



Courageous Citizens

HOW
CULTURE
CONTRIBUTES
TO SOCIAL
CHANGE

European
Cultural
Foundation

Veliz



Over the past decades, the cultural and political map of Europe and the world has changed rapidly. Developments such as the changing status of the European Union, migration, and the wider repercussions of globalization have posed numerous social and political challenges. Instead of recognizing and valuing these challenges, there is a growing tendency to retreat into fixed ideas of culture and cultural divides. This book celebrates the capacity of individuals and small groups to contribute to social change through culture and art. It is a source of inspiration for renegotiating our understanding of the world and affirming culture as a critical space to practice courage and perseverance amid complex societal reconfigurations.

Courageous Citizens focuses on those whose daring, sharing, and inventing contribute to our collective future, and for whom culture and democracy are the starting points for vision and action. The cycle of (re-)thinking, doing, and changing that is inherent in remodelling the way we view the world and concurrently the potential of culture to contribute to positive social change is addressed through three key themes:

- I – Diversity and Equality;
- II – Communities and Democracy;
- III – Fragmentation and Solidarity.

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ISBN
978-94-92095-51-0

Printed and bound
in the EU



<CORRAGEOUS
<CITIZENS

HOW <CULTURE
<CONTRIBUTES
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Valiz, Amsterdam

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BECOMING-WORLD
A New Perspective
on European
Citizenship

Rosi Braidotti

POLITICS OF LOCATION

We need to re-invent cosmopolitan citizenship for the twenty-first century, in a manner that moves beyond a-historical Eurocentrism on the one hand and a flat repetition of universalism on the other. It is time to embrace complexity, accountability, and solidarity with both human and non-human others, so as to 'become-world' together. In order to construct this new kind of cosmopolitan—or rather planetary—relations, we first need to do some serious critical thinking and work together to develop adequate understandings of our locations.

Becoming-world means creating a cosmopolitan bond among humans and non-humans as

well, as I will argue in the second half of this essay.

In order to reconstruct a cosmopolitan bond among ourselves, it is useful to start with a comprehensive

analysis of our specific locations, our relationship

to the social and ecological environments, our sense of genealogy, of intellectual and historical traditions.

Locations are spatial-temporal coordinates that pro-

vide the framework to analyze our existence in terms

of space, that is to say: class, ethnicity, geopolitical

relations, territorial and environmental belonging,

nationality, and so on. But locations also define us in

terms of time, that is to say by a sense of historical

memory, family and personal genealogies, the attach-

ment to religious and cultural practices, and trans-

historical narratives. My model for this approach is

the feminist method of the 'politics of location'. This

is an empirical, embodied philosophy first developed

by Simone de Beauvoir ([1949] 1973), to study the

different experiences of women—as compared to

men—in a patriarchal system. Assuming that women

occupy a different location, and that this difference

is a mark of inequality, de Beauvoir focused on the

specific aspects of the social, mental, and emotional

existence of what she named 'the second sex'.

The second feminist wave of the 1960s and 1970s in the USA expanded this method and Adrienne Rich actually coined the term 'politics of location' (Rich, 1987), as a way of accounting for diversity among different kinds of women unified within the generic category of gender. Differences of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age, and ability fragment the unified gender category of 'woman' and add both depth and complexity to a feminist understanding of what it means to be a woman.

This insight was further developed into the cornerstone of feminist-situated epistemologies, also known as situated knowledge (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1988). Applied in a broader sense to the construction of all subjects of knowledge, as an analytical tool, the politics of location and a situated knowledge provides the means to explore our respective locations and thus confront our differences critically. As a creative tool, it helps us mediate the tensions and conflicts emerging from the different locations and supports the construction of shareable discourses and practices. The focus on collaboration and sharing sustains the project of experimenting with ways of transforming the patterns of our social interaction, so as to increase our capacity to relate productively to each other. Awareness of the relational ties that bind us can help us devise ways of honouring them. In this regard we are better off replacing universalism with the recognition of interdependence, which in turn entails the mutual acceptance of the fact that the politics of location offer a pluralistic array of partial and hence limited perspectives.

