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Green European citizenship? Rights, duties, virtues, practices and the European Green Deal

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ABSTRACT
Published in December 2019 by the European Commission, the European Green Deal (EGD) sets out the aim to transform the EU into a sustainable society in which economic growth is decoupled from resource use, so that there are no greenhouse gas net emissions by 2050. As the 'driving force of the transition' citizens are expected a play a key role in achieving this shift, by adopting sustainable consumption habits and changing their life styles and behaviour as well as actively participating in policymaking [EC, 2019, 22]. This expectation raises questions about European citizenship: Can European citizenship be 'greened'? Conversely, might the EGD strengthen European citizenship? Drawing together theoretical insights into 'green citizenship' with research on European citizenship this paper considers what a 'green European citizenship' (GEC) might look like. It examines the rights, duties, virtues and practices of a GEC, and underlines in particular the important role of 'critical acts' of European citizens. It concludes that while the initiatives of the EGD might provoke citizenship engagement, participation and identification, these initiatives might also further expose the fault lines between citizens in Europe. This possibility makes the critical acts undertaken by citizens all the more important.

KEYWORDS
Green citizenship; environment; sustainability transformation; European Green Deal

Introduction

Published in December 2019 by the European Commission, the European Green Deal (EGD) is the EU's 'new growth strategy'. Its aim is 'to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society' (European Commission, 2019, p. 2) and to reach climate neutrality through decoupling of economic growth from resource use, so that there are no greenhouse gas net emissions by 2050 (European Commission, 2019, p. 4). 'The mission of EGD involves much more than cutting emissions' announced European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at her State of the Union address: 'It is about making systemic modernisation across our economy, society and industry. It is about building a stronger world to live in' (Von der Leyen, 2020). Our focus in this paper is not on the specific changes to consumption, production and transport demanded by the EGD, but rather the central role

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that citizens are asked to play as the ‘driving force of the transition’. Citizens are not only expected to adopt sustainable consumption habits and change their lifestyles and behaviour but also to actively participate in policymaking (European Commission, 2019, p. 22). This expectation raises questions regarding the current European citizenship regime: Do European citizens not only have environmental rights but also duties to contribute to the transformative shift? Are there certain virtues that should be encouraged in European citizens? What exactly constitutes these rights, duties and virtues and how evenly are they distributed? Does the EGD mobilise ‘acts of citizenship’ that might deepen European citizenship and identity? Or does the EGD expose and exacerbate the fault lines between citizens within Europe that have been discussed in this journal (Ceron & Palermo, 2022; Galgoczi, 2014)?

The appeal to active, engaged and environmentally conscious citizens has hitherto been conceptualised by environmental political scientists working on theoretical models and practical implications of ‘green citizenship’. But this work has generally been focused on nation-state citizenship and there has been very little attempt to conceptualise ‘green citizenship’ at the European level. This paper therefore grapples with the possibility of a ‘green European citizenship’ (GEC). By drawing the insights from the discussion amongst environmental political scientists on ‘green citizenship’ with research on European citizenship, it attempts to bridge the gap that surprisingly exists between these two bodies of literature.

‘Green citizenship’ we use here as an umbrella term for the various reconfigurations of membership of a political community at a time of ecological crisis, referred to as also for example as: ‘environmental citizenship’ (Bell, 2005; Hailwood, 2005) ‘ecological citizenship’ (Dobson, 2003; Smith, 1998; Smith & Pangsapa, 2008; Wolf et al., 2009) ‘sustainability citizenship’ (Barry, 2006; Horne et al., 2016) ‘sustainable citizenship’ (Jaufar, 2021) ‘energy citizenship’ (Lennon et al., 2020) and ‘climate citizenship’ (Vihersalo, 2017). These different accounts all highlight the way in which a transformation towards more sustainable ways of life seems to demand more than the implementation of market instruments and efforts by individuals acting alone; a substantive change must be a collective effort that engages with citizens as the members of the societies impacted in different ways by a changing climate (see Stehr & Machin, 2020). As the plethora of terms already indicates however, there is no consensus on how exactly citizenship should be reconfigured, and these different theories place varying emphasis on the different dimensions of citizenship. Some accounts focus on the creation of new types of environmental *rights* for citizens, while others attend to the *duties* that are expected to go with political membership. Some emphasise the importance of *educating* citizen to foster an improved scientific knowledge and a set of virtues while others believe that citizens should be encouraged to *participate* in environmental policymaking.

