

How citizenship matters (or not): The citizenship-belonging nexus explored among residents in Oslo, Norway

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Abstract²

This article sheds light on what citizenship means for individuals' experiences of belonging. Through 41 interviews conducted in Oslo, Norway, we trace understandings of how, when and why citizenship matters (or not) for belonging. Our interviewees fall into one of four categories: born citizens; naturalized citizens; dual citizens; and non-Norwegian-citizens who would qualify for naturalization, thus mixing participants with and without immigrant backgrounds. We interpret individuals' experiences evaluating whether formal citizenship is explicitly or implicitly salient and whether it is associated with secure or insecure belonging. We find that citizenship matters for security and recognition, both linked to belonging, in expected and unexpected ways. Our findings point to how, when and why citizenship matters (or not) for belonging, constituting the citizenship-belonging nexus. Here, race continues to matter, as does the materiality of the passport document, in how the citizenship-belonging nexus interacts with the nation as locus of membership for citizens.

Introduction

In April 2016, Norwegian citizen and bioengineer Mahad Abib Mahamud was notified by Norwegian authorities that his citizenship had been revoked; he came to Norway as a young teenager in 2000, and was granted Norwegian citizenship in 2008. The revocation was the result of an anonymous tip and followed by investigation of the grounds on which his residence permit had been granted when he first arrived. The authorities believed Mahad was from Djibouti, while he said he was from Somalia. The case incurred strong reactions among politicians, legal experts and ordinary people, and was fiercely debated in the media. It highlighted the power of citizenship as something that yields security or insecurity in individuals' lives. Furthermore, it foregrounded the paradox of citizenship as both a taken-for-granted, permanent backdrop to everyday life for many, and simultaneously an existentially critical matter, the permanence of which remains questionable, for others. The case of Mahad illustrates the issues we explore in our analysis of how, when and why citizenship matters (or not) in individuals' experiences of belonging in Oslo, Norway.

Policymakers hold formal citizenship in high regard, promoting its role in fostering social cohesion and its utility as a tool for migrant integration (Goodman 2014, Mouritsen 2012). Simultaneously, citizenship is a formality, somehow superimposed on lived experience and therefore potentially alien to individuals' experiences of belonging (Dickinson et al. 2015, Askins 2016). Tracing experiences of citizenship status, this article seeks to juxtapose formal citizenship as a tool of governance with lived experiences of belonging (Wood and Waite 2011, Antonsich 2010). Our aim is to contribute towards filling the research lacunae concerning 'what

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ordinary people associate with citizenship' (Joppke 2007, 44). We do so, first, by foregrounding experiences from everyday life, rather than focusing on e.g. citizenship ceremonies or tests (Bassel, Monforte and Khan 2018), and second, by drawing on data from 41 interviews with residents of Oslo, Norway, falling within one of four citizenship status categories: *born citizens*; *naturalized citizens*; *dual citizens*; and *non-Norwegian-citizens who qualify for naturalization*. With this data set, we mix participants: including migrants, their descendants, people without immigrant backgrounds, and children adopted to Norway. By doing this, we seek to challenge essentializing visions of a 'minority/majority divide' that assumes the existence of clear-cut boundaries between 'a majority' and specific 'minorities' and does not acknowledge the relational nature of dynamic boundaries in societies (Meissner 2015, Vertovec 2016, Yuval-Davis 2006).

The citizenship-belonging nexus, which we refer to in this article, reflects the reciprocity and the many interconnections between citizenship and belonging. Our inductive approach allows for an exploration of the fuzziness of belonging and its intersections with the rigidity of citizenship as legal status. Central to unraveling the citizenship-belonging nexus is our interviewees' sense of security and/or insecurity and whether citizenship, in their experience, has implicit or explicit roles for their sense of belonging. This is understood in relation to the spatio-temporal frames they themselves choose to foreground (Çağlar 2016).

In the next section, we develop our conceptual approach to the citizenship-belonging nexus as it connects to nationhood and race, and to questions of security and insecurity, as central analytical tropes in this article. We then present our methods and data, and the empirical context of Oslo, Norway, before proceeding to present our data and analysis. We conclude first as to how, when and why citizenship matters (or not) for belonging, and second as to how this article contributes to citizenship studies. The central contributions are that our analysis draws on a cross-category data set and provides an analytical framework for better understanding links between formal, legal, citizenship status, and more fuzzy, personal experiences of a sense of belonging. Our analytical framework foregrounds the roles of security and insecurity, articulated in explicit or implicit connection with formal citizenship status.

The citizenship-belonging nexus

We refer to the citizenship-belonging nexus, understood as the myriad interrelationships between the institution of citizenship and individual and collective belonging. These influence each other reciprocally and cut across time and place. The concept, we believe, is a useful analytical tool for approaching both 'governing' and 'experiencing' aspects of citizenship as institution and part of everyday life.

Isin and Wood (1999) consider citizenship's legal dimensions as interdependent with its sociological dimensions. The dual dimensionality can be further unpacked in terms of rights, participation, membership and formal status (Bosniak 2008, Stokke 2017, Van Bochove, Rusinovic, and Engbersen 2010). Whilst we focus on formal legal citizenship status, we

recognize its interconnections with membership in the nation-state³ (Jensen, Fernandéz, and Brochmann 2017), a membership which, reflective of the reality of dual citizenship, does not preclude the simultaneous membership also of other nation-states (Vink and Bauböck 2013).

Citizenship as a vertical state-individual relationship grants membership within the political community of the nation-state (Erdal and Sagmo 2017); as a horizontal citizen-citizen relationship, citizenship ties political community members into relationships with one another as individuals, somehow framed by the national context. Membership is defined by self-identification as well as by the recognition of others, as the notion of ‘politics belonging’ underscores (Yuval-Davis 2006, Antonsich 2010).

