, but also the cruelties of relations of exclusion—of violence, surveillance and policing of everyday human relations, such as in the case of the beatings meted out on grounds of caste digressions; where friendships are hostage to social divisions even as they constantly try to slip the governance of communities and negotiate with the state for protection, which is often denied.

Through acts of boundary drawings, both formal and informal, visible and invisible, we are marked as citizens: we—citizens—together with the state, also begin to draw boundaries of belonging as well as of exclusion, of (mis)recognition and (mal)distribution, (under)representation and (non)participation. We can thus become complicit by our refusal to act, even as we disavow what is being done in our name: images of people drowning as they cross water boundaries in the Mediterranean alert us to the dangers of being passport-less, visa-less, homeless; and yet we fear them and want them kept out. In fact, the fear of the other redraws state boundaries—the European Union draws its borders in Africa and pays private militia to keep the desperate away from the white beaches

of Europe. And yet many citizens reject this performance of racialised boundary keeping, even as the state deploys modes of cultural/identity representation in the name of European citizens.

Third, *citizenship is then embodied*—it marks the bodies that can be allowed in and those that must be kept out—physically as well as socially—through border patrols, hate speech and everyday violence. Bodies are then (mis)recognised by identities—male, female, black, white and hybrid bodies, differentially able bodies, rich and poor bodies, bodies inscribed with given identities that make more or less sense to those who are inscribed; these identities frame the performative scope of embodied citizenship. Claudia Rankine, Jamaican poet and activist, writes in her recent book *Citizen* (2015):⁹

You are in the dark, in the car, watching the black-tarred street being swallowed by speed;

he tells you his dean is making him hire a person of color when there are so many great writers out there.

You think maybe this is an experiment and you are being tested or retroactively insulted or you have done something that communicates this is an okay conversation to be having.

While Isin argues that acts produce subjects (2013: 23), can we also argue that being acted on in these exclusionary modes creates subjection?

Fourth, performing citizenship does not just happen; *citizenship is laboured over*. Rehearsing performance takes time, effort, striving and resources that are differentially distributed across groups of citizens. Performative labour can be assessed in two ways—first, labour as rehearsal; second, the value of labour and its (non)recognition. If we agree that institutional norms reflect dominant social relations, then we would also expect that the *habitus* of some provides them with greater resources to draw upon when performing and greater protection from injury; the inequalities of citizenship become visible through its performance. Battling marginalisation from the margins also takes up labour resources. Here is Rankine again on the labour that goes into to stemming the everyday stream of racism:

Sitting there staring at the closed garage door you are reminded that a friend once told you there exists a medical term — John Henryism — for

people exposed to stresses stemming from racism. They achieve themselves to death trying to dodge the build up of erasure. Sherman James, the researcher who came up with the term, claimed the physiological costs were high. You hope by sitting in silence you are bucking the trend. (Rankine 2015)

For those with fewer resources to get their voices heard, especially those who avail themselves of state welfare, the labour expended to make claims against the state then becomes unsustainable.

In terms of (non)recognition of the labour of some, let us think of those whose work in domestic spaces is not recognised as contributing to the wealth of the nation-state, which thus leads to a lack of access to formal modes of justice such as citizenship entitlements (Rai et al. 2013). In the United States, for example, Senator Russell Long infamously exclaimed in response to the protests of mothers of young children on benefits against an Act to force them into the labour market: “Why can’t those people be told that if they can find time to impede the work of the Congress they can find time to pick up some beer cans in front of their house?” (Kessler-Harris 2003: 157). Kessler-Harris comments on this arrogant dismissal of the women’s protest: ‘In the modern world, where the market has intruded into the lives of families everywhere and social rights are increasingly vulnerable, the exercise of political voice [and economic citizenship] may be at odds with claims to social citizenship’ (2003: 158).

Fifth, *citizenship is performed in political spaces and also politicises spaces through performance*. The burden that is carried by those who are pushed into spaces that are less visible—who are covered over, invisibilised and taken for granted in some roles and not in others—is onerous. Owen and Zerilli argue that in not noticing this absence of some over others, indeed through building on a long history of such absence rather than challenging it, the discipline of political science has created

a grammar of citizenship whose terms consist of measures and indices that conceptualize the relation of gender and political participation in terms that render the political meaning of gender to citizenship invisible if not irrelevant. In the modern form of coverture,¹⁰ it is less the husband than political science, through its methods and categories, that has interposed itself between women and the social science construction of the public sphere. (1991: 28)