Although citizenship is conventionally tied to a nation-state, the idea of a ‘cosmopolitan’ citizenship that exists beyond the state actually has a long lineage (Heater, 2004, p. 9). The global scope of environmental problems invites this cosmopolitan extension beyond the boundaries of the state (Dobson, 2003; Gabrielson, 2008; Valencia Saiz, 2005). Other work promotes the idea of greening citizenship at city level (Horne et al., 2016). The EGD implies that it may be possible for green citizenship to exist at a *European* level. European citizenship, however, is commonly seen as ‘thin’, lacking a sense of collective belonging and ultimately derivative of state citizenship, leading scholars to question its meaning and operability (Kostakopoulou, 2008; Shore, 2004). It is therefore important to question if and how European citizenship might be 'greened'. We show that while it might be possible that the EGD actually facilitates the greening and deepening of European citizenship, it might also show the disconnect between EU policy and some parts of Europe.

We consider, first, the various conceptions of 'green citizenship' and, second, how it might be configured at a European level. Third, we map out in more detail what a GEC might consist of, and how it might be emerging in nascent form, by examining what we regard as its four key components: *rights*, *duties*, *virtues and practices*. Although European citizenship can be seen as broader than citizenship of the EU it is nevertheless the case that the EU 'plays a significant role in the constitution of the European citizen' (Isin, 2013, p. 19) and we tend to rely on EU institutions and strategies (such as the EGD) in our account while also noticing that European citizens may exist and act outside the EU. Fourth, we address the implications of this conception of citizenship and its challenges particularly in relation to identification. We conclude by suggesting that the EGD may encourage 'critical acts of citizenship' but it may well also expose the 'fault lines' that exist in Europe that make such critical acts of European citizens all the more valuable.

Greening citizenship

Citizenship seems to provide some answers for contemporary liberal societies that face various interlocking migration, security and ecological challenges. These challenges have led to a growing recognition that, as Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman put it, 'the health and stability of a modern democracy depends, not only on the justice of its 'basic structure' but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens' (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 352). In the 1990s Kymlicka and Norman diagnosed a 'return of the citizen' (1994). This claim is arguably borne out in the implementation of citizenship tests, ceremonies and education in Europe and beyond, over the last few decades (Wright, 2008). More recently we have been reminded that citizenship is 'back with a vengeance' (Shachar et al., 2017, p. 3).

It is therefore perhaps not unsurprising that environmentalists have been interested in citizenship. Echoing Kymlicka and Norman, Andrew Dobson and Ángel Valencia Saiz identified a 'turn to citizenship' in the environmental politics literature (2005, p. 158). There is palpable frustration with 'free market' mechanisms and practices of 'green consumerism' that have failed to contribute any substantive change (Guckian et al., 2017, p. 73). As Ralph Horne and colleagues explain

> many purely market-based solutions to climate change are simplistic, have proved unsuccessful and are likely to exaggerate the power of drivers and processes that have led to run-away carbon emissions, rather than unifying stakeholders holistically in the practice of multiple strategies. (Horne et al., 2016, p. 1)

Aware of these limitations, policymakers, theorists and activists have appealed to engaged and environmentally conscious citizens to play a role in transforming their societies (Dobson & Bell, 2006, p. 3).

But the central tenet of 'green citizenship' is not simply to apply dominant ideas of citizenship to particular environmental concerns, but to actually transform those ideas of citizenship themselves (Dobson & Valencia Saiz, 2005, p. 158). As we will see, conventional liberal ‘passive’ citizenship is widely regarded as inadequate at a time of ecological crisis. So not only has citizenship become an important theme in Green political thought but, as Sherilyn MacGregor writes, ‘environmentalism has succeeded in changing the way citizenship is theorized’ (2014, p. 107). Since the 1990s, then, environmental political scientists have debated the possibilities of ‘greening’ citizenship (Barry, 1999; Dean, 2001; Dobson & Bell, 2006; Dobson, 2003; Hayward, 2006; MacGregor, 2014; Machin, 2012; Smith & Pangsapa, 2008; Valencia Saiz, 2005; Wolf et al., 2009).

