



From Reactivity to Sustainable Citizenship: Perspectives from Braidotti's Philosophy

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1 INTRODUCTION

New materialism is a theoretical orientation that has arisen since the 1990s, aiming to exceed anthropocentrism and dualism, such as the culture-nature and mind-matter dichotomies inherent in Western traditions of thought (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012: 85; Gamble et al., 2019: 111; Coole & Frost, 2010: 3). From the perspectives of both citizenship and education, these theories provide novel critical angles or alternatives to accounts that take rational autonomy to be the key to 'the good life,' such as those of traditional humanism and liberal individualism. Accounts based on rational autonomy have been criticised from various perspectives, ranging from feminist philosophy (Brown, 1995) to therapeutic psychology (Smail, 2005). The key new materialist thinker discussed in this chapter is Rosi Braidotti, whose 'vital materialism' turns the focus from the autonomous individual to the essential relationality of

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all human and non-human co-habitants. Despite the emphasis Braidotti puts on relationality, she insists on the importance of maintaining the subject position as ‘the site of ethical and political accountability’ (Braidotti, 2006: 138). This combination provides the grounds for ‘an ethological approach to citizenship’ (Braidotti, 2006:150), which concentrates on both how human subjects affect and are affected in the complex web of relations of the living and the non-living.

Inspired by Braidotti, and as a starting point for this chapter, we argue that in educating ethically and politically accountable subjects, it is of crucial importance to provide tools and spaces for learning how to understand and manage one’s affectivity, understood as the innate and deeply embodied capacity to relate to others. Our focus is particularly on the relational agency that Braidotti’s theory suggests: the subject is driven by affirmative relations, but also towards them, as they ensure them the possibilities to grow and endure (Braidotti, 2006: 257). In this chapter, we identify and elaborate on this kind of relations-based and relations-oriented agency as a mode of *sustainable citizenship*.

Sustainable citizenship implies that the subject aims to increase their *potentia*, understood as their capacity to affect and be affected through affirmative relations. Affirmative relations create positive affects which draw the subject in and enliven them towards further connections. This affirmative circuit, however, is not a given. Subjects are prone to be fuelled and oriented instead by *potestas*, understood as the restrictive form of power that works through political institutions and social conventions. We elaborate on two central forms of *potestas* in Braidotti’s philosophy: negative affects and discursive power. Reactivity, then, can be defined as an opposite mode of agency to sustainable citizenship, in which *potestas* overshadows *potentia* and limits the subject’s possibilities for connection and endurance.

In the first section of this chapter, we introduce our two Braidottian modes of agency—sustainable citizenship and reactivity—and the contrasting powers they build on, *potentia* and *potestas*. In the second section, to bring our theoretical framework alive, we illustrate reactivity in the context of populism, in which both forms of *potestas* discussed here—negative affects and discursive power—play key roles. The third section explores the educational implications of overcoming reactivity, or, from the opposite angle, growing into sustainable citizenship. Concluding, we argue that sustainable citizenship provides an alternative view of community-building and co-habiting in a common space. Sustainable

citizenship emphasises the essential relationality between human and non-human beings while maintaining the accountability of the subjects, thus offering vocabularies for challenging both the individualistic ideals and the culturally and politically polarised stances of our times. Moreover, sustainable citizenship calls for a radical change of focus from individual and identitarian thinking to the interrelational and post-identitarian. This change implies a novel understanding of how humans relate to themselves and their natural, social, and technological environments. In education, it calls for practices that foster one's 'ability to take in and on the world' (Braidotti, 2019: 169)—that is, the ability to respond in a non-oppositional way to human and non-human others, or to oneself. We discuss arts, contemplative practices, and embodied critical thinking as illustrations of what such practices might be.

2 SUSTAINABLE CITIZENSHIP AND BRAIDOTTIAN REACTIVITY

Rosi Braidotti has addressed the theme of citizenship in her earlier works, promoting the notion of a flexible and nomadic European citizenship (Braidotti, 2006: 79; 2011: 239). In this chapter, however, we explore an additional angle that Braidotti's vital materialism offers to the discussion of citizenship and education: one of relational agency. It expands the notion of agency to include awareness and accountability for both the way one affects and is affected in the dynamic web of human and non-human relations. In this section, we discuss the conceptual basis of the notion we have termed sustainable citizenship. The main goal of our conceptual work is to link citizenship to Braidotti's view of relational agency, which is based on the affirmation of *potentia*, or a subject's capacity to affect and be affected. We also discuss an opposite mode of agency, reactivity, in which the restrictive form of power, *potestas*, weakens the subject's ability to relate and connect.

