

Thesis

The Datafication of Citizenship Education

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Content

1. Introduction: Citizenship Education in the Context of Datafied Educational Governance ...5	5
1.1. Citizenship and Citizenship Education	5
1.2. Problem and Research Questions.....	7
1.3. Methodology and Data Selection.....	9
1.4. Structure of the Thesis	11
2. Theoretical Exploration of Prominent Citizenship Theories	12
2.1. The Liberal Perspective on Citizenship	12
2.2. The Communitarian and Republican Perspective on Citizenship.....	14
2.3. The Agonist Perspective on Citizenship.....	16
2.4. The Transnational Perspective on Citizenship and Global Citizenship.....	17
3. Research Process.....	19
4. Analysis of the Citizenship View in the ICCS.....	22
4.1. Analysis of the Conceptualization of Citizenship in the ICCS Frameworks.....	22
4.1.1. Constitution of Connections of Various Factors on Citizenship Education	22
4.1.2. Quantification and Datafication of Citizenship and Implications for Governance	24
4.2. Analysis of the Citizenship Ideal within the ICCS Survey.....	27
4.2.1. Democratic Notions of Citizenship in the ICCS.....	27
4.2.2. Liberal Notions of Citizenship in the ICCS.....	27
4.2.3. Global Citizenship and Transnational Notions in the ICCS	30
4.2.4. Other Lenses on Citizenship in the ICCS	31
4.2.5. Specifics of Regional Questionnaires	32
4.2.6. Assessment of Citizenship through Civic Knowledge Scores.....	34
5. Conclusion and Discussion	37
5.1. Summary of Findings.....	37
5.2. Interpretation and Discussion of Findings	38
5.3. Limitations	39

5.4. Future Directions and Practical Implications.....	40
Bibliography	42
Appendices.....	47
Attachment 1: ICCS 2022 Instruments	47
Attachment 2: Overview and Explanation of ICCS 2016 Codebook Questionnaire Files ..	48

Summary

Over the past decades, international organisations have gained prominent influence on educational governance due to their large-scale international assessments. Similarly, citizenship education has emerged as a central topic of discourse recently, as it is often regarded as the solution to various societal issues. Grounded in understanding citizenship as an essentially contested concept, this thesis undertakes a qualitative content analysis to examine the underlying normative assumptions of citizenship within the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), the only comprehensive large-scale international survey on citizenship education. The analysis reveals that the ICCS is not a neutral instrument but is influenced by a democratic, liberal perspective on citizenship alongside a transnational view emphasising global citizenship. Furthermore, the ICCS quantifies citizenship and reduces this contested concept to comparable data, contradicting its inherent complexity. This analysis highlights that the large-scale international assessment of ICCS is not purely numerical and neutral, urging a critical evaluation of the implications for citizenship education policy and practice.

1. Introduction: Citizenship Education in the Context of Datafied Educational Governance

1.1. Citizenship and Citizenship Education

Citizenship has become a widely discussed topic over the past decades. Citizenship education is often regarded as the solution to problems of societal issues such as terrorism, extremism, and intolerance. Thus, policymakers have increased parts of citizenship education in policies and curricula not only on the local or national level but also inter- and supranationally (Joris & Agirdag, 2019). For instance, in March 2022, the European Parliament published the "Report on the Implementation of Citizenship Education Actions" (Committee on Culture and Education, 2022). This report draws on the findings of a large-scale student assessment to criticise the EU Member States for focusing too much on the national level and even politicising citizenship education. However, the report further points out that the "difficulty in assessing the implementation of citizenship education lies in the fluidity of the concept and the lack of a unified definition across studies." (Committee on Culture and Education, 2022, p. 8).

Theoretically, citizenship can be defined as "membership, identity, values, and rights of participation and assumes a body of common political knowledge" (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 653). Throughout relevant literature, there are various theories on the forms and discourses around citizenship (see, for example, Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Arthur et al., 2008; Conover, 1995; Frazer, 2008; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Lister & Pia, 2008) with attempts to define a good citizen (Geboers et al., 2013; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Generally, every social participation teaches how to be a (good) citizen. The modern notion of citizenship education is connected to a democratic understanding (Geboers et al., 2013). It aims to teach about privileges and duties and promote actively participating in social realms (De Witte et al., 2020). This further implies that there is an understanding of good citizenship promoting

critical reflection, democratic engagement, and awareness for justice and (in)equality, which is why citizenship education is often linked to character or moral education (Geboers et al., 2013). However, even the perception of good citizenship can change according to social factors (Meylemans et al., 2022).

Citizenship can, therefore, be called an essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956; Menéndez & Olsen, 2020), meaning there is a lack of a universally accepted definition of what citizenship has to be. Attempts to categorise (societal discourses on) citizenship commonly name liberal, republican, communitarian, feminist and other post-colonial views (see, for example, Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Andreotti, 2014; Arthur et al., 2008). Furthermore, citizenship is very much a political concept, being at the "core of our understanding of modern political organisation" (Menéndez & Olsen, 2020, p. 19). Interested parties will still define citizenship according to their interpretation and "defend its case with what it claims to be convincing arguments, evidence and other forms of justification" (Gallie, 1956, p. 168). This justification can take various forms depending on the concerned party in question. Within the context of education, international organisations, for instance, have developed into significant forces, shaping policies, practices, and standards on a global level. These organisations have established themselves as crucial participants in the field through their large-scale educational testing programmes. The aftermath of the results of said assessment had considerable influence on moulding education systems across the globe, as education is increasingly seen as a vital factor in enhancing a nation's economy (Hastedt, 2020).

The international organisations concerned are mainly the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which develop student and system assessment frameworks. Prominent examples of these assessments are the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, OECD), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

(TIMSS, IEA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, IEA) (Hastedt, 2020).

While the tests mentioned above focus on more quantifiable skills such as mathematics or reading, the less tangible subject of citizenship education is also assessed. The most influential of these assessments is the IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). This, for instance, is the study the European Parliament used as a basis for their report. It was first conducted in 2009. The next round occurred in 2016; the latest cycle was carried out in 2022 (Schulz et al., 2022). According to the study framework, it aims to investigate "the ways in which young people understand and are prepared to be citizens in a world where contexts of democracy and civic participation continue to change" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 6). The ICCS collects data on students' knowledge and attitudes related to civic education. Civic knowledge is surveyed through cognitive tests on democratic principles, the rule of law or civic institutions, questions on rights and equality, societal issues and threats, as well as trust and values that determine students' attitudes. Due to it being the only international large-scale study on citizenship, it strongly influences citizenship education policies (Joris & Agirdag, 2019).

1.2. Problem and Research Questions

These large-scale assessments have made national education systems comparable and hierarchically classifiable across nations. The rankings can be used as potent resources for shaping policies, education, or research, as they provide valuable information on student performance, the efficacy of curricula, teaching approaches and broader systemic factors which impact educational outcomes. This data assists in pinpointing areas in need of improvement, comparing progress against global benchmarks and formulating evidence-based policies to reform educational systems (Hastedt, 2020).

This phenomenon is often called datafication, "the process by which subjects, objects, and practices are transformed into digital data" (Southerton, 2020, p. 1). Although these numbers are commonly assumed to be purely descriptive, they do, in fact, have a significant influence on the shaping of reality (Mangez & Vanden Broeck, 2020). Numbers render concepts comparable and simplify complex relations (Grek, 2024). Furthermore, international organisations oftentimes do not merely provide the data but offer additional interpretations of said data (Grek, 2024). The interpretation of this data influences the expectations and aims of education and is, therefore, also impacting opinions and decision-making processes (Jarke & Breiter, 2019).