Citizenship is characterised by its ‘multifaceted and protean dimensions’ (Shachar et al., 2017, p. 5). For Keith Faulks: ‘the idea of citizenship is inherently contested and contingent, always reflecting the particular set of relationships and types of governance found within any given society’ (2000, p. 6). The model of citizenship that is dominant today is *liberal* citizenship, which is mainly preoccupied with the value and content of individual citizenship rights. Many environmental theorists therefore focus on redesigning these rights (Bell, 2005). Starting with T.H. Marshall’s delineation of ‘civil’ ‘political’ and ‘social’ rights (1973), some propose the introduction of a new set of constitutional ‘environmental rights’ (Hayward, 2005; Lewis, 2018, p. 41).

Because of its focus on the rights of citizens, liberal citizenship has been referred to as ‘passive’ or ‘private’ citizenship (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 354). Growing awareness of global ecological issues, along with the other challenges of contemporary societies, has led to the questioning of the adequacy of this model (Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 114; Smith & Pangsapa, 2008, p. 9). There has thus been a shift to models that see citizenship not as a passive status but an *active practice* and that notice that along with *rights* go concomitant *duties and virtues*. This has led to call for a more radical overhaul of the way in which citizenship is viewed, allocated and practiced. Inspiration is often taken from communitarian and republican models, in which much heavier demands are placed on citizens, who are expected and encouraged to be aware of their social and environmental surroundings. Richard Dagger, for instance, asserts the importance of ‘cultivating the sense of obligation and desire to act for the common good that seem to so many commentators to be lacking in rights-obsessed societies’ (1997, p. 6).

As James Connelly points out, ecological concern already exists, the challenge he sees is that of ‘nurturing the seedlings of already existing green consciousness into new forms of ecological citizenship’ (2006, p. 50). He therefore stresses the importance of ‘eco-virtues’, such as frugality, care, patience and righteous indignation that he defines as continuous and reliable dispositions to act in a certain way that are motivated by ecological thoughtfulness (2006, p. 71; see also Dobson, 2003; p. 63 and Hayward, 2006). These, however, are not kindled through thinking alone but through actual *practice*: ‘Through action, participation and engagement, people become inducted into a way of living and doing that begins to settle into a virtuous groove’ (2006, p. 69). In this way, citizens are encouraged to be conscious of the world around them and the value of a sustainable healthy environment, and to contribute to their community. However, there is an obvious danger that the erection of some substantive definition of the ‘common good’ could contradict and damage a pluralist and democratic society (Mouffe, 1992, p. 29). Connolly is, for sure, careful to point out that what constitutes the ‘common good’ is not pregiven and fixed, but is something that is discussed by green citizens; one important citizen virtue he asserts is that of rational deliberation, that can be used in reflection and discussion on the sustainable common environmental good (2006, p. 51 and 66).

Indeed, for many environmental political theorists, citizenship responsibilities or duties are not about passively fulfilling predetermined tasks (such as recycling waste, using public transport or reducing energy use) but about helping to determine the very nature of those tasks, through active and engaged political participation. This is why the model of republicanism in particular has appealed to environmentalists. Republicanism, emerging in the early modern period (Honohan, 2017, p. 85) places value especially on the shared duties and civic virtues that are seen as inseparable from the status of membership in a political community (Dagger, 1997, p. 12). Citizens are called on to engage in public deliberation on community matters. This, according to republicans, does not conflict with freedom and autonomy but is essential to achieving it, because those who do not help to determine the society they live in, are ultimately subservient to the desires of others (Oldfield, 1990, p. 181). It is political participation that empowers, liberates and educates citizens and encourages them to look beyond self-interest to the common good (Oldfield, 1990, p. 184). Theorists such as John Barry have therefore proposed models of 'green republicanism' that demand that citizens actively contribute to political environmental discussions (1999, 2006; Fremaux, 2019).

We can see already from this brief review that there are four intersecting components of green citizenship: *rights*, *duties*, *virtues* and *practices* that can each be understood and prioritised in different ways. But how is such a green citizenship with its various components fomented? For Barry, the state plays a central role in creating the conditions for green citizenship (2006, p. 28). Indeed, discussions over citizenship in general have been very much focused on the level of the state (Bellamy et al., 2006, p. 2). Yet there is a clear mismatch between environmental problems and the boundaries of nation-states (Dobson, 2003, p. 5). The call to citizens in the EGD implicates *European* citizens in its project for sustainable transformation. Is it feasible for green citizenship to exist at the European level? After all, as a recent Eurobarometer survey undertaken reports that 'Europeans consider climate change to be the single most serious problem facing the world' (European Commission, 2021, p. 7). The next section addresses this possibility before we move on to considering what a green European citizenship might look like by returning to its four components.