Braidotti's vital materialism is grounded in an idea originating from Baruch Spinoza's philosophy: that the world consists of one and the same matter. This matter is intelligent and self-organising; it is one common life, which Braidotti calls *zoe*, in a continuous process of transforming, creating, and dissolving forms (Braidotti, 2019: 47). *Zoe* passes through subjects as the desire to expand and enhance their existence by seeking relations (Braidotti, 2019: 155). This idea is not merely philosophical, as Braidotti, like most new materialist theorists, draws inspiration from

the natural sciences. Here, *zoe* finds resonance in the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana's and Francisco Varela's notion of autopoietic (i.e., self-organising and self-maintaining) systems (Braidotti, 2006: 126).

As all bodies, according to Braidotti, are of one and the same 'intelligent matter, activated by shared affectivity' (2006: 148), it follows that agency—usually preserved for the autonomous, rational human subject only—is seen as relational and distributed between the bodies affecting each other. However, this does not mean that the subject is passive, merely at the mercy of external forces or not accountable for their actions—quite the contrary. Whereas in the rationalistic approach, the subject is positioned as the starting point of the linear and causal line of intentional agency, the Braidottian subject is located in the middle of social, environmental, and technological forces, among which their share of agency covers both the way they affect and are affected by these forces. This two-tiered, relational understanding of agency leans on Braidotti's conception of *potentia* as the subject's capacity to affect and be affected (Braidotti, 2006: 216).

Potentia, as the gateway for the one, common life, defines how much the subject can connect with other bodies. It increases and decreases depending on the subject's encounters and determines their potential for action in any situation (Braidotti, 2019: 171). The ideal for the subject, in this framework, is to aim to enhance their *potentia* by 'choos[ing] those forces that increase its power of acting and its activity in both physical and mental terms' (Braidotti, 2006: 161). This creates an affirmative circle: choosing relations that create positive affects opens the subject up towards more connections and possibilities for action. Affirmative relations ensure the endurance of the subject, but also make way for sustainable futures as communities made up of such subjects:

[P]ossible futures are built into the logic of sustainable affirmative inter-relations. The point is to allow the embodied self to express its powers of affirmation, by increasing his or her capacity to be affected and to affect in the positive sense of sustaining enriching encounters. This is not Utopian, but rather a rigorous geometry of positive passions that expresses confidence in the sustainability of liveable futures. (Braidotti, 2006: 209)

In sum, our Braidottian notion of sustainable citizenship suggests the kind of relational agency in which the subject aims to maintain as much *potentia*—that is, ability to be affected and to affect—as they can. This

can be done through affirmative relations, whose positive affects draw the subject in, increase their *potentia*, and drive them towards further connections. This creates an affirmative, self-feeding cycle that both ensures the endurance of the subject and makes way for sustainable communities.

To explore obstacles to sustainable citizenship, we introduce another mode of agency, reactivity. Whereas sustainable citizenship is linked with *potentia* as the connecting and productive power of the subject, reactivity leans on its restrictive counterforce, *potestas*. According to Braidotti, *potestas* manifests as reactive forces that ‘mark, police, sustain and repress the subject’s inner freedom, defined as *potentia*’ (Braidotti, 2006: 150). These reactive forces are exerted by institutional orders, both political and social, and seek to manage society. *Reactivity*, then, appears as a mode of agency in which a subject’s *potentia* is overshadowed by the reactive forces of *potestas* that hinder or limit their potential for connection and sustainability. As the subject cannot be cut away from their relational power nor from the institutional powers, it makes more sense to approach these two different modes of agency in terms of balancing between two poles than as excluding opposites.

