Women's Multifaceted Citizenship: Identity, Belonging and Spaces of Participation in Rural Uganda

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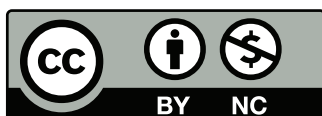*laura.delcm@gmail.com*

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Abstract

This article analyses manifestations of women's citizenship in diverse spaces of everyday participation in the rural districts of Kiboga and Namutumba in Uganda. Building on citizenship studies scholarship, we propose the notion of multifaceted citizenship, which 'takes place' in the same spaces of participation as processes of identity formation and belonging. Thus, our article also explores how identities and belonging manifest in spaces of participation. Drawing on content analysis of 50 qualitative interviews, we begin by investigating the spaces of participation that are experienced as meaningful by women. We then classify identities into five main categories: active resident, member, role model, leader, and wife. Finally, we identify two categories of belonging: personal and community belonging. In conclusion, we suggest that exploring citizenship through women's own experiences in spaces of meaningful participation provides a fruitful approach to understanding the dynamics of gendered citizenship at the grassroots level.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Uganda has been praised for the gender equality guaranteed in its constitution (Tripp 2000, 23; Tripp 2004, 5). Furthermore, throughout history, its women's movement has been exceptionally strong (Tamale 2020, 331–335; Tripp 2000, 23; Tripp et al. 2008, 17–20), and women and gender organizations have contributed tremendously to advocating for women's empowerment. However, as Tamale (2020) suggests, gender equality has been challenging to achieve, hindered by factors related to gendered roles and asymmetrical power relations, both in the public and private spheres. Women have been assigned to the domestic sphere to execute activities such as subsistence agriculture, water collection, and care and domestic work, which limit their possibilities to participate and achieve recognition as contributors to society (Tamale 2004, 52–53; 2020, 292–294). In the same vein, men have mainly taken responsibility in the public sphere, and it is common for men to represent women in public, and to rule on women's participation outside their homes (Tamale 2020, 292; Tushabe 2009, 56).

Thus, despite many changes in women's legal and societal position in Uganda over the past decades, participation in the public arenas traditionally attached to active citizenship – engaging in deliberations on joint issues, mobilizing to address grievances, or contesting for positions in elected, decision-making bodies at different levels – is still gendered. On the other hand, as feminist scholars have argued (Lister 1997; 2003; 2007; Lister et al. 2007), the entire notion of citizenship should be understood as also taking place in spheres of care and reproduction, in spaces traditionally understood as private and, consequently, outside the prevalent understanding of active citizenship. In Uganda, as elsewhere in Africa, women actively participate in religious communities, mutual-help groups, and activities arranged by local civil society organizations (CSOs) (Tripp et al. 2008). While such participation is often considered to be at the margins of society and outside the sphere of active citizenship, we suggest that scrutinizing it contributes to in-depth understanding of the dynamics of moving towards inclusive citizenship (Clarke et al. 2014; Lister 2003, 116; Tamale 2004, 60), which takes place in everyday participation.

Against this backdrop, and building on citizenship studies scholarship, we first establish a notion of multifaceted citizenship and, second, apply it to analyse the ways in which multifaceted citizenship manifests in the experiences of women in two rural communities in the districts of Kiboga and Namutumba in Uganda. Building on Clarke et al.'s (2014) suggestions of citizenship as a multi-scalar and multi-community process entailing a vertical relationship between the state and the citizen but – more importantly for our purposes – also horizontal relationships between people, culture, history, and politics that can change over time, we suggest that the proposed notion of multifaceted citizenship 'takes place' in the same spaces of participation as processes of identity formation and belonging.

Methodologically, we suggest exploring how citizenship is constructed 'from below' and 'from the margins' in diverse spaces of everyday participation (e.g., Holma and Kontinen 2020). Hence, we begin by investigating the spaces of participation that are experienced as meaningful by women, and how they characterize their participation in these spaces. For that purpose, 50 qualitative interviews with women in Kiboga and Namutumba were conducted. Women were selected among those having previously participated in activities organized by a long-surviving, Ugandan gender-advocacy, non-governmental organization (NGO), Action for Development (ACFODE). Therefore, the study did not seek to represent all women in the area but, rather, focused on the experiences of women who had participated in ACFODE citizenship-strengthening activities. However, rather than focusing only on their interactions with the NGO, we want-

ed to gain an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences within the diverse spaces of all types of participation, with NGO activities providing one of the more potentially significant spaces. As a result of a detailed content analysis of the interviews, we found that those which were meaningful for the woman participants were informal spaces, including local and NGO groups and their homes, where they had visibility and a chance to play a role and belong. Furthermore, we found five different identities connected to the roles women played in each space of participation and two categories of belonging based on the connection and perceived benefits women attributed to each space. Belonging to groups, claiming membership, and applying the skills learnt in them were found to be a crucial part of the participants' daily lives. The sense of belonging allowed women to feel part of the community, as well as members and residents.

