

# Strangers, Aliens, Foreigners

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# Strangers, Aliens, Foreigners

*The Politics of Othering from Migrants to Corporations*

*Edited by*

Marissa Sonnis-Bell, David Elijah Bell and Michelle Ryan



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# Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIA	United States Central Intelligence Agency
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DZS	Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics
EU	European Union
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIMBY	Not-in-my-backyard
NY	New York State
NYC	New York City
PR	Permanent Residency
RIA	Irish Reception and Integration Agency
SOS	Save Ontario Shores
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
FLC CGIL	Italian Knowledge Workers Federation
US	United States of America
WWII	World War Two

## Notes on Contributors

### *David Elijah Bell*

is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY. He is a Cultural and Medical Anthropologist, interested in disaster and conflict intervention, human rights, environmental contamination, ambiguous chronic illness, politics of health, and the general intersection of public health science with governance.

### *Aldina Camenisch*

is a Social and Cultural Anthropologist at the University of Basel in Switzerland. Her current research interests include skilled migration and mobility, intersectionality and belonging. In her ethnographic PhD-project, she investigates the experiences of Swiss migrants in Mainland China.

### *Seraina Müller*

is a Social and Cultural Anthropologist at the University of Basel (CH) working on migration and mobility with a special focus on belonging and communication in the digital age. In the context of her PhD, she does research among Swiss migrants living in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

### *Hanna Jagtenberg*

is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Adelaide in South Australia. Her research project concerns the post-1994 Afrikaner/Afrikaans Diaspora in Australia, and she is further interested in the broader themes of migration and loss and change.

### *Lana Pavić*

is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia. She examines the concept of stranger/alien from antiquity to the present from the perspective of moral philosophy, as conceived by contemporary normative political theory and the ethics of discourse.

### *Michelle Ryan*

studies the impacts of migration, loss and grief on asylum seekers and refugees. She is working with the University of Limerick on a migrant pilot program to support refugees. She provides human resources support to companies and teaches Academic Writing and Sociology and Diversity at Limerick Institute of Technology.



*Marissa Sonnis-Bell*

is a doctoral researcher at the University at Buffalo. Her research interests include the socio-political acceptability of alternative energies in the context of energy transitions and competing risks, with recent work emphasizing the influence of nuclear waste on acceptability and sustainability of nuclear energy.

*Tommaso Trillò*

is a Marie Skłodowska Curie Early Stage Researcher at the University of Lodz, Poland, in the context of the 'Gender and Cultures of Equality in Europe – GRACE Project (675378 – GRACE – H2020-MSCA-ITN-2015/H2020-MSCA-ITN-2015). His main research focus is on the production of cultures of gender equality in mediated communication, especially digital media.



# Introduction: Arbitrary Constructions and Real Consequences of the Self and Other

*Marissa Sonnis-Bell*

No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things; in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the "other echoes [that] inhabit the garden".<sup>1</sup>

•••

It has become clear that every version of an 'other', wherever found, is also the construction of a 'self'.<sup>2</sup>

••  
•

Scholars across disciplines have long been interested in societal constructs of separation and distinctiveness, as seen in Said's work quoted above. It has long been sought to reveal what makes a stranger strange, a foreigner foreign and an alien alienated: the identifiable components which allow separation through distinction. What unites the terms *Stranger*, *Alien*, *Foreigner*, after which this book is titled, is that they all stem from the process of "othering", or alterity, and are often framed within constructs of the dominant self and the minority other, as hinted to in the second quote above from Clifford.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage, 1994), 408.

2 James Clifford. *Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, Clifford, 1986), 23.

3 Ibid.

What I hope to emphasize in this introduction, echoed throughout the chapters of this book, is manifold. Firstly, the self and the other should be seen as part of a whole, in that one cannot exist without the other, and the creation of one is often in the context of the creation of the other. Secondly, the distinction between the self and other is arbitrarily defined in that it is fleeting and shifts with what is convenient, whether it be race, religion, class, ethnicity, or geography. This arbitrariness is most evident in spaces of exception and liminality where the process of othering does not quite map onto conventional notions of othering, as I will elucidate. Finally, while the process of othering might be considered arbitrary, the consequences are very real and tangible, as will be illustrated. For purposes of introduction, I touch on some of the prominent thinkers in the field of othering, or alterity, and suggest how the chapters of this book interact with the field and the themes outlined herein.

## 1 The Other/Self as Part of a Whole

It has been argued that the process of ‘Othering’ is visible across societies, with both psychological and philosophical implications. From early childhood, as Sibley demonstrates,<sup>4</sup> there is ‘confirmation of the boundaries of the self and situating the self in the social world through the sorting of people and things into good and bad categories’. This process of othering is thus a fundamental component to identity formation and continues with the ongoing development of one’s identity. Understanding what we are not is inherent to understanding what we are. As Kearney points to ‘Most Western discourses of identity are predicated upon some unconscious projection of an Other who is not “us”’.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, to understand this dialectically, one can see the Self/Other to be inherently intertwined and involved in the progress of identity formation. Defining the Other, we also define the Self, and in defining what is not of ‘us’ we are better equipped for self-preservation.<sup>6</sup>

To further understand the process of othering, one must also recognize that it is also often seen to be imbued with a power dynamic, in which the Self is the dominant and hegemonic ‘in-power’ entity, while the Other is the

4 David Sibley ‘The Binary City’, *Urban Studies* 38.2 (2001): 244.

5 Richard Kearney, ‘Strangers and Others: From Deconstruction to Hermeneutics’, *Critical Horizons* 3.1 (2002): 14.

6 James Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 26.

alternate minority.<sup>7</sup> The labels to which these apply are often scale dependent, as on a global scale the dominant in-power may be Western as often discussed throughout this book and introduction, while on a national scale it may be white or European, for example. The othering of minority populations is illustrated in the dominant discourses of 'invasion' by a minority other, in Tommaso Trillò's case the Muslim migrant (as discussed in chapter 8), or in Hanna Jagtenberg's case a foreign South African minority (chapter 5). This is an instance in which definitions of the Other might be along the lines of 'a member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group'.<sup>8</sup>

However, while it is true that othering is essential to identity formation in Western discourse, even the very definition of 'Western' is wrapped up in distinctions that are arbitrarily defined (yet historically entrenched), vague and complex. This is evident in the body of work on Orientalism by the founder of the field of post-colonialism, Edward Said, whereby he demonstrates the discursive construction of the 'Orient' (or East) by the 'Occident' (or the West) (Orientalism 1973). Yet for lack of a better distinction, I continue with this ambiguous terminology of 'West' used loosely to refer to the developed world.

While Othering has so far been discussed in the context of Western discourse, it is apparent in non-Western discourse too. As David Bell points out in chapter 2, Othering is commonplace in many non-Western societies too, where self-chosen names such as those of the Kulina tribe, translate to 'person',<sup>9</sup> with the assumption of Others being non-persons, non-human, or alien, to draw upon the title of this collection.

The various chapters of this book do primarily draw from Western discursive perspectives, while highlighting the complexity of Other perspectives too, such as Michelle Ryan's in-depth examination through interviews of non-European refugee experiences in Ireland (chapter 7). Despite this brief departure into non-Western thinking, the chapters mainly draw upon Western experiences to interrogate such ideas, such as the discursive construction, treatment and experiences of migrants in Europe, specifically Italy, Croatia, and Northern Europe. Although in doing so, while from a Western perspective, many authors attempt to deconstruct the oversimplified binaries of the Self/Other. The point is to understand the experiences of the other and the processes in which

7 Jean-Francois Staszak, 'Other/otherness' in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed 2008 Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (Oxford: Elsevier, 2009), 2.

8 Staszak. 'Other/Otherness', 2.

9 Donald Pollock, 'Personhood and Illness Among the Kulina', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10.3 (1996): 323.

othering occurs. Predominantly, the strangers, aliens and foreigners that we speak of come in the form of migrants, immigrants, and refugees, with the caveat of the third chapter in which Marissa Bell deals with the corporate other, adding an even more alien, in the non-human sense, dimension to the topics covered in this book.

## 2 The Arbitrariness of How the Other Is Constructed

Through the various perspectives on Othering shown throughout this book, the intention is to illustrate that the construction of the Other, in line with previous work, is arbitrary and complex, but with very real consequences. The uncertain patterns by which difference is created flow along multiple lines, of religion, ethnicity, race, nationality, class and geographic divides, seemingly fleeting and contradictory. While the Other tends to be constructed in opposition to a dominant hegemonic Self, there are instances in which the majority is also a minority along intersectional lines, or where the minority are the ones constructing the Other, depending on which perspective is being examined.

In the case of Swiss migrants to China and Northern Europe (chapter 4), Aldina Camenisch and Seraina Müller show how a socially privileged, economically advantaged, group of white European migrants are seen to be the Other. This is also echoed in Hanna Jagtenberg's work (chapter 5) in which a white, religious, educated but South African minority is discriminated against by also white, but often less educated, less religious, and most importantly Australian and therefore dominant majority. In other instances, rural, white, economically disadvantaged Americans construct a corporate Other in opposition to a spontaneously constructed yet cohesive community Self. These three cases are examples in which groups occupy liminal 'third positions' as Aldina Camenisch and Seraina Müller define, spaces of exception where the arbitrariness of categorical othering is most evident.

## 3 The Real Consequences of Othering

Yet despite being arbitrary, the process of Othering has very real, tangible consequences. Just as the Other can be defined according to multiple and complex lines of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, geography, and many others, so can the array of consequences. Discrimination on any of these bases and beyond has implications that span from emotional distress, to psychological

trauma, and physical consequences such as access to healthcare, financial support, to name but a few. On a broader scale, the process of othering has tangible implications for human rights, as demonstrated theoretically by David Bell (chapter 2) in his analysis of the suspension of human rights on a cultural level in cases for those given the label ‘terrorist’, a label only given by hegemonic society to those deemed as deviant and dangerous,<sup>10</sup> mostly ethnically Middle Eastern, Muslim others.<sup>11</sup> The tangible consequences are also exemplified through Michelle Ryan’s empirical work (chapter 7) on Direct Provision in Ireland, a prison-like institution where refugees and asylum seekers are sent before officially registered as migrants and able to work, where their movements, activities and freedoms are restricted, sometimes up to five years.

Lana Pavić, in chapter 6, deconstructs ethical-moral responsibilities of people to these refugees and migrants. In her political-philosophical discussion, Lana Pavić points to the responsibility to host migrant/strangers as guests. Most importantly, she states, ‘As long as the guest acts peacefully, one is not to be treated with hostility, locked up or tortured,’<sup>12</sup> and yet this is precisely what we see in Michelle Ryan’s depiction of vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers; they are housed in confinement detention centres until receiving the correct paperwork to be considered legally part of Irish society (chapter 7). While this may come as a surprise, it is very much embedded within modern society, as noted based on the work of Foucault: ‘Reason (or the Same) has progressively identified, named, stigmatized and sought to exclude, [through either banishment or incarceration], ‘Unreason’ (or the Other).’<sup>13</sup> The consequences of this are spatial relationships such as, ‘physical divides, segregation and exclusion, that inscribes into bricks and mortar, a distancing of the Other from the Same.’<sup>14</sup> What we see being done to refugee others, Foucault noted being inflicted upon the mentally ill, the sick and the criminal. These patterns of exclusion or demarcation are visible at multiple scales. A look at any major American metropolitan area, from Baltimore to Buffalo, would reveal stark racial and economic contrasts.

10 David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion* (London: Routledge, 1996).

11 Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony Or Survival?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), 10.

12 Lana Pavić, Chapter 6 of this book.

13 Chris Philo, ‘Michel Foucault’, in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, eds Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin. (London: Sage, 2010), 126.

14 Chris Philo, ‘Michel Foucault’, 127.

#### 4 Transcending the Self/Other

My intention for this introduction was to elucidate the invisible threads that tie the diverse chapters of this book together. Rather than end on a negative note of incarceration and spaces of exclusion, I want to return to the beginning quote of this introduction, to shed some positive light on Othering. Namely, that the benefit of having the other, the other whose “echoes inhabit the garden”<sup>15</sup>, is that not only such Other forces us to confront and further reflect on our Self (defined along any line of individuality, intersectionality, nationality etc.), but it also forces us beyond preliminary and superficial notions of the solitary self to enrich human interaction through the real complexities of a social world

While each chapter addresses some specific aspect of the process of Othering, many seek to transcend the Self/Other binary by showing how intertwined they are. In this regard, the Other is seen as inherently constituted within the Self, and vice versa. To take this one step further, the boundary between the two is often capricious and shifting based on lines drawn and given importance only through context, whether this be in regards to race, religion, class, ethnicity, nationality, as all addressed within this book. Such distinctions within such social contexts force the reader to reflect on their own self/other. Furthermore, it might serve as an understated call to action, for in highlighting the very real consequences of othering, we draw attention to the deep and troubling issues which stand as fault lines for our time. For some, these fault lines are a matter of emotional strength and quality of life, while for others they are a matter of life and death: distinguishing the importance, just like distinguishing the line between Self and Other, shall now be left up to the reader.

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15 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage, 1994), 408.



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# The Real People: Ethnohuman Speciation at the Intersection of Modern Western Multiculturalism, Human Rights, and 'Islamic' Terrorism

*David Elijah Bell*

## Abstract

Local ethnic labels for indigenous societies across the world can be translated as 'the people', or 'true' or 'correct' people, with the assumption that while outsiders may look human, such outsiders remain less than real people. This relatively extreme form of ethnocentrism can be illustrated in reference to the Mardu Australian aborigines, the Kulina and Wari of Amazonia, or potentially the Min of Papua New Guinea, revealing much about how diverse societies negotiate concepts of foreignness. Although modern and contemporary understandings for humanity draw from a biological definition of species, ethnohuman speciation remains arguably fundamental to Western and global society through sociopolitical assumptions and biosocial understandings for international law and universal human rights. This chapter explores ethnocentrism associated with ethnohuman speciation specifically when modern Western concepts of multiculturalism and human rights are challenged through anxiety for 'foreign' and 'Islamic' terrorism. Intended impacts involve a more critical and refined understanding of 'multiculturalism,' along with re-examination of debates involving human rights in the context of assumptions for foreign or religiously motivated terrorism.

## Keywords

multiculturalism – pluriculturalism – Islamic terrorism – human rights – international law – violence – modernity

• • •

*Western civilization is in a war. We should frankly test every person here who is of a Muslim background and if they believe in Sharia they should be deported... Sharia is incompatible with western civilization.*<sup>1</sup>

FORMER US HOUSE SPEAKER NEWT GINGRICH

• • •

*People must not allow themselves to be divided by religion... We cannot give into fear or turn on each other or sacrifice our way of life... It's been a difficult several weeks in the US but the divide that exists isn't between races or religion, it's between people who recognize the common humanity of all people.*<sup>2</sup>

US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

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## 1 Introduction to Ethnohuman Speciation

In an introductory note for an ethnographic account of the Wari' people, Conklin explains: "The term *wari'* is the first-person plural pronoun: it means "we, people".<sup>3</sup> A similar semantic designation is found among other Amazonian societies, such as the Kulina, also known as the Madiha. Pollock explains that *madiha* is best translated as 'person', despite the successive layers of semantic contrast involved in distinguishing *madiha* from non-*madiha*.<sup>4</sup> Everett, paying close attention to linguistic practices of the Piraha, observes that: '*Piraha language* was clearly a combination of *xapai* (head) and *tii* (straight), plus the suffix *-si*, which indicates that the word it is attached to is a name or proper noun: "straight head".<sup>5</sup> While Piraha, referring to a person, might be

1 'Nice attack: Gingrich Wants 'Sharia test' for US Muslims', BBC News, 15 July 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-36806380>

2 Ibid.

3 Beth Conklin, *Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 252.

4 Donald Pollock, 'Personhood and Illness Among the Kulina', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10.3 (1996): 323.

5 Daniel Everett, *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 20.

translated as ‘someone who is straight’, *foreigner* meant “fork”, as in “fork in the tree branch”. And *foreign language* meant “crooked head”.<sup>6</sup>

Such examples of social prioritization for an ethnic group demonstrated through colloquial ethnic labels are not limited to Amazonia. The Min peoples of Papua New Guinea, sometimes referred to as Mountain Ok peoples, include such individual groups as the *Telefolmin*, *Urapmin*, and *Wopkaimin*. *Min* effectively translates to ‘peoples’,<sup>7</sup> and when used as a suffix, *-min* establishes various types of peoples. Among the Mardu of Australian aboriginal culture, *mardu* simply means either ‘person’ or ‘one of us’.

Whether self-assigned to represent ethnocentric values and worldview, imposed by foreigners through pre-emptive and premature misunderstanding, or some combination of both, the allocation of a local ethnic label which corresponds to a concept of ‘real’ or ‘correct’ people is what I term *ethnohuman speciation*, referring to cultural limits assumed for personhood. In cases where such an ethnic label follows linguistic competency, the term would be refined to *linguistic ethnohuman speciation*. Even under modern conditions where the definition of species is governed by overtly biological terms, the concept of ethnohuman speciation remains valid in the sense that biology is always influenced by cultural factors for interpretation, making all biologies ethnobiologies. Despite a great deal of power, influence, and reliance on scientific methodology, modern Western concepts of biology and biomedicine are ultimately still viewed and understood through a cultural lens.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 The Debate for Who Is Human in Biological Anthropology

Despite a clear biological definition for humanity, where all 7.4 billion people currently on Earth are considered ‘people’, there is still a great deal of debate concerning who actually should be considered as one of these people. This debate is focused in biological anthropology on the origins of *Homo sapiens*, with particular attention to whether modern humans should be termed *Homo sapiens sapiens* and differentiated from earlier *Homo sapiens* or not. In particular, through growing DNA analysis and archaeological evidence, it is generally

6 Ibid., 20.

7 MacKenzie, Maureen MacKenzie, *Androgynous Objects: String Bags and Gender in Central New Guinea* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 31.

8 Atwood D. Gaines and Robbie Davis-Floyd, ‘Biomedicine’, *Encyclopaedia of Medical Anthropology*, ed. Melvin Ember and Carol Ember, (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publications, 2004).

understood that Neanderthals must have been capable of successful fertile reproduction with modern humans, making the biological label *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*. The question of why it matters may be a more important question than the uncertain taxonomic category of Neanderthals. I argue that ethnohuman speciation, even on an assumed biological level, is highly revealing of core cultural attitudes and ethnocentric values. Particularly when drawing from assumptions of universal biology, ethnohuman speciation offers a particularly important window for critical analysis when applied to modern society in the context of international law and universal human rights.

### 3 The Extremities of Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

As core tenets of cultural anthropology, cultural determinism and cultural relativism are particularly challenged by any proposition for universal human rights. In a 1947 declaration by the American Anthropology Association, based primarily in reference to these core tenets, it was reasoned that

Standards and values are relative to the culture from which they derive so that any attempt to formulate postulates that grow out of the beliefs or moral codes of one culture must to that extent detract from the applicability of any Declaration of Human Rights to mankind as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

In essence, it was remarked that respect for individuality can only come through respect for cultural difference which underlies such individuality (cultural determinism), and no consistent metric for evaluating culture and ethics for human rights can be universally applied. So it is with little surprise that the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>10</sup> which includes such components as the right to join trade unions (Article 23) or to have periodic holidays and leisure time (Article 24), is often seen to hold bias towards the industrialized capitalist world, and to be of much less relevance to indigenous societies. Both the preamble and first several articles centre on fundamental US American ideals involving 'freedom of speech and faith and freedom from fear and want', first articulated by US President Franklin D Roosevelt in the 1941 State of the Union address, colloquially referred to as the 'four freedoms'. These

9 American Anthropology Association (AAA), *The 1947 Statement on Human Rights* (Arlington, VA: AAA Publications, 1947).

10 United Nations (UN), *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York, NY: UN Publications, 1948).

first articles involve deliberately vague and malleable language in reference to 'freedom', 'liberty', 'slavery', 'dignity', and 'security of person'.

The core of the UN Declaration of Human Rights arguably lies in Article 5, that 'No one shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment', and Article 6: 'Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law'. These two articles, in reference to inhuman treatment and personhood before the law, are directly relevant to the topic of ethnohuman speciation and suspension of otherwise assumed human rights based on ethnohuman or personhood exclusion.

