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Sliwinska, Basia (2016) Transnational embodied belonging within 'edge habitats'. *Third Text*, 29 (4-5). pp. 287-309. ISSN 0952-8822

Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

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# Transnational Embodied Belonging Within 'Edge Habitats'

**Basia Sliwinska**

## ***IDENTITY CARD VERSUS BELONGING***

Recently I had to travel back to my 'home' country, or country of birth, Poland, to renew my identity card (it is valid for ten years, after which time it needs to be renewed). An identity card (ID) is issued by ones local Office of Civic Affairs, in my case by Urząd Miejski Wrocławia, to every Polish citizen residing permanently in Poland over the age of eighteen. It cannot be renewed in the Polish embassy of another country and the renewal application must be submitted in person. Similarly, the ID needs to be collected in person. Polish nationality law is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which means being born to at least one Polish parent (both my parents are Polish). Polish citizenship is acquired irrespective of birth-place: it is not synonymous with nationality as it describes the state of belonging (to a homeland). I live abroad permanently (since 2007 in the United Kingdom where only recently did I start to feel 'at home') and when travelling I am able to use my Polish ID as a travel document, allowing me access to countries within the European Union – and non-European countries within the Schengen area. The ID includes information on my first and second names, my surname, date of birth, my parents' names, my gender, nationality, place of birth and personal number.<sup>1</sup> There is also a security hologram, date of issue and expiry, card number and the issuing authority, my photo and the coat of arms of the Republic of Poland. My ID defines me, and my identity: it does not define my sense of belonging.

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<sup>1</sup> An individual's personal number is called 'PESEL' in Polish. It is the national identification number used since 1979 in Poland, introduced by the Communist government to allow the tracking of personal information on every citizen.

Until the late 1970s Polish citizens were allowed to travel freely, but after 1981, when most Western countries imposed visa restrictions, personal travel or migration was only possible subject to special agreements and international treaties in place to permit such travel. Since the fall of Communism, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), Polish people gained access to other countries. As a child I remember travelling with my parents across Europe from one border to another, into zones of cultural and national identifications, introducing myself with a passport at border crossings, and later, with my identity card. It seemed like moving between different habitats, being in transit and visiting neighbours – some of whom were more hospitable than others. In May 2004, Poland became a member of the European Union and in December 2007 joined the Schengen area. Since then I have been able to travel more freely. I became a citizen of the EU and was granted preferential treatment in terms of free circulation and access to certain labour markets. The area(s) within which I could belong theoretically opened up and, even though Europe still combined different habitats, it became a transitory border-less (but not border-free) space; marked by diversity, narratives of belonging and participation.

### ***ECOTONE***

Biodiversity characterises the variety and variability of organisms inhabiting different ecosystems within and between which they live and interact. Variation may concern diversity within species (genetic diversity) or ecosystem (ecosystem diversity) and between species (species diversity).

Biodiversity encourages the multitude of differences and uniqueness of communities. It is affected by external factors and pressures, such as habitat degradation, climate change or excessive nutrient loads, which reduce biodiversity. Biodiversity is essential for the health of ecosystems, boosting their productivity, their response diversity and stabilising them in the face of environmental fluctuations. In an ecosystem all the living organisms in a given area have their own niche and role to play.

Particularly interesting is the concept of an ecotone. The etymology of the word emphasises its dual meaning as a tension *and* transition zone. ‘Eco’ derives from Greek *oikos*, meaning ‘house’ or ‘household’ (which resonates with the concept of citizenship, and specifically denizenship), and in an ecological sense the prefix signifies environment or habitat. ‘Tone’ comes from the Greek *τόνος* or *tonos* meaning ‘tension’ or ‘strain’. Ecotone is where two communities meet and integrate. It is a boundary *between* ecosystems, functioning as a transitory space influenced by bordering ecosystems. In consequence, this area is often inhabited by a greater variety of species leading to a greater biodiversity, known as the ‘edge effect’. An ecotone can be created naturally or as a result of human interaction. It is environmentally important as it bridges gene flows between populations and enables genetic diversity. It also protects neighbouring ecosystems from environmental damage. This border zone offers a space within which boundaries can be shifted. It is clear that greater diversity and communality based on differences, shared and exchanged, is desirable within the environment. Species diversity inherent within an ecotone and embedded within edge habitat defines a ‘transition zone’ arising out of potential tensions.

These biological constructs facilitating exchange within communities seem to describe the current cultural and spatial relations within Europe, if not across the globe, which are marked by complex personal histories and deconstructed national identifications. Migrations are associated with movement and this movement is closely affiliated with bordering communities as well as individuals, whose belonging is sometimes restricted to an ‘edge habitat’, which may also be applied as a trope to address notions of citizenship, nation or country.

I propose that edge habitat is a useful analogy, a metaphorical space, to explore the concept of citizenship, and position it in relation to women’s art addressing citizenship through different articulations of belonging. It might seem contentious or restrictive to apply biological constructs when discussing questions of citizenship and human rights, but metaphorically, it can serve to be emancipatory and/or reactionary. In the first instance, referring to the notion of strategic essentialism introduced in the 1980s by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, it might be a form of

resistance. Luce Irigaray further develops Spivak's idea in her concept of mimesis, which describes a strategy of imitating stereotypes about oneself (in this case it could point towards national identifications) to highlight those stereotypes and undermine them. In terms of reactionary possibilities, applying biological metaphors enables us to emphasise the cultural formation of identity. Through investigating the specific spatial art practices of Joanna Rajkowska (from Poland) and Nada Prlja (from Bosnia and Herzegovina), I discuss transitory areas of edge habitats, spaces within, where boundaries are disrupted and where alternative modes of thinking about citizenship emerge. I argue Rajkowska's practice mobilises the concept of transition, while Prlja emphasises the tensions of such transition. I am interested in exploring how women artists negotiate new ways of belonging, between and within home, homeland and hostland. Similar to an ecotone, which may occur locally or regionally (between biomes), citizenship can also be explored at many spatial levels.

### ***EDGE EFFECT AND IN-BETWEEN SPACES***

The citizenship of an individual is affected by one's location within space and the constructs of social divisions such as gender. I am particularly interested in these embodied forms of belonging, which materialise within communities. The articulation of belonging through the politics of belonging and the locatedness of individuals mark the in-between space of being here and there, at home and not at home. This zone in between, and the different transformations which occur within it, can be exemplified by Alice's transition through the looking glass (in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, 1872). Alice is curious as to what is behind the looking-glass. She calls this other realm the 'Looking-Glass House', which is just the same as the room she is in, 'only the things go the other way'.<sup>2</sup> Alice desires to explore this other space but it is inaccessible. There is a border marked by the mirror/looking-glass between *here* and *there*, which prevents any

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Carroll, 'Through the Looking-Glass, and what Alice Found There' in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, Penguin Books, London, 1998, p 126

movement between the two. However, Alice goes through the looking-glass and when she does, she looks about and notices that the room is the same as the room she came from, but somehow different; for example the pictures seem to be alive. Alice is drawn towards difference and fascinated with what she experiences on the 'other side', where she seems not to belong, yet is eager to explore and experience the 'otherness'.