The article is structured as follows. First, we establish the theoretical notion of multifaceted citizenship. Second, we contextualize the study by discussing the importance of women's movements and local participation in Uganda. Third, we present the research methodology and findings. Finally, we conclude that women's active participation in the diverse spaces of everyday participation is what contributes to women's exercise of citizenship in rural Uganda.

Theoretical discussion: Towards multifaceted citizenship

Scholarship of citizenship as a status with legal rights (Marshall 1950; Turner 1986) has focused on Western societies, paying little attention to Africa and its differences in the history of citizenship and exclusion (Aminzade 2013; Halisi, Kaiser, and Ndegwa 1998). Studies of citizenship in Africa have brought out the tension inherent to belonging to different political communities, especially that between local and ethnic conceptions and practices of belonging versus national and trans-ethnic understandings and practices (Aminzade 2013; Ekeh 1975; Halisi, Kaiser, and Ndegwa 1998; Mamdani 1996). Thus, in addition to defining citizenship predominantly as a relationship with a state, various studies have emphasized the localized dimensions of citizenship, daily experiences or 'lived citizenship'. Expanding on this work, in this section we establish the notion of multifaceted citizenship.

Drawing on a study of citizenship and xenophobia in South Africa and Botswana, Nyamnjoh (2007) argues for the need to reconceptualize citizenship by proposing a notion of flexible citizenship that contains elements of inclusion and belonging which recognize others as members and actors in society. In a similar vein, Mcewan (2001) critically reviews the literature on citizenship, gender, and gendered citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa, with a focus on black women, exploring African women's lived experiences of citizenship. Her findings join those of other feminist and gender studies scholars, such as Mahmud and Musembi (2011), Miraftab (2004), and Mukhopadhyay (2015) to challenge the gendered citizenship concept proposed by western liberal scholars; instead, they suggest expanding conceptualizations of citizenship through analysis of how it is experienced and the politics of belonging in a variety of both formal and informal communities. In their view, citizenship is about experience, identity, negotiation, and relationships that promote participation and women's agency. These ideas resonate with feminist critiques of the tendency to exclude women from public space and assign them to the private one, where, it is believed, citizenship cannot be exercised (Lister 2003, 71; Lister et al. 2007, 11).

Ndidde, Ahimbisibwe and Kontinen (2020) have also examined women's citizenship in rural Uganda by exploring their daily practices and interactions, and suggest that, in practice, women's citizenship continues to be socially constructed in specific locations rath-

er than determined by state legislation, which often remains distant. Moreover, as African feminist author Tamale (2004, 54) has pointed out, women in Africa are regarded as 'second-class citizens', since their responsibility is to execute domestic tasks with limited participation in those public activities usually correlated with citizenship, (i.e., public affairs, decision-making, voting, etc.); on the other hand, men are regarded as active participants in public activities, with the power to limit women's participation (Tamale 2004, 54).

Resonating with these discussions, we suggest a notion of multifaceted citizenship, drawing on Clarke et al.'s (2014) book *Contestations of Citizenship*; this presents a response to the need to re-centre and de-centre the concept, and to understand it as a multi-scalar phenomenon that 'takes place' in dynamic constellations of vertical relationships. Therefore, multifaceted citizenship in this article is defined as inhering in the everyday experiences and relationships that occur in diverse spaces of participation. This notion suggests that social relations are crucial for citizenship, since common ideas, needs, and goals shared with others allow the construction and reconstruction of citizenship. Building on Clarke et al.'s work (2014), we suggest that such spaces of participation are arenas that enable the creation of identity and belonging. In what follows, we introduce these concepts as the framework of our research.

First, 'spaces of participation' is our own construct based on Clarke et al.'s (2014) general formulation of citizenship 'taking place' in spaces. Building on Anderson's (1983) suggestion of the nation as an imagined community, they (2014, 107) coined the idea of imagined communities of citizenship based on collective ideas emerging from diverse characteristics, locations, and settings. The literature has shown that participation is a tool used by the marginalized to engage in their collectivities as active participants, as it accentuates that the individual has an active role in forming her citizenship (Cornwall 2002,

3; Gaventa 2004, 27–29; Miraftab 2004, 4). Spaces are the physical places where participation happens (Clarke et al. 2014, 157; Jones and Gaventa 2002, 22–23).

Because of the nature of our data, we find particular inspiration in Cornwall's notion of 'organic spaces', which are those created independently by individuals who share common aims and identities, requiring collective participation to function. Implicit in the notion is that the individual has the power to select the spaces in which she wants to participate (Cornwall 2002, 17–22). Cornwall (2004) and others (de Simone 2021; Gaventa 2004; Miraftab 2004) have also used the concepts of 'invited' and 'invented' spaces to understand spaces of participation. The former refers to the spaces granted by the government or donors to grassroots organizations and NGOs, whereas the latter are spaces that challenge the authorities and status quo, also used and claimed by grassroots collectivities (Miraftab 2004, 1). Therefore, in our understanding, spaces of participation are 'invented spaces' created through participation in places where citizenship is practiced.

