CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Adolescent and young people's voice, agency and citizenship in the Global South

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The whole concept of sustainable development is rooted in balancing the needs of the current and future generations in a way that protects the planet and enhances people's quality of life, particularly the most marginalised people. Discussing our collective futures without young people around the table is a missed opportunity.

– Pooja Singh, Youth Engagement Officer, Adolescent Girls Investment Plan

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WHY A FOCUS ON ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE, AGENCY AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH?

Recognising young people's civic participation and engagement

Over the past three decades, a growing interest in youth politics within global development has instigated an evolving debate over the role of adolescents and young people in political processes. In the 1990s, young people were mostly viewed as a burden and risk to democratic futures; their political activity was largely framed in terms of anxiety over the consequences for future stability of the growing cohort of underemployed, frustrated young people – typically meaning young men – in the Global South. The term 'youth bulge' was popularised to describe the disproportionately large percentage of the population entering adulthood (Kaplan, 1994; Urdal, 2006). Research on the implications of being excluded from networks and opportunities for political participation emphasised the links between marginalisation and young people's participation in violence (Boas, 2007). Within this framing, interventions that prioritise opportunities for young people – in terms of employment and political participation – are framed as essential for the youth bulge to transform into a 'demographic dividend' in developing countries (Bloom and Williamson, 1998; Drummond et al., 2014; Momani, 2015; Kayizzi-Mugwera, 2019).

In a move away from this negative framing, more recently young people's participation has been increasingly seen as key to the pursuit of equitable and sustainable global futures, as observed in the quote from Pooja Singh which opens this chapter. The African Union's Youth Charter (2006) emphasises its conviction that Africa's youth are its greatest resource and that 'through their active and full participation, Africans can surmount the difficulties that lie ahead'. A report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the state of the world's youth similarly drew attention to the instrumental role of young people in social change, despite their underrepresentation in formal political processes (UNDESA, 2016). Adolescents and young people are also increasingly being situated as vital actors in peace and sustainability efforts, as reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 2250, which asserts their 'important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security' (UNSC, 2015).

As a result of this shift, there has been growing interest in youth 'civic engagement'. From a policy perspective, young people are now being framed more positively as capable of (and already engaging in) transformative political action, but needing more support to do so (Brennan et al., 2022). The civic

engagement literature emphasises awareness of rights, skills-building and promotion of social justice. However, this work has a limited focus, emphasising the role of civic education in preparing young people to belong to a defined polity; it also focuses on formal modes of participation (such as being members of youth groups, participating in youth parliaments, or being actively involved in broader social movements). Despite greater policy attention to youth political engagement, some key aspects remain underexplored. These include connections between civic education and participation in the civic structures that adolescents and youth have more immediate access to, especially prior to reaching the age of majority (such as school authorities, the justice system or municipalities).

Not only is the focus on young people's formal participation too narrow, but it risks romanticising the positive potential of youth. Caution about the representation of youth as a revolutionary force per se is essential; without a contextualised and nuanced understanding of youth movements, their connections with other social justice movements – and the collaborations that are essential for wider societal transformation – may be overlooked (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2014). Political agency may, for example, see young people taking advantage of opportunities provided through mainstream politics in order to seek power and opportunity in other areas of life even when those do not lead to just or egalitarian outcomes more widely – such as mobilisation into armed groups and factions (Abbink and van Kessel, 2005; Boeck and Honwana, 2005; Asante, 2012; Abebe, 2020). In particular, citizenship education as a tool for creating an idealised unified nation must be problematised in contexts where legacies of oppression and violence continue to structure young people's everyday realities (Staeheli and Hammett, 2013). An exploratory lens – which transcends notions of formal citizenship and engages with lived citizenship practices – rather than a normative approach is thus needed. Young people enacting lived citizenship, across formal and informal spaces, as change agents can subvert and challenge politics (Buire and Staeheli, 2017; van Blerk et al., 2021).

The importance of adolescent participation, voice and agency

Much of the extant literature on young people's political and civic participation focuses on older youth above the age of majority and in their 20s, rather than adolescents. Indeed, the breadth and heterogeneity of how 'youth' are defined – often encompassing individuals from early teens up to the age of 35 – makes it extremely challenging to develop targeted policies and interventions to promote civic participation (see Text Box 1.1). Adolescents have a significantly different relationship to political processes than older youth