As established above, citizenship is seen as a contested concept. However, as Qadir and Syväterä (2021) showed, politicians successfully use science talk to build a moral authority, rendering their claims less contested. Thus, test results can become a powerful tool to justify (potentially controversial) educational policy decisions, as was seen, for instance, in Japan, where the 2003 PISA results were instrumentalised to introduce an educational system reform (Takayama, 2008). The usage and interpretation of data will, therefore, become a governance mechanism and give the executing international organisations power over educational policies (Sellar, 2015).

This shows the importance of transparency and critical analysis of the assessment frameworks when it comes to the interpretation and implications of data. A study questioning which normative goals of citizenship education the ICCS promotes is the one by Joris and Agirdag (2019), in which they analyse the 2009 framework using Biesta's functions of citizenship education. They criticise the closed design of the ICCS, which restricts active participation and dialogue. Furthermore, they argue that subjectification is reduced to measurable forms of qualification and socialisation, preventing students from being seen as autonomous citizens.

However, when considering citizenship as an essentially contested concept without a precise definition, another important question arises: what kind of citizenship does the ICCS promote? What is considered an ideal citizen, and what implications arise from this ideal? How is citizenship conceptualised for a quantitative study, and how does the view on citizenship influence these choices? Drawing on the essentially contested character of citizenship, this master thesis will critically study the underlying assumptions on citizenship that influence the scientific choices behind the research process in the quantified ICCS study as described in the ICCS frameworks (Schulz et al., 2016, 2022). The basis of citizenship on which the framework is built, the implications of the study's outcome, and the interpretation of the data will be studied. The analysis is carried out based on existing theories on citizenship from the literature, which will be presented in chapter two. Through this analysis, the findings will attempt to shed light on the implications of an apparently politically neutral and technical test instrument and to gain an understanding of the type of citizenship promoted through this governance instrument. The research questions are therefore:

Research Question 1: How does the testing framework constitute citizenship as a quantifiable object?

Research Question 2: What notion(s) or assumptions of good citizenship underpin the ICCS, and how are these notions reproduced in the test?

1.3. Methodology and Data Selection

These research questions will be explored by analysing material connected to the ICCS. All of IEA's studies are presented by a framework, the accompanying data, and tools as well as national and international reports of their assessments, which are published in an openly accessible way on their website¹. This database of publications was searched based on the topics of the titles. The material which was picked should give insights into the

¹ <https://www.iea.nl/index.php/studies/iea/iccs>

methodological choices and ideas of citizenship within the test and its questionnaires. An integral part of establishing these assessments is the development of a framework. In addition to determining the purpose of the survey, these frameworks outline the methods and rationale behind the measurement tools. This is particularly crucial in the case of international large-scale assessments due to their cross-system nature, the pursuit of comparability and the need to ensure validity (Ainley et al., 2005). This is why the latest ICCS frameworks (Schulz et al., 2016, 2022) were consulted in order to gain insights into the ICCS's research process and methodological choices in quantifying citizenship. For the same purpose, another source was the ICCS questions. As an indicator, the codebook containing the questions for ICCS 2016 (IEA, 2018) and the user guide (Köhler et al., 2018) were retrieved from the Website of the IEA² and examined. Together with other explanatory publications of the IEA (Schulz, 2021; Veugelers, 2021), the questions were also a tool to examine underlying assumptions of citizenship within the ICCS. Similarly, the framework describes its conceptualisation of citizenship based on the article "Citizen Identities and Conceptions of the Self" by Conover (1995); thus, this article was added to the analysed material.

The ICCS 2022 is the third cycle of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, after those in 2009 and 2016. The respective next cycle picks up on important topics from the previous versions in addition to minor changes and updates to the structure. However, the fundamental focus has largely remained the same. For the purpose of this thesis, the chronological development of the ICCS is not of the utmost importance. Instead, the ICCS is seen more as an apparatus in Foucault's sense, meaning an ensemble of various elements tied together through logic or discourse, producing common knowledge and, hence, power (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). Therefore, the analysis will not focus on the evolvement of the ICCS throughout the years but will think of the several frameworks and interpretative publications

² <https://www.iea.nl/data-tools/repository/iccs>

of the IEA as one device of the IEA to shape knowledge production within the field of citizenship education.

These sources were assessed with the help of the steps of the qualitative content analysis based on Philipp Mayring (2000, 2015) and Margrit Schreier (2014). Qualitative content analysis offers a systematic analysis of texts "within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step-by-step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, p. 2). This allows for a methodological yet still qualitative analysis of the framework within its context.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

The second chapter will aim to give an overview of the theoretical basis and will introduce viewpoints on citizenship in the literature: liberal, communitarian, agonist, and transnational. These descriptions will guide the methodological process and, therefore, be instrumental in analysing the data. In chapter three, the research process will be outlined. Following the steps of the Qualitative Content Analysis by Mayring (2000, 2015), categories will be deductively determined using the theoretical notions of citizenship introduced in chapter two. It will be shown how the steps of the coding process were conducted, followed by a summary of the results. Finally, the results will be interpreted, and based on these analyses, a conclusion will be drawn with regard to the research questions, which will then be discussed.

2. Theoretical Exploration of Prominent Citizenship Theories

There are various theories on how states or equivalent entities create or should create a cohesive society whose members are able to coexist. As citizenship is explored within a variety of disciplines such as Political Sciences, History or Sociology as well as within different perspectives of locality (regions, nations, global), there is a similar variety of theories and views on citizenship. Moreover, these theories are built on comprehensions of society and its relationship with its individuals, and consequently, moral and political, as well as economic and social considerations come into play (Arthur et al., 2008). These theories commonly define citizenship with regard to different levels of rights and duties, participation and activity, or identity and have often developed as an antithesis to other prominent ideologies (Frazer, 2008; Lister & Pia, 2008). Among those ideologies are highly influential perspectives which shaped the public discussion on citizenship for centuries, such as liberalism - with an emphasis on individual rights - and republican and communitarian views, which focus on public duties and participation (Arthur et al., 2008). However, there are also more recent post-colonial and post-national perspectives emerging, focusing more on a diverse and plural society.

This thesis aims to make visible that behind an apparently politically neutral and technical testing instrument, choices have been made which are influenced by a particular view on citizenship. In order to gain a deeper understanding of this type of citizenship and its implications, the material will be analysed qualitatively based on five main theories on citizenship. These main tendencies are Liberalism, Communitarianism and Republicanism, and Agonism and Transnationalism, which are presented and summarised in this theoretical framework.

2.1. The Liberal Perspective on Citizenship

The liberal view on citizenship emerged as a countermovement to the absolutistic state in the 1700s and 1800s (Lister & Pia, 2008). Therefore, liberal citizenship theories

centre around the ideal of equal rights, "civil egalitarianism", and "political equality" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 8). A prominent figure in this field is John Locke, who attested an even potential for reasoning, which becomes the basis for independent behaviour that does not infringe upon the freedom of others. In order to preserve these individual freedoms, a government is formed through which a fraction of freedom is traded for security (Lister & Pia, 2008). The individual is prioritised to society; individual freedom and liberty are essential. Every individual has the right to "form, revise and pursue their own definition of the good life" (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 661) while they still have to respect others' rights.