Towards a green citizenship in Europe?

'European citizenship' came officially into existence in the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, which secured the rights of non-discrimination and free movement across the EU for all European citizens and granted them, for example, the right to elect representatives to the EU parliament (for historical accounts see Olsen, 2014, p. 154; Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 163). While the EU has the formal and legal institutions to protect the rights of EU citizens, however, it cannot grant citizenship, so that European citizenship is derivative of member state citizenship (Bellamy & Warleigh, 2001, p. 3; Tan, 2021).

A huge body of work probes the difficult construct that is European citizenship, which is described on the one hand as 'modest' (Bellamy et al., 2006, p. 15) and 'underdeveloped' (Bauböck, 2014, p. 763) and on the other as 'peculiar' (Olsen, 2014, p. 154) 'curiously ambiguous' (Shore, 2004, p. 30) or even 'paradoxical' (Shaw, 2019, p. 1). Some scholars are sceptical, questioning if it is even entitled to be called citizenship at all (Eleftheriadis, 2014; Menéndez, 2014). Nearly 50 years ago, Raymond Aron, for whom multi-national citizenship is a ‘contradiction in terms’, wrote ‘though the European Community tends to grant all the citizens of its member states the same economic and social rights, there are no such animals as “European citizens”’ (1974, p. 653). His view, that citizenship involves a political unity that did not exist at the European level persists in more recent work. Cris Shore agrees that there is an important ‘emotional dimension’ to citizenship (Shore, 2004, p. 29) and without a sense of a shared identity European citizenship would be ‘elitist, sterile and soulless … not really citizenship at all’ (2004, p. 36). For this reason, David Miller believes that if citizenship is to help bond a community in a culturally diverse society, it must be tied to a nation-state (Miller, 2005, p. 5).

Nevertheless, there is support for the idea that a novel form of European citizenship, distinct from national citizenship, is both possible and desirable. European citizenship was expected to act as a mechanism and symbol of ‘political integration and mutual bonding’ (Ferrera, 2019, p. 181). Some promote a ‘supra-national’ approach that sees European citizenship as one ‘level’ of citizenship (Maas, 2017, p. 657). Rainer Bauböck outlines a ‘multi-level’ approach of an emergent form of European citizenship that is distinct to, but complementary of, national citizenship without replacing it (Bauböck, 2014, p. 751). Others advocate a ‘post-nationalist’ approach, which can perhaps be seen as most clearly expressed in the work of Jürgen Habermas, who argues that political culture can be decoupled from national belonging and instead be founded with a ‘constitutional patriotism’ (2001, p. 74). Drawing on this idea, Gerard Delanty argues that citizenship has been de-coupled from the state and proposes a ‘post-national identity’ in Europe that, he suggests, can ‘become the key to European integration’ (2000, p. 116).

But can this form of supra- or post-national European citizenship underpin the sorts of responsibilities and virtues that are demanded by the EGD? Can these sorts of responsibilities and virtues exist without a stronger shared collective identification with Europe that, currently at least, seems to be missing? This question points to the difficulties in motivating political participation and getting an active citizenship ‘going’ without the ‘affective bond’ that comes with a collective identity. A different approach here is to point to the possibility that it is that *participation itself* that generates identification. For James Tully: ‘Participation in dialogues and negotiations over how and by whom power is exercised over us constitutes our identities as ‘citizens’ and generates bonds of solidarity and a sense of belonging to the political association’ (Tully, 2008, p. 146).

As Paulina Tambakaki points out, it seems unlikely that ‘constitutional patriotism’ or rational deliberation is able to generate an ‘affective bond’ between Europeans (Tambakaki, 2011, p. 572). She suggests that it is rather the *disagreements* between Europeans that mobilises them and, through their common political engagement with and in Europe, forges a collective consciousness (2011, p. 581).

Can the EGD open an opportunity for the greening and deepening of European citizenship by provoking participation, contestation and identification? Scholars have long grappled with possibilities for transforming the European citizenship regime (Bellamy et al., 2006; Ferrera & Bauböck, 2017; Garner, 2018; Tan, 2021). Could environmental crisis and the EGD provoke a ‘fundamental re-thinking’ of citizenship? Is a form of ‘green European citizenship’ a possibility and what might it look like? Next we examine its four interlocking key components: *rights*, *duties*, *virtues and practices*.