The act of limiting personhood status, particularly through ethnohuman assumptions, is the ultimate act of ethnocentrism and boundary line for cultural relativism: to assume cultural inclusion is equal to *human* inclusion is to prioritize one world view at the expense of all others, drawing from the hegemonic support of presumed biological difference. Since biology assumes universal laws and applicability, such an act conveniently solves the paradox of universal human rights, allowing them to be universally relevant albeit on a selective basis. Such a process is likely to be an integral component to how diverse societies negotiate 'foreignness'.

#### 4 The Ideology of Human Rights: Ethnohuman Speciation versus Personhood

While the concept of 'personhood' emphasizes human agency, ethnohuman speciation draws overtly from the biological perspective, despite acknowledging that biological perspectives are culturally mediated. This remains a critical distinction in the context of human rights, given an assumed biological or universal basis.

Donovan emphasizes that natural law theory, which identifies higher authority than civil law to be found in universal laws of biology, is the basis for human rights.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, he articulates that the 'human rights idea emerged from the ashes of natural theory',<sup>12</sup> meaning that the declarations emerging after World War II were an effort to 'modernize' natural law theory. While natural law assumed divine laws to be interpreted from nature, human rights identified a biological scope for ethical accountability without needing to identify an underlying divine force. In this sense, biology became the universal signifier itself, allowing for the legal ethical secularization of an otherwise religious philosophy.

11 James M. Donovan, *Legal Anthropology: An Introduction* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2008).

12 *Ibid.*, 200.

## 5 Human Rights within Multicultural and Pluricultural Systems

Societies which support not just multicultural, but a *pluricultural* system, meaning that assimilation is not desired and ethnic differences are valued and supported on account of being different, have both advantages and disadvantages in terms of managing diversity and upholding human rights. Multicultural systems, while prizing diversity, hold foundational components which anchor society and encourage assimilation in even higher regard. Such a model reflects diversity which still holds core beliefs, values, and ideals in common. One such core value in Western society is that of human rights, and the potential to abrogate human rights based on a loss of humanity.

The potential to maintain detailed and selective human rights largely dissipates within a pluricultural system, where a greater balance of power between cultural factions prevents any one worldview from dominating and projecting its values over others. However the greatest tragedy in debates between universal human rights being positivist and biased in multicultural systems and effectively absent in pluricultural systems is the assumption that human rights must be articulated and enforced in order to be universal. The idea that human rights should be defined and supported by a particular worldview betrays the philosophical origins of such a concept traced back to assumptions for natural law.

Some may argue that there are inherent limits to pluriculturalism, and that limit, in a word, may be 'terrorism'. The binary construction of the 'terrorist' concept warrants some discussion, in that it represents the epitome of 'the other', 'inhumanity', and 'evil'.

## 6 Three Assumptions for Anti-Modern Terrorism

Despite a name and conventional definition which suggests that 'terrorism' occurs when violent conflict targets unsuspecting civilian populations, creating 'terror' in the populace on account of being unaccustomed and unprepared for such violence, the degree to which such violence occurs on an international scale and through state military action renders such a definition almost useless. In addition, the division between 'military' and 'civilian' is certainly not always transferrable cross-culturally, and the idea of a clear-cut division is almost certainly limited to highly industrialized social contexts.

A more useful definition of terrorism examines its tenuous association with cultural modernity. Just as fundamental religious movements are necessarily products of modernity, in that a *return* to fundamental conditions is perceived

as more desirable than an uncertain and didactic present, understandings of terrorism cannot be separated from conditions of modernity. Mamdani defines terrorism as political violence ‘that does not fit the story of progress’.<sup>13</sup> Understood more broadly, terrorism is violence which is anti-modern, or at least non-supportive of a particular modernist agenda.

The key feature to distinguish violence as anti-modern, apart from the base assumptions which act as frameworks to understand terrorism from the popularist point of view, involves rights to violence. According to Weber, a prerequisite for statehood, and in turn modernity, is the condition of state authority holding monopoly over all forms of ethical violence: while an individual may commit a violent act, such an act must be criminalized and not presented as ethical outside of endorsement from state authority.<sup>14</sup>

As an act which is both incongruous and antithetical to an established notion of progress and a modern worldview, terrorism is predisposed to be understood through specific paradigms of social discourse. Following terrorism as anti-modern violence, the social discourses or base assumptions which shape popular interpretation should be recognized as follows: 1) inexplicably evil, 2) foreign other, and 3) religious. These assumptions, while potentially contradictory, do not function as a checklist, but rather as a conceptual resort repertoire which are apt to shape and emerge from patterns of social discourse.

Since terrorism cannot or should not be understood from an established perspective of progress or modernity, the simplest way in which it *can* be understood is through the polarized concept of ‘evil’. Representing the first of the base assumptions, the connotation of evil serves a dual purpose: first, an exceedingly simply archetypal narrative is established and, second, inherent to this reductive narrative, significant disincentive discourages any deeper analysis or understanding. Evil is often assumed to be irreducible, simply explained only by itself within a dichotomous framework. More importantly, to understand evil is to connect or potentially support evil, as Nietzsche reminds through the allegory of fighting with monsters. In short, assumptions for ‘evil’ or ‘danger’ facilitate reductive reasoning, and such assumptions simultaneously dissuade further exploration by way of historical reasoning. Thus, terrorism inspired by evil not only cannot be explained, but *should not be explained*. Emphasis to ‘evil’ or ‘moral perversion’ obscures ability to critically analyse the link between cultural aspects of modernity and political violence. Western

13 Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Random House Inc., 2004), 4.

14 Max Weber, ‘Politics as Vocation’, *Weber’s Rationalism and Modern Society*, trans. and eds. Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 129–198.



aversion to exploring motivations of Nazi genocide is just one example of such moral-political resistance.

If there is any reductive reasoning which can rival discourses of 'evil', it is that of 'foreign'. It should not be any surprise that labels of 'foreign' are often accompanied by fear and negativity. The sociological process of 'othering', of projecting diametric opposition onto people 'foreign', has overtly moral tones in that 'others' are everything which 'we' do not want to see in ourselves. Given intimate understanding and insight into our own actions, most people tend to see their own behaviour as rational, justified, and morally 'good'. This further exemplifies the idea of moral legitimacy through understanding; 'foreign' discourse is one other attempt to hinder such legitimacy and understanding.

Finally, given that terrorism is rooted in modernity yet constructed as violence which is anti-modern, and that since the Enlightenment society has preferred to view its primary defining feature as secularization as opposed to Nietzsche's governmental monopoly on violence, any assumption of diametric opposition to modernity should have an overtly religious base. The more overt the religious condition, or the more fundamental, the sharper emerges the contrast.

To be gleaned from this is that, rather than terrorism being anti-modern violence which is evil, religiously fundamental, and foreign, I simply suggest that anti-modern violence which can be construed as evil, religiously fundamental, and foreign is then labelled as terrorism. When violence fits the racial and ideological profile of terrorism, namely having Islamic affiliation in a non-Islamic society, it is popular social discourse which makes the connection to 'terrorism'. It does not matter whether news media labels it as such or not: as long as the key elements and assumptions are in place, popular discourse will do the rest.

## 7 **Bigotry of the 'Terrorist' Label/The Terrorist Label as Ethnic Slur**

Just as racial slurs operate as bigotry by connecting minority and foreign identities with underlying political inequalities, so too does the 'terrorist' label operate on bigotry of projecting and enforcing a foreign 'other' minority both in terms of ethnic affiliation and degree of overt religious practice. In addition to functioning as a racial slur, emphasizing more of a 'foreign' religious identity than an ethnic one, the 'terrorist' label also a criminalizing label. What makes the 'terrorist' label particularly dangerous is that it functions as a foreign slur and an incriminating label simultaneously: the criminal connotation acts to justify the prejudicial politics of othering. The label is presumed to be

attributed strictly to perpetrators of particular action, yet the guilt which is assumed, based on inherent degree of difference of the perpetrator, belittles the role of any adjudication. The assumption of difference, of othering, is so great, that arguably such perpetrators are beyond the scope of 'human', at least in terms of practice observed by human rights application.

## 8 The Point of Human Rights If They Can Be Stripped Away

Despite being a vocal proponent of human rights as articulated in the UN Declaration, the US has adapted numerous 'enhanced interrogation techniques' including destination sites for forced extraordinary rendition in locations throughout the world, involving numerous countries where human rights may be less monitored than within the US. In response to controversy involving human rights abuse in US-led 'Global War on Terror', former CIA Director Cofer Black infamously stated, 'All you need to know is that there was a before 9/11 and an after 9/11. After 9/11 the gloves came off'. The same idea was reiterated by former US Vice-President Dick Cheney in that, post 9/11, 'we have to work... the dark side, if you will'. In a 2005 edition of Newsweek, former US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld emphasized, 'Al Qaeda and Taliban individuals under the control of the Department of Defence are not entitled to prisoner-of-war status for purposes of the Geneva Convention of 1949'.

Given that Islamic militants accused of terrorism are routinely denied human rights and, more importantly, are often assumed by popular US discourse *not to have* human rights, the primary question emerges: what is the point of human rights if they can be abrogated, withheld, or stripped away? The answer can only be found in the politics of ethnohuman speciation, the fact that there are indeed cultural and political bounds for how we would like to imagine humanity.

## 9 The Ultimate Crime and Threat Involving Terrorism

Under modernity, individuals and individuality is to be protected, and the holding of rights pertains to that individuality. Yet violence, which may readily be interpreted as an individual form of expression, potentially part of a spectrum including violent language in many non-Western societies, certainly cannot be granted as a form of freedom. The greatest crime of terrorism is the violation of state monopoly on violence: making the assumption that ideological violence can be justified on an individual level. If the greatest crime of terrorism

involves taking life in a way which challenges the core element of modernity, the greatest threat involves potential for ideological corruption.

Travel writer Robert Young Pelton, writing at the height of the US Bush administration's declaration for the Global War on Terror, offers a forthright assessment of terrorism by stating that

Terrorism is the most feared foe of established democracies because it forces them to subvert the clean ideals that they pride themselves on. It creates a police state, a state of fear, harsh punishments, and tight controls. Does terrorism work? You bet.<sup>15</sup>

The greatest danger of terrorism arguably lies in its potential to subvert and disregard stated ideals associated with human rights.

## 10 A New Model for Human Rights and Ethnohuman Speciation

In conclusion, I do not argue for any radical change in understandings for human rights, nor any new appreciation for ethnohuman speciation. All I wish to convey is the illogic of supporting human rights while continuing to strip them away when politically convenient to do so. Inherent to their articulation at the end of WWII, human rights cannot be given up, or otherwise lost on account of any action, crime, ill-will, or political misdeed. To support a concept of human rights that can be lost is to simply deny humanity on an individual or cultural basis, enforcing a politically motivated category of ethnohuman speciation. The danger of this should be readily apparent, yet is worth spelling out: just as the *Homo Sacer* of Ancient Rome, so carefully described by Agamben,<sup>16</sup> can be killed with impunity as someone lying outside of the law, so too can anyone deemed 'less than human' be killed with impunity in the eyes of those supporting such a distinction. It is exactly when people are described using non-human metaphors such as cockroaches, filth in society, or metastatic cancer which must be removed from society, that the spectre of genocide truly looms.

The true irony is that such a genocide, which simultaneously adheres both to a concept of human rights and ethnohuman speciation as a way to selectively deny such rights, is intensified by modern and multicultural construction, by

15 Robert Young Pelton, *The World's Most Dangerous Places*, 5th ed. (New York: Tembo LLC Inc., 2003), 289.

16 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

the ethical conviction that as a result of a political choice or misdeed the right to being 'human' has been given-up, and therefore such less-than-humans can and should be killed with impunity.

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# My Foreign Self as Privileged Outsider: Differing Lines for Marginalization and Inclusion of Swiss Living Abroad

*Aldina Camenisch and Seraina Müller*

## Abstract

Based on ethnographic field research in Northern Europe and China amongst Swiss nationals, this paper explores how such relatively privileged migrants negotiate their identities with respect to their society of origin and their host societies. By doing so, they participate in and produce a variety of discourses of inclusion and demarcation that are often ambiguous and fleeting. In this context, the paper concludes with an outline of those ‘third positions’, which are liminal by being neither fully ‘in’ nor ‘out’, and which draw into question any spectra for expanding inclusion. These positions develop from past and present experiences of our respondents as simultaneous insiders and outsiders, but are importantly shaped by relative social privilege as opposed to political or economic need.

## Keywords

migration – mobility – national and cultural identity – intersectionality – transnationalism – politics of inclusion – foreign privilege

## 1 Introduction

Based on an on-going ethnographic research project among Swiss – who are voluntary and thus relatively privileged migrants – in both Northern Europe and China, this paper explores in the first two chapters our respondents’ negotiations of belonging with respect to Switzerland and their host societies. In the third chapter, we elaborate on ‘third positions’ that emerge from past and present experiences as in- and outsiders.

The data collection for this project took place over a period of two years. 32 people, 21 men and 11 women, living in eight major Mainland Chinese cities, in Hong Kong, and in Switzerland were interviewed as well as 35 people, 16 men and 19 women, currently residing in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.\*

## 2 Negotiating Belonging in Northern Europe and China

### 2.1 *Swiss Migrants in China: Privileged Outsiders*

When describing their feelings about living in China, some of our respondents explained that their involvement with China had started in their childhood or youth, while they were still living in Switzerland, and thus evolving around imaginaries of China.<sup>1</sup> The majority of our interview partners, however, came to China for the first time with little prior involvement with the country. For them, China was the exotic ‘other’, a place that attracted them because they knew nothing about it and which therefore promised the adventure and challenge they were looking for.

Now that they actually live in China, whether the respondents are those respondents with a long-standing fascination or those without, their negotiations of belonging are ambivalent. Many interview partners emphasise that they strive towards understanding for and a certain adaption to their Chinese host society. Moreover, most see themselves in the right place on the level of their daily lives. Yet, none of them feels that he or she belongs fully in the Chinese society.

One of the most important reasons for this is – as all our respondents unequivocally observe – that the discursive demarcations between insiders and outsiders, the Chinese and the foreigners,<sup>2</sup> are immutable and cannot be crossed.<sup>3</sup> As the ‘other’ in the form of a ‘white’, ‘western’,<sup>4</sup> and Swiss foreigner in China, they are ascribed and act out multi-faceted positions that are rooted

\* The authors thank Emma Hill and David Bell for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

1 Arjun Appadurai, ‘Disjuncture and Cultural Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.’ *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 295–310; Noel B. Salazar, ‘The Power of Imagination in Transnational Mobilities.’ *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 18.6 (2011): 576–598.

2 Waiguoren in Chinese.

3 For a more detailed discussion of immigration in China see Frank N. Pieke, ‘Immigrant China.’ *Modern China* 38.1 (2012): 40–77.

4 Anne-Meike Fechter, ‘The ‘Other’ Stares Back. Experiencing Whiteness in Jakarta.’ *Ethnography* 6.1 (2005): 87–103.



FIGURE 3.1 Meeting room at a Sino-Swiss business consultancy in Shanghai

PHOTO TAKEN BY ALDINA CAMENISCH IN FEBRUARY 2015

in (post-) colonial identity politics and power regimes, in imaginaries of economic and social progress, as well as in notions of physical attractiveness.<sup>5</sup>

Alice, 32, manager: 'You say you are Swiss, it's a legitimacy of quality, of trustfulness. I'm supposed to be someone honest, someone well educated, I mean, you know. And someone wealthy. [...] It gives a legitimacy on a few aspects of personality that I don't have to justify.'<sup>6</sup>

5 Gender plays a crucial role, too, and will need special attention in further analysis. As for the marker of race, it is interesting to note that two of our interview partners with 'East Asian' physical features experienced their social position differently from all the other interview partners with 'white', 'Caucasian' looks that feel marked as 'westerners'. One, who is Swiss with Chinese parents, describes how Chinese people would count him as (overseas) Chinese rather than as foreigner. Another interview partner grew up in Switzerland as an adopted child from Korea and referred to himself as 'a banana, yellow outside, white inside'. He describes, how most Chinese would take him for a Chinese from his looks and he feels that due to his external resemblance, it is easier for him to relate to Chinese people than for 'white' foreigners.

6 Interview conducted on February, 3rd, 2015, in Shanghai, China. Original quote.



This contrasts strongly with the – in itself highly disputable and conflictive – notion of the gradual integration of foreigners from out- to insiders that has been the guiding principle for dealing with immigration in the Swiss context. Whereas some accordingly imagined themselves ‘integrated’ into China before they moved, none holds this prospect anymore.

This results in marginalized, yet privileged positions that enable to exploit specific opportunities. Being a foreigner, according to our interview partners, liberates them of manifold social and economic obligations that Chinese individuals face. Hence, instead of gradually ‘integrating’, many interview partners describe, how after a long period of adaptation, they are now gradually ‘re-westernizing’ in order to succeed professionally as well as to (re-) gain a fitting, socially acknowledged identity:

Sarah, 28, project manager and student: But I realize that I have to re-inforce the western part, in the sense that I should make more western friends again. [...] I sometimes feel that I have been involved too deeply with Asians. And that I have adapted some attitudes that are not necessarily beneficial. For instance, that I feel under much pressure in terms of CV, career, because I study. That I have lost the relaxed attitude I used to have. [...] Stuff like that, which gives you the pressure that you don't fit in anymore.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, in our respondents' perception, as a foreigner, certain areas of economic, social and political participation remain inaccessible and they expect little protection by the Chinese authorities in case of legal problems. For some, this situation results in a feeling of vulnerability.

Moreover, in many interviews, their half insider-half outsider position concurs with a persisting ‘otherness’ and exoticism of the Chinese environment, which is seen as providing a stimulating ambiguity of belonging:

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7 Interview conducted on December, 5th in Guangzhou, China. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Aldina Camenisch. Original quote in German: ‘Ich merke, dass ich den westlichen Teil wieder verstärken sollte, im Sinne von, dass ich wieder mehr westliche Freunde haben sollte. (...) ich habe manchmal das Gefühl, ich bin wie fast zu, ich habe viel zu viel mit Asiaten zu tun gehabt. Und von dem her auch gewisse Sachen angenommen, die vielleicht nicht unbedingt gut sind. Eben, dass ich zum Beispiel auch so mega Stress habe wegen CV, wegen Karriere, wegen dem Studieren. Dass ich quasi so ein wenig die Gelassenheit verloren habe, die ich früher hatte. (...) Und solche Sachen, dass man so Stress bekommt, dass man nicht rein passt.’



Alice: I also like that now in China, I know people. Because if I go to buy the bread ... they recognize me, I recognize them. So we are, I feel close to them. But it is still exotic to me. So this is a feeling I really like. ... This is something that I can add to my life all the time. Non-stop, I would say.<sup>8</sup>

In accordance, belonging in China is often negotiated against a background of temporality and indefiniteness. This shows clearly in the way most interview partners talked about their stay in China as temporary, considering to move to other places, and eventually, but not necessarily, also back to Switzerland.

However, lines of demarcation are not only drawn between Chinese and foreigners, but also with respect to other foreigners. Most of our respondents describe themselves as relatively well-adapted, open-minded and skilled. As their counterparts, they draw the images of the ignorant and often undeservingly privileged corporate expatriates, and the western 'losers', who thanks to their looks rather than their professional skills, are able to make a living by working in typical 'foreigner jobs'.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 *Swiss Migrants in Northern Europe: Neither in Nor Out*

Many of our respondents living in Northern Europe blend in easily with the local society in terms of physical appearance and are thus often not recognised as foreigners at first sight. As was often discussed in our interviews, the lines of demarcation are subtler. One of them is the language.