Destabilised borders, or spaces in-between, facilitate belonging – as differences are either connected, or abrupt changes accumulate, and lead to a greater diversity. This disruption is inherent in the biological term 'edge habitat', which marks the tension and transition zone between two different types of vegetation. It invites greater biodiversity precisely *through* the destabilisation of border locations. Seen with reference to spatial ecology it defines habitat fragmentation: centre/margin, public/private, global/local, etc. When read in relation to women's social placements, edge habitat might be a useful metonym in marking the changes in the community structures at the boundary of two (or more) habitats. It deconstructs linear borders or makes visible the gaps in borders that host other habitats, revealing the definitive as permeable. Interestingly, it is not restricted to one border but it opens up the possibility of inhabiting the other. What I find particularly interesting about the notion of the edge habitat is the fact that locally there exists a broader range of suitable environmental conditions or ecological niches to which one can *belong*. If adapted to discourses on citizenship, edge habitat might be useful in interrogating women's experience of embodied belonging on a transnational level, perhaps as denizens.

Narratives of globalisation and recent migrations across Europe and the world in general require rethinking the concept of citizenship from a transnational perspective. Citizenship encompasses the balance between rights (deriving from the liberal political tradition in which sovereign individuals are granted freedom and formal equality) and obligations (originating in the civic republicanism tradition of classical Greece, in which political participation is a civic duty defining one's full

political potential).<sup>3</sup> However, membership of a community, apart from rights and obligations, involves also,

a set of social and political relationships, practices and identities that together can be described as a sense of belonging. Belonging is not a fixed state, nor just a material one; it involves also emotional and psychological dimensions.<sup>4</sup>

This suggested membership within a community emphasises active participation and is important not only at an individual, intimate level, but also at the local, regional, and national level, of the nation state itself. Ruth Lister, in her lecture *The Female Citizen* suggested that the language of citizenship appears to be gender-neutral but, in reality, it has very different meanings for men and women.<sup>5</sup> It also associates individuals with a legal status within a community (usually, the nation state).<sup>6</sup> This basic definition refers back to T H Marshall's conceptualisation of citizenship and classification of civic, social and political rights. He argues:

Citizenship is the status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties within which the status is endowed.<sup>7</sup>

Marshall's analysis includes the different determinants, predominantly class, structuring the denial of and access to citizenship rights, but it excludes gender. Language is powerful as it carries

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2002, p 13. For a discussion on the different meanings of citizenship and the two traditions see Lister et al, *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe: New Challenges for Citizenship Research in a Cross-National Context*, The Policy Press, Bristol, 2007, pp 6–11

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p 9

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Lister, *The Female Citizen*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1989, p 2

<sup>6</sup> The etymology of the word 'citizenship' is interesting as it points to a double meaning: on the one hand signifying the legal status of an inhabitant who belongs to, or is situated in a community while on the other emphasising the participatory dimension of citizenship. These two understandings are represented in different languages through different words defining one or the other meaning, for example, 'subject', 'denizen', 'alien', 'national', 'inhabitant', '*bourgeois*' or '*citoyen*' in French, etc. For an overview of terminology in the European tradition see Lister et al, *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe*, op cit, pp 18–20

<sup>7</sup> T H Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and other essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1950, pp 28–29

meanings and ‘determines our political culture’ but it can embody ideas,<sup>8</sup> which can be understood incorrectly, for example in gender-neutral terms when, in fact, they are tagged with gender codes. In such cases words help perpetuate stereotypes or prevalent narratives, or, as in the case of citizenship, the invisibility or exclusion of others, often women. The question is, as Lister, after Alice in her conversation with Humpty Dumpty, asks, ‘whether you *can* make words mean different things’.<sup>9</sup>

### ***TRANSNATIONAL HOMES***

In their artistic practice Joanna Rajkowska and Nada Prlja act as explorers, geographers and travellers who mark the space, being a territory or a land, or their own body, to abrogate concepts which seem to be rigid and fixed. They transcend different borders (territorial, national, corporeal) to challenge categories of belonging that are transnational and not bound by fixed concepts, such as, for example, citizenship. Both artists acknowledge fluidity and a re-configuration and reconstruction of identities and marginalised otherness. In their artistic practices they evoke emancipatory narratives challenging Euro- and Western-centrism still dominant in the contemporary art cartography. In particular, I am interested in their articulation of belonging, set against the globally relevant concepts of home and homeland, which can be repositioned transnationally within ‘edge habitats’ in the context of the current mobility of people, products and capital – highlighting the existing asymmetries and shifting geographies, also in terms of gender.

Marsha Meskimmon suggests that,

the domestic – the materials, tropes, images and spaces associated with ‘home’ – occupies an important site within contemporary transnational art, yet the experimental work of feminist artists and scholars, from which it derives much of its force, is rarely acknowledged.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> P Kellner, ‘Forging a New Political Dictionary’, *The Independent*, 17 October 1988 in Ruth Lister, *The Female Citizen*, op cit, p 2

<sup>9</sup> Lewis Carroll, op cit, p 186

<sup>10</sup> Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Routledge, London, New York, 2011, p 1



This ‘domestic turn’, as Meskimmon calls it points towards questions around women artists,<sup>11</sup> in this particular case Nada Prlja and Joanna Rajkowska, who are global citizens (if citizen is the right word to use) and actively challenge concepts of borders through the notion of home as a transnational, intercultural (or transcultural) construct that enables an authentic identity and embodied belonging. They participate in what Meskimmon calls ‘a critical dialogue between ethical responsibility, locational identity and... cosmopolitan imagination’.<sup>12</sup>

European integration, globalisation and, since the 1990s, an increase in migration, particularly in Europe, have generated new debates about multiculturalism.<sup>13</sup> They usually embrace different European legacies concerning migration, social pluralism, colonialism and imperialism in terms of multiculturalism, which in itself is an interesting term.<sup>14</sup> Such discourses highlight normative attitudes towards notions of diversity and difference and raise questions around recognition, belonging and communitarianism. To quote Lister again:

Migration and multiculturalism represent a double challenge for the classic framing of citizenship in that they force us to analyse the tension between equality and recognition of diversity and the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p 2

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p 5

<sup>13</sup> At the time of writing this article, the current refugee crisis in Europe is spiralling out of control. It is a very different kind of migration from the voluntary mobility of the artists discussed here. On Tuesday 23 September 2015 an emergency EU summit was held in Brussels to focus on introducing faster screening and fingerprinting methods on the EU’s southern borders and in the neighbouring countries. It was held a day after a decision was forced by European governments to impose refugee quotas (120,000) and redistribute the re-settlement of refugees between member states (the numbers represent only the transnational quotas, and do not consider the total number of immigrants who will be admitted to the EU). The Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia opposed the plan, while Poland sided with other Western nations, even though in May it opposed accepting refugees. Britain refused to participate in the scheme but agreed to re-settle 20,000 refugees from Syria over the next five years. It is interesting to observe Germany’s rapidly changing response to the issue. In 2010 Chancellor Angela Merkel declared the death of multi-culturalism in Germany. At the beginning of September 2015 Germany asserted an open-door policy but shortly after it backtracked and instituted national border controls in Europe’s free-travel Schengen area. Until 4 October Deutsche Bahn, the German rail operator, is suspending their intercity services to Austria and Hungary. This containment approach takes different shape in Eastern Europe, where walls and barbed-wired fences are erected on the borders to stop the influx of refugees.