The politics of location and situated knowledge are a way to explore and analyze the kinds and the degrees of difference, in terms of access and entitlements to power, without dialectical opposition and violence. This method aims at achieving

The point of complicating this subject position—'we'—is to shift the question of citizenship to a matter of shared values and active participation, while diffusing any kind of essentialized identity. Citizens are as citizens do; 'citizen acts' are their defining feature (Isin and Nielsen, 2008). This perspective offers an alternative to a sacralized notion of nationalism. Whether 'we' hold one nationality, or more than one, or whether 'we' are seeking a new nationality through migration, asylum, and human rights laws, 'we' are capable of behaving like responsible citizens. 'We' are not one and the same, the differences between us are sharp and often painful, but 'we' can act as subjects-in-becoming.

Fractured entity. self-evidence about this complex and internally in inverted commas to suspend any sense of function perfectly well. I have put 'we' deliberately countries, and yet be socialized adequately and many languages, have family and friends in several them. Similarly, 'we' are perfectly capable of speaking margins of encounter and negotiations between translatable into each other, and yet 'we' can find may not always be in harmonious terms or completely 'we' can belong to multiple cultural communities that open, relational, and multi-layered one. For example, each of us is not one closed and solid entity, but an power-relations that 'we' inhabit. The key idea is that multiple—and potentially contradictory—locations and (and 2011). Subjectivity is nomadic, because of the and situated knowledge have enabled me to theorize the *nomadic* nature of subjectivity (Braidotti, 1994 (*potentia*). The method of the politics of location restrictive (*potestas*) and empowering or affirmative negative term, but also as a productive one—it is both subject-positions. I take power not as an exclusively one inevitably inhabits as the site of one's social and accountability by unveiling the power locations that

Being a nomadic subject means to understand that we belong, but that we also flow, because the boundaries between our different cultural locations are porous and not rigid.

The idea of nomadic subjectivity calls for an ethics of mutual respect. If we agree that locations are historicized and situated, but also dynamic foundations that structure one's being-in-the-world and one's social modes of belonging, it follows that they differ in quantitative and qualitative degrees. Whether we are diasporic, nomadic, hybrid, post-colonial, a migrant, a refugee, a post-communist, or an in-between subject, makes quite a difference. These positions are not the same, though they can be equivalent. The task of the critical thinker is to make relevant distinctions among these different locations and map their points of intersection, in order to create a politically invested account of our respective locations. I call this philosophical method of mapping the nomadic subject a 'cartography' (Braidotti, 2002). Such cartographies need to do justice to the power differentials involved in the different locations, while identifying a common project that can be shared by multiply-located subjects, committed to constructing new kinds of collective citizenship.

The cartographic method of the politics of location can easily be applied to the analysis of other categories of nomadic subjectivity, for instance what it means to be human in the age of Artificial Intelligence and genomics; or what it means to speak of sustainability in the era known as the Anthropocene.¹ When we start from the relational nature of the subject and emphasize the

The term 'Anthropocene', coined in 2002 by Nobel Prize winner Paul J. Crutzen, describes the current geological era as dominated by measurable negative human impact on the Earth, through technological interventions and consumerism. It was officially adopted by the International Geological Congress in August 2016.

policing access to and participation in system of entitlements and power. Thus, it is not because he is more rational that 'Man' is dominant, but rather that, being dominant, male subjectivity has monopolized rationality as his distinctive prerogative (Lloyd, 1985). The dominant subject defines himself as much by what he excludes—the 'others'—as by what he includes in his self-understanding. Moreover, the dominant subject is always presented as a natural necessity, or as the outcome of an unavoidable evolutionary effort, which allows it to function as the standard-bearer of successful normality. The naturalization of power is one of the assets of dominant categories.

