



technology, children, schools and families

# **Future issues in socio-technical change for UK citizenship: the importance of 'place'**

**Nick Nash**

**Department of Psychology, University of Bath**

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## **Abstract**

This paper emphasises the importance of place in relation to identity, community and citizenship. In considering future technological advances it is argued that these concepts will continue to be understood in relation to place.

Identification with place is an integral dimension of selfhood and evidence for a positive relationship civic engagement is discussed. In the future, people will continue to define themselves and their communities in relation to place, although identities will be increasingly grounded in virtual spaces created by online community networks. Therefore, citizenship initiatives should be geared towards understanding the complexity of relationships to place and people's place-based meanings. In addition, the growth of online social networks will enrich and extend offline social networks rather than replace them. However, communities will be increasingly based on shared interests rather than shared locations, and communication devices will become more geared towards personal, rather than spatial, networks. This will create problems for policymakers and it will be necessary to adopt more flexible initiatives. Finally, it is proposed that citizenship will eventually become more fragmented and dislocated from the nation-state. Policymakers should gear interventions towards multiple forms of citizenship spaces, identities and practices, both online and offline.

**Keywords:** place, community, citizenship, internet, technology, communication, individualism

## Introduction

To state that predicting future social trends is a complex business would be to stretch the acceptable bounds of understatement. Predicting the future of citizenship is all the more formidable. However, we should not shrink from such prophetic tasks as it encourages us to confront and, more importantly, consider the concept in all its glorious complexity. Undoubtedly, in recent decades technological advances, particularly the emergence of new forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has had a tremendous impact on the ways that we live our lives. However, in contrast to the many dizzying changes occurring, certain things, like ourselves, appear to be fundamental and permanent.

This paper examines the future of citizenship within local communities from the perspective of *place*. The first section proceeds by outlining the important relationship between place and identity and weighs up the existence of a positive relationship between place-identity and local civic engagement. This is followed by considering the impacts of technological development for identity. It is suggested that place will remain fundamental to the construction of identity and community. Nonetheless, CMC is changing the way we think about place and identity relationships, with reference to the emerging importance of virtual spaces and authentication of selfhood. Moreover, physical and virtual aspects of identity and place have already begun to merge.

The paper then moves on to discuss the future of local communities. It is argued that CMC will complement and enhance offline interaction rather than diminish it. A number of studies are discussed that highlight the advantages of CMC for community-building and civic engagement. The final section asserts that citizenship will undergo significant change, in which formally established identities, locations and practices will give way to novel and multiple forms of citizenship that transcend the nation-state. Therefore, in the future citizenship will be characterised by more informal practices, non-traditional identities and alternative spaces.

## The role of place in the construction of identity

The academic literature is rich with studies that draw connections between *identity* and *place*. This paper takes up Tuan's (1977) definition of place as physical *space* invested with meaning. People's relationships with place are complex, multifaceted and sometimes blend with perceptions of *community*, thereby combining physical and social aspects of place (Manzo and Perkins 2005). However, others have proposed that each involves a distinct cognitive process of identification (eg Brehm, Eisenhauer and Krannich 2006). A number of concepts have emerged to explain this kind of relationship including '*sense of place*', '*place attachment*', '*place dependence*' and '*place identity*' (Manzo 2003). With specific reference to place identity, evidence suggests that a person's sense of self is partly generated by exposure to physical spaces (Korpela 1989; Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff 1983; Twigger Ross and Uzzell, 1996). Proshansky et al (1983) describe place-identity as '...a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the person lives.' (p59). People identify with places through psychological investment over time and repeated encounters in which a set of meanings accumulates for that person; a '...pot-pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as other types of settings.' (p60). Simply being exposed to a place does not lead to identification (Manzo and Perkins 2005), but when they do, the interactions, and the meanings that become attached to significant places underpin a person's sense of self and belonging.

Disruption to place identity can have profound psychological consequences for individuals. A classic example comes from Fried (1963) in the context of the relocation of suburban community in Boston, Massachusetts. Fried observed a range of profound emotional responses akin to loss after the community was relocated to other parts of the city (see also Cuba and Hummon 1992). Twigger Ross and Uzzell (1996) remark that the sense of loss people experience in being forcibly relocated may persist for decades. This is because people are motivated to maintain a sense of self-continuity, which is sustained by a psychological connection to places that symbolise past selves (*place-referent continuity*) or transferable features of those places (*place-congruent continuity*). If this sense of self-continuity is disrupted the person may experience loss. Of course, this does not occur each time an individual moves to a new physical location. People may even choose high mobility lifestyles and some cultures are traditionally nomadic and do not exhibit the same type of emotional response. Twigger Ross (1996) and Giuliani (1991) speculate that key factors appears to be the strength of place-identity and whether the physical relocation is voluntary or not.

