

Introduction: Against citizenship: Visual belongings and transnational affects

Cultural Dynamics
2023, Vol. 35(1-2) 3–11
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DOI: 10.1177/09213740231171225
journals.sagepub.com/home/cdy



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Abstract

This special issue “Against Citizenship: Visual belongings and transnational affects” gathers contributions that address the affective and transnational networks that position themselves against or confront the “fantasy” of an egalitarian citizenship, understanding that this notion is not only intrinsically segregating, but aleatory and artificial, in the same way that the creation and existence of states are. The framework of the issue is the possibility given by cultural practices to articulate and perform post-national, denationalized or transnational forms of citizenship in a world characterized by globalization, post-colonial societies and migratory movements. Through these cultural practices a variety of political communities try to solve the restrictions that the State imposes to differentiated types of citizenship or even to cross its limits, be them geographical or juridical, and to create a different sense of belonging and recognition. The struggles for the rights around intersections, such as race, gender or disability, that are fundamental to the internal exclusion of the “citizens” of a state, are key in questioning the political debt that citizenship has with its supposed cultural homogeneity, as post-colonial countries have experienced in the last years. In this sense, notions such as identity, belonging and affect motivate the needs and roadmaps of communities excluded from citizenship, but seeking precisely to provide radically opposite definitions and possibilities which guarantee the attenuation of vulnerability and, above all, the right to be, live and exist.

Keywords

citizenship, right to culture, belonging, affect, transnationality

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In the last decades the notion of citizenship, strongly determined by Western historical perspectives (*citoyen*, liberal citizenship) and based on exclusion, has undergone a deep process of questioning by sociologists, political theorists and anthropologists, generating new definitions and perspectives. One of these debates revolves around the breakdown in the identification between citizenship and nationality. This opening has brought forth the possibility of new vocabularies (Isin, 2009) and articulations of post-national, denationalized or transnational forms of citizenship (Sassen, 2002). These transformations respond, among other factors, to the challenges posed to and by globalization, post-colonial societies and migratory movements. Authors such as Desforges et al. (2005), Cottrell Studemeyer (2015), Holston (2009), Appadurai (2001), to name but a few, have proved the insufficiency of these perspectives to account for the diversity of networks of belongings and organizations in a post-colonial world. New criteria and approaches have advanced attempts to re-conceptualize and re-constitute the strategies of access to rights from a variety of political communities and to solve the restrictions that the State imposes or to cross its limits, be them geographical or juridical.

Cultural citizenship

Contemporary de-territorialization has widened and transformed patterns of identification and belonging among citizens, expanding from territorial imagination and perceptions to relational practices and experiences that give way to a “lived citizenship” in which the topographical combines with the topological (Kallio et al., 2015). For these authors, a lived citizenship is not only a status, but a set of relationships and practices that give it meaning. In addition to this, we can add the notion of cultural citizenship, as coined by Allor and Gagnon (1994), that relate the new forms of political power to citizens as producers and consumers of culture. This idea was reframed by Klaus and O’Connor in relation to the emotions and pleasure engendered by popular culture. In their words, “The concept of ‘cultural citizenship’ embraces both aesthetic and emotional aspects in addition to rational and moral argumentation and could expand and revitalize critical analysis of the public sphere” (Klaus and O’Connor, 2000: 424). In this sense, we propose that the practice of culture, with its emotional and aesthetic components, is one of the ways to produce a lived citizenship.

Although the analysis of the relationship between citizenship and cultural studies exceeds the purpose of this introduction, we can briefly mention that the already cited crisis in the notion of citizenship opened not only the opportunity to re-evaluate the relationship between citizenship, civic engagement, public sphere and culture, but also to generate a wider turn where cultural studies have helped to rethink citizenship. In Hermes and Dahlgren’s approach “cultural studies can offer a much wider sense of the (hidden) resources for citizenship, as well as help to understand how these hidden resources are both beneficial and detrimental for the idealized public sphere about which political élites like to dream” (Hermes and Dahlgren, 2006: 262). Concretely, they propose that this cultural turn of citizenship needs to consider the inequalities that shape how individuals emerge as speaking subjects and the ways in which civic agency and new public spheres are connected to meaning, practices, communication and identities. In trying to overcome

the outdated notions of the public sphere, these studies help to understand how communities and their identity processes can relate to forms of belonging beyond the nation-state. These cultural dimensions of citizenship, in return, produce citizen cultures.

