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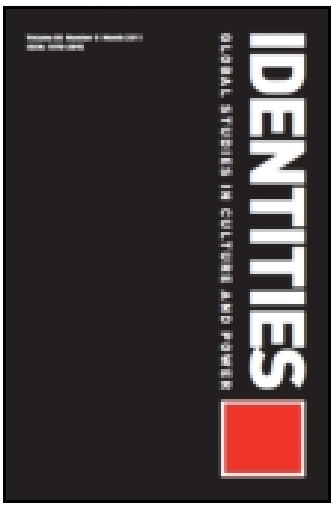

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'Racism', intersectionality and migration studies: framing some theoretical reflections

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'Racism', intersectionality and migration studies: framing some theoretical reflections

Ramon Grosfoguel, Laura Oso and Anastasia Christou

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The concept of 'racism' has faced many difficulties in migration studies. Depending on definitions, *islamophobia* is a form either of *religious discrimination* or of *racism*. The same is true in contemporary debates in Europe about *xenophobia* against immigrants from the Global South. This article provides an alternative way of thinking about racism and its relationship with questions of intersectionality and discusses the relationship of these issues to migration theory. In the first part, we discuss intersectionality in relation to Fanon's definition of racism. Then, we establish a dialogue between the work of de Sousa Santos and Fanon that could enrich our understanding of intersectionality in the framework of modernity and the capitalist/imperial/patriarchal/racial colonial world-system. Finally, we analyse this discussion's implications for migration theory, highlighting how migration studies tend to reproduce a northern-centric social science view of the world that comes from the experience of others in the zone of being.

Keywords: racism; islamophobia; gender; xenophobia; migration; intersectionality

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The use of the concept 'racism' has faced many difficulties in migration studies. For instance, the rise in discrimination against Muslim immigrants/minorities in Western Europe and the United States after 9/11 has posed a crucial theoretical question: Is *islamophobia* a form of racism? There is a lack of clarity and multiple responses to this issue. In the European Union, many countries oppose the recognition of islamophobia as a form of racism. The problem with this question is that it requires an answer to a prior issue for debate, namely a definition for racism. What is racism? Depending on the response, islamophobia is either simply a form of *religious discrimination* or a form of *racism*. The same is true of contemporary debates in Europe today regarding *xenophobia* against immigrants from the Global South. Extreme right parties are growing and winning massive numbers of votes in successive elections across Europe with islamophobic and xenophobic anti-immigrant discourses. The unprecedented entrance into parliament of the fascist 'Golden Dawn' party in the recent Greek elections; the significant increase in votes of Marine Le Pen and the front national in France; as well as extreme right parties' electoral offensive in Norway, Sweden, UK, The Netherlands, Switzerland and many other parts of Europe are

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clear examples of this. Their defence against accusations of racism includes the argument that they do not consider 'immigrants' biologically inferior, but rather 'culturally inadequate' to European societies. Is this racism? Moreover, European Union citizens such as Roma people have been expelled from France and interned in camps in Italy despite the free mobility of European citizens across national borders. The argument used to legitimate this act is that they are 'nomadic' and have settled in forbidden places. Although Roma people are not in fact nomadic, the argument is still used to gain legitimacy in the eyes of other Europeans. Is this racism? This article will provide an alternative view of racism and its relationship with questions of intersectionality. Moreover, in the section entitled 'Migration and the coloniality of power', it will discuss the implications of the alternative concept of racism discussed here for migration theory. Part of the problem is how, with few exceptions, migration theory has focused on human mobility across borders, underestimating the significance of race and racism in processes of migrant incorporation.

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What is racism?

Racism is a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the 'capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system' (Grosfoguel 2011, 2013). The people classified as above the line dividing superior from inferior human beings are recognised socially as human beings and thus enjoy access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women's rights and/or labour rights) and social recognition of their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spiritualities. Those classified below this line are considered subhuman or non-human; that is, their humanity is questioned and, as such, negated (Fanon 1967). In the latter case, access to rights and recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spiritualities and epistemologies are denied. We must pay attention to several important issues with this definition.

This definition of racism allows us to conceive diverse forms of *racisms*, evading the reductionisms of many existing definitions. Depending on the varying colonial histories in a number of world regions, the hierarchy of human superiority/inferiority can be constructed through various racial markers. Racism can be marked by colour, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion. Although since colonial times colour racism has been the dominant marker of racism in most parts of the world and this was also accompanied by physiognomy and craniometry, it is not the sole form of racism. On many occasions, we confuse the specific social form of marking racism in one region of the world with what is taken to be as the exclusive form or universal definition of racism. This has created countless conceptual and theoretical problems. If we conflate the particular social form that racism adopts in the region or country of the world in which we have been socialised with the universal definition of racism, then we

lose sight of the diverse forms of racisms that are not necessarily marked in the same way in other regions of the world. This leads us to the false conclusion that racism does not exist in other parts of the world if the form of marking racism in one particular region or country does not coincide with the 'common-sense' way of marking it in our own country. This forms part of the pervasive 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2006; Amelina et al. 2012) that obscures the broader and transnational understanding of a modern/colonial problem such as racism.