Despite the extensive literature variously touching on citizenship and belonging, including that on migration-related diversity in Europe (Bloemraad 2015, Brubaker 2010, Meissner 2015, Kofman 2005), empirical investigations into the citizenship-belonging nexus from an actor-oriented perspective, which include individuals with different citizenship statuses within the same analysis, are scarce (though see Tyler 2010, Williamson 2016). Instead, much research starts from a theoretical vantage point, e.g. providing analyses of citizenship policies (Goodman 2014, Mouritsen 2015, Midtbøen 2015), and emphasizing the role of citizenship for newcomers’ integration, but leaving behind a blind spot: how citizenship may (or may not) matter for individuals’ sense of belonging *across* formal citizenship categories, including those who have never changed citizenship status (such as born citizens, or foreign citizens who elect not to naturalize) (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti 2011).

We understand belonging as ‘*a dynamic emotional attachment that relates people to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience. It is about feeling “at home” and “secure”, but it is equally about being recognized and understood*’ (Wood and Waite 2011, 201). We acknowledge both the interplay of belonging and the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006), and the interdependence of belonging as an ontological category and the politics of belonging as political projects wherein collectives define their boundaries (Antonsich 2010, Guibernau 2013, Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017), e.g. in national terms.

Formal citizenship – an institution of which the state is the keeper – epitomizes the politics of belonging, defining a collective and its boundaries (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017). For belonging, ethnicity, religion and race matter, yet it may be argued that ‘when people travel abroad they are usually identified both formally and informally, by their nationality/state citizenship’ (ibid., 4). Hence, the salience of the passport is underscored, not least as a key instrument in states’ construction of citizenship (Torpey 2000).

Despite greater focus on citizenship and belonging, from both states and in research, the role of the passport document itself has been conspicuously absent in scholarly discussions (notable exceptions include Torpey 2000, Häkli 2015). Rather, the passport has been recognized as a citizenship-linked mobility resource, especially for migrants’ naturalizing in the Global North,

³ The term nation-state itself speaks to the core of this article’s focus, analyzing connections between nation and state, through the prism of citizenship as this experienced.

those countries' passports grant far easier access worldwide (Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006, Mau et al. 2015, Erdal 2016).

Meanwhile, states have immense might in constituting boundaries of belonging. We see this in literature foregrounding precarious, quasi-citizenship and non-citizenship (Goldring and Landolt 2013, Vickstrom 2014). However, we must examine the roles of formal citizenship for individuals' belonging empirically, not presupposing a certain status produces given results. For 'citizens may behave as non-citizens, and non-citizens may [...] resemble citizens' (Goldring and Landolt 2013, 5).

Simultaneously, the national boundaries of a nation-state, and its power over citizenship within its territory, should not make that which is outside of these borders analytical blind-spots (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). We therefore investigate empirically how citizenship matters or not, and how it reflects spatial belonging to multiple locations within and across nation-state borders, and across different citizenship categories, including for those without formal citizenship in a given context (Erdal 2016, Vora 2013).

Nationhood and race

Since Brubaker's (1990) seminal work on Germany and France, the interface of citizenship and nationhood in Europe has provided guidance for discussions about migration, integration, migration-related diversity and management thereof (Meissner 2015, Brochmann and Seland 2010). However, how nation-states with populations characterized by migration-related diversity relate to this interface presents a paradox. On one hand, 'nationality' as a descriptor of an individual's citizenship conflates the notions of citizen and national. On the other, we observe resistance in states' ways of dealing with underlying ethnocultural conceptions of the nation, especially where citizenship is based on descent (Brubaker 2010, Pailey 2016). Whilst the citizenry of many European nation-states has become more diverse in racial terms in recent decades, the prevailing conception of what 'a national looks like' (Antonsich 2018), may remain unchallenged by policy makers, although simultaneously highly politicized and contested in public debate (Bangstad 2015).

The dissonance between what is assumed as natural in terms of race and national belonging in many European societies, and what actual citizens-cum-nationals look like, underscores an insufficient scrutiny of the underlying principles of what legitimates belonging in the national political community (Erdal and Sagmo 2017). To be more precise: how does citizenship legislation based on the *jus sanguinis* principle accommodate the national belonging of citizens who are – in the case of Norway – not white? Of course, the *jus sanguinis* principle is not racially defined, yet, it is based on blood ties, on descent, and therefore implicitly has sanctioned a particular racial – as well as ethno-cultural – vision of the nation. Meanwhile, most countries' citizenship policies in practice draw on an amalgamation of citizenship principles (Vink and Bauböck 2013); *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis*, as well as *jus domicile*. Thus, in practice, citizenship policy in most European countries, is increasingly reflecting the more diverse populations in these societies, but arguably, not necessarily sufficiently affecting the ways in which the nation as imagined community is conceptualized, resulting in a dissonance (Matejskova and Antonsich 2015, Erdal and Strømsø 2018).

Bringing nation and race into dialogue with the citizenship-belonging nexus reveals prevailing hierarchies of belonging (Skey, 2013). These exist in public imaginaries of what it means to be ‘one of us’, thus while these are not fixed, they are perceived and experienced as social reality in individuals’ everyday lives (Skey 2013, Vink and De Groot 2010). To illustrate, in contemporary Europe, race matters differently across contexts, and arguably, since 2001, being Muslim or not matters more than race per se, although the two are clearly interconnected (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017, Gilroy 2000, Phoenix 2011).

