Racism and anti-racism in Europe: a critical analysis of concepts and frameworks

Journal Article

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

oro.open.ac.uk

Racism and anti-racism in Europe: a critical analysis of concepts and frameworks

Umut Erel*

Summary

The targets and expressions of racism vary across Europe. This article discusses the relevance of different descriptions and analyses of racism despite the different terms used in different countries such as 'ethnic minority', 'foreigner' or 'black' and different interpretations of which differences matter. It shows the significance of a cross-national European perspective on racism. There are important convergences across European countries in the discourses and practices of racism, particularly the distinction between 'useful' and 'abusive' migrants. A cross-European perspective can be an important inspiration for anti-racist struggles.

Sommaire
####STILL TO COME####

Zusammenfassung
####STILL TO COME####

Keywords: racism, Europe, comparative, anti-racist struggles, migrants, foreigners, blacks, ethnic minorities

The issue of what constitutes racism in different European countries is complex. There are different histories, different social conditions, and different groups of people becoming the racialised Other.[1] However, there are also

---

[1] I am referring here to the social and representational process of constructing a group as 'Other', i.e. incompatibly different, on the basis of assumed biological or cultural difference. I use this term to emphasise that these

commonalities of experience, due to a shared history of colonialism and post-colonial developments, as well as shared constructions of boundaries, both discursively and through legal and other institutions.

Moreover, resistance to racism is also articulated differently. Those who are excluded and subjected formulate diverse strategies and demands addressing specific situations of exclusion that continue to be formulated in national terms (Lamont 1997). However, subjected groups learn from the experiences of other groups and share forms of resistance (Anthias and Lloyd 2002). It is important, in a contribution to the debate within the trade union movement, to understand that racism is not only an ideology and practice that subjects people and renders them victims. Those subjected to racism also find ways of countering it in everyday encounters, as well as in more organised ways (CCCS, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies 1982; Gilroy 1987; Taguieff 2002).

This article first presents some outline evidence on the growth and presence of racism in Europe. Next it probes the different understandings of racism in the different countries, looking in particular at the different terminologies. Finally, it focuses on comparing racisms across Europe.

What evidence is there of racism in Europe?

Many commentators find that racism in Europe is on the rise. While evidence in the form of official statistics is patchy or difficult to compare across countries, many anti-racism NGOs believe that there is a rise in racism across Europe (Winkler 2006 **NEED TO ADD THIS TO REFERENCES**).

---

differences are socially constructed through power relations, rather than being the 'natural', pre-existing basis for a 'natural' preference for those similar to oneself.

Looking at the development of attitudes towards ethnic minorities in the EU in three surveys from 1997 to 2003, worrying trends were identified in one study:

- resistance to a multicultural society was subscribed to by one in four Europeans living in the EU, constituting a rather stable minority over time;
- the view that there are 'limits to multicultural society' was supported by a growing majority of about two out of three Europeans living in the EU;
- there was a large but rather stable minority (of about four out of ten) that opposes civil rights for legal migrants **?worth elaborating: that opposes civil rights for legal migrants similar to those other legal residents have?**;
- about one out of five Europeans living in the EU is in favour of repatriation policies for legal migrants;
- a growing majority of about two out of three Europeans insists on the conformity of migrants with the law **?at first sight I did not follow why believing that migrants should comply with the law should be a worrying trend, I looked at the study and I would suggest that we give more information on the context: 'insists on the conformity of migrants to the law, that is, that migrants should give up such parts of their religion or culture that may be in conflict with the national law', although one might see why some people might not condone the practice of e.g. female circumcision I suppose, even though if I understood the survey correctly the results were not based on a question with regard to female circumcision???** (Coenders *et al.* 2003: 5).

Related to this negative attitudinal environment, when we look at the position of migrants and ethnic minorities in the labour market, a clear picture of disadvantage emerges. While this in itself is not a sufficient measure for racism, it gives a view of inequalities based on ethnicity that do interact with structural and interpersonal racism.

In the labour market, ethnic minorities and migrants show higher unemployment rates and tend to be concentrated in lower pay and low status occupations (EUMC, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006a: 41). There are, of course, differences across countries, ethnic groups, sectors and skills, but the general statement still holds true (for detailed breakdown of these factors see ICMPD 2003: 25). Of course, it is contested how far the statistical over-representation of migrants and ethnic minorities among the unemployed and in low status occupations can be seen as a sign of racism, as it is argued that this may simply reflect their lower levels of education or other factors. Yet, the fact of low educational achievement itself, especially for second and later generation migrants, is not independent of racism.