What are these reactive forces, then, that have the power to hinder the subject’s ability to develop and engage in affirmative relations? In Braidotti’s work, the word reactivity appears in multiple contexts—for example, in terms of reactive emotions (Braidotti, 2006: 154), reactive affects (Braidotti, 2006: 157), reactive passions (Braidotti, 2006: 222), reactive morality (Braidotti, 2006: 180), reactive thinking (Braidotti, 2011: 40), reactive values (Braidotti, 2011: 282), and reactive critique (Braidotti, 2011: 84). For the purpose of mapping reactive forces, we have distinguished two central themes among them, with one linked to affects (forces, emotions, passions) and another to language (morality, thinking, values, critique). Thus, we introduce reactivity here within two forms of *potestas*: *negative affects* and *discursive power*.¹

Affects, in the Braidottian framework, do not refer to feelings or emotions. Instead, they are defined as embodied intensities that change the subject’s capacity to act (Braidotti, 2006: 161; 2019: 45). In contrast

¹ Braidotti’s philosophy carries a rich genealogy of thought, combining elements from philosophers like Baruch Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Luce Irigaray, which allows us also to draw connecting lines from Braidotti to these thinkers while maintaining distance from, for example, the ‘pure’ meanings of reactivity in a Nietzschean sense or discursive power in a Foucauldian sense.

to subjective feelings, affects are transpersonal: they turn the focus on what happens in encounters in between bodies. As discussed above, the subject's agency is relational: their possibilities for action are directly proportional to the quantity and quality of their relations. Affects, as relational forces, are categorised as either positive and negative based on whether they increase or decrease a subject's interactional capacity (*potentia*) (Braidotti, 2006: 148). Here lies the ambiguity in the concept of affect: its quality can only be judged afterwards, by the effect it has had on one's capacity for relations. The distinction between positive and negative is not based on a moral judgement, on 'good' or 'bad' affects. Rather, these definitions are pragmatic notions of the subject's resultant weakened or increased ability to relate to others:

What is negative about negative affects is [...] the effect of arrest, blockage, rigidification [...] Negative passions do not merely destroy the self but also harm the self's capacity to relate to others — both human and nonhuman others — and thus to grow in and through others. What is negated by negative passions is the power of life itself — its *potentia* — as dynamic force, vital flows of connections, and becoming. And this is why they should neither be encouraged, nor should we be rewarded for lingering around them too long. Negative passions are black holes. (Braidotti, 2011: 288–289)

Braidotti argues that there is pain behind every negative affect, whether it arises 'from being hurt, lost, and dispossessed,' or comes 'as a result of a blow, a shock, an act of violence, betrayal, trauma, or just intense boredom' (Braidotti, 2011: 288, 322). Negative affects, then, appear as a somewhat inevitable, mundane aspect of our embodied and relational existence; their pain is a proof of the fundamental way we are interrelated (Braidotti, 2011: 320). Braidotti identifies, however, something in our human condition that works as a doorway for negative affects. She argues that the pain they cause is 'indexed on the ego' (Braidotti, 2006: 154), understood as the individualised self, marked with social identities. Braidotti seems to imply that there is no guilt, shame, or anger—affects considered to be negative in Braidotti's view—that do not rise from one's 'self' feeling inadequate, unrecognised, or disrespected in an oppositional relationship with another. Here, Braidotti's concept of the human radically differs from that in liberal individualism, where reciprocity and recognition are considered elements that can only be realised between

rational autonomous individuals. Within Braidotti's relational frame, reciprocity and recognition are replaced by an acknowledgement of the positive co-dependence among human and non-human bodies (Braidotti, 2006: 158). From this perspective, the pain of negative affects is caused by an illusion of separation—an illusion which is nevertheless capable of distorting the way the subject is affected by other bodies.

The other form of *potestas*, discursive power, works through language as generalising but societally inevitable systems of representation and identification (Braidotti, 2006: 28; 2011: 278). Braidotti—like new materialist thinkers in general—emphasises the dynamic materiality of the world against the primacy granted to discursive and cultural practices in Western tradition of thought (Coole & Frost, 2010: 3; Lummaa & Rojola, 2014: 23). In Braidotti's subject-oriented work, the emphasis on materiality is most evident in the close link between *potentia* and the physical body. The force of *potentia* appears as an active, direct expression of the dynamic and flowing nature of the world, which the body, Braidotti argues, is able to sense in encounters; it is the 'thermometer of becoming' (Braidotti, 2006: 214). Something draws our attention—another person, the sea, a painting—and acts like a 'switch' that opens us up to new connections, feelings, and thoughts, and prompts us to action. This 'random attraction' (Braidotti, 2006: 163) of *potentia* is unpredictable; it follows a logic of affects, not the linear logic granted to language. In contrast to *potentia*, the reactive forces of *potestas* need somewhere to establish their hold. Their character is to limit and provide a frame for a subject's *potentia*. In a way, citizenship appears as a constant balancing, or synchronisation (Braidotti, 2006: 94), between these powers. The problem with discursive power, if given precedence, lies in its capacity to orient a subject in pre-determined ways, based on the oppositional and stereotyping patterns of thought.

