

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Nira Yuval-Davis**, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2011, 252 pp. \$46.00 paper (9781412921305), \$108.00 hardcover (9781412921299)

**N**ira Yuval-Davis's book is an original contribution to ongoing scholarly debates on intersectionality, belonging, and citizenship. She seeks to expand theories of intersectionality beyond women and gender studies, and presents a remarkable intersectional analysis of politics of belonging. The main argument of the book can be summarized as follows: In the context of neoliberal globalization, multiple political projects of belonging have emerged as alternatives to hegemonic forms of citizenship and nationalism. She takes a closer look at political projects that are centred around religion, cosmopolitanism, feminist ethics of care, as well as alternative discourses of nationalism, and argues that it is no longer possible to fully understand formal state citizenship without examining how it intersects with these multilayered projects at sub-state, cross-state, and supra-state levels. In other words, individuals simultaneously engage in these multiple political projects of belonging, and they are affected and positioned differently by each one. And, the author believes that these complexities of belonging can be best approached through the perspective of intersectionality.

The book consists of six chapters, plus the conclusion. Each chapter is devoted to a major contemporary political project of belonging, where the author presents an extensive overview of theoretical debates and a set of examples. In chapter 1, Yuval-Davis introduces her theoretical framework. She first engages in a detailed analysis of theories of intersectionality, belonging, and politics of belonging, and then examines the interlocking processes of globalization and glocalization, with a special emphasis on neoliberal capitalism and transnational migration. In chapter 2, the author continues with a rigorous discussion of state citizenship. She maps out the rights and obligations associated with state citizenship and then looks at the set of technologies through which states define and control citizenship, such as official statistics and the use of passports. Moreover, she pays special attention to some contemporary constructions of citizenship other than formal state citizenship, such as active/ist citizenship, "intimate" citizenship, consumerism as citizenship, multicultural citizenship, and multilayered citizenship. It is remarkable that

Yuval-Davis goes beyond the framework of the nation-state in her definition of citizenship: As opposed to formal state citizenship, she believes, “people’s citizenship” encompasses a diverse set of memberships in local, regional, national, cross and supranational political communities (p. 61). That is, state citizenship is now being interlocked with or implicated in these multiple forms of people’s citizenships. However, while state citizenship is being contested by these alternative projects of belonging, the author is careful enough to acknowledge the persisting importance of state citizenship as well as the increasing state control in the everyday life of many people.

In chapter 3, Yuval-Davis turns her gaze to alternative nationalist discourses. After a summary of theories of nation and nationalism, she carefully investigates alternative nationalist projects of autochthony, indigeneity, and diasporism, and she ends the chapter with a brief analysis of feminism and nationalism. Chapter 4 offers a useful examination of another major contemporary political project of belonging, religious fundamentalism. The author examines the collapse of the secularization thesis and argues that religion has become a key principle of political mobilization in our current era of neoliberal globalization. She goes on by discussing notions of secularism, fundamentalism, and multifaithism, and finishes up the chapter with an overview of religious and antifundamentalist feminisms.

When it comes to chapter 5, Yuval-Davis shifts her focus to cosmopolitanism. She begins the chapter with an overview of different kinds of cosmopolitan discourses such as situated, rooted, rootless, and visceral cosmopolitanism. What is more, in her analysis of cosmopolitanism “from above” and “from below,” she pays special attention to discourses of human rights and human security. She eloquently asserts that these discourses might operate both as technologies of cosmopolitan governance and as discourses of resistance to global inequalities. She concludes the chapter with a brief analysis of cosmopolitan feminism.

Chapter 6 comprises an investigation into the intersections between the political, the normative, and the emotional in the context of feminist ethics of care. Yuval-Davis takes a closer look at the theoretical foundations, and contends that caring and love constitute the ultimate framework of political action in feminist ethics of care. However, as opposed to feminist ethics of care, she proposes a transversal feminist politics with more emphasis on “rooting” and “shifting” in the context of changing relations of power (p. 199). The book concludes with chapter 7, where the author summarizes her overall argument and gives a detailed account of her own transversal and emancipatory project of belonging and hope.

Taken as a whole, Yuval-Davis's book is a most welcome effort to bridge scholarship on intersectionality and theories of belonging and citizenship. One of the many strengths of this book is her effective demonstration of the complexity of belonging. She rightfully problematizes the essentialism of identity politics and maps out the intersectional character of belonging: Belonging is multiple, multilayered, and constantly shifting. What is more, it should be acknowledged that the book covers a wide range of examples of contemporary political projects of belonging, ranging from religious fundamentalism to feminist ethics of care, from indigenous discourses to cosmopolitanism. The author cogently explores how these projects operate at sub-state, cross-state and supra-state levels in the context of neoliberal globalization. She contextualizes these examples with an extensive discussion of the scholarly literature relevant to each case. In particular, it is worth noting that she ends each chapter by looking at a particular feminist movement which has emerged as a part of or reaction to each one of these political projects of belonging.

Yuval-Davis also contributes significantly to citizenship scholarship. She believes that citizenship can not be narrowly defined as formal state citizenship. Rather she defines it in broader terms as "the participatory dimension of membership in all political community" (pp. 201, 48). For her, this broader conception enables us to see that citizenship encompasses one's memberships in a diverse set of communities and thus it is intersectional. Nevertheless, quite intriguingly, the major drawback of the book lies here. In my opinion, there is a lack of clarity in Yuval-Davis's discussion of citizenship. For instance, she uses the notions of belonging and citizenship interchangeably without a theoretical justification or explanation. Although she implies that those alternative political projects of belonging correspond to different forms of people's citizenship, she does not explicate the larger theoretical framework within which her conception of citizenship is situated, except some brief notes and references. Her short discussion of the distinction between state citizenship and people's citizenship is interesting, yet she does not pursue it further in the rest of the book and fails to link it to her broader discussion of nation and nationalism, religion, cosmopolitanism, and feminist ethics of care.

Overall, *The Politics of Belonging* is a major theoretical intervention to the study of intersectionality, belonging, and citizenship. With its deep description and creative application, this book yields fresh insights and is well worth reading for scholars in sociology, political science, women's and gender studies, and cultural studies, among others.