The stage upon which citizenship is performed is both local and national and indeed global and almost always overlapping. From the borders of the nation-state to the parameters of local socialities, which enmesh citizens, political space is critical to citizenship performance. As John Torpey has argued, citizenship frames space through the monopolisation of mobility by the state—the passport the visible form of this monopoly (2000).¹¹ With state monopoly comes surveillance of the citizen body, the dependence of the citizen on the state for the means to access to livelihoods and ‘other’ socialities. While this monopoly provides some state resources, in some countries, through welfare regimes, it also allows the state to delimit citizens’ lives by the terms it sets for this access (see Nandy and Banerjee in this section). It also complicates the politics of ‘security’. Those citizens who benefit from welfare programmes are more subject to state scrutiny and abrogation of rights than those citizens who are not dependent on state provision. The intersections of class, gender and race/caste mark the mobility and security of the citizen. Citizen identity itself then becomes vulnerable to state definition—we are Indians because we have a passport that tells us so.¹² But as we have also seen above, community governance structures and discourses—often cast as culture and often restrictive in nature—also shape public spaces and police social boundaries of race and caste, of love and hospitality, through violence that is both physical, discursive and social. *Khap* panchayats might not issue passports or even AADHAAR cards but through the threat of excommunication and violence their control over mobilities, spaces and everyday lives is no less powerful for that.

Sixth, *citizenship performance is fraught/liminal*—in making claims on the state, or against other citizens and institutions, citizens can put themselves and those they hold dear at risk; and yet this performative moment can also be empowering. This threshold is where political actors are in a space/place/time when disruption of the stable is possible—often regarded as dangerous because it defies classificatory limits (Turner 1970: 97). If the liminal moment passes, political actors often become once more subject to custom and law (1970: 106), but sometimes in that moment a more lasting rupture can occur. This instability and uncertainty of citizenship then urges us to examine agency more carefully, taking into account the risks that citizens take in order to perform belonging or challenge ascribed subjectivities that deprive them of it. Later in this volume, Dutt and Gandhi describe a particular instance

of this ambivalence in their discussion of circus performers and the laws devised to protect them but which also exclude them.

Finally, therefore, as Ruth Lister suggests, *citizenship 'unfolds' in and through performance*. In making claims, in asserting (equal) rights, in challenging inequalities laid bare through performing citizenship, agents become citizens, while at the same time they discover new modes of belonging, new pitfalls of exercising their agency and therefore the limits of both their own assumptions and that of the parallel sovereignties of the state and the community. They could, for example, realise that their rights as citizens are negotiable and negotiated and therefore inherently unstable. At the same time, their claims to citizenship could be performed by crossing social boundaries to forge new friendships and socialities that provide new solidarities and action networks.

The key element of performative citizenship, then, is that it situates the citizen within a specific textual—constitutional—*and social and affective landscape* of political rights and social enablements that are necessary for the full participation in the life of the subject/citizen as well as modes of belonging that generate overlapping and sometimes contradictory allegiances and complicities. If we recognise this we also have to recognise that the citizen is not, as often cast, the autonomous, self-determining subject of liberal humanism characterised by self-authorship and responsibility in respect of her choices, preferences and actions. She is not the neoliberal, rational and autonomous, choice-making citizen—but a subject rather more vulnerable to the biopolitics of the governance of both the state and the community, one who needs support/networks. These elements of citizen performance make it imperative for us to deconstruct both agency and risk attendant upon the performance which shapes citizenship.

RISKS OF/AND CITIZENSHIP

Feminist praxis has been built on a refusal to see women as victims; rather feminist activists view women as agential subjects in pursuit of realising their own capabilities and empowering themselves while doing. However, as I have outlined above, agency often comes at a cost, and empowerment strategies can be undermined by structural power. Therefore, we need to evaluate the risks attendant upon the performance of citizenship and examine how this can cast a long (but often unnoticed) shadow over citizens exercising agency. Without taking this into account, we cannot theorise or mobilise against the risk attendant upon

citizens exercising agency, which can attract high levels of violence and put at risk their lives and wellbeing.

This is particularly true when we consider the spaces in which citizenship is performed. While public space is seen to be the stage of citizenship and local ecology is regarded as more accountable, and more participatory, the local space is not an uncomplicated one. The mainstream literature on risk, however, does not focus on the social environment at all. It is embedded in neoliberal frameworks of analysis—the individual is the risk-taker, who evaluates risk in relation to profit or loss, to success or failure, and always to costs. Even in the critical literature, (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990) understanding of risk assumes an ontological security as well as a constancy (regularity) of the social environment in which agents operate. As the story of Bhanwari Devi underlines, however, ‘the levels of culturally validated oppressions, exclusions, violations and surveillance that women experience in villages can be extremely high. The intimacy of spaces makes for intimate violence’ (Madhok and Rai 2012: 663). The social environment Bhanwari Devi challenged through her work, through which she transformed her reflexivity and risked the stability of her subjectivity as a citizen, resulted in violence and injury to her, with little protection from the state or non-state bodies involved in the Women’s Development Programme (2012). Similarly, in the case of the transgressing young couple, we see attempts at escaping the local by running away; the risks of transgressive politics in communities were then played out on the village stage where the spectacle of governance of the state broke down and where the spectacle of community governance (Baxi et al. 2006) was brutally enacted in the humiliation and injury to the young man beaten publicly.