Esther, 55, farmer: 'Even after so many years living here, I still get the friendly-meant question "Where are you from?" whenever I open my mouth. I am absolutely fluent in Norwegian, but I will always keep my Swiss accent. This is sometimes very frustrating.'<sup>10</sup>

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- 8 Interview conducted on February, 3rd, 2015, in Shanghai, China. Original quote.
- 9 Pei-Chia Lan, 'White Privilege, Language Capital and Cultural Ghettoisation: Western High-Skilled Migrants in Taiwan.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37.10 (2011): 1169–1963; James Farrer, '“New Shanghailanders” or “New Shanghaiese”: Western Expatriates' Narratives of Emplacement in Shanghai.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36.8 (2010): 1211–1228.
- 10 Interview conducted on January, 25th, 2014, outside of Oslo, Norway. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Seraina Müller. Original quote in German: 'Obwohl ich schon so viele Jahre hier wohne, werde ich immer noch die wohl nett gemeinte Frage gefragt: "Woher kommst du?", sobald ich meinen Mund öffne. Ich sprech absolut fließendes Norwegisch, aber ich werde meinen Schweizer Akzent für immer behalten. Manchmal ist das ziemlich frustrierend.'

Here, language is much more than just the exchange of information. In fact, it is part of the appearance of identity and social hierarchy.<sup>11</sup>

Even though most of our interview partners are fluent in the language of their country of arrival, most of them never manage to lose their foreign accents totally, which unmasks them immediately as somebody who was not born in the host country. This creates a dilemma. On the one hand, there is this feeling of being well embedded in the new heimat, home, combined with a strong sense of belonging. On the other hand, the fact of being recognised as a foreigner whenever using the local language seems to create frustration and alienation.

However, using a different language than the mother tongue can as well result in a new and unexpected experience.

Veronika, 32, consultant: 'In Swedish, everybody uses the Du, you. Nobody uses the polite form. Right in the first weeks here in Sweden, I realized, that new relationships, especially in business, start on a different level than in Switzerland. I think that there is a connection between the form of language and the way people encounter each other.'<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with the observations in China, several of our interview partners state an emotional connection with or even romantic attraction to one of the Nordic countries prior to their migration experience.

Sandra, 40, language consultant: 'Already in my younger days, the Finnish language fascinated me. I don't really know why. My mother thinks it has something to do with the TV series about Lapland. Anyway, I was always interested in languages. I learned Italian, Russian and later Finnish. It was somehow exotic.'<sup>13</sup>

11 Monika Heller, *Paths to Post-Nationalism. A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity* (Oxford: University Press Inc, 2011).

12 Interview conducted on May, 10th, 2015, Stockholm, Sweden. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Seraina Müller. Original quote in German: 'Auf Schwedisch sind sich ja alle per „Du“ – man verwendet keine Höflichkeitsform. Gleich in den ersten Wochen hier in Schweden ist mir aufgefallen, dass neue Begegnungen, insbesondere im Beruf, auf einer anderen Ebene beginnen als in der Schweiz. Ich glaube, dass es ein Zusammenhang zwischen der Sprachform und der Begegnungsform gibt.'

13 Interview conducted on June, 17th, 2014, Helsinki, Finland. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Seraina Müller. Original quote in German: 'Die Finnische Sprache hat mich schon immer fasziniert. Ich weiss nicht warum. Meine Mutter meint, das hängt zusammen mit einer TV-Serie über Lapland. Sie meinte, das komme daher. Ich war schon früh interessiert an Sprachen. Italienisch, Russisch. Und ich lernte dann Finnisch. War irgenwie exotisch...'

Again, language remains crucial in Sandra's life. Having both a German and a Swiss background, she is often torn between the different languages and dialects she wishes to speak with her own children. This hinders her somehow to fully engage with the local context; always feeling that one of her languages is missing.

Another influential aspect is the public discourse in which Swiss nationals are usually classified as 'good immigrants'. Often, there is a rather indifferent position towards Switzerland, dominated by stereotypical aspects such as the landscape and potential leisure activities in it, the political system, and Swiss cheese, chocolate, and watches. At the same time, there are rather negative notions around the reconcilability of family and working life in Switzerland, especially the comparably short parental leave, the extremely late introduction of women's suffrage, or the (in)famous Swiss banks. But generally, the perception of the Swiss as rather exclusive citizenship prevails. Iris, 22, stage designer, puts it this way: 'Some people even find it a bit exotic, that I am from Switzerland.'

Unlike the experiences of Swiss nationals in China, the negotiation of belonging in Northern Europe is initially less shaped by temporality and indeterminateness. Many of our respondents came to a Nordic country with the wish to stay, at least for some time. Several of them changed their country of residence due to love migration.<sup>14</sup> This kind of migratory experience differs in many ways from other mobility forms. Among other things, it facilitates the first stage of arrival and grants access to local knowledge and networks.

However, we encountered several stories where changing family situations and crucial life events challenge the relationship with the (second) country of residence and renders one's situation unexpectedly transient.

### 3 (Re-) Negotiating Switzerland from Afar

A majority of our interview partners describes, how through the experience of living abroad, Switzerland as a country and as their place of origin has taken on different meanings.

Generally, Switzerland is the place of their mostly happy childhood memories which they call their *heimat* and where they locate their roots. While still living 'at home', however, being Swiss as well as the way our respondents had lived in Switzerland was by most simply taken for granted and not reflected much on.

14 Russell King, 'Towards a New Map of European Migration.' *International Journal of Population Geography* 8 (2002): 89–106.



FIGURE 3.2 Departing flight from Oslo heading to Zurich  
PHOTO TAKEN BY SERAINA MÜLLER IN MARCH 2015

Some of the interview partners also took a critical stance towards their Swiss environment, seeing it as an overregulated, uneventful place with a rather narrow-minded and complacent society. Hence, they felt that they would be happier elsewhere where they could lead a less predetermined, and more challenging life.

In our interview partners' narratives, the growing geographical and timely distance after migration leads to a reevaluation of Switzerland and changes the relationship to it. Living abroad, respondents are all of a sudden constantly confronted with and sometimes reduced to their nationality and its assumed qualities. This triggers a reflection of their own identity and roots.

Additionally, the differing reality they encounter leads to a re-assessment of what they had experienced in and felt for Switzerland before. Even though those re-assessments remain multi-layered, and sometimes conflictive, overall, this 'bifocal' perspective sheds a rather positive light on their home country.<sup>15</sup> Many respondents, especially those living in China, describe how they came

15 Sarah J. Mahler, 'Theoretical and Empirical Contributions Toward a Research Agenda for Transnationalism.' *Transnationalism from Below*, eds. Michael P. Smith and Luis E. Guarnizo (London: Transaction Publisher, 1998), 64–102.

to appreciate the high standard of living, the efficient infrastructure and state system, and the beautiful nature in Switzerland. This makes many aware of and grateful for their privileged background, and proud of being Swiss.

This enduring, and sometimes reinforced belonging happens not only on an emotional level but also manifests itself in active efforts to keep social relationships with friends and family in Switzerland, travel back frequently and stay up to date by reading or watching Swiss news. In addition, many respondents work in transnational settings and some also rent, or own apartments both in China or Northern Europe, and Switzerland.

Switzerland, therefore, not only appears as the place of our respondents' roots, but also as their 'safe haven'. For those without a transnational life, it remains the haven to fall back on if things do not work out abroad, or if personal situations and needs change.

Sarah: 'Switzerland is so beautiful. (laughs) Switzerland is great. (laughs) I sometimes even become absorbed in the thought that everything will be good if I went back to Switzerland. Everything will be fine. ... I think I couldn't live here without this feeling.'<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, we have observed how crucial life events such as becoming a parent, marriage, divorce or ageing have triggered a renewed reflection of belonging in Switzerland. Indeed, some interview partners with children have moved back or are considering doing so. Moreover, Switzerland is in unison referred to as a perfect place to spend one's retirement. For some, this brings about some truly ambivalent feelings.

Annalea, 45, mother of 6 children and student of education science: 'If I were to go back to Switzerland as retiree, I guess I would then get my pension from Norway. I don't know how the rules are. I absolutely see myself moving to Switzerland now. I wouldn't have a problem with that. But all depends on the children. I don't want to do an ego-trip going back to Switzerland and leave my kids behind.'<sup>17</sup>

16 Interview conducted on December, 5th in Guangzhou, China. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Aldina Camenisch. Original quote in German: 'Ah, die Schweiz ist so schön. (lacht) Die Schweiz ist toll. (lacht) Ich verliere mich manchmal sogar im Gedanken, dass ich denke, wenn ich in die Schweiz zurück gehe, ist alles gut. Kommt alles gut. (...) Ich glaube, ohne dieses Gefühl könnte ich hier auch gar nicht so leben.'

17 Interview conducted on June, 10th, 2015, Sarpsborg, Norway. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Seraina Müller. Original quote in German: 'Wenn

While Switzerland stands for one's safe haven and eventual return migration for many, time and distance have enhanced estrangement from 'home' for others. For them, if were they to leave China or Northern Europe, they'd rather move to another country than back to Switzerland, or a return would only be seen as a 'stopover'. Hence, leaving Switzerland was the first step in an increasingly mobile lifestyle.

Jan, 32, social anthropologist: 'Switzerland is more on the margins for me. Either here (in Norway) or towards another country. Switzerland would then rather serve as a stopover. To go there and see how it has developed during the years. And then a different country. Norway would be my backup. I like it better here.'<sup>18</sup>

This feeling of alienation relates to another common demarcation that is being upheld among many of our interview partners. Even though they refer to themselves as Swiss, they don't see themselves as the 'average person' back in Switzerland, who, according to them, lacks their own adventurous, energetic and entrepreneurial spirit as much as sophistication and open-mindedness.

#### 4 Neither Here Nor There – Manifestations of a 'Third State of Belonging'

As we have described in the two preceding chapters, our interview partners' negotiations of belonging are shaped by rootedness as much as temporality, ambiguity and in-betweenness. In this chapter, we would like to conclude with an outline of these 'third positions'.

Some of the aspects of the Swiss migrants' negotiations of belonging described above, are mirrored in the notion of transnationalism.<sup>19</sup> Whereas they

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ich zurück in die Schweiz gehe als Pensionierte, dann hätte ich Pensionsgelder aus Norwegen. Ich weiss gar nicht, wie die Regeln sind. Ich kann mir gut vorstellen, jetzt in die Schweiz zu ziehen. Da hätte ich kein Problem. Aber es kommt auf die Kinder an. Denn ich will ja nicht als Egotrip zurück in die Schweiz und meine Kinder sind hier.'

18 Interview conducted on November, 12th, 2015, Oslo, Norway. The interview was held in German and the quote was translated by Seraina Müller. Original quote in German: 'Die Schweiz ist für mich eher etwas an der Aussenseite. Entweder hier oder in einem anderen Land. Die Schweiz wäre dann eher ein Zwischenhalt. Einmal dorthin zu sehen. Eventuell ein anderes Land und dann habe ich Norwegen als Back-up. Finde es hier besser.'

19 Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, Cristina Szanton Blanc, 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration.' *Anthropological Quarterly* 68.1 (1995): 48–63;





FIGURE 3.3 Entrance to a traditional Beijing courtyard (Hutong) in which a Swiss interview partner lives

PHOTO TAKEN BY ALDINA CAMENISCH IN JANUARY 2015

do feel 'at the right place' in their country of residence, Switzerland as the place of the roots and their home still holds a more or less important position in the personal 'geography of belonging' of respondents. Additionally, some also lead a transnational lifestyle through their work, living arrangements, or social relationships.

However, many experiences and feelings of our interview partners cannot be captured fully as a form of transnationalism. Rather, they seem to take on shapes that are more than solely rooted in or between two places. We have observed, how some of our respondents' personal 'geographies of belonging' have become multi-sited, situated in three, or more places, or even delocalised. Hence, as their life-courses are shaped by diversity and mobility, dichotomous and apparently durable notions of 'us' and 'them', and of clear-cut (trans-) national identities seem to apply no longer. Instead, their 'third states

of belonging' have to be seen as changing landscapes shaped by notions of mobility and transience.

Remarkably, even though most of our interview partners have been living in Northern Europe and China for many years, many do not negotiate their life abroad as a migration experience but rather as a more flexible, potentially temporary state of mobility. In some migration trajectories, ending up in Northern Europe or China came about rather coincidentally, or as a result of a gradual process starting with travelling. Hence, lines commonly drawn between travel, mobility and migration dissolve, leading to 'mobile lifestyles'.<sup>20</sup>

Still, our interview partners are not directly equivalent to the so-called transnational elite subjects who move effortlessly without any need and wish to root themselves in specific local circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

Rather, in line with Yeoh and Huang,<sup>22</sup> we argue that their experiences and considerations have to be understood as being shaped by specific social, economic and cultural contexts. Many of our interview partners correspondingly talked about how they have to a certain extent committed themselves to their Northern European or Chinese environment – but could also do so somewhere else.

This partly resonates in Hannerz'<sup>23</sup> notion of cosmopolitan lifestyles, which enables people to 'go local' in different settings, finding one's way into new cultural contexts and developing corresponding competences. However, Hannerz focuses in our opinion too much on rather short-term 'hopping in and out' of a sociocultural pattern and distinguishes in a problematic way between 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals'.

Another concept which could be developed further to discuss our data, is that of the 'third culture kids'. Pollock and Van Reken<sup>24</sup> describe third culture kids as being able to interact and connect with all sorts of socio-cultural contexts, but never fully immerse in them. Instead, they share a sense of belonging with people of similar background.

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Luis E. Guarnizo, Michael P. Smith, 'The Locations of Transnationalism.' *Transnationalism from Below*, eds. Michael P. Smith and Luis E. Guarnizo (London: Transaction Publisher, 1998), 1–34; Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

20 Scott A. Cohen, Tara Duncan, Maria Thulemark, 'Lifestyle Mobilites: The Crossroads of Travel, Leisure and Migration.' *Mobilities* 10.1 (2015): 155–172; Anthony Elliott, John Urry. *Mobile Lives* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010).

21 Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* (London: Blackwell 2001).

22 Brenda S. A. Yeoh, Shirlena Huang, 'Introduction: Fluidity and Friction in Talent Migration.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37.5 (2011): 681–990.

23 Ulf Hannerz, 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture.' *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 237–251.

24 David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken, *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1999.



Furthermore, we find Homi Bhabha's idea of a 'third space'<sup>25</sup> inspiring. But again, Bhabha's in-betweenness does not fully capture the experience of our respondents. Instead of the postcolonial identity politics identified by Bhabha, we observe a conscious maintenance of a life marked by living in a tension of 'in-betweenness' from a position of relative privilege (China) or only subtle power differentials (Northern Europe).

The in-betweenness we observe evolves in a non-linear process with unexpected twists and turns, partly as a result of an individualizing, and mobile world, partly influenced by biographical events. However, our respondents do not only react to influences. Instead their relative affluence provides them with (mobility) options and thus with the agency to decide whether, when and where to move on in their lives. Often, there is a backup plan, or at least the possibility to return to the 'safe haven' of Switzerland.

To sum up, the third positions we came across in our ethnographic research need further reflection and conceptualization. The point of departure could be the notion of in-betweenness of rather affluent, and mobile subjects, which results in often consciously chosen, and mainly fulfilling lifestyles but also entails feelings of vulnerability, and sometimes loneliness.

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25 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

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# Invited In but Kept Out: Experiences of Skilled Afrikaans-Speaking South African Immigrants in Australia

*Hanna Jagtenberg*

## Abstract

Based on ongoing fieldwork amongst white Afrikaans-speaking South African immigrants in Australia, in this chapter I argue that Australia's immigration policy contradicts everyday reality. The country actively recruits skilled South Africans, many of whom are Afrikaners/Afrikaans. Because they receive visas based on their qualifications and experience, they expect to find employment in Australia easily. Once arrived, however, they find that many Australians view them as foreigners who have come to steal their jobs. Consequently, they struggle to find employment and/or to advance their career. Underneath this problem lie the misleading perceptions that white-on-white migration is easy and that 'Western' cultures are similar, which contribute to false expectations. Thus, it appears that, in addition to their post-apartheid identity struggle in and alienation from their home country, the Afrikaners/Afrikaans people in Australia are now struggling to give meaning to their lives in a, for them, strange and often unwelcoming land.

## Keywords

Australia – South Africa – Afrikaners/Afrikaans people – skilled migration – white privilege – discrimination – false expectations – cultural differences – identity struggle

## 1 Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, Australia attracts a steady flow of skilled South African immigrants, many of whom belong to the 'white',<sup>1</sup> or Caucasian,

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1 Strictly speaking, skin colour is a physical attribute, not a state of being. However, in our racialised world, labels for skin colour are often used in the latter sense, i.e. as if people *are*

Afrikaans-speaking subgroup generally still known as 'Afrikaners', though increasingly as 'Afrikaans'.<sup>2</sup> Although the exact figure is difficult to determine, based on available data<sup>3</sup> I would argue that at least half of the 145,683 South Africans in Australia counted in the 2011 Census is Afrikaans, which means that this ethnocultural subgroup accounts for approximately 0,5 per cent of the Australian population, and the number continues to increase.<sup>4</sup> In light of this interesting phenomenon, I am currently conducting an ethnographic study on Afrikaans immigrant experiences in Australia for my doctoral degree at the University of Adelaide.<sup>5</sup> This chapter is thus based on empirical research. The data is collected through informal, semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, participant observation and the analysis of texts, mainly Facebook group discussions. Fieldwork has been conducted since September 2015 and will continue until the end of 2016. Thus far, approximately 130 people have participated in the research, 70 of whom through interviews. The research sample is drawn from those Afrikaans people that emigrated as adults (i.e. the first generation) between 1994 and today and is mainly selected through snowball sampling. The majority has emigrated as a nuclear family unit, and the average age of participants is between thirty and fifty years. The main fieldwork location is Adelaide/South Australia, though interviews have also been conducted in Sydney and Melbourne and will be conducted in Perth as well.

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indeed their skin. As such, the term 'white' has become a signifier of many other attributes, for example, 'powerful', 'wealthy', and 'privileged' amongst others. Although I follow the common usage of the concept, I have put it in quotation marks here, since I agree with Jon Stratton that it is, 'like all forms of racialised classifications [...] a discursive construction' Jon Stratton, *Uncertain Lives: Culture, Race and Neoliberalism in Australia* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 4.

- 2 My fieldwork observations lead me to conclude that the majority of Afrikaners prefers to be referred to as 'Afrikaans' nowadays, since they feel that the former name is associated with the apartheid regime. Respecting this, I use the new term throughout this chapter.
- 3 This calculation is based on the following three main sources: 'Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011', *Statistics South Africa*, viewed 7 March 2012, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022011.pdf>; Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011), 700–709; and Eliree Bornman, 'Emigrasie onder Afrikaners vandag', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 45.3 (2005): 386–399.
- 4 Other sources used are: Anikó Hatoss, Donna Starks and Henriette Janse van Rensburg, 'Afrikaans Language Maintenance in Australia', *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 34.1 (2011): 4–23; David Lucas, Acheampong Yaw Amoateng and Ishmael Kalule-Sabiti, 'International Migration and the Rainbow Nation', *Population, Space and Place* 12 (2006): 45–63; and Johann van Rooyen, *The New Great Trek: The Story of South Africa's White Exodus* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2000).
- 5 The research underlying this paper is being conducted with support of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Nearly all Afrikaans people that have participated in the research project thus far have left their home country primarily because they do not see a future for their children and, to a lesser extent, for themselves, in South Africa, due to their skin colour. The dominant perception is that, due to the majority African National Congress (ANC) government's post-1994 economic policies aimed at redressing apartheid's injustices, South Africa now knows 'reverse apartheid', meaning that white South Africans, and Afrikaans people in particular, are being discriminated against in the sense that they do not have equal access to education and jobs. Because of this, many interviewees<sup>6</sup> see themselves as (albeit privileged) political refugees who are no longer welcome in their home country. The main reason why they choose Australia as their destination country is because they perceive the transfer from South Africa's to Australia's job market to be relatively easy and because the two countries are viewed as culturally and geographically similar.<sup>7</sup>

These perceptions are mainly derived from the fact that the Australian government has increasingly focused on attracting skilled migrants since the mid-1990s,<sup>8</sup> and from stories participants heard from immigration agents at recruiting events in South Africa. Under Australia's State Specific and Regional Migration Schemes set up during the 1990s, various states have been very active and successful with specific recruitment programs (e.g. 'ImmigrationSA' in South Australia).<sup>9</sup> In collaboration with Australian or multinational companies, immigration agents and other organisations with a vested interest, Australian state governments organise information days or evenings, so-called 'Expo's', in major cities in South Africa, aimed at recruiting skilled migrants. Many

6 I am aware of the tendency among contemporary social scientists to speak of 'interlocutors' when referring to research participants, however, I choose to maintain the term 'interviewees', since I agree with Joost Beuving and Geert de Vries that the relationship between researcher and interviewee/informant is not an equal (reciprocal) one, i.e. '[the term interlocutor] disregards that we as researchers want to find out about society, and not the other way around' Joost Beuving and Geert de Vries, *Doing Qualitative Research: The Craft of Naturalistic Inquiry* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 45.

