3 Acts of citizenship as methodology

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The more value-neutral a conceptual framework appears, the more likely it is to advance the hegemonic interests of dominant groups, and less likely it is to be able to detect important actualities of social relations (Harding 2006a: 6).

Introduction

On 17 October 2005, approximately 200 sex worker activists gathered at the European Parliament (EP) in Brussels at the invitation of Italian Member of European Parliament (MEP) Monica Frassoni, to present the proceedings of the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration. During the conference, the delegates debated and worked on two documents, the Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe and the Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto, outlining both the violations of sex workers’ rights and demands for rights that they were due. During the session, they presented key points from the manifesto and a set of recommendations on sex work for policy makers. Celebrating the end of the conference and the endorsement of the declaration and the manifesto, delegates displayed banners at the EP. A group of Swedish women, holding a conference on human trafficking at the same time, asked that security staff remove the sex worker activists on the grounds that demonstrating and waving banners in the EP is illegal. Having successfully held their ground in the EP, the activists regrouped and headed to the streets of Brussels for a demonstration. During the demonstration they held up red umbrellas, a symbol used by sex worker activists Europe-wide to signal their presence and make visible their political demands.

The Brussels mobilisation was characterised by a strong European dimension: it engaged groups from the twenty-seven countries of the European Union (EU) and its immediate neighbourhood, it was held in the institutional capital of the EU and it addressed policy makers and EU law-making institutions through the recommendations on sex work and
through endorsement in the EP of the Declaration by Vittorio Agnoletto, an Italian MEP. During the mobilisation, much emphasis was placed on citizenship, either through demanding the right to freedom of movement for all sex workers irrespective of their legal status and nationality, or by claiming the position of active citizens (Manifesto 2005).

While sex worker activists positioned themselves explicitly in relation to issues of EU citizenship, neither the literature on sex work in Europe nor on European citizenship engage the nexus between sex work and EU citizenship. Apart from a few scholars who discuss sex work in relation to EU citizenship (Andrijasevic 2010; Aradau 2008), sex work is mostly debated from the position of organised crime and exploitation of prostitution, in particular of migrant women (Lazaridis 2001), or from the perspective of the criminalisation of sex workers through various models of state regulation of prostitution and anti-trafficking policy (Chapkis 2003). This body of literature emphasises the social isolation, vulnerability and abuse of sex workers or the social and legal exclusion of sex workers due to existing prostitution and anti-trafficking policies (Bernstein 2007; Hubbard et al. 2008; Mai 2009; Ribeiro and Sacramento 2005). Similarly, mobilisations and the assertion of the position of active citizens by sex workers have not been taken up by the EU citizenship literature. This body of scholarship focuses primarily on EU integration and on how to conciliate national citizenship of EU member states with EU citizenship. Much of the debate revolves around questions such as what type of citizenship could emerge from various constitutional traditions (Preuss et al. 2003), whether EU citizenship should have ‘stand-alone’ status and hence replace national citizenship (Bellamy 2008), and how certain populations, such as settled third-country nationals (TCNs), are being excluded because citizenship remains embedded in the nation-state rather than the EU (Maas 2008).

The above scholarship offers, on the one hand, important insights into sex workers’ working conditions and, on the other, into citizenship rights and political communities, but neither addresses the link between sex work and EU citizenship nor the contribution that mobilisations of sex workers could make to studies of civic participation and active citizenship in the EU. While the relevance of this omission might not be readily visible, I would like to suggest that the failure of the above scholarship to consider the importance of collective mobilisation by sex workers, and of sex workers as active citizens, signals the failure of a number of conventional approaches in accounting for the role that political contestations and marginal subjects play in relation to EU citizenship. This shortcoming is due to the fact, I believe, that such modes of analysis privilege and constantly reproduce the existing conceptual frameworks that conceive of
marginal groups primarily in terms of exclusion and of EU citizenship as a formal status and institutionalised form of political participation. In order to detect the relevance of collective mobilisations by marginal groups for studies of EU citizenship, there is a need for a different entry point for analysis that approaches citizenship starting precisely from mobilisations of marginal groups rather than from an institutional or representational angle. That starting point, I suggest, is offered by the concept of ‘acts of citizenship’ that brings to the fore those instances of political participation, such as mobilisations by marginal and oppressed groups, that are often overlooked when the focus is on formal rights or legislation (Isin and Nielsen 2008). ‘Acts of citizenship’ shifts attention from citizenship as a formal status towards the question of how subjects constitute themselves as citizens irrespective of their status, and in doing so makes collective and marginal struggles its entry point of analysis.