- **Rights**

Perhaps the most straightforward component of green citizenship is its expansion of the list of citizenship *rights* to include those that guarantee the access to environmental goods and the protection against environmental harms. As Derek Bell explains, much of the literature on citizenship conventionally presented the citizen as a 'locationless' creature who is simply disconnected from their surroundings and the environment they depend upon (2005, p. 183). Bell proposes that if the environment is taken seriously as a provider of basic goods, then citizens should be given not only the *substantive* rights to clean air and water, the detail about which there is likely to be dispute, but also the *procedural* rights to participate in the debates over definition and allocation of those substantive rights (2005, p. 187).

What environmental rights might be involved in the buttressing of GEC? In considering this question it is important to notice that a central criticism against EU citizenship in general is that the legal rights that are attached to it only seem to have relevance for those mobile and economically active (Eleftheriadis, 2014; Menéndez, 2014). Freedom of movement, consular protection, non-discrimination on the basis of nationality are rights provided by EU citizenship that are contingent upon cross-border mobility within the EU (unless you engage in a cross-border activity, EU citizenship rights are for you fairly meaningless). The social and political rights of European citizens, on the other hand, are generally at the discretion of member-states. EU Community Law does not say anything about the process and conditions for the election of the members of European Parliament for example.[1] The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, a legally binding document for all member states following the entry into force of Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, obliges all EU institutions and member states to guarantee the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights for all the citizens of the Union. However, the Charter only applies to the EU member states when they implement EU law. The EU cannot intervene in fundamental rights issues in areas over which it has no competence, such as education.

The question that arises for us here, then, is whether environmental policies and practices are considered as an area over which the EU has jurisdiction. Adopted in 2021, the European Climate Law (Regulation 2021/1119) writes into law the goal set out in the EGD for European economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. The European Climate Law requires that all EU policies contribute to achieving the EGD objectives and 'set Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate-neutral by 2050'. Even a decade before the EGD and the European Climate Law, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) explicitly stated that the EU shares competence with member states in environmental policy.[2]

With the entry of the Climate Law into force in July 2021, the alignment of environmental policies and practices has become clearly part of the EU jurisdiction. The EC has already started reviewing every EU law to check whether it aligns with the climate targets set as part of the EGD.[3] Furthermore, EGD sets its aim as 'to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts.' In combination, these developments could indeed indicate the existence of 'environmental rights' in some sense. If this was the case, it may lead to case laws for European Court of Justice to supplement fundamental rights in the charter with environmental rights such as protection of the health and well-being of citizens. To date, however, there have been no ECJ cases that link EU citizenship and environmental rights through the claim on the violation of fundamental rights via pollution or any other environmental transgression.[4] The enactment of the Climate Law, of course, may change this in the future which would be significant to the development of GEC.

- **Duties**

As described above, much work on green citizenship, especially that influenced by republican approaches, shifts focus away from a sole preoccupation with rights, to emphasise the importance of responsibilities, obligations or (the term we use here) *duties*. A greening of citizenship, it is explained, entails an emphasis not only on the environmental duties of citizens in particular, but also on the duties of citizens in general (Gabrielson, 2008, p. 441; Machin, 2012, p. 848).

For some, the idea of the duties associated with a GEC would simply be not only empirically inaccurate but also normatively untenable. Kochenov, for example, asserts that 'the presumption of importance of EU citizenship duties should be dismissed once and for all' (Kochenov, 2014, p. 483). While he agrees that EU citizens have some important *rights*, he refutes the existence of empirically observable duties and claims that such citizenship duties are outdated mechanisms for the uniformisation of societies through the 'suppression and humiliation' of cultural, political and linguistic diversity (2014, p. 491). Others maintain that different types of citizenship duties do exist, both at and above the level of the nation-state, and that environmental duties arise directly from the impacts of an individual's 'ecological footprint' (Dobson, 2003).

But what sorts of duties are implied here, particularly in relation to European citizenship? There are two types of duties that might be relevant for a GEC; private and public. First, what we might call 'private duties' which involve changing lifestyle and consumption habits, and eating, travelling and communicating differently. For example, the European Climate Pact, launched in 2020 to support the EGD explicitly points to the duties of individuals: 'Reducing emissions and adapting to a changed climate will require us all to change our habits' (European Commission, 2020, p. 3). Citizens are expected to 'play their part': '… The many solutions outlined in the Green Deal can only succeed if designed in a socially just and fair way and if citizens, communities, companies and organisations *play their part*, alongside government policies and regulation' (European Commission, 2020, p. 1. Emphasis added).