<sup>14</sup> Lister suggests it ‘refers to principles that either respect minority rights or defend special rights for minority groups’, in Lister et al, *Gendering Citizenship*, op cit, p 77.

relationship between national and transnational arenas. Citizenship is about the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and social groups in societies where struggles over rights have been closely linked to the nation state.<sup>15</sup>

Even though feminist scholarship has acknowledged versatile strategies and notions such as multicultural citizenship to include marginalised groups,<sup>16</sup> for example women, in society, nonetheless discussions on multiculturalism have often been gender blind and ignored cross-national contexts, identifying different citizenship regimes. What is interesting is the gender dimension of migration and the interplay between dynamics of migration and lived citizenship as negotiated in artistic practices of women artists. Citizenship is ‘a contextualised concept’<sup>17</sup> and it is communicated in ‘spaces and places’.<sup>18</sup> This spatial dimension is addressed by ‘lived citizenship’, which addresses ‘the meaning that citizenship actually has in people’s lives and the ways in which people’s social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens’.<sup>19</sup> Current migrations necessitate new articulations of the concept of home, which is not tied to here or there but is positioned ‘in-between’, in a transitory space. This in between of the borderland or edge habitat offers new possibilities to embrace difference and strangeness within a new home, signifying embodied belonging. Can this unmarked territory of sexual difference described by Meskimmon enable cosmopolitanism and difference? Can it embody this inside space that seems to be defined by borders and boundaries such as political concepts of citizenship or nation, which often do not acknowledge the new dynamic and contextual mixes of cultures and identities, suggested by Siim and Williams?<sup>20</sup> Can this inside space be re-negotiated respecting otherness?

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p 78

<sup>16</sup> See for example Will Kymlicka, ‘Citizenship in an era of globalization: commentary on Held’, in I Shapiro and C Hacker-Cordón, eds, *Democracy’s Edges*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999

<sup>17</sup> Birte Siim, *Gender and Citizenship: Politics and Agency in France, Britain, and Denmark*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p 1

<sup>18</sup> Emma Jones and John Gaventa, *Concepts of Citizenship: A Review*, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, 2002, p 19

<sup>19</sup> T Hall and H Williamson, *Citizenship and Community*, Youth Work Press, Leicester, 1999, p 2

<sup>20</sup> Birte Siim, *Medborgerskabets udfordringer – belyst ved politisk myndiggørelse af etniske minoritetskvinder* [The Challenges to Citizenship – Political Empowerment of Ethnic Minority

Globality involves concepts of difference and issues of co-existence. It addresses questions about identity precisely in light of otherness.<sup>21</sup> At the same time only a few European countries accept dual citizenship. The concept is still tied to the nation state. Recent migrations, diverse approaches adopted by European nation-states to manage their immigrant population, policies either neglecting or integrating ‘foreigners’ or ‘others’, the notion of globalisation and the rapid demographic changes fuelling social reforms including laws about, for example, citizenship, demonstrate that home/homeland/borderland are fluid concepts. They resonate with recent re-conceptualisations of citizenship beyond Marshall’s framework as belongings but also in transnational dimensions, as proposed by Soysal and Yuval-Davis<sup>22</sup> or in post-national citizenship.<sup>23</sup> They need to be re-appropriated to address the current multicultural demos. Artificially invented boundaries and borders function as veils that do not allow us to see: Rajkowska and Prlja lift them, making this blurry line between own-ness and other-ness visible.

Rajkowska and Prlja imposed geographical and cultural displacement upon themselves. They left their homelands. Their migrations allowed them to address the concept of home and homeland in their own ways of internalising cultural displacement in their artistic practices. Being ‘outsiders’ in England, Germany, and other countries they visited and lived in, they attained a new perspective on the complexity of their identities and belonging, which cannot be simply defined by their citizenship or cultural origin. Their mobility functions as a catalyst to transcend notions of nationality and borderlands.

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Women], Århus Universitetsforlag, Århus, 2003; F Williams, ‘Contesting “Race” and Gender in the European Union: a Multi-layered Recognition Struggle’, in B Hobson, ed, *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Power and Agency*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

<sup>21</sup> Fredric Jameson suggests that globalisation originates from, ‘the sense of an immense enlargement of world communication, as well as of the horizon of a world market, both of which seem far more tangible and immediate than in earlier stages of modernity’. F Jameson, ‘Introduction’ in F Jameson and M Miyoshi, eds, *The Cultures of Globalization*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1998, p XI

<sup>22</sup> Soysal and Yuval-Davis, in Birte Siim and Judith Squires, ‘Contesting Citizenship: Comparative Analyses’, in *Contesting Citizenship*, Routledge, New York, 2008, p 2

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p 10

## ***JOANNA RAJKOWSKA AND TRANSITION ZONES***

Joanna Rajkowska is a Polish artist based in London. She is intervening in public space, contesting social relations and adopting a strategy of unfamiliarity as a political tool used to open up platforms for dialogue. Her early projects dealt with the concept of memory and post-communist and post-Holocaust communities whereas her most recent works address her life experiences. Rajkowska often interweaves her installations and social sculptures into the urban fabric, which reveals conflicts and opens up discussions. Her works are often unfinished, left to be taken further and to evolve. Here, I focus on one particular project, which Rajkowska discussed at the final event hosted at Nottingham Contemporary, UK, as part of my research project entitled *Migratory Homes*.<sup>24</sup>