In order to show the relevance of this shift, I will draw on feminist scholarship and in particular on feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1987, 1991). In their critique of dominant accounts of social sciences, feminist scholars have argued that conventional and so-called ‘objective’ research and methods are not neutral but that they reflect and promote institutional and political interests of those in dominant political, social and economic positions (Alcoff and Potter, 1993). To counter this tendency, and to produce a less distorted analysis of the social and political world, feminist standpoint theorists argue for beginning investigations from the lives of marginal and oppressed groups and their histories. In as much as both feminist standpoint theory and ‘acts of citizenship’ argue that analysis should begin with the political struggle of marginalised groups, they attempt to transform the existing modes of research and politics of knowledge. With this in mind, I argue for ‘acts of citizenship’ to be considered as a form of methodological intervention into how citizenship should be studied with the aim of generating a more complete and less distorted picture of European citizenship.

‘Acts of citizenship’ is commonly understood as a concept and a theory of citizenship rather than a critical methodology. In suggesting that ‘acts of citizenship’ be understood as a methodology and in bringing together ‘acts of citizenship’ with feminist standpoint theory through the case of the sex workers’ mobilisation in Brussels, my aim in this chapter is twofold. Firstly, I wish to highlight the link between methodology and epistemology and show the ways in which ‘acts of citizenship’ as a methodology brings a standpoint perspective to EU citizenship studies and in doing so challenges the conventional approaches to EU citizenship and the regimes of power and knowledge these help to maintain. As ‘acts of citizenship’ has not been developed and is not commonly used specifically in relation to EU
citizenship, I will be offering an overview of major trends in EU citizenship literature. In doing so, this chapter expands on the issues on European citizenship introduced in Chapter 1, and in particular on the limits of EU citizenship as the dominant regime. Secondly, in drawing on feminist standpoint theory in my discussion of ‘acts of citizenship’, I also wish to extend the conceptual framework underpinning ‘acts of citizenship’. In doing so, I will show how bringing more firmly into focus feminist approaches on political consciousness and struggle, including contradictory rights claims, allows for a more nuanced understanding of the constitution of collective political subjectivity.

The chapter is organised as follows. In the first section, I offer an overview of the underpinning methodology of mainstream approaches to EU citizenship so as to present their main concerns and limitations. The second section focuses on feminist insights into the politics of location and on a critique of failed objectivity in dominant knowledge production. This lays the ground for the final section in which I draw out the common lineages of feminist theories and the acts of citizenship perspective and, by focusing on the contradictory rights claims, I suggest ways in which ‘acts of citizenship’ could be developed further.

**EU citizenship: active, passive and activist**

At the core of ‘acts of citizenship’ is the shift from the question ‘Who is the citizen?’ to ‘What makes the citizen?’ (Isin 2009: 383). This shift, apparently modest, instigates an important move from citizenship as a status – and hence institutionally granted – to citizenship as a process through which subjects, by claiming rights, and regardless of their citizenship status, constitute themselves as citizens. The shift to the question of what makes the citizen means that ‘acts of citizenship’ places emphasis on what people do, namely on those claims and actions through which citizenship is enacted. This opens the space for detecting the ways in which those who do not hold EU citizenship and even reside outside the EU’s borders can actually act as European citizens. It also allows us to conceive of EU citizenship outside its legalistic and institutional format and to identify the importance of mobilisation, contestation and claims to rights to the ways in which citizenship is negotiated on the ground. Citizenship, from this perspective, becomes contingent, contested and in flux (Isin 2009) rather than a formal status. In order to understand the importance of this shift of perspective when studying European citizenship, I offer an overview of principal trends and concerns in mainstream EU citizenship scholarship. The bulk of these debates revolve around the issues of the relationship between national and European citizenship and
of how to enhance the role played by citizens of member states in order to foster the development of a European demos.