BOX 1.1 ADOLESCENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH

At the global level, policy literature offers various age-related definitions of adolescents, youth and young people. The United Nations definitions, which are used in this textbook, categorise adolescents as those aged 10–19 whereas youth are aged 15–24, and 'young people' is the term often used to encompass the entire age range of 10–24-year olds (UN, 2018; UNICEF, 2022). Meanwhile, the African Union's Youth Charter defines young people and youth as being those between the ages of 15 and 35 (AU, 2006). Differences between adolescents and older young people are not limited to their legal recognition as citizens, which in many countries begins at the age of 18; various physiological, cognitive and socio-emotional shifts also unfold throughout the second decade of life (Patton et al., 2016). Whilst chronological definitions can be useful for statistical purposes, such as assessing the extent to which adolescents are being specifically included in policies and programming aimed at young people, global differences in what it means to be an 'adolescent' or 'young person' underline the fluidity and context-specificity of such categories. It is therefore important to account for the ways that different cultures and societies understand the maturation process, and the implications for adolescent and youth civic and political identities, opportunities and experiences.

who are above the age of majority, and within the category of 'adolescence', there is huge variation in capability and opportunity. As Berents (2020) observes, 'youth' has historically been shorthand for 'young men', which means there has been scant attention to how gender inequalities structure voice and agency, and the implications for girls' and boys' participation across all levels of civic and socio-political knowledge, discourse and mobilisation.[1]

Investing in adolescents (aged 10–19 years) has been argued to be key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations' Adolescent Well-being Framework includes domains for connectedness and positive contribution to society, and agency and resilience – that is, being 'empowered to make meaningful choices and to influence their social, political, and material environment' (Ross et al., 2020). However, investments in young people within the SDGs remain largely confined to health, education and protection from violence, with little attention to adolescent voice, agency, civic engagement and political participation (Sheehan et al., 2017; Guglielmi et al., 2022). Only one SDG indicator (5.4.1) measures any dimension of voice and agency (assessing progress in terms of gender- and age-disaggregated time use). Although reporting is uneven across countries, data clearly shows that girls spend more time than boys on domestic and care

work at home, creating a barrier to girls' opportunities for decision-making and wider participation (Guglielmi et al., 2021).

Policy often relegates adolescents to the realm of childhood because they are (for the most part) under 18. Childhood is a category that continues to hold power within children's rights movements, providing the basis for demands that children participate in decisions that affect their lives. However, there is still no clear vision of how the developmental reality of adolescents fits into definitions of children and childhood (Woolard and Scott, 2009). This is problematic, particularly when it comes to the politicisation of participation, voice and agency. Legalistic approaches emphasise the right of children and adolescents to be heard and to have their views given due weight according to age and maturity, as well as rights to information and freedom of association (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989). Yet the UNCRC does not differentiate between the capacities, interests and opportunities of very young adolescents compared to older adolescents. The framing of 'giving due weight' also implicitly subordinates the views of under-18s to adults, who retain power over spheres of participation. This obscures the reality of adolescents' participation and exercise of politicised voice and agency in spaces where adults are not gatekeepers of participation in straightforward ways, including online and in-person youth-generated activism (see Text Box 1.2).

BOX 1.2 CITIZENSHIP

While historically a concept associated with the Global North and focused on membership of a national community (see Marshall, 1950), more recent citizenship theories have recognised that citizenship may also be enacted through mundane everyday practices, acts and personal understandings – rather than being limited to a specific identity grounded in formal or legal status (Tarrow, 1994; Corbridge et al., 2005; Isin and Nielsen, 2008). Contemporary feminist approaches underline that citizenship is a lived, subjective experience of belonging and membership, which can be expressed at various scales (locally, nationally and globally) (Lister, 2005; Wood and Black, 2018). Beyond Global North scholarship, in Latin America, a large body of research has explored the role of social movements in re-signifying the relationship between people and the state (Alvarez et al., 1998). Decolonial scholarship has also drawn attention to the role of global systems and relations beyond the state in generating multi-scalar inequalities such as climate change, conflict, and economic injustices, which both shape lived experiences of citizenship for people in the Global South as well as undermine the securing of citizenship rights (Amin, 2011). The concept of citizenship is thus constantly evolving to encompass a much wider range of forms of participation in civic and political life than earlier definitions permitted.

Discourse on 'children' and, indeed, 'youth' has also tended to obscure how gender inequalities shape younger people's lives (Graeve, 2015). Feminist re-envisionings of women as active agents within their own lives have also been critiqued for insufficiently recognising young people's voice and agency, largely positioning under-18s as pre-social and passive recipients of care by women (e.g., Baird, 2008). Adolescent girls are thus doubly marginalised within the rights-based categories of 'childhood' because of their gender, and 'women' due to their age (Taefi, 2009).

Feminist critiques target several dimensions of the 'liberal rights model', including that the basis of the universality it proposes is premised within the views of dominant groups; that individuals are treated as 'disembedded' from communities and society; and that it constructs a public-private dichotomy in which the 'public' realm is a more important space of participation (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Lister, 2003; Wood, 2012). This is particularly problematic when contemplating the political agency of adolescents and young people, which is largely contained within their families, peer networks (virtual and in-person) and local communities, reflecting social restrictions on their mobility and legal restrictions on their civic participation. The former, in particular, constrain girls' opportunities for voice and political expression.

