

THE SOUND OF CITIZENSHIP

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This article discusses how the soundscape of citizenship ceremonies is part of the materialization of citizenship in the twenty-first century. In this comparative research on citizenship ceremonies in West European countries, the use of the performative approach has led to a changed focus from the textual discourse and rhetoric of the citizenship ceremonies to what is actually done. In the ceremonies, citizenship is not only enacted in different discourses and versions of bodily practice. It is also materialized in flags, certificates, information folders, pins, medals, food and beverages, and in various soundscapes comprising recitation of oaths, playing children, folk music, and singing of national anthems. These soundscapes are the primary focus of this paper, thus promoting the idea of an ethnology of sensory experience and materialization.

Keywords: citizenship, materialization, soundscape, ritual

What does citizenship sound like? Does it sound like hundreds of Swedish paper flags, crackling and waving in the air at the Blue Hall at Stockholm City Hall? Is it the sound of an all-male choir in Norway singing the national anthem, 'Yes, We Love This Country', in the Great Hall at Oslo City Hall? Or does it sound like thirty new citizens reciting the oath of allegiance – each in their own dialect of English and with different native accents? Does citizenship sound like the national anthem played on a 'ghetto blaster'? Like children playing, laughing and crying among the rows of chairs on the polished floors of the ceremonial rooms?

Citizenship ceremonies are a new solution that many old nation-states are applying to the multicultural challenge at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Australia and Canada are two countries that continue to practice older traditions of granting citizenship, whereas other countries have invented new

rituals to celebrate naturalization and citizenship. My current project is a comparison of these new ritualizations of citizenship in western countries, but instead of the typical approach in the political sciences often dealing with citizenship as a concept or identifying distinctive models of citizenship, my project is focused on the concrete enactments of citizenship. Thus I am following Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal who argues that focusing our analysis on the proliferating sites of making and enacting citizenship will enhance our grasping of new dynamics and topographies of membership (Soysal 2000). New forms of citizenship and ways of belonging are emerging all over Europe, and citizenship ceremonies both celebrate these as they at the same time are confirming 'the national order of things' and way of belonging. The citizenship rituals work as a kind of seismographic spaces, where national interests, emotions, xenophobia, and politics of belonging and

integration surface and are negotiated. Thus citizenship ceremonies form a kind of laboratory for materialisations of these new heterogeneous and ambiguous forms of belonging.

Though citizenship ceremonies are emerging at the same time in several of the old European nation states, they are not carried out in the same way. Though many countries (as the Scandinavian welfare states) have chosen models different from the known models from Canada, Australia or the United States, one can hardly speak of a 'European version' of neither citizenship nor citizenship ceremonies. But by using comparative and contrasting strategies towards this new European cultural phenomenon we can enhance our understanding of the different ways in which European versions of citizenship are enacted at national, regional and local levels. Moreover the comparative perspective opens up a more complex understanding of this cultural phenomenon, as it elucidates what is taken for granted or what is unthinkable in the different countries and thereby makes clear what the different national and local styles of the ceremonies are. In that way a comparative approach highlights the 'presences' but also the 'absences' of the ceremonies.¹

This paper focuses primarily on four countries: Great Britain, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The ceremonies in these countries follow two different scenarios. In Britain – as in Australia and Canada – the core element of the citizenship ceremony is the oath of allegiance, framed by an official speech of welcome, presentation of certificates of citizenship, singing or listening to the national anthem and finally, light refreshments. These ceremonies follow a national matrix, though they are conducted locally and with some variations.²

In the three Scandinavian countries, the differences are stronger. In Sweden, there is no national legislation (so far) concerning the form of these ceremonies, or even whether there should be ceremonies at all. Nevertheless, several local authorities have taken the initiative to have celebrations for the new citizens in their municipalities.³

In Denmark, the first Citizenship Day was held in 2006. Conducted at the Parliament, at Chris-

tiansborg Castle, it is held once a year, for all newly naturalized Danish citizens from the previous year. The ceremony consists of speeches, entertainment, singing the national anthem, followed by a so called 'open house' in the parliament building. The city of Copenhagen has hosted welcoming ceremonies on Constitution Day (June 5th) since 2003.⁴ The Swedish and Danish ceremonies do not include swearing-in ceremonies or other communal core elements, but are more or less informal public celebrations with an official welcoming speech, entertainment and refreshments. In Norway, the first citizenship ceremonies were held in December 2006 in four different locations. The ceremonies included speeches, entertainment and a new oath of allegiance specially composed for the occasion.⁵