The debate on national versus EU citizenship includes both opponents and proponents of EU citizenship. Given the increased level of interaction between member state and EU citizenship resulting from the Europeanisation process, most scholars agree that nation-state and EU citizenship cannot be considered independently. What they disagree on is how to bring existing models of national citizenship into EU citizenship and whether the latter can be seen as a distinct or new form of citizenship. Those who advocate the primacy of national over EU citizenship work either with the ‘confluence model’, that attempts to develop a common concept of citizenship grounded in the variety of national traditions (Preuss et al. 2003), or with the ‘complementary model’, that sees EU citizenship only as complementary to nation-state citizenship (Bellamy 2008). Scholars who privilege the EU model focus on the innovative aspect of this arrangement and its potential for developing more inclusive forms of citizenship. For some scholars, the innovative aspect can be seen in new partnerships such as those between EU institutions, national governments and regional authorities which engender a multi-level European governance that Willem Maas has called the ‘network Europe’ model (2008: 497). For others, the innovative aspect lies in the framework of rights that has enabled multi-level governance and signals EU’s post-national and supranational character (Kostakopoulou 2007: 645). The preoccupation that scholars express in relation to these issues is whether one type of citizenship weakens and undermines the other. For proponents of national citizenship, the principal problem is the diminishing and undermining of the role of member state citizenship when, as in some rulings of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), EU citizenship takes precedence over nation-state citizenship (Bellamy 2008: 600). Some take this argument even further and contend that the result of EU citizenship being based on residency rather than descent or birth is the erosion of nation-state citizenship (Delanty 2007). For proponents of EU citizenship, the problem remains that EU citizenship is still embedded in member states rather than EU standards which create exclusions that can only be overcome by decoupling EU citizenship from national membership (Maas 2008:592). Some propose to abandon altogether the debate whether primacy over citizenship needs to be with member states or the EU, and argue that scholars need instead to address the interaction and gradual transformation of both national and EU citizenships (Kostakopoulou 2007: 634).

The debate on the tensions between nation-state and EU citizenship is linked to the discussions on belonging and European demos (see the discussion in Chapter 10, this volume). Much emphasis in this body of literature is placed on the need to move from an instrumental to a
rights-based conception of European citizenship in order to reflect the change from economic to political aspects of integration. Scholars identify enhanced political integration with the role of the ECJ and its ruling in changing national legislation on matters such as benefits, immigration and employment in public services and with the introduction of EU-wide anti-discrimination regulations such as the rights of workers, equality of women and anti-discrimination of minorities (Enjolras 2008). The centrality of rights with regards to European citizenship has prompted further contentions on the absence of an affective dimension in EU citizenship which is, on the contrary, a key component of nation-state citizenship (Bellamy 2008). Its cause is identified to lie in the fact that EU citizenship is based on rights and on the EU’s institutional and legal competencies which are seen as inadequate to generate belonging and foster a European demos, namely a unified body of subjects whose allegiance is to EU institutions (Bellamy 2008). Perhaps the ‘affective’ debate is best captured by Weiler who identifies the nation-state in terms of Eros and the EU in terms of civilisation, an opposition between the pre-modern, which appeals to the heart and emotions, and the modern, which appeals to the rational and to Enlightenment humanism (Weiler 1997: 551). In order to address these issues, some scholars suggest the need to look for alternative conceptions of political community because migration has challenged views about attachment to only one nation-state (Bauböck and Guiraudon 2009) and because EU citizenship has altered national citizenship through lessening the link between citizenship rights and state nationality (Kostakopoulou 2007: 642). Others express preoccupations with whether and to what extent the rights engendered via freedom of movement can constitute a common sense of belonging, and contend that due to its exclusive emphasis on rights, the EU has failed to bring about any degree of civic engagement (my emphasis, Delanty 2007: 66).