A contrasting view argues that as a cognitive construct, place-identity is vague and imprecise (eg Ponti 2005). Taking a broadly discursive psychological approach, an alternative body of work has sought to '*displace*' place identity from cognitive *structure* to discursive *process* (Dixon and Durrheim 2000; see also Haste *in press*). That is, the way that people talk about place identity is not taken as reflecting the reality of their cognitive relationships with places, but in terms of the realities constructed and legitimated by language (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In contrast to the assumption that place-identity (and identity more generally) is a fixed, internally consistent structure, place identity is constituted in social interaction rather than in the mind and enabled and constrained by available ways of talking about people's relationships to places (Wetherell and Maybin 1996; Widdicombe 1998). Therefore, rather than investigating what place identity *is*, we should be examining what place identity *does* (Dixon and Durrheim 2000; Ponti 2005, Wallwork and Dixon 2004). Whichever perspective on place-identity is adopted, the connection between identity and place is of special importance with reference to community engagement and citizenship. Following what has already been written, the next section questions the assumption that community engagement is predicated on a person having some kind of identification with a place or community, based upon a sense of attachment to or affiliation with that place, in light of the way that identity is changing with the growth of CMC. Whilst community may be defined in a number of ways, in this paper '*local community*' is defined by a shared physical location roughly equivalent to '*neighbourhood*' as distinct from '*virtual community*', which is defined by shared interest (see Gaved and Anderson 2006 for a review of community definition). However, there are no hard boundaries; for example, members of online social networks may be defined by a shared physical location (eg Turner and Pinkett 2000).

It is generally assumed that a strong sense of place-identity is a positive thing and benefits both the individual (in terms of nurturing a sense of belonging, purpose and self-esteem) and the community (in terms of active community engagement) (Hay 1998; Low and Altman 1992; Perkins and Long 2002). In the literature, a variety of measures of place-identity have been found to be positively correlated with local community engagement (Brown, Douglas and Brown 2003), engagement in neighbourhood sustainability initiatives (Guardia and Pol 2002; Pol 2002), support for protection of the local landscape (Vorkinn and Riese 2001; Vaske and Kobrin 2001) and behaviours aimed at local water conservation (Bonaiuto, Bilotta, Bonnes, Ceccarelli, Martorelli and Carrus 2008).

Conversely, Lewicka (2005) found that place identification itself did not predict local community engagement, but required local social networks to translate people's identification with place into civic activity. Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, Pierce and van Egeren (2007) also note that a community needs to reach a kind of *critical mass* of

perceptions including an awareness of community problems, community efficacy and local leadership before people will act. It may be that in the studies that did establish a link, a sufficient level of community social capital already existed. Therefore place-identity alone might not be sufficient to ensure community engagement. Identification with place may also be counterproductive according to some studies. Fried (2000) notes that individuals with lower levels of emotional investment in places are socially and economically advantaged because they tend to be more geographically mobile with broader social networks because they are less tied to places. Meanwhile, those who are emotionally invested in a place are effectively '*localised*' and socially and economically disadvantaged.

## **The future of place-identity**

Whilst the findings are slightly mixed, they raise some interesting questions. For example, how will technological advances, particularly the growth of CMC influence place-identity and what might this mean for local community engagement and citizenship in the future? As advances in CMC continue apace, the way we think about the concept of identity will undoubtedly change. Bennett (2003) notes the ambivalence with which new understandings of identity have been anticipated; positively, in terms of granting the freedom to creatively fashion multiple identities, and negatively, in terms of the tyranny, insecurity and personal responsibility of reflexive self-determination (see also Giddens, 1991). New forms of identity have been taken as heralding the demise of traditional forms of identity based upon affiliations in physical space, leading to a fragmentation of local community and society. This concern stems from the assumption that online identities are *inauthentic* because they are disembodied, spatially dislocated and therefore effectively anonymous (Watt, Lea and Spears 2005).

