



## **Whiteness and racialization in/between East and West**

*“Racialization, Whiteness and Politics of Othering in Contemporary Europe”  
(Study Circle 5)*

*Nordic Summer University*

Winter symposium: 27-28 March 2023

Place: Roskilde University, Denmark

### **BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

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**MONDAY, 27 March, 9:30 – 12:30**

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**ANA SVETEL**

University of Ljubljana

#### **Others of the North: Representations of the (sub)Arctic Indigenous populations in Slovene textbooks**

Even though racialization and othering in Europe can be traced along the (contested) line dividing western and eastern part of the continent, the existing hierarchies and asymmetries often traverse the (geo)political, socio-economical and historical borders between the "West" and the "rest". This paper examines one of these exceptions among the otherwise predominantly idealistic image of the North, which prevails in the public and media discourses in Slovenia (see Svetel 2022), namely the representations of the indigenous populations of the Circumpolar North as maintained, constructed and reinforced in the Slovene textbooks. While these textbooks tend to portray Nordic countries as hyper-modern and ultra-developed societies, the indigenous populations living in northern Fennoscandia and Greenland are often represented as the opposite - traditional, exotic, frozen in time or excluded from the global processes. The paper will focus on the following questions: how have these representations evolved over the last 32 years? How do these representations diverge in different school phases and subjects? If and how is the racial perspective integrated in these representations? In what ways does the climate and environmental change affect the representations of these populations? How are these representations aligned with the media discourses about the indigeneity on the one hand and nordicness on the other? The textbooks proved to be an

indispensable element of the public discourse - in her broad analysis of the Slovenian textbooks, Šabec (2016: 139) claims that they can be understood "as an agent of ethnocentric and racist socialization", while Porić and Črnič (2021) show that the stereotypes about Muslims are integrated in Slovenian primary-schools textbooks. Using the critical discourse analysis I will, on the (geographically) other hand, emphasis similar logic which lies behind the representations of the Others of the North. In order to contextualise the case, selected examples of textbook portrayals of Indigenous populations from other (sub)Arctic areas will be brought forth as well as some additional school material (posters, school projects, extra-curricular activities).

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## **CSILLA HAJNAL-SMITH**

Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University in Budapest/Vienna

### **Racialisation of Eastern European migrants in post-Brexit Britain**

Drawing on work by Botterill and Burrell (2020) I interrogate questions surrounding the different ways of performing whiteness among Eastern European migrants in the UK. My contention, following Fox et al (2012), is that whiteness comes in different shades, and it is inherently unstable and heterogeneous (Böröcz and Sarkar, 2017). Eastern European migrants can be viewed as (in)visible, 'not quite white' or 'White-Other' (Favell, 2008) in the racialised contexts of Britain's migration regime. I set this against the wider discourse about the failure of multiculturalism and its replacement with integration, where controlled immigration and migrant integration are employed to have a grip on diversity (Favell, 2022). While prior to Brexit, free-moving EU citizens were not subject to integration when they settled in Britain, and they could retain their own nationality and enjoy a European citizenship on the basis of residency rights, post-Brexit they had to consider permanent settlement (Gonzales and Sigona, 2017). I set my exploration between the critical receptions and ensuing debates surrounding the Parekh and the Sewell reports. I analyse how the post-Brexit integration nation is removed from, and stands directly against the idea of a 'post-nation state', that was advocated by the Parekh report, and how the Sewell report sets Britain firmly within the dominant mode of post-racial logic (Lentin, 2012), and serves a wider hegemonic project of the culturalization of politics, whereby reducing the crises of capitalism to the cultural they redefine what it means to be British.