Remarks such as the above on the lack of active participation by EU citizens in the political processes of the EU are commonplace in the EU citizenship scholarship. This does not mean that scholars do not discuss political participation. On the contrary, there are scholars who discuss participation in terms of ‘citizenship practices’ through which citizens insert themselves into the constitution-making process (Wiener and Della Sala, 1997: 598); ‘direct democracy’ which signals citizens’ participation in Treaty reform and its ratification procedures (Cheneval 2007); and ‘network Europe’ to indicate a system of consultations between civil society and multi-level EU governance (Enjolras 2008). Some even speak of a ‘democratic surplus’ when referring to the increase of engagement by citizens following the Maastricht Treaty and the EC’s efforts to enhance active citizenship and participatory democracy in the Union (Arato in
Wiener and Della Sala, 1997: 608). However, the bulk of mainstream EU citizenship studies identify lack of active participation as a key problem facing the EU. This lack of participation is attributed to the rather technocratic nature of EU institutions and a lack of transparency in the working of these bodies and in their procedural mechanisms, which make EU institutions difficult to understand and access. Mostly discussed under the heading of democratic deficit and active citizenship, the emphasis is placed on the decline of voting patterns and democratic participation, and the debate centres on the implementation of various measures designed to increase citizens’ participation, overcome the EU’s democratic deficit and stimulate democratic renewal (Eriksen 2000; Follesdal and Hix 2006). For scholars working within this tradition, key questions are how to institute processes of authorisation, accountability and representation at the European level and strengthen formal aspects of European citizenship so as to make them into vehicles for participation by EU citizens in decision-making processes. Such preoccupations also extend outside the institutional and legal frames to encompass civil society groups and deliberative forums which are considered to be unable to offer a substitute for national party-based systems (Bellamy 2008: 608) as well as non-governmental organisations which are identified to be lacking transparent, democratic internal procedures and hence failing to deliver the Europeanisation of civil society (Warleigh 2001).

The above overview of the key debates in EU citizenship studies provides an important insight into the key methodological underpinnings of the EU citizenship literature. Despite its wide-ranging approaches, this body of scholarship on EU citizenship works from the ‘scalar’ model of citizenship whereby rights, political identity and public spheres are lifted up from the national to the European level (Aradau et al. 2010: 948). As a consequence, the political practice of European citizenship is limited to nationals of member states, framed by the EU’s legal and territorial boundaries, and channelled towards integration. While this way of approaching EU citizenship might be helpful in conveying certain forms of political participation, it is unable to consider others such as those by sex workers discussed in this chapter. Sex workers’ mobilisation falls outside the scope of mainstream EU citizenship studies because it is not an institutional intervention by EU citizens but rather a gathering of

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1 Consequently, the EU citizenship literature takes for granted the separation between the EU’s ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ despite the increasing number of studies which have stressed the theoretical and political limitations of this binary logic in times when the strict connection between sovereignty, territory and the law is under challenge (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2008; Rigo, 2010).
individuals who, due to their engagement in the sex industry, are most likely to be perceived as victims of exploitation rather than political actors. This implies that only practices by EU citizens, taking place through already existing institutional channels and geared towards Europeanisation, are posited as examples of political participation and active citizenship.

What we can observe therefore is firstly, unduly limiting assumptions about citizenship’s limits as in the debate on nation-state citizenship versus EU citizenship and secondly, the narrow parameters about political participation put forward in the debate on democratic deficit and civic participation. Such framing of citizenship and participation means that, ultimately, the main interest of certain mainstream EU citizenship studies is in passive versus active notions of citizenship. In order to account for the instances when citizens claim rights that they do not have and when non-citizens act as if they were citizens, Engin Isin has put forward the term ‘activist citizenship’.

‘Activist citizenship’ attempts to overcome the limits of the dualistic mode of thinking of citizenship in terms of EU citizens/non-citizens and active/passive citizenship by exploring and privileging ‘acts of citizenship’ through which marginal groups who are not necessarily recognised in law as citizens (both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the EU) mobilise and claim European citizenship. In doing so, it captures those instances of political participation that the focus on formal rights fails to see and investigate. By focusing first and foremost on the acts though which new actors emerge as claimants of rights, it broadens the scope of political participation and changes the conception of the political in that it need not be limited to the existing territorial boundaries or the exercise of rights by already constituted legal subjects. Importantly, in doing so, ‘acts of citizenship’ decentres the state and the EU from the position of the main referent in relation to citizenship. It provides a more complex and nuanced reading of citizenship in Europe than those advanced by conventional EU citizenship studies. This shift in perspective from institutional and legalised forms of participation by self-evident citizens-subjects, to collective contestation and the process of the construction of citizens, which lies at the core of the ‘acts of citizenship’ perspective, raises important issues about methodology and epistemology in relation to studies of EU citizenship. In order to examine in more depth the assumed universality and impartiality of mainstream EU citizenship studies, I turn in the next section to feminist

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2 For an elaboration on mobility in relation to the constitution of sex workers as a collective political subject via mobilization see Andrijasevic et al. (2012).

