

Imig'rant (N° 4) by K ♀ m Goddard
(rant = fulminer, tempêter)

Inclusion and diversity

The personal is political.

I've lived in France for 28 years and at least two thirds of of that time was spent attempting to move from 'excluded foreigner' to 'integrated citizen'. Yes, those years were a fantastic adventure and a formidable learning experience, a life well worth living. They were also a never-ending struggle to learn the language, find my place as foreign woman in the rural workplace, cope with the hideous bureaucracy and suffer the vagaries of the paternalistic (nay, positively feudal!) local politics - all necessary to becoming part of the village community.

Being accepted did not come without a price. I learnt to dumb down as a woman, to suppress my feminist and 'communist' tendencies and to keep my head below the parapet when talking politics, economics, justice (well, anything really).

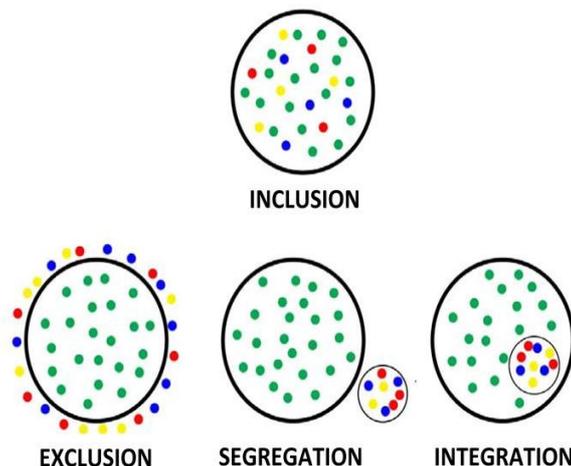
Finally, after nigh on 20 years there arrived a moment when the Mayor of our village commented, somewhat surprisedly, on how well 'integrated' we were. Hurrah, we'd arrived!

Exclusion integration and back again!

Naively, I finally felt accepted and safe enough to 'come out' as a feminist! as an anti-capitalist! as a transition activist! It's a long story, but suffice it to say that being 'integrated' did not save me from being the object of the most shameful and abysmal witch-hunt as my increasing activism and participation in the transition movement challenged the patriarchal status quo and 'business as usual'. A few dye hard chauvinists and opportunists joined the fun, watched on by many neighbours who managed to 'look the other way'.

It took a lot less time to move from 'integrated' to 'excluded' than vice versa!

This experience has made me deeply reflective and sensitive around issues of exclusion, integration and inclusion.



Diversity

A few weeks ago I took part in a 15 day Nomadways workshop on gender stereotypes .The WeMen (*1) workshop brought together 24 youth workers, visual artists, gender activists and theoreticians from different parts of Europe: France, Poland, Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain, Germany, United Kingdom and Turkey. We spent a great deal of time working on the pernicious effects of gender stereotypes in excluding and discriminating against women, but also against people of many genders on the base of their 'difference' from the dominant cult of 'normality' - a bipolar view of the human race divided into biologically determined men and women. Diversity denied!

The aim of the workshop was to produce artworks (in the form of comics) which challenge the dominant narrative and break down prevalent harmful stereotypes to allow a better understanding of the diversity and richness of humankind and thus create space allowing for more inclusive societies.

Though conversations and music in many languages are heard daily throughout Homade (*2) the workshops were principally in English and, much to my amazement and joy, I found this incredibly liberating. It was as though a fountain of creativity had suddenly been unleashed from deep within me. I became more intelligent, funnier and more creative. Though some of this was surely due to the exceptional quality of the company and the programme, I am absolutely positive it would never have surfaced in me had the workshops been in French. And there is the crux of the matter. I cannot be fully myself in French.

No more than can a gay man be himself as a straight man, or transpeople be themselves as the gender they don't identify with. We all need to self-identify, and we need the space to do it in without fear of discrimination. Unless we make this space and embrace the diversity, the 'different' in others, the 'abnormal', we will never unleash the creativity that we need to help us to design regenerative cultures (*3).

Wemen on our doorstep

We are fortunate in the Lot to have an initiative such as Nomadways on our doorstep. Homade at Brivezac is an incubus for "joyful evolution and unconventional solutionsa space where everyone is welcome to share and practice creativity".

The Wemen workshop was incredibly challenging for most, if not all, of the participants (not to mention the Nomad team!)

Twenty four nomads, artists, educators and social actors living (extremely closely) together and working through an intensive immersive experience - an inter-cultural, 'think-and-action-tank' about an inherently difficult, often painful and taboo, subject.

We not only learnt technical skills from each other and created some amazing gender bending artwork (*4), we also crossed boundaries, changed the narratives of our lives and opened up possible different futures for each of us. (*5 #expussytionists)

Personally (and the personal is political) the thing that I've brought away with me and that I'd like to share with Sur le Vif is about **the importance of creating spaces where we can all be ourselves.**

Inclusion requires us to allow diversity to burgeon.

*1 Wemen <http://nomadways.eu/wemen-france-2018/>

*2 Homade - <http://nomadways.eu/welcome-to-homade-2018-france/>

*3 DANIEL CHRISTAIN WAHL. *Redesigning Regenerative Cultures*. Triarchy Press and International Futures Forum. 2016 .287pages. ISBN978-1-909470-77-4

*4 Photos from the exhibition https://www.facebook.com/pg/nomadways/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2069298683351253

*5 Expussytionists - site under construction www.expussytionists.eu