Second, identity, as discussed by Clarke et al. (2014, 25), entails the recognition of others who share common values, ideals, and purposes. In their critique of Isin's (2007) scalar thought, Clarke et al. (2014) suggest that culture is another component of citizenship to consider besides the nation, one that involves intrinsic knowledge accepted by the individual and shared with others. Identities – defined by Yuval-Davis (2006) as the self-description of the individual who is accepted personally and recognized by others – play a key role in culture by promoting individual and collective narratives (Soysal 2012), which are critical for the practice of citizenship. Literature in the field suggests that identity is relational; it seeks approval and recognition of the individual both in groups and in private, and also looks for recognition between groups (Isin and Wood 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006). Accordingly, it has been suggested that a group of individu-

als can share similar identities since individuals construct their own identities with certain characteristics that are equivalent to others (Clarke et al., 2014, 109; Isin and Wood 1999; Kabeer 2005). Consequently, we understand identity as a self-description constructed on the basis of common characteristics prevalent in a collective group. In addition, we believe that, while identities are formed individually, they also need recognition from others.

Third, belonging, according to Clarke et al. (2014, 11) is a "a feeling of attachment, and a sentiment of ownership" (2014, 151). Similarly, Anthias (2006) argues that the feeling of inclusion in a group emerges once the individual has created emotional bonds through belonging, which also relates to the individual's reproduction of identities (Anthias 2006, 20–21). On the other hand, Yuval-Davis' (2006) suggests that for belonging and identity to be created and reproduced, active participation connecting the individual to the community in the spaces available is critical. Moreover, it has been argued that belonging is a fluid notion because it is subject to the interactions that take place in a particular context (Lister et al. 2007; Yuval-Davis 2006). Accordingly, we define belonging as the creation of emotional bonds, with emotive and subjective aspects, to people and spaces through active participation.

In conclusion, spaces of participation enable identity formation and the construction of belonging. These interconnected elements build multifaceted citizenship, which refers to the everyday experiences and relationships created through identity construction and belonging in diverse spaces, with spaces of participation comprising the 'invented spaces' created through mutual engagement in places where citizenship is practiced. These are the arenas that enable the formation of identity – the individual's self-description built based on the common characteristics prevalent in a collective group – and belonging based on the creation of emotional bonds, with emotive and subjective aspects, to people and spaces. In all

these processes, active participation is fundamental.

Uganda as a context for women's multifaceted citizenship

In this section, we first briefly justify the focus on multifaceted citizenship in a state, Uganda, that exercises limited responsibilities over its citizens, before contextualizing the specific issue of women's citizenship. We argue that in current Uganda, everyday practices are important arenas for exercising citizenship, and further, that this applies especially to women who suffer even more than men due to the non-realization of their constitutional rights.

The legal and national underpinnings of citizenship in Uganda have been subject to political turbulence since colonial times. The British colonial model imposed in Uganda deepened its ethnic divisions and split the country into regions with different levels of development (Tripp 2011, 42–43). Uganda gained independence from Britain in 1962; however, for almost 15 years the country experienced periods of disorder, volatility and violence (Reid 2017, 56–70; Tripp 2011, 43–47), until the National Resistance Movement (NRM), led by President Yoweri Museveni, came to power in 1986, ruling the country ever since.

Although the NRM has brought some relative stability to the country, state violence is more pervasive in some areas and geared towards certain segments of political society, especially those perceived as opposition (Reid 2017, 88–98), while authoritarian rule jeopardizes citizenship practices such as voting in democratic elections (Tripp 2011). Moreover, although the Constitution of Uganda guarantees extensive citizens' rights, their actualization has been far from complete (Tamale 2004). Overall, as Alava et al. (2020, 61) suggest, "[ethnic] belonging, patronage, religion, and violence" are critical aspects of citizenship. In such contexts, they propose that par-

ticipation at the local level and a notion of 'grassroots citizenship', involving rights and responsibilities set by the groups to which individuals belong, is key to understanding the dynamics of citizenship practices in Uganda (Alava et al. 2020, 67).

Thus, in Uganda, the state has to a great extent failed to provide its citizens with basic services and fundamental freedoms. In general, in such contexts of narrowed state responsibility, as Clarke et al. (2014, 91) suggest, it is common for responsibility for welfare, security, and other services to be transferred to the citizens themselves or to NGOs and international organizations (Clarke et al. 2014, 91). In Uganda, grassroots activism and local organization have been crucial for citizenship practice (Alava et al. 2020, 67; DENIVA 2006, 37), in part due to President Museveni's political project, which encourages and requires citizens to be active in their communities, instigating local improvements on their own initiative rather than expecting state interventions (Jones 2009; The Republic of Uganda 2020).