Indeed, Lennon et al. notice that in relation to energy use official narratives often emphasise the individual behaviour change of private citizens, urging them to make more informed consumption choices and to 'play their part' in the energy transition (2020). This, as they point out, constructs citizens as consumers, limiting their role to that of purchasing and investment: 'Paradoxically, the result of an official discourse which lays much of the responsibility for transition on the citizen-as-consumer has been to leave both citizens and consumers largely disconnected and disempowered' (Lennon et al., 2020).

It is therefore potentially more empowering to emphasise citizenship duties in the public sphere and to ask citizens to actively take part in the actual policy discussion and decision, rather than just to passively support those policies. This is central to Barry's model of 'green republicanism' in which democratic participation is central. He suggests that the duties of green citizens are not dispatched in unthinkingly follow the rules laid down by a government in which they have no part, but rather to understand and influence those forces and policies that affect their lives; this is precisely what constitutes republican freedom: 'green republicanism' he writes, demands that 'in relation to the environmental forces influencing their lives, citizens control or manage their relationships to the environment' (Barry, 2021, p. 731).

The EGD noticeably also calls for such 'public duties', and expects citizens to participate actively in policy debates (EC, 2019, p. 2). According to the European Climate Pact 'involving people directly in important and complex discussions creates co-ownership, unlocks technological and social innovation, and optimises decision-making' (European Commission, 2020, p. 7).

It is important to note here however, the feminist critique of environmental citizenship and its uneven (and often gendered) distribution of these citizenship duties across the private and public spheres. While the burdens of 'private duties' such as recycling and household energy saving could well intensify the (unpaid) labour in the home, for example, it also expects citizens to still have enough time to actively engage in political debate. The caring services provided in the domestic realm, as well as the dependency of individuals on those service, are often rendered invisible in discussions of environmental citizenship. Sherilyn MacGregor highlights the paradox that arises from 'the twin emphasis on lifestyle changes in the private sphere that promote both greater self-reliance and eco-friendliness and greater participation in the green public sphere' (2006a, p. 107). We return to this problem when we consider, below, the way in which GEC might exacerbate existing fault-lines between European citizens.

- **Virtues**

Another aspect of green citizenship that is explicitly mentioned in numerous accounts of green citizenship is that of citizenship *virtue* (Barry, 1999, 2006; Connelly, 2006; Hayward, 2006). Discussions of citizenship virtue circle around the idea of a 'good citizen' who displays frugalness, care and compassion (Connelly, 2006) 'resourcefulness' (Hayward, 2006) and discipline, loyalty, courage, perseverance, commitment, tolerance and knowledge (Barry, 2006, p. 35). As Barry explains: 'One may say that the 'good' green citizen is one who most approaches the ideal of the 'ecological steward', a central part of which involves considering the interests of fellow citizens, non-humans, foreigners and future generations' (Barry, 1999, p. 231). In contrast to the 'green consumer' who might choose 'local' and 'eco' products to buy and eat, the 'good green citizen' in contrast, will rather attempt to reduce their overall consumption and will 'demonstrate a connection to nature' (Guckian et al., 2017, p. 74).

Certainly, environmental policy discussions in Europe seem to emphasise this notion of the 'good citizen': 'energy transition debates in the EU have skewed towards normative constructs of what it is to be a "good citizen"' (Lennon et al., 2020). Virtue is something that might be seen as necessarily extending beyond the confines of state membership, to support a more cosmopolitan form of citizenship: Isin and Turner argue that the virtues of citizenship extend outside the nation-state: 'While its existence is confirmed by the provision of an identity card or passport, its practices and virtues also expand beyond the borders that the passport identifies' (Isin & Turner, 2007, p. 14).

Virtue is something that is often understood to be engendered through education. As Kymlicka writes

> Citizenship education is not just a matter of learning the basic facts about the institutions and procedures of political life; it also involves acquiring a range of dispositions, virtues, and loyalties which are intimately bound up with the practice of democratic citizenship. (1997)

We could therefore look for the virtue component of GEC in the various initiatives for a European-wide form of citizenship education, that its advocates suggest could be a 'core element' of the transition of the EU to a more sustainable economy *and* that at the same time 'prepare citizens to participate fully in European democracy (Milanese, 2020). The European Climate Pact, for example, states that it will promote and support the development of 'green skills' and 'educational and training institutions' that will allow citizens to take advantage of job opportunities in the green economy (European Commission, 2020, p. 14) but also urges schools and universities 'to boost climate and environmental literacy and bring the science and the urgency of the climate crisis to bear on our daily lives' (2020, p. 16).

