Editorial: Connecting Racism and Migration

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On 23rd June 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union (EU). The vote is likely to define British politics for generations to come. Inspired by a right-wing populist agenda, the Leave campaign in the UK often based their arguments on inflammatory racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric, invoking a fictitious sense of British identity reminiscent of the imagined golden era of empire. Yet, the UK is not alone in experiencing a rise in right-wing nationalisms; one must only look at the election of Donald Trump and the electoral gains made by right-wing populist parties in countries such as Italy, France, Hungary, Germany and Austria. In each case, electoral success has come, at least in part, by riding a popular wave of nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiment.1 The recent "Windrush scandal" and a generation of people harassed by hostile immigration rules of the UK Home office, is part of this wave of anti-immigrant sentiment.2 It is this socio-political context that provides the point of departure for the thematic edition of this journal.

The contemporary 'hostile environment for migrants' in the UK was the inspiration for a one-day symposium on debates about racism and migration in the post-Brexit world, held at Goldsmiths, University of London, in October 2017.3 It is from this symposium that the current special edition emerges. The aim was to create a dialogue and to encourage debate through multiple lenses including wider geographical perspectives, different scales and methods, in order to create a polyvocal space to demonstrate how the intersections of migration, citizenship, race and racism operate and are experienced. While contemporary and critical migration studies is a vibrant field, a number of scholars have pointed out that there tends to be a notable silence on race in migration discourses (Anderson, 2013; Lentin, 2014; Solomos, 2014). Within the academic literature, the figure of the migrant is often studied from the perspective of mobility. This edition suggests that it is equally important to approach migration in terms of ideas about race, gender,

class and nationality. As many scholars argue, the migrant is a construct that is inherently racialised (Anderson, 2013; Back et al., 2012). Gurminder K. Bhambra – who was a keynote speaker at our symposium – is particularly prominent in this field, highlighting that the links between race, citizenship and the boundaries of belonging are highly racialised (Bhambra, 2015). Taking into consideration Bhambra's argument, and through the posing of specific questions in their fields of expertise, this edition aims to create a close debate between different research areas. By interrogating 'race' and racism as a social construction in a post-Brexit context, this edition focuses on papers that reflect upon migratory shifts, processes of racialisation and racism, their complex interconnectedness and different forms and expressions.

This edition responds to the tendency to either erase or ignore questions of race from migration by bringing together content from diverse spaces, such as the academy, political activism and the arts. Included are two academic papers focussing on the discussion of racism and migration from the perspectives of Ghanaian and Serbian diaspora communities in the UK; and two papers oriented towards the critical analysis of the politics of refugees. One concerns the EU's humanitarian response to the so-called "refugee crisis" and the other undertakes a spatial analysis of refugee camps in Palestine.

Of the two papers on diasporic communities in the UK, Yvette Ankrah focuses on processes of identity construction among second-generation Black Ghanaians. The author interrogates the discourses and politics of belonging in the UK through an analysis of hybrid and 'third space' identities. In her interviews with second-generation Ghanaians living in the UK, Ankrah found that as a consequence of experiencing prejudice, racism or micro-aggressions, most of the interviewees dis-identify with any form of 'English' identity. However, this dis-identification can be problematic for some, since they are also considered as outsiders from the perspective of Ghanaian identity. These multiple exclusions necessitated the creation of 'third space' identities, as a strategy of belonging and home creation where Ankrah's participants feel they 'can be themselves'.

The other investigation into diaspora communities in the UK comes from Sanja Vico, who organises her discussion around questions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Vico's paper undertakes an analysis of the attitudes that Serbian Londoners hold about Brexit, with particular consideration of the motives behind

their voting decisions. Derived from her two-year ethnographic study alongside Serbian Londoners, Vico argues that cultural and social capital are the most important factors of vote decision. Unlike the voting trends found in the British population, income and social class are not the dominant determinants of voting decisions amongst Serbian Londoners. Vico's research finds that the attitudes and voting preferences of Serbian Londoners are primarily connected with different dispositions toward nationalism and the ambivalent role that London plays as a place that is both cosmopolitan and British.