Since colonial times CSOs in Uganda have been fundamental platforms for political activism that provides local social and economic services to women (Tushabe 2009, 46); however, currently their focus is on providing welfare services at the grassroots level, often the role of NGOs, churches, and international donors (Fourie and Kakumba 2011, 56; De Coninck 2021, 6-8). As Jones' (2009) study on the sub-parish of Oledai in rural Uganda argues, active participation in local CSOs such as religious and burial groups, and voluntary community work to ensure community well-being and collective action, are an important part of daily activities in rural Uganda (Jones 2009, 160–62). Therefore, Clarke et al.'s (2014, 92) proposition that citizenship takes place in different locations and spaces where multiple actors are present and where relationships form among people, agencies, agents, institutions, and the state itself, resonates well with the Ugandan realities of citizenship prac-

tices.

Women's activism has been essential for the organization of grassroots collectivities that provide welfare services to women and their families, and for ensuring women's rights in the national constitution to advance gender equality (Tripp 2000, 23; 2004, 5; Tushabe 2009, 48). According to Tripp (2000, 23; 2004, 5), such movements, often initiated by highly educated women, are among the strongest social organizations in Uganda, with an important role in promoting gender equality at both local and national levels. ACFODE, for instance, has been advocating for gender equality at local and national levels since 1986, lobbying the NRM government with other women's organizations to establish the Ministry of Women in Development to guarantee gender parity in every ministry at the national level and in the local governments (Tushabe 2009, 51). Additionally, ACFODE provides training on leadership skills, women empowerment, sustainable farming, health, and education at the grassroots level (Ahimbisibwe, Ndidde, and Kontinen 2020, 173).

Through its programmes, ACFODE has provided new kinds of spaces of participation for women, especially rural women, who are a significant part of Ugandan citizenry. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics report (UBOS 2020, 31), most of the working population in Uganda lives in rural areas, where women's participation in agricultural activities is higher (70%) than that of men (58%). Moreover, women's literacy in rural areas is only 62%, with about 8% finishing elementary school. Teenage pregnancy is persistent in Uganda and is higher in rural areas – one of the main causes of school dropout among girls – while the fertility rate is five children per woman, which can be explained by the low decision-making power that women have over their own sexual and reproductive health (UBOS 2016, 33–34). Thus, women who live in rural areas tend to be less educated and lack control over their health, especially their reproductive health. Moreover, women are less

likely to be represented at the governmental level and in leadership positions. Therefore, their position in the economy and in the country more broadly is complex, with a high risk of living in poverty. In this context, it is easy for women's citizenship to remain on the margins, and for the literature to place women in a passive and somewhat victimized position. In contrast, in this article we focus on the ways in which women are active in different spaces of participation in their daily lives, and the kinds of multifaceted citizenship that is constructed there.

Methodology[1]

The empirical material used in this article consists of 50 individual, qualitative interviews conducted with women in the districts of Kiboga and Namutumba in Uganda in 2017. Both are rural areas with low developmental improvements and numerous social challenges, such as illiteracy, famine, malnutrition, gender inequalities, and overpopulation; furthermore, 30 years ago, Kiboga was the epicentre of war for over five years (Ahimbisibwe, Ndidde, and Kontinen 2020, 173). Data collection was conducted within a broader research project focusing on and promoting growth into citizenship in civil society encounters, realized in collaboration with ACFODE, a local NGO with an established relationship with women in the two districts. Therefore, the sample selection approach was purposive in nature, targeting women who have received training from ACFODE. The main purpose was to gain an in-depth understanding of women's diverse

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[1] The research in Kiboga and Namutumba was part of the GROW project conducted in collaboration with Makerere University in Uganda and the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. The researchers worked with the local NGO ACFODE to select participants from among those whom it had conducted its activities. Language skills were crucial to selecting the locations, and the researchers were fluent in the dialects spoken there, Luganda and Lusoga.

lived experiences of citizenship. In Kiboga the majority of participants were local leaders trained in leadership and empowerment skills, whereas the Namutumba participants were mainly community members trained in well-being improvement. However, the focus of the interviews was not on participants' experience with ACFODE, but on identifying the diverse spaces of participation relevant to women's everyday lives, and their relationship to such spaces.

Qualitative interviews based on a participatory research approach were used in data collection, which was conducted by two Ugandan researchers, one of whom is the second author of this article. The fieldwork methodology, including conversation based on general guidelines, enabled investigation of participants' everyday experiences of citizenship in a safe environment in which they could share their experiences openly and tell their "lived experiences of citizenship" stories (Ahimbisibwe, Ndidde, and Kontinen 2020, 160–165; Bergold and Thomas 2012, 196). Additionally, a Venn diagram, drawn from participatory research methodology (Adebo 2000, 16), was used as a tool to encourage participants to identify different spaces of participation and their significance in their everyday lives. The diagram facilitated the researchers' learning and the participants' self-reflection on their citizenship practices (Ahimbisibwe, Ndidde, and Kontinen 2020, 165). To protect the anonymity of the research participants, we have assigned numbers to each interview. We have also removed the names of people and groups mentioned and replaced them with the insertion [NAME].

