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CITIZEN-SUBJECT FORMATION AS GEO-SOCIALISATION: A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH ON 'LEARNING TO BE CITIZENS'

Abstract

The paper sets out to develop further geographies of citizenship as based on the topological constitution of lived realities. Instead of identifying new territorial frameworks or scalar dimensions of/for citizenship, topologies of citizenship are attained by tracing the social ties that people adopt, create, maintain, transform, challenge, and refuse in their everyday activities. The politics emerging in topological worlds concern the matters that people, as contextual (inter)subject, care for and find important; what makes them *attentive* towards what happens in their worlds, based on which *attitudes* concerning certain matters may develop, which may invite people to *act* for or against them. Drawing from this theoretical framework, the paper outlines a methodological, geosocial approach to studying the relational formation of citizen-subjects, with *geo-socialisation* as a key concept describing these processes. The concept refers to the social dynamisms by which political subjectivities are contextually established, maintained, struggled, and reformulated in the mundane realities where people lead their lives and learn to be citizens. The paper draws from a research project with 262 youth in Southern Finland and Northern England. By presenting a piece of analysis based mainly on the English sub-study, and with focus on experienced inequalities, it demonstrates how the processes of citizen-subject formation can be traced from narrative research materials by geosocial means.

Keywords

subject formation, geosocial, socialisation, political subjectivity, citizenship

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Introduction

Recent attempts to re-theorise citizenship have exposed contested spatialities of citizenship (e.g. Desforges *et al.* 2005; Kurtz and Hankins 2005; Smith and Bakker 2008; Lorimer 2010; McNevin 2011; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Ryan *et al.* 2015). Engin Isin's (2002, 2009, 2012) theorisation related to 'acts of citizenship', in contrast with state-based status and formal practices, have been particularly influential in raising these questions (also Sassen 2002). If, in the realization of citizenships, mundane acts are considered not less important than formal practices, and if the citizen-status is not the only position by which political rights are given and gained, what then are the contexts of citizenship like? As part of this discussion, also serious concerns related to the relativisation of citizenship have been presented. Paulina Tambakaki (2009, 7), for instance, fears that the theoretical project where "the discourses and practices that bind democratic citizens together [are replaced by] common humanity" may lead to citizenships happening nowhere, which may again engender political disengagement and apathy instead of new forms of democratic political practice. This conjecture points to the fact that "by giving up the *geographies* of citizenship, we risk losing the *politics* of citizenship" (Kallio and Mitchell 2016, 262).

With an attempt to contribute methodologically to the research on relational citizenship, yet with sensitivity to the potential dispersion of citizenship into a contextless empty note, this paper sets out to develop further geographies of citizenship as based on the topological constitution of lived realities. Instead of identifying new territorial frameworks or scalar dimensions of/for citizenship, topologies of citizenship can be attained by tracing the social ties that people adopt, create, maintain, transform, challenge and refuse in their everyday activities (e.g. Lorimer 2010; Ek 2006; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Sepp 2012; Ahlqvist 2013; Martin and Secor 2014). The relational realms thus exposed are not static constellations as they constantly transform through people's lived relations yet neither are they completely fluid realities where nothing holds its place. 'Geosocial life' is conditioned by established spatial structures with

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geopolitical and geoeconomic underpinnings, and the politics emerging in topological worlds concern the matters that people, as contextual (inter)subject, care for and find important; what makes them *attentive* towards what happens in their worlds, based on which *attitudes* concerning certain matters may develop, which may invite people to *act* for or against them (Häkli and Kallio 2014; Kallio *et al.* 2015; Kallio and Häkli 2017; Kallio 2017b).

Drawing from this theoretical framework, the paper sets out to outline a methodological approach to studying the relational formation of citizen-subjects, with *geo-socialisation* as a key concept describing these processes. It refers to the social dynamisms by which political subjectivities are contextually established, maintained, struggled and reformulated in the mundane realities where people lead their lives and learn to be citizens (Kallio 2014a, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b). Instead of a top-down idea of socialisation that leaves little room to people's agencies, geo-socialisation emphasises the dynamic (intersubjective) and contextual (spatial-political) nature of these processes (cf. Crossley, 2001; Elwood and Mitchell, 2012; Habashi 2017). This dimension is largely missing from the critical research that seeks to re-spatialize and re-politicise citizenship, similarly to broader interdisciplinary discussions related to political agency and democratic life, for reasons briefly explained in the paper.

In addition to the methodological approach, the paper presents findings from a research project involving Finnish and English children and youth. The study set out to explore the development and unfolding of political subjectivities in relational space. With a piece of analysis, I will explore geo-socialisation with regard to experienced (in)equalities, mainly as presented by two participants of the English sub-study. The analysis demonstrates how geo-socialisation unfolds in the everyday lives of youth, concurrently illustrating what kind of analysis can be generated with the introduced methodological approach. The concluding section provides a brief summary of the paper and reflects upon methodological challenges requiring further attention.

Geosocial methodological approach on political subject formation

Conceptual re-definition of socialisation

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Geo-socialisation is a concept by which I seek to re-conceptualise socialisation as an analytical means. The reason for this attempt is simple. Since the 1980's, socialisation has been regarded as an old-fashioned idea that approaches childhood from a top-down perspective, ignoring children's active agencies as much as the dynamics of everyday life in the communities where they lead their lives (Connell 1987; McDevitt and Chaffee 2002; Prout 2011; Habashi 2017). The broad-ranging critique against this idea, which almost established the interdisciplinary field of Childhood Studies, succeeded in revealing an outdated conception and engendered a new paradigmatic approach to studying children as full social members of their communities and societies (e.g. Alanen 1988; James and Prout 1990). Yet, as Connell (1987) perceptively noticed already when the change was taking place, regarding political subject formation the baby was being thrown out with the bathwater.