The liberal understanding of citizenship is characterised by a procedural and legalistic view; people become members of a self-governed community through legal means. Being a citizen in a liberal sense means enjoying fundamental rights to life, freedom, and possession. Having been established as an antithesis to absolutism, liberalism takes issue with community and any form of "arbitrary government" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 11). According to Locke, liberal education aims at raising autonomous and free critical thinkers who possess a sense of justice and will have the means to lead a fulfilling life. Children are to be provided with an "open future"; democracy and human rights are fundamental, next to a sufficient education in the knowledge of history and institutions (Archard, 2015). As personal freedom is of utmost value, participation in public life is not considered essential but rather a personal choice (Lister & Pia, 2008). The political sphere is only to advocate and contest one's own individual rights and interests (Mouffe, 1992). A differentiation can be made between neoliberalism, which focuses on liberal market ideology and economic principles such as rational self-interested individuals and political liberalism, which focuses more on autonomy and identity as well as reason and intellectual knowledge as a base for liberal citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006).

2.2. The Communitarian and Republican Perspective on Citizenship

Developed as a critique of liberal individualism, communitarianism "seeks to emphasise the obligations of citizenship and sees membership as a prerequisite for rights" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 15). In contrast to the liberal focus on rights, communitarianism prioritises the community over the individual and centres it around individual obligations. Civil membership is developed through a reflection of this very community; the focus lies on culture and morality. Being part of a community enables one to enjoy citizen's rights (Lister & Pia, 2008). The communitarian role of the state is not to be neutral but to provide the community with a common sense of morality and the good (for this community), thus promoting the community's well-being. For modern communitarianism, morality itself and moral principles are only comprehensible and applicable in an already established community since an "individual is embedded in and constituted by social formations and communities" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 17). People are taught this morality and righteousness of collective obligations through public groups and civil organisations. Although these are voluntary, non-conformity mostly leads to disapproval from the private surroundings, which has a strong influence within societies. Communitarian education would, therefore envision schools as communitarian entities which aim to promote personality development and social cohesion while teaching the community's cultural values and policies (Lister & Pia, 2008).

Consequently, public participation is a central virtue within communitarian citizenship (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). This further means that the identities of the members of a community are shaped through said community (Lister & Pia, 2008). Since people are seen as dependent on a civic community, politics should not focus on individual rights but rather on the common good since the "exercise of rights is dependent upon a stable, functioning community" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 19). Citizenship is, therefore, connected to the particular

community of a person; it cannot exist universally and thus, justice is evenly bound to the decisions of communities (Lister & Pia, 2008).

While communitarianism is often viewed as a response to the lack of social cohesion in the middle of the twentieth century by focusing on identity and civic duties, another view on citizenship (re-)emerged as a reaction to a perceived decrease in public engagement: modern republicanism (Lister & Pia, 2008). Civic republican citizenship is characterised by a strong civic identity and the value of participation in and service to the political community. Within this view on citizenship, patriotism and communitarianism are essential in order to promote the common good of a political community. Citizens are to identify themselves with communal goals and commit to actively engaging in society. It is made clear who is included and excluded, respectively, in this community. This perspective on citizenship is thus more or less directly opposed to more transnational views.

Education and civic knowledge play a crucial role since members of this community are expected to uphold certain traditions, virtues and ideals (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). One idea to encourage participatory values is through education. Republican education will aim to teach and preserve democracy and heritage; knowledge about democratic history and institutions is crucial, as well as incentives to participate, such as patriotism, respect, or loyalty. Participation itself can have educative effects through integration which makes citizenship in the republican sense practical (Lister & Pia, 2008).

Republicanism is similar to communitarianism with regard to privatism and the prominence of individual rights. However, republicans focus on public participation in shaping citizenship. Individual freedom is nevertheless a rather significant concern of republicanism. In contrast to the liberal protection from interference however, citizenship in a republican sense aims to build a positive self-governing freedom. This liberty is built upon the participating membership within a community. The political community does not only consist of the state,

the republican freedom relies rather on a self-governing civil society and "freedom from domination" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 23). For this master thesis, the focus will be put on communitarianism with regard to its focus on community and participation.

2.3. The Agonist Perspective on Citizenship

In addition to these classic discourses around citizenship, other, more critical views have emerged that mainly expand or criticise the former due to the lack of acknowledgement of differences and the exclusion of oppressed groups. There are, for instance, feminist citizenship theories which mostly challenge the male-centred history of citizenship and aim to increasingly include the life worlds of women into the public discourse (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Feminist, as well as multicultural perspectives, disagree with the classical citizenship notions of universal rights for community members as they argue that specific groups are oppressed based on gender or ethnicity, as well as sexuality or other excluding factors (Lister & Pia, 2008).

Another prominent critical theory is agonism, coined by Chantal Mouffe (for instance 2005a). Agonism radically aims to alter the prevailing power dynamics and to form a new dominant influence. It is, therefore, in stark contrast to the liberal approach characterised by the competition of interests (Mouffe, 2005a). While Mouffe agrees with the communitarian criticism of liberal individualism, she also constitutes a lack of compatibility with "the pluralism that is constitutive of modern democracy" (1992, p. 29). Thus, she demands a "form of commonality that respects diversity and makes room for different forms of individuality" (Mouffe, 1992, p. 30).

Mouffe's understanding of democracy is shaped by the simultaneous acknowledgement of group differences as well as social pluralism (Mouffe, 2005b). She describes agonism as "relations between adversaries" who are in a "conflictual consensus" to prevent the reinforcement of dominant views (Mouffe, 2005a, p. 52). Conflict is appreciated, identities

are built through a we/they delimitation (Mouffe, 1992). Oppositions or opponents are legitimately acknowledged, as well as the fact that there is no rational solution to the conflict between the parties (Mouffe, 2005b). This implies a citizen who identifies with the values of a "modern pluralist democracy" (Mouffe, 1992, p. 30). This community is not based on a common good, which is "presented as contestable" (Kenis, 2016, p. 963), but on a "common bond, a public concern" (Mouffe, 1992, p. 31). Agonistic education would envision schools as a political place which should welcome conflict and disagreements, while also being aware of reproducing power relations.

2.4. The Transnational Perspective on Citizenship and Global Citizenship

Due to rising globalisation and the increased power of transnational organisations such as the EU, views on transnationalism and post-national or global citizenship have increased (Lister & Pia, 2008). These views honour international societies next to the national and local ones. The progress of globalisation is recognised, as well as the commitments and achievements of liberal democracy. Partnerships across borders and fundamental human rights are central, the goal of global citizenship education is cultivating global citizens (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006).

When citizenship is considered outside the borders of nation-states, the question arises of what characterises citizenship. Lister and Pia (2008) summarise four categories to define citizenship: juridical condition, rights, political action and communal identity. Thus, citizenship is opened to a more "multifaceted and pluralised understanding of citizenship identities and solidarities" (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 79).

There are critics, however, of a Western and Global North-centred literature and research/discourse domination. Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti (2014), for instance, draws attention to the works of Andrew Dobson and Gayatri Spivak. Dobson identifies the centre of global disparities and hierarchies in global citizenship theories in making it a moral question

based on values rather than on political obligation and doing justice to exploitation (Andreotti, 2014). Spivak, on the other hand, offers a cultural analysis of the expansion of Western and Northern interests and values as universally achievable, which manifests the hierarchy between the Global North and South (Andreotti, 2014). Andreotti offers the division between soft and critical citizenship education, where students are taught in "critical literary" (Andreotti, 2014, p. 27) and the issue of inequality and injustice rather than of poverty and helplessness is stressed.