*Born in Berlin* (2012) was commissioned by 7th Berlin Biennale (see cover image). It addresses Rajkowska's experience of giving birth to her daughter in Berlin. Rosa was named after Rajkowska's grandmother and Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish revolutionary from Zamość who lived in Berlin, where she was also murdered. Rajkowska is talking about the 'process of "planting" Rosa into the German cultural and historical soil', which was documented in the film.<sup>25</sup> The film marks the beginning of a new life and the narrative is open-ended. The essence of citizenship according to civic republican tradition is represented through the fulfilment of civic duty. There exist two offshoots of this tradition: communitarianism and materialism. The first emphasises belonging and common cultural identity, while the second recognises motherhood as a female contribution to citizenship. More recently this branch has been extended to include narratives of an ethic and practice of care, recognising gender and other inequalities.<sup>26</sup> Rajkowska, as a mother, is responsible for raising a new generation of citizens. She fulfils her civic duty. Together with the liberal model,

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<sup>24</sup> The project (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK) was developed when I worked as a Research Associate at Loughborough University in 2013. *Migratory Homes* was a 'living' research project focused on domesticity, travelling and the associated concept of 'home', subjected to many changes due to migrations across Europe. The final event took place in Nottingham Contemporary, with both Joanna Rajkowska and Nada Prlja were invited as guest speakers.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Rajkowska, 'Born in Berlin', 2012, <http://www.rajkowska.com/en/filmy/266>, accessed 7 January 2014

<sup>26</sup> Ruth Lister et al, *Gendering Citizenship*, op cit, p 7

both traditions feed into cosmopolitan citizenship beyond the boundaries of nation states. Rosa, ‘planted’ in Berlin, becomes a cosmopolitan citizen. Her citizenship ‘can be inscribed both as status and practice at global level’.<sup>27</sup>

The film starts from documenting the first encounter of the artist’s pregnant body with Berlin architecture from the Nazi-era. It captures historically and often painfully-charged locations such as the Olympic Stadium in the city, where the mother takes her yet unborn child to make her aware of the wounds of the past. The vulnerable, pregnant body functions in this political landscape as a vessel that brings a gift, a new-born baby, for the city. Marcel Mauss in his 1924 essay on the gift conceptualised it as a free and obligatory social phenomenon based on the triple obligation of giving, receiving and reciprocating.<sup>28</sup> This animated a range of discourses on the desire to give, transmit and give back.<sup>29</sup> The understanding of the gift is ambiguous and contradictory. On the one hand it is an emblem of generosity and generativity, on the other it manifests a bond, obligation and loss. The act of giving establishes reciprocity, in which generosity and hospitality co-exist. Another ambiguity arises once the gift is seen as an exchange between what is visible (a token enabling the exchange based on conditional reciprocity) and invisible (an act which should be gratuitous and unconditional). Derrida argues that the possibility of the gift is also the condition of its impossibility (similarly to hospitality, as I will discuss further). A genuine gift should reside beyond the demands of giving and taking and beyond any self-interest.<sup>30</sup> It would require the anonymity of the giver. As such, it seems the actuality of any gift is impossible, as a gift is associated with a command to respond, and an absolute altruism that cannot be fulfilled. A gift is annulled by anything that

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p 8

<sup>28</sup> Marcel Mauss, *Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, W W Norton, New York, 1990

<sup>29</sup> See for example, David J Cheal, *The Gift Economy*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988; Alan D Schrif, *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, Routledge, New York, 1997; Rosalyn Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas*, State University of New York, Albany, New York, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p 30

acknowledges it (even ‘thank you’) or proposes compensation, reward or recompense.<sup>31</sup> The possibility of giving is problematised in terms of its dissociation from receiving and taking. Rajkowska raises similar questions around hospitality by generously offering Rosa as a gift within a location, which is associated with the unforgivable crimes of World War II. Rosa is a gift towards reconciliation; she is offered to forgive the unforgivable and lift the spell of apathy towards communal belonging.

With the tightening asylum refugee policy,<sup>32</sup> Germany is not associated with a place of hospitality. Berlin, however, is known as a city of immigration; fashioning itself as open, tolerant, culturally, religiously and ethnically diverse. It might be called a cosmopolitan city. The word ‘cosmopolitan’, deriving from the Greek *kosmopolitês*, meaning ‘citizen of the world’, defines a single universal community of world citizens. It is a positive ideal, which can be abused through imposing obligations or denying rights. The different versions of cosmopolitanism also depend on the employment of the notion of citizenship. In the Greek *polis* citizenship defined ‘the reciprocal relationship of “rule and being ruled”’,<sup>33</sup> suggesting exchange based on hospitality. If citizenship is understood as an embodied form of belonging, cosmopolitanism is strongly linked to narratives of shared cultures and the recognition of the ‘other’. Jacques Derrida argues that there exists a double imperative within the concept of cosmopolitanism, which involves both an unconditional and conditional hospitality.<sup>34</sup> On the one hand all newcomers should be offered the right to enter a country, on the other, the rights of residency need to somehow be regulated. The negotiation of these two imperatives, irreconcilable and indissociable, enables political action and allows for re-thinking the notion of citizenship itself, and offering new forms of belonging. The two poles, the

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<sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* [1991], University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, p 29

<sup>32</sup> Asylum laws were recently revised; in general applications for the right to asylum are frequently rejected within the EU. In the wake of the current refugee crisis in Europe, they are most likely to be reviewed again. On the one hand European governments force aforementioned quotas for re-settling refugees in EU member states, on the other they deny the right of asylum funding and building camps for refugees outside of the EU.

<sup>33</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, ‘Intersectionality, Citizenship and Contemporary Politics of Belonging’, in B Siim and J Squires, *Contesting Citizenship*, op cit, p 160

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London, 2001

unconditional, or absolute, universal, and the conditional, the relative and particular, should form the basis of responsible political action. Such action would acknowledge the ‘unconditional purity’, associated with the Kantian ethical Moral Law or Levinas’ ‘infinite responsibility’, and at the same time would legitimise (but not be based on) the pragmatic conditions of a specific context.

Derrida differentiates between the two forms of metropolis, the city and the state, and suggests cosmopolitanism might be affiliated with all the cities or all the states of the world.<sup>35</sup> He then questions whether a city is able to exercise hospitality at all, given that, as suggested by Hannah Arendt, international law is limited by treaties of sovereign states.<sup>36</sup> Rajkowska addresses cosmopolitanism (interestingly, this is also an ecological term describing an organism found in most parts of the world) and mobilises issues of solidarity in terms of access to membership, of or belonging to a state or a city, in this case Germany and Berlin. She tests the limits and restrictions of hospitality first arriving in Berlin herself and then delivering Rosa *in* and *for* Berlin.