Before we elucidate our take on reactivity in the frame of populism, we would like to bring two key concepts together. Sustainable citizenship, in our Braidotti-inspired interpretation, means that the subject is driven and oriented towards the increase of their interactional capacity—*potentia*—through affirmative relations with both human and non-human others. *Reactivity*, for its part, is fuelled by the restrictive forces of *potestas*: it is a mode of agency where negative affects and discursive power decrease a subject's *potentia* and thus limit their potential to grow and thrive. Negative affects arise from an oppositional relation between self and other, whereas discursive power works through habitual representations whose

repetitive grip take precedence over *potentia* and so limit the subject's ability to relate to and connect with others.

3 ILLUSTRATING REACTIVITY THROUGH POPULISM: NOSTALGIC REPETITIONS

In this section, we illustrate our Braidottian take on reactivity in the context of populism. Our reason for using populism as an example is that in this topical political phenomenon, both forms of *potestas* discussed above, negative affects, as well as discursive power (here understood as fixed identities, representations, and narratives), have all been noted as a playing central role (e.g., Palonen & Saresma, 2017; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017; Zembylas, 2020). In vocabularising these aspects of populism through a Braidottian lens, our aim is to bring our theoretical framework alive through an example, rather than to provide an overall interpretation of the admittedly complex and locally varying phenomenon of populism.

As Finnish scholars, we present our example by means of a dialogue between the populist rhetoric used and expressed in the principal programme of a Finnish populist political party, the Finns Party,² and Braidotti's theoretical thought. We illustrate the workings of negative affects through nostalgia and discursive power through fixed identities, narratives, and representations.

Finns feel 'Finland' in their heart and soul and it remains there — no matter how the world changes.³

Nostalgia, in its sweet quality, might at first seem an odd choice for describing a negative affect. Nostalgia is not the most likely affect to describe populism either, as populism is more often identified with negative emotions like anger or resentment (Zembylas, 2020: 156) However, nostalgia allows us to express well the ambiguity of negative affects and

² The Finns Party became the second-most popular party in Finland with 17.5% of support in the governmental elections in 2019. It is best known for its critical views on immigration and the European Union.

³ This passage is an extract from the Finns Party Principle Program, https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Periaateohjelma-19.10.2018_SU_In-English.pdf.

their close relationship to identity-based thinking. Nostalgic feelings are evoked through the national romantic imagery used on the Finns Party's website and campaigns, and probably most blatantly by the slogan '*Suomi takaisin*' ('Finland back'), for which the party is famous.⁴ The narrative of 'Finland back' promotes an idea of a once-unified land that has been lost—mainly because of the EU and what they consider to be unsatisfactory immigration policy—and which the Finns Party is now promising to bring back. When approached as a subjective feeling, nostalgia is qualified by what it is, for example as 'sadness mixed with pleasure and affection when you think of happy times in the past' (*Oxford Advanced American Dictionary* 2021, nostalgia entry). Approached as an affect, however, nostalgia gets qualified by what it does: weather it increases or decreases the subject's ability to relate to and connect with others.

Within Braidotti's new materialist framework, the others to whom the subject relates and connects include not only other human beings, but also non-human others. This dynamic brings forward a less discussed aspect of citizenship that is central to new materialist theories, which is the subject's relationship to their environment. The Braidottian subject is an extended body, wired up in technology, enmeshed in social relations, and entangled among their natural environment in complex ways (Braidotti, 2019: 46). These relations are not theirs—on the contrary, the quantity and quality of the subject's relations define them in terms of how widely and at what intensity they can operate (Braidotti, 2006: 156).