For example, UK statistics show that the unemployment gap between whites and those of Indian and Chinese origin has almost closed over the past 15 years. Yet, people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black-Caribbean and Black-African origin still experience unemployment rates two and a half or three times that of the white majority (EUMC 2006a: 42). In France, studies showed that unemployment rates for people born outside France are higher than for those born in the country, in particular where North Africans are concerned (*ibid.*).[2]

Discrimination testing in the Netherlands also confirmed a depressing picture:

> In the Netherlands in September 2005, the website *www.elqalem.nl* published the results of a series of discrimination tests. 150 CVs, adapted to published job vacancies, were sent to a number of companies in the Netherlands. Half carried a traditional Dutch name and the other half a foreign or Islamic-sounding name. Of the 75 'Dutch' CVs, 69 persons were invited for a job interview. Of the 75 'foreign' CVs, 33 persons were invited. All the job interviews were attended. After the interviews were

---

[2] For more statistical information on ethnic minorities and migrants in Europe, see ICMPD 2003.

held, 51 of the Dutch respondents were hired as opposed to only two of the ethnic minority respondents (EUMC 2006: 49).

When we take a look at the experiences of migrants and ethnic minorities, a bleak picture emerges: in a recent study commissioned by the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), respondents in several European countries were asked whether they 'experienced the following discriminatory treatment due to their 'foreign background': (1) they were denied a job that they applied for; (2) they missed a promotion at their job; (3) they suffered from harassment at work' (EUMC 2006b: 19) in the past five years. About a third of respondents experienced discrimination at least once or twice in that period, with harassment at work being most widespread (36% of respondents).

This subjective account of migrants and minorities' experiences is confirmed by the general population in the EU, 45% of whom think that ethnic origin is likely to be a disadvantage when applying for a job (European Commission 2007: 16).

Trade unions can play an important role in countering racism in Europe. Thus, being excluded from participation in trade unions can be part of racist legislation, as 'in the case of the new official contracts for domestic workers in Cyprus which forbid such workers from participating in any trade union or political activity, on pain of automatic termination of the work and residence permit.' (EUMC 2006a: 13) Trade unions should also address the fact that legal discrimination of non-nationals can lead to racist discourse: 'On two occasions during 2005, in two different countries, Ireland and the Netherlands, where there were similar instances of groups of foreign workers introduced to replace and undercut the wages and conditions of national workers, fears were raised about the implications of this for the growth of anti-immigrant sentiments.' (EUMC 2006a: 14)

A study of extreme right-wing attitudes among trade union members in Germany found that the prevalence of these was the same among members

and non-members (around 20%). Worryingly, the study also found that among middle class trade union members the prevalence was higher (19%) than among their non-unionised peers (13%). One of this report's main conclusions is that it is important to strengthen the role of trade unions as opinion leaders in advocating anti-racist ideas both among their members and in wider society (Stöss *et al.* 2004).

When comparing expressions and experiences of racism in different European countries, it is important to be aware of the different national frameworks of recording and 'measuring' racism. Comparisons should also take into account that 'antiracist campaigns and the concepts of justice differ from one country to another' (Wieviorka 2002: 464). But comparisons must also make clear that some of the words used have quite different meanings in terms of people's experiences.

What's in the words migrants, blacks, foreigners ...?

When examining racism in Europe, one of the first problems is the different terminologies and indeed explanatory frameworks in which exclusionary practices and discourses, as well as their analyses, are couched. Thus, in Britain the prevalent debates are in terms of 'race relations', the Black-White divide and multiculturalism. In continental Europe other terms, such as 'immigrants' and 'foreigners' are used to both describe and construct people as racialised Others. In this section I will begin by discussing the different terms used to describe ethnic minorities, migrants, foreigners and blacks in different European countries. I argue that these different terms shed as much light on the way the societies see themselves and the degree of ethnic homogeneity and inclusiveness as they say about the people they are supposed to describe. Moreover, I argue that the different terms not only show different country-specific situations, but also stem from different political standpoints and analyses of racism. An important difference in political standpoints refers to whether racism is seen as mainly a question of

ideological representation or whether one views racism as a power relation that takes place in different social arenas (such as representation in the media or political life, or the extent of labour market inclusion). I will also discuss different levels of racism, such as direct and indirect, interpersonal and structural. I will look at how these different levels of racism are sometimes used to present racism as a minor problem and to disqualify the views and experiences of people who experience racism.

Describing ethnic/racialised differences

Does the use of different terms in different countries make any difference? Is it important? A lot has already been written about this. Jan Rath (1993) argued that in the European context where British or English-speaking social sciences are dominant, the concepts of racism and racialisation have been adopted widely. But Rath believes these concepts cannot properly be applied to the situation in other European countries. Instead he argues for using those terms that are prevalent in each country. For Belgium he suggests to use the term 'immigrisation' as he thinks that the specific logic of exclusion in Belgium refers to the fact that immigrants are newcomers. For the Swedish context, he suggests the term 'culturalisation' as it is the reification of cultures as forming the boundary between 'us' and 'them' which is given most prominence in defining the Other, not so much a reference to supposed biological difference. For the Netherlands, he diagnoses a process of 'ethnic minoritisation' as the most pertinent form of constructing Otherness on the basis of specific socio-cultural characteristics, which institutionalise the groups who are the objects of racism as 'ethnic minorities'.