The interviews were conducted in local languages, then transcribed, and finally translated into English. The interview material was analysed using a method of systematic content analysis (Lofland et al. 2006, 199). Facilitated by software ATLAS.ti, the contents of the interviews were first coded in detail, then the data were organized into categories and sub-categories. The data analysis process con-

sisted of two steps: initial coding and focused coding. This allowed in-depth analysis and data immersion, resulting in a set of categories which provided a smooth identification of topics critical to the collating research findings.

In the initial coding, 18 general codes were identified while the subsequent focused coding produced two main categories along with some sub-categories, which provided an-swers to our research question. The categories and sub-categories are as follows: (a) identity, which contains five sub-categories: active resident, member, role model, leader, and wife; (b) belonging, which contains two sub-cat-egories: community belonging and personal belonging. Table 1 illustrates the analysis pro-cess and provides a description of each sub-category.

Table 1. Analysis Table

Category	Sub-Category	Sub-Category Description
Identity	Active resident	The participant reflects on her active work.
	Member	The participant focuses on her work with others.
	Role model	The participant describes herself as a role model.
	Leader	The participant describes herself as a leader.
	Wife	The participant describes herself as a wife.
Belonging	Community	When there is a sense of attachment to the community, groups, associations, NGOs.
	Personal	When there is an internal sense of attachment e.g., to home, religion, politics.

Note. Authors' own construction

Multifaceted citizenship in spaces of participation

In this section, we discuss the ways that mul-tifaceted citizenship, identities, and belonging manifest in the spaces of everyday participa-tion identified as relevant by the women par-ticipants and articulated in the interviews. As our definition of spaces of participation refers to imagined communities of citizenship with significance for the individuals interviewed, we analyse them as 'invented spaces' created through participation.

During the interviews, women described diverse spaces of participation where they interacted with others and mutually engaged over certain issues, which shaped their iden-tities and belonging on a daily basis. It was found that the spaces of participation which were experienced as meaningful by women were informal, such as local self-help, sav-ings, and religious groups, the local council, the village, NGO groups, and home. All these spaces enhanced their visibility and provided opportunities to play a role and belong; usual-ly, they made them feel safe and allowed them to be heard and acknowledged by their fellow women. Moreover, women had the freedom to choose the spaces in which to participate; hence, they belonged to groups where similar characteristics and needs were shared.

Active participation in these groups provided spaces for interaction and learning. Women narrated their experiences of being

members of diverse groups which allowed them to participate as chairpersons, councillors, leaders, treasurers, health promoters, and so on, where they shared their knowledge with others and worked together to improve their village. NGOs also worked with these groups to promote training in farming practices, health, women's empowerment, business management, and leadership skills. In turn, women implemented the learnt skills in their daily roles and homes.

These responsibilities and improvements may seem informal and low impact, but participants felt proud to share their experiences of progressing from nothing to something that at least gives them visibility, not only at the family level, but also in their communities. It was also perceived that their success propelled them to work harder for the survival of the groups of which they are members. Finally, as one noted,

> …but the most important thing is that this group has made me develop as a person. Truly, before I joined it, I was badly off – poverty, sickness, and even ignorance – but now, I can stand and teach my colleagues, I can even 'teach' community members. (Interviewee 24, female, Kiboga)

In what follows, we first discuss our findings related to manifestations of identity, and then those of belonging.

The changing face of women's identity in the spaces of everyday participation

We have referred to the notion of identity as self-description by an individual that is accepted personally and also shaped in a group. Our analysis identified five main categories among our participants: active resident, member, role model, leader, and wife. These identities were subject to the roles women played in the diverse spaces of participation and were dynamic and sometimes overlapping, as is explained in the following paragraphs.

The first identity, an *active resident*, refers to an individual who participates in local CSOs and at home to improve her living conditions. She has strong motivation which emerges with the realization that acquiring knowledge, skills, and friends contributes to the improvement of her living conditions and her family's wellbeing. For example, farming activities were critical for the group members' contribution to their communities, enabling them to work with others and receive benefits from their hard work:

> The group [NAME] encourages farming and it is a must that every member should have a garden. Still, if you have a garden, you have to store food. This means it helps us to be hard working people. Because we do not aim at harvesting little, like two bags. No, we aim at always harvesting big unless [crops] are affected by sunshine. (Interviewee 11, female, Namutumba)

Furthermore, the active resident is an individual recognized in her community. According to our findings, when women acknowledged themselves as capable of playing a role in the community, this was reinforced when others recognized them for their participation, and the roles they played. As a participant narrated,

> They thanked me for good work done because some people grow food and, after, they put it on the floor, which makes it dirty. But for you, you know how to sundry your food. They gave me a tarpaulin as a gift. That group really changed me. (Interviewee 12, female, Namutumba)

The second identity, a *member,* is an individual who prizes membership in organized groups that share common aims, thus highlighting the

value of belonging to local CSOs. Participants narrated that working in groups is necessary to achieve progress and build trust, meanwhile encouraging them to continue improving their living conditions and promoting the construction of a better life. Participants also affirmed that belonging to groups, or creating groups with fellow residents, has allowed them to be recognized in their community, as well as helping to improve their living conditions by instigating income-generating activities.