These theories on citizenship will be used as a basis to see which citizenship theories mainly influence the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study. Before the analysis, the research process will be outlined.

3. Research Process

As mentioned in the introduction, the material was analysed along the steps of the qualitative content analysis based on Philipp Mayring (2000, 2015) and Margrit Schreier (2014). The material was read through once in total, and all text passages which were related to citizenship or the conceptualisation of citizenship or the method were highlighted and assigned to the designated categories. For this analysis, the deductive (or concept-driven) coding approach, thus the top-down application of a theoretical framework (Elliott, 2018), was used as a primary method. Therefore, the initial coding frame was composed of the four main citizenship theories outlined in the theoretical section of this thesis, containing keywords referencing the respective notion of citizenship. The main content categories deductively derived through these citizenship theories are Liberal Citizenship, Communitarian and Republican Citizenship, Agonistic Citizenship and Transnational or Global Citizenship. They are complemented by respective subcategories which are deductively determined by the main features describing the respective citizenship theory. Moreover, another main category called "Miscellaneous/Other Citizenship Notions" was set to make room for the coding of other citizenship notions and information on the conceptualisation of citizenship.

However, in order to reflect and be open to the richness of the material, recurring themes of citizenship which did not fit the four deductive main categories were added as new main categories through a data-driven (inductive) approach (Schreier, 2014). Inductive coding is a bottom-up approach where codes emerge from the material (Elliott, 2018). Since both deductive and inductive strategies were combined, an iterative approach was used (Neale, 2016). In the material, two additional citizenship notions could be identified through this inductive coding: democratic citizenship and digital citizenship. Other topics which were first collected under "miscellaneous" were combined into the miscellaneous category "other citizenship notions & influencing factors". Other factors influencing citizenship perspectives

emerged, such as sustainability and the environment, as well as test and assessment methods. Furthermore, socioeconomic background and other context variables were mentioned in both Conover's account of citizenship as well as the ICCS frameworks (Conover, 1995; Schulz et al., 2016, 2022). After careful consideration, however, digital citizenship and sustainability were discarded from the analysis in order to focus on the traditional citizenship theories outlined in the theory section. All categories can be found in the overview Table 1.

Table 1

Category System

Main Category	Subcategories (Coding level)
Liberal Citizenship	Rights; reason(ing) & critical thinking: liberty, freedom & autonomy; individual, knowledge & skills, history & institutions; human rights
Communitarian & Republican Citizenship	Community; obligations, responsibilities & duties; belonging & membership; social cohesion; participation & practice; culture & identity; Civic knowledge & traditions, values & virtues
Agonistic Citizenship	Pluralism & diversity, group differences; critical & conflict, opposition & disagreement; common bond & public concern; Chantal Mouffe; power relations
Transnational & Global Citizenship	Globalisation; Transnational, post-national, global; fundamental human rights
<i>Democratic Citizenship</i>	<i>Democracy, democratic</i>
<i>Digital Citizenship</i>	<i>Technology & advances; digital; social media</i>
<i>Other citizenship notions & influencing factors</i>	<i>Sustainability & environment; test & assessment methods; socioeconomic background & other context variables</i>

Note. Categories which emerged inductively from the material are highlighted in italics.

The extracted material was then paraphrased and summarised first by subcategory, then by main category. This follows the steps of the structural qualitative content analysis with a focus on content structuring by Mayring (2015). Its aim is to "filter out and summarise certain topics, contents, aspects from the material" (Mayring, 2015, p. 103). These summaries make up the findings presented in the analysis section. In the following chapter, this analysis will be presented and interpreted along the research questions.

4. Analysis of the Citizenship View in the ICCS

After the outline of the methodical approach, in the next chapter, the results of the coding process will be presented. As stated at the beginning of both the ICCS 2016 and 2022 framework, ICCS aims to "investigate the changing ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens across a wide range of countries" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 12). This is studied through the collection of data regarding students' grasp of concepts in civic and citizenship education, as well as their attitudes and involvement in this domain. In the previous chapters, the essentially contested nature of the concept of citizenship has been elaborated. The following chapter, therefore, presents an analysis of the ICCS frameworks as well as the supporting literature and explores which kind of citizen the ICCS is looking for.

4.1. Analysis of the Conceptualization of Citizenship in the ICCS Frameworks

The ICCS frameworks are made up of a theoretical background, sub-frameworks on knowledge, attitudes, engagement, and context as well as the study design and exemplary survey questions. These frameworks describe three respective areas concerning the learning area of citizenship: civic knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions for engagement in citizenship issues, as well as context factors. These learning areas are explored with the help of six different instruments: an international student test, an international student questionnaire, two regional student questionnaires (European and Latin American), a teacher questionnaire, a school questionnaire, and finally, a national context survey. An overview of the instruments can be found in Attachment 1, while the specific contents of the various questionnaires in the ICCS 2016 codebook are further explained in Attachment 2.

4.1.1. Constitution of Connections of Various Factors on Citizenship Education

This outlined structure of the survey is characterised by a variety of factors playing into the operationalisation of citizenship in the ICCS. The ICCS combines not only various viewpoints but also includes several different actors throughout the questionnaires. Through

the choice to combine all these diverse factors in the survey, they appear connected and combinable. A citizen is, therefore, a combination of their civic knowledge, opinions, and upbringing environment. By naming these factors the influencing ones on citizenship education, the ICCS hence establishes a standard definition of citizenship, offering a basis for consensus on the essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956; Menéndez & Olsen, 2020). Grek (2024) describes that international organisations have been "constructing consensus by data" (p. 89) by socialising actors of educational policy worldwide. Common norms and values were established through a shared language and communication among actors at various levels, which have contributed to the emergence of a new system of governance which integrates global political and economic dynamics into national policymaking. Grek views this "technicisation" (2024, p. 113) as a highly political process involving deliberate decisions about what information to prioritise or disregard and how resources are allocated for data collection and analysis.

One example is the decision to incorporate context factors into the survey. The ICCS frameworks (Schulz et al., 2016, 2022), for instance, underscore the number of influencing factors on the social environment context as context factors cover roughly a third of the study (Schulz et al., 2022). In the ICCS 2022, information on the context is collected through four levels, from broad to narrow: community (global to local to virtual), school, family and peers, and individual (characteristics and predispositions) (Schulz et al., 2022). A considerable part of these topics refers to the socioeconomic background of the participating students. As mentioned above, the ICCS draws on the citizenship conceptualisation by Pamela Johnston Conover (1995). Conover (1995) also acknowledges the socioeconomic background of the children as an influential factor on citizenship, citing some examples, namely religion, gender, ecological variables (such as urban or rural upbringing), education and social class. The framework emphasises: "Higher levels of socioeconomic background can potentially provide

a more stimulating environment for developing civic-related dispositions and enhance the educational attainment of adolescents", which can promote political engagement (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 63). However, not only the socioeconomic status is of interest to the ICCS; other contextual variables such as geographical environment, democracy and gender play roles as well. Thus, the ICCS presents context factors, such as the socioeconomic background, as having an influential role in citizenship education. Through the framework, the ICCS can combine several different complex parts of factors influencing education and civic life, which in turn appear linearly correlated.

Another instance is the inclusion of several topics which are considered contemporary societal issues, reinforcing the claim of viewing education as a possibility to tackle various social issues, including democracy and citizenship. The ICCS includes, for example, different "content focus areas" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 16) in each of their cycles to meet the current Zeitgeist topics. These areas include sustainability, modern digital technology, diversity or global citizenship (Schulz et al., 2016, 2022).