Derrida refers to the origins of the concept of hospitality, including the ‘duty’ of hospitality and the ‘right’ to hospitality.<sup>37</sup> Again, Derrida argues that the possibility of hospitality is also the condition of its impossibility as hospitality always posits limitations upon the other.<sup>38</sup> To be hospitable, the host needs to have power over ownership, be the ‘master’ of the house (or nation, or country), and be in control of the guests, closing the boundaries and sometimes excluding some groups.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, hospitality demands a welcoming, which ceases the control and mastery. This also circumvents the possibility of hospitality as there is no control or ownership. Derrida argues:

one cannot speak of cultivating an ethic of hospitality. Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one

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<sup>35</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘On Cosmopolitanism’, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London, 2001, p 3

<sup>36</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1967

<sup>37</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘On Cosmopolitanism’, op cit, p 5

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000, p 135; and Jacques Derrida, ‘On Cosmopolitanism’, op cit, p 16

<sup>39</sup> Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, op cit, pp 151–155

ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics in hospitality*; ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality.<sup>40</sup>

And further, 'being at home with oneself... supposes a reception or inclusion of the other which one seeks to appropriate, control, and master according to different modalities of violence'.<sup>41</sup> Derrida reminds us that the urban right to hospitality and the concept of a city of refuge in the Hebraic tradition was developed in the Book of Numbers (the fourth book of the Hebrew Bible),<sup>42</sup> and further developed by Emmanuel Levinas in *The Cities of Refuge* (1982) and Daniel Payot in *Refuge Cities* (1992). In medieval tradition, the city could determine the laws of hospitality. These two conventions connect within cosmopolitanism, affiliated with Greek stoicism and Pauline Christianity, further developed by Kant, who (in *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, 1795) defines *jus cosmopolitanum* (international law), 'Peoples, as states, like individuals, may be judges to influence one another merely by their coexistence in the state of the nature.'<sup>43</sup> He then suggests, 'The law of cosmopolitanism must be restricted to the conditions of universal hospitality.'<sup>44</sup> Hospitality, according to Kant, defines 'the right of a stranger not to be treated in a hostile manner by another upon his arrival on the other's territory'.<sup>45</sup> It is the acknowledgement of difference and the co-existence of differences that is embedded within cosmopolitanism. Starting from universal hospitality without limit, Kant determines the conditions of peace between all men as a natural or

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pp 16–17

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p 17

<sup>42</sup> Another challenge to the concept of citizenship lies in the re-negotiation of the private-public dichotomy in terms of the agency of women and men to actively participate within space and the invisibility of some denizens of the city. Feminist interventions question the gender divide between the public *polis* urban space, and the private domestic sphere, opening the concept of citizenship to women. I have recently explored these issues with regard to the practice of walking in my keynote talk, 'The "Aesthetics of Pedestrianism" and the politics of belonging in contemporary women's art', at the conference *Flâneur: New Urban Narratives* at Teatro Municipal São Luiz in Lisbon, May 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Derrida, 'On Cosmopolitanism', op cit, p 19

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Toward Perpetual Peace', in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*, Yale University Press, New York, 2006, p 82



original law. According to this law, all human beings have been granted ‘common possession of the surface of the earth’. Therefore, in principle, no-one should be able to withhold access to ‘the surface of the earth’. However, Derrida notes, what is above, the soil, the constructed, culture, habitat, state, etc, is no longer pure and ‘must not be unconditionally accessible to all comers’.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, there exist limits (borders, states etc), which inhibit the unconditional hospitality and, at the same time, enable thinking of new forms of embodied belonging beyond the concept of citizenship.

Kant limits ‘a right of residence’ to ‘right of visitation’, when a stranger entering a foreign territory should be treated without hostility as a visitor, and not necessarily as a guest. This limitation, reminds Derrida, depends on the treaties between states.<sup>47</sup> Further, Kant defines hospitality as dependent on state sovereignty and, as such, its nature is public. Derrida adds to this, suggesting that it is controlled by the law. Going back to Rajkowska’s project, ‘planting’ Rosa in Berlin can then be seen as an attempt to question the law and seek new forms of belonging, which are transnational, and,

*between the Law of an unconditional hospitality, offered a priori to every other, to all newcomers, whoever they may be, and the conditional laws of a right to hospitality, without which The unconditional Law of hospitality would be in danger of remaining a pious and irresponsible desire, without form and without potency.*<sup>48</sup>

Rajkowska’s project also acknowledges the importance of one’s place of birth, as the artist says ‘both as a personal decision and a biopolitical fact’. The film depicts Rosa’s birth and then portrays the burial of the placenta in front of the Reichstag. Rosa’s beginning of a new life in Berlin changes her biography. She is a displaced and yet *emplaced* person. Being the daughter of a Polish mother and a British father, and being born in Berlin, Rosa is a transnational being. Berlin was not a

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<sup>46</sup> Derrida, ‘On Cosmopolitanism’, op cit, p 21

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pp 21–22

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp 22–23

coincidental choice. Rajkowska consciously decided to move to a city, which has become 'home' for many immigrants. This personal choice also has a symbolic dimension. Rosa will always say she was born in Berlin. It has now become part of her identity and her history. By choosing Berlin as Rosa's place of birth, Rajkowska also re-enacts history. Considering Polish-German to be a heavily loaded and traumatised relationship, she offers Rosa as a gift. There is potential for change and a new beginning. She offers Berlin the gift of a new life, which is pure and stimulates the future, and which, perhaps, can re-enact the fraught issue in Germany. This gift enables issues around the location and nature of new migratory homes to be addressed.

Berlin in itself is a city of contrasts. It has been reinvented first after World War II and then after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is a cosmopolitan city which often marks the space in between the east and the west of Europe, being a place of interactions between the self and the other, between genders and races. It is where the self can be re-invented. At the same time, it is a space of alienation. Rajkowska says:

Decisions have already been taken. Andrew will give up his job and we're moving to Berlin. We will live on savings and occasional exhibitions and lectures. Andrew will be a full-time father. The intention is very simple – to give a little life to this city, to put Rosa in the middle of Berlin, filter it through her skin. Now, while she is still in me, through my skin and later, when she can look around. I believe that knowledge is acquired through breathing, eating, touching. Rosa will drink Berlin water and breathe the Berlin air. And then every time when she is asked about her place of birth, she will say: Berlin.<sup>49</sup>

The rest is up to Rosa. In terms of migration models Germany has moved from the ethno-cultural towards the territorial pole, which means that nationality is now emphasised by birth.<sup>50</sup> Rosa was born in Berlin and it is up to her to decide where she belongs and whether Berlin is her home.