> We joined other groups because if you don't work with other groups you cannot be known. For example when I am alone here people cannot know me; people came to know me after forming that group. After forming that group [NAME] we teamed up with other groups at the sub-county and we constructed a produce bulking 'store'. (Interviewee 11, female, Namutumba)

In addition to improving their self-confidence, participants valued the formation of relations of trust. For example, the names they gave to some of their groups reflected the value they expected to derive from these groups and the common, meaningful goals participants wanted to promote. Names like *Agali Awamu* Women's Group (the strength of togetherness), *Tukolelere Wamu* (let us work together), and *Bugaga Bulaire* (the common goal of overcoming poverty) reflected the psychosocial values and benefits they wanted to promote in the community groups to which they belonged.

The third identity, a *role model*, applies to an individual who shows and teaches others about the improvements that can be made with real examples, so others can copy them. It was perceived that some participants felt responsible for teaching their fellow women the skills and knowledge they had acquired in training sessions conducted by NGOs on crop and livestock farming, home sanitation, and family relationships in Kiboga and Namutumba, as not

all women can attend them. Therefore, teaching others by example seems to be a crucial daily interaction as can be seen in the following description:

> Yes, we can go train others. Now, especially concerning hygiene, looking after a home, cultivating and animal husbandry, I have to participate in that as a leader. You have to be an example to others – the women and everyone else. (Interviewee 16, female, Kiboga)

The fourth identity we identified is that of *leader*, usually represented by women who held leadership positions in local politics or in groups and saw themselves as decision makers with power in the groups in which they participated. They also showed an interest in teaching and helping others to improve community conditions. In general, such individuals had received leadership and empowerment training from NGOs like ACFODE, allowing them to gain the skills to advocate on behalf of their community and guide women, men, and couples when needed. The following narrative describes the daily activities of a leader in Kiboga:

> Because I've had a lot of training, from different organizations, whenever I'm with the community, for example if someone has trouble in their home, I can use the knowledge I got to sit and counsel the couple. If…it's time to focus on youth – I often call a meeting for guidance and counselling in the church and the community – to teach youth life skills. Sometimes the community has problems and in my role as secretary, I can sit with them and use the knowledge I've received to guide the community in what to do. (Interviewee 39, female, Kiboga)

The final identity, that of a *wife*, was prevalent among the women participants who filled the

role of a married woman with responsibilities in the home and with her partner. This identity usually emerged when women were explaining a topic related to the home or her husband. It was interesting to find that women associated their residency status with marriage, affirming that before marriage they were not residents; they only became so once they got married. "You are a resident so long as you come and get married here….When you are a woman, you leave your parents' home, you come and get married here" (Interviewee 13, female, Namutumba). However, in the Ugandan national constitution women and men are granted equal citizenship rights. This theme is broadly assessed in Ndidde, Ahimbisibwe, and Kontinen (2020).

Overall, the five identities were present in most of the narratives provided by the women in Kiboga and Namutumba, although the prevalence of the *role model* and *leader* was greater among the women in Kiboga. This is due to the type of training ACFODE has conducted in the two areas, with women in Kiboga being trained in leadership and empowerment skills, and women in Namutumba in farming and wellbeing. Nevertheless, as explained in the methodology section, the focus of the interviews was not on participants' experience with ACFODE; rather, it was on identifying women's diverse spaces of participation and their relationship to such spaces. Moreover, as the focus of the questions was on spaces requiring active engagement, identities such as *mother* were not probably mentioned because our participants did not regard the role of motherhood as one performed in the spaces of participation. Identities related to ethnic groups were not emphasized either, because participants were predominantly from a homogenous ethnic group – *Baganda* in Kiboga and *Basoga* in Namutumba districts, respectively; therefore, ethnicity did not play a significant role in identity formation for this study.

When we combined these identities with the different roles women played and with the diverse spaces of interactive participation, it became evident that their identities manifested differently in different spaces. For example, when a participant was in the local council advocating on behalf of women, her leader identity emerged. When she attended a meeting in a savings group or gave counsel to fellow women, both the leader and the member identities came to the fore. Furthermore, analysis revealed that a single identity can be adapted to an individual's spaces of participation and the particular roles she plays in each. For instance, a participant from Kiboga adapted her leader identity to her interactions in the village and in the local council. In the village, her role was to teach fellow women, to counsel them, and to support them with their challenges: "Now I update them about what's going on whenever we meet and as a counsellor I even counsel them concerning the challenges they encounter in their homes" (Interviewee 15, female, Kiboga). When she was in the local council, she advocated on behalf of her people and represented them there, with the goal of bringing improvements to the village:

> When there are problems in the community...I fulfil my responsibility as a leader in the community, to get information and give feedback to people....It began with me lobbying people for donations, and being given some money.…I bring fellow leaders and have them contribute to our groups. (Interviewee 15, female, Kiboga)