Multiculturalism informs all rituals in both the Scandinavian and the Commonwealth countries. The reasons for creating these ceremonies are also quite similar: becoming a citizen of a country is considered to be something valuable and should therefore be celebrated. In the Commonwealth countries, the ceremonies are a formal part of the naturalization process. Citizenship is granted at the ceremony, following the recitation of a pledge. The British ceremony thereby replaces the official letter of notification, which was formerly the only official notice of the newly gained citizenship status given to the individual.

In the Scandinavian countries, formal notification of citizenship is transmitted by letter, and participation in the citizenship ceremonies is optional. The individual receives the invitation after having received the letter of notification. The reasoning in the Scandinavian countries is that the ceremony will help make new citizens feel welcome. As in the Commonwealth countries, however, the citizenship ceremony is intended to mark the occasion as something special so as to make it more memorable, thereby helping the individual to feel the rights and obligations of citizenship more deeply.

In all four countries, then, the intention behind these new ritualizations of citizenship is to create a sense of belonging, to produce citizens with a special kind of subjectivity or self. The self is to be trans-

formed by the rituals, and the civic self is to be enacted at the ceremonies.

Doing Ethnography of Sound

In choosing the word 'enacted', I am signalling a performative approach inspired by the performative turn within the actor-network-theory (ANT)⁶ and the 'praxiography' proposed by the Dutch philosopher Anne Marie Mol. In her book *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (2002) Mol moves from 'perspectivalism' to performance; reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it. Rather, reality is shaped or performed within these socio-material practices. Objects are enacted in a diversity of practices, and reality is therefore multiple. Instead of different perspectives on a single phenomenon, Mol promotes the idea of phenomena performed in different versions. Objects exist only by virtue of practices and 'doing'. Hence, the pivotal point in Mol's analysis is the distribution and coordination between the different versions within the same setting. In her analysis, the setting is a hospital in Holland, where a single disease is enacted in many different versions:

It is possible to say that in practices, objects are enacted. This suggests that activities take place – but leaves the actors vague. It also suggests that in the act, and only then and there, something is – being enacted. Both suggestions fit in fine with the praxiography that I try to engage in here. Thus, an ethnographer/praxiographer out to investigate diseases never isolates these from the practices in which they are, what one may call, enacted. She stubbornly takes notice of the techniques that make things visible, *audible*, tangible, knowable (Mol 2002: 32–33, my emphasis).

Focusing on practices and techniques that make citizenship a sensory experience more than just a matter of rhetoric or discourse is pivotal in my comparison of citizenship ceremonies in Western countries (primarily Britain and Scandinavia). What is said at the ceremonies in different countries is very alike in spite of interesting differences. The discourse of

citizenship is always a mixture of multiculturalist, national, and constitutional elements, and certain rhetoric figures are recognisable at many ceremonies. However when turning to what is actually done, eaten, sung, presented as gifts etcetera, the differences are striking. In a comparative perspective the performative approach helps to shift the focus from the textual discourse and rhetoric in the ceremonies to what is actually done. This is not simply a 'return' from discourse analysis to ethnography, but also a refocusing on the materiality of these ceremonies, on things and their significance, though the approach is not the traditional. Choosing 'materiality' and the verb 'materialize' instead of the concept or category of 'material culture' constitutes a way of dealing with the material in which this is treated as a continuously enacted relational effect (Law 2004: 161). The implication is that materials do not pre-exist in and of themselves but are endlessly generated and at least potentially reshaped in praxis. Thus a possible future of European ethnology is a rearticulation of the importance of studying concrete praxis, processes, and stabilizations enabled by the perspective of materiality.