In the last few years, several authors, such as Elgin F. Isin or James Holston have highlighted this performative aspect of citizenship. For Isin, civic agency is performed as ‘acts of citizenship’ that produce the citizens themselves as they unfold (Isin, 2008). In his analysis, he proposes the figure of the citizen activist, actors that “claim to transform themselves (and others) from subjects into citizens as claimants of rights” (Isin, 2009: 368). In the same vein, Holston has articulated the notion of “insurgent citizenship” (2009). Political and transnational affects and historical processes connected by solidarity networks and social and activist movements, that advocate for the end of the violence against dissident identities, challenge the notion of a world segmented by colonialism through the revindication of a sense of belonging that we can truly acknowledge.

Citizenship and belonging

Either in liberal definitions that consider citizenship a status, or as an active practice oriented to social change, citizenship is determined by some form of belonging and, therefore, by its negation or exclusion. It is in relation to this identification, external or self-determined, that the different forms of citizenship are built and our positioning toward them takes shape. The understanding of citizenship, defined by the belonging to a nation-state, relates to the exclusion of foreign people, but also to the invisibilization of the differences between “nationals” that don’t necessarily share what “we” understand by community and don’t need the same kind of “action” in the practices of their expectations and rights. In fact, they don’t need to share Benedict Anderson’s notion of imagined communities (1983). Considering these differentiated types of citizenship, the term seems to have to do more with rights than with administrative status, because belonging inevitably needs the recognition of the rest of the community. In this sense, the struggles for the rights around intersections, such as race, gender or disability, that are fundamental to the internal exclusion of the “citizens” of a state, are key in questioning the political debt that citizenship has with cultural homogeneity, as post-colonial countries have experienced in the last years.

At this point, it is interesting to think of two meanings of citizenship that define, to a great extent, post-colonial and post-totalitarian or post-dictatorial citizenship, meanings that are the focus of this volume: cultural citizenship and transnational citizenship. The first indicates how these rights are subordinated, in contemporary nations, to the cultural assimilation that a state demands in return for the fulfillment of certain rights. In this sense, the problem of recognition, with its strong colonial imprint, is conditioned to degrade the cultural differences of those who don’t represent the “majoritarian” culture (Mamdani, 1996; González Casanova, 2006). Here, the forms of belonging are crucial, because often it is precisely within communities that these cultural practices can develop and where that active practice of citizenship takes place, while, at the same time, this need is used by the state for exclusion. On the other hand, the affective bonds that arise from this cultural citizenship facilitate the establishment of networks among those that, share needs,

expectations and often, cultural legacies. At this point, the notion of transitional citizenship has to do with settled borders, but also through those borders or, even, within the interior of these borders.

The distinction proposed by Carrie-Ann Biondi Kahn between “belonging” and “becoming” (Kahn, 2002) suggests that, along with being active, citizenship is variable and unstable. We don’t just “belong” to a community, but we become part of other communities when we cross the borders of the masculine, heterosexual, white, abled citizen that is, a priori, the touchstone of modern citizenship. In this sense, Malcolm Waters defines citizenship as “a set of normative expectations” (Waters, 1989: 160). This idea also refers to Mahmood Mamdani’s notions of cultural and political identities, considering the first one as an identity characterized by the sharing of the past, and the second, by the sharing of the future (Mamdani, 2005). Notions such as identity, belonging and affect will therefore motivate the needs and roadmaps of communities excluded from citizenship, but seeking precisely to provide radically opposite definitions and possibilities which guarantee the attenuation of vulnerability and, above all, the right to be, live and exist.

Jean Beaman has worked with the idea of cultural citizenship mainly in France, a state which boasts of having “invented” citizenship, but is in fact traversed by deep racial inequalities due to colonization (Beaman, 2016). It is a context that has also been analyzed by Étienne Balibar (2003) and that has a reflection in diverse moments in the riots and conflicts of the French large cities known as *banlieus*. Their thoughts have proved that it is not nationality which guarantees inclusion, but assimilation. In relation to this, Beaman explains:

My framework of cultural citizenship emphasizes how citizenship operates for marginalized populations, who despite being formal legal citizens are nonetheless not fully included in the citizenry. Cultural citizenship focuses on what would allow an individual to traverse the cultural-symbolic boundaries around a particular national community and identity and be accepted as a full member (Beaman, 2016). Insofar as cultural citizenship is a claim, I am framing it as a claim to full societal belonging by fellow members of one’s community, versus a claim to a specific set of rights. Being denied cultural citizenship denotes an impaired civic status (Meer, 2010). Furthermore, cultural citizenship is a claim for full societal inclusion, despite one’s difference from others (Beaman, 2016: 852–853).