To date, critical social scientific interest in socialisation continues to be low. What Prout (2011, 8) describes as an overstatement produced by sociological reductionism, put off practically everyone from studying the processes of subject formation by which communities and societies continue to exist and reform (Sapiro 2004, but see Paasi 1996). In consequence, socialisation remains a theoretically hollow concept used mainly by political scientists and related scholars, who seem more or less content with its conventional meanings (e.g. van Deth *et al.* 2011; Almond and Verba 2015). This research pays little theoretical attention on *subjectivities* (emphasis rather on structural positions and fixed identities), takes the *spatialities* of these processes largely for granted (like territorial nations and states) and approaches the *political* dimensions of socialisation from narrow perspectives that reproduce existing conventions and ideas (policy, polities) (for a thorough discussion see Kallio 2014a, 2016a).

By taking notice of these very dimensions, geo-socialisation comprises analytical potential to studying how people come to conceive of the worlds in which they live, including themselves and other people as important constituents of these worlds (cf. Habashi 2017 on the political socialisation of youth). Citizen-subject formation is one apparent context for exploring the potentials of this methodological approach. Regardless of its contested nature, citizenship remains a major category and identity regarding which people are identified and identify with, as political subjects with rights and agency. This may be most

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obvious in liberal democracies such as the UK (in this special issue, see Mills and Waite 2016; Phillips and Starkey 2016), but the role of citizenship is notable also in societies and transnational borderlands where democracy is contested and/or under reconstruction (in this special issue, see van Blerk 2016; Hammett 2016; Ilcan and Kiwan 2016).

The re-conceptualisation of socialisation that I propose, based on my longstanding theoretical work on political agency with Jouni Häkli, leans on three cornerstones. First, geo-socialisation is a *topological* concept, which, basically, means that sociality permeates all spatial relations. In contrast with 'flat' spatial theorisation (e.g. Amin 2004; Springer 2014), geo-socialisation does not ignore the dominating structures of people's lived worlds but includes them as strongly conditioning frameworks (cf. Mitchell and Elwood 2012). With this conceptual specification, I draw attention to the current structuration of societies and communities that follow largely territorial logics (which is not to suggest topography as a counter-part of topology, see Martin and Secor 2014; Joronen 2016). Put in a nutshell, in the context of geo-socialisation topology refers to the relational realms where people find themselves living and which their everyday activities somewhat constitute (Kallio and Häkli 2017, for related uses of topology see Ek 2006; Lorimer 2010; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Sepp 2012; Ahlqvist 2013).

The second conceptual cornerstone of geo-socialisation emphasises that people are active players in the dynamic processes where their agencies establish through *intersubjective socialisation* (Kallio 2017a). This theoretical positioning stands in vast contrast to the conventional approaches where subjects are seen as *socialised by* discursive forces and institutions. Geosocial agency includes capacities to experience the world, share experiences about lived realities with other people and, on this basis, develop attitudes, opinions and stances towards different matters happening in the world (Hörschelmann and Reich 2016; Sparke 2016). The (inter)subject positions that people come into terms with in the flow of everyday life, with more and less agreeable attitudes – often referred to as proposed identities – form the geosocial infrastructure where political agencies are established (Häkli and Kallio 2014, also Crossley 2001). This conception goes in line with the theories of subjectivity that appreciate it as an intersubjective process based on mutual recognition (e.g. Honneth 1995; Cornell and Murphy 2002; Markell 2006; Noble 2009).

Finally, the political dimensions of geo-socialisation surface from the matters that raise people's attentiveness, as they familiarise with their worlds through mundane practices. Attentiveness may lead to oriented stances, articulated attitudes, purposive activities and intentional action, with the potential to maintain or challenge the status quo; yet none of this self-evidently results from attentiveness. In a geosocial methodological perspective, *matters that people identify and define as particularly important* in their lived worlds are considered as political. Geosocial politics is hence always contextual and subjective; things are political to some-ones, living some-where, at some-times (Mitchell and Kallio 2017, also Massaro and Williams 2013; Väyrynen 2014). Yet politics does not exist *in* individuals but *between* them, meaning that politicisation is a social process involving sharing and recognition (Häkli and Kallio forthcoming, also Markell 2006, with reference to Arendt). This conception of political agency comes close to Isin's (2012) conception of 'acts of citizenship', as well as the pragmatist and phenomenological approaches recently presented in geography (e.g. Barnett 2012; Dikeç, 2013; Simonsen 2013; Baines 2015; Häkli 2017)

Analytical layers of the geosocial approach

Geo-socialisation can be traced from narrative research materialsⁱ through three analytical layers that follow from the theoretical framework just introduced, including social, spatial and political analysis. At the first stage of the analysis, social relations are identified as entry points to the participants' lived worlds. In their everyday lives, people create long-lasting relationships with their significant others, have fleeting encounters with strangers and connect indirectly with distant others. Additionally, social relations may involve explicit information exchange, like teaching at school, information transmission through media, and knowledge sharing in informal situations. In the processes of geo-socialisation, also these factual pieces of knowledge turn into experiential understandings (cf. Mitchell and Elwood 2013 on Stiegler). Through social relations, people learn what the world seems to be like, how they and other people seem situated and related in it and which matters seem more interesting and important than other matters. This 'seemingness' does not refer to doubtfulness or falsity, quite the contrary. Following Arendt (2005, 128, emphasis in original), relational spatiality is "something that is shared by many people, lies between them,

showing itself differently to each and comprehensibly only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it and exchange their opinions and perspectives with one another, over against another." (see also Kallio 2017a, 94)