Through this connection of various matters into data points, the concepts themselves will naturally be reduced, as data will always reduce complex realities into simplified points in order to make them easily translatable and moveable across state lines, professions, and fields (Grek, 2024). This is what made data an attractive tool for international organisations to establish "datafied education governance" as the "only viable means of achieving consensus and a technical/political equilibrium" (Grek, 2024, p. 54).

4.1.2. Quantification and Datafication of Citizenship and Implications for Governance

However, not only this connection of various factors plays a part in the influential role which large-scale international assessments have. Another tool is the quantification of these tests. The ICCS 2022 test on civic knowledge, for instance, contains a total of 121 items and is made up of different question types: Multiple choice, "Open-ended response items" and

"Drag & Drop items" (p. 70) as well as "Large-task items" (on a computer) (p. 71). While there were 108 multiple-choice items (approximately 90 %), there were 13 (approximately 10 %) open-response items (Schulz, 2021; Schulz et al., 2022). The other questionnaires (school, teacher, student) followed their preceding surveys and contained the following types of items: Likert-type (mostly rating, frequencies, and other levels of opinions), multiple choice, "categorical response" and "open-ended response" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 71). Joris and Agirdag (2019) stress the predominant usage of multiple choice questions as well and criticise that they limit students' ability to think critically or independently as well as not giving students a chance to come up with their own ideas.

These types of questions make the outcome of the test deliver mostly quantified data. While quantification uses numbers to organise information, experts changed their usage of numbers to move beyond a mere scientific approach but instead blend science with the politics of numbers (Grek, 2024). Through quantification, issues can be politicised since it renders matters translatable and comparable. Comparison, in turn, as Grek (2024) points out, can be used as a governance tool, "especially when governing is done at a distance and through the use of 'soft power'" (p. 32). Numerical data can be used as a basis for negotiations and agreements (Grek, 2024, p. 44). Through the datafication of educational assessments, educational systems were thus made comparable and hence accountable for their performance in international comparison.

Grek (2024) describes the power and influence of the international organisations conducting these educational tests lying in the analysis provided for policymaking afterwards since the participating states must adapt their system in order to score higher in the next test cycle. Governing numbers exercise influence not through merely creating facts but also through the way they are obtained, by whom, with which interests in mind, and through

which societal lens (Grek, 2024). When numbers govern, the power of providing these numbers becomes clear.

International organisations, however, do not only create this quantified knowledge of education, a vital part of providing these numbers is also providing an interpretation of them (Grek, 2024, p. 93). For each of the previous cycles of the ICCS, the IEA has published several reports containing further implications for the participating countries and regions (Schulz, 2021; Schulz et al., 2016, 2022; Veugelers, 2021). Through these local reports, participating countries receive a detailed interpretation including suggestions regarding their students' performance related to citizenship education. Naturally, this leads to a comparability between the countries and can influence policy making. As Grek (2024) describes, solutions offered to problems based on data oftentimes establish causality and narratives by giving understandable and persuasive reasoning, which is presented as the only feasible way.

This simplification comes at the cost of eliminating other factors which do not fit this narrative. Grek (2024) calls this omission of knowledge while creating other knowledge the "active production of non-knowledge" (p. 78). Through this dismissal of other knowledge, the quantification of education and education policy focuses on "comparability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness" (Grek, 2024, p. 62), all inherently economic principles. According to Grek, this datafication of education and knowledge combined with the interdisciplinarity paradigm led to the "mono-disciplinarity" (2024, p. 54) of the "economisation of educational knowledge" (Grek, 2024, p. 189). An acknowledgement of the influence of economic principles on their studies can be found in both the ICCS 2016 and 2022 frameworks, which point out the importance of modern civic skills to employers (Schulz et al., 2016, 2022).

So far, the nature of the study design and conceptualisation of citizenship education has been studied, and the quantifying nature of the survey has been highlighted. The normative dimensions of any survey come to light through the kind of questions and discourses

used. Thus, in the following section, the underlying ideal of citizenship will be analysed based on the ICCS questions and frameworks.

4.2. Analysis of the Citizenship Ideal within the ICCS Survey

As elaborated in the theoretical section of this thesis, citizenship can be regarded as an essentially contested concept. However, in order to create such a quantified test as the ICCS, naturally, choices need to be made in terms of the definition and operationalisation of citizenship. This analysis aims to look beyond this operationalisation and make the implicit meanings of a desired citizenship visible. This is based on the traditional citizenship theories outlined in chapter two as well as the additional findings through the qualitative content analysis.

4.2.1. Democratic Notions of Citizenship in the ICCS

In the initial stage of going through the material, one theme was quite prominently stressed, and that is democratic citizenship. Since all the above-mentioned theories on citizenship are built on democratic values, this is not surprising. Generally, most questions have a democratic background seen for instance, in a question on the "best reason for voluntary voting", with the correct answer "Choosing not to vote is a way of expressing political views" (IEA, 2018, p. ISAC3).

The attitudes section on citizens and society gives examples of nepotism, media diversity, public criticism, elections, protests, law enforcement, the judiciary, the separation of powers, and equal rights. Students are asked to rate these situations on a scale from good to bad in the context of a democracy. Furthermore, students are asked to express the individual importance they attach to certain behaviours, such as voting, respect, activism, support, work, history, environmental awareness, and adherence to the law (IEA, 2018, p. ISGC3). This shows the significant focus on democratic values and practices of the survey.

4.2.2. Liberal Notions of Citizenship in the ICCS

The citizenship theory which was most prominent in the material was liberal citizenship. This can already be observed in the ICCS's defined goal of citizenship education. This goal is, according to the ICCS, "to provide young people with knowledge, understanding, and dispositions considered necessary to participate successfully as citizens in society" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 13). Successful participation is defined as having a comprehension of societal institutions and tenets as well as being capable of displaying "critical judgment, and develop an understanding and appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of a citizen" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 13). The liberal key components of *rights* and critical *reasoning* can be found repeatedly throughout the frameworks as well as the supporting literature.

As outlined in the theory section of this thesis, the liberal view on citizenship is firmly built on a *legalistic* basis. The ICCS draws on the citizenship conceptualisation of Conover (1995), who describes the fundamental part of citizenship as "membership in the political community as signified legal status" which should "specif[y] the legal privileges and responsibilities of citizenship" (p. 138). This view is, in fact, also mentioned by Veugelers (2021), who states that a citizen's identity is marked by the "formal status as legal persons, the 'bearers of rights' in the eyes of the state" (p. 138). This citizenship based on laws can also be observed in questionnaire questions. An example question from the 2022 cycle introduces the following situation: "Many people in noisy workplaces in <Exland> have had their hearing damaged by the noise." (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 129). The possible answers to the question "What is the most reasonable action the government could take to deal with the problem of noisy workplaces?" are "immediately close down all noisy workplaces", "give money to the workers to help them find jobs in quieter workplaces", "introduce laws stating that employers must protect workers from noise", "arrest all owners of noisy workplaces". The correct answer is the third - the students are expected to see the introduction of laws as the only reasonable solution. This item is at the lowest proficiency level D. Furthermore, a liberal

understanding of rights shines through in another question, with one correct answer being "<Male Name 1> needs to understand that <Male Name 2>'s rights are as important as his own" (IEA, 2018, p. ISAC3) as well as the protection of human rights for "all people throughout their lives" (IEA, 2018, p. ISAC3). In addition, students are surveyed, among others, on civic principles, described as "shared ethical foundations of civic societies" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 26). The following principles are mentioned: equality, freedom, rule of law, sustainability, and solidarity (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 29). Questions on equal rights, liberty, and inequalities, as well as on the rule of law, fit into the liberal tradition. Lastly, the attitudes questionnaire includes a rights and responsibilities section which focuses on gender equality, as well as equal rights for ethnic and racial groups (IEA, 2018, p. ISGC3).