Therefore, it is precisely the allegedly lack of integration or homogeneity that is at stake as a justification of the lack of rights of some parts of the population. This kind of belonging is felt by these communities as an imposition. At the same, the notion of a *valid* belonging is invoked, in return, in numerous violations of rights. It is a citizenship that operates in two different manners “against” itself.

We could think about the different forms of transnational citizenship and they too would be affected by the range of participation and transformation or inherent belonging of national citizenship. An example of transnational citizenship could be the European Union that, in spite of not being ruled by the dissolution of national identities, gives up part of their states’ sovereignties, while having their own technologies of exclusion;

mainly via border controls or restriction of free movement of non E.U. citizens. These technologies have consolidated what Balibar has called “European apartheid” (Balibar, 2003). In opposition to this, the different theories around transnational citizenship have evolved through and with diverse forms of social and political struggles. In fact, activism has become a key mediator for support and transmission in transnational networks and in migration and diaspora processes. These fights, beyond the notion of cultural or political belonging, have resumed the idea of sharing expectations, expanding the framework to a kind of political imagination that projects the affective in the present and the future, and not necessarily in a common history and culture.

In his multi-dimensional approach, Ken Plummer identifies five processes through which new public spheres can appear, namely: imagining/empathizing; vocalizing; investing identities through narrative; creating social worlds and communities of support; and creating a culture of public problems (Plummer, 2003: 81–82). Contributions, such as the ones of Arjun Appadurai, who proposes the creation of digital archives of “future memories” (Appadurai, 2003), or Ariella Azoulay, who connects photography and citizenship (Azoulay, 2008), have given visibility a preeminent place for building other ways of denouncing, transforming and especially belonging and empathizing in order to link remote contexts, both cultural and geographically. In the realm of the imagination and visibility, audiovisual and artistic practices have a significant potential to generate self-representations and others forms of spectatorship and participation. They can also put into question the production of hegemonic visibility. Thirdly, they are fundamental to proposing new modes of re-imagining citizenship and re-defining it beyond its current juridical limitations. The visual and artistic practices propose, at the same time, life and territory as something for whose conservation we create dissident forms of belonging and citizenship as a status *against* which we need to self-organize.

This special issue of *Cultural Dynamics* gathers contributions that address the affective and transnational networks that position themselves against or confront the “fantasy” of an egalitarian citizenship, understanding that it is not only intrinsically segregating, but aleatory and artificial, in the same way as the creation and existence of states. The volume intends to reunite contributions that explore experiences and visual, artistic, photographic, filmic or performative forms and processes that expand the notion of visual citizenship(s) from an affective and transnational approach.

Several articles of this issue connect gender, race, citizenship and the different forms of active mobilization that denounce cases of exclusion. In his article, “‘We will make the revolution as homosexuals!’ Underground texts, identity and citizenship. Transnational solidarity among social movements in the 1970s,” Víctor Mora addresses the relevance that the seventies had on the processes of homosexual emancipation in a transnational realm, linking the Spanish and Italian cases. Mora departs from the articles published in Italy by FUORI magazine to analyze how these different contexts looked at and supported what happened in other countries. The text highlights what was common in their struggle, to create an identity that was already there, but that was being built from the mobilization and that crossed national borders. In particular, and in response or as opposed to the pseudo-scientific texts that were still disseminated internationally in the seventies, which criminalized homosexuality under medical pretexts, the magazines also contested the old

homophobic orders. Thus, the activist production of publications became an axis and a tool for connecting and transforming the negation of citizenship for sexual dissidence reasons.

Taking also Spain as a point of departure, Leticia Sabsay in her article “Gender(ed) Violence in Neo-Authoritarian Times” discloses the relationship between the neo-authoritarian trends present in contemporary Europe and gender-based violence and how it is made equivalent to violence exercised against women. In her contribution to this issue, she states that it is not only gender that needs to be reformulated, but also the notion of violence. She revisits the semantic transformations of these forms of violence in the Spanish juridical realm. From this point, Sabsay advocates a more intersectional vision that goes beyond the gender-sex binarisms and hetero-centric positions. Departing from “patriarchy and its others,” and from the limitations of citizenship based on sexual condition and identity, she reveals the frictions between the different forms of gender-based violence. The action against these forms of violence is key for the fulfillment of citizenship.