Following the geosocial methodological approach, intersubjective subject formation is hence entered through the 'social layer', as ongoing processes of 'becoming', involving the subject, her or his significant others, occasional passers-by and indirect encounters. This preliminary analysis paves the way to the second, 'spatial layer', where topological worlds are traced. In my ongoing analysis, I have sought to understand how spatiality existed to my participants at the time of the fieldwork and how they positioned themselves and others in their experienced realities. To avoid petrifying lived worlds into fixed constellations, I have studied their manifold spatial relations *without* an attempt to create uniform descriptions or figures. Indeed, topological portrayals are patchy and scattered. They include networks and disconnections, stable and flickering points, pile up matters that have seemingly nothing in common, separate things that may first appear as parts of one system – to mention just a few characteristics of 'topological maps' that, thus far, remain unvisualised in scholarly enquiry (I will return to this matter at the end of the paper). However difficult to grasp, I deem these topologies as *the* contexts where the unfolding of political subject formation can be explored, as they portray socially embedded experiential perspectives.

'Political layer' is the third analytical dimension of geosocialisation. In this phase of analysis, the topologies revealed through the spatial layer are scrutinised by paying attention to moments of attentiveness, and further, to the oriented stances, articulated attitudes, purposive activities and intentional actions potentially growing from these experiences. Heightened attentiveness concerning any matter can be analysed: events taking place near or far, things appearing suddenly or emerging from familiar things, current, past or future activities, personal or public concerns, and inspiring, oppressive, interesting or boring happenings. In the analysis concerning citizenship, based on which I will introduce the theme of inequalities in this paper, I have identified as relevant matters related to democracy. Themes such as freedom, diversity, responsibilities, opportunities, identities, social status, will, rights, conflicts and

peace, public administration and policy-making, mobility and borders, nationality and residency – and equality – were acknowledged as important features in the analysis of citizen-subject formation.

Pulled together, the geosocial methodological approach builds on a theoretical understanding of (inter)subjectivity as human capacity in becoming/being political, topological space as a relational context of political life, and political aspects referring to experienced and shared significance. Leaning on this conceptualisation, the approach offers analytical tools to exploring contextual political subject formation – or geo-socialisation – as a dynamic process, where people may become attentive to specific issues, develop awareness and attitudes, form oriented stances, and take action. Before turning to the piece of analysis that, besides presenting empirical results, demonstrates the potential of the geosocial methodological approach, the broader study is briefly introduced.

Studying contextual political presence with youth

My present study focuses on children's political presence, understood as a right, reality and practice of the child. The research set out to learn about children's and young people's experienced worlds as political realities, broadly understood, and about themselves as dwellers and actors in these worlds. In the framework of political presence, youthful citizenship stands for a set of proposed subject position, experienced identities and active roles. The conceptual field outlined in Figure 1 (originally published in Kallio 2016b) portrays a variety of venues for political presence, ranging from institutions and activities where political relevance is explicit (bottom/left) to contested and less organised politics (centre) to everyday politics rarely conceived of in political terms (top/right). These venues are variably available and accessible to children and young people, who are diversely situated in their communities and societies. Moreover, as different kinds of persons, youthful subjects are keen on accessing and using different kinds of politics, thus practicing citizenship from their subjective stances.

Figure 1: Dimensions of political presence.

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The study involved altogether 262 10–17 year-old girls (n=128) and boys (n=134) in Southern Finland (n=128) and Northern England (n=134), as participantsⁱⁱ who shared their lived worlds with me during 2011–2015ⁱⁱⁱ. Engaging with their portrayals of their lived realities, and how they see themselves and others in these experienced worlds, was the main aim of the fieldwork. Two age groups were targeted to get access to the lived realities of young persons who are, on one hand, moving from childhood towards youth (10–12), and on the other hand, entering a more independent stage of youth during their last year of school (15–17). The fieldwork was carried out in the cities where I was working during the study and it was not designed with a direct comparative analysis in mind. As the research concerns primarily political agencies based on subjectivities, we focused more on individual perspectives than comparable matters or groups of people.

In general, I follow a research orientation that seeks to break off from the dualist trajectories and normative ideals that have dominated much of the childhood and youth studies in the past 30 years^{iv}. As I have argued elsewhere, the study of banal or even subjugated knowledges makes tangible geosocial realities that can be contrasted with other analytical frameworks, for instance geoeconomic or geopolitical (e.g. Kallio 2012; Kallio and Häkli 2017). To appreciate experience-based knowledge as the *primary* source of information in the analysis, I sought to keep distance from other sources before and during the empirical study. Hence, I did not collect personal background information about the participants (e.g. socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation), beyond what they wanted to share with us during the fieldwork.

The only general background information that I have concerns the participants' places of residence and schools. Most lived in urban areas but we also worked in one rural town in England. In Finland, the participating children and youth went to schools in neighbourhoods that can be called 'middle-class', one residing relatively close to the city centre and the other one in a remote corner of the municipality. However, as this label can be used for the majority of Finnish urban neighbourhoods, it does not really distinguish the participants. During the study I came to learn about various kinds of homes and differing life situations that framed their everyday lives. In England, the schools where the fieldwork was carried out

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have even less in common. Due to the high level of residential differentiation, we selected purposefully different kinds of neighbourhoods to avoid a notable bias to one or another direction in the whole study. Yet all schools are state-funded (three primaries, one high school, one sixth form school and one academy).