This analysis of the various ways in which the construction of difference and subjection of 'Other' groups are framed in different European countries can be helpful. This was one of the points of departure in the Working against Racism

project's[3] analysis of the historical specificities of racism in Europe. Thus, we have found the prevalence of the notions of 'immigrant' both in France and francophone Belgium, as well as the notion of the 'foreigner' in Dutch-speaking Belgium, as well as a tendency to favour forms of ethnic minority representation. In Italy, the notions of 'immigrant' or 'those from outside the EU' are salient, while in Bulgaria the notions of national or ethnic minorities, or marginalised populations, is prevalent, as the term racism is not seen as relevant to the Bulgarian context apart from some NGOs who participate in more international discourses and have adapted this terminology (see Zhelyazkova and Angelova, in this issue).

Analysing power relations as racialisation

These national differences in constructing the racialised Other are important, but it is also crucial to go beyond the description of national differences to develop concepts capable of analysing the phenomena of racism in diverse contexts, pointing out commonalities as well as differences. From this perspective a general concept of racism can be developed that understands it both as discourses and practices that exclude and subordinate people who are constructed as a group on the basis of supposed biological or cultural differences. In this way 'racialisation' means the social process by which a group is constructed by means of biologistic or culturalist representations **??made by others? or can it be the group itself that constructs itself??** (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).

---

[3] The Working Against Racism project (2003-2005 whose European Union Fifth Framework Programme acronym was RITU) was a research project in five European countries that examined the role of trade unions in challenging, perpetuating or ignoring racism in society, the workplace and within the trade union movement. Many of the contributions in this volume are based on this research; for more information see www.workingagainstracism.org.

The problem with approaches that focus on terminological differences is that they limit themselves to viewing racism as an ideological representation (Miles 1989). This misses out on the crucial aspect of racism as a power relationship involving the practice of subordination, which takes place across different social sites and where different social and institutional actors are involved. Reducing racism to an ideological representation can prompt giving up a unified analytical framework of racism as a cross-national phenomenon to which transnational responses should be made. The problem, therefore, with Rath's approach is that he takes at face value the descriptions of difference along which the boundaries of 'us' and 'them' are constructed. In contrast, the concept of racialisation offers a more in-depth approach by questioning the processes through which groups are constructed as 'Other' in the first place. The term racialisation does not subscribe to discredited 'scientific' racial theories. Instead it can be used to describe the processes through which social and economic differences are justified and maintained.

Culture and racism

What about the term 'cultural differences'? With the discrediting of scientific racism in post-war Europe, the idea of biological differences between 'racial' groups has given way to more cultural explanations of difference (Lamont 2002). The idea that it is indeed ethnic groups' own distinctiveness that leads to the 'natural' preference for their 'own' national or ethnic group and that this preference is not an assertion of hierarchies was characteristic of the 'new racism' of Enoch Powell as early as the 1960s in Britain. These 'neo-racist', 'differentialist' or culturalist discourses have gained ground all over Europe (Alund and Schierup 1991; Balibar 1991; Barker 1981) including in Britain, notwithstanding the continued use of the term 'race'. Indeed, some observers have argued that culturalist racism is becoming the prevalent form of racism in Europe. In addition, as Gilroy (2000) argues, the scientific discourse on genetics is also becoming more and more hegemonic as an explanation of social inequalities and is contributing to a new invigorated scientific racist discourse.

According to Wieviorka, however, the two forms of scientific and culturalist racism should not be seen as opposed since any form of racism operates along two axes of differentiation and hierarchy. He puts forward an analytical framework classifying six elementary forms of racism, four of which favour the in-group ('magnifying the differences', segregation behaviour, discrimination – concerned with hierarchisation – and racist violence), and two further aspects, that cross-cut all the above: political racism, in parties or smaller organisations, and ideological racism (Wieviorka 2002).

The construction of difference as 'cultural incommensurability', where it is alleged that there are impassable, fundamental differences in life styles and values, or as an institutionalisation of social groups as 'ethnic minorities', as well as the continued exclusion of groups on the basis of being newcomers, are all different facets of the same phenomenon of contemporary racism that apply to different degrees in all European countries. In Britain, for example, a renewed emphasis on calls for 'integration' is noticeable. In this way – directly or indirectly – the cultural difference ascribed to ethnic minorities is then made responsible for their continued exclusion (Alexander 2002; Back *et al.* 2002). This understanding of racialisation suggests that the quite common argument that there is a 'unique' British experience of racism is not tenable. Instead, for a variety of historical reasons, including and importantly the strong development and establishment of anti-racist resistance, the terms used (e.g. Black and White) are different to those used elsewhere in Europe. Instead, I suggest that the different understandings of racism are not only owing to the different country situations but to different political projects that inform the analysis.