Alternative approaches to conceptualising young people's civic participation and engagement

A relatively new and burgeoning body of work, on 'youth studies of the Global South', offers an alternative understanding of young people's participation that speaks to young people's everyday material realities (Cooper et al., 2019). It emphasises the political agency (see Text Box 1.3) of young people who resist, disrupt and transform the existing social and economic order across contexts – and do so largely outside delineated political structures (Christiansen et al., 2006; Honwana, 2012; Abebe, 2020). In much of the world, growing global inequality and economic precarity structure young people's lived experiences, engendering identities, movements and cultures of youth (Ugor and Mawuko-Yevugah, 2015). Swartz et al. (2021) suggest that young people's political practices in the Global South can only be understood properly through these contexts of inequality and precarity. Furthermore, processes of social exclusion must be understood in the context of globalisation and economic restructuring, which result in the marginalisation both of young people who have low skills and lack education, and of educated and aspirational youth (Bayat, 2000).

Another body of research has underlined how poverty and inequality shape individuals' sense of identity and belonging, with consequences for

BOX 1.3 POLITICAL AND CIVIC AGENCY

In addition to an extensive body of literature on adolescent and young people's agency more broadly, work has explored their agency specifically in relation to both their civic engagement and political participation. Lister (2003) argues that citizenship requires a belief that one has agency to act (especially collectively) on issues that matter – and likewise, acting on one's civic values can enhance one's agency. Political agency has come to be understood as more than just acts such as voting or participating in parties and social movements; it can refer to a variety of ways that adolescents and young people individually and collectively act affect and impact 'politically' (Flint, 2003). Agency is recognised within the literature to be relational; this means that adolescents and young people's experiences with regard to civic engagement and political participation vary at different times and in different spaces, as well as being shaped by the involvement of others (Kennelly, 2009; Wood, 2017).

civic engagement. Lived experiences are central to a person's understanding of the state and of their relationship to processes of governance (Mamdani, 1996; Corbridge et al., 2005). Narayan and colleagues (2000) argue that poverty is experienced as a social relationship as well as a material reality, which diminishes citizenship. Decolonial work on citizenship also problematises the ways that imperialism and colonialism shape concepts of citizenship and political subjectivity. Mignolo (2002, 2006), for example, notes the continued hegemony embedded within 'citizenship' of an inherently Eurocentric framework about what it means to 'belong' to a state. This literature thus also offers important challenges to framings of citizenship that are contingent on liberal Western values of autonomy and rationality (Ahmed, 2014). These concepts may offer insights into the civic identities of young people whose sense of themselves as citizens is complicated by displacement, homelessness or marginality on the basis of identity such as ethnicity or sexuality. However, there has been little if any work exploring how adolescents and young people in the Global South envisage meaningful citizenship values and practices.

Research in the 'youth studies of the Global South' field has identified how young people actively navigate the challenging social and economic conditions they encounter as they transition to adulthood (Jeffrey, 2010; Honwana, 2012). Ugor (2013) describes young people as finding and creating meaning and hope in their lives in the face of countless economic and social constraints. Far from being passive victims of these circumstances, Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) suggest that being stuck in 'waithood' can generate political meaning and actions for young people. However, this body of

work, which draws largely from small-scale, in-depth studies of young people (primarily young men), risks romanticising how they navigate these conditions. It also focuses on adolescents and young people at the older end of the age spectrum whose experiences of political participation are more likely to be mediated by the transition out of education and into the job market.

Nevertheless, the concepts at the heart of the 'youth studies of the Global South' offer an important alternative lens through which to situate and explore adolescent and youth political agency and citizenship in lower- and middle-income contexts. As observed within decolonial scholarship, 'the Global South' also encompasses a diversity of historical-political national trajectories within which adolescent and youth experiences must be contextualised. Moreover, a decolonial lens offers new insights into adolescent and youth participation beyond the framework of rights and protection, which continues to dominate global thinking on civic engagement. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990) formally recognises the role of family and community, and notions of reciprocity, care and obligation, in shaping young people's opportunities and participation. While analogous regional frameworks do not yet exist in other contexts, a robust history of children and young people's activism and movements centred around their right to work, and in opposition to the UNCRC framing of 'child labour' as inherently exploitative, has fed into national-level policies across Latin America (Risley, 2020).

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The right of adolescents and young people to participate in matters that affect them is a cornerstone of an approach that recognises and supports their voice and agency in relation to politics and citizenship (see Text Box 1.4). To align with this framing, it is imperative that research on adolescent and youth voice, agency, civic engagement and participation includes methods and tools which are themselves participatory and aim to co-produce research with young people. A participatory research approach is rooted in the understanding that young people – not external researchers – are the experts on their own lived experiences, and that social change is a key part of the research process (Freire, 1970; Petrone et al., 2021). A participatory approach must also be intersectional, acknowledging that structural obstacles to civic engagement will also mediate participation in knowledge production. Researchers must make efforts to enable even the most marginalised adolescents and young people to participate.