7 See also Eric Louw and Gary Mersham, 'Packing for Perth: The Growth of a Southern African Diaspora', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 10.2 (2001): 303–333; Van Rooyen, *New Great Trek*; Bruce Visser, 'From "Braai" to Barbecue: South African Immigration to Australia' (PhD diss., Flinders University, 2004).

8 Graeme Hugo, 'Change and Continuity in Australian International Migration Policy', *International Migration Review* 48.3 (2014): 868–890; Winnifred R. Louis, et al., 'Speaking Out on Immigration Policy in Australia: Identity Threat and the Interplay of Own Opinion and Public Opinion', *Journal of Social Issues* 66.4 (2010): 653–672; Visser, "Braai" to Barbecue.

9 'Immigration South Australia', Government of South Australia, Viewed 10 April 2016, <http://www.migration.sa.gov.au/>.

interviewees have attended such an ‘Expo’ before deciding to move to Australia. Most of them have subsequently entered the country on a Permanent Residency (PR) visa (subclass 190), which they were granted because Australia, or one specific state, had a shortage of people in their profession at that time (i.e. their occupation was on the ‘Skilled Occupation List’, more commonly known as the ‘skills list’).<sup>10</sup> The second major group was granted a Temporary Skilled (Worker) visa (subclass 457), which is an employer-sponsored visa for a period of up to four years.<sup>11</sup> During this time, this group applied for PR too, as it presents the pathway to citizenship.

## 2 Expectations vs. Reality

According to most research participants, at the ‘Expo’s’, Australia is presented as the land of milk and honey, i.e. a place where everything is wonderful and perfect (at least for skilled and white-skinned South Africans)<sup>12</sup> because they will get a job in no time and will easily adjust into Australian society, since the cultures are so similar. However, in their experienced reality, neither of these things is true. In the words of Carolien:

I think, with the immigration, there’s a lot of deceit. Many lies are being told to the people, because they send the immigration agents out, and they offer a night, they say: “Do you want to emigrate? Come and listen to so and so [...]”, and they guarantee it will be successful. And then they have all these things that they tell you, amongst others the one thing that South Africans are doing really well here, that South Africans are very much sought-after here, that they get jobs very easily, that their children are doing very well at school, all those things they say. And the people believe this.<sup>13</sup>

10 ‘Skilled Nominated Visa’, Australian Government, Viewed 14 May 2016, <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa-1/190->.

11 ‘Temporary Work (Skilled) Visa (Subclass 457)’, Australian Government, Viewed 14 May 2016, <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa-1/457->.

12 Australia has a long history of racial discrimination regarding (prospective) immigrants, epitomised by its ‘White Australia Policy’ (1901–1972) that denied access to anyone regarded as ‘non-white’, and is extremely restrictive towards non-skilled migrants and asylum seekers/refugees. See, for example, Louis, et al., ‘Speaking Out’; John Pilger, *A Secret Country: The Hidden Australia* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1991); Stratton, *Uncertain Lives*.

13 Carolien Jansen, interview with author, 2016. All citations from interviews in this chapter are my own translations from Afrikaans to English. To protect the identity of research

Another participant, Adriaan, stated:

Whether it's the immigration agents or the big companies [...], they need people to work in inhabitable [...] places, and therefore come to recruit in South Africa. They offer less wages than they would offer Australians, but for a South African it's much more since he's used to getting paid in Rand. What they don't realise, is that life in Australia is also much more expensive than in South Africa, so that their salary isn't so much as it seems in relative terms. So either way, with the migration agents or with the big companies, South Africans are being cheated. It's not a land of milk and honey, Australia.<sup>14</sup>

One woman said that, coming back from 'such a visit' [Expo]

you almost have the idea that when you land here [in Australia] and you get off the plane, that the people will get you and put you in a car and, with a driver, drive you to an employment. And this is absolutely not how it is.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, for many Afrikaans people reality is very different. Nearly all interviewees who entered Australia on PR visas without having secured a job beforehand struggled to get employment, specifically within their own profession. On average, it took them about two years and, for many, the job hunt took so long that they changed careers, usually entering into a lower economic sector (and thus class) than from which they came in South Africa: engineers became garbage collectors, lawyers became cleaners, consultants became security guards, managers became call centre operators. Those who did manage to get a job in their own field never started at their previous level: usually, they went two to three steps down the career ladder, which means that they lost five to ten years of working experience, like Paul for example, who had been working as a general manager in South Africa, and who only got a job as an operations manager in Australia. Many others had to do bridging courses or additional (university) course work and training in order to get their South African

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participants, pseudonyms are used. Since there are relatively few Afrikaans names, I have chosen Dutch names as pseudonyms, to prevent Afrikaans people in Australia from being identified by mistake. Dutch and Afrikaans names are usually quite similar.

14 Adriaan van de Berg, conversation with author, 2016.

15 Catharina Jacobs, interview with author, 2016.



qualifications certified in Australia. These extra trainings are usually expensive and time-consuming, causing people to rely heavily on their personal savings in their initial years in Australia, which places considerable financial strain on the families. In fact, this is one of the main reasons participants mentioned as to why some of their Afrikaans friends and acquaintances have returned to South Africa.

The perceived reason why Afrikaans people are struggling to get a job is that they are being discriminated against because of their immigrant status. Many research participants described Australians<sup>16</sup> as very discriminatory, having a negative and closed attitude towards foreigners, and as being far more racist than South Africans ever were.<sup>17</sup> In Adelaide in particular, Australian society is perceived as closed and cliquey, ruled by nepotism. The general feeling among Afrikaans people in Adelaide is that if you are not local, or if you do not know someone who is local, you will not get a (suitable) job. Some participants changed their surnames (to Australian/English ones) in order to be invited for job interviews; others deleted their South African experience from their résumés. Still, after that, they were rejected for not having local experience. Most participants feel, however, that the true reason for the rejection is being a foreigner. This sentiment is strengthened by the fact that frequently, after having gained the required local experience (often by working voluntarily for a number of months), they continue to be rejected, this time under the pretence that they are overqualified.

Indeed, Australians are thought to specifically dislike Afrikaans immigrants due to their relatively high qualifications. Perceivably, this makes Australians feel threatened and insecure, scared that these foreigners will bypass them or take their jobs. As a consequence of Australia's skill-based immigration policy, most contemporary immigrants, including the Afrikaans group, are in fact higher qualified than Australians.<sup>18</sup> In addition to this, most non-British immigrants are by definition bi- or multilingual, which, according to the

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16 With the term 'Australians', I refer to white-skinned descendants of Anglo-Celtic colonists, convicts and settlers. This is not because I do not acknowledge the existence of Aborigines or immigrant groups with Australian citizenship, but because this is the way in which my research participants, following mainstream Australian society, use the term.

17 This remark is usually made both with regards to Australia's genocidal history towards and continued oppression of Indigenous Australians, as well as to its contemporary treatment of immigrants and refugees/asylum seekers.

18 Lixin Cai and Amy Y.C. Liu, 'Wage Differentials between Immigrants and the Native-Born in Australia', *International Journal of Manpower* 36.3 (2015): 374–396; James Forrest, Ron Johnston and Michael Poulsen, 'Middle-Class Diaspora: Recent Immigration to Australia from South Africa and Zimbabwe', *South African Geographical Journal* 95.1 (2013): 50–69.



majority of interviewees, causes Australians, invariably described as being aggressively monolingualistic, to feel intimidated by them. One research participant, Peter, who lost his job in 2012 and has been unemployed since then, regardless of sending out over 350 applications, said that 'you should not put on your CV that you can speak multiple languages, because you won't get the job: they'll feel intimidated and they'll know you're foreign'.<sup>19</sup> Since South Africa's education system was of a very high standard before 1994, and since the research participants were among those who had access to it (being 'white' South Africans), they are arguably among the best-qualified immigrants Australia currently attracts. Also, Afrikaans people generally invest considerably in their children's education and they stimulate them to do well in school and get university degrees. Most interviewees experience the Australian public education standard to be shockingly low, and they therefore send their children to private schools, if they can afford it. They find that Australian society does not value tertiary education much and that the trades are seen as more important. The consequence of this perceived difference is that Australians are thought to feel even more threatened by Afrikaans immigrants, as they fear that these immigrant children will steal their children's (future) jobs. Some research participants stated that they have received literal accusations of this kind.

Once employed, whether in their own field or in another type of job, many interviewees find that they are unable to advance their career.<sup>20</sup> Those that do bridging courses and ultimately acquire a position within their own sector, usually compete with young Australians that come fresh out of university without any strange accent. It seems that participants' South African working experience is not recognised in Australia, and therefore they start from scratch (as previously stated, going back five to ten years in career). Also, it proves to be hard for them to climb the career ladder. Most feel that this is because Australians generally dislike having immigrants as their manager/boss. In the words of Bettie, who was in a leading position for a little while, but decided to step back,

[...] because I found they don't tolerate other cultures as in charge of them. You can be the best worker, you can be the most appropriate person or equipped person, but because [of] your accent, I found that they

19 Peter de Keizer, conversation with author, 2015.

20 This also applies to those who did secure a job before emigrating and to 457 visa holders. It does not apply to 'expats' – those who transferred within the company they worked for – nor to university graduates recruited by multinationals.

don't accept us [...] you're regarded, you're seen as criticizing, or telling them what to do, [...] and that's why so many of our friends really struggle, 'cause they want to go into second line of management or so, and that's just unacceptable.<sup>21</sup>

Another participant, Simone, sees colleagues being promoted to positions of which she did not even know were vacant. This, combined with the fact that after two years of working at this company, still not all her colleagues talk to her, makes her believe that they are deliberately shutting her out and preventing her from advancing her career.<sup>22</sup>

### 3 White Privilege and Cultural Differences

From the above it is clear that many Afrikaans immigrants feel discriminated against by Australians in the job market. Apart from the fact that they did not anticipate this at all (based on the information they received pre-emigration),<sup>23</sup> it seems to come as an extra shock to them, since both groups belong to the privileged 'white' peoples of our current world order. It appears that, perhaps as a consequence of the general unawareness of 'being white' (i.e. 'white privilege'<sup>24</sup> is so normal to those who enjoy it, that they are oblivious to it),<sup>25</sup> an unconscious expectation exists that discrimination does not occur within the 'white' group. The shock becomes clear in research participants' comments such as 'even though we are white, they misuse us'.<sup>26</sup> A number of interviewees actually found that Afrikaans immigrants are having a harder time than those who are visibly different from Australians, such as people from the East/Asia,

21 Bettie Veenendaal, interview with author, 2015.

22 Simone Raaijmakers, interview with author, 2016.

23 It further appears that they are not warning each other/respective new Afrikaans immigrants for the anticipated difficulties. Explanations given for this are mainly cultural: to be struggling is seen as a weakness in Afrikaans culture, and therefore people often choose not to show their true feelings or express how things are really going.

24 The term 'white privilege' was famously defined by Peggy McIntosh as 'an invisible package of unearned assets that [white people] can count on cashing in each day [...]' Cited in Steve Garner, *Whiteness: an Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 35–36 and can be seen as a consequence of European colonial conquest.

25 See, e.g., Garner, *Whiteness*, 34–39, or Ben Wadham, 'What Is Whiteness? Authenticity, Dominance, Identity', *Placing Race and Localising Whiteness: Conference Proceedings for the Placing Race and Localising Whiteness' Conference*, eds. Susanne Schech and Ben Wadham (Flinders University: Flinders Press, 2004), 22.

26 Laura van Oosten, interview with author, 2015.

precisely because they (Afrikaans people) look exactly like them (Australians). Many stated that, in interaction with Australians, before speaking, they were treated exactly the same. However, 'the moment you open your mouth, they pick up you're not Australian, and then they go like: no, no, no, no, no'.<sup>27</sup>

It further appears that Afrikaans people do not perceive the experienced discrimination to be racially motivated (since they are 'white'), but rather as foreigner-motivated, i.e. as discrimination against immigrants in general, de facto against anyone who does not come from Anglo-Celtic heritage. They feel that white South African immigrants of British descent are not, or much less, discriminated against in Australia, since they are seen as an extension of the UK. As one interviewee stated: 'The moment you walk in with an accent that is not British or Scottish or Irish or Welsh, it's not good enough'.<sup>28</sup> Historically, Australia has always focused on attracting immigrants from the UK, and within its long-term 'White Only Policy', British subjects were the only people that could enter Australia freely, provided that they were 'white'.<sup>29</sup> The definition of 'whiteness'<sup>30</sup> was only extended on rational terms, at times when Australia saw its need to populate the country as greater than its aspiration of remaining a 'white' country (i.e. 'Populate or Perish').<sup>31</sup> It seems that, where in earlier times this definition was extended to the Irish, the Greeks and the Italians, currently it is being done for white South Africans.<sup>32</sup> As one participant said: 'On the surface, their [Australians] attitude is "yes, we want immigrants here", and in their brain, they realise they have to, but in their hearts, they don't want to'.<sup>33</sup> The 'brain' here can be symbolically seen as the Australian government or official policy, and the 'heart' as the Australian people, or the lived reality. The research participants' experiences and perceptions seem to confirm findings of previous research in this regard. According to the World Justice Project's Rule of Law

27 Rianne Hoogendijk, interview with author, 2015.

28 Laura van Oosten, interview with author, 2015.

29 James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 14–15.

30 As stated before, 'Whiteness' is not simply the state of having white skin. It is a social concept that may best be described as 'an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct' which, due to the history of European colonization 'has become an ideal of being the bearer of "Western" civilization [...] and as such, is a fantasy position' Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (New York: Routledge and Annadale NSW: Pluto Press Australia, 2000), 58.

31 See, e.g. Stratton, *Uncertain Lives*; Pilger, *Secret Country*; and Jupp, *White Australia*.

32 With the relatively large influx of Asian immigrants in recent times being given a status of 'honorary whiteness' Stratton, *Uncertain Lives*, 215.

33 Ineke van Veen, interview with author, 2015.

Index, Australia ranks almost at the bottom when it comes to discrimination against immigrants.<sup>34</sup> Also, despite being a 'traditional' immigration country,<sup>35</sup> between the 1950s and the early twenty-first century, the proportion of Australians who believed that there were too many immigrants in the country has on average been about 44 per cent.<sup>36</sup>

Linked to the misleading perception that migration within the white privileged group is easy, pre-immigration, all research participants believed that Australian- and Afrikaans cultures were similar, since they are both 'Western'. Although, given the developments in South Africa since 1994, the country may no longer be regarded as 'Western', its basic economic principles are and the Afrikaans subculture is. The term broadly indicates values such as neoliberal capitalism, parliamentary democracy, individual freedom, equality, and Christianity, and refers to a common geographical descendancy from northwestern Europe.<sup>37</sup> However, upon arrival in Australia, nearly all research participants experienced a very real culture shock, which continues to be part of their daily-lived experience, even after having stayed in Australia for many years. In reality, it appears that only those relatively superficial cultural similarities derived from the two countries' geographical locations and climatological circumstances, i.e. an outdoor lifestyle (camping, sports, barbecuing, beach life), are indeed comparable. Most interviewees define culture in terms of values however, and the deeper, underlying values and corresponding norms of Afrikaans culture are perceived to be fundamentally different from those of Australians.

To discuss the experienced cultural differences in-depth is beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, it suffices to list the four main and interrelated dichotomies that Afrikaans immigrants perceive to exist between Australian culture and their own. Most importantly, Afrikaans culture is seen as Christian, whereas Australian culture is viewed as atheist. Related to that, Afrikaans culture is thought of as valuing hard work, ambition and innovation, whereas Australian

34 Anne Susskind, 'Essential Freedoms, Yes, but Our Undertow Is Ugly', *Law Society Journal: The Official Journal of the Law Society of New South Wales* 48.11 (2010): 26–29, 26.

35 Hugo, 'Change and Continuity', 868.

36 Louis, et al., 'Speaking Out', 654.

37 The values listed here are not inclusive and represent prevailing ideas about 'Westernness', which are, in line with white privilege, dictated by 'the West' and as such regarded as positive. I would argue that each of them is, to its own extent, much more a normative aspiration than a reality, except perhaps for neoliberalism. Also, to the list could arguably be added: obsessive self-control, rationality, order and the repression of emotions, which manifest themselves somatically in rigidity (see Dyer 'White' 1988, 1997 cited in Garner, *Whiteness*, 49), cultural gentility (see Paynter "The Cult of Whiteness in Western New England," 2001 cited in Garner, *Whiteness*, 49), arrogance, and, above all, hypocrisy.

culture is perceived as consciously stimulating mediocrity. Also, whereas before emigration Afrikaans people perceived Australia, like South Africa, to be a capitalist country, in their overall experience it is much more a socialist state. Finally, Australian culture is seen as British, which is invariably described as polite, politically correct, pretentious/fake and dishonest, whereas Afrikaans culture is seen as continental European (mainly Dutch/German), which is viewed as direct, straightforward, no-nonsense/'what you see is what you get', and honest. It is important to note here that human beings generally have the tendency to view the 'in-group' as positive and the 'out-group' as negative (i.e. 'positive distinctiveness').<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the described experiences are real to the Afrikaans immigrants concerned, and the felt disconnects make their settlement process in Australia difficult.<sup>39</sup> In fact, it is stated as one of the main reasons why many return to South Africa.

Nearly all research participants mentioned knowing families that have returned to South Africa because they could not adjust to Australian culture. For most interviewees however, returning is not an option, as they feel completely alienated from their home country, not seeing any future for their children, themselves, or for their people there. Ever since apartheid has ended, Afrikaans people have been struggling to give meaning to their lives in the new South Africa.<sup>40</sup> It seems that, by leaving for Australia, this struggle has merely gotten extra dimensions.

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- 39 By contrast, based on their study conducted in Perth, Forrest, Johnston and Poulsen claim that white South African immigrants readily assimilate into the Australian community and labour and housing markets. Forrest, Johnston and Poulsen, 'Middle-Class Diaspora', 51, 54. Their findings are solely based on surveys, and it is not clear how many Afrikaans people were part of their study, though perhaps I will also find that Afrikaans immigrant experiences are different in Perth.
- 40 See, e.g. Jacob R. Boersema, 'Afrikaner, Nevertheless: Stigma, Shame, and the Sociology of Cultural Trauma' (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2013); Rebecca Davies, *Afrikaners in the New South Africa: Identity Politics in a Globalized Economy* (London: Taurus, 2009); June Goodwin and Ben Schiff, *Heart of Whiteness: Afrikaners Face Black Rule in the New South Africa* (New York: Scribner, 1995).

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# *Hostipitality* in Post-War Society

Lana Pavić

## Abstract

Following the theoretical path of hospitality – a principle strongly marked by its *aporia* from antiquity until present, this paper examines the contemporary problem of hospitality towards migrant strangers, from the perspective of Croatian political practice. Croatia, as a society that has for centuries produced economic and political migrants, is the only EU state with recent experience of serious warfare. The *Homeland War* (1991–1995) has made hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people and refugees. Nonetheless, social experience of displacement did not make contemporary Croatian policy more inclined towards asylum seekers and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. In late summer 2015, Croatia was confronted with daily flow of thousands of migrants on their way to Germany and Scandinavia. Even though the left-liberal government at the time, in cooperation with the group of civil society organisations, answered humanely and provided corridors, food and medical help, dominant public opinion called for more caution and closure of the borders. These acts of both hospitality and hostility provoke *hostipitality*, a theoretical and practical concept that disables true acceptance of Others – strangers migrants in need.

## Keywords

hospitality – hostipitality – stranger migrant – post-war – Croatia – asylum seeker – refugee

## 1 Introduction

The principle of hospitality and the problem of cosmopolitanism are two inseparable concepts of European thought and political practice that can be traced from antiquity. Although philosophy and political literature contain numerous academic texts on this topic, strong *aporia* present in the term of hospitality does not allow simplified conclusions, as well as unified

application of this principle in the interaction between individuals and states.