The processes by which racialised groups make rights-claims on the civil societies in which they live inevitably make some use of the prevalent institutional and ideological forms of inclusion within the national context, as well as appealing to transnational discourses of human rights (Soysal 1994). Thus, in different national contexts, the same ethnic group may present itself as an ethnic minority, as an immigrant group, or as a racialised group.

At the same time, racialised groups may present themselves in non-ethnic terms, as in the struggles of undocumented migrants – the *sans papiers* – in France. Or they may choose to identify in trans-ethnic terms as with the use of the multiracial, multiethnic category of being 'Black' in the UK. In both these examples of social movements, the forms organising resistance have taken are of politicised social identities that rely on the commonality of experiences of institutional and legal forms of racism, rather than on a common ethnic identity.

Relying on the prevalent form of constructing difference within a country and taking for granted any *a priori* existence of groups constructed by racist discourses and practices is a mistake. Instead it is vital to deconstruct and identify the processes by which groups have been constructed as the 'Other'. The advantage of the concepts of racism and racialisation are their emphasis on the inventiveness of 'race', and on 'race' as a social construct. As such it takes various forms and can be articulated differentially in different social and national contexts.

Different levels and dimensions of racism

It is helpful to make the distinction between direct racism, or explicit forms of exclusion and subordination, and indirect racism. This is where policies may be seen as 'neutral' because they treat everyone in the same way but they actually affect particular groups in the population adversely. For example if a company recruits only in its local area, this may indirectly be an exclusion criterion for ethnic minorities who do not live locally. Or if a redundancy involves a last-in, first-out policy that might just happen to protect the jobs of the longer-serving ethnic majority. While direct racism is always deliberate, indirect discrimination can also occur unintentionally.

We can further distinguish between different levels of racism. Structural racism exists where, for example, all the senior positions in a business are occupied by majority white staff, and the lowest ranking work is carried out by ethnic minorities. Interpersonal racism, in contrast, exists where remarks or

exclusionary acts occur between two or more individual people. Many people tend to equate racism only with this face-to-face level of interpersonal, intentional racism. This is problematic, as the more pervasive structural racism is thus ignored. While interpersonal racism – as the above quoted ICMPD study shows – is widespread and needs to be tackled head on, it is important not to lose sight of the more subtle and structural forms of racism.

The existence of racism is often downplayed or denied. One strategy to do this is by accusing the targets of racism of exaggeration or paranoia, or simply labelling their views as 'subjective' and therefore lacking in reality. Racism is, of course, an uncomfortable truth that many would prefer to sweep under the carpet rather than address. As a consequence, those who name racism are routinely labelled troublemakers, and many organisations prefer to shoot the messenger rather than listen to the message. It is in this context that we must remember that the notion of objectivity is bound up with power relations, and indeed the experiences of dominant groups tend to be validated through educational and cultural institutions as true, whereas those of marginalised people tend to be portrayed as 'subjective' and therefore not fully valid.

The validation of their own experiences is one important aspect that has fuelled the development of identity politics of subordinated groups such as women, blacks, migrants and gays. These are not homogeneous groups and there are many different political, social, gendered, ethnic, ability, age and other positions within each of them. Yet, the claim to produce a political position from an experiential basis is part of reclaiming identity positions that had hitherto been defined by others. Any politics that aims at addressing racism must be sure to take seriously and engage with the experiences and views of those targeted by racism.

Xenophobia is the dislike of strangers, the crucial difference with racism being that racism involves power relations. Members of socially powerless groups can have racist views or xenophobic attitudes, however as they have limited social power to put them into practice, these need to be viewed differently from racism by members of dominant groups.

'Comparing' racism across European countries

The very construction of Europe was historically bound up with racism. The 19th century creation of the modern 'nation state' and idea of 'Europe' relied on the exclusion of the heritage of exchange and the contributions made by Africa and Asia. At a time when the European projects of empire were justified by a 'civilising' mission, the African and Asian contributions to 'European' civilisation had to be disavowed and instead 'Classical Greek' cultures were constructed as 'white' antecedents of European culture, adding longevity to a narration of Europe (Balibar 2004; Pieterse 1994).