3 For a critical reflection on adopting political struggle and mobilisation in the field of security studies see Squire (2011).
contributions to the discussion on ‘objects’ and ‘subjects’ of research and on what constitutes knowledge.

**Feminist standpoint epistemology and acts of citizenship**

The notion of a self-evident subject-citizen has been problematised by feminist scholars. This concept of the citizen, feminists have argued, is posited as a universal subject. Yet, such an ideal of universality is biased as it assumes a subject that is male and that is constructed in opposition to its ‘other’, namely the feminine. This model, feminist scholars suggest further, rests on the classical Western system of dualistic oppositions such as active/passive, culture/nature, reason/body and publicly/privately organised according to the logic of difference and where the difference is always expressed in terms of the negative (i.e. less than). This binary logic confines women and marginal groups to the position of the ‘other’ and posits the masculine as the universal norm against which ‘others’ are measured and judged (Braidotti, 1994). In as much as it is theorised as universal, such a subject is imagined as detached from context and circumstances and hence constructed as neutral, impartial and politically disinterested or, in other words, objective. This implies that the aim of the objective perspective is to transcend subjectivity and location. In exposing the binary system of oppositions that sustains both universality and objectivity, feminist scholars have shown that objectivity and universality are generalised but partial and distorted accounts of a relatively small social group, constructed through the exclusion of the subjectivities of those positioned as ‘others’ such as women, minorities and the poor (Code, 1993).

What is of interest for this chapter is that feminist scholars do not limit their analysis to issues of social and political exclusion of marginalised groups but link their critique of objectivity and universality to that of knowledge production. Sandra Harding, one of the key thinkers of feminist standpoint theory, argued that women, black people, poor people and other marginalised groupings have been constructed in opposition to socially legitimated knowledge. It is rare, Harding suggests, for marginalised groups to be seen as occupying the position of those generating knowledge about their own lives as well as lives of other groups, especially those in power. Mostly the process is the reverse one, and it is those in power that investigate marginal social groups (Harding, 1991). Marginalised groups still remain to be seen as local informants rather than subjects of knowledge in their own right and the knowledge of ‘others’ is routinely considered in terms of descriptive examples of their ‘own’ culture and hence limited in scope and relevance (Christian, 1987;
Sandoval 2000). While commonly understood to be value-free and neutral, this way of studying the social and the political, feminist theorists argue, is not impartial or devoid of subjectivity but rather grounded in the particularity of the subjective positions of those groups in dominant political, social and economic positions.

In their critique of failed objectivity and universality of dominant knowledge production, feminist scholars suggest that knowledge is always ‘situated’ (Haraway 1988) and that production of knowledge is not an abstract, neutral and detached process but one that is contingent on one’s location and experience. Aiming at providing empirically and theoretically more complete interpretations of social and political worlds, feminist standpoint theorists stress the importance of the ‘politics of location’ (Rich 1986) to suggest that subjects are always located somewhere and that the specificity of that location is both limiting and enabling in as much as it is inflected by intersecting and multiple axes of power (gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality etc.). In their attempt to advance more complete accounts of knowledge, standpoint epistemologists propose to take women’s lives and the lives and histories of other marginalised peoples as the starting point for research and suggest that the historical, local and subjective aspect of the location that marginal groups occupy is precisely what enables them to decentre the standpoint of the elites and advance a critique of dominant knowledge claims (Harding 2006b).

It is in light of these considerations that the links between feminist standpoint and ‘acts of citizenship’ become clearer. In the same vein as feminist epistemologists who argue for commencing research from the lives of oppressed groups rather than from disciplinary or conceptual frameworks, ‘acts of citizenship’ grounds the analysis of European citizenship in acts by those who are not formal citizens of the EU and those who are citizens but marginalised from formal politics. This is why I opened this chapter with the act of mobilisation by sex workers in Brussels in 2005. In commencing the discussion of EU citizenship from an act and in locating as protagonists those who are not necessarily constituted as subjects of politics, I wanted to highlight the methodological challenge that ‘acts of citizenship’ brings to the analysis of European citizenship in as much as it probes the limits of the existing reach of citizenship policy and mainstream research on European citizenship.