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## **GODA CICENAITE**

University of Iceland

### **Racialization of migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: Lithuanians in Iceland case**

The research project I am conducting explores experiences of Lithuanian immigrants and migrant workers in Iceland during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the current paper, which is a work-in-progress, I focus on racialization of Lithuanian migrant workers in Iceland during the first two years of the pandemic (from January 2020 to February 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic, as a particular crisis, induced issues that fed into discrimination of Eastern European immigrants during Iceland's financial crisis of 2008, such as increased

unemployment, economic uncertainty, and insecurity. Past research by Kristín Loftsdóttir (2017) has shown racialization of Lithuanian migrant workers in Iceland in the context of Iceland's financial crisis, which captured how racist practices have to be seen as produced within local subjectivities. In the paper, I discuss whether the COVID-19 pandemic affected such undercurrents and in what ways. The population of Lithuanians in Iceland has increased three times since the financial crash, making it the second-largest group of foreign nationals in the country scattered across the island. In the symposium, I will present the progress of the paper and the findings drawn from the in-depth interviews with Lithuanian migrant workers in Iceland's South and East between December 2021 and May 2022. I also intend to discuss why the Eastern European body became a part of Icelandic racism.

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### **MILENA BŁAHUTA**

Doctoral School of Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw

Title: "It is so pleasant not to understand" – interactions with local language in the narratives of high skilled Polish migrants in CEE

In this presentation, based on my doctoral research, which focuses on migrations of young skilled migrants from Poland to other countries of the region of CEE, I will discuss individual language strategies of the studied group of migrants. I will reflect on specific characteristics of the context of the "East-East" mobility, i.a. regarding processes of racialization of migrants (in the context of white privilege and "peripheral whiteness" of Eastern Europeans) or global power relations in the region (CEE as a "missing Second World" in postcolonial studies). Following the individual narratives on everyday practices and experiences of the interviewees, I will discuss social hierarchies, inequalities and ambivalent identity of high skilled Polish migrants in the studied countries, additionally reflecting on the mechanisms of turning their language capital into location-specific economic profit.

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**MONDAY, 27 March, 13:30 – 17:00**

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### **URSULA PROBST**

Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Freie Universität Berlin

**"But we are all white!" - Migrants from "Eastern Europe" negotiating whiteness in and beyond the sex industry in Berlin**

Since the 2000s, public and political debates about sex work and prostitution in Germany strongly feature the "Eastern European prostitute" as a stereotypical figure of the naïve and passive victim of human trafficking and exploitation. On a discursive level, these debates serve as a vivid example of the peripheralization, stereotypization and homogenization of "Eastern Europe" as a "backward" and "less-European" region in contrast to (implicitly Western) "European" countries such as Germany.

The (supposed) problems of "Eastern European prostitutes" portrayed in these discourses are often far removed from the heterogenous realities of sex working migrants from countries and

regions commonly understood as “Eastern Europe” in Germany. Nevertheless, as many of the participants of my research on the everyday (work) lives of this group of migrants in Berlin recounted, stereotypes about “Eastern Europe” and “Eastern European prostitutes” in particular made it necessary to constantly negotiate their “Europeanness” in the German capital. As became apparent in their narratives, these negotiations were not only influenced by sexualized and classist categorizations, but also very much related to racialized ideas of (not-quite)-whiteness.

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## **FLORA TIETGEN**

Faculty for Education and Diversity at the University of Iceland

### **Service and support for immigrant women in Iceland: Institutional practices and the reproduction of colonial discourses**

According to the #metoo stories by immigrant women published 2018 in the Icelandic online newspaper Kjarninn, their experiences with institutions which provide services and support for immigrants and/or women who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) are characterized by a lack of cultural sensitivity and appropriate responses to the women’s needs. Inspired by these stories, 20 semi-structure interviews were conducted between autumn 2020 and spring 2021 with service providers and NGOs that work with immigrant women who have experienced violence – either at work or in the intimate relationships. Drawing on decolonial/postcolonial theories, the proposed paper will analyse how service providers/NGOs in Iceland construct the needs of immigrant women which are often framed within the “rights” discourse by focusing specifically on the intersection of ethnic background, gender, and immigration. Furthermore, the paper draws attention to how service providers and NGOs in Iceland construct unilateral knowledge on immigrant women which sustains and reproduces whiteness and coloniality. In other words, service providers and NGOs rarely incorporate postcolonial/decolonial perspective into their institutional practices. In so doing, the paper aims to understand the working power in terms of service provision for immigrant women and how it reproduces colonial discourses. This critical examination of how services are provided and which shortcomings there are, has the potential to make suggestions for more culturally appropriate and decolonial services for all immigrant women.