Methodological tools must also be adapted to diverse contexts. Extant research has drawn attention to the ways that power inequalities in low-income settings can shape the trajectories of discussions and interactions

BOX 1.4 VOICE

While adolescents and young people's agency refers to their capacity to act, 'voice' is the right to freely express one's views and have them heard. Having a voice on one's rights and being listened to has been argued to be essential to the fulfilment of *all* rights outlined in the UNCRC (1990) (Lansdown, 2001). Various typologies have been developed to conceptualise how processes that seek to engage the voices of adolescents and young people can do so meaningfully. While they vary in emphasis, these models largely recognise the important role of sociocultural context and relationships, especially those with adults and other gatekeepers (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Lundy, 2007). Central to the critical literature on voice in relation to agency and participation is a recognition of the relations of power which shape opportunities for voice and the extent to which these are listened to, as well as whose voices are seen to matter.

during the research process, especially when using traditional methods such as focus group discussions (Scheelbeek et al., 2020). As noted in the youth studies of the Global South, material inequalities are layered with age-related inequalities, and research may be taking place in contexts of violence, state oppression and political instability. These dynamics have consequences for researching adolescent and youth voice, agency and civic engagement that must be recognised and addressed at the design and data collection stages, even if they cannot be entirely mitigated. Participatory action research can offer opportunities to intervene in these dynamics (Trott, 2021).

To capture how contextual factors such as wider political shifts or continuities and changes in individual and interpersonal relationships mediate voice, agency and participation at different points in time demands further methodological innovation, as well as investment in better quantitative measurement of youth participation, voice and agency. Mixed-methods research can bring valuable nuance, as use of multiple tools can capture complexity and ensure that a range of experiences are represented (Baird et al., 2021). However, the concepts of voice and agency continue to be largely explored with smaller samples and using qualitative approaches. Longitudinal research can also enhance understanding, with some innovative research programmes – including Young Lives, Growing Up on the Streets, the Global Early Adolescent Study, and Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) – following cohorts of adolescents across the second decade of life and including a focus on voice and agency and participation. However, such studies are relatively rare, especially in relation to civic and political engagement. Some of these studies, and the lessons for methodological opportunities to explore voice and agency in relation to citizenship, are represented in this book.

BOX 1.5 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

There is no single, universally agreed meaning of 'civic engagement'. Some definitions are very broad; others are more specific and limit 'civic engagement' to activities such as volunteering or community service. Generally speaking, acts of civic engagement are those which address issues of public concern, but do not have the direct aim of influencing formal political structures and outcomes. They may also be latent forms of participation which contribute to political behaviour and culture in a given context (Ekma and Amnå, 2012). Such forms of participation may include individual expressions of civic engagement (such as discussing politics with others) or collective civic engagement (such as joining a group activity or process that aims to address an issue within one's community) (Adler and Goggin, 2005).

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The policy and programming environment on adolescent and youth civic participation in the Global South echoes the growing attention to young people's role in political processes (see Text Box 1.5). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017) describes a spectrum of initiatives to foster young people's participation in public policy, from 'informing' young people right through to their being empowered by partnerships where they have the final say on matters. Initiatives still largely fall within the category of 'informative' and sometimes 'consultative'. Given that government-instituted, curriculum-based civics education is, by definition, implemented in school settings, information is not reaching the most marginalised young people – those who are out of school (Trivelli and Morel, 2019). Evidence also shows that interventions may be of poor quality and inadequately linked to the real-life experiences of young people's participation (Muleya et al., 2020). Indeed, there is very little evidence on the link between civic education and actual civic engagement (Skalli and Thomas, 2015).

Across the Global South, young people's participation in party 'youth wings' is commonplace, but largely gendered, with girls and young women typically marginalised. Moreover, within party politics there remains a risk that young people may be instrumentalised for pre-set political objectives, rather than having a meaningful say on issues. Efforts by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to foster youth participation in these contexts have focused on building young people's skills in communication, negotiation and decision-making, and creating conducive environments for their participation in local, national and global political processes (Generation Unlimited, 2020). With the SDGs calling for greater attention to those who are typically excluded from meaningful decision-making, including in political processes,

BOX 1.6 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Much of the literature on political participation starts with the definition developed by Verba et al. (1999) of an 'activity that is intended to, or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly, government action'. However, this definition does not specify what kinds of activities 'political participation' might include. Distinctions between 'formal' activities such as voting and campaigning, and 'informal' activities such as protest, social movements and demonstrations often form the basis of analysis within political science. Feminist scholars have however challenged the emphasis afforded to 'formal' political participation, which obscures the ways that women have historically organised for change outside of the sphere of institutional politics (Lister, 2003). Work on children and young people's 'everyday' politics has subsequently built on such critiques by calling attention to the politics of transformation and resistance that are embedded within day-to-day activities and social relationships (Wood, 2012).

it is important to consider what kinds of initiatives are effective in engaging younger adolescents, girls, and the myriad of young people who do not have access to formalised politics (see Text Box 1.6).