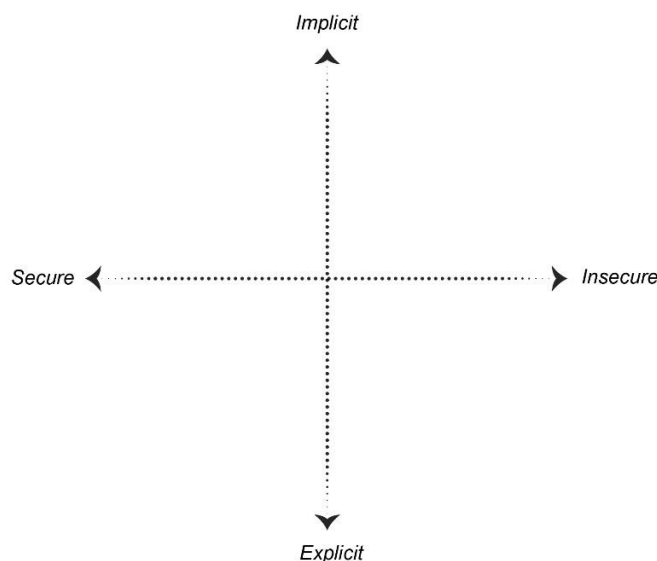
Belonging, security and insecurity

Within the growing literature in citizenship studies, security (Nyers 2004) is often discussed vis-à-vis legal status (or lack thereof) and living with the risk of deportation (Anderson, Gibney, and Paoletti 2011). Research on migrants who choose to naturalize reveals a salient desire for safety, particularly from deportation (Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006). Meanwhile, in the US, Europe and elsewhere, more people have less-than-full legal statuses, making deportation a real threat. Studies on everyday bordering and policing of populations with precarious legal statuses show how critical the security-to-insecurity axis is for studying citizenship (Yuval-Davis et al. 2017).

As Nyers (2004, 205) notes, ‘in any movement from insecurity to security a transformation takes place’. This points to the dynamism of individuals’ sense of security over time and across contexts. Potential for transformation affects how formal citizenship matters (or not). For some, and in some contexts, it merely appears in the background; for others, and in other contexts, formal citizenship status is undeniably part of everyday life.

A cursory review of the literature in citizenship studies reveals that both security and insecurity are reoccurring themes and differently connect with questions of belonging. By contrast, less attention is given in the literature to how belonging and citizenship emerge varyingly as either extraordinary, explicit and reflected upon or more mundane, implicit and unconsidered. Figure 1 below presents the analytical framework developed from our data, grounded in our understanding of the citizenship-belonging nexus. The framework lets us index experiences along an axis ranging from implicit to explicit roles of citizenship, and an axis ranging from secure to insecure senses of belonging. Arrows for axes indicate that experiences should be seen as fluid and dynamic processes on a continuum.

Figure 1: Implicit/explicit roles of citizenship and secure/insecure experiences of belonging



We adopt this analytical framework below, where we illustrate and discuss the ways in which the citizenship-belonging nexus is experienced in ways that manifest secure belonging, and where citizenship can be quite implicit, or in ways that demonstrate secure belonging, but where the roles of citizenship are explicit. By contrast, belonging is also experienced as insecure, and we find, here too, that the roles of citizenship in such experiences may be implicit, or explicit. These experiences – as we will return to – cut across citizenship statuses, in both expected and unexpected ways, underscoring the roles of race, and the salience of the passport document itself in experiences of the citizenship-belonging nexus. We return to the potential and limits for applicability of this analytical framework in other contexts.

Empirical context

As in many Western countries, Norway's population is becoming more diverse, largely due to immigration, though it should be noted that Norway's population always included minorities such as the Sami indigenous populations. Today, 14% of the 5 million people are foreign-born and 3% are children of migrants, according to Statistics Norway. The largest groups originate from Poland, Lithuania and Sweden, and the largest non-European groups from Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Eritrea and the Philippines. Immigrants reside in all municipalities, but most live in cities. In Oslo, migrants and children born of migrants account for 33% of the population⁴, thus making Oslo unique in Norway, and perhaps more similar to other superdiverse

⁴ <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/14-prosent-av-befolkningen-er-innvandrere> (accessed 2018-04-25)

urban contexts in Europe, when it comes to the citizenship-belonging nexus and the interplay with nation and race.

Norway applies citizenship by descent (*jus sanguinis*), not citizenship by territory (*jus soli*). More countries now allow dual citizenship, including neighboring Sweden and Denmark, but Norway still prohibits it⁵. In practice, however, many residents have dual citizenship due to legislative exceptions, such as when dual citizenship was acquired automatically at birth or when it is not possible to denounce the original citizenship due to legal, financial or practical hindrances. Norwegian naturalization policy comes somewhere between Sweden's more liberal position and Denmark's more restrictive position, with Norwegian policy moving in a more restrictive direction (Midtbøen 2015, Jensen, Fernández, and Brochmann 2017, Erdal and Sagmo 2017). Although not an EU member, Norway belongs to the European Economic Community and the Schengen Area, so Norwegian citizens' freedom of movement is equal to that of EU citizens.

In January 2017, Norway introduced tests on language and knowledge of society, alongside a seven-year requirement for naturalization. Compared to other European countries, Norway has a high naturalization rate; over 70% of foreign-born residents apply for citizenship (Gathmann 2015). Those who naturalize tend to originate from the Global South (Pettersen 2012). Citizens and permanent residents are entitled to the same welfare provisions; residents can vote, though only in local elections. Still, both enjoy most social and political rights equally. This makes Norway's legal context interesting, as it allows us to somewhat isolate the role of formal citizenship status in relation to belonging.

Methods

Our focus is on individuals' experiences of belonging and how they relate these, or not, to formal citizenship status. The passport document is a material sign of citizenship, and is often conflated with citizenship status, whilst one does not equal the other. In this article, we take an emic approach to analyzing both the status and the document, as these emerge from our data, allowing for analysis of our interviewees' statements in their own words.