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## **LIENE JURGELĀNE**

new visions collective

### **Exploring our bodies as maps of racialization (workshop)**

In this session we will primarily focus on our physical bodies as vessels of racialized experiences and sources of knowledge of how to tend to the individual and collective scars of racialization.

Through a series of embodied practices and individual & collective reflection exercises we will practice listening deeply to our bodies; unravel some of the ways racialization affects different bodies in different political contexts; and explore ways of tending & mending some of the impacts of racialization through our bodies.

The practices offered in the session are selected with intention to accommodate different racial & other social positionalities to create as safe a space as is possible.

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**TUESDAY, 28 March, 9:30 – 12:00**

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**MARTA MALISZEWSKA**

University of Warsaw

### **Race and Whiteness in White Societies**

In my presentation of work in progress I ask if and how categories of 'race' and 'whiteness' can be applied to understand hierarchies between groups in mostly white, semi-peripheral societies on the example of anti-Ukrainian racism in Poland. I recall thesis of Saly Haslanger (2019), Tariq Modood (2018), Sara Ahmed (2007) and Linda Martin Alcoff (2015) that all show how categories of 'race' and 'whiteness' are socially constructed and as such are used to describe positions of various white and non-white groups. What those theories have in common is their assumption that racialized people are those who are seen as strangers in a society. They more or less visible racialized marks make it impossible for them to pass as locals. 'Wrong' body or name become a cause of being stopped in white dominated world – privilege of comfort, of feeling 'at home' is available only to 'white' bodies. Others, 'non-white', are always in a 'position of being a guest, or the stranger, the one who receives hospitality' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 164).

Referring to those theories I claim that Ukrainians as an ethnic group are racialized in Poland and features as a spoken language or even an accent function as their racial markers. Geographical associations contribute to placing them in a social hierarchy, for example designate Ukrainians' position on a labor market in Poland. Thus, being or not being white is not a universal feature, but it depends on a socio-economic context – Ukrainians could be at the same time white in Ukraine and non-white in Poland (similarly to Poles working in the UK). Therefore, while applying the term 'whiteness' one should emphasize that it focuses less on a person's look (as different and arbitrary features can be racialized) and more on their ability to act and perception of those action by the rest of a society. Using terms as 'race' and 'whiteness' to describe power relations between two 'white' groups on the one hand helps to see dynamic between them in a broader context of critical race theory and on the other it contributes to denaturalizing the meaning of those terms.

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**TERESA FAZAN**

University of Warsaw

### **The “powerful fiction” of whiteness: Poland as the West’s “intermediary Other”**

In my presentation, I explore how whiteness and blackness work out in defining progress, Europeanness, and ultimately - Polishness. By briefly reaching toward Polish colonial fantasies from the interwar period, I wish to explicate how racialization played and plays a role in shaping the self-images of Poles. Of particular interest are notions of being in-between (West and East,

arguably also South and North) and a mixture of aspiration/inferiority and xenophobia/superiority expressed by Polish mentality.

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## **BOLAJI BALOGUN**

University of Sheffield, UK

### **Race and the Colour-Line: the Boundaries of Europeanness in Poland**

This talk sets out the foundational ideas about race and coloniality in Poland and relates them to the global manifestations that influenced them. Focusing on race and coloniality, the talk shows a shift in global racial discourse – an understanding of the specificity of Polish racism that can transform and add to our understandings of race in the West. In doing so, the talk offers a brief theoretical and historical context, whilst outlining the ways in which race and coloniality have been framed in Poland. To do this effectively, the talk draws from archival resources - manuscripts, documents, and records - from Poland and other parts of Europe to theorize what I identify as the three key manifestations of race and coloniality in Poland, namely Colonial global economy; Colonization; and Eugenics. In doing so, the talk recalls discussions on race and coloniality from the peripheral to the centre in order to redirect them beyond the prevailing accounts of race and colonialism in the West. The talk excavates the veiled racialized and colonial structures within the Polish histories as a way of remapping the politics of race-making in Europe.