Increased funding for girls' movements reflects the focus on girls' agency and empowerment and its connection to gender-equitable development processes. At a global level, there has been greater attention to the role of individual 'girl activists' who mobilise such wider movements (Taft, 2014; Vanner, 2019; Raby and Sheppard, 2021). However, Mikel Brown (2016) cautions against this 'lifting up' of individuals as it detracts from the systemic barriers to girls' and young women's participation, and the necessity of scaffolding and support – instead framing activism as a matter of individual girls' self-confidence and initiative (Harris, 2004; Mikel Brown, 2016; Taft, 2020). Though largely drawing on evidence from the Global North, a vital counterpoint is work that emphasises collective action in Girlhood Studies, which draws on feminist work on political participation and emphasises the significance of 'informal' politics (Lister, 2003). A focus on cross-generational opportunities for solidarity, and using an intersectional lens that recognises how privilege shapes representation and influence, can help to overcome tensions that often emerge between celebrating the achievements of individual girls on the one hand and honouring the collective nature of activism on the other (Vanner, 2019; Raby and Sheppard, 2021). Girls' club initiatives often combine the two, with Marcus et al. (2017) finding evidence that the most effective programming of this kind engaged with (adult) community members as well as girls.

CONCEPTUALISING ADOLESCENT VOICE AND AGENCY IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Intersectionality and attention to inequalities

A body of literature on citizenship in relation to sexuality, disability, ethnicity, class and other social inequalities has long explored the implications for political participation of social marginalisation on the basis of identity (Fraser, 2003). Yet whilst engaging directly with gender, this work has largely disregarded age-related inequalities. Feminist work on intersectionality that explicitly situates analysis of power relations across different spaces and scales offers a means to critically engage with the agency and civic engagement of adolescents and young people in the Global South. This literature has drawn attention to the particular experiences of marginalisation that are produced at the axes of age and gender, amongst other social positionings and identities (hooks, 1984; Crenshaw, 1989).

However, an intersectional framing must go beyond simply identifying and clustering social identities; analysis must locate compounded inequalities such as gender and age within a nuanced understanding of their temporal, spatial and geographic contexts, in order to avoid assumptions about what social identities mean in different spaces (Yuval-Davis, 2015). In relation to citizenship, a situated intersectional lens can offer insights into what enables and constrains linkages and connections between voice and agency at a more localised level – for example, within families, schools and communities – and in more formalised expressions of politics and participation.

Younger adolescents' voice and agency

Literature on youth political agency and civic engagement makes an implicit distinction between older adolescents and youth on the one hand, and 'children' on the other. Younger adolescents tend to be grouped with children, despite the life changes they are undergoing, which have gendered implications for their participation and agency. As a result, there has been very little attention to younger adolescents' voice and agency in relation to civic participation and opportunities for decision-making.

Globally, early adolescence marks the point at which gendered expectations begin to shift, increasingly limiting girls' mobility and thus their opportunities to participate outside the home (Blum et al., 2017). At the same time, gendered messages about appropriate behaviour and expectations intensify and, as a result, girls' choices and autonomy become more constrained. Although these changes have led to some growing attention to younger adolescents' voice and agency, the literature originates within public health work, and focuses on sexual and reproductive health rights, which

are framed as instrumental to young women's future health, well-being and relationships (e.g., Igras et al., 2014; Ninsiima et al., 2018). Although sexual health and bodily autonomy are important, they are just one expression of voice and agency; very young adolescents' wider decision-making, community relationships and civic identities are significant aspects of meaningful participation but are largely overlooked within the literature.

The UNCRC's notion of the 'evolving capacities of the child' has enormous implications for voice and participation during adolescence. Lansdown (2005) suggests that it not only constructs children as being in a direct relationship with the state as rights-holders and not just objects of protection, but it also emphasises the role of parents and caregivers in enabling children's increasing agency over their own lives as they go through adolescence (Varadan, 2019). According to Häkli and Kallio (2019), political subjectivities are formed within childhood and change across the life course in ways that are socio-spatial, contextual and temporal. The experiences and identities of younger adolescents in relation to citizenship and politics will thus be different from those of individuals designated as 'children' and those who are approaching the age of majority.