Because of the systemic way in which power works, as both entrapment and empowerment, we need critical and creative accounts of our multiple and potentially contradictory locations. Accepting that 'we' are in *this* predicament together, but 'we' are not one and the same is the first move towards a new vision of becoming-world, by which I mean a planetary citizenship that might be attuned to the complexity of our era.

Accepting that 'we' is not a universalist entity blurring all differences, but rather a relational threshold that acknowledges and honours those differences, is at the core of relational ethics. It combines the recognition that 'we' are fractured by multiple and multi-layered differences of locations, and hence of power and entitlements, with the rejection of a dialectical and negative view of these differences. Instead, differences become the building blocks of a shared sense of identity, while maintaining the diversity of situated locations and power relations that have structured the different kinds of subjects 'we' have become. To achieve this balancing act, 'we' have to produce a courageous act of collective creation of citizens that are rooted,

tions I outlined before: a becoming-world in a relational and productive manner. Symbolic of the regressive tendencies in Europe at present is the deterioration of our collective relationship to migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, who bear the brunt of racism in contemporary Europe, as the project of multiculturalism seems to have lost momentum.

Applying the method of the feminist politics of location to this conjuncture, we need to start the process by producing adequate understanding of our current situation. A useful first step is to remember our complex history, which is not only full of glorious achievement, but also of objectionable events and shameful moments. Europe's history includes colonialism, fascism, several world wars, and a tendency to xenophobic rejection of others. As Balibar (2001) and Bauman (2004) have argued, contemporary European subjects and citizens must meet the ethical obligation to be accountable for their past history and the long shadow it casts on present-day social and political life. This is the only way to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. The new mission that Europe has to embrace is indeed courageous as well as creative. It entails the criticism of narrow-minded self-interests, intolerance, and racist rejection of otherness. We need to infuse new collective meaning and credible energy into the statement that 'we' are in *this* together. The sense of connection and cohesion needs to be qualified by the recognition of the structural differences of location that compose each of us. Only a grounded and accountable analysis of these differences in a non-oppositional manner can result in a renewed claim to community and belonging by singular subjects. This results in a proliferation of locally situated claims, or 'a collaborative morality' (Lloyd, 1996, p. 74).

economic realities of the global market and also as a progressive advocate of human rights and world peace. The EU is a multi-faceted political project, where reactionary and progressive elements of the European projects stand alongside one another. On the one hand, Europe celebrates its cultural diversity and the importance of transnational exchanges, but on the other hand it witnesses the resurgence of hyper-nationalisms occurring at the micro-level of regions, provinces, and even towns. The cosmopolitan global city and the paranoid Fortress Europe stand back-to-back as opposite but interconnected sides of the same coin.

In an attempt to bypass these binary oppositions, I emphasize an alternative vision of Europe as becoming-post-Eurocentric, or 'becoming-world'. The demise of Eurocentrism is taken as a generative premise that points to the possibility of a qualitative shift in our collective sense of identity and our collective imagining (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999). Contained within the progressive project of the EU are the seeds for a post-nationalist social-political space (Habermas, 2001). But this potential flies in the face of the insurgent neo-nationalism of European nation states, especially in the former East, which creates deep fissions within the EU. We then see how the sense of shared locations, of a common European citizenship and a shared history, culture, and currency, coexists with increasing internal fragmentation, regionalism, and xenophobia. The 'new' Europe is trying to steer its course in the midst of these complex and contradictory coordinates.

Again, let us take our history seriously. Since the end of European hegemony and especially after World War II, the decline of Europe as an imperial world power has been at the centre of the project of European unification. This means Europe has to find another way of being in the world.

A post-war consensus has arisen, which stresses the advantages of transforming Europe into a social-political laboratory so as to develop a post-nationalist sense of citizenship. Europe needs to become the place that is capable of elaborating a critical reflection on its own history, so as not to repeat its mistakes, notably the reduction of the different lives of sexualized, racialized, ecologized 'others' to a pejorative, devalorized status.