European political practices of offering hospitality, i.e. accepting different groups of strangers (economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers) in non-domicile territories, is no less complex than the theoretical dispute regarding the principle of hospitality. Higher advocacy of internal and external sovereignty, as well as ethnical, religious and cultural homogeneity of European states, is contrary to the idea of universal human rights which supersede national borders and affiliation to the specific corpus of citizens. This is especially noted in the current *migrant crisis* provoked by war and destruction in North Africa and the Middle East, compelling millions of people to seek safety in European states.

To corroborate the issues noted in the introduction, this paper has three fundamental goals: firstly, it will give a brief overview of theoretical understanding of the complicated principle of hospitality and its connection to the term of *hostipitality*. Secondly, the focus will shift to the practice explaining the unique Croatian position in the story of *hostipitality*, which is, at the same time, directly related to the actual *migrant crisis*. Finally, it will give a conclusion rising from the fusion of theory and practice, particularly relevant for European societies that have established their statehood lately and do not have enough experience in accepting strangers/migrants.

## 2 Theoretical Understanding of Hospitality

Hospitality is a word of Latin origin marking a special form of interaction among individuals of different cultural, national, religious or political communities. In ancient Greece, hospitality was considered to be more than the act of friendship between Greeks – providing the food and shelter for the stranger traveller was one of the main demands by the supreme god Zeus. Not obeying this principle resulted in the wrath of gods, but it was manifested solely on other Greeks, meaning those who spoke Greek language, and not on *radical Others* – barbarians.

With the emergence of Cynics, starting with Diogenes from Sinope, the notion of cosmopolitanism began to spread. Namely, Diogenes was the first person to be attributed with the use of the word *kosmopolitēs* with which he marked himself as a citizen of the world.<sup>1</sup> This type of cosmopolitanism, as a

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1 Anthony Long, The Concept of the Cosmopolitanism in Greek and Roman Thought. *Daedalus*. 137:3 (2008), 55.

concept of universal hospitality, would be developed with time into an understanding of the human community as a worldwide city, under one universal law, and it will become a significant philosophical term within the Stoic school of thought. In the centre of Stoic understanding was the desire to replace the central role of the *polis* with the idea of *kosmos*, where humanity would live in harmony. Thus, the human simultaneously inhabits two worlds – the local, where one was born, and the one vastly broader that is common to us all, allowing equal values for every person. ‘Allegiance is owed, first and foremost, to the moral realm of all humanity, not to the contingent groupings of nation, ethnicity and class.’<sup>2</sup>

Despite such moral allegiance to humanity, people live in bordered political communities, since modernity onwards called states – the logic of which is reduced to internal and external sovereignty. Therefore, what is put upon the idea of cosmopolitan community and understandings of hospitality as the principle problem, is how to regulate relations between people when states stand in between.

By establishing the state as a new *ideal* frame for human life, the international system of states is constructed. The regulation of such system will be one of the fundamental tasks of Immanuel Kant.

Kant would underline the term of hospitality in his brief but defining essay in modernity – *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Kant’s cosmopolitanism is impossible without the principle of hospitality because it is the right of every man on the Earth’s surface for protection and sanctuary in any part of the world. It determines ‘the right of a stranger not to be treated in a hostile manner’.<sup>3</sup> Without such universal comprehension of hospitality the realisation of the law of world citizenship becomes impossible. By Kant’s interpretation, hospitality ceases to be an act of philanthropy (as well as Greek friendship, a prerequisite for Roman imperial conquering of the world or Christian charity). From Kant onward, hospitality becomes legal requirement – it becomes a right. This right for acceptance under life-threatening conditions should not be denied to anyone, since denying hospitality and returning the endangered individual to one’s native state could end one’s life. Disregarding such an advancement in understanding of hospitality, Kant will define the difference between the right for temporary (*Besuchsrecht*) and permanent residence on foreign territory

2 David Held, ‘Principles of Cosmopolitan Order.’ In *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Gillian Broc and Harry Brighouse (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10.

3 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 82.

(*Gastrecht*). As long as the guest acts peacefully, one is not to be treated with hostility, locked up or tortured. Should the guest want to obtain permanent residence in the new environment the right for hospitality will then become restricted and dependent on the specific agreement between the host and the guest.

European territory was dominated for centuries by the idea of an empire, the logic of which thrives towards constant expansion and relativizing of the borders, minimising the strangeness amongst the conquered nations. By establishing national states with defined territory and population, the understanding of the notion of strangeness changes because the right to reside inside the state is given only to those within the corpus of the citizens, while the others become intruders. Therefore after Kant, the theoretical directionality (as well as political practice) would be put on the idea of nation and on legal positivism, instead of cosmopolitanism and hospitality. Only after the terrifying experiences of WWII, and especially after the Cold war, the notion of cosmopolitanism returns to the focus of European political theory.

Even though the fall of the Berlin Wall will awaken the new spirit of European community, Eastern Europe, liberated from Soviet dominance, will rediscover the concept of nation. European territory, therefore, becomes divided in ideals, although the idea of cosmopolitanism seemingly prevails. However, this *new cosmopolitanism*, as suggested by Rebeca Lettevall and Kristian Petrov,<sup>4</sup> has its base in the selective display of Kant's thought, but is, at the same time, contrary to the real situation. Instead of applying the idea by which borders become less relevant and societies more unified, in terms of human rights and freedom, the political practice in the Central and Eastern Europe turns to ethnocentric nationalism.

Historically, Europe has perhaps more than any other area in the world internally, as well as externally, being conceptualized as universalistic civilisation – the birthplace of the Reason, Science, Democracy, Human Rights and Economic Globalisation.

Paradoxically, however, it has all along being dependent upon archaic patterns of essentialist dichotomisation.<sup>5</sup>

4 Rebeca Lettevall and Kristian Petrov, 'Toward a Critique of Cosmopolitan Reason.' In *Critique of Cosmopolitan Reason – Timing and Spacing the Concept of World Citizenship*, ed. Rebeca Lettevall and Kristian Petrov (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 5.

5 Ibid.

The division of Europe and the problem with the notion of Europe itself, as well as the practice of cosmopolitanism and hospitality within it, will be prominently noted by French moral philosophers. They clearly demonstrate how 'western metaphysical heritage, grounded in Greco Roman thought, has generally discriminated against the Other in favour of the Same'<sup>6</sup> and, therefore, focus on the question of the Other – the acceptance of the strangers. Amongst many, the contributions of Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida stand out.

Derrida constructed the notion of absolute as opposed to conditional hospitality, which he attributes to Kant. The main objection to Kant's notion is that the legal definition of hospitality is inevitably perverted every time the person seeking hospitality is posed with conditions. Derridean absolute or unconditional hospitality, according to Kearney<sup>7</sup> marks the break with everyday conventions of hospitality governed by rights, contracts, duties and pacts:

[...] absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with the family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.)... but to the absolute other, unknown, anonymous other and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive [...]<sup>8</sup>

Derrida distinguishes the *politics* of hospitality from the *ethics* of hospitality. Politics is marked by obstructions, borders and caution, while ethics of hospitality demands radical opening towards stranger and his acceptance, disregarding all risks which may arise. Such radical understanding has attracted criticism by contemporary authors who have deemed it an inapplicable ethical ideal.

But Derrida in his philosophy is not being naive. What he wants to emphasise by such sharpened definition of hospitality is the permanence of the European acceptance of the Other. Derrida sees Kant's hospitality as a 'constant point of reference for us and throughout the whole tradition that has carried it on.'<sup>9</sup> Hyperbolic demand for absolute hospitality only emphasises the problem

6 Richard Kearney, 'Strangers and Others: From Deconstruction to Hermeneutics.' *Critical Horizons*. 3.1 (2002), 8.

7 Richard Kearney. 'Others and Aliens – Between Good and Evil.' In *Evil After Postmodernism – Histories, Narratives, and Ethics*, ed. Jennifer L. Geddes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 105.

8 Jacques Derrida, 'Of Hospitality – Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond' (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000a), 25.

9 Derrida, 'Of Hospitality', 41.

of European philosophic, linguistic and religious heritage that even today stands in the way of the true acceptance of the Other, especially when European states are not faced with stranger individuals, but thousands of Others in need. Given that, he forges the term *hostipitality* to show how hospitality has a 'troubled and troubling origin,'<sup>10</sup> i.e. word *hostis* having the multiple meaning of guest/stranger/enemy which opens the inseparability between the understanding of the term hospitality and the term hostility

So do we know what hospitality really is? According to Derrida, it is a self-contradiction, an *aporia* because it 'carries its own contradiction incorporated into it.'<sup>11</sup>

### 3 Case Study – Croatia

Croatia is the only state of the European Union that, in its recent past, had the experience of long lasting war that caused mass migration and the creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. The *Homeland War* that occurred in the midst of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the process of Croatian independence, lasted between 1991 and 1995. Armed conflicts stopped in 1995 but did not mark the end of military occupation of Croatian territory. The restoration of the entire territory under Croatian sovereignty and the beginning of the partial return of refugees to the remaining occupied territories occurred in 1998 with the process of *Peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium*.

As stated by Esterajher,<sup>12</sup> during the mentioned eight years the system of care for the refugees distinguished four groups of migrants: displaced persons, returnees, refugees and refugees in transit. At the peak of the migration crisis by the end of 1991, 700 000 people lost their homes; 150 000 people became refugees while 550 000 people were displaced within Croatia. Due to the outbreak of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 160 000 people sought refuge in Croatia in the period from April until December 1992. The additional influx of refugees from the occupied areas in Croatia and other former Yugoslav republics lasted until 1995.

The *Homeland War* was not the only huge wave of immigration from Croatia to safe European states. Croatia traditionally creates migrants. The first

10 Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality.' *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*. 5.3 (2006), 3.

11 Ibid.

12 Josip Esterajher, 'Iskustva zbrinjavanja prognanika i izbjeglica i suvremena izbjegličko-migrantska kriza u Hrvatskoj.' *Političke analize*. 23 (2015), 16.

significant migration of Croatian populations started in the period of Ottoman conquests and culminated by the end of the 19th and during 20th century. Mass emigration of the poor part of Croatian population started during 1960s and 1970s when Tito's Yugoslavia was opening towards the West, primarily for the economic reasons, but also to discard the political enemies. Most of the migrants in those times sought sanctuary in the Western Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the USA and Canada, while the earlier generations of migrants found their sanctuary in the states of Latin America, Australia and New Zealand. Such course of emigration in the last 150 years created numerous diaspora. Today's estimate is that circa 4 000 000 Croatians live abroad, almost as much as in the homeland. Besides mentioned, the Central Bureau of Statistics (DZS) estimates that between 60 000 and 100 000 people have left Croatia only in the past decade, predominantly due to economic reasons.<sup>13</sup>

Did the war experience of being a refugee, as well as the more recent economic migration, make the citizens of Croatia more sensitive to those who do not belong to the same national and cultural circle but share the same fate? What is the attitude of Croatian citizens' towards strangers, particularly refugees and economic migrants? How did Croatian citizens react to the recent *migrant crisis*?

Research conducted in 2013, at the time of Croatian accession to the EU, showed that the stable majority (over 50% population) had no xenophobic attitudes towards strangers.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the other half expresses negative attitudes towards ethnic groups with whom they coexist. That primarily refers to the Roma people (up to 44%) and Serbs (up to 38%). Additionally, a higher percentage of xenophobia is being shown towards groups with which they have not yet had contact, in research marked as: Chinese (up to 32%), Arabs (up to 27%) and asylum seekers (up to 37%).

Generally speaking, the citizens of the Republic of Croatia are in greater measure in accordance with the restrictive, rather than liberal politics of giving citizenship to immigrants. On average, they express equally mild positive attitude towards immigration of foreigners who come to Croatia for education, while they hold negative attitude towards the immigration of economic migrants and asylum seekers.<sup>15</sup>

13 Ivana Tomić, 'Gotovo sto tisuća ljudi iselilo se iz Hrvatske u proteklih deset godina' Viewed on June, 02, 2016. <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/gotovo-100-tisuca-ljudi-iselilo-se-iz-hrvatske-u-protekljih-10-godina---334253.html>.

14 CMS, *Istraživački izvještaj – Zastupljenost i indikatori diskriminacijskih i ksenofobičnih stavova u Republici Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Centar za mirovne studije, 2013), 29.

15 Ibid.





FIGURE 5.1 *Departure to a better future?* Croatian Police supervise arrival of the refugees in Croatia at the railway station Tovarnik at Croatian–Serbian border in order to control their further transit to Slovenia, late summer 2015.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ZAGREB CENTER FOR PEACE STUDIES

Such attitudes are to a certain degree hypocritical regarding the continuous emigration of Croats to other Western states but also because Croatia was never the desired refuge for migrant strangers. In eleven years (2004–2015) less than 5000 people requested asylum in Croatia (just 133 persons qualified for some kind of legal protection). During the recent *migrant crisis* strangers migrants did not ask for a permanent place in Croatia. What they asked for was predominantly just passage and opening the borders; not to enter and stay, but to enter and carry on.

As a result of closing the migration route through Hungary at the end of summer 2015, Croatia was caught completely unprepared. The left liberal government reacted in opposition to the governments of neighbour states, stating that the migrants will be given help in their search for safe and organized transit to their desired sanctuaries. As a land of ‘small possibilities but big heart’,<sup>16</sup> Croatia decided to treat migrants humanely. The Prime Minister Milanović, at the same time, rejected the possibility of Croatia being forced to give more permanent shelter to the refugees: ‘On the third day following the first arrival of the refugees in Croatia, he repeated that Croatia did not want to be a hot spot for Europe.’<sup>17</sup>

President Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, as well as a number of political parties adhering to the leading conservative party – the Croatian Democratic Union

16 Jasna Čapo, ‘The Security Scape and the (In)Visibility of Refugees: Managing Refugee Flow Through Croatia.’ *Migracijske i etničke teme*. 3 (2015), 393.

17 Ibid.



(HDZ), opposed the government's decisions, but not because they considered them to be inadequately empathetic towards migrants. Rather, they accused the government for endangering the national interests and subsequently advocated a complete ban of passage through Croatia by sending the military to safeguard the national borders.

#### 4 Conclusion

Contemporary theoretical debate on hospitality indicates that in meeting the stranger a plethora of feelings, from xenophilia to xenophobia, appears. That spectrum of emotions causes the risk of that what is offered to the stranger: hospitality or hostility.

The case of Croatia clearly demonstrates that, despite its recent war experience, Croatia is not yet ready for the ethics and practice of hospitality towards the groups of migrant strangers outside its national and cultural circle. Moreover, it demonstrates how in preventing hospitality to become hostility, much more is needed than the mere opening of the door for trans-passage. Today's notion of hospitality demands more effort of European policy-makers in the development of mutual migrant policies that proceed beyond partial and depleted models of integration. These policies must not be marked solely by temporary assistance towards individual strangers migrants. They have to be adequately designed for acceptance of larger endangered groups with which Europeans must be prepared to share the same limited territory, even when there is no direct short term socio-economic benefit for EU states. Hospitality is then only the first act of a complex process of integration of strangers into new surroundings where it is not known for how long they will stay and whether their stay will be permanent. Such process of *implacement*<sup>18</sup> should include both the hosts and the guests, as it should happen by degree, leaving enough time for adjustment to both parties in the process. This is not an easy task because:

Most Western discourses of identity are predicated upon some unconscious projection of an Other who is not 'us'. At the collective level of politics, this assumes the guise of an elect 'nation' or 'people' defining itself over and against an alien adversary.<sup>19</sup>

18 Edward S. Casey, 'Strangers at the Edge of Hospitality.' In *Phenomenologies of the Stranger*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 30–48.

19 Kearney, 'Strangers and Others', 14.

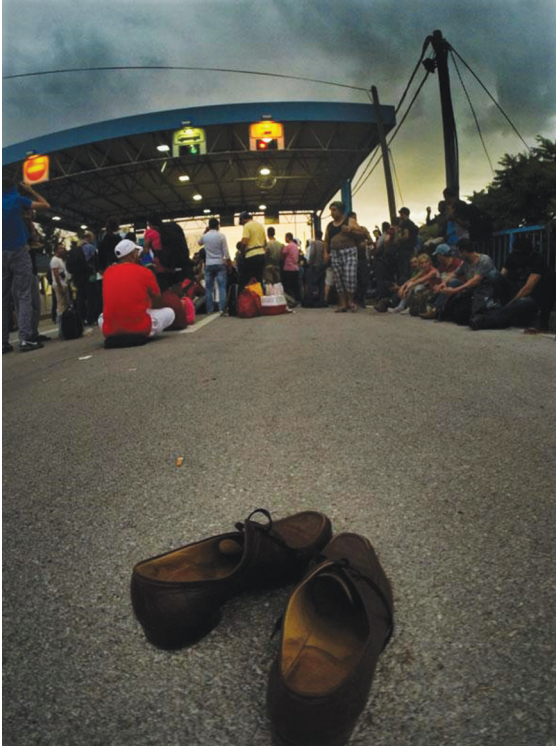


FIGURE 5.2 *Abandoned shoes*. Refugees waiting to enter in the Schengen Area at the Croatian–Slovenian border Harmica, September 2015.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ZAGREB CENTER FOR PEACE STUDIES

During the realisation of this process it is important to insist on three elements: the element of the right – traced from Kant; the ethical element – Derrida's heritage, and the political element based on the idea of cosmopolitanism. The latter element represents a complex task for all European societies and especially post-socialist member states of the EU. Their political history and political culture was not rooted in liberal democracy and in the understanding of citizenship defined apart from affiliation to the same nation. Only then the policy of complete exclusion, marked by *ad hoc* responses to a concrete problem, will be transformed towards pluralistic models of integration<sup>20</sup> for the ones who need European hospitality instead of *hostipitality*.

20 Snježana Gregurović et al., *Integration of Migrants in the European Union With Reference to Croatia – Position Paper of the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies* (Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnost, 2016), 5.



FIGURE 5.3 *Solidarity has no borders*. Volunteers of the Welcome Initiative supporting refugees at the temporary refugee centre in small Croatian town Opatovac on Croatian – Serbian border, autumn 2015.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ZAGREB CENTER FOR PEACE STUDIES

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# Lost and Found in Limerick: Exploring the Experiences of Migrants Who Have Made Limerick Their Home

*Michelle Ryan*

## Abstract

This chapter examines the lived experiences of asylum seekers and refugees who have made Limerick (a small city in the Midwest of Ireland) their home over the past decade. The emphasis was originally on both *cultural bereavement* (what migrants leave behind) and *cultural gain* (what tangible supports they have found in Limerick that enable them to form new identities and move forward with their lives). The study focuses particularly on those individuals who have lived in, or are currently living in, a system called *Direct Provision* and the challenges that they face.

## Keywords

migrants – asylum seekers – refugees – cultural bereavement – direct provision – loss and grief

## 1 Introduction

This study explores the lived experience of migrants who have settled in Limerick in the last ten years to gain an understanding of their situation in two respects: (i) what they have lost (specifically cultural bereavement) and also (ii) what they found in their new home in Limerick to help them build new identities and communities. As the research progressed, the wider global displacement of people featured consistently throughout the media. The picture of Aylan Kurdi, the 3 year old Syrian boy whose body washed up on the beach in Turkey went viral within days of being posted

online.<sup>1</sup> People of all backgrounds, nationalities and religions mourned the child's death. Even locally in County Limerick, a project was set up to offer accommodation to Syrian refugees in a 'pledge a bed' campaign.<sup>2</sup> This refocused the research project to migrants who had come to Limerick and were seeking asylum or refugee status. There is little literature published on this topic because it is very new to the Irish context, so this research may prove timely. The main themes of existing migrant literature addresses psychological impact, children in direct provision and trauma.<sup>3</sup> This research will investigate the lived experience of individuals who reside in Direct Provision. This is the system used in Ireland to deal with asylum seekers and refugees. People are accommodated in residential institutions, where they can remain for many years. They are prohibited from working and from cooking for themselves and individuals share living space, whole families occupying one room.