However, the concept of 'evolving capacities' remains largely absent in policies and programming designed to expand young people's voice and agency. Buller and Schulte (2018) suggest that this is partly due to norms that prescribe deference to adult authority, as well as intersecting norms around gender, age and other social identities that delineate whose voices are listened to, and in what context. Though the UNCRC as a guiding document pays little attention to idea of 'trusted adults', work on evolving capacities has emphasised the important role of girls' club leaders, teachers or religious leaders, underlining the relationality and interdependence of agency as a negotiated process constituted through other social forces, rather than an intrinsic quality that adolescents and young people can possess.

Nuancing the notion of citizenship

Current socio-political realities facing adolescents and young people further complicate extant concepts, definitions and understandings of citizenship, by reshaping the contours of what it means to 'belong', at what scale, and in what space. Citizenship has traditionally been conceptualised as a legal status 'bestowed on all those who are full members of a community' (Marshall, 1950) guaranteeing certain social, political and economic rights and duties. This definition emphasises the relationship between the individual and the state, in which the two are bound by reciprocal rights and obligations (Heywood, 1994). Yet increasingly, the spatial location of citizenship as bounded to a state has been problematised and interrogated. Globalised

issues such as climate change, displacement, migration, the growth of online spaces and international protest movements have mobilised youth everywhere. The ways that adolescents and young people engage with politics challenges both how we understand and define participation as a dimension of voice and agency, and thus how we define their 'citizenship'.

Within political geographies, a recent body of work has also sought to disrupt traditional binary distinctions between 'citizen' and 'non-citizen', instead emphasising citizenship as a way of 'being political' that is dynamic, temporal and spatially located (Isin, 2002; Kallio and Mitchell, 2016; Maestri and Hughes, 2017). In this framing, citizenship is understood as characterised by forms of connectedness and belonging that transcend the state, incorporating both informal and formal activities (Kallio et al., 2020). This interrogation of what it means to be a citizen, which complicates the relationship of individuals with the state, has been taken up within childhood and youth studies (Lister, 2003, 2007; Bartos, 2012; Kallio et al., 2020) as well as work on migration, displacement and other mobilities (Staeheli et al., 2012).

Within both these areas of research, citizenship practices are seen to reflect a broad spectrum of political realities, including those facing adolescents and young people – as institutional barriers to formal participation clearly do not preclude ways of 'being political' such as joining protest movements or engaging in online activism. For displaced and migrant populations, exclusion from legal rights does not inhibit either formal or informal citizenship practices – from claiming rights and being involved in diaspora politics, to engaging in social movements and solidarity networks (Isin and Nielsen, 2008; Ataç et al., 2016). However, research on young refugee and stateless people's experiences and articulations of citizenship have largely focused on those living in Europe or the United States; although political infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions for citizenship in these contexts may reinforce inequalities, they remain a world away from the neoliberal conditions that characterise many Southern contexts, particularly within Africa (Ugor, 2013). Yet adolescent and youth civic and political experiences at the margins of legal citizenship remain underexplored, as are the gender- and age-related differences in how adolescents and young people engage with politics 'beyond borders'.

THE BOOK'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature on young people's emergent citizenship has moved away from binary framings of formal and informal politics and increasingly recognises the 'everyday politics' of daily life as an important arena for the contestation and transformation of political modalities and norms (Lister, 2003; Philo and Smith, 2003; Dyck, 2005; Dickinson et al., 2008; Skelton, 2010; Wood,

2012). Rather than being grounded in legal status, young people's citizenship identities are thus increasingly understood as *spatial, relational* and *affective* (Wood and Black, 2018). Attention to spatiality means recognising that plural and transnational attachments that transcend the loci and focus of local or national administrations can also shape young people's allegiances and interests in powerful ways (Beck, 2007; Kallio et al., 2020). Considering the relational means exploring the constitutive effects of young people's positioning at the intersection of relationships with others (adults, peers and community members), as well as how structural characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religious identity and social class shape young people's experiences of civic engagement and agency (Huijsmans et al., 2014; Wood, 2022; Harris et al., 2020). Affect is a key dimension of relational embeddedness and refers to the role of emotion in political subjectivities, in particular one's sense of 'belonging' (Wood and Black, 2018).

These developments have generated new spaces for further exploration of young people's perceptions and experiences of citizenship and belonging. However, the research that informs the notion of 'everyday politics' is largely confined to Western European and North American contexts. What is missing is attention to how inequality, marginalisation, precarity and resources shape these experiences in low- and middle-income country contexts. Layering in attention to materiality also aligns with an intersectional lens and the emphasis this places on the structural conditions and relations of power within which individuals experience marginalisation or opportunity in relation to voice, agency and participation.