The question is, then, what does nostalgia in terms of the Finns Party's rhetoric do? As discussed in the previous section, sustainable citizenship implies an affirmative circuit in which positive affects, created by affirmative relations, drive the subject towards more connectability. Within the populist narrative of 'Finland back,' the driving energy of positive passions, like the relatable affection for the place in which one was born, is not integrated into the rich materiality of the present moment. Instead, its potentiality becomes captured by linking it to an illusory land, once lost, or to a restored dream land in future. The nostalgic feelings are also tied also to a certain identity: it is Finns, who 'feel Finland in their heart and soul,' as the quote above suggests. While this nostalgia does

⁴ '*Suomi takaisin*' was first introduced as a slogan for the 2018 presidential election campaign of the party's candidate, and it has remained the party's main political theme ever since. It is one among many examples of similar populist narratives (e.g., 'Make America Great Again') used by populist movements in the recent decade.

serve to connect and bind together a certain group of people, it does so through a mechanism opposite to *potentia*; it forces relationships on the pre-determined basis of how the connecting bodies are defined and recognised. Thus, nationalistic nostalgia works more in terms of exclusion, limiting certain bodies out of inclusion, rather than in opening up unprecedented possibilities for connection and action in the bodies affected. As discussed in the first section, the negativity of affect is defined by the weakening effect it has on a subject's relationality, which arises from an oppositional relation to the other. Within populist rhetorics, then, nostalgia works as a negative affect: by tying into fixed identities and narratives, it works as an affective tool against the present conditions and their potentialities, thereby depleting the possibility of futurity wherein 'sustainable presents generate possible futures' (Braidotti, 2006: 276).

The populist rhetoric of the Finns Party promotes an assumption of a non-changing essence of a national identity and of a territory as *patria*, which the quote at the outset of this section captures well: no matter how the world changes, Finland and the Finns stay the same. Against the backdrop of the rapid change and complexity of our technological, social, and natural environments, this assumption plays on the well-documented illusions in Western traditions of thought of the separateness of the subject and their environment, of their control over it, and of their control over themselves. However, as Brian Massumi aptly expresses, 'the human is a carrier of a movement of relational transformation, one that swept it up, and sweeps through it' (Massumi, 2017: 8), whether one likes it or not. Moreover, the concepts of unitary and fixed identities that populist rhetorics promote are inherently incompatible with Braidotti's theory. As we return to the foundations of Braidotti's thought where the world is seen as one self-organising matter, we find a principle of difference as immanent and dynamic, and, as such, an inherently positive starting point for all beings (Braidotti, 2019: 12). In contrast, populist movements rely on a binary logic of identity and otherness, which presents difference as a pejoration, equating 'different from' with 'less than.' Braidotti argues that it is exactly this idea of difference, implicit in our social imaginary, that allows for the production of hierarchies and exclusion (Braidotti, 2011: 171; 2013: 15).

...a Finn will nevertheless know what it does mean to be Finnish — and what it does not.⁵

The excluding logic of ‘us,’ on which populist rhetoric builds, promotes an idea of communities thriving and enduring in the safety of their ‘own kind’: Finland is only for Finns, who know who they are and how to be that way. This connection between the politics of exclusion and the well-being of communities has been contested by, for example, Karatzogianni and Robinson (2010), who in their Deleuze-inspired work conceptualise groupings who build on unitary identities and aim at constitutive exclusion as reactive networks. Karatzogianni and Robinson argue that the hierarchic mechanisms of closure for which these reactive networks advocate are, in fact, ‘suicidal’; although these mechanisms are targeted at the different ‘others,’ they simultaneously limit the conditions of existence of the ones on the inside (Karatzogianni & Robinson, 2010: 203). Their argument is in line with Braidotti, who argues that interrelations should happen ‘in a pragmatic mode of random attraction’ (Braidotti, 2006: 163), and it is also due to this affinity that these relations endure, not because of an external law or agreement on ‘us.’ This mechanism of *potentia*, as discussed in the first section, creates ‘mutually embedded nests of shared interests’ (Braidotti, 2006: 162), bodies gathered together not on the basis of what they are defined or recognised as, but what they are drawn to do together. This principle provides the basis for sustainable citizenship, a dynamic and collective conception of co-habiting a common space which precedes the logic of identities and other systems of regulation.

Setting the positivity of *potentia* as the point of reference for citizenship does not remove the conflicts between groups with different interests or subjects with different values. Negotiations are still needed, Braidotti remarks, but they are more productively placed in a frame of shared affectivity than in an oppositional position of ‘us versus them’ (Braidotti, 2006: 157). Acknowledging that one’s essence as *potentia* is bound to other human and non-human bodies means yielding to a positive co-dependence. Looked at from another angle, this move suggests a collective conception of freedom, shaking the foundations of liberal

⁵ This passage is an extract from the Finns Party Principle Program, https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Periaateohjelma-19.10.2018_SU_In-English.pdf.

individualism: the Braidottian subject needs others to be free (Braidotti, 2006: 163). From this standpoint, reactivity presents itself essentially as a lack of freedom: it is self-containment and the waste of both one's own *potentia* and of the possibilities for collective futures, which kept up by negative affects and fixed representations. Since the solution for self-containment cannot come from the outside, the emancipatory measures must be targeted at the right source: the subject's conception of oneself and one's habits of thought.