Another aspect of liberal citizenship which can be found in the material is *reasoning*. This is a deliberate decision, as Schulz (2021) points out when he describes the efforts in the transition from CIVED to ICCS 2009, where the framework meant to "place greater emphasis on reasoning and applying when assessing students' civic knowledge." (Schulz, 2021, p. 278). For instance, the international student test surveys "students' civic knowledge and ability to analy[s]e and reason" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 23). The framework moreover states that filling out the survey not only required knowledge but also "students' ability to reason with and apply their knowledge" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 26), showing an affiliation with the liberal ideal of the reasonable thinker. The focus on reasoning can also be seen in the respective number of questions. The ICCS framework distinguished between cognitive and content areas of learning in the ICCS 2022 knowledge test. The cognitive domains are "knowing" (which makes up one-third of the items) and "reasoning and applying" (which consists of two-thirds of the items), while the content domains are (in order of frequency/" highest number of items") "civic principles", "civic institutions and systems", "civic participation", and "civic roles and identities" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 72).

The third liberal citizenship notion which can be observed in the sources is the importance of *individuality* and *autonomy*. For instance, the content domain Civic Participation focused on "individuals' actions in their communities" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 31) and therefore leans again more towards the liberal view on citizenship than the communitarian. A further focus on individual citizens can be found in civic roles and identities, which "refers to knowledge and understanding of the individual's civic roles and identities, and their perceptions of these roles and identities [...] related to concepts of nation, ethnic origin, and cultural heritage" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 32). The ICCS includes transnational communities as well as subcommunities "based on specific topics (such as sports or common interests)" (p. 32), acknowledging the agonistic principle of multiple groups, as well as digital communities.

4.2.3. Global Citizenship and Transnational Notions in the ICCS

In addition to the liberal viewpoint, there is a further important notion which is stressed throughout the frameworks and questions, and that is the call for transnational cooperation and global citizenship. In fact, Conover (1995) already included the possibility that "citizens experience multiple levels of citizenship nested within each other" (p. 134). Veugelaers (2021) elaborates as well on the change of traditional national citizenship to broader identities no longer bound to the nation-state. In terms of the communal context, for instance, the ICCS highly weighs the international environment: "due to increasing globalisation, connectedness via digital technologies and the growing importance of supranational organisations, it is important to consider contexts beyond the nation-state within the scope of ICCS" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 52). Moreover, the ICCS 2022 national context questionnaire focuses on "global citizenship values, the presence of policies for intercultural education, addressing diversity at school, inclusive education, the promotion of democratic ideals in schools, and the use of digital technologies to encourage civic engagement" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 54). For example, in a question on international charity, international cooperation is encouraged

through the correct answer, "It helps <Exland> to have good relationships with nearby countries" (IEA, 2018, p. ISAC3).

4.2.4. Other Lenses on Citizenship in the ICCS

Whereas these three citizenship viewpoints are quite prominent, other theories are also included. Participation in society, for instance, is a recurring and important theme. To strengthen its importance, the ICCS even made it a content domain (Schulz, 2021). The domains knowledge and attitudes of the ICCS are influenced by "connections with their civic communities" (Schulz, 2021, p. 278) and were therefore complemented by questions on individual traits, the private contexts such as family and friends as well as on public contexts like school and community. This is also reflected in the ICCS 2022 framework: students with higher levels of civic knowledge and engagement would be expected to participate more frequently in activities (at school, at home and within the community) that, in turn, promote these outcomes. " (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 50). In the "Participating in Society" section, students are surveyed on their abilities to engage in discussions, participate in the media, and express their opinions. Additionally, they provide insights into their current and anticipated future involvement in democratic activities, such as voting and staying informed as adults (Schulz et al., 2022).

Furthermore, even some hints of agonistic citizenship ideals are acknowledged. There are questions on protest behaviour and types of civic action (Schulz et al., 2022) as well as on "perceptions of threats to the world's future" (Schulz, 2021, p. 285), for example, on climate change. An example is a question which concerns itself with the "best reason against violent protest", where the correct reply option is "it might make other people less likely to think about the reasons for our protest" (IEA, 2018, p. ISAC3). On the other hand, the ICCS distinguishes between specific topics for each of the fields that students are asked about, and these are called content domains. The four topics students are being surveyed on in civic

knowledge are: civic institutions and systems, principles, participation as well as civic roles and identities (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 26). Questions on civic institutions and systems include items on public, economic and civil structures and explore "the mechanisms, systems, and organisations that underpin societies" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 26). Including these standardised items on civic principles is in stark contrast to the pluralistic principle of an agonistic citizenship view.

4.2.5. Specifics of Regional Questionnaires

Besides these underlying views on citizenship, the two regional questionnaires caught attention. Next to the international student questionnaire, the two regional European and Latin American ones collect data on context variables, civic issue attitudes and opinions. The division into regions is, on the one hand, intuitive and reasonable and does justice to local differences and diverse contexts. However, it also reifies these differences which are normatively enhanced through the test character of the survey, visible in the usage of different normatively valued question topics.

The European-specific questionnaire (ISE) covers topics such as European Union affiliation, access to EU-related education, freedom of movement, equality and discrimination as well as immigrant rights (IEA, 2018). Questions extend to the future of Europe, individual prospects, ethical consumerism, and the legal age for rights. Other themes are peace, democracy, and societal challenges such as terrorism, poverty, and environmental pollution. Participants are also asked to assess their own prospects in terms of occupational stability, job satisfaction, financial well-being, travel opportunities and income sufficiency. The questionnaire concludes with an assessment of the EU's performance in human rights, environmental action, economic value and as a place of a common set of rules and laws ("**<EU>** guarantees respect for human rights all over Europe"; IEA, 2018, p. ISEC3).

Contrarily, the Latin American questionnaire (ISL) has a distinct focus on democratic (mal)practices and power dynamics (IEA, 2018). It begins with evaluating governments, authority structures, and relationships with public service ("It is fair that the government does not comply with law when it thinks it is not necessary"; IEA, 2018, p. ISLC3). Following this, students assess statements related to law, conflicts, moral justifications, and scenarios involving legal violations ("Dictatorships are justified when they bring economic benefits"; IEA, 2018, p. ISLC3). Preferences regarding social groups as neighbours, experiences of bullying, perceptions of discrimination, and attitudes towards homosexuality are also explored ("Homosexuals should have the same rights as all other citizens"; IEA, 2018, p. ISLC3). The questionnaire concludes with inquiries about discrimination against various groups, including women, youth, and indigenous populations.