Following *Born in Berlin*, Rajkowska worked on another project *Born in Berlin – A Letter to*

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<sup>49</sup> Joanna Rajkowska, 'Born in Berlin', 2012, <http://www.rajkowska.com/en/filmy/266>, accessed 18 January 2014

<sup>50</sup> R Koopmans and P Statham, *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics: Comparative European Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000

*Rosa* (2012), where she explains to her daughter through drawings, how through Rosa's birth in Berlin history can be disenchanting. 'You were going to be a gift for Berlin, a city which, for me, was the place from which destruction usually came. At least for my family. A gift to lift the spell.'<sup>51</sup> She then writes about Rosa's first moments in Berlin; her travelling and encountering the new. Rajkowska, Andrew and Rosa set out on a journey through the city to tame it, domesticate it. They visit Berlin, explore it as guests and potential settlers. The space is hospitable and welcoming. Rosa breathes in Berlin, the place of her birth. She is already a transnational being. She then starts travelling and migrating; to England and to Poland. The letter ends, 'Nine months after your birth the doctors in Poland diagnosed you with retinoblastoma, cancer in both eyes.'<sup>52</sup>

### ***NADA PRLJA AND TENSION ZONES***

Nada Prlja was born in Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She later moved to Skopje, Macedonia and then to London. Currently she lives in Skopje. In her artistic practice, including site-specific works, live projects, installations, videos, photography and drawings, she mobilises issues of inequality and injustice in societies. She actively addresses political, economic and social dimensions of contemporary global, migrant reality. I will be focusing on Prlja's projects, *Give 'em Hell* (2008), *Stop War Against Immigrants* (2008), and *Aliens Inc.* (2009), that represent her exploration of issues such as neglect, hatred, indifference, insensitivity and misinterpretation in terms of concepts of home and identity. In one of the interviews, Prlja says:

the fact that I am never in one single environment, sharpens my senses. However, the sharpness of the senses is two-sided and is relevant for both England and Macedonia/the Balkans. It is about a rather unusual form of existence. Every day I have a yearning 'to go home', but where is my 'home' now?... In my native country, I no longer have a voice – I am not asked for an opinion, as I do not 'belong' there anymore, whereas in my new 'adopted' country of residence – I do not have a voice, and my actions are delivered through agents, the agents of assimilation, or the agents that help me 'translate'

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<sup>51</sup> Joanna Rajkowska, 'Born in Berlin – A Letter to Rosa', 2012, <http://www.rajkowska.com/en/wystawy/267>, accessed 18 January 2014

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

the meaning from one culture to other. The 'agent' is a helping hand, but the 'agent' is also a modifier of my own messages...<sup>53</sup>

When she moved to London in 1999 she started questioning the relationship between 'the local (my own) and international (my own to be)'.<sup>54</sup> Since then she has been subjected to the process of re-adjustment and modification. Naturalisation is a very complex process, in which citizenship is often seen as a tool of integration in accordance with a given country policy. A citizen and a non-citizen can be characterised by an individual's willingness and ability to conform to responsibilities and rights in terms of norms, discourses and policies. It seems there exist contradictory tendencies within Europe; on the one hand the intensification of integration of those living within a particular country is promoted, on the other, the entrance to territories is being restricted. Integration becomes Janus-faced both supporting and disciplining individuals, even if encouraging participation and a sense of belonging.

The 'threshold' existence separates citizens from foreigners. Julia Kristeva proposes the concept of foreigners within ourselves in her book *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991).<sup>55</sup> An immigrant herself, she talks about this foreignness and strangeness:

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself.<sup>56</sup>

And further,

when the citizen-individual ceases to consider himself as unitary and glorious but discovers his incoherences and abysses, in short his 'strangenesses' – that the question arises again: no longer that

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<sup>53</sup> Nada Prlja, 'Foreign Experience in Post '89 Art', 2009, seminar paper, <http://www.seriousinterests.co.uk/WRITINGS.php?id=171>, accessed 17 January 2014

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, London, 1991

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 1

of welcoming the foreigner within a system that obliterates him but of promoting the togetherness of those foreigners that we all recognize ourselves to be.<sup>57</sup>

Kristeva's concern with strangeness and otherness emphasises the complexities inherent in the concept of citizenship and its affinity with the notion of exile. This ambiguity of the encounter between the host and the visitor is addressed through togetherness based on hospitality (called by Kristeva, when discussing a nourishing banquet, 'the cosmopolitanism of a moment, the brotherhood of guests who soothe and forget their differences'<sup>58</sup>). In her works, Prlja questions possible ways of being in common in the wake of fractured identities. Her foreigner is supplementary, less than a citizen, and unwelcome more often than not. Prlja's strategy of re-thinking the concept of home from the position of the margin and the foreigner resonates with Homi K Bhabha's interpretation of the migrants and the nation's margins.<sup>59</sup> It also echoes his suggestion that within national identity there is an inscribed metaphor of landscape, as both concern issues of social visibility and the power of the eye to reduce the rhetoric of national affiliation and expression.

Prlja says she must learn the native as "'localised" or "periferic" or... the new "international" as shapeless, vague or undefined'. She is stateless, hovering in a post-national existence in an adopted country. She also suggests Europe has lost its identity, saying:

If we look at the 'product' of European policy-making translated into one of the most important fields – the economy – the results are pretty 'globalised', or in other words, 'generalised'. The Euro banknotes, the design of which is apparently intended to conceal the identity of individual European countries, points out the horrifying position in which Europe finds itself. What I read from the Euro banknotes is a land with no identity, no heritage, a land that prioritises 'architectural details' and bad taste.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pp 2–3

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p 11

<sup>59</sup> Homi K Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990

<sup>60</sup> Nada Prlja, 'Make Everything Nice', 2008, for Decision Maker: Art Reclaims Foreign Affairs, <http://www.seriousinterests.co.uk/WRITINGS.php?id=75>, accessed 17 January 2014

This concealment of identity and the subjection of ‘strangers’ or ‘others’ to the post-national existence is demonstrated in Prlja’s single screen video *Give ’em Hell* (2008) and the drawings and newspaper cut-outs that followed, entitled *Stop War Against Immigrants* (2008). With a hidden camera, Prlja recorded youngsters who were destroying a series of protest banners she had left on the streets of London. These included messages supporting immigration and equal human rights for everyone, such as: ‘We are all foreigners’; ‘Stop criminalizing immigrants’; or ‘Rights for foreigners’, among others. This documentary demonstrates the anger and intolerance towards immigrants. By adding the music, she aestheticises the violence. Hannes Swoboda reminds us that:

The preamble to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union places democracy, the rule of law, and universal values at the core of European construction. More importantly, it places the individual, its rights and duties, at the centre of its activities and of its actions.<sup>61</sup>

The Charter (adopted in 2000) emphasises rights existing at the European level and promotes the idea of integration through citizenship practice.<sup>62</sup> On principle, democracy presupposes that only

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<sup>61</sup> J Birdwell, S Feve, C Tryhorn and N Vibla, ‘Backsliders: Measuring Democracy in the EU’, 2013, report, [http://www.demos.co.uk/files/DEMOS\\_Backsliders\\_report\\_web\\_version.pdf](http://www.demos.co.uk/files/DEMOS_Backsliders_report_web_version.pdf), p 9, accessed 25 May 2015