## 2 Key Objectives and Methodology

This chapter will review the background to immigration in Ireland, then examine the system that is called Direct Provision, which Ireland uses to manage asylum seekers and refugees. Then it will discuss the situation from an NGO perspective and finally move on to the emerging themes from the research. The main purpose is to review the lived experience of migrants. I carried out a pilot study before meeting the five participants who were willing to share their story with me. Some of these I contacted through my supervisor at the Limerick Institute of Technology and others I met through an NGO based in Limerick called *Doras Luimni* (I will talk about this organisation further in the

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- 1 Anne Bernard and Karam Shaloumi, 'Image of Drowned Syrian, Aylan Kurdi, 3, Brings Migrant Crisis into Focus', *New York Times*, 2015, accessed 6 June 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/04/world/europe/syria-boy-drowning.html>
  - 2 Anne Sheridan, '450 Beds in Limerick Pledged to Refugees', *Limerick Leader*, September 2015, accessed 30 September 2016 <https://www.limerickleader.ie/news/local-news/196020/450-beds-in-Limerick-pledged-to.html>
  - 3 Dermot A. Ryan, Ciarán A. Benson, and Barbara A. Dooley, 'Psychological Distress and the Asylum Process', *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 196.1 (2008): 37–45; Alastair Christie, 'Unsettling the "Social" in Social Work: Responses to Asylum Seeking Children in Ireland', *Child Family Social Work* 8.3 (2003): 223–231; Bryan Fanning, Angela Veale, and Dawn O'Connor, *Beyond the Pale: Asylum-Seeking Children and Social Exclusion in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Refugee Council, 2001); Theophilus Ejorh, 'Modern African Migrations to Ireland: Patterns and Contexts', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38.4 (2012): 577–593.

chapter.) One of the challenges was to find participants, because people are reluctant to talk for many reasons: they don't wish to revisit traumatic experiences, they don't want to appear to be complaining about their circumstances for fear it will have a negative impact on their asylum seeking process. Also some participants are simply tired of telling their story. The people I met are either currently residing in direct provision or have previously lived there. Their countries of origin include Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The initial interviews took place in a neutral venue and took approximately between thirty minutes to one hour.

### 3 Background

Since the early 2000's Ireland has experienced an increase in inward migration, mainly due to what was termed '*The Celtic Tiger*'. This was an economic boom that began in the late 1990s, and has been attributed to a number of factors including: foreign direct investment, an essentially flexible workforce, and social partnerships that created a stable working environment.<sup>4</sup> This encouraged many Europeans and people of other nationalities to migrate to Ireland. Limerick, the fourth largest city in Ireland (with approximately 190,000 inhabitants) currently hosts a number of those migrants.<sup>5</sup> They are predominantly from EU member countries in Eastern Europe (such as Poland and Lithuania), but also comprise a number of other nationalities.

This is the first experience Ireland has had of inward migration on such a scale. For the past two centuries migration has been distinctly outward. Approximately ten million people left Ireland during those 200 years, many people forced by famine from their homes to the UK and USA.<sup>6</sup> It could be argued that, as members of a nation with such a history, the Irish people should have empathy toward migrants. Forced migration has become internationally even more evident today. Due to the rate of climate change, natural disasters and conflict, international communities are seeing a dramatic increase in human

4 O'Hearn, Denis. 2003. "Macroeconomic Policy In The Celtic Tiger: A Critical Reassessment." In *The End Of Irish History? Critical Approaches To The Celtic Tiger*, 1st ed., 34–55. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

5 'Document title', CSO – *Central Statistics Office*, accessed 27 May 2016, [https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011profile6/Profile\\_6\\_Migration\\_and\\_Diversity\\_entire\\_doc.pdf](https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011profile6/Profile_6_Migration_and_Diversity_entire_doc.pdf)

6 Kevin Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study', *Journal of American History* 90.1 (2003): 134–162.



displacement and migration.<sup>7</sup> Conflict-induced forced migration is at the highest level ever recorded, with an estimated 60+ million people classed as refugees or internally displaced.<sup>8</sup>

A tiny fraction of those displaced or seeking asylum currently reside in Ireland – the numbers coming to just under 8,000 people according to a working group report to the Irish government last year.<sup>9</sup> While 54% of asylum seekers live in the community, the remaining 46% live in the direct provision system, of which the Irish public had little knowledge until recently.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4 Direct Provision

Direct provision is the responsibility of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). The agency was formed in 1982 and is part of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), which in turn is a division of the Department of Justice and Equality. The RIA is the organisation charged with providing accommodation and food under a Direct Provision System to asylum seekers while their application for international protection is being processed. According to the RIA:

Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status are being processed rather than through full cash payments. Direct provision commenced on 10 April, 2000 from which time asylum seekers have received full board accommodation and personal allowances of €19.10 per adult and €9.60 per child per week.<sup>11</sup>

7 Marion Couldrey and Maurice Herson, 'Page/document title', *Forced Migration Review*, accessed 4 May 2016, <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/climatechange-disasters.pdf>

8 Niels Harild, 'Forced Displacement: A Development Issue with Humanitarian Elements', *Forced Migration Review*, accessed 19 June 2016, <http://www.fmreview.org/solutions/harild.html>

9 Working Group 2015 was a group set up to review the system of direct provision in Ireland. It was established by the government and membership of the group consisted of a range of backgrounds including UNHCR, non-governmental organisations, protection applicants and academia.

10 Liam Thornton, '#DirectProvision15: 15 Years of Direct Provision in Ireland – Human Rights in Ireland', *Human Rights in Ireland*, 2015, accessed 4 June 2016, <https://liamthornton.ie/2015/04/06/directprovision15-15-years-of-direct-provision-in-ireland-a-timeline/>

11 *Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) Ireland*, accessed 4 June 2016, <http://www.ria.gov.ie/>



Individuals in direct provision endure endless periods of inactivity, often leading to depression, social isolation and poverty. Typically the centres are placed outside local towns, making the possibility of integrating with the community fraught with practical obstacles, while increasing *othering* and keeping the issue of migrants hidden. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work in Ireland, cannot participate in any form of study, and are even prohibited from cooking for themselves. They spend the majority of their time with nothing to do, nowhere to go, and without financial means. This level of inactivity and ‘waiting’, as one of my interviewees termed it, often leads to ‘frustration, loneliness and depression’. The Irish Refugee Council, as well as many non-governmental organisations who represent asylum seekers, are openly critical of this system and advocate a more humane arrangement.

## 5 Doras Luimni

This research is closely linked to an organisation called *Doras Luimni*.<sup>12</sup> *Doras Luimni* is an NGO based in Limerick that offers direct support services to migrants and refugees in the Limerick and general Midwest region (that includes the counties of Clare, Tipperary and Laois). Their declared mission is to support the human rights of migrants through advocacy, integration initiatives and campaigns at both local and national levels. They report that much of their work currently centres on helping asylum seekers to navigate the immigration system and gain access to social welfare, housing and employment. They also administer campaigns to influence policy and engage policy makers. Through my relationship with *Doras*, they have helped recruit volunteers for this research, and I will be enlisting the help of these interviewees to recruit more participants through ‘snowball’ or purposive sampling. It may well be the case that the reluctance of individuals to participate is mainly due to fear, as my pilot study participant suggested, but also due to interview fatigue. It is often the same people who offer to be interviewed by researchers doing this type of phenomenological qualitative study. At a conference workshop at the University of Limerick one activist confirmed this, by suggesting that the same people are getting tired of doing interviews and not seeing results or outcomes.<sup>13</sup> He

12 Helen O’Grady, ‘Barriers to the Labour Market for Refugees and Persons with Leave to Remain in Limerick’, *Dorasluimni.org*, 2008, accessed 4 June 2016, <http://dorasluimni.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/publications/barrierstolabour.pdf>

13 Stephen Ng’ang’a, ‘Making History’ (Paper presented at University of Limerick, Limerick, July 2016). Workshop: Engaging with refugees: Disseminating Social Scientific Research,

then appealed to academics and researchers to find new ways of disseminating their research so that the wider public has access and that policy making can become more enlightened.

## 6 Emerging Themes

At the time of writing this chapter I am still in the process of recruiting participants and completing semi-structured interviews, and have yet to complete an in-depth thematic analysis. However some themes are clearly emerging:

- A: Migrant experience of direct provision as a form of 'prison'
- B: Lack of trained professionals in direct provision
- C: Ireland not the chosen destination
- D: Unspoken and unacknowledged grief and fear
- E: Ambiguous loss

### A: *Migrant Experience of Direct Provision as a Form of Prison*

Each of the participants referred to direct provision centres (there are 34 in the country) as 'prison'. For many years they had to sign a register every day to confirm they were present. Following an application to the High Court in 2014 by two asylum seekers in Galway, the ruling did not find direct provision unlawful but did acknowledge that some of the procedures in the direct provision centres *were* unlawful. These included the lack of visitation rights, unannounced room inspections and the requirement to sign in.<sup>14</sup>

The direct provision centres are in the words of Anna:

Like open prison camps, now we don't have to sign up but until last year you had to go in every day to reception to sign in to say that you are in the centre but now you know the room keys are electronic so now that's how they keep track of you. If you're not in the room for more than 3 days they give away your room so you have no place to live anymore.<sup>15</sup>

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to Increase Impact on Practise, Policy and Community, University of Limerick, July 6, 2016.

14 Ruadhan Mac Cormaic, 'Direct Provision System does not breach human rights, court rules', *The Irish Times*, accessed 30 September 2016, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/courts/direct-provision-system-does-not-breach-human-rights-court-rules-1.2001017>

15 Anna – Participant one renamed to maintain anonymity, living in Direct Provision 3 years, age 32.

This was the experience of one asylum seeker. He went to visit a friend in another centre and access to his own room was consequently removed. This participant felt that he had been labelled a troublemaker and was forced to move to another facility. Another participant, Frank, echoed this sentiment of a prison-like experience,

I see it was a crime to come and seek asylum in this country, you see by in the eyes of the department of justice I believe it is a crime 'cos we are just kept in that ... look it's better to be kept in prison because you know your fate even if you have some difficulties in prison you know how to sort yourself inside there until you come out and gain your freedom again but in this one there is nothing it's even worse.<sup>16</sup>

He goes on to describe the conditions in his facility, which also highlights his experience as an 'Other' – a guest in the country, not feeling at home,

... one you are forced to eat the food, look I am not Irish, the food is terrible, so terrible, if I had enough time I would show you some photos of the food that we eat, it's very terrible you know people each and every time have leftovers after the following day so when you cook it again the following day it gets not food at all and we are forced to eat that, you understand we are forced to eat that.<sup>17</sup>

Another participant talked about hiding rice cookers in the ceiling space above their rooms as they are not allowed to cook. If the rice cookers are found during room searches they are confiscated. Luckily rice cookers are not terribly expensive, this lady added '...they only cost nineteen euros so it's not so expensive to replace'.<sup>18</sup> This is quite ironic when the total income for that person is nineteen euros per week.

### **B:**     *Lack of Trained Professionals*

Throughout the NGO literature and reports published by these organisations who advocate for refugees and asylum seekers, the topic of mental health is often discussed. The detrimental psychological effects on those who remain

16 Frank – Participant two renamed to maintain anonymity, living in Direct Provision 6 years, age 30.

17 Ibid., 16.

18 Ibid., 15.

in this system for long periods of time can be significant.<sup>19</sup> The direct provision service is tendered through local authorities and there is no requirement to have professionals qualified in social care, psychology, or health, or anyone who would be in a position to support people who may have been through considerable trauma. This theme also emerged from my discussions. In particular, Frank concurs:

The worst part is the staff put in place there doesn't have patience or training to deal with any of it. They don't have the personality or the skill to handle people, they are not qualified at all.<sup>20</sup>

People who have been displaced through forced migration, who are very likely suffering from post-traumatic stress, are often then forced to cohabit in an unsafe environment. Cultural and religious clashes occur in the centres, as people with different religious backgrounds are forced to share the same limited space. This was the experience of one of the interviewees, James:

... you know I am 35 years and staying in with three others that you don't even know they are coming from its actually awful, there is no privacy in the house, we are different religion each other Muslims and Christians and we know exactly there is tension out there between religion so you see its very difficult.<sup>21</sup>

### C: *Lack of Choice in Ireland as a Destination*

One participant said he thought he was in London for a few days before he realised he had arrived in Dublin. He had never heard of Ireland before he learned where he was. Another said whoever organised her passage out of her home country chose what flights were immediately available to them based on the papers that she held. She fled the country with her children who were in their shorts and t-shirts and arrived to a very cold November day in Ireland with no warm clothing to put on the children. This finding should help to dispel some of the myths and rumours that abound in the narrative around migrants: for

19 Ibid., 12.

20 Ibid., 17.

21 James – Participant three renamed to maintain anonymity, living in Direct Provision 6 years, age 35.

example that they are coming to Ireland for social welfare. Many asylum seekers are not interested in social welfare: they want to work.

**D:** *Unspoken and Unacknowledged Grief and Fear*

Throughout the process of phenomenological interviewing there is a lot left unsaid. There are several possible explanations for this. Perhaps during a first meeting with a researcher, people are wary of how much information they share; they may be afraid to say too much about their living conditions or their past experience. A campaign manager and human rights advocate at *Doras Luimni* gently guided me before I met participants. She suggested that it would be morally correct to refrain from asking an asylum seeker why they had come to Limerick. That was confirmed by my pilot study participants over a number of meetings. It is not possible to know before meeting an asylum seeker what they have been through or what trauma they have experienced before arriving in Limerick.

The objective of phenomenological research is to understand the lived experience. Apropos to this task, we might recognise that silence forms part of human interaction and communication as much as speaking does. When a person chooses silence as part of their own discourse, the researcher must be aware of it and explore it, in order to represent it correctly. Silence was part of my interaction with the participants and I wanted to be respectful of that phenomenon in the exchange. Dieneske suggests that when human beings experience the unspeakable it may be beyond a person's linguistic competence to speak of it.<sup>22</sup> In the present study, this difficulty is compounded by the fact that English is not the first language of my participants. Another factor to consider is the imbalance of power which plays a part here; I became mindful of my own position of privilege, being a white person in a white society. Also being female, gender is an issue. Many of the asylum seekers come from societies which hold differing views on a woman's place in society.

**E:** *Ambiguous Loss*

'Ambiguous loss is a loss that remains unclear'.<sup>23</sup> A further theme to emerge from the research which is relevant here is ambiguous loss. Each of the participants refer to losing loved ones, family members who have disappeared and also leaving their family behind. When such relationships are unclear and there is no way to attain closure, the vagueness causes anxiety and grief which

22 Max Van Manen, 'On the Epistemology of Reflective Practice', *Teachers and Teaching* 1.1 (1995): xx, doi:10.1080/1354060950010104.

23 Boss, Pauline. 1999. *Ambiguous Loss*. 1st ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

becomes very complicated.<sup>24</sup> According to Boss, ‘ambiguous loss always results from war and violence.’<sup>25</sup> This reinforces the trauma that an asylum seeker experiences.

Boss suggests there are two types of loss: physical and psychological. Both are experienced by asylum seekers and refugees. Physical loss, as the term suggests, is when someone is no longer physically present.<sup>26</sup> For refugees, that represents the families they have left behind. Psychological loss, on the other hand, affects the asylum seeker vis-à-vis their identity that they have lost; their sense of self; having left their homes, their careers, their dreams.<sup>27</sup> I intend to examine whether or not ambiguous loss theory is a good model to assess the migrants’ situation. Understanding this may help by providing psychologists or advocacy groups with a framework within which to build more beneficial interventions.

At a conference in the University of Limerick in July 2016, attended by activists, academics and NGOs,<sup>28</sup> former refugees spoke about the shame of admitting to being a refugee. One participant told me she could not tell her family in Africa that she was a refugee or that she was part of *the system* or living in direct provision. She wanted to maintain her identity through them holding onto their image of a previous version of her. The notion of migrants losing their self-identity is potentially another area worthy of exploration.

## 7 Conclusion

The study set out to explore migrants’ experience in Limerick. The research evolved from exploring narratives about the developing multicultural aspects of Limerick city to focus on the experience of asylum seekers and refugees in the system called direct provision. The findings add to our knowledge that asylum seekers have little or no voice, so the objective now is to bring the voice of the asylum seeker to the public. It is too early to discuss the cultural bereavement or cultural gain experienced by migrants. The trauma they have to endure before being displaced – being exposed to horrors like torture, persecution,

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>28</sup> Conference: Agents through Time: How Do People “Make History”? Social Psychological & Historical Research into Collective Memories, Social Identities & Intergroup Relations. Final Cost Action IS1205 Conference, University of Limerick, Ireland. July 7–8, 2016. Workshop: Engaging with refugees: Disseminating Social Scientific Research, to Increase Impact on Practice, Policy and Community, University of Limerick, July 6, 2016.

rape, or starvation – is challenging enough, without exposing a fragile human being to what can be seen as the ill treatment of direct provision. Overcoming the difficulties encountered and the unsettling experiences they have suffered shows a depth of resilience which is also yet to be explored. Agencies and NGOs are not equipped to address the developmental needs of individuals in the direct provision system in Ireland and yet it has been allowed to continue for sixteen years with no indication of the process changing. Further research is clearly needed, and new ways of sharing and disseminating the data gathered, and the conclusions reached, might productively be explored. Educating people about other cultures and changing the narrative and discourse about globalisation will plausibly benefit us all. As one of the participants in this research perceptively said: ‘there is only one race, the human race’.

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# Fighting against the Wind: Politics of 'The Local' and Corporate Othering in Community Activism against Wind Energy Installation in Upstate New York

*Marissa Sonnis-Bell*

## Abstract

There is an emerging local community movement in rural upstate New York against Apex, a renewable energy company seeking to capitalize on wind energy. This chapter focuses on how the socio-political processes of constructing the 'local' and the 'other' interplay with these politics of resistance. At the heart of this process is Save Ontario Shores, a citizen coalition imbued with a sense of community predominantly conjured in response to this external threat. Two dominant processes involving strategic external othering are the struggle between conflicting objectives of New York state-level and local-level governance, and the construction of Apex as an inhuman and corporate outsider fixated on capital gains. The relative and shifting nature of 'the local' plays a major role in defining what the community supports and what it does not. However, the resulting concept of 'local' is not homogeneous, and has resulted in the alienation of some residents who are in support or simply not opposed to Apex. Ultimately, what is at stake is not just wind energy installation, but identity and representation of the 'local'.

## Keywords

wind energy – opposition to wind – othering – local/non-local – community activism – procedural justice – corporate othering

## 1 Lighthouse Wind, SOS and the Pivotal Role of Producing the 'Local' and Producing the 'Other'

In the small, quiet, rural towns of Somerset and Yates in upstate New York, residents have been deeply involved in fighting against a proposed 200-megawatt wind energy project. This project, named Lighthouse Wind, is proposed by Apex, a renewable energy company hoping to capitalize on local wind resource and a well-established power grid infrastructure on Lake Ontario shores.<sup>1</sup> The driving force behind the opposition is Save Ontario Shores, named in reference to the letters SOS, a self-organized citizen coalition of local resident 'wind warriors' from towns of Somerset and Yates.<sup>2</sup> Community opposition to wind energy development projects has been thoroughly documented, from Pasqualetti examining wind opposition across multiple national contexts,<sup>3</sup> to Devine-Wright's examination of opposition to wind energy beyond NIMBYism.<sup>4</sup> While some similarities to other case studies can be found, this chapter is less concerned with examining the intricacies of factors affecting perception in yet another case study of wind energy opposition. Instead, I focus only on two interrelated processes specific to this case study. First, I examine the strategic construction of the 'other' and production of external threats central to opposing the wind energy project. Second, I seek to elucidate how notions of 'community' and 'the local' are conjured specifically in response to this external 'other', and are pivotal to the successful opposition campaigns of SOS. This chapter therefore focuses on how the socio-political processes of constructing the 'local' and the 'other' interplay with politics of resistance against this wind energy initiative. To this goal, this chapter draws from preliminary research combining primary and secondary sources, participatory observation, informational conversations, municipality surveys, public comments, newspaper articles, and archived public documents.