Notably, interesting discrepancies arise when comparing this Latin American questionnaire to the EU-specific one. While the international and European student questionnaires contain predominantly questions on "attitudes toward civic issues and institutions", the Latin American student questionnaire mostly asks about "attitudes toward civic principles", and questions on "Attitudes toward civic roles and identities" are least represented (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 73). As seen before, the ICCS is characterised by a liberal democratic and transnational understanding of citizenship. Veugelers (2021) acknowledges this as well and states: "It would be interesting to include questions that challenge the notion of democracy in the general ICCS-questionnaire" (p. 297). The principles of this understanding of citizenship are equal rights and responsibilities, the rule of law and transnational cooperation. While the Latin American questionnaire questions students based on these principles, the European questionnaire explores themes beyond the mere fulfilment of these principles, as it expands to include questions regarding opportunities for self-fulfilment and economic prosperity ("European countries should cooperate to guarantee high levels of employment"; IEA, 2018, p.

ISEC3) as well as threats from other actors or environmental threats ("European countries should cooperate to protect the environment", "European countries should cooperate to combat illegal entry from non-European countries"; IEA, 2018, p. ISEC3). The European student questionnaire focuses, for instance, on questions on the future of Europe and attitudes toward the European Union and European cooperation, while the Latin American students were asked about their opinions on "authoritarian government practices" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 40). While both questionnaires inquire about discrimination, the EU questionnaire offers four response options, whereas the Latin American version provides eleven response options (IEA, 2018, pp. ISEC3, ISLC3). This exhibits a more pessimistic approach to the Latin American questions regarding liberal ideals. This variation in response choices, on the one hand, may complicate cross-regional comparisons; the choice to include separate and different regional questionnaires on the basis of the above-mentioned themes reveals the liberal democratic ideal behind the ICCS. The frameworks do not offer an explicit rationale for this regional specificity and why certain questions were included.

4.2.6. Assessment of Citizenship through Civic Knowledge Scores

Another intriguing aspect detailed in the ICCS 2022 framework is how the civic knowledge test is assessed. All the answers to the cognitive test will result in "civic knowledge scores" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 75) that assign students to different levels of proficiency according to the score achieved. While the 2016 cycle differentiated between three levels from one to three (Schulz et al., 2016), the 2022 cycle assigns four levels from A to D (Schulz et al., 2022). However, the general proficiency levels are similar overall; they reflect increasing levels of civic knowledge and cognitive processes. Each level represents a deeper understanding of civic principles, institutions, and processes. For example, Level D focuses on foundational democracy understanding, while Level A entails integrated and evaluative judgments regarding civic and citizenship concepts. Level A students are furthermore

expected to "make connections between the processes of social and political organisation and influence, and the legal and institutional mechanisms used to control them" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 124).

Thus, the ICCS values reasoning as the most critical learning of citizenship education, while participation is seen as a "strategic" tool and not a core duty of being a citizen. Furthermore, students are expected to show an understanding of liberal democratic principles, such as to "justify the separation of powers between the judiciary and the parliament" or "evaluate a policy with respect to equality and inclusiveness" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 124). Being able to "suggest related benefits of widespread intercultural understanding in society" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 124) is also rewarded with a higher proficiency level. Students are, therefore, seen as more successful learners if they can use reason to understand and justify liberal democratic principles.

Lastly, including such a test, which is assessed through these proficiency scores, is a decision in itself. Students' civic knowledge is quantified and reduced to hierarchical categories of skills. As elaborated at the beginning of this thesis and this analysis chapter, quantification is a powerful governance tool, especially together with interpreting the data along a particular narrative (Grek, 2024; Jarke & Breiter, 2019; Sellar, 2015). As shown above, the questions are influenced by a democratic liberal and transnational citizenship view. Students will, therefore, be ranked based on their proficiency in reproducing knowledge on those liberally influenced questions. These rankings are comparable, which makes this test a contest of knowledge on liberal citizenship education.

In their conclusion, Joris and Agirdag (2019) furthermore point out that the ICCS, while aiming to address all three of Biesta's citizenship education functions, seemingly prioritise qualification and socialisation over subjectification. They argue that the ICCS reduces instances of subjectification to quantified forms of qualification and socialisation and instead

fosters citizenship as a skilled competence. The study's methodology and fixed design hinder active contribution and dialogue from young people, treating them more as governable subjects rather than autonomous citizens. This view on children as not being fully able to reason yet and hence not being full citizens yet is again consistent with the liberal view on children (Archard, 2015).

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The main aim of this thesis was to examine the underlying assumptions of good citizenship in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, a quantified large-scale international survey. Furthermore, it was analysed how the ICCS's research instruments were influenced by these assumptions and their implications. By evaluating the ICCS's frameworks (Schulz et al., 2016, 2022), questionnaire questions (IEA, 2018; Köhler et al., 2018) as well as related publications (Conover, 1995; Schulz, 2021; Veugelers, 2021), it was intended to demonstrate that the survey is not a neutral instrument with clear and overarchingly applicable results but that it is influenced by a specific view on citizenship.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The content analysis showed the influences of all the different theories on citizenship discussed in the theory section – namely the liberal, communitarian and republican, agonistic, and transnational theories. However, by further analysing the content as well as the structures and methodology of the ICCS, an interplay of some of these theories became prominent. The analysis suggests an interplay of a democratic understanding of citizenship based on liberal, individualistic ideals enhanced by global citizenship ideas. While participation and protest are mentioned, they are viewed from a rational, i.e. liberal perspective. The frameworks value reasoning and understanding of liberal democratic principles, with students expected to justify separation of powers, evaluate policies, and demonstrate intercultural understanding. Overall, the ICCS 2022 framework promotes a vision of citizenship which combines democratic participation, liberal values, global awareness, and individual autonomy, while also recognising regional differences and the importance of active engagement in society. Furthermore, the quantifying nature of the survey became apparent through the outweighing usage of closed multiple-choice questions and civic knowledge proficiency scores. Lastly, the ICCS aims to reconcile multiple factors influencing the quality of citizenship education, which, for

instance, led to the decision to include additional regional questionnaires according to continents. These regional instruments were revealed to be very positive towards Europe with a focus on questions on economic stability and self-fulfilment, while the Latin American questionnaire explores basic liberal principles such as attitudes towards government practices, power dynamics, and discrimination.

5.2. Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

These findings have several implications. Citizenship is, as outlined throughout this thesis, considered to be an essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956; Menéndez & Olsen, 2020). Citizenship, however, is, at the same time a highly political concept which concerned parties will define and justify according to their interests (Menéndez & Olsen, 2020). For political decisions, for instance, "it matters a great deal which kind of identity citizens are presumed to have" (Conover, 1995, p. 153). The ICCS serves to promote and reinforce liberal democratic citizenship ideals. Through their emphasis on critical thinking, informed decision-making and legalistic view on citizenship, the test contributes to the cultivation of citizenry upholding liberal values. While this in itself is naturally neither good nor bad, it brings a specific worldview into a test which is considered neutral and applicable for any system in the world as the ICCS claims to "investigate the changing ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens across a wide range of countries" (Schulz et al., 2022, p. 12).

By quantifying this contested concept, citizenship education is made comparable and thus may be suited to be used as a tool to shape policies and governance (Hastedt, 2020). Numbers are perceived to be merely descriptive and neutral; however, they are based on initial assumptions and do shape reality (Grek, 2024; Mangez & Vanden Broeck, 2020) through the interpretation of such numerical data, which is a powerful governance mechanism (Grek, 2024; Sellar, 2015). Grek (2024), for instance, describes this as follows: "At the same time,

quantification is as powerful as it can be paradoxical: measurement is not a neutral activity, but located at the intersection of diverse (and often competing) epistemic and value orders" (p. 5). The question arises, for instance, how the results of the civic knowledge test scores are interpreted according to which country a participant is from. If students only reach the lowest level of proficiency, does this mean poor school performance, being insufficiently prepared to be a valuable citizen, or being inadequately prepared to be a citizen in a liberal context? International organisations have gained considerable power by establishing international large-scale educational tests, which in turn have become influential governance tools, not least for reasons of strengthening economic market competition (Grek, 2024; Hastedt, 2020). These tests shape how concepts are defined and have a considerable impact on curricula, as citizenship education is often regarded as a possible way to tackle various societal issues. Additional influence is given to the ICCS since it is so far the only international large-scale study on citizenship education (Joris & Agirdag, 2019).