The major fieldwork method was 'topological mapping' that generated narrative biographies. These were produced primarily in relaxed map-based interviews, which the participants could complete by writing stories and drawing pictures about matters that they found particularly important in their worlds. The fieldwork began with a mapping exercise where the participants created 'lifemaps' on Google Maps platforms (neighbourhood, city, regional, national, European, global). They include markings about important matters as defined by each participant, taking place anywhere in the world (with traffic light codes: green for positive, red for negative, yellow for neutral). The major function of the maps was to provide personalised interview frames by which we could identify entry points to the participants' topological realities (social analytical layer); that is, the maps were not to be analysed as such and we did not have general interview themes, topics or questions. In the individual interviews (or rather chats), we talked about the matters that each child had marked on her or his maps. As it seemed agreeable to the participant, we sought to make connections and distinctions between different markings (spatial analytical layer) and delved deeper into themes that seemed especially relevant (political analytical layer).

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and coupled with the child- and youth-produced drawings and writings. From these joined materials, I am learning about children's and young people's relational worlds as based on experiential knowledge, which I am analysing with reference to other knowledges (e.g. experienced inequalities vis-à-vis policies and institutions generating/upholding inequalities). As an ethical note, topological mapping is a child-centred method that emphasises the participants' rights to determine what aspects of their lives may be included in the study, which was taken into account throughout the fieldwork and in the analysis (for details see Kallio 2017a). I acknowledge the situatedness of knowledge, as well as the positionality of the researchers and the participants, in a critical geographical spirit. The following analysis hence approaches the participants' biographies as dialogically created, partial truths about their experiential worlds.

The next section presents results from this research related to citizen-subject formation, with the intention to illustrate how the geosocial methodological approach may be useful for exploring political geographies 'from below', as experienced by people in their everyday lives (cf. Massaro and Williams 2013; Väyrynen 2014). Leaning on a smaller set of cases, and in particular two biographies from the English sub-study^v, this piece of analysis centres around the theme of (in)equalities.

Exploring citizen-subject formation as geo-socialisation

Becoming a citizen by experiencing and understanding (in)equalities

The most obvious citizenship theme traversing throughout my research materials links together experiences, ideas and activities related to (in)equalities. In one way or another, the majority of the participants emphasised the principle of justness. The examples by which equality was discussed vary notably, which, in my view, is a strong indication about the centrality of equality to citizen-subject formation.

Equality is one of the key elements of democracy. I find Arendt's (2005, p 61–62, emphases in original) classical formulation emblematic of its core meaning: "Just as there exists no human being as such, but only men and women who in their absolute distinctness are the same, that is, *human*, so this shared human sameness is the *equality* that in turn manifests itself only in the absolute distinction of one equal from another." In an Arendian sense, equality hence both distinguishes and relates people from/with one another: we are all unique persons with different, socially constituting and intersubjectively negotiated, characteristics. A major challenge in democratic life is the appreciation of this plurality by living together with difference (detailed reading of Arendt, see Kallio 2014b).

Many of my participants had noticed the significance of equality through their personal experiences, which some of them had linked with knowledge sought from various sources (e.g. school, media, friends, family, hobbies and church). This was the case especially in situations where *inequalities* were experienced (cf. Väyrynen 2014; Habashi 2017). Some of the occurrences they told about concern private relationships and perhaps seemingly minor matters. For example, *Lowell* talked about her grandmother who had had an

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accident at work. As the workplace had shirked their responsibilities, she was left without work and compensations, with a crippled hand, which had taken her close to suicide. *Lowell* saw this as a crying injustice. At the other end of the spectrum are examples related to geopolitical tensions and global trajectories that increase inequalities between people of different origin, religion, nationality, et cetera. *Mukhtar* brought up such themes in the context of his Afghan family that has spread around Europe. He described how during international crises people may become very differently positioned, which in his view should confirm solidarities rather than self-interests – which is not always the case. Also broadly politicised issues that cross over personal and public life were taken up by a number of participants. *Medwin* had formed strong opinions about Russia due to their homophobic policies that had become apparent during the Sochi Olympics. He had become particularly attentive towards this matter after he had learned that someone he knew in the primary school had come out.

As part of the broader study, I have analysed (in)equality as a cross-cutting theme by which a better understanding about the experienced political realities and agencies of youth can be gained (see also Kallio 2014b, 2016a, 2017a). Employing geosocial methodology, the analysis involves social, spatial and political layers, which together form a topological analytical framework. For this article, with a methodological focus, I have selected two in-depth analyses of experienced inequalities, based on biographies created in the English study with *Adigun* and *Rebecca*. They are 11 graders living in one of the bigger cities in Northern England and going to the same school. Substantially, the analysis demonstrates how geo-socialisation unfolds in the form of developing sense of equality and may lead to deeply motivated agency. Methodologically, it illustrates how and what kind of analysis can be generated with the geosocial approach. Hence, in the next sections, it is essential to keep in mind the gradual formation of political agency (from attentiveness to awareness to attitudes to position taking to activities) and the key aspects of the three analytical layers (social relations, spatial relationality, and politics as personally identified significance).