Of the two papers that address the politics of refugees, Evgenia lliadou's paper proposes a critical analysis of the violence inherent in the EU "humanitarian" response to the so-called "refugee crisis". lliadou argues that instead of attempting to protect and end the suffering of refugees, the EU's "humanitarian" response applies a culture of control and violence, categorising and racialising the migrant as a means of control. Paying particular attention to the EU's "protective" response in Lesvos Island, Greece, lliadou analyses the critical effects of this policy in relation to the permanent criminalisation and illegalisation of migrants that take place once they have crossed the border into Europe. In so doing, placing the EU's humanitarian response within a broader discourse of 'deterrence', aimed at preventing unwanted border crossings.

The second contribution to the theme of the politics of refugees comes from Samar Maqusi, who approaches the topic through a focus on the relationship between spatiality and subjectivities. In her socio-spatial analysis of Palestine refugee camps, Maqusi interrogates the effects of government policies on the physical production of these camps. Maqusi pays particular attention to the ways camp spaces are connected to themes of vulnerability and control. The author finds that the materiality of the spatial network of the camp means that refugees adopt multiple subjectivities depending upon their specific geographical and socio-political location. In response, Maqusi proposes new tools for designing 'spatial interventions' in order to improve the self-determination of refugees and create new sites of resistance.

This edition also includes an essay by the youth-led migrant organisation Let Us Learn (LUL). A project that seeks equal opportunities for young people to attend university, LUL challenges the discriminatory laws that deny people without settled immigration status access to student loans for higher education. In this ar-

ticle, LUL explain their background, their legal fight for changing rules for student loan eligibility, their political campaigns and the development of the organisation. Finally, this edition includes four poems by artist and activist Bo Thai – himself an undocumented young person from Thailand – that reflect upon the diasporic experience in connection with a variety of themes such as a sense of home, journey, memories, dreams and limbo. For instance, the poem "Traveling Man" interrogates the notion of self and freedom for a man on a permanent journey. Meanwhile the poem "A lost boy with no vision" is a reflection on the condition of a boy who is existentially trapped between the past and the present. Using different platforms, the work of both LUL and Bo Thai reflect the reality of what it means to be undocumented, highlighting how (il)legality is a shifting status and one that is subject to racialisation. We included these poems to provide an alternative approach to understanding migration and racism from conventional modes of academic knowledge production.

This edition is organised by the PhD Migration Reading Group at Goldsmiths, University of London, a student-led space for the articulation of different approaches, concepts and ideas from PhD students working on migration across different departments at Goldsmiths. We meet regularly to debate, discuss and share ideas about migration-related research. We also host lectures and conferences and take part in political action as a group. All contributors to this edition participated in the conference, either giving public presentations of their papers, political work or art. Bo Thai was not present in person as he is unable to travel due to his immigration status. His art and poems traverse the globe, while he cannot. The cover art for this edition is a graphic recording of the symposium created by illustrator Raquel Durán, who has vividly captured the dynamic conversations during the day.4 Durán's graphic recording called "connecting racism and migration" includes a variety of creative visual elements that refer to various topics discussed in the symposium such as human mobility, super diversity, barriers and control.

Endnotes

[1]   The current UK Prime Minister Theresa May has played an important role in creating this hostile environment. See: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/10/immigration-bill-theresa-may-hostile-environment

2   See: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/20/the-week-that-took-windrush-from-low-profile-investigation-to-national-scandal

3   More details about the conference: https://cucrblog.wordpress.com/2017/11/28/a-conversation-on-connecting-racism-and-migration-a-phd-migration-reading-group-conference/

4   See Raquel Durán's work: https://raquelcronopia.wordpress.com/2017/10/09/1421/

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