This article builds on 41 semi-structured interviews conducted in Oslo between January and April 2017.⁶ The research was carried out as part of the 'Governing and experiencing citizenship in multicultural Scandinavia' research project⁷. Sampling selection was based on four categories of citizenship status: those who held Norwegian citizenship since birth; naturalized Norwegians; dual citizens; and non-Norwegian-citizens who would qualify for naturalization.⁸ The purposive sampling was mixed with snowball sampling (with a maximum of one new name per respondent) with a great number of entry points, including community organizations, neighborhood cafes, expat websites, workplaces and student communities. Interviewees ranged relatively evenly from those in their mid-20s to 70s, with equal shares of men and women, with various socioeconomic

5 Dual citizenship legislation is being considered by the Norwegian Parliament in 2018.

6 Interviewees resided throughout Greater Oslo, which includes the Norwegian capital and its suburbs (whose residents often commute to work in central Oslo).

7 Funded by the Research Council of Norway, grant no. 248007.

8 Interviewees equally distributed along the categories (Following the order above: 11, 10, 10 and 10). (Please see Supplementary material in Appendix, Table 1).

backgrounds, occupation types and educational levels. They resided in different neighborhoods in and around Oslo and included both individuals with and without their own or a parent's immigrant background.⁹

Sampling across the 'majority/minority' divide (cf. Meissner 2015, Yuval-Davis 2006) proved beneficial when recruiting interviewees who would otherwise shun studies like ours. Amir, a 36-year-old naturalized citizen born in Norway to migrants from Pakistan, explained how he disliked the idea of being recruited for having 'Pakistani roots'. Yet, after he learned our interviewees also included people with no immigrant background, like his friend Eirik, he agreed to participate.

No way that I would've participated in something like this. Never. I thought this was only for foreigners, like, with Pakistani roots, but he... [...] Eirik asked me, 'Have you responded?' And I said, 'No, like, why are you asking?' And then he said that he had participated.

Thus, the fact that we interviewed people across the 'majority/minority' divide helped us in reaching people who normally would not participate. Our sampling strategy was developed to capture the myriad factors that influence experiences of belonging in Norway's diversifying population, thus situating the study within emerging work that attempts to move beyond essentialized understandings of the nation-state and ethnic and religious groups (Wimmer and Schiller 2003, Yuval-Davis 2006, Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017). Our research design allowed us to contrast and compare a diverse set of people and get an empirically grounded understanding of the categories and identities that the interviewees themselves deem important in everyday life.

Several interviewees expressed unease discussing formal citizenship. Although an important finding, it also reminds us of the importance of carefully considering the power dynamics in the interview situation: interviews were voluntary and all interviewees were informed in detail about the project and its objectives. All interviews took place where the interviewee suggested: at home, in the workplace or in a café, and were conducted in Norwegian. The fact that the Norwegian word for citizenship, *statsborgerskap*, mainly refers to the formal notion of citizenship, helped focus the interviews around belonging vis-a-vis the legal dimensions of citizenship. Also, none of the interviewers was a Norwegian citizen, and this detail was sometimes brought into the interviews when interviewees asked, and contributed to ongoing reflection about researcher positionality (reference removed for peer-review).

Our interview guide comprised open-ended questions and several aids, including a Norwegian passport; a table comparing citizenship legislation in Norway, Sweden and Denmark; and a collage of newspaper clippings from a controversial Norwegian news case that we call 'birthplace unknown'.¹⁰ In addition, the 'Mahad case' introduced above was often brought up by

9 Participants or their parents were born in a total of 28 different countries across the globe (Please see Supplementary material in Appendix, Table 2).

10 In 2016, the birthplace field on a Norwegian passport was given as "unknown" if the holder was born in one of 31 countries in Africa, Asia or Kosovo. Norwegian authorities stated this was due to new documentation rules, including information exclusively from sources considered to be sufficiently reliable. The story was much debated

interviewees. Triggering memories or eliciting reflections, these aids helped draw out interviewees' experiences of citizenship. All interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo software, based on a codebook developed from bottom-up analysis. We applied pseudonyms for all cited individuals and neighborhoods.

Qualitative interviews encourage in-depth discussions that uncover nuances. Yet, framing the interviews as being about citizenship risked inflating the importance of citizenship in interviewees' statements. We sought to address this challenge by starting with broad questions – such as 'Where do you feel at home?' and 'How do you experience belonging?' – without actively introducing 'formal citizenship'. Further into the interview, a Norwegian passport was used as a 'prop' and placed on the table, to foreground the materiality of citizenship as manifested through the passport itself.¹¹ Including the passport physically in the interview setting contributed to reflections on belonging, also in emotional ways, on travel and experiences of border control, on sense of security/insecurity, on not having a Norwegian passport, but also on receiving the Norwegian passport for the first time.

Experiencing the citizenship-belonging nexus

Secure and implicit

Formal citizenship was in some cases implicit to interviewees' experiences of belonging. Feeling secure about one's place in Norwegian society went hand in hand with seeing formal citizenship as prosaic. As might be expected, such experiences were shared by individuals who were born in Norway to Norwegian-born parents. Both men and women, varying in age and occupation, rarely thought about formal citizenship, much less questioned it. As 53-year-old Anne¹² explained:

I don't regard [citizenship] as very important. [But] I understand that it is very important. When I think about those who don't really fit in anywhere, then of course I understand that it's important. But it's not something I have reflected upon or thought about.

This perspective, acknowledging that things could be different for migrants to Norway and/or their children who had naturalized or considered naturalizing, was common to born Norwegian citizens with no immigrant background. Anne reflected on becoming aware of the importance of citizenship, and the value of having citizenship in a safe, wealthy country, when visiting India. She recalled: 'And then I thought: "Oh God, how lucky we are, [we] who can just board the plane and [travel] back." ... [I understood then] that it's very important to have a passport.' For Anne, the security of Norwegian citizenship contrasted with the knowledge that not all people in the world have their rights secured through citizenship.

A secure sense of belonging and a complacent attitude regarding formal citizenship also characterized the experiences of belonging of some citizens *with* immigrant backgrounds, particularly those whose parents were naturalized – the Norwegian-born descendants of

in social media, and in print media, and incurred substantial and emotional reactions, often referencing discriminatory practices targeting immigrants.