This chapter will proceed as follows: first, I examine processes of strategic othering in which the objectives of state-level governance are seen to conflict with those of local-level governance; second, I explore the notion of corporate othering. Third, I focus on upstate/downstate tensions constructing the 'local';

1 'About Lighthouse', *Apex*, Viewed on 14 May 2016, [http://www.lighthousewind.com/about\\_lighthouse/](http://www.lighthousewind.com/about_lighthouse/).

2 'Homepage', *Save Ontario Shores*, Viewed on 14 May 2016, <http://lakeontarioturbines.com/>.

3 Martin J. Pasqualetti, 'Opposing Wind Energy Landscapes: A Search for Common Cause', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101.4 (2011): 907–917.

4 Patrick Devine-Wright, 'Beyond NIMBYism: Towards an Integrated Framework for Understanding Public Perceptions of Wind Energy', *Wind Energy* 8 (2005): 125–139.

and fourth, I explore how othering constructs a problematic 'local' drawn upon in opposing Lighthouse Wind.

## 2 The Neoliberal Contradictions of Multi-Level Governance: Conflicting State/Local Objectives

The first of the dominant processes at play involving strategic external othering is the struggle between the conflicting objectives of New York state-level and local-level governance that has facilitated a stronger definition, if not creation, of the 'local', since the formation of the citizen coalition was directly in response to a local governance framework deemed inadequate to serve 'local' needs. Neoliberal trends in governance have been characterized by a devolution of governance to lower levels, for example, from national to provincial, or provincial to municipal.<sup>5</sup> However, the case of renewable energy project legislation in New York State contradicts this and points to the struggle between conflicting objectives. At the heart of this struggle is the New York State 'Article 10'. Within the legal framework of Article 10, the state can intervene and override local town 'home rule' decision-making in the case of energy projects larger than 25 MW, when the state feels that such projects are within the best interest of broader strategic renewable energy goals.<sup>6</sup> These 'simplified state-level siting and permitting procedures that minimize opportunities for local opposition show a statistical advantage in wind energy development', although they also tend to increase local opposition due to lack of community input.<sup>7</sup> Figure 7.1. shows a local protest sign designed and printed by Save Ontario Shores which reads "Gov. Cuomo: Return Local Control", addressed to the Governor of New York State Andrew Cuomo. It is a direct reference to the power imbalance created by the Article 10 process which shifts the control away from local municipalities toward New York State.

Similar frameworks are in place just across the border in the Province of Ontario, Canada. In the Canadian case, recent studies suggest that this struggle of local vs. non-local government interests can be a determining factor in whether a community opposes wind energy development. Walker found that

5 Martin Jones, Mark Goodwin, and Rhys Jones, 'State Modernization, Devolution and Economic Governance: An Introduction and Guide to the Debate', *Regional Studies* 39A (2006): 397.

6 'Article 10 Law', *Department of Public Service*, Viewed 16 May 2016, <http://www3.dps.ny.gov/W/PSCWeb.nsf/All/D12E078BF7A746FF85257A70004EF402?OpenDocument/>.

7 Christiane Bohn and Christopher Lant, 'Welcoming the Wind? Determinants of Wind Power Development among U.S. States', *The Professional Geographer* 61.1 (2009): 87.



FIGURE 7.1 Local SOS protest sign, with a farm in the background in Orleans County, New York  
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AUTHOR

communities in Ontario, where the state controlled decision-making, opposed wind energy projects; while in contrast, communities in Quebec were entirely unconcerned and in fact highly supportive of community-based wind energy projects where the community led the projects.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, whether wind energy decision-making is governed by local municipalities or state-level authorities can hugely impact project outcomes and social acceptability.

The governance mechanisms for energy projects are an issue of procedural legitimacy, which is the extent to which local residents and local governments are involved in decision-making, something that the New York State Article 10 process can inhibit. The Article 10 process does have space for public input, however, the final decision ultimately lies with a state-appointed siting board. Bohn and Lant, when comparing across U.S. states, found a distinct pattern that

8 Chad Walker, "By the Time Neighbours Find Out, It's a Sure Thing!" Wind Energy and Procedural Justice in Canada' (Paper presented at the annual meeting for the American Association of Geographers, San Francisco, California, March 29 – April 2, 2016).

'local opposition can occur if the public questions the procedural legitimacy of locational decision-making for individual projects'.<sup>9</sup> The issue of procedural legitimacy is evidently on the minds of the local residents and representatives of Somerset and Yates who oppose the proposed wind project. Exemplifying such a view is a comment submitted to the Somerset Town survey, which states: 'We pay taxes on our land, but the State can "overrule"'.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, representatives of the township have also been

'critical of the loss of home rule on the project, with the final decision on land use made by the state instead of a local board as part of a new Article 10 process'.<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that local residents and local government officials are unhappy with the conflicting interests of New York State and local Townships and therefore view it as an external threat to their 'local sovereignty'. This is a separate concern from the corporate 'other', in this case Apex, although the corporate and government 'other' often appear interlinked in the minds of local residents. In the following section I elaborate on what I mean by the 'corporate other'.

### 3 The Construction of a Corporate 'Other' in the Context of Perceived Benefits

The second process of othering relates to an emphasis on the financial interests of Apex and perceived benefits to the community. These help frame Apex as an inhuman and corporate outsider fixated on capital gains, aided by the fact that Apex is a large, profitable, multi-state corporation that operates across 25 states and is headquartered in Virginia. As emphasized by the words of SOS, Apex is 'an out-of-state corporation that has the potential to gain enormous profits'.<sup>12</sup> The benefits are perceived by the local community to flow outside of the area, or at the very least be limited. This lack of perceived benefits has also played a role in other cases of opposition to wind energy in Cape Cod,

9 Christiane Bohn and Christopher Lant, 'Welcoming the Wind', 98.

10 'Wind Energy Project Survey Comments', *Town of Somerset*, Viewed on 14 May 2016, <http://www.somersetny.org/home/pages/wind-energy-project-survey-comments>.

11 Tom Rivers, 'Assembly Leader Fails to Nominate Local Resident for Turbine Siting Board', *Orleans Hub*, January 22, 2016, Viewed on 5 February 2016, <http://www.orleanshub.com/news2016/Assembly-leader-fails-to-nominate-local-resident-for-turbine-siting-board.htm/>.

12 'Homepage', *Save Ontario Shores*.

Massachusetts, and Lewis Isle, Scotland, as documented by Pasqualetti.<sup>13</sup> Residents in this case have raised concerns in the Somerset town survey referencing the ‘non-local’ and corporate nature of Apex, as well as hinting at concerns over procedural legitimacy and community involvement:

This household supports alternative non-industrial, non-centralized energy development ... Inviting large, non-local companies to come in and ‘develop’ in this town is a recipe for disaster ... Please use your energy and influence to support community businesses and residents rather than corporations and politicians that have no true stake in living here.<sup>14</sup>

This comment speaks to three issues discussed in this chapter, the first issue of state-level government ‘politicians’ inadequate in serving local needs. Second, the notion of an external corporation with external interests playing on the local/non-local divide; and third, the issue of procedural legitimacy and role of local community in decision making.

Based upon the issues of multi-level conflicting interests of government and corporations, comments and feelings become emotionally charged and influence how the benefits of the project are perceived. Whether or not there are actual benefits to the local community becomes irrelevant when they are not perceived by local residents. Glenn Maid, a representative of SOS speaks to this in their comments on Lighthouse Wind with the belief that there will be no benefits:

This is nothing but an unholy alliance between government and large corporations. Misleading promises give wind energy neighbors (sic) the impression that tax money and utility benefits will be enjoyed, but be wary. That does not happen.<sup>15</sup>

While it is clear that the lack of perceived local benefits plays some role in the social acceptability of this particular proposed wind energy project, it is not clear whether real benefits to the community would be a determining factor in social acceptability. Instead, it is possible that the ‘corporate otherness’ of

13 Pasqualetti, ‘Opposing Wind Energy Landscapes’, 907–917.

14 ‘Wind Energy Project Survey’, *Town of Somerset*.

15 Max Warfield, ‘Anti-Turbine Crowd Weighs in on Lighthouse Wind’, *Lockport Journal*, May 1, 2015. Viewed on 16 May 2016, [http://www.lockportjournal.com/news/local\\_news/anti-turbine-crowd-weighs-in-on-lighthouse-wind/article\\_0109fb91-24a5-5a81-b823-689cd611fb7.html](http://www.lockportjournal.com/news/local_news/anti-turbine-crowd-weighs-in-on-lighthouse-wind/article_0109fb91-24a5-5a81-b823-689cd611fb7.html).





FIGURE 7.2 SOS protest signs by the roadside on private property in Orleans County, New York  
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Apex is a much more significant driving force of opposition. In support of this, another comment states the following: ‘Any monetary payment receive (sic) would be like selling our souls to the devil!’<sup>16</sup> This suggests that even if there were benefits to the community, the fact that the corporations are outsiders with non-local interests is what drives opposition. Figure 7.2. shows again local SOS protest signs, specifically the sign on the left of the image reads: “Surveys say: Apex go home!”, illustrating a direct message to the Apex corporation referencing that it is not a local organization, rather its “home” is based elsewhere, in this case Virginia.

#### 4 Upstate/Downstate Tensions: ‘New York City Seems to Be the Only Place that Benefits’

Wrapped up in the perceived benefits to the immediate local area are historic upstate/downstate core-periphery tensions. Namely, peripheral, rural, marginal

<sup>16</sup> ‘Wind Energy Project Survey’, *Town of Somerset*.

areas such as upstate New York often become sites of production to be exploited for the benefit of downstate resource and energy demands of urban cores such as New York City, approximately 400 miles away from Yates and Somerset. At numerous public meetings, members of SOS have stated that if New York City needs electricity ‘they should put the turbines in their back yard!’<sup>17</sup> Other cases of wind opposition have had similar themes. For example, opposition to wind energy development in Catalonia, Spain, is also tied to core-periphery dynamics of rural areas being exploited for the benefit of cores such as Barcelona.<sup>18</sup> Along with this are the problematics of power imbalances, and the often-external nature of multinational corporations with external interests and lack of perceived local benefits.

In the Lighthouse Wind case, the boundary between the local and non-local is clear and based upon existing scalar politics. The local includes the towns and even counties but beyond this, the distant counties and cities of downstate are not included within this ‘local’. A comment in the Town of Somerset Survey touches on these themes in exclaiming the following: ‘Town of Somerset residents will not see any benefit from the turbines, not in tax reduction or electrical cost! It still all goes downstate and always will!’<sup>19</sup> This quote in particular draws upon these historic core-periphery relations. This is not just about New York City requiring electricity; this is about a historic relationship of exploitation of resources in upstate New York. Another comment explains an underlying perception of inequality: ‘NYC seems to be the only place that benefits – Cheap electricity goes right by our homes to “the big city!”’.<sup>20</sup> The electricity generated could provide benefits to the local community in terms of reduced rates, but instead is perceived to flow directly past them to downstate.

These processes of state, corporate and downstate (non-local) ‘othering’ all manifest in dichotomous othering producing a clear ‘other’. At the same time, however, the creation of an ‘other’ enables a clearer definition of the ‘self’, in this case allowing for the construction of a ‘community’ and a ‘local’, enabling a stronger position from which to oppose the Lighthouse Wind project. In the following section, I delve into this construction of ‘local’ in response to an external threat.

17 Stated by a resident of Yates at a Yates Town Board Meeting, 10 March 2016.

18 Jaume Franquesa, *Power Struggles: Dignity, Value, and the Renewable Energy Frontier in Spain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 10.

19 ‘Wind Energy Project Survey’, *Town of Somerset*.

20 ‘Wind Energy Project Survey Comments’, *Town of Somerset*.



## 5 SOS and the Construction of a 'Local' in Response to an External Threat

Save Ontario Shores, the local citizen coalition driving opposition has been very active in its opposition campaign and has had some successes. SOS calls upon its members to be present and be vocal at public Town Board meetings. They have also conducted surveys of public opinion, and count among their successes pressuring Apex to sign a code of conduct, and a modification of a local wind energy zoning ordinances making it significantly more difficult to place wind turbines within the bounds of Somerset and Yates.<sup>21,22</sup> It is not clear whether the opposition would be as strong if it were not for this organized and persuasive campaign of opposition. A 2007 survey in the Town of Yates found an overwhelming majority of 70% strongly in favour of the Town encouraging 'wind energy facilities to locate in the Town of Yates',<sup>23</sup> and it is unclear why exactly the opinion shifted following the introduction of Lighthouse Wind.

More importantly, SOS has partaken in the othering of government and corporate interests in garnering support for its campaign of opposition. In conjunction with this, SOS also draws upon the concept of the 'local' and conjures a sense of community and solidarity predominantly constructed only in response to the external threat. This relative and shifting nature of 'the local' plays a major role in defining what the community supports and what it does not. However, the resulting concept of 'local' is not homogeneous, and has simultaneously resulted in the alienation of some residents who are in support or simply do not oppose the wind turbine installation.

One way in which the 'local' is defined by SOS is in terms of who resides in the area, which comes with its contradictions. In general, the concept of the 'local' is known to be a vague and ambiguous term that shifts based on scale of analysis and intentional scalar politics.<sup>24</sup> When Apex invited union members from neighbouring Lockport to attend a Town Board meeting in support of Lighthouse Wind and the jobs it would provide, SOS members were infuriated

21 Kaley Lynch, 'Somerset Amends Wind Energy Zoning Law' *Lockport Journal*, February 24, 2016, Viewed on 4 June 2016, [http://www.lockportjournal.com/news/local\\_news/somerset-amends-wind-energy-zoning-law/article\\_e84e3f95-164a-5d13-90fc-ac239e198e0d.html/](http://www.lockportjournal.com/news/local_news/somerset-amends-wind-energy-zoning-law/article_e84e3f95-164a-5d13-90fc-ac239e198e0d.html/).

22 'Local Law Filing', *Town of Yates*, Viewed on 25 May 2016, [http://townofyates.org/LegalNotices/2016/14056001\\_1%20final.pdf/](http://townofyates.org/LegalNotices/2016/14056001_1%20final.pdf/).

23 '2007 Town of Yates Survey Results for Wind Farms in the Town', *Town of Yates*, Viewed on 4 June 2016, <http://www.townofyates.org/Extras/Wind%20Energy%20survey.htm/>.

24 Andrew Herod, *Scale* (London: Routledge, 2011), 27.

that 'Apex filled the room with outsiders who had no place being there'.<sup>25</sup> However, at the same time they encourage local residents and their friends and families (regardless of place of residence) to write letters to the Public Service Commission in opposition to the project. SOS also draws upon a large network of supporters across the U.S. mainly through social media, and yet their website emphasizes that SOS is supported only by 'local donations'.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, a large number of those opposed to the wind turbines are self-proclaimed 'snowbirds', those whom live half the year in Florida or similar warm-weather places and half the year in lake-view vacation homes on the shore of Lake Ontario. This evidently qualifies these 'snowbirds' within the bounds of the SOS defined 'local' (given that members of the board are 'snowbirds' themselves); given some ownership of property in the area. Others mentioned having a dominant residence within other nearby municipalities but owning land, which again might qualify them as 'local'. In contrast, some residents felt they could not vote and could not weigh in on the wind energy debate in the area specifically because they could not count themselves as local.<sup>27</sup>

The creation of this community of support is also founded on vague terms. While the community nature of this grassroots organization is emphasized, SOS board members openly discuss that they did not know each other and did not know their neighbours with whom they now work in SOS, prior to the Lighthouse Wind proposal. Furthermore, the 'local' that is produced excludes residents of the Towns of Somerset and Yates who do not voice opposition to SOS and one is almost seen as a traitor to the 'local' if one either signs a lease or voices support for Apex. In other scenarios, these residents in support of Apex are seen to have been deceived by Apex.

Overall, what can be preliminarily concluded here is that the 'local' plays a role in defining what the community supports and what it does not. However, the concept is ambiguous, relative, shifting and not homogeneous. It has simultaneously resulted in the alienation of some residents who are in support or simply not opposed to the wind turbine installation.

## 6 Conclusion

To complement existing studies of opposition to wind energy projects, I chose to focus on how the process of othering and externalization has contributed

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25 Personal Communication with Somerset resident.

26 'Homepage', *Save Ontario Shores*.

27 Personal communication with Yates resident.

to local opposition to wind. The processes of othering are framed in terms of multiple dichotomies: local/state, community/corporate, and local/non-local. This research also adds to a growing literature on the role of procedural legitimacy in affecting social acceptability of wind energy projects, in terms of understanding how lack of procedural legitimacy can be a determining factor in making a project less acceptable.

I also argue that the othering, both of the external threat of Apex and the external benefits perceived to be enjoyed by Apex, has successfully produced a strong sense of 'local' that has been strategically utilized by SOS to successful effect of battling the proposed Apex Lighthouse Wind project. This notion of 'local' only arose in direct response to this external threat. The impact of perceived benefits interplays with concepts of the 'local' in two ways, by judging the benefits or lack thereof felt by the 'local' community, and in creating an 'other' deemed to be the primary recipient of the benefits in the form of 'profit' and 'corporate gain'. These contributions are useful and significant in the wake of the ever-increasing risks of climate change, growing awareness of its anthropogenic origin, and thus a growing need for clean and renewable energy.

While some locals declare themselves to be environmentally conscious, particularly in regards to the environmental concerns of the wind turbines, many residents of this area (predominantly white, older, retired, and mostly politically conservative and Republican), feel that climate change is not a concern, is not of anthropogenic origin, or believe the effects of climate change to be geographically distant. Therefore, moral obligations of persuasion to host wind turbines are unlikely to be of any effect. Rather a focus on local perceived benefits and community involvement, either through investiture or community participation in decision-making, are likely to be more effective in pushing through successful wind energy projects. Finally, what this means for notions of the 'local' is a reaffirmation of existing theories of the fluidity and political flexibility of what it means to be 'local'.<sup>28</sup>

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# 'Christmas is Cancelled': Controversy in Italian Schools (and Press)

Tommaso Trillò

## Abstract

Marco Parma, President of a public school in an immigrant neighbourhood in the southern hinterland of Milan, Italy, was accused in late-November 2015 of 'cancelling Christmas' in the name of inclusivity towards non-Catholic school pupils. Partially misguided and partially unfounded, these allegations became object of extensive media coverage and political controversy over Italian cultural identity and the role of public schools in it. Through critical discourse analysis and visual analysis, this paper scrutinizes a small corpus of newspaper articles from *Il Corriere della Sera* (Italy's most circulated newspaper) covering the Rozzano scandal and the related images. Findings are as follows. Firstly, the episode is covered in terms of a clash of civilizations between an Italian Catholic 'self' and an immigrant 'other'. Secondly, this 'other' is constructed as 'Muslim'. Thirdly, Muslim voices are largely under-represented. When 'Muslims' get to speak for themselves, the voices included are usually those of private individuals (not community representatives), often in familial environments rather than public fora.

## Keywords

Italy – secularism – religiosity – Catholic Church – schools – immigrant students – clash of civilizations – invasion – critical discourse analysis – visual analysis

## 1 Background

On November 27th, 2015, the Italian broadsheet newspaper *Il giorno* published an article titled 'Rozzano: School Principal Cancels the Christmas Fest'.<sup>1</sup> In a

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1 Rozzano is a small municipality in the southern hinterland of Milan. Massimiliano Mingoia, 'Rozzano, il Preside Cancella la Festa di Natale. E la Scuola Rimuove Anche i Crocifissi',

sensationalistic style, the article claims that the decision to ‘cancel’ the traditional Christmas fest came in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris (13 November 2015) as a preventive measure in order not to hurt the sensitivity of Muslim school pupils. Marco Parma, the school principal referenced in the newspaper article’s title, promptly responded to the allegations made by the newspaper with an open letter to the school community.<sup>2</sup> In the letter, Parma confirms that the Christmas fest would regularly take place on December 17th. The only unusual event for the holiday season was the postponing of the ‘Christmas concert’ to January (contextually renamed to ‘Winter concert’) for logistical reasons. Finally, Parma admits that he did oppose one religious activity: the teaching of Christian carols by two mothers during lunch break; an initiative he marks in his letter as ‘inappropriate’ in a public school.