Risk is also *diverse*—risk can be *individual as well as collective and institutional*; it can be reputational, operational but for many also a direct physical risk. Local government women officials I interviewed in Pakistan, for example, said that when they travelled from one village to another in order to conduct their work, men often besmirched their reputation as those who loiter (*ghoomti hai*) (Rai et al. 2007)¹³. Their institutional position did not protect them against reputational damage. To the extent that risk is inversely related to social and economic advantage, greater attention to risk redistribution in society will inherently highlight inequality and potentially offer new ways of dealing with it. Class and identity can be particularly risk-laden markers for citizenship: a neglect of social contexts, an ahistoricised participatory framework that focuses

on agency but not on the structures of inequality, can result in catastrophic consequences both for individual citizens, as seen in the case of Bhanwari Devi and the young man assaulted by the policeman, and in many instances of violence against citizen protest.

An awareness of risk need not, however, lead to a political paralysis; it can rather allow citizens to both be aware of the possibilities of agency and have due regard for their own and other citizens' security. Risk assessment and risk minimising can also work towards a *sustainable performative citizenship*—drawing in more people for longer periods to engage in shaping change. My worry about an Arendtian valorisation of action is that the heroic is often a gendered understanding of risk taking; I would rather not 'expect miracles' but figure out ways in which small and big negotiations of everyday life might lead to social change over time. It is often the performance of these small and even private actions that accumulate, sediment and accrue towards change.

So, a performance lens on the concept of citizenship enables new questions to be asked—the unpacking of its different elements as it is lived and as it unfolds in our everyday lives, through formal and informal modes in complex landscapes that are traversed by citizens and non-citizens alike. A performative citizenship also allows us to focus on the agency of citizens as well as on the framing of this agency by structures of power. The enactment of citizenship always elicits a response of other enactments—of state and informal institutions of governance, of gendered violence, of complex networks of exclusions, but also of many solidarities. A performance approach also shows the unfolding nature of citizenship—its instability, contingency and partiality. Performing citizenship is risky business for some, but also empowering. The purpose is to expand and reshape a sphere of politics where we engage in struggles of citizenship and belonging, over a period of time, making claims against the state as well as against informal institutions and indeed against others who seek to exclude or abuse, such that the risks of making such claims are minimised for all.

NOTES

1. Permanent Account Number, which is a code assigned to all individuals who pay tax and other financial services. Unlike the Aadhaar card, the PAN card is also issued to foreign nationals, as investors, subject to a valid visa; it is therefore not accepted as a proof of Indian citizenship.

2. 'The Unique Identification number (Aadhaar, trans. foundation or base), which identifies individuals uniquely on the basis of their demographic information and biometrics will give individuals the means to clearly establish their identity to public and private agencies across the country' (<https://uidai.gov.in/aadhaar-usage.html>) [accessed 13 August 2016].
3. The Bombay High Court rejected the possession of an Indian passport as a mark of Indian citizenship—because it could have been bought or fraudulently acquired (see Gopal Jayal 2013).
4. <https://uidai.gov.in/aapka-aadhaar.html>.
5. This is not an isolated incident; police involvement or failure to protect the victims of violence is well documented. See, for example, http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue34/thapar-bjorkert_sanghera.htm [accessed 13 August 2016].
6. *Khap* or caste panchayats have no constitutional place in India's public life, but have operated in parallel with the village panchayats, which form the lowest rung of governance architecture of India. Under the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee's dispensation, a three-tier system of local government was adopted—*Gram Panchayat* at the village level, *Panchayat Samiti* at the block level, and *Zila Parishad* at the district level. This was called the 'panchayati raj' system, which was further strengthened under the 72nd and 73rd Amendment Act; a quota of 33% for women was also introduced under these Acts.
7. Tribal assemblies in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
8. The *Vishakha v State of Rajasthan* was a case that resulted from campaigns in support of Bhanwari Devi, whereby the Indian Supreme Court's judgement of August 1997 provided the basic definitions of sexual harassment at the workplace and provided guidelines to deal with it.
9. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/247344> [accessed 13 August 2016].
10. Coverture is a nineteenth-century legal notion that places husbands between their wives and the civic space. It has taken legal form through common law in the UK, which has assumed that the family interest represented by the male head of household subsumes the interests of all within that unit.
11. Of course, the framing of our identities by the state does not only take place through a monopoly over the means of mobility across international borders. We are also told that we are 'backward' or a 'person of colour' (as if whiteness is not colour marked)—constitutions, laws and state policies frame citizens within borders and support hierarchical discourses of exclusions.
12. But as the case of Syed Ali Shah Geelani shows, the necessity for acquiring a passport does not obfuscate the political repudiation of state

insistence of marking citizenship through passport. A Kashmiri nationalist, Mr Geelani 'had reportedly refused to fill up the column for "nationality". "I am not Indian by birth. It's a compulsion that we have to travel with an Indian passport"' (<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/passport-issued-to-hurriyats-syed-ali-shah-geelani-783821>) [accessed 13 August 2016]. Thanks to Niraja Gopal Jayal for alerting me to this case.

13. See also Phadke, Shilpa, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade. 2011. *Why Loiter?: Women & Risk on Mumbai Streets*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India.

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