Furthermore, the ICCS is comparable to other large-scale educational assessments such as PISA or TIMSS, which also turn educational practice into comparable data. Hence, citizenship is perceived as and reduced to skills in a learning area like mathematics or reading competencies. This is consistent with the findings by Joris and Agirdag (2019), which criticise the lack of subjectification and the focus on citizenship as a competence. In their study on the empirical research on political education, Biedermann and Reichenbach (2009) also criticise the simplified measurement of higher scores equalling higher political competencies, especially in the fields of patriotic attitudes, political action, conventional citizenship or trust in governmental institutions.

5.3. Limitations

These findings could have been enriched by some methodological improvements. Limitations include the absence of trial coding, primarily due to time constraints. Trial coding

could have provided valuable insights into the data analysis process, potentially enhancing the depth of the study findings. Additionally, the research was conducted by a single researcher, which resulted in constraints regarding the amount of material which could be analysed. For instance, this analysis does not include an evaluation of any material concerning results or interpretations of results. The IEA has published a variety of consulting material for each of the ICCS cycles, which could offer even more insights into how the results and surveys are interpreted. Especially since, while efforts were made to collect relevant material, it is acknowledged that not all the material gathered has been equally informative for addressing the research questions. In the end, the frameworks and questions provided the material for the main parts of the analysis, while the other sources contributed only limited answers useful to the research questions. This limitation raises the possibility that some relevant perspectives or insights may have been overlooked or underrepresented in the analysis.

5.4. Future Directions and Practical Implications

Since it did not fit the research questions, the initially coded categories of modern topics, such as digital citizenship, sustainability, and climate change, were dropped during the process of analysing the results. However, the influence of these contemporary global issues on citizens cannot be denied; hence research on the future implications of the traditional citizenship theories where those issues are concerned would be interesting.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the ICCS is clearly assessing democratic citizenship education. Veugelers (2021), for instance, states: "In reality ICCS is a study not of citizenship but of democratic citizenship" (p. 297). He does, however, express an interest in exploring diverse forms of citizenship in states with various political systems while at the same time acknowledging that non-democratic states were less likely to join the survey for ideological as well as practical reasons, as the ICCS includes questions on voting, free speech, and democratic representation.

Moreover, another intriguing topic is the treatment of citizenship as a learning area. This leads to influencing factors such as socioeconomic background, school achievement and gender. When citizenship is conceptualised as predominantly competence-based, the test inherently measures school achievement. An interesting research angle could be to explore the correlation between these factors, and implications thereof for the view on citizenship. The success of competence-based citizenship education might be influenced by the same factors as the general respective school system.

Finally, it should be stressed that the research efforts and significance of ICCS's results for international citizenship education are recognised. Nonetheless, this significant influence of large-scale assessments shows how important critical analysis and thorough and constant checking of assumptions is. For instance, as Joris and Agirdag (2019) point out as well, other more qualitative types of survey methods, such as interviews or observatory methods could broaden the findings in terms of students' opinions and autonomous and critical input. Furthermore, this would give more room to the contested nature of citizenship, as both the participants and the recipients of the survey would receive more open-minded, less guided results. Since policymakers in education rely heavily on these large-scale international surveys, it would be beneficial to acknowledge citizenship as an inherently contested concept which will always be influenced by one's own beliefs and to let then the methodology reflect that.

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Appendices

Attachment 1: ICCS 2022 Instruments

Instrument	Length	Respondent	Items		
			Old ICCS 2016	New ICCS 2022	Total
International cognitive test	45 min	Student	P: 55 (45%) C: 55 (40%)	P: 66 (55%) C: 81 (60%)	P: 121 C: 136
International student questionnaire	40-50 min	Student	125 (68%)	60 (32%)	185
European questionnaire	Ca. 20 min	Student	42 (48%)	46 (52%)	88
Latin American questionnaire	Ca. 10 min	Student	38 (84%)	7 (16%)	45
International Teacher questionnaire	Ca. 30 min	Teacher	54 (55%)	45 (45%)	99
International School questionnaire	Ca. 30 min	Principal	75 (58%)	54 (42%)	129
National contexts survey	No limit	National research coordinator/designate			

ICCS 2022 framework: "ICCS 2022 instruments", p. 69; "Numbers and percentages of items from ICCS 2016 and those newly developed for ICCS 2022 contained within the main survey instruments", p. 70; (C = computer-based, P = paper-based)

Attachment 2: Overview and Explanation of ICCS 2016 Codebook Questionnaire Files

ISA	Student civic knowledge test file	"The ICCS 2016 student civic knowledge test data files contain the student responses to the individual test items in the ICCS 2016 assessments. The student test data files are best suited for performing item-level analyses. Civic knowledge test scores (plausible values) for the ICCS 2016 civic knowledge scale are only available in the student questionnaire data files." (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 11)
ISR	Student Reliability File/Within-country scoring reliability data files	"The ICCS 2016 within-country scoring reliability data files contain data that can be used to investigate the reliability of the ICCS 2016 constructed-response item scoring. The scoring reliability data files contain one record for each booklet that was double scored during the within-country scoring reliability exercise" (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 12)
ISG	International Student Questionnaire File	"Questions related to their home background, perceptions of their school context, their attitudes toward civic principles, institutions and important topics in society, as well as aspects related to their civic engagement. The international student questionnaire data files contain students' responses to these questions. They also contain students' civic knowledge test scores (plausible values) to facilitate analyses of relationships between student background and student perceptions, characteristics and achievement." (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 10)
ISE	European Student Questionnaire File	"Students from European and Latin American countries were administered regional student questionnaires in addition to the student test booklet and
ISL	Latin American Student Questionnaire File	the international student questionnaire. The questions in the regional questionnaires were related to students' attitudes and perceptions relevant to the region. The questionnaire data files contain students' responses to these questions" (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 10)
ITG	Teacher Questionnaire File	"information about school and classroom contexts, connections between schools and local communities, perceived objectives of civic and citizenship education, and approaches to teaching in this learning area" (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 10)

ICG	School Questionnaire File	School principals
NCQI	National Contexts	"This data file contains the responses provided by National Research Coordinators of the participating countries to the ICCS 2016 National Contexts Questionnaire. The National Contexts Survey was designed to systematically collect relevant data on the structure of the education system, education policy, and civic and citizenship education, teacher qualifications for civic and citizenship education, and the extent of current debate and reforms in this area. The survey also collected data on processes at the national level regarding assessment of and quality assurance in civic and citizenship education and in school curriculum approaches." (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 12)
CSC3	Questionnaire data file	
WLE	Summary scales and derived variables from the questionnaire	"In the ICCS 2016 reports, a scale is a special type of derived variable that assigns a score value to students on the basis of their responses to the component variables. In ICCS 2016, new scales were typically calculated as IRT WLE (weighted likelihood estimates) scores with mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10 for equally weighted countries." (Köhler et al., 2018, p. 15)