Not only gender, but race is also an inner frontier that excludes others from full citizenship. In her article “From Cultural Citizenship to Suspect Citizenship: Notes on Rethinking Full Societal Inclusion,” Jean Beaman develops the idea of suspect citizenship, a term that extends the current notions of silent citizenship or citizen outsiders. Taking her ethnographic research with Black and Maghrébin-origin populations and North African second-generation in the Parisian metropolitan region as a point of departure, she states that racialized minorities in France are excluded despite their legal citizenship status, because of both their ethnoracial origins and their cultural differences, which question ‘proper’ French national identity. This exclusion takes place in a range of micro and macro situations, such as the permanent police violence and harassment or the omission of antiracist and pro-migrant struggles and protests in France’s narratives of civil unrest.

In the case of Greece, Anastasia Christou, in her article “Divergent democracy: toward a mediatized affective activism renewal of the feminist and anti-fascist struggle in contemporary Greece,” through the analysis of two recent films made after the austerity measures of the European *troika*, addresses the rise of the right wing after decades of economic crisis, but also the feminist and anti-fascist activism developed in the wake of this rise. The article tries to recapitulate and recognize feminist and anti-racist movements, while, at the same time, uses cinematographic analysis in order to produce an autoethnography of the country. In addition, Christou stresses how important it is to activate solidarity networks and movements against the violence that is increasingly spreading throughout the country in the last years.

Another set of articles focus on migration, borders and citizenship, seeking a more fluid understanding of this relationship. In “Visual negotiation of identity and settlement of Poles in the so-called Recovered Territories: East Side Story by Anne Peschken and Marek Pisarsky,” Marta Smolińska presents the photographic project *East Side Story I: Mysłibórz* (2019- ongoing) by Anne Peschken and Mark Pisarsky (Urban Art) in which the performative aspect of citizenship is shown through the re-enactment of vernacular photographs by the descendants of the Poles who settled in the Polish-German borderland

after the Second War World. The original photographs were taken in the so-called Recovered Territories by Polish newcomers who needed to represent themselves as having the right to inhabit this territory and develop a sense of belonging. Smolińska highlights the role that Peschken's and Pisarsky's strategy of reenactment plays in the surfacing of the phantasmatic aspects of this border in contradiction to the nationalist identity of Poland. Correspondingly, she looks at this photographic project through the notion of borderscapes, which allows for a more complex understanding of the relationship between territory, image and citizenship.

If Smolinska's article allows us to see the German-Polish frontier as a border assemblage, Leire Vergara's text, "Plazas of Sovereignty: Curatorial Imagination in Times of Expanded Borders," apprehends the Spanish Moroccan one as a *dispositif*. Her article deals with the *plazas* of sovereignty, a series of strongholds that Spain has occupied in the northern coast of Morocco since medieval times and to which access is prohibited. The *plazas* represent the protection of national sovereignty and project the externalization of European borders into Africa. Vergara tries to pierce this opacity through a curatorial speculative process in which five artists worked out several actions, including a reading group, the production of documentary materials and several site-visits to the nearest points of these *plazas*. The project *Dispositifs of Touching*, in opposition to the opacity and invisibility of the enclaves and of other *dispositifs*, such as the History and Anthropology Museum of Melilla, enables a different kind of transnational affect, exercising new collective processes of subjectivation towards the construction of meaning.

Vergara's article explores the possibility of rendering observable another phantom border, while Pablo Lugo, in his article "Practices of disobedience and clandestine citizenships: a proposal towards an anarchist theory of art" proposes a different kind of borderscapes, based on concealment. From an anarchist standpoint, he endorses a kind of artistic creation in transition that is involved in everyday life and that runs in parallel to commercial and institutional apparatuses. These are activist practices that dissolve themselves into life and operate quietly between secret, rumor and fiction to improve people's lives. Specifically, he talks about a series of actions that may have been produced by anonymous artists between 2014 and 2019 in the U.K. In this pre-Brexit period, they have offered their IDs as the basis for printing new documents, allowing some undocumented immigrants to acquire legal status. This clandestine and ghost citizenship, made possible by artistic procedures, paradoxically helps to make visible the contradiction simultaneously of refusing and accepting some people's existence when the system requires their labor.

Yet, in another turn in the continuity between concealment, fluidity and visibility of borderscapes processes, this issue presents a visual essay by Abdiel Segarra, "We are here: an archive of portraits to look at myself" (2016-ongoing). The project is part of a collection of portraits of people from different diasporas, many of whom are currently living in Spain. The essay is highly significant in a country that tends to ignore the impact of migrant communities. For this volume, Segarra, a Puerto Rican living in Madrid, has chosen people that are part of different academic, cultural and artistic local initiatives. While their diasporic subjectivities are captured by the captions which give a glimpse of their life journeys; the images provide a deeper sense of presence and embodiment and

offer a sense of visual belonging and lived citizenship for this transnational community. The project is a visual case study that is constructed as an archive of future memories.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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