At the ceremonies, citizenship is not only enacted in different discourses and versions of bodily practice. It is also materialized in different versions of flags, certificates, information folders, pins, medals, food and beverages, and finally, in different auditory forms, what I call 'soundscapes'. It is these soundscapes that will be the focus of this paper.⁷ Focusing on sound is just one way of doing ethnography of the senses, of the visible, audible, and tangible etcetera – which I must confess is not the kind of ethnography I am most familiar with. As Regina Bendix has argued (2000), sensory experience is often marginalized in ethnographic work. Though all our senses are at work when conducting fieldwork, ethnologists often limit themselves to the visual when turning events into text. Nevertheless my comparative approach to the citizenship ceremonies soon made it obvious that the atmosphere was very different, and to grasp these differences the visual dimension was not enough. In order to analytically penetrate the sensory totality of the rituals, my analysis had to incorporate other

dimensions. Sensing an atmosphere or the mood of a ceremony involves many senses, but listening was a possible approach, though an elaborated vocabulary for an 'ethnography of listening' was missing and the paucity of terms striking (Bendix 2000: 36). My fieldwork therefore also turned into an ethnographic and analytical laboratory for finding my ways of doing ethnology of the senses, and trying to overcome my own 'sensory biases' (Howes & Classen 1991: 260).

In search of modes of conceptualizing the totality of sounds and their socio-material nature at the rituals I turned to the concept of soundscape. Composer R. Murray Schafer created the concept of soundscape in his comparative research on sonic environments (1994). For Schafer, the soundscape was understood not only as a desire to reduce noise but to enhance our awareness of the aesthetic power of sound, and of the soundscape as something we could create and design. The project is thereby not only linked to the descriptive and documentary tasks, but also to a compositional and aesthetic product. However, Schafer has also developed a vocabulary for the analysis of the cultural and emotional significance of sound. 'Keynote sounds' are the fundamental tone in a sound milieu. These are the sounds that are continually heard and pervade the environment, such as the sound of the ocean in a maritime environment. 'Soundmarks' – similar to landmarks in the landscape – are unique sounds that have a quality such that they are noticed, call attention to themselves and distinguish themselves in the soundscape. 'Sound signals' are foreground sounds that we listen to actively, either intentionally or because they compel us to pay attention to them, in that they have a clearly differentiated meaning in the context.

In cultural analysis Schafer's concept is often used in a wider sense, as an auditory or aural landscape. Like a landscape, a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; 'it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world' (Thompson 2004), and I might add ways of doing or practising that specific environment. The concept of soundscape has relevance for every ethnographic study

where the auditory dimensions of culture should also be included. The primacy of the gaze in modernity is often problematized, but the methodological challenge – to increase the auditory awareness and to sense the sound in all its material variety – is easier expressed than implemented. I have attempted to incorporate the concept of soundscape into my research on citizenship ceremonies, but not by documenting the soundscape in a mechanical recording. Rather it is by including the sounds as part of my field data along with the other materializations of citizenship. Following Bendix it is not the sounds in themselves but the sensory experience they are part of which is in focus in the analysis of how citizenship is materialized and enacted at the ceremonies. A soundscape is also done by the participants, and an ethnology of the senses involves forms of auditory engagement; i.e. singing along with the new citizens, as the 'participatory knowledge' is often advocated as the object the 'ethnographic ear' seeks to capture (Erlmann 2004).

The 'multi-channel character' of ritual communication has frequently been noted (i.e. Howes & Classen 1991). The soundscape at the citizenship ceremonies is thus central to our understanding of their ritual character, for the soundscape is a central part of the enactments of the multiple versions of citizenship in the ceremonies. One way of understanding the soundscape, therefore, is to investigate how the ceremonial or ritual space is auditorily constituted.⁸

The Sound of the Sacred

To create an appropriate soundscape involves a set of techniques used in the ceremonies. According to many organizers of citizenship ceremonies, the events should be carried out with an appropriate balance between the solemn and the informal and relaxed. The solemnity is necessary in order for the ceremonies to be effective, and the informal aspects are needed in order for the participants not to be uncomfortable or even frightened, as well as to frame the ceremonial aspects, to create an auditory beginning and end to the ritual. In this way the ritual space is produced and framed, a ritual space which sets itself off from the everyday space. Characteristic for

the beginning of the citizenship ceremonies is that they are marked by an expectant silence and subdued speech. The ceremonies generally take place in venues where ordinary people (much less non-citizens) do not normally come (the parliamentary building in Denmark, the Blue Hall of Stockholm's City Hall, or the councillor room in the London boroughs). The material solemnity of the space, the monumental architecture, polished wood floors and pompous furniture in the finest carved woods, all mean that the sound is acoustically reflected and resonates in a specific way. The soundscape is thus socio-material and part of the material setting. In many such ceremonies (notably in Denmark) music recordings are played in order to reduce the tension when people arrive at the ceremony. The music is subdued, so that it does not dominate or absorb people, while preventing any embarrassing or awkward silences. The music is intended to help the participants relax and to feel welcome and comfortable.