- **Practices**

In contrast to the attention given to the 'top-down' education of citizens in assuaging a sustainability transformation emphasis is also placed on the importance of 'bottom-up' activism in targeting unsustainable institutions and policies. Certainly, some theorists of citizenship suggest, as membership in a polity, it can be understood not only as a bundle of obligations and entitlements but also as a set of practices (Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 4). What citizenship *practices*, then, are aligned with GEC?

As we have seen, the EGD emphasises the duties of citizens to not only change their habits to live and travel more sustainably, but to actively participate in policymaking. But this participation should not consist only of activities that *match and support* governmental institutions and strategies, but also those that *contest and challenge* those institutions and strategies.

This crucial point is made by Barry who advocates a form of environmental 'resistance citizenship' (2006, p. 32) that would involve nonviolent activism and struggle. Barry is therefore sceptical of environmental education that he notices is unlikely to teach 'nonviolent direct action tactics' and 'the ethical and political dimensions of civil disobedience' (2006, p. 34). He argues that green citizenship should not be confined to state-based or state-backed practices but should rather extend to include those directed *against* state-based or state-backed practices (2006, p. 34). His account resonates with that of Engin Isin, who contrasts the suggestion that citizens are passive recipients with the idea of citizens as *active claimants* (2013, p. 20). Isin goes on to suggest that European citizenship is regarded as 'citizenship-to-come' of a 'Europe-to-come' and is created precisely through 'acts of citizenship' (2013, p. 21).

For these sorts of practices of GEC we should look beyond the top-down governance of the EGD towards the 'bottom up' environmental movements that are burgeoning in (although not limited to) Europe, such as *Fridays for Future* (FFF) and *Extinction Rebellion*

(XR). These movements promote and practice a form of democracy that is inclusive, participatory and also potentially disruptive (Machin, 2022). It is the struggles of these movements that constitute examples of practices of GEC, that not only involve active environmental demands but also perform citizenship and produce individuals *as citizens*. These practices – ranging from school strikes and demonstrations to non-violent disobedience are directed against the unsustainable status quo and the institutions and actors that uphold it (de Moor & Wahlström, 2022, p. 271). These activities potentially display the critical attitude that Teena Gabrielson sees as a key attribute of green citizenship (2008, p. 437). The 'critical acts of GEC' are therefore a potentially important aspect of GEC that connect to and extend its other components.

Identities, fault lines and critical acts of green European citizenship

It is possible to detect the 'greening' of European citizenship through the emergence of four contested and interlocking components. Put differently, we could say that European citizenship comes with a nascent bundle of environmental rights, duties, virtues and practices. However, as we explained above, sceptics of European citizenship suggest that without an affective bond and a 'thick' identification citizenship cannot exist in any strong sense. From this perspective, the EGD cannot draw upon the resources of European citizenship to promote sustainability transformation. But it is worth asking whether this connection might be put the other way around: by encouraging the existence of the rights, duties, virtues and practices can the EGD reinforce the idea of EU citizenship and the sense of belonging to (or in) Europe, which will, in turn, underpin any collective and robust response to environmental challenges such as climate change.

As we have seen, it is possible that with the 'acts of citizenship' comes a sense of obligation and belonging to a community (Davidson & Cotte, 1989; Isin, 2013). Perhaps the EGD and GEC may act as what Ferrera calls a 'bonding mechanism' (2019, p. 182) so that by encouraging various citizenship initiatives and participation the EGD plays a role in both greening *and* deepening European citizenship. We have suggested that such acts of green citizenship may also be those that disrupt and challenge policymakers, institutions and strategies such as the GED. This means that we should celebrate the existence and boldness of critical green citizens in Europe who not only campaign for a more sustainable economy, but who also highlight some of the problems that 'lurk behind the rhetoric' of EGD such as the outsourcing of environmental damage to countries outside the EU (Fuchs et al., 2020, p. 671). A new generation of European activists politicised by way of environmental movements such as FFF – mobilized *against* EU leaders and strategies – could potentially act as a buttress to an encompassing European identification, inform and expand GEC and offer some robust corrections to the EGD. After all, it is supposed to be through critical engagement and political struggle that the project of Europe itself is enabled (Radeljić, 2015). As Kostakopoulou surmises, EU citizenship is 'not a finished artefact' and its flexible and dynamic content provides the primary normative appeal to individuals who are part of multiple associative networks to which rights and obligations of citizenship are attached (Kostakopoulou, 2007). It is worth noting, however, a comparative study on youth activism in climate protests that suggests the structural availability of protesters (their organisational membership and interpersonal networks) correspond to their strike participation but not self-efficacy of students (their personal conviction/political motivation) (Prendergast et al., 2021). This finding implies that any possible identification and a sense of belonging to European citizenship through environmental activism might be delimited by social boundaries.