In response to this, it should be noted that in both online and offline communication people '*manage*' their identities in different ways, enhancing or concealing different parts of their character depending on the social context (Widdicombe 1998). Therefore, to a degree, the dichotomy between online and offline selves is a false one. In the immediate future the capacity for meaningful and emotional expression of self will continue to be limited by the design constraints of specific online networks. Currently, modes of online communication remain heavily text-based; however, this is changing and will continue to change. In the future, online communication will be less text-based and will enable new modes of expression with the development of new audio and visual communication media to '*flesh out*' online identities (Watt et al. 2005). Does this mean that people will be more constrained in constructing their online identities? Perhaps not, as recent evidence suggests that online identities may not be as inauthentic as some assert. Robinson (2007) argues that the differentiation of online and offline selves stems from studies of multi-user domains (MUDs) and generalised to all online identities. Conversely, in other forms of online communication people frame their identities in accordance with their offline selves. Moreover, it has been reported that people are sometimes more likely to disclose personal characteristics when online than in face-to-face interaction (Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons 2002).

It is likely that in the future place will constitute an important category for grounding identity online. Goodings, Locke and Browne (2007) remark how users of the social networking site MySpace constructed and authenticated their identities through past and shared experience of place. From this they argue that the concept of place is fundamental to identity in all '*mediated*' communities (communities that are not defined on the basis of shared physical space). Whilst mediated communities are not geographically bounded, a sense of '*shared locatedness*' emerges from the interaction of its members to construct a shared identity linked to '*virtual space*' that the online community can effectively '*inhabit*'. An alternative example of this occurs in the

phenomenon of cultural diasporas. These are communities in which people may be geographically remote but experience a tangible sense of belonging that is mediated through spatial narratives of shared identity linked to common places. Hampton (2003) explains that the sense of loss experienced by members of online communities is similar to that experienced when a local community is physically relocated (eg Fried 1963).

In addition, some new forms of online social networking sites, such as Facebook, begin from established *offline* social networks as the basis for community affiliation, in which place (eg school, college or workplace) defines identity and membership (Goodings et al 2007). This is an interesting development as it supports the argument that online social networking sites are likely to be place-focused in the future, both in physical and virtual locations. Moreover, in transcending the virtual, online social networks enhance offline social networks creating the potential to increase social capital in local communities which, as discussed, may be an important precursor to community engagement (in addition to identification with place). Furthermore, Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) examined the relationship between social networking on Facebook and the formation and maintenance of offline community networks. They found that social networking sites like Facebook integrate online and offline networks, serving to maintain offline social ties. Meanwhile, Gaved and Anderson (2006) note the increasing proximity between online and offline social networks that in the past were viewed as being more exclusive. They go on to argue that place still matters; whilst CMC may liberate people from spatial constraints, leading to the creation of geographically unbounded social networks, it does not reduce the importance of place in terms of their identities and relationships.

The literature on local community responses to risk also underscores the importance of place and identity with reference to the way people frame their perceptions of environmental risks. This is in contrast to the post-modern idea that traditional structures such as the local community were declining in importance (eg Beck 1992; see also Ekberg 2007 and Mythen 2007 for a critique). In perceiving risks, people do not respond passively to external knowledge but engage in meaningful and active interpretation of risk communications and develop their own understandings. This takes place through the lens of local community experience (Horlick-Jones, Sime and Pidgeon 2003). Pidgeon, Henwood, Parkhill, Venables and Simmons (2008) emphasise the importance of understanding risk perceptions grounded in the local social, cultural and political context. Their research on communities living in close proximity to nuclear facilities in England suggests that risks *intersect* with people's autobiographical narratives. Local risks were viewed as part of local life and nuclear facilities were broadly supported. Bickerstaff, Simmons and Pidgeon (2006) comment that in researching local community responses to risk, places are treated as simply physical backdrops, which overlooks the meaning-laden nature of risk. In their research into the experience of risk and risk management policies in the 2001 UK Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, local people's experience of risk was explicitly spatial in focus and shaped by complex constructions of place and identity. Local people constructed a marginal place identity through which the outbreak and centralised responses to the outbreak were interpreted and understood (eg central government ignoring local knowledge and community interests in a region that was already politically and economically subjugated).