"You have to be able to open up people's minds": identifying how a critical political stance builds in everyday life

The first piece of analysis comes from the biography of a sixteen-year-old participant whom I call *Adigun*. His understanding of equality is largely based on experiences related to racist inequalities. When he was twelve years old, he started to face racism at school, expressed by "ignorant people who just don't understand, they can't see past themselves". At first, the situation had made him very angry. For a couple of years, he had been getting constantly into fights with his harassers. Then something happened: "After that I kind of realised, I grew past all that. I decided that these people, I shouldn't let these people have such an affect on me. I should be able to live my life and just kind of ignore them. And I've slowly, slowly tried to ignore them."

In geosocial terms, this turning point describes how attentiveness to matters that become central in a person's life may lead to growing awareness about the subject matter and subjective change (political analytical layer). To *Adigun* it had appeared that, to break free from such an oppressive situation, he would have to set himself above it. When describing how racism has contributed to his personality, he says, "You have to try to keep it under control as much as possible", continuing, "If you have to deal with it you have to build up knowledge. You have to understand why someone is being like this to be able to deal with it. To stop yourself from doing the same thing." Thus, he had started to ponder about the reasons for people's ignorance, which had led him to identifying geographical differentiation:

"Probably all they know is where they've been and not a lot of people have travelled, or understand a lot of other cultures. I mean, for example, I know, I talk to people that don't live in this country. I have like a friend in Japan I talk to sometimes. I personally understand a lot of different cultures so I understand how people behave and what someone's reactions to different things would be. But a lot of people are like – England's all they know. They're British people. They don't really, I'm not being ruse or anything, but they don't really know anything apart from that and when sometimes different happens, they can't deal --- but have to deal with it, and people don't like change so they end up rejecting it in a very negative way."

The geosocially emerging awareness about ignorance and racism had helped *Adigun* to develop a new attitude and new forms of agency. They build on the distinction between his own transnationally established subjectivity versus racist people's nationally embedded belonging that both result from intersubjective socialisation processes, yet with radically different socio-spatial grounding (social analytical layer). Whereas *Adigun's* sense of self with reference to others has built through 'transcultural friendly networks', racist attitudes are established in local and familial contexts influenced by deep-rooted national discourses. Seeing these as distinct yet related spatialities, in a topological spirit, has helped him to acknowledge that it is not the *people* who are racist, but the *worlds* in which they live (spatial analytical layer).

"Now I'm a very calm person, who just kind of deals with things. I now understanding people. Cause before I used to be very – because all of what used to happen to me – I used to be kind of cold and I didn't really care about other people: 'Oh if they're going to do that to me, I'll do that to them'. But now I guess I've a lot more compassion for people and this, you know, has affected the way that I've, how I behaved to people around me and stuff."

These new ways of dealing with racism resulted from possibilities to share thoughts and feelings with others, who could support *Adigun* in his attempts to manage the racism that had become a part of his everyday life (cf. Wood 2013). His single-parent mother has been very supportive and comforting throughout, like have his friends who "have the same reaction as me because they all think, you know, they're not like small minded". The school also had taken the situation very seriously, sorting things out adequately when they were reported. Moreover, some of his friends shared his very situation, which had strengthened *Adigun's* understanding about how to deal with it: "When you see someone else you feel – obviously I knew what they were going through – I'd have to help them. Cos I couldn't just, you know, leave a friend like that. I'd have to help my friend. It was through that I've just been able to say, you know, let's just leave this."

By tracing these elements of sharing, it is possible to grasp situated knowledge about geo-socialisation, and specifically, citizen-subject formation as an intersubjective and contextual process. Moreover, in a geosocial analysis, *Adigun's* notions concerning racism can be connected with those of religion, which helps to understand how intimate forms of sharing and getting support contribute to relational citizen-subject formation, along with transnational ties for instance. By the end of the interview, when the discussion had turned to completely different issues^{vi}, *Adigun* introduced yet another important context that had contributed to his political agency: "Religion's one of the reasons I'm also where I am now, because before, I've always been religious but obviously when I was like in year 7 I didn't take religion all that seriously, but once I started taking religion more to heart it just calmed me down as a person and made me feel and understand and see other people's side of things."

In summary, the geosocial analysis of *Adigun's* mundane citizen-subject formation, largely based on experienced racism, led to the following findings: Together with his significant others, *Adigun* had built a subjective stance towards racism, a matter that had started to emerge as particularly important in their lived realities, i.e. politicise. As a part of this geo-socialisation process (or contextual political subject formation), he was being intersubjectively shaped into the political subject whom we encountered in the study. Concurrently, by binding his experiential knowledge together with information coming from other sources, he was finding out about the world where he lived and its people occupying various subject positions. This subject formation and consciousness building did not happen freely as his agency is strongly conditioned by the raced and gendered community where he lives (for a critique on individualistic approaches to political agency, see Zanotti 2013). However, his commitment to a compassionate approach demonstrates that even in underprivileged social positions, people are not only subjected subjects but have capacities to *relate* with the identities proposed to them in the flow of everyday life and pursue meaningful agencies.

Further, these findings allow the geosocial analysis of *Adigun's* active political agency. Leaning on his "relative autonomy" as a political subject he had, first, chosen to seek insight into why people become racist and, by the help of this socio-spatially grounded understanding, sought to change his lived world so

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that everyone could live together in it beyond the dividing lines (on relative autonomy, see Häkli and Kallio 2014). Besides standing with his friends, this agency had recently mobilised in the situation of his younger brother who was facing racism in his primary school: "I went into school personally, to talk to their head teacher about it, because having this kind of thing at such a little age, it's not good." While he wanted to draw attention to his brother's case, he was not worried about him only but also about those who were *bullying* him.