A further challenge for those working with adolescents and young people is to navigate the question of what voice and agency is then *for*. Especially in highly constrained spaces, voice and agency might manifest in expressions of politics that are violent, problematic or harmful to adolescents and young people, and those around them. One possibility for addressing this lies in the concept of 'collective capabilities'. Work on collective capabilities draws on the work of Amartya Sen on the role of economic, social, human, political and emotional resources in enabling or constraining the capacity of individuals to achieve a way of living that they value (2008). Sen's work has however been critiqued as placing too much emphasis on individuals and overlooking the wider contextual factors which constrain agency (Stewart and Deneulin, 2002; Stewart, 2005; Ibrahim, 2006; Shove, 2010). A focus on 'collective capabilities' attends to the relationships of trust and reciprocity which can support young people to exercise voice and agency on issues which affect them with the explicit goal of broader transformation of systemic inequalities. It also emphasizes collective learning, and the need for opportunities at all levels for collective agency to be exercised and scaled up (Pahl-Wostl, 2006; Pelenc et al., 2015).

The conceptual framework below seeks to bring together these ideas. At the centre, diverse adolescents and young people are depicted, encircled by relationships at different scales and in different spaces – recognising that institutional participation is not the only measure of civic voice and agency. In additional to spatial and relational factors, the wider material context is denoted on the left of the visual. Context here alludes to spatial and temporal locations, structural economic conditions, the impact of shocks such as conflict or pandemics and the historical and cultural contexts in which these play out. Building on existing evidence, including from the contributions and case studies in the book, and with the objective of pursuing collective agency, we suggest at the bottom of the visual a number of pathways through research, policy and programming towards the expansion of adolescent and young people's voice and agency. These exist across a spectrum, beginning on the left with the local and to the right moving to institutional and global imperatives to include and listen to young voices. At the top of the visual, we suggest some of the dimensions of citizenship that expanded voice and agency can lead to for young people; implicit in the absence of specific outcomes is the understanding that it is young people themselves who can and should decide.

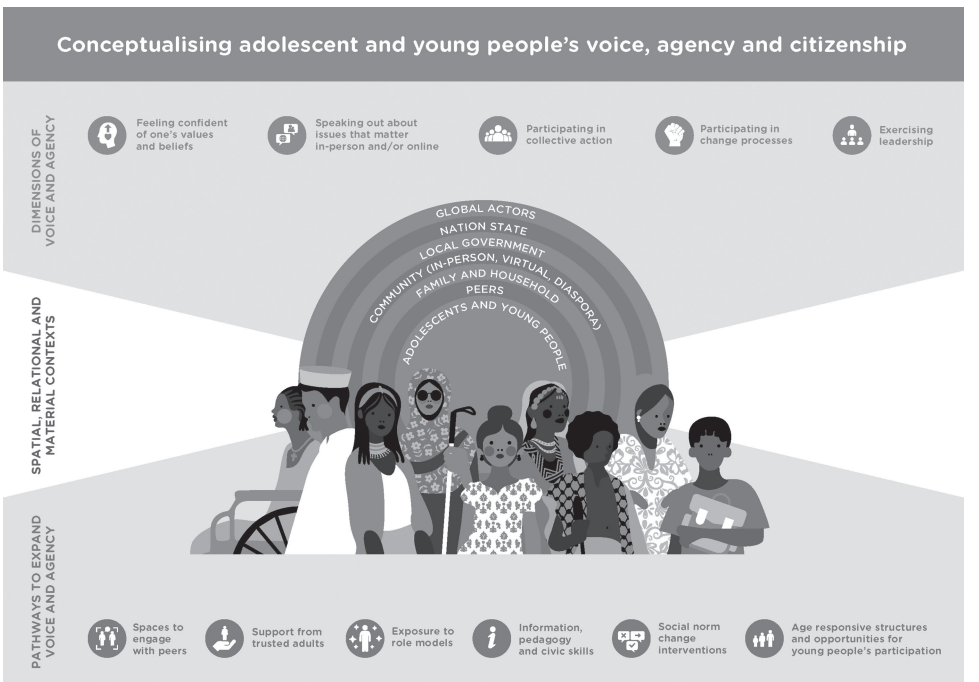

FIGURE 1.1
Conceptual framework.

CONCLUSION

Through a series of case studies that draw on research with adolescents and young people aged 10–24, and pieces contributed by young people about their own experiences of civic engagement and political participation, this book explores how adolescents and young people exercise voice, agency and participation in relation to political processes across diverse contexts. The book is divided into five sections, as seen in Table 1.1. Each section is preceded by an introduction, which gives a more detailed overview of the issues at hand and how the individual case studies and youth pieces speak to these.