When the ceremony begins, it is also marked acoustically by an individual who raises his/her voice to welcome the guests, while the audience remains more quiet. The music can also be used in a strategic fashion, in order to render to each part of the ceremony a different 'keynote sound'. This can be illustrated by the observations of the organizers of the British citizenship ceremony, held in the multiethnic London borough of Hackney:

I have noticed from observing, that when you put classical music on, when they collect their certificate, they don't talk ... They are still in that formal mode, and I think it is quite nice to break up the ceremony and have the formality of citizens making their oath, standing and being very serious, nervous and shaking, and then you became British. Now you got time just to relax and chat to people you be with. Because when you play more informal or contemporary music – however you want to describe it – it allows you to relax and to breathe and to talk and then – you know ... it is relaxing, and you should actually get an atmosphere going ... because there was no atmosphere otherwise. If it is just formality, there is no atmosphere,

is there? So when you got the contemporary music coming, the atmosphere then comes out and the children start laughing (Female organizer, Hackney, October 2006).

Hence, it is classical music that produces the formal, almost sacred atmosphere around the legally decisive oath, which in the British ceremonies comprises the liminal or transition phase, as Van Gennep and others have characterized such rites of passage,⁹ while the reincorporation phase is marked by more 'relaxing' modern jazz or soul music. The music is played on a portable ghetto-blaster placed on a lectern at the front of the room. The quality of the music sound is therefore limited, and the sound functions primarily to render a kind of mood, background or soundscape, rather than as a specific musical experience. In this sense, the change in musical style helps to create a shift in the ceremony's keynote sound, rather than operating as a specific sound signal. In the Commonwealth ceremonies, the ritual culminates in the oath of affirmation of allegiance. In most places, the oath is recited in unison, as a repetition of the organizer's words in longer or shorter phrases, all according to the English language competence of the participants. In Hackney, however, the ceremony organizers have chosen to let the individual new citizen recite the oath alone, which gives a larger difference in the soundscape. The individualized approach is explained by one of the organizers from Hackney:

Because, really, that [the oath or affirmation] is the point of really becoming British, you have to be fully aware of by saying the words ... And that is so you can ensure that everybody has said their oath, because it is actually by saying – verbally saying the words – that you become British. So we make sure that they have said the words. ... because some of them couldn't speak any, or hardly any, English at all ... but yet they had to say the words in English, otherwise they couldn't become British. So in a group scenario, how could you definitely be sure they had said all the words – so that is another reason why (Female organizer, Hackney, October 2006).

The sonic production of the words of the oath is thus the decisive point by which one becomes a British citizen. The sound becomes a form of object for control, and the citizenship becomes something that must be enacted or performed *as* sound in order to be recognized and followed by the ritual shaking of hands and the presenting of the citizenship certificate. Despite the control and the desire for a common linguistic standard of English, the oath or affirmation of allegiance is presented in so many variants of English, with larger or smaller traces of the new citizens' first languages, that we can speak of a range of sonic versions of citizenship. As Alice Filmer has shown, trespassing linguistic boundaries is another way of contesting the 'national order of things', and bilingual belonging is not easily accepted (Filmer 2007). The acoustic performance of identity is therefore a crucial dimension of the sound of citizenship.

National Soundscapes

The question of the children's participation in the ceremonies is another important dimension in the enacting of soundscapes at the ceremonies. In some ceremonies, the parents are asked to leave the room with the children if they begin to cry or make too much noise, because they break the intense atmosphere and thereby the potential impact of the ceremony. In other places (especially at the local ceremonies in the Scandinavian countries), children who are playing, running around, or crying are an integrated part of the ceremonies' soundscape. This is one of the decisive differences in the enactment of solemnity when comparing the obligatory ceremonies in the Commonwealth countries and in the Scandinavian optional ceremonies.