Another key point on which feminist standpoint and ‘acts of citizenship’ are aligned is the emphasis both put on the construction of political subjectivity via collective struggle. While feminist standpoint theories stress the importance of starting research from the lives of oppressed groups, they also hold the position that the view from the margins does
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not equal a standpoint. While women’s lives offer a privileged perspective on dominant structures of power and on the impact they have on women, any relationship between women’s experiences of oppression and a standpoint is not a straightforward one because women’s experiences per se are not seen as constituting a reliable basis for knowledge claims, i.e. a standpoint about social and political relations (Harding 1991: 123). For feminist epistemologists, a standpoint is an achievement generated through political struggle and empirical inquiry (Hartsock 1987). Importantly therefore, a standpoint is not an individual opinion but rather an outcome of the engagement in a political struggle through which oppressed groups are constituted as a collective subject and as agents of knowledge (Harding and Norberg 2005).

‘Acts of citizenship’ puts forward a similar understanding of political subjectivity. The idea of activist citizenship discussed in the previous section postulates mobilisations and struggles as those acts where it is possible to observe the ways in which, by claiming rights, subjects that are not citizens act as if they were citizens. From the perspective of activist citizenship, then, it is through acts that ‘actors’ transform themselves from subjects into citizens. In suggesting that we start the investigation of citizenship from struggles of marginalised groups, and in giving value to the locality in which those mobilisations unfold, ‘acts of citizenship’ suggests that it is precisely acts that produce subjects as citizens. The key issue is, then, not to think of the ‘doer’ prior to the ‘deed’ but rather to examine the process and the acts through which new actors emerge.

When bringing to the fore the commonalities between feminist standpoint theory and ‘acts of citizenship’, it becomes visible that the conceptual framework that privileges EU citizens as political actors and EU institutions as the main channels through which political participation takes place, is not value neutral or universal. On the contrary, it carries specific assumptions about political participation and citizenship’s limits reflected in the dualistic mode of citizens/non-citizens and active/passive citizenship interpretative frameworks. A focus on the dynamic and contingent nature of citizenship and on the process of constitution of

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4 For more details on the debate on how to avoid the danger of giving epistemic privilege to oppressed groups see Narayan (1989) and Bar On (1993).

5 It is worth noting that the emphasis on collectivity and political struggle has led feminist scholars to emphasise alternative ways of knowing (such as through dialogue) and political organisation (such as across differences and on the basis of temporary alliances). The priority given to subjectivity in relation to the political as well as the prospect of exploring the link between ontology and epistemology has prompted feminist scholars to explore the importance of affect in relation to political engagement. See Berlant (2007) and Hemmings (forthcoming).
political subjectivity that starts from the ‘acts’ of groups marginalised from formal politics would then uncover more of the unexamined assumptions in EU citizenship literature and advance methodologies that offer less distorted and more accurate interpretations of political participation in today’s Europe. For EU citizenship studies, this raises issues about ethics in methodology and in particular about the consideration that it matters how one conducts research and with whose interests in mind. Critical interrogation of the conventional conceptual frameworks in EU citizenship studies, starting from standpoint theories, could open the field to new ways of generating knowledge in terms that marginalised subjects would recognise. At the same time, it could challenge the narrow understanding of the political and the unequal distribution of cognitive authority.

Acts of citizenship and European citizenship studies

As I discussed in the previous section, ‘acts of citizenship’ and feminist standpoint both stress the transformative dimension of collective political struggle either in terms of transition from objects to subjects of knowledge or from subjects to citizens. Both refuse to reduce the political process to the mobilising of already existing actors and place emphasis instead on the formation of new political subjects. However, while asking about the process of construction of political subjectivity, ‘acts of citizenship’ does not zoom in so as to examine in more detail the articulation of the collective subject. I suggest that a closer look at the process of articulation of the collective subject is pivotal in order to understand better the dynamic and contingent aspects of citizenship. I return in this section to the sex workers’ mobilisation and, with the aim of extending the reading of political subjectivity advanced by ‘acts of citizenship’, I take a closer look at the tensions and contradictions that accompany the formation of the collective political subject.