National differences between racisms are also shaped by whether the countries have a colonial past with post-colonial immigrants, or by the presence of other groups who may be national minorities or are settled ethnic minorities with citizenship status. In this the legal culture of the country is also crucial. Thus, for example, the *ius sanguinis* legal tradition giving citizen rights only to those born of German ethnic parentage has long meant a lack of civil rights for third-country nationals in Germany, even if born on the territory, while ethnic Germans, even if they had lived abroad could more easily acquire citizenship.[4] While the citizenship status of immigrants and colonial history of European nation states has certainly been a key variable in European comparisons of racism (Brubaker 1989), it is also important critically to evaluate the role of national historiography in this context. Thus, while colonial history is acknowledged to play a part in the immigration experiences of countries such as Britain, France or Belgium, there is a tendency to downplay the formative effect of colonialism on articulations of racism in those countries

---

[4] It remains to be seen how the introduction in Germany of a naturalisation process that relies on a mixture of *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis* (citizenship determined by the citizenship of the parents) will affect the situation of migrants.

such as Italy or Germany, where fascism is seen as the point of reference for contemporary racisms. Colonial histories as well as the experience of fascism in Europe and more recent developments of 'new migrations' (Koser and Lutz 1998) including refugees and undocumented migrants from eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America have to varying degrees structured the articulation of contemporary forms of racism.

At the same time, the hegemonic black-white paradigm of understanding racism in the UK is not adequate for understanding forms of racism directed at other groups. Thus, post-colonial migrants in the UK such as the Cypriots have largely been excluded from analyses of 'race relations' as well as of political 'Blackness'. This is a problematic omission, pointing to the inadequate separation of the descriptive category of 'visible minority' and a more analytical concept of Blackness as political positioning (Anthias and Lloyd 1992). This shortcoming has also marginalised the analysis of experiences of racism of groups such as Arabs, Muslims and more recently refugees and undocumented migrants. The term 'xeno-racism' has recently been suggested as a way to overcome the focus on colour-based racism in the UK (Sivanandan 2001).

The articulation of racism and anti-racism also depends on the philosophical self-representation of nation states, such as the extent of the recognition of difference in the public realm. Thus France is cited as the prime example of a nation state where cultural difference is relegated to the realm of the private. Public affirmation of belonging to an ethnic or religious group will lay one open to accusations of ethnicisation or racialisation of collective life 'with the implication that those who do so, whether they realise it or not, are racists in the eyes of their critics' (Wieviorka 2002: 465). In the UK, on the contrary, such an approach of denying cultural differences would be seen as an expression of racism. Other countries, such as the Netherlands, with their political tradition of 'pillarisation' into distinct community spheres of influence have included ethnic minorities within their existing frameworks of institutionalising cultural 'difference' in the public domain. These differences have also made it very difficult for anti-racist activist NGOs to cooperate

across national boundaries, in particular on the European Union level as nationally specific discourses and approaches cannot easily be reconciled (Lloyd 2002; Rex 1994). This can also be a problem within the European trade union movement, and this has become clearer with the new migration flows within Europe in the 1990s.

'New migrations' and racisms

The post-World War II migrations of colonial citizens as well as of so-called 'guest workers' were fuelled by labour shortages in Europe making the labour market an ambivalent arena of inclusion as well as of experiences of racism. From the 1970s, however, immigrants and black people found access to the labour market increasingly difficult. While they were marginalised in the fields of education and social welfare, racist discourses now identified them as a source of the failures of a declining industrial society and its institutions (Wieviorka 2002).

The 1990s saw the emergence of 'new migrations' in Europe and with it new racist discourses and practices. While the transition from communism in eastern Europe was celebrated in western Europe as the triumph of democracy and human rights, it gave way to the dismantling of asylum systems across Europe. Whereas during the Cold War the figure of the refugee, in particular associated with the image of the dissident from communist countries, had positive connotations this changed with the breakdown of a bipolar world. From the 1970s, labour migration to Europe had effectively halted and been replaced by migration of family reunification and formation. The 1990s saw an emergent Fortress Europe 'harmonise' its border controls and systems of classifying, de-territorialising and policing asylum applicants and those who had – often through rejected asylum claims – become undocumented migrants. One aspect of racist discourses against this 'new migration' became the securitisation of immigration controls, criminalising immigrant populations and linking the issue of immigration with

law and order campaigns as well as foreign policy considerations. Another feature was the construction of the 'bogus' refugee who abuses humanitarian concerns to gain access to European welfare systems. In this context, governments argue that welfare systems act as a magnet for asylum-seekers and are limiting their access to social citizenship. In populist racist discourses, this is justified through representations of asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants as recipients of welfare, rather than as contributors (Bloch and Schuster 2002).

The 'new migrations' of the 1990s and 2000s have had a different effect on southern European countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. These used to be countries of emigration rather than immigration. In a very short space of time the new migrations mainly took the form of undocumented migrations. This can be placed in context with reference to weak welfare states and large informal economies, as well as extremely low rates of recognition of asylum applications. A key feature of these migrations has been the gender balance, which is highly uneven between ethnic groups. Overall, however, these migrations are overwhelmingly feminised.