4 EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES—TOWARDS POST-IDENTITARIAN SUBJECTIVITIES?

In this last section, we aim to map a way forward and ask what growing into sustainable citizenship would mean if interpreted in the light of Braidotti's thinking. In reverse, this means addressing the educational challenge of overcoming reactivity: how to provide tools to transform negative affects into positive ones and, as we demonstrate, to revise our understanding of thinking itself. In what follows, we reflect on these educational aspects through Braidotti's thought and elaborate on how, if implemented, they would change educational thinking and educational practices.

Negative affects are tied to the identity-bound 'me' in Braidotti's thinking, which stresses the role of the unconscious in the processes of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2002: 39). This theoretical shift challenges traditional views of education, as the case of the ego and the unconscious has not been traditionally considered to belong in the field of education. As the neuroscientist and philosopher Francisco Varela has aptly observed, the only Western tradition that has stressed the need for a space to explore the makings of the knowing subject itself, is psychoanalysis (Varela, 1999: 64). The educational challenge of transforming negative affects implies problematising the separate understanding of self, or more sharply in Braidotti's words, the 'paranoid-narcissistic self-nexus' (Braidotti, 2006: 180).

If post-identitarian selfhood—that is, a 'non-unitary, relational and outward-bound definition of the subject' (Braidotti, 2006: 251)—is taken as the key to affirmative relations and sustainability, how can education answer to such a radical call for transformation? Becoming aware of one's identifications, not to mention changing them, is challenging, because such identifications are not simply a matter of conscious will; they are

often unconscious, deeply rooted, emotionally loaded, and thus do not easily surrender to being observed. Braidotti uses the term *disidentification* to refer to those fleeting moments when the subject succeeds in creating an internal distance from the identities they have claimed as their own. Disidentifications appear as some kind of in-between states of re-negotiation, where the subject as who they thought they were is no longer there but has not yet become ‘new,’ either (Braidotti, 2002: 40). By disidentifying with pre-given identities, Braidotti argues, the subject distances themselves from the negativity that is tied to the dialectics of self and other and the historically accumulated power formations that the dialectic carries with it (Braidotti, 2011: 33, 42). In imagining what these educational practices of disidentification could be, we can recognise a recent example in the field. Contemplative practices, originating from Eastern philosophies, have become increasingly popular in the Western world during the past decade, also making their way into schools and workplaces (Kortelainen et al., 2014; Saari, 2018). Leaning on the principle of internal distance, that is, observing one’s identifications as if from the side, contemplative practices aim to create space for the observation of one’s thoughts and for becoming aware of one’s self-presentations.

The educational challenge of discursive power, in turn, challenges us to think differently about thinking itself. In the example of populism, discussed above, we problematised the restricting effect of habitual representations, or in Braidotti’s words, ‘the uncritical reproduction of Sameness’ (Braidotti, 2011: 244). Recalling the definition of *potentia* as the capacity to affect, but also to be affected, reactivity presents as a generalising, simplifying way of responding to oneself, others, and one’s environment. As a remedy for the repetitive loops of habitual representations, Braidotti suggests an idea of reason that also includes affectivity (Braidotti, 2006: 162). The affective idea of reason reaches one step further than the idea of reason behind critical thinking, for example, and the logical skills it requires. In addition to the cognitive and self-reflexive processes thinking entails, Braidotti counts in the pre-discursive moment of being affected—the moment of encounter, yet without words—to the thinking process. Affects pass through the subject equally in conceptual (not only embodied) encounters, increasing and decreasing the subject’s *potentia* as the ‘receptivity, capacity as well as the yearning for thinking’ (Braidotti, 2002: 125; 2013: 170). Thinking becomes ‘thinking-feeling’ (Massumi, 2017: 59): being capable and willing to see, hear, and sense anew, acknowledging the nature of the world—and oneself—as constantly

in flux. In Braidotti's words, the self gets unfolded to the world, and the world enfolds within the subject, always in new ways (Braidotti, 2011: 224). The kind of conceptual creativity that enables the creation of located and embodied meanings is at work in the field of art, whether that is poetry, dance, or any other form that 'speaks' from the realm of embodied and embedded experience, not from the habit of repetition (Braidotti, 2006: 202; see also Itkonen, 2020). Another example of practices of 'thinking-feeling' is the recently emergent movement of embodied critical thinking (e.g., Schoeller & Thorgeirsdottir, 2019), which aims to bridge the gap between the intricacy of the lived experience and conceptual thinking.