Critical citizens play an important role perhaps precisely because the EGD might not only fail to encourage collective identification and a sense of belonging, but will expose and reaffirm the existing fault lines between Europeans. It seems possible that while 'environmentally engaged' citizens develop a stronger connection to the EU, those who are disengaged from environmental concerns become further disconnected from European citizenship and identification alike. Linking green rights to European citizenship could arguably demarcate the inclusion of those individuals who currently feel disassociated from EU institutions (Tan, 2021). Yet it might be that rights are disproportionately distributed, just as the duties and virtues of green citizenship may disproportionately burden the private sphere and those active in it (MacGregor, 2006b). The transition to a greener economy also tends to be negotiated by men and to lead to more employment opportunities for men, and has therefore been accused of being 'gender blind' and not 'gender transformative' (Heffernan et al., 2022). Just as the differentiated expectations and effects of the EGD and GEC can exacerbate gender inequality they can also deepen other intersecting fault lines across Europe.

Indeed, it is important to attend to the problems that might arise when prioritising the green innovation and transformation that will disadvantage certain industries and workers. Research into 'just transition' shows that while green innovation can create employment opportunities, it will also result in the decline of the fossil fuel industry and the loss of jobs for people who cannot necessarily find new ones in the new green energy industries (Claeys et al., 2019; Heyen, 2020; Newell & Mulvaney, 2013). One policy brief predicts, for example, that a region in Poland could lose up to 41,000 jobs in the transition away from coal (Claeys et al., 2019, p. 17). It is not clear for the moment to what extent the new financial and technical mechanisms of the EC (such as the Just Transition Fund) will be able to compensate. Previous research shows that citizens who do not feel confident about their economic future are likely to be Eurosceptics (Anderson, 1998; Gabel & Whitten, 1997) and so the energy transition may even fuel Euroscepticism in certain regions and industries.

Conclusion

In democracies, it is ultimately citizens who legitimise any political arrangement and who are able to inform, accept, reject or protest against governments and their policies and agendas. No account of social change is therefore complete without an analysis of citizenship (van der Heijden 2014, p. 1). This means that if the EU is to succeed in reaching its ambitious environmental goals, and if it is to uphold its claim to be a global leader in environmental governance (see Zito et al., 2019), then citizens must surely play a role in the transformation in Europe towards more sustainable economies and societies.

But what might a green citizenship in Europe look like? In this paper we have considered four nascent 'components' of a GEC and shown both their potential and their weaknesses; there is room for European environmental citizenship *rights* but it is not clear how they would be enforced; European environmental *responsibilities* are already emphasised but are distributed unevenly across the private and public spheres; European environmental *virtues* seem to call for a unitary 'common good' that risks undermining the social and political plurality of Europe; finally the *practices* of citizenship facilitate critical acts but also risk polarising Europeans. We conclude, then, that if GEC is thinkable, it faces numerous challenges and pitfalls in becoming established.

We have also observed that while the EGD opens the constructive possibility for citizens to participate in environmental governance, the limitations of the current European citizenship regime make it likely that this participation will be uneven and could possibly even exacerbate the 'fault lines' that persist across Europe. This makes the critical acts of citizenship that expose the unsustainable conventions and challenge the social inequalities that persist across and beyond the continent, all the more valuable.

Notes

1. See Art. 22 of the EU treaty, and Art. 39 and 40 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
2. See Art. 4(e) TFEU.
3. See Art 4.(2) European Climate Law.
4. We conducted a search in the ECJ database in June 2021. First, we selected the options of 'environment' and 'union citizenship' that did not lead to any search results. Then, we did the search by using 'environment' and 'fundamental rights' that lead to 8 results. The existing cases are mostly built upon the claims against the equality before law, right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial.

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