TABLE 1.1

Overview of sections, case studies and contributions by age and region

Sections, case studies and young people's contributions	Region	Age range
Research methods to explore young people's voice, agency and civic engagement		
Case study: Measuring adolescent voice and agency: an overview of quantitative and mixed-methods approaches	Global	10–19
Case study: Empowerment in the age of Covid-19: a mixed-methods study of voice and decision-making on four continents	Global	10–14
Case study: Giving voice to children and adolescents in Chile: lessons from the participatory research Mosaic approach	Latin America	10–18
Youth contribution: Changing perceptions, changing roles: exploring self, peer and public perceptions and changing roles and responsibilities of street-connected peer researchers and advocates in Kolkata during the Covid-19 pandemic	Asia	Adolescents
Youth contribution: Our child-led research makes child activists' voices stronger in Brazil	Latin America	Adolescent
Youth contribution: How we are working to reduce teenage pregnancy in our community in Sierra Leone	Africa	Adolescents
Youth contribution: 'When a girl says something, I learn from her'	MENA	Adolescent
Listening to young people: negotiating gendered perspectives on voice and agency		
Case study: Exercising agency on the periphery: Brazilian children and young people's understanding of agency and choice within contexts of inequality	Latin America	12–17
Case study: 'Children have the right to be controlled by their parents': children's voice in rural Sierra Leone	Africa	12–24

(*Continued*)

TABLE 1.1 (Continued)

Sections, case studies and young people's contributions	Region	Age range
Case study: Exploring the Lived Realities of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Youth in Bangladesh	Asia	18–28
Youth piece: When children and young people participate, it is possible to make a change	Africa	Adolescent
Youth contribution: Reflections of a young feminist navigating the promise of sustainable development by world leaders	Global	Young person
Youth contribution: Pressure around sex in exchange for necessities is a setback in the fight against HIV among adolescent girls living in fishing communities in Kenya's Lake Victoria region	Africa	Young person
Youth contribution: 'Although the camp has changed as compared to the old times, I don't think it has changed enough'	MENA	Adolescent
Understanding young people's citizenship: marginalisation, agency and the political Imagination		
Case study: Novel political participation by street youth in Ghana: Street youth as human billboards – a paradox of performed street citizenship.	Africa	14–24
Case study: Informality, gender and alternative citizenship: the lives and livelihoods of rural migrant youth in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Africa	15–23
Case study: Youth movements and political protest: opportunities and limitations of Ethiopia's Qeerroo movement in affecting transformative change	Africa	10–19
Youth contribution: Youth activism in a community of migrant workers during the Covid-19 pandemic in India	Asia	Adolescent
Youth contribution: My revolution footprint in Zambia	MENA	Young person
Young people's voice, agency and participation 'beyond borders'		
Case study: Patterning, enablers and barriers to adolescents' participation in protracted crises: a case study of adolescents' mobility and safe access to public spaces in the Gaza Strip	MENA	10–19
Case study: Adolescents mobilising in real life and online: The Bangladesh context	Asia	14-year olds

(*Continued*)

TABLE 1.1 (Continued)

Sections, case studies and young people's contributions	Region	Age range
Youth contribution: Youth Climate Leaders: What are the major barriers facing young people in climate action and how can these be overcome?	Global	Young people
Youth contribution: 'Being part of the military wing gives you authority here in the camp'	MENA	Adolescent
Youth contribution: 'My mother does not allow me to go out of this camp': reflections on experiences as an internally displaced adolescent girl in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia	Africa	Adolescent
Policies and programming for voice, agency and civic participation		
Case study: Supporting adolescent voice, agency and civic participation in the context of forced displacement and crisis: the role of the Makani programme one-stop centres in Jordan	MENA	10–19
Case study: Negotiating meaningful dialogue: scaffolding safe spaces for street-connected young people's participation	Africa	10–24
Youth contribution: Youth citizenship and advocacy: perspectives and challenges facing Peruvian youth leaders	Latin America	Adolescents and young people
Youth contribution: 'We give our views but our suggestions are not implemented': adolescents' reflections on school parliaments in Batu, Ethiopia	Africa	Adolescent
Youth contribution: The Khuluma Mentor program: adolescent experiences of running a digital peer-led psychosocial support intervention in South Africa	Africa	Adolescents and young people

Case studies explore how structural inequalities and access to resources shape perceptions of what constitutes civic engagement, and how young people from different backgrounds express voice and agency at different levels. They also explore the experiences of young people who are marginalised – whether by their gender, sexual identity, age, disability, citizenship status or geographical location, for example – allowing insights into how an intersectional lens is applied within research practices (as in the section on *Research methods to explore young people's voice, agency and civic engagement*). In the last section, *Policies and programming for voice, agency and civic participation*, case studies explore adolescents' and young people's experiences in policy and programming arenas at the local, national and

international levels, and reflect upon the wider implications for policies and programming.

The principle of adolescents' and young people's right to be heard on issues that affect their lives is at the heart of the way this textbook is organised. Alongside contributions from researchers and practitioners, there are contributions from young people themselves about their own experiences of organising, participating and engaging in activism at different levels of politics. Table 1.1 illustrates the scope of the book in terms of age and geographies.

NOTE

1 In this book, we use the term 'youth' to refer to young men and young women, noting critiques of early youth studies (e.g., McRobbie, 2000) that work on youth must include a gender analysis.

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