Lastly, we argue that sustainable citizenship calls for educational approaches that take seriously the role of negative affects in hampering the possibilities of building sustainable relations to others. At the level of philosophy, sustainable citizenship requires a concept of human that is not limited to a subject's rational consciousness but admits the crucial role of the affective, pre-discursive realm in human thinking and action. This calls for the kind of psychoanalytically oriented understanding traditionally excluded from educational concerns. Moreover, it demands the questioning of identity-based thinking and the related idea that recognition and reciprocity are only possible between rational autonomous individuals. Contemplative practices and the arts can provide fruitful avenues for overcoming fallacious conceptions of isolated identities and recognising the relational nature of the subject. By de-familiarising one from habitual representations and ways of perceiving, they also make way for unbiased encounters and conceptual creativity.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have introduced the notion of sustainable citizenship based on the relational agency entailed in Rosi Braidotti's philosophy. Braidotti's theory is grounded in an understanding of the world as one and the same matter that is intelligent and self-organising; it strives to endure and expand its existence by seeking relations. The Braidottian subject as 'non-unitary, relational, and outward-bound' (Braidotti, 2006: 251) is inclined to recognise and choose the connections that keep them going. Sustainable citizenship means an orientation towards affirmative relations that increase the subject's *potentia*, opening them up for more

connections. This self-feeding circle ensures the growth and endurance of both the subject and the communities created. We contrasted sustainable citizenship with reactivity, understood as a mode of agency in which reactive forces of *potestas* overshadow the subject's *potentia* and, accordingly, their ability to connect and endure. We introduced two forms of *potestas* that are central in Braidotti's thought—negative affects and discursive power—illustrating them in the context of populism, in which both factors have been seen as playing a central role. We discussed negative affects in relation to nostalgia within the populist rhetoric and demonstrated how the 'sweetness' of nostalgia gets captured when tied to an essentialised idea of national identity and glorified patria of the past, hampering the possibilities for affirmative relations in the present. We also problematised fixed identities and habitual representations as examples of discursive power. Their repetitive grip both limits the formation of relations and communities in an oppositional and excluding way and denies the dynamic difference that Braidotti places at the heart of each subject.

In the third section, we asked what overcoming reactivity and moving towards sustainable citizenship could mean in terms of education. Addressing the close connection that Braidotti draws between negative affects and the ego as the individualised and identity-based self, we first argued that transforming negative affects calls for tools that allow the critical examination of our attachment to identifications and self-representations. Contemplative practices were mentioned as already emerging tools of this sort in the educational field. Secondly, we argued that overcoming the habitual representations and dialectical thinking on which discursive power builds would require a more holistic approach to thinking that encompasses affectivity and creativity. The arts and practices such as the newly arising movement of embodied critical thinking, which emphasises the embodied and pre-conceptual side of our processes of meaning-making, were discussed as crucial for this change.

The aspect of sustainability that Braidotti's theory brings to the citizenship discussion is significant in our time in two deeply entangled ways. In the light of cultural and political polarisation, increased negativity, and social malaise, it provides vocabularies for the need to cultivate enduring, empowered subjectivities that are capable of relating and connecting to others and to oneself in an affirmative way. Furthermore, in the midst of the global environmental crises of our time, it heeds the call for

sustainable communities that also take into account the aspect of the non-human.⁶

Finally, moving from reactivity to sustainability implies a radical change of focus from individual and identitarian thinking to the interrelational and post-identitarian. This is not an easy switch, because it forces us to reconsider the ways we habitually relate not only to ourselves, but to our natural, technological, and social environments, as well as to our cultural values and norms. As Braidotti writes, it calls for an alternative social imaginary altogether (Braidotti, 2011: 269). This imaginary works as both the requisition and foundation for the yet unimagined, more sustainable practices of co-habiting and enduring in a common space.

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⁶ This dimension deserves more attention than we have been able to give it in the limited space of our chapter.

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