Children are not only making sounds by themselves – they interact with the different materiality of the ceremonies. A polished wooden floor seems to be an invitation to run and slide. At the ceremony in the Blue Hall of Stockholm City Hall, Swedish paper flags are distributed to all the participating children at the entrance (who also reach out to get them). When the paper flags are waving during the high points in the ceremony, there is a characteristic crackling sound, something especially familiar

whenever the Scandinavian royalty are celebrated in public space.¹⁰ However 'the Swedish sound of citizenship' is unique compared to the other Scandinavian countries, where use of the flag is toned down, if not absent altogether.¹¹

Auditory dominance, because of its penetrating nature, is often discursively framed as a question of noise (pollution) or disturbance. In his article on *The modern auditory I* (1997) the cultural historian Steven Connor has argued that the auditory sense compels us to follow the sound movement in the space in which we find ourselves, at the same time as the sound creates a plural space, in that one can hear many sounds at the same time. The sounds vibrate through our bodies, immediately engulfing us and being absorbed into our bodies. We cannot 'turn our backs' or look the other way on such sounds, as we can with our visual senses. We can only retreat, escaping the range of the sound. Our auditory relationship with the world is therefore characterized by movement and involvement, in that the sound is omnipresent, non-directional and mobile (Connor 1997: 207). The playing, noisy children thus become a part of the ceremony, also for those participants who do not have children themselves. Understandings about the extent to which children ought to affect a soundscape also become a part of the way in which a nationally specific soundscape is composed and done. For those participants who feel that there is too much noise from the children the specific soundscape can operate as a subtle form of 'othering'.¹² The specific soundscape of a ceremony is thus composite and multiple, in that some sounds act to include some participants, while these same sounds can alienate other participants in the same physical space. 'Nothing is more exclusively national and more individual than the pleasures of the ear' as Herder stated (Bendix 2000: 37).

The controlled soundscape can also incorporate as well as exclude. A recurring auditory element in most citizenship ceremonies is music and singing, thus prompting considerations by the organizers regarding what kind of music should be performed. In both the Swedish and Norwegian citizenship ceremonies, folk music contributions are frequently

used.¹³ Norwegian guidelines for conducting citizenship ceremonies, issued by the Integration and Diversity Directorate (IMDI), state that music having specific ethnic/cultural references runs the risk of favouring some new citizens over others. Therefore, the Norwegians have decided that Norwegian culture should be viewed as being neutral:

We recommend showing prudence in selecting cultural interventions which could be viewed as favouring one ethnic group. It can be experienced as offensive and exclusionary by other participants. Many will feel that a cultural contribution based on 'that which is Norwegian' is 'neutral' (IMDI 2006: 12).

Differing experiences have occurred at the Copenhagen City Hall, where the first citizenship ceremonies were held in 2003. Here a Danish pop singer sang so called 'Danish songs',¹⁴ but this was not seen as a success. One of the organizers remarks:

Since we now are in Denmark, we also thought that we should hear some Danish songs ... That wasn't so popular. In fact, most of the participants left when she began to sing. On the part of the organizers, we were a bit disappointed about this, I have to admit. We had not expected it ... I don't believe it was really interesting for them. Generally speaking, they livened up during the Turkish, Pakistani and Oriental music, but the Danish songs just weren't the thing (Female organizer, Copenhagen City Hall, July 2005).

The following year, it was decided that the ceremony would have what the organizers called 'their own music', i.e., 'ethnic music', which in Copenhagen seems to have functioned in an inclusive way. This did not mean that no so called Danish songs were sung. In 2006, the Copenhagen Boy's Choir performed national-romantic songs about the Danish summer. While singing a cappella the choir members formed a circle around the new citizens. The culmination of the Danish ceremonies, as with most other citizenship ceremonies, is the collective sing-

ing of the national anthem.¹⁵ One can say that the national anthem constitutes a soundmark, which in Denmark is emphasized bodily by the choir members dispersing themselves amidst the new citizens, who all stand up and sing using a sheet of lyrics that they have received.