<sup>62</sup> Since the inception of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, paving the way to foster economic co-operation, citizenship has been present in discussions on EU legislation. The right to belong and participate, strongly linked to notions of migration, ethnicity and nationalism, brings up the idea of European democracy, which should be based on people’s active participation in decision-making processes and their belonging to ‘a *polis* of equals’. The accession process to European Union stipulates that new member states need to follow the democratic principles, upon which the EU was founded, ‘liberty, democracy, respect for human rights’. Furthermore, there are other mechanisms ensuring members maintain a baseline of democracy. Nonetheless, democratic backsliding can be observed within EU member states, as noted by, for example Birdwell et al, and not only among Central and Eastern European countries, but also in Western Europe (criticised for undemocratic legislation on issues such as religious freedom in France or media ownership in Italy; both countries are founding members of the EU). Birdwell et al suggest a tool they call the Demos EU Democracy Index, which can be used to assess the democratic health of European countries. It includes five dimensions that should be considered when thinking about democratic principles and practices. Interestingly, two of those dimensions (tolerance of minorities and active citizenship) are guided by issues arising from migrations of individuals within and across Europe. What interests me particularly is the tolerance of migrants (or the ‘desirability’ of some groups over others) and

citizens are entitled to active participation in the political landscape of nation states. This democratic system and the nation state itself is challenged, as suggested by Hammar in light of the large scale immigration happening in Europe (and beyond) from the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> It is a human right to leave a country, and this is recognised in political practice, but there is no right to enter a country. This access is determined by hospitality regulated by the laws of the receiving country. Prlja's video and drawings portray hatred, anger, and disturbing violence against foreigners.

There exists a double set of gates or boundaries controlling admission to a territory, as suggested by Lister, first by restraining admission to a state, then by limiting partial membership in social and civil rights, and finally political rights granted by full citizenship.<sup>64</sup> This raises the issue of citizenship and its inadequacies (as embodied belonging) and flawed nature in the light of current migration patterns and numbers achieving higher than-ever annual growth rates.<sup>65</sup> Prlja articulates this embodied belonging. Images of youngsters destroying the banners in the video are shown in slow motion, accompanied by music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Opus 125. It was his final symphony, completed in 1824, unusually using voices. In the fourth movement soloists and a chorus sung reordered words from *Ode to Joy* (1795; revised in 1803), a poem by Friedrich Schiller. *Ode to Joy* became a protest anthem, a celebration of unity and brotherhood. In 1972 the musical backing of Symphony No. 9 was chosen by the Council of Europe as the Anthem of Europe, and subsequently of the European Union (in 1985). Prlja calls for solidarity and a hospitable community accepting otherness. Through slowing down the pace of the

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the extent to which citizens and foreigners are allowed to be politically and civically active. Ibid, pp 13–19

<sup>63</sup> Tomas Hammar, *Democracy and The Nation State: Aliens, Denizens and Citizens in a World of International Migration*, Aldershot, Avebury, 1989, pp 1–2; Hammar argues, referring back to the revolutionary cry from eighteenth century America ('there should be no taxation without representation') that, in fact, political democracy is not functioning properly in Western Europe, as it presupposes that only citizens are full member of the state.

<sup>64</sup> Lister, *Citizenship*, op cit, p 47

<sup>65</sup> Eurostat, 'Migration and Migrant Population Statistics', 2014,

[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)

[explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics), accessed 5 June 2015

video, she makes us look at the images of intolerance and hatred. She forces us to face the lived dimension of migration and the very real violent response of hosts towards foreigners.

With *Aliens Inc.* (2009) Prlja addresses attitudes towards migration in the UK. The increased intensity of mass migration after the World War II resuscitates interest in notions of home and homelands, and host-lands. It becomes possible to perform 'national' identity and address its fluidity and flexibility. This extends Bhabha's notion of the 'double time of the nation' and the artificiality of the language of national belonging,<sup>66</sup> referring back to Lister's point made with regard to the urgency needed in re-thinking and reappraising the meaning of the language of citizenship. Shapiro suggests:

Creating unity out of constitutive division, the state attempts to write itself in a way that ends the split. Indeed, once we locate the state in a theatrical frame, imaginatively performing its distinctiveness rather than simply existing passively within a naturalized, geopolitical space, the split temporal dimensions of its existence become more apparent. Diverse cultural movements have served to 'disperse the homogeneous, visual time of the horizontal society' and to reveal nations as a set of disjunctive temporal performances.<sup>67</sup>

Prlja's T-shirts in *Aliens Inc.* challenge narratives of national cultural coherence by highlighting prejudices and hostility in host-lands. They include slogans she heard on the streets of London or found in British newspapers and television programmes, such as 'illegal alien' or 'alien mother'. The t-shirts shed light on the politics of citizenship, which excludes co-presence. By placing black slogans on a white background Prlja disrupts the dominant utopian narrative of political correctness that seeks to establish a singular and exclusive national citizenship. She criticises citizenship and offers a way of undoing it. By undoing citizenship, she opens up different possibilities of belonging, which is embodied and embraces difference and otherness. Freud's notion of the unconscious situates otherness, biological and symbolic, within the same. It resonates with Kristeva's

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<sup>66</sup> Bhabha, *Nation*, op cit, p 297

<sup>67</sup> M J Shapiro, 'National Times and Other Times: Re-thinking Citizenship', *Cultural Studies*, vol 14, no 1, 2000, p 84



‘foreignness [which] is within us’, being reconciled with our own ‘otherness-foreignness’. This enables the exploration of ‘strangeness of the other and of oneself, toward an ethics of respect for the irreconcilable’,<sup>68</sup> Freud’s suggestion to locate difference within us, conditions our being with others, and cosmopolitanism, which is based on our solidarity with ‘the foreign’. Prlja suggests,

Inhabiting the ‘international zone’ is an unstable position/place to be in, but it is a position that seeks to find a different access to the world, a position removed from the comfort zone – the most appropriate position from which to look for new relationships that could be formed today between art; presence, history; society and politics?<sup>69</sup>

### ***TRANSNATIONAL EMBODIED BELONGING***

Some suggest other ways of thinking about belonging *within* and *across* space. Citizenship, being tied to discourses on one’s status, describes belonging *to* a particular place or a concept, such as the nation-state or a union of countries. It is not a voluntary membership, and even if usually citizens are free to quit the territory of their nation state, they cannot simply renounce their citizenship.<sup>70</sup> It seems other figurations might be considered when conceptualising new forms of embodied belonging emergent from migrations across Europe. As Lister suggests, citizenship may be understood as a lived experience which embeds it within a temporal and national context, and emphasises individuation; what citizenship means for individual citizens.<sup>71</sup> Everyday lived citizenship, portrayed in Rajkowska and Prlja’s works, also enables us to consider cultural and social practices, including gender cultures that broaden the understanding of the concept.<sup>72</sup> There is

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<sup>68</sup> Julia Kristeva, *op cit*, pp 181–182

<sup>69</sup> Nada Prlja, ‘Foreign Experience’, *op cit*

<sup>70</sup> Becoming a citizen of another country as a foreign citizen is granted by the given state, not the individual.