"You have to be able to open up people's minds, not just leave them, these closed minded people, which is what happens to a lot of people, ignorance and all of that. And you can't have this kind of attitude because not everybody thinks that way. Like the majority of people will understand, you know, different cultures, different people who have different needs. And once you get into the adult world, it's not just going to be 'oh you get detention' or you know maybe you get excluded or whatever, it's going to be serious. Serious punishments, and like the police will get involved and things like that, and if you can't learn that before you leave then it's just not, because people in the outside world don't tolerate it at all."

The worries that *Adigun* expressed towards racism at large in his little brother's school, with the head teacher, had both personal and broader outcomes: "Obviously the child's parents got involved, she talked to the parents. And then she said she would give an assembly on, not how to not be racist, but how to open your mind up, you know, not to just think of someone's colour." For having been able to accomplish these effects, *Adigun* voiced pride. He was able to use his experience-based understanding about racism to creating a better society for all people. Unquestionably, a critical citizen-subject was emerging and acting during these events, which could be identified by analysing his biography through social, spatial and political analytical lenses.

"I'm not gonna be pulled down properly": tracing the development of capacities to political resistance

The second piece of analysis comes from a participant I call *Rebecca*, a sixteen-year-old girl living in an urban neighbourhood. My geosocial exploration begins from the description of her living environment that provides for social, spatial and political analysis:

"I've grown up never seeing anything else, so you would think that that would obviously be a strong happy area, because it's somewhere I'm used to, somewhere I'm familiar with, but the area itself has just got worse over the years. We've got neighbours that, they've sort of threatened my Mum on a number of occasions. They've never done anything violent, or, but there's a lot of people on that estate who have given up with progressing in life. I wouldn't say that they're depressed or anything like that, they've just given up with working or further education. They don't care. They live off of, basically they live off the government. They sit on their arses most of the day and they smoke drugs, and, yeah. It's just put a bad reputation on the area. The area is, erm, suits its reputation it's got. Its bad reputation. But it's not somewhere I feel unsafe, it's just somewhere I don't like."

Rebecca saw that the neighbourhood where she lived was posing major obstacles to her future. Brought together with her personal background, including a temporary placement in children's home and her single-parent mother's eventful past, she felt her life opportunities diminished. Primarily, she blames the school and especially its grading, or benchmarking, practices, which she finds deeply unfair:

"Fischer Family Trust is what you get, plus your background and everything, which gives you a grade. So for me cos of where I live it gets pulled down significantly. So I was predicted to get a D in maths and that was down to the fact I got a 4. And the whole area, a 4 should have been like a B grade, and they pulled it right down for a D, and the school wouldn't explain why it was a D. And then it got to the point where I was working higher than my target grade and there was no reason behind the actual target grade itself, apart from the fact that my background is quite rubbish. My Mum never got well in school and the area itself, people don't care about school."

The 'pull down effect' that gets repeated in *Rebecca's* interview results from a reporting and data tool provided to schools in England by the Fischer Family Trust Aspire, a non-profit company committed to "providing accurate and insightful information to schools which enables pupils achieve their full potential and schools to improve" (FFT 2016). They offer a "key target setting and school performance evaluation information using the latest curriculum and accountability measures – quick and easy to access and providing in-depth analysis to support future planning and preparation for Ofsted and Estyn inspections." (ibid.) The FFT Student Explorer program is based on an "intelligent benchmarking system [that] helps you find the level of challenge – average, high or very high – most appropriate for your school to set aspirational targets for pupils and supports year on year improvement for subjects. With the integrated *opportunities and risk indicators* from Student Explorer, targets can be personalised to the specific needs of pupils." (ibid., emphasis in original). To *Rebecca* this program that notices her life situation as inopportune and risky had appeared as a subordinating system that downplays her academic performance and hinders her future opportunities.

Unlike the school that relied on the FFT system in assessing and supporting its students, *Rebecca* believed that she could do well in school – better than what they expected and even better than most others. She had therefore applied to a well-performing sixth form school, which would have provided good starting points for continuing her studies. She was, however, declined the place because of where she lives. Instead, her place of residence offered the opportunity to attend a public school with a special measures status (performs below the acceptable national standards). This had made her very upset.

"I knew people who'd been here and they'd left and they'd, they didn't do anything with their life, they didn't come out any better for it. So I thought 'why am I going here when I don't feel the same way, I want to do well'. And erm, I just felt that by being here I was getting pulled down. So far all I've got is: I live in an area which has a very rough rating, I went to a school that was in special measures, so the chances of me getting into quite high universities like Oxford and Cambridge, which is some of the things I would really like to do, is quite slim because they look on grades. But they're not just

gonna look on your grades, they want to see where you've come from, they want to see what type of person they're gonna get, they want to see what background you've come from."

Based on these experiences, *Rebecca* had grown a strong awareness of class differences and a critical attitude towards the state education policies. Put in geosocial terms, she had learned what her world is like and how she and other people are situated in it, as part of her mundane activities and with the people who share her day-to-day affairs:

"There's no way I'm gonna change, or other people in my area are going to change, if we just get pulled down by the background and where we come from, where we go to school. It should really be down to whether you're good, if you're good at something or not. But people want the best and they're gonna look for someone whose from, like a posh Cambridge family and they've got four kids and a nice house, they have good grades, they're going to get a job, they're going to have a better chance of doing that than someone who lived just with their mum in a council house on an estate that's just got worse over the years and then they went to a school that was in special measures, then chances of them getting the job is quite slim compared to the other, which is quite unfair."