Burningham and Thrush (2004) discuss how perceptions of local air pollution were interpreted in the context of local community life. They explain that rather than perceiving the pollution from the factory as problematic, it was accepted because the consequences of losing the factory, on which community identity and livelihood rested, was perceived as being greater than the air pollution threat (see also Bickerstaff and Walker 2001). Similar approaches have investigated locally and personally significant meanings as a framework for understanding wider perceptions of risk in the context of the meanings of woods and trees (Henwood and Pidgeon 2001; O'Brien 2005). This means that perceptions of risk may be less dependent on the provision of expert knowledge and more informed by local perceptions of community and place. For

example, in the context of flood risk, local people sometimes rejected official Environment Agency 'at risk' status for their homes when it did not accord with evaluations based on local perceptions and experience (see also Bickerstaff and Walker 2001). Therefore, policymakers must move beyond the idea that local community responses are governed by a lack of information and the reductionist view of risk that fails to take local social, cultural and political context into account (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001).

## **The future of place-based communities**

Further to the dichotomy of online/offline identity, it is likely that the existing distinction between online and offline *communities* will become less conspicuous in the future. Will this evolution will be to the detriment of existing local communities? The evidence suggests that this will not be the case because new modes of CMC promise to connect people *to* place as much as liberate them *from* place. There is a sense, particularly in social psychology that online social networks draw people away from face-to-face interaction and damage local community relations by facilitating modes of communication that transcend physical location (Watt et al, 2005). Some speculate that this will result in the death of local communities, reducing them merely to what Wellman, Quan-Haase, Boase, Chen, Hampton, Diaz and Miyato (2003) refer to as '*quaint residuals*'.

Wellman, Quan-Haase, Boase, Chen, Hampton, Diaz and Miyata (2006) review a range of studies supporting the idea that communities are evolving in line with the proliferation of networked individualism (NI), which is displacing spatial community networks. This is because new networking devices connect to people rather than places. Wellman et al (2006) use the example of the telephone to illustrate this; whereas telephones would previously have been situated in fixed places for anyone to use, phones are now personal, portable devices. Other technological developments such as wireless internet also facilitate NI. This is leading to a shifting of the structure of community, whereby community networks are now less determined by shared physical location. For examples, communities are increasingly based upon shared interests rather than shared location and community '*goods*' (such as social support and information) are conveyed to individuals online rather than in the household or neighbourhood. This means that in the future we will be more likely to come to know our neighbours on the grounds of shared interests rather than on the grounds of shared location (Foth and Adkins 2006). As Foth and Adkins remark, physical proximity cannot be equated to social proximity.

However, despite these predictions, the role of local community relationships is unlikely to simply fade away. Apart from being unrealistic, the idea that one day we may conduct our social relationships almost exclusively online is somewhat depressing. Besides, most scholars would not subscribe to this bleak view of the future. An often overlooked but important point raised by Hampton (2002) criticises the idea that offline communities were constrained by their geography until liberated by the internet as archaic; previous technological developments in communications and transportation, such as the telephone and the steam train have, for a long time, enabled people to connect to social networks beyond their own neighbourhoods without threatening the existence of local communities. Wellman et al (2003) argue that the dichotomy between online and offline communities is a false one; virtual communities are unfavourably compared to an idealised geographically bounded, close-knit local community that never existed. Moreover, the distinction between physical space and cyberspace is also inappropriate because social ties increasingly transcend both spheres (Wellman 2001). It is more likely that rather than damaging the fabric of existing local communities, online communities will actually accentuate their importance and extend and enrich them.

For example, in a series of ongoing studies of 'Netville', an experimental 'wired' local community near Toronto, Wellman et al (2003) observed that those who used the online local community network were more engaged with their neighbours as well as with people more geographically distant. More specifically, users reported no negative impacts on their offline local social networks, had more offline face-to-face contact with their neighbours and wider offline social networks. Such research lends support to the argument that CMC does not necessarily mean the death of traditional place-based communities, but may facilitate engagement within such communities by expanding users' personal networks, improving communication within the community and building trust and cooperation between members.

In order to gauge the impact of technological change for local communities in the future, it is necessary to look at how communities are currently sustained. As mentioned previously, the sharing of physical space does not of itself automatically lead to identification or affiliation with those with whom that space is shared. Taking a view of community as a process as opposed to structure, community is constructed and sustained through its (re)production in social interaction (see Haste, in press). This means that like online communities, offline communities should not be considered as something that exists independently 'out there', but as a discursive formulation that becomes more or less important depending on the social context. This can be exemplified by looking at studies that report on local community conflict.