It was also found, conversely, that in a single interaction two or more identities can emerge. For example, a participant can advocate for the implementation of development programmes in her village with her leader identity. Then, with both her member and her active resident identity, she mobilizes fellow woman to participate in them: "When I'm at the District I can get to know about the programmes at the District and the sub-county [levels], so I can mobilize the people in my village" (Inter-

viewee 15, female, Kiboga). Furthermore, the same participant could shift her identities from group to group based on the roles she plays in them. For example, one participant is a member of a Buganda Kingdom women's group;[2] she participates in it and performs activities as a member and, therefore, in that interaction her member identity emerges: "In the [Buganda] Kingdom [group], I'm not a leader. I have no leadership role, but I participate" (Interviewee 15, female, Kiboga). In another interaction in a different group, her role model identity emerges: "When we get trained we become examples to others, and we have to implement what has been taught to us because there is no way you can tell someone to do something for you that you yourself cannot do" (Interviewee 15, female, Kiboga).

It can be seen that women's identities are created individually and collectively in their spaces of participation, are based on their everyday living experiences, and seek social and individual recognition. In addition, the analysis revealed that identities manifest differently according to the roles women play in each of their diverse spaces of participation, and to the belief on the part of the individual that she is capable of fulfilling roles in public and private spaces (Lister 2003, 39). Identities are also constantly changing and producing a complex interweaving of participative experiences that support each other (Wenger 2008, 106). These findings resonate with those of other scholars (de Simone 2021; Malkki 1996) who have analysed processes of identity formation in vulnerable groups (e.g., refugees from South Sudan living in Uganda; refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania) in 'invented' spaces of participation.

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[2] Buganda Kingdom women's groups (mentioned in Kiboga district) are mobilized and supported by the Buganda Kingdom Ministry of Women's Affairs and Community Development. These groups are community-based and aim at empowering women to participate actively in the social and economic activities of the community and to preserve the Buganda cultural heritage.

Belonging: Connection and perceived benefit from spaces of participation

We defined belonging as the creation of emotional bonds with emotive and subjective aspects through active participation with people and spaces. In this section, we discuss findings on manifestations of women's belonging in their daily interactions in various spaces of participation, which research participants reflected on in multiple ways. Based on the content of the interviews, we divided belonging into two distinct although overlapping categories: *community belonging* and *personal belonging*, which we further describe below.

Community belonging, according to the analysis, is defined as interactions in a shared space where women relate with others, are members of a group, and play a role in it. This type of belonging was identified when the participants expressed a connection to the community, groups, associations, or NGOs. Interacting with others and participating actively in groups was a highly important part of the participants' daily activities. They expressed the importance of working together with others because it benefits both the community and themselves. As one commented,

> If you don't associate with people, there is nothing you can learn. But every time you go among people, there is something you learn and if you follow them it brings a change in the condition. (Interviewee 1, female, Namutumba)

In our study, we found that participants voluntarily chose the spaces where they wanted to participate: "Well you join a group where you feel comfortable" (Interviewee 19, female, Kiboga). By using a Venn diagram in interviews, participants were able to indicate the groups to which they felt more attached. They tended to narrate those groups as places where they felt comfortable and which they perceived as offering a positive benefit.

Participants had obligations towards the groups of which they were members. For instance, the majority of women were members of saving groups; therefore, they had to attend weekly group meetings, save money, and take out loans if required. Moreover, participants worked hard and opened businesses to secure land ownership to build a house and plant crops to ensure their families' livelihoods; others enrolled in leadership positions in groups or in local politics to advocate on behalf of their fellow women.

When drawing her Venn diagram, the participant positioned herself in the centre, then visualized the groups of which she was a member, with the closest and biggest groups those to which she felt most attached. The further or smaller the groups, the less attachment she felt. This promoted the participants' recognition of the importance of, and the sense of identity and belonging to the spaces of participation they acknowledged. Drawing and explaining the Venn diagrams during the interviews gave them an opportunity to reflect on the groups of which they were members, the role they played in their communities, and for some, it allowed critique of their daily activities and roles. Figure 1 presents the Venn diagram of one research participant.

Figure 1. Example of the Venn diagram
Note. Field photo of the Venn diagram of a female teacher and councillor in Kiboga.

Personal belonging is the second category that was identified. According to the findings, a sense of *personal belonging* provided the motivation to be part of a group associated with a direct positive impact on participants' personal lives. In turn, this provided the motivation to use the knowledge and skills gained from membership in groups to improve their living conditions, their families' livelihoods, and to aspire to future achievement. For example, by planting crops in their gardens women were able to provide enough food for their families, which both improved their relationship with their partners and their living conditions, as some participants explained:

> We studied and we put in practice what we studied. Now our husbands are calm because those who would have gone to look for juice somewhere do not go because it is done at home. (Interviewee 11, female, Namutumba)

> They trained me on how to grow vegetables. I am no longer struggling to look for a source, I just pick from my garden. For example, eggplants I just go to the garden, pick, and bring them home. (Interviewee 13, female, Namutumba)

For others, religion and politics drive their *personal belonging* and motivate them to become better residents. Some participants mentioned that religion has brought them peace of mind, has taught them values, and has helped them to relate to their partners better. The majority felt that to succeed they needed to put God first. Furthermore, religion motivated them to be good residents, respect others, and participate in groups. Prayers and blessings were very important for their survival and success in their daily activities.