Women migrants to southern Europe have found employment in the informal service sector, mainly in domestic work and sex work, though also in catering. While female domestic workers are viewed overall with benevolence as fulfilling the needs for childcare and elder care, and are not construed as the main targets for racist discourses in southern European countries, the very *invisibility* of their legal insecurity, dependence on their employers, curtailed rights to family reunification and exposure to violence and exploitation form part of the specific structural racisms they are faced with. On the other hand, male migrants are often construed as potential criminals, or in the case of Muslims, security risks. As in northern Europe, especially after 11 September 2001, Islamophobia has become a pronounced element of contemporary racism. Muslim populations have been targeted as security risks and as potential 'terrorists'. And indeed migration and ethnic diversity nowadays are viewed in public debates through the lens of national security.

The east-west divide within 'Post-Wall' Europe has also become a new border, permeable but only on a temporary basis. This has led to new forms of cross-border mobilities in the form of 'pendular' migrations, with back and forth movements often for limited periods of time. The strategy of these migrants has been characterised as settling in mobility (Morokvasic 2003). Thus, elaborate networks of migration enable men (often involved in construction work) and women (often involved in domestic work or sex work) to work or trade goods across the borders in western Europe. These circular migrations enable a survival of the family – and sometimes the maintenance of a middle class lifestyle – 'back home'. The temporary nature of this migration is enabled and enforced by physical proximity, as between Poland and Germany, or by a short flight time and by the fact that nationals of the EU-8 countries do not need visas to enter. **However, at the same time, the EU-8 migrants are not allowed freely to take up documented employment except in the UK, Ireland and Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Greece. ?Replace with: Only seven Member States have not imposed transitional restrictions on employment of citizens from the EU-8 countries. These are in the UK, Ireland and Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Greece.?**

While the migrants themselves try to make use of these opportunities to create mobile lifestyles that enable them to benefit from the wage differentials in the formal and informal economy they do so under constraints. The structural violence of the border affects both nationals of the EU-8 countries and others who attempt to cross the boundaries into western Europe from there. Migrants from the EU-8 are still seen as a potential threat of undocumented or simply 'cheap' labour in western European countries. That is why many EU Member States imposed a waiting period for admitting free movement of labour from the 2004 acceding countries. In response to a xenophobic campaign protesting at the numbers of EU-8 migrants, the UK government, which had initially not envisaged any restrictions on free movement and employment, first restricted the eligibility to welfare for migrants from EU-8 countries and then imposed restrictions on Bulgarian and Romanian workers.

Convergences between contemporary racisms

Finally, it is important to point to three areas of convergence between contemporary racisms across Europe. First, there is the discursive construction of 'useful' versus 'abusive' migrant populations that is becoming increasingly widespread. In the UK and Germany, those migrants whose high level skills are being recognised, largely the minorities who work in IT or as health professionals, are counted among the 'useful'. Meanwhile, the majority of migrants do not have their qualifications recognised or socially validated. Often this does not depend on the type and level of qualification but on the entry route. Thus immigration legislation and selective legislation regulating access to (skilled) labour markets is directly responsible for enabling a small number of migrants to be counted as 'skilled' and on the other hand for deskilling and racialising the rest.

Depending on the situation and on the audience those already settled in Europe are (or may be) sometimes included in the category of 'useful' migrants. However, the flexibility of racist discourse and practice is evident in that at other times, settled ethnic minorities are seen as outposts of an increasing population of undesirables, linked to traits which are deemed 'alien' to Europe, be it religious fundamentalism, terrorism or 'traditional' gender roles.

A telling illustration of the construction of the 'useful' versus the 'unwanted' or 'abusive' immigrants has taken place in Italy. Since the 1990s, immigration law has step by step circumscribed legal channels of migration and made the entry of migrants into the formal labour market very difficult, often through controlling the allocation of residence permits. The exception to this has been immigrants, mostly women, working as domestic and care workers in the household, and nurses and medical practitioners. They are the only occupational group who have been conceded the recognition of qualifications

and the right to practise their professions, exempting them from the citizenship requirements of other public sector employment.

Another convergence is around the racialisation of the issue of social cohesion and integration. The language of integration had been prevalent through the 1970s. It has been widely criticised for placing the onus of adaptation solely on the migrants and ethnic minorities and had been superseded officially in some countries by multicultural policies (e.g. UK, Netherlands, Sweden) and in others had become a strong alternative discourse. Of course, multiculturalism itself is not unproblematic. It has been properly criticised for culturalising power differences, organising social differences mainly along ethnic lines and governing them thus, as well as for strengthening the role of undemocratically appointed 'community leaders'. Moreover, feminists have pointed out that in the name of multiculturalism sexist values and practices were often reinforced by European states.

