

(Original call)

International Research Workshop

CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF RACIALIZATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL POPULISM

3-4 June, 2019

Venue: Aalborg University, Campus in Copenhagen, Denmark

Organized by SERR (The Study of Experiences and Reactions to Racialization in Denmark).

Project leader: Peter Hervik, Aalborg University Denmark

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Building on the work of Hannah Arendt, Arjun Appadurai has argued that the road from national genius to totalized cosmology of the sacred nation, and further to ethnic purity and cleansing, is relatively direct. Thirteen years after he wrote his post-9/11 essays, highly disturbing schismogenetic processes of subordination have spiraled out of control suggesting that Appadurai's assertion may be coming closer to realization. While race has long been seen as a master narrative for inequality in the USA (Omi and Winant 2015) and (neo)nationalism continues to dominate policies and discourses about immigration in Europe (Gingrich and Banks 2006), supremacism and nationalism today seem to be inseparable and glued together in what has become a global populism. Narratives of cultural incompatibilities are echoed in media discourse, social media and interpersonal exchanges. New identities have been carved out in social movements that intimately connect commercial far-right broadcast media with local movements. Far right/centrist movements have been quick to invest into the workings of social media and political communication leaving social movements who counter racialization and anti-racism to the role of trying to catch up (Westermeyer 2019).

The current era of anxiety and conflict is conducive to an environment where scrambles for power lead to aggressive populism with its nexus of racialization, nationalism, and a strong belief in the authoritarian state, in which zero-tolerance policies, and a nationalist resolve that draws on the family-as-nation model with a strict rather than nurturing father (George Lakoff 2014). Flexing muscles only generates further polarization and vitriol directed against minoritized groups and individuals. Inspired by Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's thinking, Hubert Dreyfus argues that the Internet-age leads towards Nihilism and despair. Through the universal access to 'anything-anytime-anywhere' nothing and

everything matters at the same time. The “fallen sparrow” or “dead squirrel” in front of your residence are as important as the death of thousands of children in wars far away (Dreyfus 1999, Kierkegaard 1850, Zuckerberg n.d.).

Without educators and institutions serving the public interests where the trivial is separated from the significant, professionalized weapons of communication, such as the advertisement industry and the political communication industry, are free to create and capitalize on people’s emotions and thirst for simple answers to complex issues. News media debates and exchanges on social media, increasingly follow the format of a boxing match, where nothing counts but the number of hits. The more dramatic the debate and exchange, the more interesting and relevant it is deemed to be, since avoiding boredom is the one ruling distinctive criterion for use of the Internet (Dreyfus 1999). In this view, we need to break with the activism of the 1970s as pointed out by Micah White (2016) but we also need an improved understanding of how processes of inclusion and exclusion continue to be entangled with different forms of racialization (Loftsdotir 2018). The outcome of the fierce traffic in “emotion” (Catherine Lutz 1988), where thousands of daily commercials appeal to emotions (love, envy, fear, fun) and the desire to be part of in-groups, is at risk of assembling negative emotions and affect across the landscapes (Shoshan 2016) that risk ending up as identity politics that organizes politically around advancing a particular group’s interests against a simplified ‘enemy’ without concern for the larger collective (Hervik 2019).

In the Danish scene a large portion of the white hegemonic majority relegate racism and racialization to the past, or to foreign attempts to spoil Danish cultural life and thereby outright reject the racial experience of a large portion of the minoritized members of the population. A strong narrative circulates in the public, where racism in the Nordic context is understood as something that primarily ‘exists “far away”, “in the past”, or “on the extreme right wing” (Hervik 2019; Danbolt, 2017). At the same time, race is becoming the lens through which both “Muslims” and “Non-Westerners” are understood. Paradoxically, racialized populations, even those whose parents or grandparents migrated to Denmark, are often depicted as ‘new’ (or as migrants) to the countries where they grew up, and where they have full citizenship (El-Tayeb 2011). Further, when societal problems are associated with them, they often lead to debates and public policies that treat these as novel. As such, violent extremism, when associated with radical islam, is treated as a new menace which is allegedly unrelated to other forms of violent extremism associated with the far right or far left. Boe’s study of the measures taken to counter prisoner radicalization in France and Denmark show how this problem has been identified and has necessitated the mobilization of new tools and policies towards racialized populations, which have been invented in different locations and have been circulated within national bureaucracies, and through the actions of supranational and transnational actors.

When young people in diverse institutional settings in Denmark negotiate who are friends with whom and how (not) to be friends with each other, they also reproduce and produce frameworks for understanding each other's intersecting markers of difference. Through their friendship formations practices, such as eating lunch at cafeteria or humour, Vertelyte argues, young people negotiate everyday politics of race.