In the same way, politics was crucial for some of the participants, giving them the motivation to continue; belonging to a political party has enabled them to fill a role and construct their leader identity, besides mak-

ing them known in their community. Most of the participants had an affiliation to the NRM party and narrated that belonging to it has allowed them to strengthen their leader identity and support their community while participating as councillors, chairpersons, candidates, or voters.

It became clear that in the groups where women were more active, they had more decision-making power and liberty to suggest activities. Therefore, belonging manifested differently according to the connections women had to each space of participation. For instance, they demonstrated a higher connection to the groups over which they had influence, where they had a voice, and where they had the opportunity to perform activities. Conversely, they were less active in groups where they had less influence, and only a moderate connection was perceived. Additionally, belonging manifested differently based on the direct advantage women perceived they gained from each space, expressing greater attachment to the groups, religion, or politics which they felt offered them and their families the most benefit.

Decision-making power was also more common in spaces of greater attachment. Women could shift their power from one place to another; it could be higher or more moderate based on the connection, influence, and perceived benefit women attributed to each space. For example, when narrating her participation in a savings group where she had a lot of influence and the freedom to make decisions and represent her people, one woman expressed a strong connection to it and presented herself as a leader in it:

> I give some advice to these groups because I know a bit more than them about where I have come from….All the groups I've spoken about are very, very useful in sharing knowledge and mediating where there are conflicts and sending me on errands, say, to make a constitution or to get certificates. They usually have no idea about that. But at my level

I can go through the process without spending any money. (Interviewee 17, female, Kiboga)

On the other hand, she expressed only a moderate connection to groups where she had less influence, or limited participation, or no time to attend meetings:

> [NAME] I don't go there often. I don't even find time to attend meetings. The group meets every Monday, and I'm in the office from Monday to Friday so I rarely go there, although I meet all the requirements. (Interviewee 17, female, Kiboga)

Belonging to groups through membership and applying the skills learnt in them make up a crucial part of the participants' daily lives. Belonging allows women to feel part of the community, as well as members and residents. As a result, they have also been able to gain relative economic independence, plan for future achievements, and improve their living conditions and those of their families.

Participants belonged to diverse groups in their communities, including local CSOs such as self-help groups, saving groups, and burial groups. Here, interactions and participation took place on a daily basis, with members sharing with others their common needs and goals, playing specific roles, working to improve their communities, and learning new skills to implement with other women and at home. Indeed, the home was a critical space for women to put the learned skills into practice, improve domestic conditions, and invest in them. These experiences enabled women to practice their multifaceted citizenship by creating emotional bonds to people and spaces.

Conclusion

In this article, we have made two main contributions to the field. First, building on recent

literature in citizenship studies, we established the notion of multifaceted citizenship to capture the form of citizenship that takes place in different everyday spaces of participation where identities and belongings are constructed. We argue that scrutinizing the notion of citizenship in everyday participation is especially important for understanding the dynamics of citizenship in contexts where women's participation in public arenas is restricted, for instance, on political or cultural grounds. Second, we applied the established framework to analysing the kinds of multifaceted citizenship apparent among women in rural communities in the districts of Kiboga and Namutumba in Uganda, and investigated the varying identities and belongings constructed in their spaces of participation, including those provided by a gender-focused NGO.

The findings show that whilst rural women can be seen as marginalized in terms of citizenship in public spaces, they actively participate in diverse practices that shape their identities and feelings of belonging. It became clear that women's citizenship practices mostly take place in so-called informal spaces. Those 'invented spaces' are locations that enhance women's active participation, encouraging the sense of belonging to a group, and impacting identity formation. It is there that interactions take place and relationships are formed on a daily basis, and women have agency and power. In accordance with

the arguments of some critical researchers (Cornwall 2002; Gaventa 2004; Lister 1997; 2003), this article illustrated how active participation in informal spaces provides opportunities for women to share their experiences without being judged and to form relations of trust; thus, it provides the marginalized with a tool with which to exercise their citizenship. Moreover, by being active in diverse spaces of participation in their daily lives, women gain recognition as active members of their communities. They can achieve a stronger identity as contributors and become increasingly appreciated as residents in their own areas. Further, they can potentially enlarge their spaces of participation and become part of the realization of more inclusive citizenship in every community, including that of the state.

In conclusion, we suggest that the framework of multifaceted citizenship and the methodological approach of starting the inquiry into citizenship with women's own experiences in spaces of meaningful participation provides a fruitful approach to understanding the dynamics of gendered citizenship at the grassroots level, both for academic research on citizenship and for NGOs committed to fostering women's participation and appreciation in any society. Acknowledging the existing spaces of participation and the identities and belongings therein is a much-needed contribution to citizenship research.

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