However, recent criticisms of multiculturalism have simply revived the notion that migrants and ethnic minorities should carry the burden of integration while at the same time the very opportunities (in the UK at least) of learning language skills are being curtailed. The language of social cohesion that is currently promoted across Europe picks up on older themes that dominated debate in the 1970s, namely the demand that migrants 'integrate' into the host society. This idea posits a homogeneous, problem-free society of residence and links social problems firmly to the presence of racialised Others. Thus, the decline of the welfare state or fears of the break up of the generational social contract are racialised. These problems are fixed to the presence of *undesirable* Others, who are identified as 'undocumented' or as refugees **??although are these 2 problems not also seen as caused by changing demographics with increased immigration being suggested as one of the solutions to these problems??**.

This dichotomisation between the desirable and undesirable can take absurd dimensions. Thus, while it is well established that the UK health sector is heavily dependent on migrant staff, the popular press has promoted the idea

that so-called 'health tourists' are coming to the UK in large numbers, consequently triggering discussion of making only emergency treatment available to asylum-seekers. The racist logic in this case has succeeded in discursively reversing social realities: the migrant population who disproportionately contribute to maintaining public services through their labour or indirectly through taxes and national insurance are being denied access fully to realise their own – often limited – entitlements to welfare and public services.

Quite widely, welfare institutions and other social services are therefore called upon to monitor the immigration status of their clients, often leading to racist discrimination of ethnic minorities and migrants, who are in any case likely to claim less welfare and social services than they are entitled to (Bloch and Schuster 2002). This surveillance of immigration status has turned public spaces into internal border zones. For example, in Germany, teachers are obliged to notify the immigration authorities if they learn that their pupils or their parents are in breach of immigration legislation. This has meant that for most undocumented children, the human right to education has been inaccessible. Similarly, health, cultural and other services are largely inaccessible for undocumented migrants. Police controls on the street or in public spaces where migrants congregate and live have become a regular feature of urban life, though often unnoticed by those who are not affected. The criteria for those controls are racialised appearance and thus, these controls have affected and cast doubt on the legitimacy to simply 'be here' of documented or undocumented migrants and also of citizens who 'look foreign'. How does this affect undocumented people? Patricio, an undocumented migrant speaking in Cologne, Germany, describes the survival strategies thus: 'You just have to stick to the rules and avoid problems. That means not to be in public spaces, not to lead a normal social life, avoid arguments and never complain.' **5**

---

5 Quoted in: http://www.frsh.de/schl_35/schl35_34.pdf
 [accessed 19.06.07]

It is in this context that Engbersen (2001) suggests that the regulation of migration in Europe has moved on from 'Fortress Europe', where the control of the external borders was the main concern, to 'Panopticon Europe'. This is where the streets, the point of contact with social service provision such as health or education or indeed the public transport system can become policed as 'border-zones'. This in turn is reinforced by the securitisation of migration policy. Yet, it affects not only migrants but also ethnic minorities holding European citizenship, as particularly young men of the second or third generation of migration are now identified as (potential) 'homegrown' terrorists.

Conclusion

Realising that racism targets a diverse group of people and has many different expressions should not prevent us from a coherent analysis of racisms in Europe. The particular experiences of racism in different countries may vary and it is important to understand these differences. Yet, our understanding of racism is also shaped by the analytical frameworks we adopt. Furthermore, the social and political structures and political culture that enable particular forms of anti-racist organisation and activities also play a part in forming our understanding of racisms. Comparisons across European countries can help to identify national specificities that anti-racists can highlight and scandalise; such comparisons also enable an understanding of the convergences of European racisms. Most anti-racist groups and organisations are fully occupied with immediate, often urgent, local and national concerns and have few resources to spare for transnational cooperation. In this context, the particularities of terminology often make communication and meaningful exchange more difficult. This is why I have focused on disentangling the terms involved in debating racism in Europe.

An understanding of racism in other European countries and on the European level is also important because discourses and policies such as those around

integration and social cohesion are mobile and become influential cross-nationally. Yet, a cross-national perspective on antiracist struggles can be an important source of inspiration.

* RCUK Academic Fellow, Centre for Citizenship, Identity and Governance, Open University, UK. E-mail: u.erel@open.ac.uk

References

Alexander, C. (2002) 'Beyond black: rethinking the colour/culture divide', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25 (4), 552-571.

Ålund, A. and C.-U. Schierup (1991) *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*, Aldershot: Avebury.

Anon: Sie sind langst da – und sie bleiben. Rede des 'Papierlosen' Patricio im Kolner Schauspielhaus. http://www.frsh.de/schl_35/schl35_34.pdf [Accessed 19.06.2007]

Anthias, F. and C. Lloyd (2002) 'Introduction: Fighting Racisms, Defining the Territory', in F. Anthias and C. Lloyd (eds.) *Rethinking Anti-Racisms. From Theory to Practice*, London: Routledge, 1-21.