The presentation of the Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto and the endorsement of the Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe in the EP were the final instances of a process that had begun nearly two years earlier. The basis of both documents is a consultation process consisting of a set of questions that the Organising Committee (OC), based in the Netherlands, sent to sex workers and allies across Europe. The questions asked the groups to identify instances of violation of sex workers’ rights in their specific contexts and suggest possible actions to address these violations. In order to facilitate this process, the OC provided the groups with examples of actions drawn from sex workers’ manifestos in South America, India and Spain. This information was then compiled and used to draft two separate documents, the declaration and
the manifesto. The drafts were sent back to the groups that originally contributed in order to make sure that nothing important was accidentally omitted. The process of writing the documents was then finalised at the conference. The manifesto was completed by the participants themselves, who in the process re-wrote parts of the document. The declaration was completed by a group of human rights lawyers. It is worth noting that the manifesto and the declaration are two different documents, written with different audiences in mind. The declaration is a legalistic document, based on human rights treaties and targeting an institutional audience.

The manifesto is organised around a series of demands not present in the law and its audience is sex workers themselves. Finally, both documents were translated into several European languages in order to facilitate their circulation and impact.

By tracing the organisational history that led to the events in Brussels, we can observe the process through which sex workers and allies came to identify, agree on and articulate common agendas and claims to rights. Importantly, what had started as a mobilisation of local groups and initiatives, resulted in a Europe-wide network, the Network of Sex Workers and Allies in Europe, which serves as a mechanism for collective organising and lobbying for sex workers’ rights. However, this was not a smooth process; it was ridden with contradictions. These can be seen in the declaration which, despite the fact that its main areas of intervention are sex work, human rights, migration and labour, actually contains very little on the rights of migrants specifically. The declaration does claim the right to freedom of movement within states in order for migrants to move and take up sex work. Yet, at no point does it put forward the right for migrants to stay, the right to work or the right for undocumented migrant workers to become legalised. Moreover, the declaration claims a right to protection for victims of trafficking but does not demand that the victims be granted a long-term permit to stay and work in the EU. In a context where more than 70 per cent of sex workers in Europe are migrants, and in light of the argument, advanced in the manifesto, that anti-trafficking policies give a strong hand to anti-immigration policies, it is rather surprising that the declaration does not address these issues specifically.

6 The declaration outlines the rights to which sex workers are entitled under international law and is intended as a benchmark against which to judge what rights have been achieved; as a basis for advocacy and lobbying for the rights that European governments are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil; and as a tool to empower sex workers in respect of their rights.

7 Examples include the demand for anti-discrimination legislation within the sex industry and within sectors other than the sex sector where sex workers seek alternative forms of employment.
It can certainly be argued that this is because the rights framework of the declaration is based on existing treaties and therefore whatever is not included in the treaties is not included in the declaration either. However, based on feminist standpoint theory, I would like to put forward a different interpretation. I suggest that this omission signals tensions through which the constitution of a collective political subjectivity takes place and that it is impossible to account for the constitution of a collective political subjectivity in the abstract. Subjects are not unitary and coherent but steeped in lived experience and positioned across multiple axes of power. In the case of the sex workers’ mobilisation, this means that the different locations sex workers occupy in terms of their gender, race, nationality, class or sexuality might result in prioritising different demands to rights. It is possible to say that sex workers in general have been affected by increased Europe-wide criminalisation of sex work (TAMPEP 2009). However, certain groups such as street-walkers have been more exposed to anti-prostitution measures. This is, for example, the case in France where in 2003 the government passed an anti-soliciting law that introduced a prison sentence and a fine for sex workers engaging in ‘passive soliciting’, meaning attracting clients through modes of dress and behaviour. Moreover, the whore stigma, which establishes a separation between decent and indecent, chaste and unchaste, worthy and unworthy women (Pheterson 1996, Scambler and Scambler, 1997), affects male and female sex workers differently. Finally, migrants and EU citizens are affected inversely by anti-prostitution policies. In contrast to sex workers who are EU citizens, if arrested migrant sex workers are vulnerable to deportation either because they might be ‘illegal’ or because they might be identified as victims of trafficking, and hence assumed to be in the EU against their will or to work in conditions akin to slavery (Andrijasevic 2010).