In my transformative perspective, the political project of European unification involves a qualitative shift in consciousness, which is the result of the process of analyzing and accounting for the politics of location. A courageous and creative post-nationalist vision of Europe entails the critique of ethnocentrism and of the self-appointed role of Europe as the alleged centre of the world—this false universalism underpinning the old Eurocentric identity. As an alternative, I propose a nomadic, that is to say multi-lingual, multi-faceted, and hybrid vision of Europe as a place where we are historically pushed to think about our history in a critical but also creative manner. As a post-nationalist project, the EU will, ideally, undergo a change in consciousness away from nationalism, moving towards a flexible mode of citizenship that allows for multiple belongings. This image of Europe is the opposite of the grandiose and aggressive universalism of the past. In contrast, this new image of Europe is both a situated and accountable perspective, that becomes-world in a non-conquering manner, turns our collective social imaginary away from the mental habit of cultural homogeneity towards a relational sense of diversity. Such a qualitative shift will allow us to look to the future confidently and to the past without nostalgia. As such it is a creative gesture, producing horizons of hope and, simultaneously, constructing the possibility of a future that is alive to the positivity of difference,

the wealth of diversity, and the need for qualitative transformations.

For people who inhabit the European region, the present is marked to an unprecedented degree by trans-culturality, migration, and flows of migrants, itinerant workers, war refugees, and asylum seekers. The endless talk of yet another 'refugee crisis' is the symptom of the seabed change that is taking place in the very structure of European self-perception, as well as Europeans' anxiety about how to cope with this change. These new social-political realities raise fundamental questions concerning entitlement and agency. Thus the EU is faced with the following issue: can one be European, Black, Jewish, and Muslim? How can 'we', in all fairness, expect some of our fellow citizens to put up with being a Europe-born non-European, confined to the status of a second-class citizen within the dominant polity, while being an official citizen, as is often the case with generations of migrants and post-colonial citizens? Can the European project enable a new practice of flexible and multi-layered post-nationalist European subjectivity? Being a nomadic European subject means to be in transit within different identity-formations, but also to be sufficiently anchored to a historical position so as to accept responsibility for the location one occupies. By assuming full responsibility for the partial perspective of its own location, the European space can open up to a world no longer dominated by European power alone, while remaining loyal to the wealth and diversity of its roots.

The process of multiple belongings and a becoming-world of European citizens is transformative and affirmative, but not without its challenges. It requires some degree of dis-identification from established, nation-bound parameters of identity-formation. Such an enterprise inevitably entails a

sense of loss as cherished habits of thought and representation will be left behind. This mature and sobering experience offers unquestionable benefits, because it produces a more adequate cartography of our real-life conditions, free from delusions of grandeur. It is therefore more lucid epistemologically and ethically fairer.

There is a lot to be learned from migrants, exiles, and refugees, who have first-hand experience of the pain and loss felt as a result of being uprooted and of forced dis-identification with familiar identities. Multi-locality is the affirmative translation of this negative sense of loss, allowing for the active production of multiple forms of belonging and complex allegiances (Glissant, 1997). What is lost with the sense of fixed origins is gained in an increased desire for multiple belonging.

The qualitative leap through the sense of loss of familiar values can turn into a gesture of active creation, one that affirms new ways of belonging. It is a fundamental reconfiguration of our way of being in the world that acknowledges the pain of loss whilst moving beyond it. Given that identifications constitute an inner scaffolding that supports one's sense of identity, we cannot shift the social imaginary lightly, like casting away a used garment. This process is difficult and more akin to shedding an old skin. Moreover, it is a collective activity; a group project that connects active, conscious, and willing citizens. It points towards a virtual, but no less real, destination—a post-nationalist Europe that becomes world. It is historically grounded, socially embedded, and already partly actualized in the joint endeavours of those who are currently working towards it. Affirming new ways of belonging mobilizes positive affects, such as creativity, the imagination, the power of vision and bonding.