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## **BRYAN GREENE**

Department of Sociology at the University of Connecticut

### **From #BlackLivesMatter to #DontCallMeMurzyn: Exploring Anti-Blackness in Poland**

Most conversations about anti-blackness in Poland usually begin with folks asking, “They have black people in Poland?” Albeit not well known, there is an extensive history of interactions, trade, and movements of people from the African continent to Poland and vice versa that date back centuries. Although not directly involved with the Atlantic Slave Trade or colonization of the African continent, records indicate trade and commercial transactions dating back to the 18th century. After World War II’s end, Poland was completely ravaged and decimated by the conflict and fell under Soviet influence. Many thought that Soviet influence closed off the country but tens of thousands of students from Africa came to Poland to study in various universities. These students created families in Poland and the children of those students would become known colloquially as Afro-Poles and to date, there are multiple generations of Afro-Poles residing in Poland. After Soviet influences waned and Poland became a member of the European Union in 2004, many immigrants from Africa would enter Poland and create lives for themselves and their families. These immigrants and Afro-Poles already present in Poland unfortunately were not necessarily welcomed with open arms by Polish citizens and with the nationalist position of the current leaders in Poland, instances of anti-black violence and xenophobia have occurred more often and with more fervor. This project seeks to bring the lived experiences of Afro/Black Poles and other black individuals in Poland to the fore and

contribute to the dearth of scholarly conversations on anti-black racism in Central/Eastern Europe.

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**TUESDAY, 28 March, 13:00 – 15:30**

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**SVITLANA ODYNETS**

University of Gothenburg

The representation of the current Ukrainian refugee wave in Western knowledge production: old power asymmetries and new positionalities

The reactions to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 indicated a multiplicity of standpoints, different positionalities and power asymmetries, in particular in the Western academy. Many representatives of migration research centres as well as individual researchers, while recognising the importance of solidarity with the Ukrainian people and with Ukrainian scholars, emphasized simultaneously that all other migrants around the world should get help from the EU governments on the same level as Ukrainian war refugees (IMISCOE Statement, 21 June 2022; Näre et al 2022). Moreover, the majority of published research articles (by November 2022) in Migration Studies argue that non-Western, but white and Christian Ukrainians have been accepted in a much better way than non-white migrants from African and Middle Eastern countries who experienced much harder obstacles trying to enter the Europe, and that therefore, this particularly welcoming reception of Ukrainians in the EU is direct evidence of racism (Morrice 2022; Jackson Sow 2022).

In other words, as Franck Düvell recently claimed in his editorial article for IMISCOE (Düvell 2022) the current refugee wave from Ukraine is seen by many Western academics through the epistemological bias of the older dynamics between the Global North and Global South despite the factual and symbolic existence of the Global East.

In this paper I will focus on the unity of the statements that come from different researchers and institutions, but are unexpectedly similar, if not identical in their explanations for the observed difference in the reception of Ukrainians. I am also interested in the unequivocality of the conclusions, before any comparative studies about the reception of Ukrainians and other migrants have been done. In addition, I will try to understand why in academic circles, characterized by postcolonial standpoints, the interest in current knowledge from inside Ukraine as a (post) or (de)colonial subject as well as in forms of new agencies is so low, if it exists at all.

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**DMYTRO MAMAIEV**

Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences

**Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia in the migration discourse: realm of 21st century and ways to move ahead**

Migration processes acceleration has been intensifying for a long period of time. Wars, revolutions, coups, armed conflicts, persecutions, deportations, economic conditions and many other aspects were defining migration dynamics for centuries. 21st century does not

change a pre-text for cross-border movements. People are still striving for a better future and also suffer from climate changes reality.

As a young researcher, I do explore integration of young Ukrainian migrants in Lithuanian communities while touching up on the issues of racism impact and various discriminations with regard towards migrants across Baltics region. Research with eventual objective to assist vulnerable categories of people goes along with my dissertation goals.

According to the OSCE, the term "racism" is defined as prejudice and intolerance based on a person's "race" or skin color, and is often associated with country of origin/or religion. Meantime, the word "xenophobia" is "fear of the otherness". Xenophobia refers to behavior based on the idea that another person is alien to a community or nation or comes from other places. This kind of intolerance often manifests itself in the form of discrimination towards migrants/displaced people.