In studies of community conflict, the concept of local community takes on a novel significance. Whereas for most of the time people are not mindful of their membership of the local community, when place became threatened in some way campaign leaders mobilised the community as a heterogeneous, consensual entity defined in relation to place. In this context local community serves to galvanise support against a 'common enemy' whilst simultaneously masking multiple and sometimes contradictory political interests, goals and demands expressed locally. This has been used as a defence by local people in the context of grassroots campaigns against development at Anahim Lake, British Columbia (Larsen 2008), the proposed expansion of Stansted Airport, near London (Griggs and Howarth 2008) and central government measures to protect the Swedish wolf population (Sjölander-Lindqvist 2008). Community constructions are flexible. For example, they may intentionally construct the local community as marginalised (eg Bickerstaff, Simmons and Pidgeon 2006; Wallwork and Dixon 2004) or as representing common values (eg Della Porta and Piazza 2007). As Burningham (1996) comments, such communities do not reflect actual social divisions, but are socially constructed at different times for different purposes. For this reason, online communities should not automatically be considered inferior to offline communities.

## **The future of citizenship**

The final part of this paper considers how anticipated changes to identity and community brought about by technological change might impact upon citizenship in the future. It is argued that whilst more traditional forms of citizenship at the level of the nation-state are likely to give way to multiple forms, citizenship will continue to be located in spaces, whether physical or virtual. Wellman et al (2006) predict that the rise of NI and the ensuing impact on local communities will lead to a 'fragmentation' of citizenship. The result will be multiple, distinct, mobilised citizenships based upon affiliations of individual interest rather than a general commitment to more traditional political values or ideology based upon one's position in the social structure. They do not intend this to mean that issues concerning place or locality will no longer be of relevance to citizenship. What they do argue is that place will become simply another community of interest, rather than an organising principle of citizenship (as in the nation-state). What this means is that governments will need to radically alter their strategies for promoting non-territorial

citizenship initiatives, targeting communities of shared interest rather than shared geography. This will require the development of novel, flexible forms of governance and democracy.

Some place-based citizenship initiatives are successful. Turner and Pinkett (2000), as part of their '*Creating Community Connections Project*', took an asset-based approach to local community development and conducted a year-long study in a low-income housing estate in Roxbury, Massachusetts. A local online neighbourhood network was used to map a wide range of local community amenities and services, for example, providing information on local resources including local businesses, associations and social groups. The corpus of information on local amenities and services was then collated online and made available to local residents via the internet either from home or at a local community centre. The aim of this was to create connections within and between people in the local community and to increase awareness of neighbourhood amenities and services, which, it was hoped would improve levels of civic engagement. After one year of the resource being set up, civic awareness amongst users of the resource was found to have significantly increased community social capital.

Bennett (2003b) suggests that many CMC initiatives aimed at encouraging political engagement are directed towards conventional political practices, where radical transformation is least likely to occur. At this level, transformation is likely to be limited to making communication networks more efficient and expansive. However, there is the future potential for transformation in democratic spaces outside the control of government and other established political institutions. This is because decentralised, online networks are beyond the control of political elites and provide a means of publicising an issue to a wide audience at little expense, allowing individuals and communities to compete with established organisations and institutions. Conversely, it is also these very features, celebrated as having potential for future citizenship practices, that give rise to the problems of ensuring effective decision-making and managing the vast range of diverse identities and interests in online network structures (Bennett 2003a)

Pell (2008) also claims that citizenship is being fragmented, though differs from Wellman et al (2006) by arguing that opportunities for civic engagement reside not in virtual spaces, but in new democratic spaces. She critiques the current structure of citizenship, whereby rights and obligations are commonly located at the level of the nation-state. This effectively brackets off opportunities for citizenship in alternative spaces. Therefore, political practices that take place outside of these spatial boundaries are denied legitimacy. However, Pell asserts that new and multiple forms of citizenship are emerging in alternative spaces. Ong (2006) concurs that attention should be directed towards emergent spaces that are fertile for the cultivation of citizenship (see also Dobson 2003).

One or two examples of new places for citizenship practices deserve mention here. Pell (2008) examines alternative locations and practices of citizenship in the context of a tactical housing squat (known as *Woodsquat*), which aimed to highlight urban homelessness. Pell reflects on how homeless people and their supporters occupied a derelict department store building. In doing so, activists sought to circumvent traditional modes of citizen engagement and engage instead at the level of their local community. Examples such as this indicate a more active form of citizenship, one that is not simply contracted by the state, but claimed by citizens. Pell explains that identifying with the local neighbourhood was as important as identifying as a member of the nation-state, thus raising the importance of physical spaces as places for the emergence of democratic citizenship.