11 Examples of other questions: 'in what situations do you come to think of your citizenship?' and 'what comes to mind when you see the Norwegian passport'?

12 All names are pseudonyms.

immigrants. We asked 30-year-old Rachel, whose parents were born in East Africa, about her citizenship:

I'm a Norwegian citizen. But it's actually not something I'm conscious about. I don't think about it [...]. But it has some consequences legally; Norwegian citizenship provides me with some rights that I'm entitled to, doesn't it. Yes, but I kind of take it for granted.

For Amir, a 36-year-old who naturalized as a child, belonging was linked to the neighborhood where he lives. Being born in Norway provided a sense of secure belonging – in his eyes – discrete from his Norwegian citizenship.

I grew up here, whether I have the Norwegian passport or not. Like, I'm from Ammerud¹³. I was born at the [local] hospital. I was born there; I live in Ammerud, in the same neighborhood. So, I'm from there. The Norwegian passport doesn't say... it doesn't describe me.

Discussing belonging vis-à-vis family history and his Norwegian passport, Amir differentiated between himself and his parents, emigrants from Pakistan. He linked their desire for Norwegian naturalization to the sense of security it brought after leaving an unsafe place with corruption and poor conditions: '...and they thought that: "If we at least have a Norwegian passport then, then at least we are here, then we cannot be deported." It's been more like that, right, on their part, while I was born here.'

Revealing of different dynamics, immigrants to Norway from Western countries expressed a clear divide between sense of belonging and formal citizenship status. For example, 58-year-old James, who grew up in the US, distinguished clearly between matters of identity and passport, 'I am who I am, right? And a passport or a piece of paper will not change that'. Similarly, 37-year-old Australian-born Brian viewed naturalization with pragmatism, and as de-linked from questions of belonging:

At least to me, it's merely a practical solution. [...] I feel extremely comfortable here, and I very much like it here without citizenship, you know. I don't need that in order to feel at home.

Both Brian and James express belonging in terms of feeling *at home* in Norway, yet do not *feel* Norwegian, thus underscoring the complexity of the citizen-cum-national category. Among our interviewees, experiences of secure belonging can be discrete from citizenship status, explicitly and in particular contexts. People may experience belonging in everyday life, without considering their formal citizenship much at all. In these contexts, the passport document might be described as a mere 'piece of paper'. Such experiences are articulated predominantly by – unsurprisingly – Norwegian citizens without immigrant background, but also by descendants of migrants, and by non-Norwegian citizens who know they would qualify for naturalization, thus illustrating the importance of considering various citizenship categories and types of backgrounds jointly.

13 All place names are pseudonyms

Secure and explicit

Formal citizenship also took on explicit roles in individuals' experienced belonging, nuancing considerations of formal citizenship as a prosaic matter. For Samuel, who was adopted at a young age from Sri Lanka by Norwegian-born parents, having Norwegian citizenship anchored his belonging: 'Belonging. It's.... in a way it's the passport that kind of defines you. [To a] very, very large degree...'. He continued, referring to his Norwegian identity being questioned in everyday life, being asked where he was *really* from, where on-lookers, based on appearance, assumed his background was not Norwegian. At age 41, Samuel had come to use his Norwegian citizenship as proof of his Norwegian identity.

I think the fact that I know that I'm a Norwegian citizen gives me a sense of security. It means that when someone asks me where I'm from, it doesn't harm my identity. It's kind of like, 'Yes, okay, let me tell you, because I'm a Norwegian citizen so I'm...' [...] I think it has brought me a sense of security. You have something with you in your backpack. So, I have this belonging, so you can say what you want, and you can think what you want – I am as Norwegian as you.

Marianne, a life-long resident of Norway in her 40s, had not reflected much about citizenship. Formal citizenship, however, took a different meaning when discussing her adopted daughter Cathrine. She was denied entry on a bus from Denmark to Norway, because she did not have her passport with her. Borders between the two countries were porous until new security measures arose in the context of the European refugee crisis in 2015/2016. Even so, Marianne immediately thought that Cathrine's skin color was the reason why she was stopped:

It hurt my heart. But then I saw a newspaper article about two young people of Nordic appearance who were stopped on the bus. It was a few months later. Same thing. So, then I thought: 'Wow.' There was a little bit of relief [...] Cathrine, my little girl, has [a passport]. She is just another, another person with dark skin born in Norway. Now she is as Norwegian as [anyone].

The passport, then, became symbolic of being a Norwegian citizen – of being a Norwegian – regardless of its holder's personal appearance. Here, the passport becomes much more than merely a formal document: it is seen as a defining object, as materially confirming belonging.

Formal citizenship was also explicitly mentioned in the context of feelings of belonging among people who held dual citizenship, naturalized as adults, and non-Norwegian citizens who chose not to naturalize, but would have qualified. Among the latter, Johan encountered a situation that triggered explicit reflections on connections between formal citizenship and belonging, even when he felt a secure sense of belonging in Norway. Johan, who is 39 years old and came to Oslo as a teenager from Germany, said: 'people think I'm Norwegian'. Although he seldom reflects on his [German] citizenship, he mentions an example from his work at a hotel: 'one time I was asked to show a valid residence permit. They had not asked about that before, so then suddenly one day all of us foreigners had to provide this document... That was a bit strange'. Johan was taken aback by it, but remembered that many of his colleagues, who had other citizenships, had been much more troubled by it. For him, this was a mere formality, reflecting his sense of a secure belonging, despite not being a Norwegian citizen.

We see how formal citizenship takes on explicit roles, also for belonging, albeit in very different ways. The above examples are marked by a sense of secure belonging in ways chosen, reflected upon and acted on. Meanwhile, questions of race, and being seen by others as belonging (or not), also emerge. Whilst the individuals in these examples define their belonging as secure, their explicit reflections on formal citizenship underscore the ways in which national belonging and being a citizen continue to be affected by racial assumptions in Norway. On the one hand, these racial assumptions can be challenged, changing parameters of national belonging, as Samuel demonstrates. On the other hand, through the framework of the citizenship-belonging nexus, we find that the complexity of national belonging can transcend formal citizenship status, when belonging is experienced as secure, as Johan's example shows.