The principal probably expected that his letter would settle the dispute. In fact, in the following days the ‘cancelled Christmas’ attracted the attention of all major news outlets and reached the highest offices in the country, including that of the (at the time) Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The episode remained in the public eye until the Ministry of Education, requested to investigate on the case, found that the conduct of Marco Parma was procedurally and legally sound and dismissed the case on December 4th.

Episodes such as this have not been uncommon in Italy in the last few years. Despite a small immigrant population share (8%),<sup>3</sup> an invasion narrative has gained circulation in the Italian mediascape.<sup>4</sup> These discourses usually revolve around the need to preserve Italian ‘culture’ against a threatening ‘other’.<sup>5</sup> Through a critical discourse analysis<sup>6</sup> and visual analysis<sup>7</sup> of the coverage of the Rozzano case by *Il Corriere della Sera* (Italy’s most broadly circulated newspaper), this study offers empirical evidence confirming the above trend.

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*Il Giorno*, 27 November 2015, viewed 22 April 2016, <http://www.ilgiorno.it/sud-milano/rozzano-polemica-scuola-crocifissi-festa-natale-1.1522604>.

2 Marco Parma, ‘Natale e Dintorni’, *Communication Internal to the School* 7, viewed 22 April 2016, [http://www.icsgarofani.gov.it/attachments/article/173/circ\\_7\\_natale-signed.pdf](http://www.icsgarofani.gov.it/attachments/article/173/circ_7_natale-signed.pdf).

3 ISTAT, *Noi Italia. 100 Statistiche per Capire il Paese in cui Viviamo* (Rome, Italy: ISTAT, 2014).

4 Stefano Allievi, ‘Immigration, Religious Diversity and Recognition of Differences: The Italian Way to Multiculturalism’, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 21.6 (2014): 724–737.

5 Francesca Orsini, ‘Cannons and Rubber Boats: Oriana Fallaci and the “Clash of Civilizations”’, *Interventions* 8.3 (2006): 444–460.

6 Norman Fairclough, ed. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd ed. (Harlow UK: Longman, 2013).

7 Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Abingdon, UK: Psychology Press, 1996).

## 2 An Italian Catholic 'Self'

The main narrative circulated in the coverage of the Rozzano case consistently referred to the existence of an Italian 'self' with clear cut cultural features. Examples of this narratives can be found in all the voices reported: politicians, journalists, and interviewees. The most vocal politician on the issue has been Matteo Salvini, populist leader of the right wing nativist party Lega Nord. In bombastic tones, Salvini referred to Parma's decision saying that 'only a madman would deny our traditions'<sup>8</sup> and that 'teachers and principals who cancel Christmas should be fired'.<sup>9</sup> Salvini went as far as showing up in Rozzano to symbolically 'donate' a nativity scene to the pupils and thus 'return' the stolen Christmas, as depicted in Figure 8.1.

Other politicians joined Salvini in condemning Parma's allegedly unilateral decision to 'cancel' Christmas celebrations. For example, Alessandro Colucci, group leader of the center-right (Nuovo Centro Destra – NCD) in the regional parliament of Lombardia, commented that

Questioning our identity and the long established traditions of our society in order not to bother people following other religious faiths is completely pointless and misleading. This is not how respect for diversity works.<sup>10</sup>

In the quote above, Colucci refers to Catholic carols and nativity scenes as deeply rooted parts of 'our identity' that should therefore be considered normal in public schools. According to him, this is so self-evident that questioning it is 'pointless and misleading'.

Consensus was also found on the left hand of the political spectrum, with the remarkable voice of Prime Minister and leader of the Democratic Party (PD) Matteo Renzi joining the discussion. Renzi commented that

Christmas is far more important than a school principal looking for controversy. Perhaps he believed that the decision would favour integration and coexistence; I believe he failed. ... [Inter-religious/

8 Paolo di Stefano, 'Canti di Natale e Presepi: A Scuola lo Show dei Politici; Il Caso', *Corriere della Sera*, 1 December 2015, 7; all translations from Italian into English are my own.

9 Federica Cavadini, 'Bufera sul "Divieto" di Natale Lascia il Preside Sotto Accusa; Scuola', *Corriere della Sera*, 29 November 2015, 1.

10 Marco Galluzzo, '“Non si Dialoga Rinunciando al Natale”', *Corriere della Sera*, 29 November 2015, 23.





FIGURE 8.1 Matteo Salvini (Lega Nord) in Rozzano

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inter-cultural] dialogue and exchange does not equate with drowning peoples' identity in a tasteless and indifferent 'politically correct'. Italy in its entirety, seculars and Christians alike, will never renounce Christmas.<sup>11</sup>

Renzi confirms that Catholic traditions (here under the proxy of Christmas celebrations) are so central for Italians that they are something non-renounceable, as he himself affirms in the quote above.

The only voice from official politics offering a secular narrative is the one of Caterina Spina, Secretary General for the Milan Unit of the FLC CGIL, the national Union of public school teachers. When interviewed, Spina argued that public school are secular institutions unless made otherwise by law. 'If [they] want to make the preparation of nativity scenes and the teaching of carols mandatory for every school, then they should make it so by Ministerial decree'.<sup>12</sup> In an act of discursive defiance, Spina challenges politicians to follow through with the implications of their narratives.

Outside of official politics, some journalists from *Il Corriere della Sera* seem to share the same position as party politicians. For example, Marco Garzonio, journalist and lecturer at the Catholic University in Milan, published an opinion piece arguing against Parma's decision. Linking the ethos of the city of Milan to Christianity, Garzonio comments that

11 Galluzzo, '“Non si Dialoga Rinunciando al Natale”', 23.

12 Federica Cavadini, 'E Anche i Sindacati si Schierano con lui – La Cgil: E' Diventato un Bersaglio Politico; L'intervista', *Corriere della Sera*, 30 November 2015, 7.



Secular and religious institutions are meant to recognize and speak to each other, seeking to contrast the fears produced by tragedies, intolerance, and other phantoms. Rather than doing this, a man from the school system [Marco Parma] (supposedly a system meant to foster intellectual meetings, research, training, and constitutional values) is now going against the will of the enlightened and thinking Milan.<sup>13</sup>

The reference to constitutional values in Garzonio's piece is rather peculiar given that decision #203 of the Constitutional Court found in 1989 that the Italian state is constitutionally secular.

Also Isabella Bossi Fedrigotti, journalist and writer, dismisses the need for secularity as over-zealous in an open letter to the newspaper editors on December 4th. Bossi Fedrigotti comments

Over the last few days, I noticed many downtown boutique windows displaying the words 'season's greetings' or 'winter greetings'. OK, those shops probably have customers of other religions, and business is business. However, still minding business, customers might well be more interested in the windows of Dolce and Gabbana, exhibiting a nativity scene from the '700s and a large table prepared to resemble a typical Sicilian Christmas lunch.<sup>14</sup>

Here, Bossi Fedrigotti is trivializing secularism and simultaneously praising those Italian trademarks that proudly embrace the Catholic roots of the Italian people.

The voices of private citizens are also present in the corpus. These include school principals and teachers as well as a few lines by parents of school-age children. In the earliest article in the corpus (28 November), an official letter to Principal Parma signed by 28 school parents from Rozzano is quoted for the public to read

In name of what superior value should we renounce to celebrate Christmas? If that value is respect towards those who do not follow the Catholic Christian religion, we reserve for ourselves the right to disagree. In the

13 Marco Garzonio, 'L'Eccesso di Zelo Trascende il Natale: Dialogo Antidoto ai Pregiudizi', *Corriere della Sera*, 30 November 2015, 1.

14 Leda Guenzati Pessi, 'Il Natale Rovinato nelle Scuole: Ci Siamo Dimenticati dei Bambini; La Lettera di Isabella Bossi Fedrigotti', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 December 2015, 6.

very name of cultural exchange, we believe that preserving our traditions without limitations can do nothing but enrich those who follow other religions and traditions.<sup>15</sup>

A similar rhetoric is put forward by Massimo Barrella and Anna Sandi, both principals in public schools in the area neighbouring Rozzano. The latter draws a rather visual comparison between opposing carols in schools and demolishing bell towers as equally senseless acts of cultural self-annihilation. The former argues more mildly that ‘parents of foreign students are not against nativity scenes, carols, or the crucifix in the classroom’.<sup>16</sup>

The main narrative emerging from these statements suggests the existence of a deeply held belief that to be Italian is to follow Catholic traditions. This belief is also accompanied by the notion that the ‘other’ can only be ‘enriched’ by exposure and participation in Italian Catholic traditions, including not-so-covert assumptions regarding Italian cultural superiority. Among private citizens, however, there are also voices in support of Marco Parma. For example, Manuela Gallina, elementary school teacher from the neighbouring area, states that ‘school are secular places of encounter between cultures, not religions’.<sup>17</sup> Antonella Campolongo, self-declared practicing Catholic and mother of a school kid attending Parma’s institution, declared that ‘religious carols should be sung in church, not at school’.<sup>18</sup> These two women are not alone in supporting Principal Parma. A small but non-negligible number of school parents and teachers joined a solidarity march for the Principal and against the politicization of the event.

I wish to close this first section with an analysis of two pictures from the gallery complementing the reportage of the march. The first one depicts the people involved in the march carrying a banner spelling ‘I stand with Parma’ (Figure 8.2). The group is represented while walking from right to left of the frame. The image is in my view polarized, as the right hand (representing ‘the new’) is occupied by the people marching while the left hand (representing ‘the old’) is still partially empty. A possible reading of the image is that ‘the new’ (perhaps progressive multiculturalism) is marching to take over ‘the old’ (perhaps Catholic traditions).

15 Olivia Manola and Andrea Senesi, ‘“Per gli Islamici è una Provocazione”: Bufera sul Preside che Sposta il Natale; Il Caso’, *Corriere della Sera*, 28 November 2015, 13.

16 Cavadini, ‘Bufera sul “Divieto” di Natale Lascia il Preside Sotto Accusa; Scuola’, 1.

17 Ibid.

18 Olivia Manola, ‘Maestre e Genitori con il Preside di Rozzano’, *Corriere della Sera*, 30 November 2015, 7.



FIGURE 8.2 People marching in solidarity with Marco Parma

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The second image represents two children sitting underneath a paper billboard spelling 'politics out of schools' (Figure 8.3.). The children are faceless because they are facing in a direction opposite to that of the camera. Their eye level is below the billboard, suggest that they are not engaging with it. Despite being 'faceless' because turned, the kids seem to demand involvement by the viewer, who is invited to care for them. The picture is highly polarized, with the children occupying the sphere of the real at the bottom while the billboard occupies the position of the ideal at the top of the composition. The explicit message spelled on the billboard clearly states that the problem at stake is the unwanted engagement of politicians with the school system (not, for example, separation of Church and State). The message is visually reinforced by the kids not staring at it.

### 3 Who Is the 'Other'?

If the narratives represented in the corpus under scrutiny consistently construct the existence of an Italian 'self' culturally identifiable as Catholic, this self is also constructed in opposition to an 'other'. In the earliest article of the corpus, commentary on the student body of Parma's school states that 'foreign



FIGURE 8.3 School children facing a billboard spelling 'politics out of schools'

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students are around 20% of the student body; many of them are Muslim.<sup>19</sup> In another article, the already-mentioned Massimo Barrella (school principal) commented as follows. 'Christmas a provocation? [It is not, because] Muslim pupils help their classmates in decorating the nativity scenes'.<sup>20</sup> More explicitly, journalist Marco Garzonio opened his above-described opinion piece by saying that 'A Muslim family would never dream of renouncing to celebrate Ramadan because they fear to hurt the sensitivity of the Milanese people hosting them'.<sup>21</sup>

19 Manola and Senesi, '“Per gli Islamici è una Provocazione”: Bufera sul Preside che Sposta il Natale; Il caso', 13.

20 Cavadini, 'Bufera sul “Divieto” di Natale Lascia il Preside Sotto Accusa; Scuola', 1.

21 Garzonio, 'L'Eccesso di Zelo Trascende il Natale: Dialogo Antidoto ai Pregiudizi', 1.



FIGURE 8.4 Children running towards a school's entrance

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These comments are seemingly unprompted. However, a similar narrative is also present in images. One specific picture included in the corpus represents some elementary school pupils walking/running towards the entrance of the school (Figure 8.4). The image is strongly polarized, as it is spatially divided in two parts by the tree in the middle. The left end is occupied by a veiled girl running alone on the grass, while the right hand is occupied by a crowd of other kids walking together on pavement. Positioning the crowd walking united on concrete on the right suggests a sense of strength in communality. On the other hand, positioning the veiled girl running alone on uneven ground on the left suggests a sense of weakness coming from exclusion.

These initial elements suggest that there is a narrative in the corpus that understands all immigrants/foreigners in Italy as 'Muslim' and that constructs Muslim-ness as the locus of alterity for the Italian Catholic self. Based on these elements, I started looking for the voices of the 'Muslim' other. In the corpus under scrutiny, only three Muslim voices were presented. *Il Corriere della Sera* reports on a short comment by Davide Piccardo, coordinator of the Islamic associations in Milan, in which he states that 'the celebration of Christian fests



has never been a problem for Muslims in this country'.<sup>22</sup> Piccardo is the only voice in the corpus representing the Muslim community in some official capacity.

The most extensive interview with a Muslim person in the corpus is an interview with Laila Magar, Egyptian immigrant and mother of two children, both of whom have attended Parma's school in Rozzano. The interview is complemented with a few lines by her husband Mahmoud El Kheir. Magar comments on the case stating

Who can possibly be bothered by Christmas [celebrations]? Maybe the Principal, surely not the Muslim community. My kids always took part in the Christmas celebrations at school, singing ... traditional Catholic carols. Why create a problem that is not there?<sup>23</sup>

El Kheir's comments follow the same lines, and read as follows:

Who are we, Muslims, to say what is allowed and what is not in Italian schools? We are guests in this country. I hope that public opinion will understand that the decision was not prompted by Muslim parents.<sup>24</sup>

El Kheir's quote above is particularly poignant. By stating that Muslims are guests in Italy, he de facto endorses the dominant narrative that sees Italy as an unchangeably Catholic entity (despite its own constitution). Simultaneously, El Kheir constructs his own subject position as that of an inherently foreign 'other' that should willingly accept a diminished position in society. By extension, he does so for all other Muslims included in the collective 'we' he uses.

Aside from Piccardo, Magar, and El Kheir, one further Muslim person is named as being interviewed. However, her voice is not reported directly, nor is her name. Her figure remains vaguely identified as that of 'a veiled woman' getting her groceries at the local market.<sup>25</sup> In light of this final example, I wish to close the section by pointing out the contrast between the reporting of Italian Catholic voices and that of Muslim voices. The spokespersons of the Italian 'self' almost exclusively comment from a position of authority conferred them by a political or professional title. By contrast, the Muslim 'other' is virtually

22 Cavadini, 'Bufera sul "Divieto" di Natale Lascia il Preside Sotto Accusa; Scuola', 1.

23 Galluzzo, '“Non si Dialoga Rinunciando al Natale”', 23.

24 Ibid.

25 Manola, 'Maestre e Genitori con il Preside di Rozzano', *Corriere della Sera*, 30 November 2015, 7.

always speaking in a private capacity and in non-institutional settings, such as their own home (that's the setting of the interview with Magar and El Kheir mentioned above) or the local market. Arguably, the recurrent representation of Muslims as private individuals always caught off guard during their daily errands with hardly any institutional representative to speak for them is another element that contributes to further disempower their voices in a master narrative that already presents them in a subordinate social position.

#### 4 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presented a polyphony of voices that argue for the existence of an Italian national 'self' that is unmistakably Catholic. Salvini and his nativist Lega Nord adopt what Marco Tarchi has defined as 'ethnopopulism': a political rhetoric based (among other things) on the assumption that different 'cultures' are not meant to mix, and corroborated by a relatively overt notion of racial superiority.<sup>26</sup> This rhetoric also infuses the letter signed by the school parents opposing Parma's decision and claiming that 'preserving our traditions without limitations can do nothing but enrich those who follow other religions and traditions'.<sup>27</sup>

The moderate right and the centre-left adopted a more cautious stance. While not wielding any overtly racist argument, representatives from both hands of the political spectrum argued for the self-evident existence of an Italian national self that is Catholic or that, to the very least, follows traditions that are infused with Catholicism, such as celebrating Christmas. This trend was not unexpected, since Catholicism is a well-known political force in Italian politics, usually imagined as a 'white whale' impossible to ignore.<sup>28</sup> Counter-narratives were very limited, and ultimately advocated for the separation of Church and State but not against the Catholic nature of the Italian 'self'.

If the ethnopopulist narratives by definition exclude immigrants, moderates on the left and on the right make reference to either assimilationist or multiculturalist approaches to diversity. This trend has also been observed in

26 Marco Tarchi, *Italia Populista: Dal Qualunquismo a Beppe Grillo* (Bologna, Italy: Contemporanea, 2015).

27 Manola and Senesi, '“Per gli Islamici è una Provocazione”: Bufera sul Preside che Sposta il Natale; Il caso', 13.

28 Alberta Giorgi, 'Ahab and the White Whale: The Contemporary Debate around the Forms of Catholic Political Commitment in Italy', *Democratization* 20.5 (2013): 895–916.

the literature,<sup>29</sup> and concern was voiced regarding the (in)efficiency of these models that have over-lived their times and have been replaced elsewhere with more inclusive paradigms.<sup>30</sup>

If the Italian 'self' is constructed as unequivocally Catholic, the 'other' is constructed just as inescapably as 'Muslim'. This emerged mostly through unprompted reference to the Muslim religion of foreign students as well as in more overt considerations throughout the corpus. This trend also finds confirmation in the literature, with Stefano Allievi's 'how the immigrant has become Muslim' being one classic scholarly example analysing the path through which Muslim became the 'other' in the European public sphere.<sup>31</sup>

Muslim voices are numerically under-represented in the corpus, despite the ubiquitous inference that they are indeed the cause of the Rozzano incident. Furthermore, while Italian Christian voices come from all spheres of public and private life, including institutional representatives at all level, the only institutional Muslim voice comes from a local-level representative that is given the space of a single line of text. Finally, while Italian voices are mostly assertive when stating their positions, Muslim voices are presented as defensive and submissive, to the extent that one of them has not even achieved the right to be quoted directly. Also this final trend has already been object of inquiry. Through different angles, a wide array of studies has observed how Muslim voices are silenced<sup>32</sup> or granted space only when they are not 'too different'.<sup>33</sup> I wish to conclude by pointing out that this final trend is not specific to the case of Muslim minorities in Italy or Europe. In the North American context, a seminal study by Vargas has found that people of Hispanic origin are consistently under-represented in local news and portrayed in disempowered positions. Vargas describes this in terms of a semi-conscious editorial process that (1) limits the space offered to Hispanic voices (i.e. not quoting them directly),

29 Tiziana Caponio, 'Multiculturalism Italian Style: Soft or Weak Recognition?', *Challenging Multiculturalism: European Models of Diversity*, ed. Ray Taras (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 216–235.

30 Maria Bustelo and Emanuela Lombardo, 'Comparing the Europeanization of Multiple Inequalities in Southern Europe: A Discursive-Institutionalist Analysis', *The Europeanization of Gender Equality Policies: A Discursive-Sociological Approach*, eds. Emanuela Lombardo and Maxime Forest (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 121–144.

31 Stefano Allievi, 'How the Immigrant Has Become Muslim', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 21.2 (2005): 135–163.

32 Stefano Allievi, 'Sociology of a Newcomer: Muslim Migration to Italy – Religious Visibility, Cultural and Political Reactions', *Immigrants & Minorities* 22 (2012): 141–154.

33 Wendy Pojman, 'Muslim Women's Organizing in France and Italy: Political Culture, Activism and Performativity in the Public Sphere', *Feminist Formations* 22.3 (2010): 229–251.



(2) interviews private citizens rather than community leaders, and (3) focuses on the private affairs of the interviewees rather than public processes.<sup>34</sup> In light of the similarity between these two cases across the North Atlantic, further research should explore through a larger sample the validity of this comparison.

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34 Lucilla Vargas, 'Genderizing Latino News: An Analysis of a Local Newspaper's Coverage of Latino Current Affairs', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17.3 (2000): 261–293.

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