In Danish film, representational practices often become sites for reproduction, renegotiation or resistance to underlying racial hierarchies, shaped by gendered, aged, ableist and classed dynamics as well, as Thorsen shows.

These and other studies have shown the dominance of racialization thinking and practices in Denmark at various junctures and take place within the realm of partial recognition, of inchoate awareness, and ambiguous perception (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). In Denmark public circulation of research-based knowledge of racism and racialization is undermined rather than read and understood (Lene Myong and Tobias Danbolt 2019), not unlike what is seen in the African diaspora in Brazil and the United States. While there is a growing social awareness of "Blacks' experiences of discrimination, there is also a denial of anti-blackness as a foundational and structural fact" (Vargas 2018; see also Gloria Wekker 2016).

This international workshop aims at carrying out a critical assessment of "racialization", whether racial experience (Torres 2015); sustained experiences of contestations and oppositions over time (K. Warren 2001); moral outrage (Conflict and Society, theme issue 2018, vol 4); or racialization as a spectrum of practices rather than a binary black-white logic (Udupa and Pohjonen 2019). The workshop is by no means confined to the Danish case, but opens up for other research-based approaches to understanding racialization and how racism is integrated into other structures and forces within a truly transnational or global framework. As such, we do not wish to compare countries or cultures with each other. We encourage research that views racism as part of constructing incompatible differences, inequalities, inferiorities and superiorities, and nationalism, which does not, in any way, undermine the importance of racism (Hervik 2019). Although it is not exclusively confined to a trans-Atlantic dialogue on racialization, and the re-conceptualization of racialization, we include experts from the Americas for presentations and dialogue that includes racism against "First Nations", "Native Americans", "Indians" (Forte 2015; de la Cadena 1998) as well as "non-Westerners", Muslims, Jews, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Arab-Americans, Cholos, Inuit, Sami, Roma, Aborigines and many many others. We must move beyond single-axis explanations that only focus on race but leaves aside the intersections of race with gender or class (Crenshaw 1989), ignores racisms multiple and co-existing and changing alterities (Hesse 2014), and give way to a multifarious

understanding of racism or reduce analytical understandings of racism to a single historical kind (Meer 2012).

We invite participants with substantial research experience in any of these areas, who will also use their insights, experiences and power of imagination to look forward and reflect on where majority-minority relations will be in 5 or 10 years from now - not simply as an extrapolation of contemporary research findings but trying to foresee where society, democracy and theorizing will be at.

Attendance to this closed workshop is fully funded. Organizers will cover the costs of travel and accommodation according to the standards outlined by the Danish state. We ask for submissions to be pre-circulated to the workshop participants and we will pursue publication in a special journal issue. Therefore, contributions to this volume should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Please send your extended abstracts (1000 words) before 1 April, 2019 to Peter Hervik, [hervik@cgs.aau.dk](mailto:hervik@cgs.aau.dk). Selected participants will be notified by 7 April 2019. Abstracts should contain a clear outline of the argument, theoretical framework, methodology, ethnographic material (findings if applicable), and a brief note on how your research links to the overall theme of the workshop. Please include 3-5 keywords that best describe your work, and a short bio (max 100 words, stating affiliation). Full papers (5000 words) of selected submissions are due on June 1, 2019.

The SERR project is organizing the workshop. Project leader and responsible is Peter Hervik.

Venue: Aalborg University, Campus in Copenhagen, June 3-4, 2019

**Possible topics and themes:**

- 1) How does sustained experience of negative contestations and oppositions relate to racializing social relations? Under which condition and circumstances do they lead to moral outrage and new forms of violence?
- 2) Re-conceptualizing racialization. Can racialization be empirically separated from other forms of inclusive and excluding forms of subordination? If so, does these "elements" form a combination or a synthesis?
- 3) "Mainstream extremism?" How do we conceptualize the mainstreaming and "naturalization" of racialization, banal nationalism, and everyday racism?
- 4) What are the similarities and differences in penal policies towards prisoners convicted or suspected of islamist radicalization and those who are mobilized towards prisoners who are involved in violence associated with regionalist, far-left or extreme

right political violence? How are such initiatives circulated through supranational bodies, transnational networks and recontextualized in local policies and practises?

5) How do publicly circulating narratives and racial epithets shape racialized reasoning in everyday life, popular reasoning as well as representational policies? How do “the racialized” negotiate these publicly circulating narratives of differences? Do they create new forms of resistance?

6) Condition of doing research on racialization, racism and anti-racisms. Is research ignored, “nobody cares”? b) Do new research projects need to professionalize their communication strategy? Post-disciplinary issues.

7) Queering the binaries: How may embodied intersectionality and racial experience be used as tools for disassembling binary logics? What are the challenges to this form of analysis? Does the new focus on racial experience and intersectionality reflect different disciplinary trajectories?