Insecure and implicit

Existing scholarship on citizenship and belonging has underscored the ways in which insecurity can play out (see e.g. Bassel et al 2018, Yuval-Davis et al 2017). Insecure belonging and changing experiences of (in)secure belonging over time and depending on context were also common among our interviewees. Maria, a 37-year-old non-Norwegian citizen originating from Latin America, who had not naturalized, had struggled to begin a new life in Norway. Language was a challenge, she worked in low-income jobs, experienced housing market discrimination and found it hard to get to know people in Oslo. Having now lived in Norway for 25 years, and having moved to an Oslo suburb, working in a permanent job and with children in school, she had started to feel a sense of belonging. In her narrative of increased belonging, citizenship status, however, was conspicuously absent.

Meanwhile, naturalization came up in her discussions with friends who have become Norwegian citizens. When she explains why she has not naturalized, she refers to the rights permanent residence provides: 'Healthcare applies to me, doesn't it? [My] children are in school. That's why I thought: "Why do I need it?" Only for travelling or to say that I'm Norwegian. [I'll] never become Norwegian, it's only a paper.' She continued: 'People are going to ask you where you are from regardless, you know. So, it does not say that much.' Figuratively emphasizing the point, Maria puts the Norwegian passport on her forehead and says, "it's not like I walk around with it here, you know". Although there are precarious dimensions to her experienced belonging, she does not feel that having Norwegian citizenship would change those because "it's only a paper."

A similar reflection came from Nuru, a 49-year-old, who in practice 'had to naturalize' because of work-related travels. He explained that he felt he belonged to Kenya, and increasingly so to Norway, but that, 'citizenship has nothing to do with it'. He relates this to his appearance: 'I don't know whether it would have been different if I was a European citizen, so that I blend, because for me it is very obvious that I have origins in Africa'.

The degree of security in relation to belonging could vary, but as with the above two examples, the roles of formal citizenship in relation to a secure sense of belonging ranged from absent to somehow implicit, but given little weight. This was most clearly linked to questions of race, and of not being 'seen as' Norwegian regardless of formal citizenship – often despite increasing sense of belonging to Norway.

The expressed sense of belonging could also change during an interview. Amir, who was born in Norway and naturalized as a child, had initially explained how citizenship was something he only thought about when travelling. However, Amir's choice of words later in the interview contrast:

It's only an advantage when you are travelling [...] It's those types of things that I connect with the Norwegian passport. It's like, how should I put it, kind of misusing it, you see? Taking the advantages. Not a nice thing to do, but that's the way it is.

His references to 'misusing' and 'taking the advantages' reveals Amir's ambiguity about his entitlement to his passport. This contrasts with Rachel, whose parents were born in East Africa, who said: 'Norwegian citizenship provides me with some rights that I'm entitled to'. So, while Amir takes such rights for granted without reflecting on them, he also seems to question whether his entitlements are full and legitimate. His unease about the interview also reveals the paradox of anchored belonging and doubting the security of that anchoring.

Amir's conflicting reflections on citizenship and the passport are based on a tie that somehow holds, yet is also experienced as insecure, reflective of the multiplicity of the citizenship-belonging nexus. Perhaps triggered by backdrop of the 'Mahad case' at the time of the interview, Amir subsequently brings up the hypothetical scenario of being deported to Pakistan, dramatically adding a precarious component to his sense of belonging, linked to doubts about whether or not Norwegian authorities regard him as someone who belongs in Norway, on equal terms with other citizens.

That's why I ask, it [the interview] shouldn't affect me somehow? Suddenly I would have to go back. Again, if they would do that [deport him], I can't go to Pakistan. I have no sense of belonging there. I know people here. You get what I mean? So, it's not them who are supposed to tell me. I have my friends here, my things are here, my work is here. If I would be sent to Pakistan, or wherever they would send me, what the hell should I do? Then they could just as well send me to anywhere in the world, just say, 'Try it out here'.

Amir's case illustrates how citizenship can guarantee safety and mobility rights, but can simultaneously symbolize their potential withdrawal. Citizenship and belonging, thus, remain tinged with precariousness. Experiences of belonging reflecting insecurity, without foregrounding citizenship, underscore how contextual factors, including the specter of deportation or the revocation of citizenship that appear in the media, mattered for Maria and for Amir. Further, their agency was central to forming their experience. Their reflections articulate hierarchies of belonging in Norway, in relation to both looking and sounding Norwegian for Maria, and to descent for Amir; where citizenship can only partly offer respite.

When relating insecure belonging to often implicit links with citizenship, to the citizenship-belonging nexus, it becomes clear that citizenship – and the passport – on the one hand may matter more than the first, quite implicit roles described, perhaps triggered by particular mediatized events. And on the other hand, for Maria, the roles of citizenship for belonging remain of little concern, as the formal status of permanent resident already offers the types of security and rights which she deems necessary. She has little faith that citizenship would change

what she feels continues to be an insecure and partial belonging to Norway, despite a sense of belonging which is increasing over time.

Insecure and explicit

Interviewees who expressed an insecure sense of belonging often referred to citizenship more explicitly, as something that does or could potentially increase their security. Bahar, a 49-year-old, with both Norwegian and Afghan citizenships, stresses the role of citizenship where ‘the passport is validity, it gives you, in a way, it guarantees that you can live where you feel (..) the belonging is related to the guarantee the passport gives you’. For Bahar, not having Norwegian citizenship is a mark of insecurity, of insecure belonging in practical and emotional terms.