Anthias, F. and N. Yuval-Davis (1992) *Racialised Boundaries*, London: Routledge.

Back, L., M. Keith, A. Khan, K. Shukra and J. Solomos (2002) 'The Return of Assimilationism: Race, Multiculturalism and New Labour', *Sociological Research Online*, 7 (2). http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/2/back.html

Balibar, E. (2004) *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*: Princeton: Princeton UP.

Balibar, E. (1991) 'Is There a "Neo-Racism"?, in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (eds.) *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 17-28.

Barker, M. (1981) *The New Racism*, London: Junction Books.

Bloch, A. and L. Schuster (2002) 'Asylum and welfare: contemporary debates', *Critical Social Policy*, 22 (3), 393-413.

Brubaker, W. R. (1989) 'Membership without Citizenship: The Economic and Social Rights of Noncitizens', in W. R. Brubaker (ed.) *Immigration and the politics of citizenship in Europe and North America,* Lanham: University Press of America, 145-162.

CCCS (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) (1982) *The Empire Strikes Back*, London: Hutchinson.

Coenders, M., M. Lubbers and P. Scheepers (2003) *Majorities' attitudes towards minorities in European Union Member States Results from the Standard Eurobarometers 1997-2000-2003 Report 2 for EUMC.* http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc/material/pub/eurobarometer/EB2005/Report-2.pdf [Accessed 25.06.07]

Engbersen, G. (2001) 'The unanticipated consequences of panopticon Europe. Residence strategies of illegal immigrants' in V. Guiraudon and C. Joppke (eds.) *Controlling a New Migration World*, London: Routledge, 222-246.

European Commission (2007) *Special EUROBAROMETER 263 Discrimination in the European Union.* http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_263_en.pdf [Accessed 18.06.2007]

EUMC (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia) (2006a) *Annual Report 2006*.

EUMC (2006b) *Migrants' Experiences of Racism and Xenophobia in 12 EU Member States. Pilot Study*.

Gilroy, P. (1987) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, London: Hutchinson.

Gilroy, P. (2000) *Between Camps: Nations, Culture and the Allure of Race,* London: Allen Lane.

ICMPD (2003) *Migrants, Minorities and Employment: Exclusion, Discrimination and Anti-Discrimination in 15 Member States of the European Union*.

Lamont, M. (2002) *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lloyd, C. (2002) 'Antiracism, Social Movements and Civil Society', in F. Anthias and C. Lloyd (eds.) *Rethinking Antiracisms: From Theory to Practice,* London: Routledge, 60-77.

Koser, K. and H. Lutz (1998) 'The New Migration in Europe: Contexts, Constructions, and Realities', in K. Koser and H. Lutz (eds.) *The New Migration in Europe. Social Constructions and Social Realities,* Houndmills: Macmillan, 1-20.

Miles, R. (1989) *Racism*, Routledge: London.

Morokvasic, M. (2003) 'Transnational Mobility and Gender: a view from Post-Wall Europe', in M. Morokvasic-Muller, U. Erel and K. Shinozaki (eds.) *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries*, Vol. 1: Gender on the Move, Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 101-133.

Nederven, P. (1994) 'Unpacking the West: How European is Europe?', in A. Rattansi and S. Westwood (eds.) *Racism, Modernity, Identity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 129-149.

Rath, J. (1993) 'The ideological representation of migrant workers in Europe: A matter of racialisation?', in J. Solomos and J. Wrench (eds.) *Racism and Migration in Western Europe*, Oxford: Berg, 215-232.

Rex, J. (1994) 'Ethnic mobilisation in multi-cultural societies', in J. Rex and B. Drury (eds.) *Ethnic mobilisation in a multi-cultural Europe*, Avebury: Aldershot, 3-13.

Sivanandan, A. (2001) 'Poverty is the New Black', *Race and Class*, 43 (1).

Soysal, Y. (1994) *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Post-National Membership in Europe*: Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stöss, R., M. Fichter, J. Kreis and B. Zeuner (2004) *Abschlussbericht Gewerkschaften und Rechtsextremismus*, Freie Universität Berlin Fachbereich Politik- und Sozialwissenschaften Otto-Suhr-Institut. http://www.polwiss.fu-berlin.de/projekte/gewrex/gewrex_downl.htm [Accessed 18.06.2007]

Taguieff, P.-A. (2001) *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and Its Doubles,* University of Minnesota Press.

Wieviorka, M. (2002) 'The Development of Racism in Europe' in D. T. Goldberg and J. Solomos (eds.) *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, Blackwell, 460-475.

Winkler, Beate (2006) Racism and Xenophobia in the EU Member States: Annual Report 2006 of the EUMC. Speech delivered to Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs European Parliament Brussels, 27 November 2006.

http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/ar06/Dir_speech_annual_report_2006_en.pdf [accessed 22 August 2007]