In addition to the emergence of novel forms of identity and place for citizenship practice, new modes of CMC also present potential areas for new kinds of citizenship. Burgess,

Foth and Klaebe (2006) explore a number of examples of everyday engagement with CMC media, including online chat, photo-sharing and blogging. They claim that these examples provide a means through which new and alternative practices of citizenship can emerge by creating opportunities for users to engage with online and offline communities and to discuss topics of shared interest or concern. Burgess et al refer to this as a form of '*electronic democracy*' that engages with the intricacies and nuances of culture, democracy and citizenship in the public sphere. It also necessitates a shift in the identities of engaged citizens, from receivers of mass forms of top-down, one-way communication, to producers and transmitters of information (Bennett 2003b). Burgess et al propose that CMC and online network media should do more in future to orient their guiding principles in ways that go beyond issues of ownership, content regulation and control, to cultivate technologies and practices that can allow citizenship practices to emerge through informal everyday practices. At present, the formalisation of democratic citizenship practices overlooks the contribution to be gained from alternative identities and spaces in terms of generating innovative methods of citizen engagement. In focusing initiatives in this way, it may be possible to build community networks and promote civic engagement in ways that are more meaningful and important to citizens.

## **Conclusion**

As technological advances gather momentum it seems natural to question how things will change in the future. At the same time, it is difficult to comprehend that things *will* change. It is difficult to foresee any truly revolutionary impacts for identity, community and citizenship in the future. As a result, the predictions made in this paper are somewhat conservative and unavoidably myopic. Whilst, disappointingly perhaps, averring from making any wildly speculative predictions involving extraterrestrials, robots or global apocalypse, this paper has sought to highlight the continued importance of place with reference to the concepts discussed.

It would seem that a future where identity is dislocated from place is tantamount to a future where identity is relinquished altogether. Current evidence suggests that people will continue to define their identities in relation to places, and there is little reason to suppose that the growth of CMC in the coming decades will alter this; as embodied subjects we are always spatially positioned. Clearly, people value places. Nonetheless, a shift is likely to occur in terms of '*anchoring*' identities to virtual spaces, which appear to have an emotional resonance akin to physical places. Initiatives aimed at increasing civic engagement are advised to design interventions that strengthen identification with place. This will involve better understanding the diverse meanings that places hold for people. However, whilst being necessary for civic engagement, identification with place is not sufficient. Therefore, interventions must also ensure that communities possess sufficient social capital in order to motivate people into action.

Furthermore, initiatives should be careful not to overlook the increasing importance of the self-determining capacity of people in constructing their own virtual spaces, which are likely to fulfil a similar function as referents for identity. It is unlikely that identification with physical spaces will diminish as virtual spaces flourish. However, it may well be that in time virtual spaces appear to be almost as '*real*' as a person's physical surroundings. Strategies for civic engagement will also need to attend to the developing relationship between online and offline community networks. Virtual communities seem set to become more ephemeral and characterised by self-interest and limited to specific forms of action. This makes it more difficult for policymakers to decide where to target their interventions; it is likely that they will be required to gear interventions more towards communities of shared interest rather than shared location. Whilst the barrier between online and offline communities will become more permeable, local communities will continue to be of some relevance, whether as communities of

interest or otherwise. For example, representations of local community are still important and will continue to function as a symbol of solidarity for people sharing a geographical location, for example, to rally against development and outsider interests. It is through such processes that community is sustained.

Finally, citizenship appears to be the concept to be most radically transformed by technological and social change. The literature proposes that citizenship in its current form, as a contract of rights and duties between citizen and nation state, will gradually give way to multiple forms of identity, location and citizenship practice that transcend the traditional model. In order to deal with this, governments and institutions must also adopt more flexible and loose approaches to promoting citizenship. Policymakers may choose to look at novel ways of encouraging engagement through the provision of new media tools based around CMC. This could empower and encourage citizens to develop their own informal practices online, rather than using preset formats and agendas. Alternatively, policymakers could consider ways in which to allow citizenship to blossom in physical spaces that transcend the nation-state. For example, planning interventions could think about architectural designs that incorporate novel forms of public space that might encourage the blossoming of citizenship. More work is needed that underlines the significance of place for community engagement. A more complete psychological understanding of people-place relationships is central to this venture, and its importance cannot be overstated.

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