Sara, a 26-year-old who does not have Norwegian citizenship, linked her belonging to citizenship. Asked about belonging and where she feels at home at the interview’s start, she replied: ‘I don’t feel at home in Norway.’ Then, when asked why, she replied:

Citizenship is actually part of it. Because every time when people ask me, ‘Where?’ – that is, ‘Where did you grow up?’ – and then I reply that ‘I was born in Russia and grew up in Norway’, and they reply by saying: ‘Sure, but you do have Norwegian citizenship, don’t you?’ So, the moment I say, ‘No, I’m Russian’, people get really like, ‘What!?’ and then I get many more questions. Then I feel like they don’t treat me the same way as they would treat a Norwegian. [...] [Citizenship] has always been an issue because I have – my name is Sara, right? And also, I have, I look Norwegian, I speak Norwegian, and in a way [citizenship] is the only thing that separates me.

Sara said she often experienced people teasing her for being an ‘illegal immigrant’, which annoyed her.

[I] grew up in Norway. How can I be here illegally? [...] So, with the Norwegian passport I avoid that. Then there isn’t any, there aren’t any questions. I... It’s not like I can show up with my residence permit and just. It isn’t the same thing, it’s just a piece of paper. A passport is a passport. Nobody doubts a passport.

She links her citizenship status and her experience of belonging, and refers to being reminded that she does not have Norwegian citizenship, which diminishes her sense of belonging. Given that she could naturalize, why has she not?

I thought that if I give away [my] Russian citizenship, then I’ll never get it back [...] So, then I thought [about how] it gives me more benefits to have citizenship in Russia. It is both a bit because of heritage and in case something happens. Because, you... you never know what will happen ten years from now, and then it’s good to have another country to lean on. [...] But also, the most important part is perhaps that it is actually part of my identity. Because if I only have Norwegian citizenship then, yes, then I’m not Russian at all anymore.

Sara’s reason to not naturalize connects with her identity as well as sense of security. In a way, her Russian citizenship serves as insurance, something that could save her in a crisis. Even though she expressed feeling ‘protected’ in Norway, the assertion was complicated when she

admitted, later in the interview, to sometimes worrying that her parents might have made a mistake upon arriving in Norway, which could end in the withdrawal of their residence permits. Insecurity thus underpinned Sara's sense of belonging in Norway as directly linked to her citizenship status.

Similar explicit reflections on citizenship and belonging were found among individuals who chose to naturalize. 48-year old Cheng naturalized 10 years ago. He stressed the importance of citizenship:

It means that, legally, the system has accepted you (...) if you accept me that's fine, if you don't accept me, then it doesn't matter because the system doesn't discriminate me [...] I have a Norwegian passport and there is no systematic discrimination, so I am satisfied already. Then you're not as easily hurt.

For Cheng, the passport constitutes an element of security and a systematic commitment to equal treatment, although acknowledging that having the Norwegian passport may not translate into recognition as a Norwegian. However, for Cheng, these dimensions are less important than the formal recognition which his Norwegian passports offers.

Gémina, who naturalized 25 years ago, closely tied her dual citizenship to sense of security and belonging. Now, at age 48, she seems to regard citizenship as something that can, to some extent, protect her against discrimination, especially on the job market. However, she also noted that her Norwegian citizenship would not prevent prejudice encountered from having a foreign-sounding name. So, while her feeling of belonging in Norway grew over time, underlying insecurity remains.

There is this insecurity when you hear the debate on immigration and all this, right? It's almost like... Right now there is this case about someone's citizenship that is being revoked, and I'm thinking: 'Oh my God, maybe I wrote my last name a bit wrong', and that could be the case because I have an accent mark on the "e", that I usually don't use in Norwegian because, oh God, I have to make sure things like that are in order so that they don't think I have said the wrong name or... like feeling of insecurity, isn't it? So, there is this... still I don't belong 100% here [...] So that is why I've actually kept both citizenships.

Gémina directly links her sense of belonging to both her Norwegian and original citizenships in relation to security and insecurity. She regards belonging as closely connected with 'becoming citizen' and feeling she has a stake in the society she is living in. Yet, a sense of risk looms: citizenship can be renounced, as the 'Mahad case' is a reminder of.

Set against the citizenship-belonging nexus, these experiences underscore how formal citizenship status is explicitly brought into discussions about belonging. The extent to which people felt secure (or not) in their sense of belonging varied. For Sara, Norwegian citizenship was the only missing element. Maria called the passport 'just a piece of paper'. The frictions between interviewees' reflections testify to the role of context, but also the passage of time. Meanwhile, here too, the pervasiveness of perceived hierarchies of belonging in Norway – where race remains a central issue – persists. Simultaneously, both Sara's and Gémina's stories point to their

agency in producing belonging under the constraints in which they find themselves, where different and dynamic outcomes accompany degrees of belonging and recognition.

Conclusion

In this article, we ask *how, when and why citizenship matters (or not) for belonging*. We addressed this question through data collected in Oslo, Norway, including people with differing citizenship statuses, and those with and without immigrant backgrounds. Exploring the citizenship-belonging nexus through the experiences of our interviewees, the interplay of secure/insecure belonging, with implicit/explicit roles of citizenship status, became evident, as reflected in the analytical framework which guided our analysis. This analytical framework, we believe, holds analytical potential which is of relevance also to empirical contexts beyond our own, and offers potential for cross-context comparison.

Before offering three theoretically oriented conclusions, we advocate the need for further scrutiny of experiences of belonging in relation to citizenship, which systematically analyzes data that comprises the experiences of individuals with varying citizenship statuses, rather than presuming that a given citizenship status equates certain experiences of belonging, per se (Askins 2016, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Further, we argue that avoiding the reproduction of a ‘majority/minority’ divide has allowed us to shed light on cross-cutting dynamics vis-à-vis the citizenship-belonging nexus. This – as we return to – confirms expected realities of race as salient (Bangstad 2015, Gilroy 2000). Our data also allow for complexity and agency to come forth (Antonsich 2010, Yuval-Davis 2006). Such a methodological approach is critically important to analytical endeavors to unpick the dynamics of the experienced citizenship-belonging nexus. Our analysis also reflects the reality that the often-used minority/majority divide in its most dichotomous iterations is empirically unfounded, and certainly only reveals part of the picture, in research in societies characterized by migration-related diversity.