Recently, after 2015, to regulate the flow of migrants and refugees to their territory, many states voluntarily or at the request of supranational bodies, such as the EU, introduced domestic quotas for the admission of a certain number of migrants into the country. The solution to the problem of migration using mandatory quotas is considered controversial due to the assumption that quotas imply the selection of a certain number of immigrants depending on their nationality, country of origin or level of qualification. Moreover, not all the countries have agreed to endorse large shares of migrants (case of CEE region). Situation tremendously changed after 24 February 2022. Plenty of states of CEE reacted in unity and solidarity towards Ukrainian people.

Given symposium would be excellent opportunity to discuss how politics and identity intertwined often with racism and xenophobia developments define the reality of 21st century in the discourse of global migration.

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## **EMINA BUZINKIC**

Independent scholar, member of AGITATE! Unsettling knowledges Editorial Collective and Transbalkan Solidarity

### **The epicenters of anti-Muslim violence in the Balkans: Race, ethnicity and border**

In this presentation, I discuss the politics of race and racialization in the Balkans as part of the global and, more specifically, European racial discourse while tracing localized genealogies of ethno-racial hierarchies. I situate my analysis within the entanglement of the continual anti-Muslim politics in the Balkans, accounting for visceral, cultural, and epistemic erasures, and the recent migration politics enforcing restriction of movement and keeping away Muslims and populations of color outside of European borders. I draw attention to the longevities of anti-Muslim violence in the complex twinned histories of revulsion towards Muslims as racial savages and detestation of the Islamic religion. This historical entry into the divides between Islam and Christianity relates to Charles Mill's (2022) theorizing on the foundations of racial contract in Europe, according to which religious identity interchanges with markers of race and the critical question of who counts as white and who counts as non-white.

Anti-Muslim violence has been deployed as the politics of racialization where second-hand whiteness and non-whiteness inconveniently fit Christian and civilized Europe. The deployment of anti-Muslim violence against brown and Black, Muslim, and looking-like Muslim populations, refugees and migrants arriving from the so-called Muslim countries within the recent migratory flows appears as politics of racism deployed for preservation of white,



Christian, and civilized Europe. With Islam and Islamic culture regarded as foreign to Christian and white European spaces, Muslim populations are rendered as not belonging to Christian and white European topographies.

I argue that anti-Muslim violence is not only a representation of ethnic tensions but also the pervasive logic of racial formation in the Balkans, layered with the racialized designations traveling along with migrants and refugees, pronounced explicitly during and after the so-called refugee crisis. The labor of unsettling the prevailing ethnic categories calls for an understanding of the critical underpinnings of anti-Muslim and anti-migrant violence reflective of race politics in the Balkans, particularly nowadays when the prolonged refugee crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic call for a closer examination of the politics and methodologies of social distancing against targeted populations and their flattening.

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**KATHARINA MARIA WUROPULOS**

Helmut Schmidt University

**Stranger Imaginaries: Encountering imagined "others", a comparison of assistance for refugees hailing from South and East**

In media reports and public discourse refugees from war-torn countries are often imagined as strangers (compare Ahmed 2000). Going into field work at the Moldovan border to Ukraine and spending time in Chisinau, the capital of Moldova, as well as in Athens, Greece and on the Eastern Mediterranean islands of Chios and Lesbos, I researched how European societies deal with refugees. How do those who have been living in a place for a long time deal with those who newly arrive fleeing from conflict and war? How are people with histories of flight and migration differentiated and categorized (Bauer & Wahlberg 2009)? Europe as an identity and categorizations of people who "deserve" help are constantly (re-)negotiated in (European) borderlands (Reyes 2019) where newly arrived from conflict and war meet long-established social groups. Likewise, the people that inhabit European borderlands (- Moldova is not part of the European Union and has for centuries been subjected to colonial claims from East and West), constantly renegotiate their own identity along values and political preferences, that are also influenced by flight migration.

How societal groups evaluate who deserves help and who does not, is shaped by their own understanding of who belongs where. It is moreover influenced by topoi of insecurity used by political regimes to destabilize a European human rights identity in the flight-context. An example for such is the topos of "Gayropa" used in post-Soviet discourses against liberal values, which was used in Moldova after the war in Ukraine started that established a European identity of the moral-less, neofeminist, promiscuous refugee and refugee supporters.