<sup>71</sup> Ruth Lister, ‘Citizenship: Towards a Feminist Synthesis’, *Feminist Review* 57, 1997, pp 28–48 and Ruth Lister, *Citizenship*, *op cit*.

<sup>72</sup> It captures multiculturalism and issues around migration, including the terms of entry and residence in nation states. One’s entrance to a foreign territory might be allowed, but is restricted. The different regulations determine one’s status in terms of right of domicile and residency. Foreigners may apply for a citizenship or permanent resident status, depending on which country they inhabit.

another group of alien residents, who are in between being naturalised and being foreign citizens. In social sciences they are called denizens, in-between subjects.<sup>73</sup>

Hammar suggests those with social and civic rights but without formal citizenship, who have legal residence status, are called denizens. This concept goes beyond the citizenship envisaged by Marshall and emphasises locatedness, spatiality, belonging and participation.<sup>74</sup> There are many complexities attached to the concept of denizenship, such as for example insecurity in terms of residence status and the denial of the right to vote, which has consequences for democracy. It is an interesting term, which in art practice is responsible and spatial, as in the case of Rajkowska and Prlja's projects, where it becomes a figuration that enables thinking through what it means to be at home and where this 'home' might be.

Feminist citizenship theorists argue for a practice of citizenship embedded in 'a differentiated universalism in which the achievement of [the] universal is contingent upon attention to difference'.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, equal and emancipatory citizenship needs to recognise diversity of status and identity. Denizenship understood as representing living experience of embodied belonging addresses the hospitality of space, which welcomes the 'other' and makes them feel at home. It is this space in between that is negotiated by both the host and the guest or the denizen. It cannot, as argued by Derrida, be unconditional, but it is based on generosity and mutually beneficial exchange, as demonstrated by Rajkowska's project *Born in Berlin* and as called for by Prlja in *Give 'em Hell* and *Stop War Against Immigrants*. Such relationships seems to be more appropriate currently, when many individuals move and migrate between places and their belonging more often than not becomes transnational and territorially unfixed. This has detrimental implications for personal identity and identifications, but also the ability to make oneself at home. The earlier proposed

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<sup>73</sup> Atle Grahl-Madsen proposes that the traditional concepts of whom is considered to be a 'foreigner' are no longer adequate with the current situation and so a new term for a new category of alien resident is needed (in Tomas Hammar, op cit, p 13).

<sup>74</sup> Lister suggests the rights available 'inside', once an individual has entered a territory, are insecure and unclear causing them to become vulnerable. In opposition to the Marshallian model, social and civic rights are granted first and the political rights are the final stage of an individual's full and legalised belonging within a state. (Ruth Lister, *Citizenship*, op cit, p 49)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p 91

concept of edge habitat seems to me to metaphorically represent the changing concept of citizenship towards belonging, which is based on generosity, friendship, hospitality and being included in a community.

Edge habitat being both a transition (as demonstrated by Rajkowska's practice) and tension zone (as in Prlja's works) facilitates exchange between communities based on hospitality laws. Cultural rights in terms of migration embrace both the right to equality and to respecting cultural diversity, including the right for an individual to observe their own cultural practices. Women are often seen as bearers of culture, its norms and values, and can introduce new complexity and diversity to issues of migration. Processes of migration are particularly important for women who carry, reproduce and resist symbols and practices of cultures, moving towards integration. Narratives embraced by women artists lead to fragmentation, deconstruction and the re-writing of citizenship beyond the nation state, even if still often territorialised within Europe.

Rajkowska and Prlja set off on a journey and question their identity and place in the world. They are constantly in motion, dislocating, re-inventing their home/homeland and, at the same time being in between. Their belonging can be defined as borderless, neglecting fixed boundaries and borders, unveiling truths and prejudices, and at the same time offering new beginnings. Both artists are on a journey searching for home and exploring their identity. They are global citizens who could be described as identitarian, repeatedly re-writing their belonging within their multiple homes and re-defining the concept of home itself. They cannot be categorised as *from* here or *from* there: their identities are transnational.

Their citizenship might be termed a migrant but the political concept of citizenship in itself is too narrow as a construction addressed in the arts to respond to recent migrations and changes in the fabric of the European flow of individuals. Citizenship is legally defined and based on the civic status of an individual. Stuart Hall and David Held offer a more expansive conception beyond formal definitions, which includes participation in the community.<sup>76</sup> This is the most basic meaning

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<sup>76</sup> Stuart Hall and David Held, 'Left and Rights', *Marxism Today*, June 1989, p 17

of citizenship, a token of belonging, membership of a community, where each element of the equation – membership, identity and relationship – needs to be interrogated. Art practice, through different aesthetic interventions, offers an alternative space to practice politics and ask questions. Rajkowska and Prlja's projects suggest a new insight into the concept of transnational belonging. Through different narratives they share commitment to articulate a hospitable space, transition or tension zone, inhabited by a community based on identification with others.

In 'On Cosmopolitanism' Derrida concludes by talking about 'being on the threshold', and 'a certain idea of cosmopolitanism, an *other*'.<sup>77</sup> This threshold, the space in between, edge habitat, has the potency to re-evaluate the different forms of embodied belonging. Perhaps denizenship is a more appropriate term, marking as it does a temporary, often multiple migration and being a resident non-citizen. Hammar defines 'denizens' as neither foreign nor naturalised citizens of the host state holding legal and permanent resident status.<sup>78</sup> Denizenship blurs the either/or logic and makes definitive concepts permeable. Or, as Meskimmon suggests, we 'might move toward a more global sense of political engagement and ethical responsibility' through acknowledging cosmopolitanism. And further,

If we are working toward a notion of the subject as embodied, embedded, respons-able and responsible *with/in* the world, then we encounter the very exciting possibilities that cosmopolitanism offers in terms of communicating with others in and through difference.<sup>79</sup>

Embodied transnational belonging negotiated in women's art practice gives voice to invisible denizens who are enabled to take up a wider range of positions within space. Such belonging embodies a fuller citizenship within communities, in the space in between, within edge habitat, which enables one to be here and there and *in between*. Perhaps, as in the case of Alice, once 'the

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<sup>77</sup> Derrida, 'On Cosmopolitanism', op cit, p 23

<sup>78</sup> Hammar, *Democracy and The Nation State*, op cit

<sup>79</sup> Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, op cit, p 93

glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist<sup>80</sup> we should make a step forward and explore the in between.

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<sup>80</sup> Carroll, 'Through the Looking-Glass, and what Alice Found There' op cit, p 127