First, the interface of race and nationhood runs through our analysis of experiencing citizenship and belonging in relation to one another (or not). Here, we find that perceived hierarchies of (national) belonging (Phoenix 2011, Skey 2013) get articulated, often in terms of race. This connects with perceptions of nationhood insofar as whiteness – or, as an interviewee noted, ‘looking Norwegian’ – is seen as producing particular positions within a hierarchy of national belonging (Antonsich 2018, Bangstad 2015, Brubaker 2010). *Becoming* ‘one of us’ as a citizen is a goal of naturalization programs, though does not automatically equate with being *seen* as ‘one of us’ in new citizens’ experiences (references removed for peer-review). The citizenship-belonging nexus sheds light on the complex ways in which formal citizenship status interacts with perceived hierarchies of belonging in a nation-state like Norway (Skey 2013). These hierarchies point to the problematic conflation of citizenship with nationality, which recognizes citizens as nationals, but withholds their full public recognition as nationals, first and foremost because of race. Evidently, relationships between nationhood and the community to which citizenship grants membership within have not yet been fully resolved, in Norway, much as in other European countries (Brubaker 2010). Meanwhile, in everyday life, and through concerted efforts, individuals who are not white draw on Norwegian citizenship in order to prove their legitimate national belonging, even when this is questioned by on-lookers. Thus, citizenship may yet hold the power to include in the national community, although this is currently a contested reality.

Second, throughout our analysis, the passport document itself surfaces. From the ‘Mahad case’ we started off with, which was also raised in relation to insecure belonging, both implicit and explicit, the passport is often referenced by interviewees. For the passport is indeed experienced as a material sign of citizenship – whether as mobility resource, as security against deportation, or as proof of national belonging (to one or more nation-states and national communities). Methodologically, and theoretically, we find that whilst the passport cannot be conflated with citizenship as such, its importance as a material sign is in need of further scrutiny (though see Torpey 2000, Häkli 2015). We find that the varied roles the passport takes on emerge through analytical attention to the citizenship-belonging nexus. Symbolic and emotional dimensions of belonging, including national belonging, but also very practical and pragmatic dimensions of belonging, as an insurance mechanism guaranteeing entry at the border, are articulated.

Third, and lastly, we find our interviewees revealed agency whilst operating in the citizenship-belonging nexus. Across categories of citizenship, many interviewees had a seemingly pragmatic approach to their citizenship status, saying they only thought of it when travelling with their passport – as a mobility resource. However, perspectives on citizenship and reflections about belonging often changed over the course of the interview, as differing temporal or contextual dimensions were foregrounded. The agency of individuals to manage the varying, sometimes conflicting experiences of formal citizenship in relation to belonging is therefore central to understanding such dynamics. Agency could be related to the degree of reflexivity concerning the role of citizenship, ranging from taking citizenship completely for granted to explicitly citing how security and insecurity were produced by particular citizenship statuses. Yet, we must recognize some of the ways agency cuts across citizenship categories and factors, such as race, in producing outcomes with regard to belonging. Rachel’s, Amir’s and Samuel’s cases illustrated that the outcomes are not entirely predictable, yet underscore the roles of individual agency, in the midst of structural constraints, as regards experiences of the citizenship-belonging nexus.

This article has provided insight into how people understand, approach and reflect on formal citizenship in relation to belonging. The interplay of seeking security and minimizing (the risk for) insecurity vis-à-vis the citizenship institution emerges as salient. As a membership-granting institution, citizenship is inherently about belonging. Thus, formal citizenship status does matter for – but does not determine – people’s sense of belonging. We find that attention to the citizenship-belonging nexus encourages a sharp analytical focus, which allows flexibility in yielding evidence of how, when and why citizenship matters, and also provides evidence of the limits and challenges to the role of citizenship in producing (national) belonging.

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Appendix: Supplementary material

Table 1: Gender, age and citizenship categories across interviewees		
Citizenship category	Gender	Year of birth
Norwegian	M	1988
Norwegian	F	1988
Norwegian	M	1965
Norwegian	F	1987
Norwegian	M	1988
Norwegian	F	1982
Norwegian	F	1946
Norwegian	F	1964
Norwegian	M	1966
Norwegian	F	1958
Norwegian	M	1962
Dual	M	1975
Dual	F	1990
Dual	F	1969
Dual	M	1994
Dual	M	1964
Dual	M	1976
Dual	F	1947
Dual	F	1968
Dual	F	1951
Dual	F	1972
Naturalized	M	1982
Naturalized	M	1974
Naturalized	F	1967
Naturalized	M	1985
Naturalized	F	1973
Naturalized	M	1970
Naturalized	F	1950
Naturalized	F	1958
Naturalized	M	1968
Naturalized	M	1969
Foreign	F	1983
Foreign	M	1959
Foreign	F	1970
Foreign	M	1970
Foreign	F	1954
Foreign	M	1978
Foreign	F	1988
Foreign	M	1989
Foreign	F	1980
Foreign	M	1972

Table 2: National backgrounds across citizenship categories of interviewees	
<i>Citizenship category</i>	<i>Own or parents' country of birth (self-reported)</i>
Born citizens	Norway, Australia, Ethiopia, USA
Dual citizens	Norway, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Brazil, Colombia, Denmark, El-Salvador, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Turkey, USA
Naturalized citizens	Afghanistan, China, India, Iraqi Kurdistan, Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, UK
Non-Norwegian-citizens	Argentina, Australia, Cameroon, Chile, Greece, Poland, Russia, Somalia, Sweden, Uruguay, US