Rebecca's delineation about her and other people's given positions in the English society is telling about geo-socialisation in a particular geoeconomic context. She had learned through experience that people are not born with the same opportunities and that abilities alone do not count when one's prospects in education, and thus life opportunities, are nationally weighed. What she was describing in the interview goes largely in line with Mitchell and Lizotte's (2014, 66) argument regarding a contemporary trend in many Western educational systems. They pose that "strategic networks of philanthropic funding and knowledge [...] are characteristic of a contemporary form of neoliberal governance in which the philanthropic "gift" both obligates its recipients to participate in the ideological projects of the givers and obscures the incursion of market principles into education behind a veneer of progressive activism". This kind of understanding was not common among the participants of my study. It is telling about knowledge

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that *Rebecca* had, first, (inter)subjectively engendered, and second, was able to make use of for growing awareness and building critical agency. My broader geosocial analysis reveals similar mundane learning experiences from other participants' biographies, related to a number of inequalities they had encountered in their everyday lives (e.g. Kallio 2017a).

Like *Adigun*, *Rebecca* had decided to challenge the subject position that in her case was being proposed by the market-driven school, suggesting for her a future of a poorly educated working-class female. While she constantly found that others do not believe in her, she was determined to make her way in the educational system:

"Everyone who asks me what I'm doing next year has said 'Are you sure you really think you can cope with the workload, and don't you think it'll be a bit too hard?'. And its, I've taken computer science and maths and physics, and then psychology as just something else I want to try, see what it's like. But a lot of people tell me I should maybe not do all physics as well as maths and computer science, but I'm like, well they all link together, so it's sort of going to help me out and I enjoy all of them, so I might as well do it."

Regarding standards of living, *Rebecca's* aims are high, but that is not the only driver in her attempts to succeed in education. She considers herself an example that can prove prejudiced attitudes and biased education policies wrong. The next interview excerpt describes particularly well how political subjectivity operates as a capacity that allows people opportunities to dispute structural subordination, revealing a key element of human political agency in the geosocial perspective:

"Well, in education I want to do well, and then be able to basically show off that actually someone can actually come from shit background, go through shit stuff, but then come out better than the rest. That's my aim. And, I think that's probably the main positive thing that I have, that's something that's holding me back from slipping completely, is the fact that I want to prove to people that you can do whatever you want to, and you can upset them and you can bully people, but you can't stop them from

doing well. Which is what I want to do, so that's mainly the thing, not just to get a career but it's basically to prove to people that you can pull me down but I'm not gonna be pulled down properly."

While impressive as such, in *Rebecca's* case the specific significance of her persistent attitude has to be understood with reference to her overall situation. She has been deeply depressed over several years, due to some traumatising events that we did not discuss because of her unstable condition. This matter completely dominated the maps by which she introduced her world: except for one green spot in Scotland, where her only true friend lives, all maps are coloured with red (indicating negativity). Her personal despair and disbelief in life in general were the main topics of our discussion. Hence, to *Rebecca*, education and the future prospects it may offer are not only ambitious aims with social motivation. Rather they stand for the only potential way out from the miserable world where she feels alone and outcast, meaning that they are *the* important matters in her experienced world, i.e. the central political aspects of her geosociality. Like in *Adigun's* case, bringing together these seemingly distinct personal experiences paves way to understanding how the world appears to her, as an experienced non-linear and manifold political reality.

In addition to developing awareness about inequalities embedded in her local and national contexts, *Rebecca* took up transnational geosocial relations, which opens up further the topologies of her citizen-subject formation. Among other things, she had become attentive to how English people engender negative attitudes towards people from other countries, like Russia and Germany, without other reasons than having distant knowledge about state policies or previous wartime events. In her family, this had occurred as prejudiced attitudes: her Mum had claimed that some Germans had grunted at them in a bar. *Rebecca* had set out to criticise this interpretation: "I don't believe you, I think you just didn't read them properly, because you're a different culture, so a different understanding, you couldn't read them properly, understand what they were thinking."

In a geosocial analysis of these transnational ties, it can be first noticed that *Rebecca* was well versed in spatially embedded prejudice. She was often equated with the people living in her neighbourhood even if she did not feel like belonging there and did not dwell with them. This experiential knowledge helped her

to appreciate cultural differences in other scalar dimensions. Quite similarly to *Adigun*, she linked with Britishness attitudes where separation from 'others' is emphasised: "We want to make ourself stand out from the rest." She had identified these geosocial relations in the Eurovision song contest, for instance, where European people had voted for their neighbouring countries largely excluding Britain – which did not surprise her. Her last comment in our long interview sums up how she sees her own attitudinal change regarding transnational relations: "We're not different, but the idea that I've been brought up on is that we are. So now I'm sort of, I'm sort of trying to explore that and see if that's actually true, if we're actually quite similar in different ways."

This last piece from *Rebecca's* case portrays some topological aspects of citizen-subject formation, namely the multi-faceted spatialities of belonging. On one hand, she expressed a clear distance between herself and British people, which refers to a non-nationalistic identification regarding identity and citizenship. Concurrently, she unquestionably includes herself in the group 'British' (who are or are not similar with others), implying that her political subjectivity has built in relation to national identity. Her mother is part of these realities as well. She appears concurrently as a prejudiced British person *and* as a family member sharing her oppressed social position. Through these experiences of inequality, *Rebecca* is at once evolving into a British citizen with a critical attitude and a critical citizen with a contra-British identity. Topologically understood, this double-affiliation is not contradictory; it is telling about the multi-dimensionality of political subjectivities and political realities.