In order to deepen the analysis of political subjectivity and account for ambivalences at play in the process of ‘becoming’ citizens, I propose to...
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extend the ‘acts of citizenship’ approach though feminist insights into the ways in which social and political order generate conflicting demands on social groups. The potential of ‘acts’ lays in the fact that they enable investigation of contradictions precisely because it is through specific actions that contradictions and paradoxes become visible. In quite a fundamental way, as illustrated by Chapters 7 and 8 in this volume, ‘acts’ are about paradoxes of action. A more insistent focus on contradictory claims brings into focus the constitution of collective political subjectivity not as a straightforward but rather as a contradictory process which, contingent on the various locations subjects occupy, is engendered via multiple and conflicting claims to rights. In as much as the development of a political consciousness and consequent transformation from disenfranchisement to participation in a movement is engendered though the interpretation of oppression within a collective context (Bracke and Puig 2004), the ability to see and incorporate conflicts and contradictions as clues to the study of political subjectivity exposes the limits of conceiving of mobilisations as being ‘enacted’ by already ‘formed’ collective actors. Extending the reach of ‘acts of citizenship’ analysis of citizenship via feminist insights into political consciousness and collective struggle would, in my opinion, allow for a more nuanced reading of emerging political subjectivities and of the transformation of citizenship these are bringing about in today’s Europe.

Conclusions

Conventional approaches to EU citizenship typically do not recognise how mobilisations by ostensibly marginal groups constitute European citizenship. Steeped in a framework that considers citizenship primarily as a matter of already constituted citizens and a territorially and culturally bounded polity, the dominant literature on EU citizenship overlooks the relevance of mobilisations such as the one by sex workers discussed in this chapter or protests by students, workers, migrants and indignados (protesters in Spain who came to prominence in 2011) that have been taking place across Europe. This oversight has resulted in a discrepancy between how citizenship is enacted ‘on the ground’ and how it is theorised. As several chapters in this volume show, ‘acts of citizenship’ aims at closing that gap by bringing marginal struggles into focus and by grounding the analysis of citizenship in the acts that constitute subjects as citizens.

Importantly, mobilisations by marginalised groups do not necessarily result in an improvement of their conditions or a lessening of the abuse marginal groups experience. In fact, sex workers’ mobilisation did not put
an end to repressive policies by states towards sex workers who are either EU nationals or migrants. What it did do, however, particularly when seen in the context of other past and present protests across Europe, is signal a ‘conflictual dimension of democracy’ and the extent to which struggles for rights need to be seen as political forces that expand the frontiers of citizenship (Balibar 2009: 12). In taking political struggle as the entry point for analysis of citizenship and showing that European citizenship need not be granted by the state, limited to the territory within the EU borders, and acted out by people who are already citizens, I have suggested that we view ‘acts a citizenship’ as a methodology in as much as it intervenes critically into how citizenship should be studied and theorised.

In focusing on political subjectivity as a process rather than on citizenship as a formal status, ‘acts of citizenship’ raises questions about the process of a citizen’s formation. In order to capture the contradictory aspect of citizenship as a process, I have drawn upon feminist standpoint theory as it offers a critique of the coherent universal subject that allows us to capture the dynamic and contradictory aspects of collective struggles. In making connections such as those between feminist standpoint theory and ‘acts of citizenship’, my intention was to bring together apparently unrelated critical approaches in order to develop methodological frameworks that can disrupt instituted ways of researching, analysing and theorising European citizenship. What the case of sex workers’ mobilisation illustrates is that, once unpacked, the complexities and tensions of the constitution of a collective subjectivity cannot be easily folded back into more linear analytical frameworks. The shift in analysis from self-evident citizen subject and instituted regimes of rights to the acquisition of subjectivity and political mobilisation is not simply an add-on approach that stresses inclusion instead of exclusion of marginal groups. Instead, I see this methodological shift in terms of putting in place an alternative mode of knowledge production on EU citizenship. To research EU citizenship starting from those who are usually considered objects rather than subjects of politics and whose political participation seems unremarkable from the perspective of institutional EU politics, means to bring standpoint methodology into EU citizenship studies and, by doing so, re-articulate the conceptual framework on which EU citizenship studies and citizenship policies are based.

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References


Acts of citizenship as methodology