Doing Sound

Whether one sings along or simply listens, it makes the sound's transverse properties involve all the participants. As explained by one of the new Danish citizens attending the ceremony in the Danish parliament:

Anyway, the atmosphere was warm, those who also sang together with us and all the others, it was just like opera, right? When a choir sings without accompaniment, you can feel that you are practically singing together with them, you know? ... I almost got a sore throat, you know? Because all of a sudden I felt like tense in my neck area, you know? Like when you are singing with others, right? (Interview, Christiansborg, 2006).

Even though one's own participation is mild or ambiguous, the absorbing dimension of the sound renders a feeling of inclusion for this participant. With the sound one becomes absorbed, but thereby also part of a group of interacting subjects. One becomes a part of a collective enactment of citizenship, the sound of which pervades and penetrates us (in a nearly painful way, as a sore throat), and enables the citizenship to vibrate in each of our fibres, even the small hairs on the back of our neck. In the absorbing properties of the soundscape, another form of the self is created. As Connor concludes: 'The self defined in terms of hearing rather than sight is a self imaged not as a point, but as a membrane; not as a picture, but as a channel through which voices, noises and music travel' (1997: 207).

We can thus speak of another form for subjectivization through hearing – a citizen by/of sound – but in order to be allowed to be absorbed by the national anthem, one must also know it and be able to sing it. A newly naturalized Australian citizen explains how

her preparation for the ceremony has taken precisely this factor into consideration:

I think that probably singing the anthem was really important. In fact, we decided to learn it beforehand, not just to read it, because we felt that it was something we really wanted to do. So it was sort of – probably – the main part of the ceremony for us (Interview, Sydney, 2007).

To sing a song one knows ‘by heart’ is an entirely different way of enacting the national anthem than a first time reading of the lyrics from a sheet of paper. At certain ceremonies, intense preparation is absolutely necessary if one wants to sing along, because the text is not distributed (as is the case in Lund, for example). During the singing, one can therefore more easily feel excluded than incorporated. In other ceremonies (i.e. Brent, London suburb), a recording of the national anthem is played. Here the organizers just stand silently without singing along themselves, so the new citizen has to be very courageous and certain of how they will enact their new citizenship in order to sing along and thus allow singing to become a part of the soundscape. In other suburban London communities (i.e. Hackney), the organizer leads the singing to the accompaniment of the recorded music of the anthem, while the lyrics are also distributed to the participants.

In some locales (Stockholm, Sydney) the chorus is replaced by an individual singer who sings the national anthem using a microphone. But as the anthem is so often sung in a very personalized rendition, it becomes very difficult for the normal participants to sing along, and in any case it demands that one listen more closely than just allowing one’s own melody to flow freely. Hence, while the national anthem can function as an inclusive soundmark, it can also operate in an exclusionary fashion.

Sound, as Connor has shown, has the absorbing dimension, and the auditory self functions as a membrane which swings along in the soundscape. Nevertheless, I have argued that the sound of citizenship is not only inclusive and absorbing, but at the same time potentially exclusionary. The sound-

scape is thus ambiguous and multiple – many versions are enacted simultaneously. These differences and the heterogeneity of the rituals are highlighted in a comparative perspective. Atmosphere is a slippery ethnographic term, yet it is pivotal in the new citizens’ sensory and emotional experiences of the ceremonies. Through the concept of soundscape I have tried to seize on this dimension of the ceremonies.

Atmosphere and soundscape is not only a passive sensory experience – it is also enacted and done by the participants. At the Danish citizenship ceremony, held at the parliament building at Christiansborg, one of the new citizens comments, after having sung the national anthem: ‘Well, now one has actually done it.’ The sound of citizenship is not only something that flows through the person (passive and inclusive). It is also something one *does*. The sound of citizenship is ambiguous and is organized not only by those directing the ceremony. It is also enacted by the individual new citizens in many and different versions. Thus sound as other dimensions of materiality must be analysed as praxis and not as an ontological category that exists in itself. Sound is done by the participants – children and adults – but is as argued also one of the dimensions in focus when the organizers are crafting rituals and trying to make them striking events.

