

PROPOSAL OF THE PROJECT IM/MIGRATIONISM (A follow-up of 'The Post-Colonial Migrant')

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Introduction

The two most important pledges after World War II were:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
The Marshall Plan (European Recovery Program), 1948

These two pledges have enduringly molded post-war Europe's socio-economic and socio-cultural landscapes and boosted the welfare of its citizens. However, as both human rights and welfare hinge (albeit circuitously) on citizenship, immigrant denizens tend to be barred from many a privilege. The project at hand is concerned with their predicament in the web of European citizenship legislations. In particular, the project revolves around a classification of four ideal-typical citizenship regimes, introduced by Koopmans et al. (2005):

ASSIMILATIONISM, SEGREGATIONISM, MULTICULTURALISM AND UNIVERSALISM

These regimes are viewed here as phenotypes of im/migrationism.

Im/migrationism

Im/migrationism may loosely be conceptualized as the full immigration cycle, comprising both horizontal immigration (the process of entering a new country) and vertical immigration (the process of adapting to the new circumstances in that country). In consequence, im/migrationism is a multi-faceted conviviality, where the multiple facets form a structured typography, a series of simultaneous transformations of the contemporary space.

As the project aims to show, in its vertical phase, im/migrationism may put its own body 'en scene', turning into a laying hen with significant fertility. Im/migrationism is also represented in the voyage of the present as a laboratory for experimentation and contamination, which must be preserved because research results ultimately serve the development of HUMANS.

Structure versus agency

Because the immigrant "other" often functions as the mirror in which we can observe and by which we can redefine ourselves, immigration tends to create pressures and opportunities for a redefinition and reinvention of the conception of citizenship and national identity of the receiving nation-states. (Koopmans et al., 2005: p.6)

Citizenship regimes epitomize and abridge the incongruous ways in which nation-states have regulated access to national citizenship and social facilities at the macro-level of society.

These sets of regulations shape the opportunity structures that bound immigrants' life choices and chances. The project intends to illuminate how national and supra-national (European) citizenship regulations percolate down to the micro-level of individual immigrants' private lives, laying bare the very mechanisms that elucidate some of their life outcomes. These mechanisms are fathomed here as the interplay between the opportunity structure and the degrees of freedom it (at times inadvertently) leaves immigrants to endure and if need be defeat it. The project seeks to dissect and unravel this agency migrants have vis-à-vis the system.

Project description

It is the ambition of the project to propose a condensed package of the experience and expertise of immigrants that can best be understood as an inspiration to refine the realm of cross-culture. Immigrants reinvent and re-create themselves in a process that mirrors the architecture of the citizenship regimes. Specifically, the project is concerned with the fate of Senegalese immigrants who live in mixed-race couples under the reign of citizenship regimes in six European nation states:

FRANCE, BELGIUM, THE NETHERLANDS, THE UNITED KINGDOM, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND

The associations of these nation states with citizenship regimes are considered here as versatile (rather than one-to-one), the assumption being that as a consequence of increasing European integration hallmarks of any regime may resurface in any country.

The project will be a direct collaboration between the artist and a group of sociologists concerning the comparison of vertical immigrants living in mixed couples in the six European countries. The project attempts to achieve an understanding of what it suggests to be the complexity of this voyage in the present and envisages the vicissitudes of vertical immigration as FRACTALS.

By converting the typographies and multi-faceted aesthetic of im/migrationism, the artist will construct four such fractals (based on the four citizenship regimes). By eliciting stories and dialogues from the couples, he will capture immigrants' experience with forming relationships and founding families in their host countries, registering in sound and image narratives that illustrate how the fractal templates reverberate in immigrants' private lives. Zooming in on couples' most sensitive choices and heeding their cues will reveal the convoluted nature of the most private outcomes of public laws.

The sociologists, for their part, will research and document current national and European citizenship legislations, exemplifying the specific opportunity structure immigrants face in each country. They will analyze and interpret immigrants' experiences within the bounds of citizenship regimes, highlighting their socio-economic and socio-cultural contribution. As such, they are charged with the definition of the added value of sub-Saharan immigration for Europe.

Project summary

The envisaged project consists of three parts:

Part I: Installations: visual depictions of citizenship regimes as fractals

Part II: Book, containing:

- a description of each country context
- fragments of interviews with mixed couples
- photographs of mixed couples
- sociological analyses of couples' experience vis-à-vis the citizenship regimes

Part III: Documentary, containing:

- interviews with experts
- interviews with mixed couples in seven different European contexts

References

Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M. & Passy, F. (2005) *Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*, University of Minnesota Press.

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