Conclusions

This article has proposed a methodological approach to studying political subject formation and emerging citizenship from a perspective that highlights contextuality and experience, with the aim to contribute to research on topological space (e.g. Lorimer 2010; Ek 2006; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Sepp 2012; Ahlqvist 2013; Martin and Secor 2014; Joronen 2016) and intersubjective socialisation (e.g. Sapiro 2004; Prout 2011; Elwood and Mitchell 2012; Habashi 2017). The methodology involves analytical tools – framed as social, spatial and political layers – to exploring political subject formation as a dynamic process, geo-socialisation.

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Geo-socialisation unfolds in mundane environments where people, first, become *attentive* to specific issues and, second, may develop *awareness* and *attitudes* concerning certain matters. Attentiveness, awareness rising and motivated attitudes may potentially lead to forming *oriented stances* and *taking action*, as an opportunity to maintaining or challenging the status quo arises.

Theoretically, the geosocial methodology builds on a three-fold baseline: *(inter)subjectivity* as a human capacity in becoming and being political, *topological space* as the relational, geosocially constituting context of political life, and *the political* referring to subjectively experienced and socially shared matters of particular importance. Demonstrating what the approach has to give to the study of relational citizenship, the paper has introduced results from an ongoing study exploring citizen-subject formation during childhood and youth in Southern Finland and Northern England. The piece of analysis included in this paper approached the experienced worlds of some English participants as topological contexts of political living. Their subject formation was analysed as processes of geo-socialisation by which people learn about citizenship as a lived condition and take active stances and roles in their communities as political subjects. In these life-long processes, people are 'politically present' at once as beings and becomings, that is, as citizens of today and developing political agents. With a specific focus on (in)equalities, the analysis illustrated how citizen-subject formation is a mundane process, entwining together personal experiences and knowledge coming from different sources. Moreover, it shed light on the spatial relationalities of this specific dimension of subject formation. By using the geosocial methodological approach, the analysis disclosed that, depending on how the world as a lived space appears to them, children and youth grow not only into national citizens but may develop political subjectivities with reference to various spatial-political contexts.

The analysis was produced by reading the research materials through social, spatial and political analytical layers. Geosocial approach accentuates that by beginning from people's experiential knowledge – instead of some background information concerning them or statistics regarding their social positions – it is possible to study spatiality and political life as they appear to people in their everyday realities. Thus, both the geographies and the politics of citizenship are given specific attention, instead of taking them for

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granted or dispersing citizenship into common humanity happening nowhere (cf. Tambakaki 2009).

Geosocial methodological approach includes that social relations are used as entry points in *entering people's topological lifeworlds*. *Spatial connections and disconnections* are traced from engagements with and conceptions regarding different places, people, matters, ideas, artefacts, et cetera. *Politicisation* is identified from matters that people portray as particularly important, including heightened attentiveness, raising awareness, developing attitudes, forming oriented stances, and/or taking action.

The spatial-political realities and agencies thus revealed are, of course, very subjective, and can only serve as partial knowledge in a political geographical analysis (cf. Massaro and Williams 2013; Väyrynen 2014).

Yet, leaning on Foucault (2003 p 6–8), I argue that this type of geosocial knowledge is often subjugated or disqualified with reference to other types of knowledges (e.g. geoeconomic, geopolitical), and thus needs to be especially unearthed. To serve ideally the study of contextual political subject formation and the changing political realities where people live, I see that geosocial methodologies require further development. Converting narrative materials into visual formats, for instance, would help to portray 'topological maps' more tangibly. GIS-based mapping formats could be useful here, not only to analytical purposes but to the participatory research itself, as the different dimensions of lived realities could be pictured and explored together with the participants (cf. Elwood and Mitchell 2012). Intergenerational research settings have proved fruitful in studying the different facets of geosocialities and their relations with geoeconomic and geopolitical conditions (cf. Habashi 2017). Overall, more work is needed in the creation of topological methodologies. Geographers, before anyone else, should take up this challenge and start bringing topological theorisation more into empirical enquiry.

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ⁱ I believe that any narrative materials, including visual narrations, can be used to trace geo-socialisation if social relations are included in the narrative. The next section introduces what kinds of materials I have gathered for my analysis.

ⁱⁱ All names used in the analysis are pseudonyms and, where necessary, the participants' identities are protected by changing minor details from their biographies.

ⁱⁱⁱ The fieldwork in Finland was carried out with Elina Stenvall as part of her PhD thesis. In the English sub-studies, Marie-Avril Berthet and Peter Hart were responsible for implementing the fieldwork. Alisa Piiipponen has contributed to the study as research assistant by organising and archiving the research materials, and by participating in the citizenship analysis that this article draws from.

^{iv} Alan Prout aptly sums up these dualisms into three dimensions: 1) children as agents versus childhood as social structure, 2) childhood as social construct versus childhood as natural, and 3) childhood as being versus childhood as becoming (Prout 2011, 6).

^v I have published results from the Finnish sub-study more, as it took place earlier, regarding both age groups yet with emphasis on the 10–12 year-olds (see list of publications). Hence, in this paper, I draw more heavily on the English sub-study and have stronger focus on the older age group.

^{vi} There is no space to discuss these aspects in detail in this paper: Adigun talked about how 'Muslim' and 'Islamic' are stereotyped in media in relation to extremist groups based in Iraq and Pakistan, and how these perspectives harmfully affect the lives of all Muslims around the world, whose principles and lifestyles contradict radically with those of extremist organisations such as ISIS and Al Quaida. Put together with his descriptions concerning personal life, this notion provides one example of how people, ideas and things, from near and afar, entwine topologically, connecting through geosocial relations conditioned by current geopolitical and geoeconomic situations.