As mentioned in the beginning one general purpose of these new ritualizations of citizenship is to create a sense of belonging – to materialize or stabilize a new ‘civic self’ – by making the granting of citizenship a memorable event. The idea of the importance of making the occasion memorable inscribes citizens ceremonies into the ‘experience economy’, since ‘the engagement of customers in a memorable way’ is the exact definition of an experience following Pine and Gilmore’s launching of the concept (1999: 4). However, the memorable qualities of the citizenship events are constantly negotiated before, at, and after the ceremonies, by the organizers and the new citizens. Making memorable once-in-a-lifetime events is also turned into local routine and everyday life. The organizers are certainly trying to produce a success, and the ceremonies can be seen

as a kind of event-laboratory for making modern rituals, mixing old and well-known ritual elements with new. As I have described, the making of rituals for a very cultural heterogeneous audience seems to be a constant act of balancing; neither too formal, cold, and rigid, nor too informal and relaxed. Another point of balance is the question of the national. The national must be emphasized, since citizenship is national, but at the same time an atmosphere of inclusion, welcoming, and multiculturalism must be produced.

The idea of citizenship ceremonies is international, but what is reckoned to guarantee that new citizens will actually experience the sense of belonging which is considered necessary for feeling an obligation towards the state, the nation or the fatherland, differs at national and local levels. A comparative approach to soundscapes as ways of incorporating and enacting moments of sacredness and moments of relaxed togetherness in the same ritual is a way of elucidating the different national and local styles. Since the rhetoric of citizenship is quite alike at the ceremonies a praxiographic approach emphasizing materializations of citizenship at the ceremonies is a fruitful strategy enhancing our ability to grasp the complexities of the new dynamics and topographies of membership and forms of belonging in Europe. The praxiographic 'is' is not universal; it is local, and requires a spatial specification (Mol 2002: 54). As culture takes place and is sociomaterial, understanding the complexity and heterogeneity of new cultural phenomena in Europe will benefit from the ethnological approach. Rethinking the ethnological potential in terms of materiality and ethnography of the senses might be one of the strategies in understanding current political processes in Europe.

Notes

- 1 In this context I am inspired by John Law, who has pointed to absence 'as the necessary Other to presence, which is enacted along with the latter, is constituted with it, and helps to constitute it' (Law 2004: 157).
- 2 Fieldwork was conducted in the London boroughs of Brent and of Hackney in October and November 2006. In addition, I conducted fieldwork in Sydney, Australia,

- on the national day, known as Australia Day (January 26th 2007). The Australian examples, however, are used only as background reference for this paper.
- 3 In Sweden, fieldwork was conducted in the capital of Stockholm and in the university town of Lund, in southern Sweden.
- 4 Fieldwork was conducted at the Copenhagen Town Hall in 2006 and twice (Spring 2006, 2007) at the Danish parliament's 'Citizenship Day', held in the parliament building, Christiansborg Castle.
- 5 I attended the first ceremony in the capital of Oslo in December 2006.
- 6 An approach to sociotechnical analysis that treats entities and materialities as enacted and relational effects. The most prominent figure in this tradition is Bruno Latour.
- 7 For an analysis of other dimensions of the materialization of citizenship, see Damsholt (2008).
- 8 The background for the analysis that follows is the solemn or secular sacral, which is a key part of the ceremonies; this concept is inspired by Moore and Myerhoff's *Secular Rituals* (1977).
- 9 After Van Genep (1977[1909]).
- 10 See for example Damsholt et al. (2007a).
- 11 This is related to the fact that June 6th is also Swedish Flag Day. However, the difference between the use of the flag and other objects in the national colours is the striking contrast between the various Scandinavian ceremonies. See further Damsholt (2007b).
- 12 I wish to thank Maja P. Frykman for calling my attention to the national quality of the soundscape in the sound of the crying children at the citizenship ceremony at Lund Town Hall, in her spontaneous outburst: 'A very Swedish soundscape'.
- 13 Hence, folk music was played in the town hall ceremonies in Oslo, Stockholm and in Lund. The Lund ceremony was followed by a national day event at the local cultural museum, 'Kulturen', where the new citizens were especially invited and welcomed by the speakers.
- 14 The category Danish Songs refers in Denmark to traditional, national-romantic songs praising the Danish landscape, nature and people.
- 15 The ceremony at the Lund Town Hall is the only one I have seen where the national anthem was not sung. However, it was sung at the second part of the event, held at Lund's museum 'Kulturen'.

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