Racial hierarchies can be constructed and marked in diverse ways. Westernised elites of the Third World (African, Asian or Latin American) reproduce racist practices against particular ethno/racial groups, depending on the local/colonial history. While the ethnic/racial hierarchy of superiority/inferiority is marked by skin colour in many regions of the world, in others it is constructed by ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural markers. *Racialisation* occurs through the marking of *bodies*. Some bodies are racialised as superior, others as inferior. The important point here is that those subjects classed as superior live in what Afro-Caribbean philosophers, following Fanon's work, called the 'zone of being', while subjects that live on the inferior side of the demarcating line live in the 'zone of non-being' (Fanon 1967; Gordon 2006; Wynter 2003; Maldonado-Torres 2008). The latter is not a geography but a positionality in racial/ethnic hierarchies.

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Differentiated intersectionalities/entanglements: zone of being and zone of non-being

In an imperial/capitalist/colonial world, race constitutes the transversal dividing line that cuts across multiple power relations such as class, sexual and gender relations on a global scale. This is what has become known as the 'coloniality of power' (Quijano 2000). The 'intersectionality' of race, class, sexuality and gender power relations, a concept developed by Black feminists (Davis 1983; Crenshaw 1991), occurs in both zones of the world that Fanon describes. However, the lived experience of diverse oppressions and the particular way in which intersectionality is articulated differs in the zones of being and non-being.

Despite being racialised as superior beings, there are people in the zone of being who are subjected to class, gender and/or sexual oppressions. However, they do not experience racial oppression but rather racial privilege. As will be discussed below, this has fundamental implications for how class, gender and sexual oppression is lived. Given that in the zone of non-being subjects are racialised as inferior, they live with racial oppression instead of racial privilege. The entanglement of class, sexual and gender oppressions that exist in the zone of non-being are therefore qualitatively distinct from the way these oppressions are lived and articulated in the zone of being. In the zone of non-being, the class, sexual and gender oppressions are aggravated by racial oppression. The issue that should be emphasised here is that there is a qualitative difference between how

intersectional/entangled oppressions are articulated and lived in the zone of being and the zone of non-being in the 'Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World-system' (Grosfoguel 2011).

Neither of these zones is homogenous. Both are heterogeneous spaces. Following Fanon (1967), we could say that within the zone of being, continuous conflicts exist between what the Hegelian dialectic characterises as the 'I' and the 'Other'. In the 'I' and 'Other' dialectic within the zone of being, there are conflicts, yet these are non-racial conflicts, as the oppressor 'I' recognises the humanity of the oppressed 'Other'. The 'I's in the imperialist/capitalist/patriarchal global system are Western, heterosexual, masculine, metropolitan elites and/or Westernised, heterosexual, masculine elites in the peripheries of the world-system. Internal colonialism exists as much in the centre as in the periphery. For Fanon, the Hegelian 'Other' consists of the populations of the Western metropolitan centres or the Westernised subjects within the periphery whose humanity is recognised, but who at the same time live under racial privilege oppressions based on class, sexuality or gender, dominated by the imperial 'I' in their respective regions or countries. The zones of being and non-being are not specific geographical places, but rather positions within racial power relations that operate at a global scale between centres and peripheries, but that are also manifested at a national and local scale against diverse racially 'inferior' groups. Zones of being and non-being exist at a global scale between Westernised centres and non-Western peripheries (global coloniality). However, zones of being and non-being exist not only inside the metropolitan centres (internal racial/colonial subjects in urban zones, regional spaces, ghettos, segregated communities, etc.), but also within the peripheries (internal colonialism). The zones of non-being within a metropolitan or peripheral country are the zones of internal colonialism. However, it is here that the critical decolonial sociology of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010) contributes to clarifying the racial difference between the zones of being and non-being.

Fanon's zones and de Sousa Santos' abyssal line

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007, 2010), modernity is characterised by an abyssal line between inhabitants above and below the line. The abyssal line is the line demarking the zones where codes of law are recognised among European empires and the lawless zones where violence is the rule. The zones of law correspond to Europeans, and the lawless zones to the colonial territories in the Americas. Boaventura de Sousa Santos refers here to the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas between Portuguese and Spanish empires. This Treaty was made to clarify the confusion created between the two empires by the newly claimed colonial territories in the new world.

If we translate the abyssal line into the Fanonian concept of the line of the human and we consider those that live above the abyssal line to live in the zone of being, while those that live below the line are in the zone of non-being, we can

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establish a dialogue between the work of de Sousa Santos and Fanon that could enrich our understanding of modernity and the capitalist/imperial/patriarchal/racial colonial world-system we inhabit. For de Sousa Santos (2006), the way conflicts are managed in the zone of being (above the abyssal line) is through what he calls mechanisms of regulation and emancipation.

'Regulation' refers to codes of civil/human/women/labour rights, relations of civility, spaces of political negotiation and action that are recognised to the oppressed 'Other' in conflict with the oppressor 'I' within the zone of being. 'Emancipation' refers to discourses of liberty, autonomy and equality that form part of the discourses and institutions used for the management of conflicts in the zone of being. Overall, conflicts in the zone of being are managed through non-violent means. Violence is used only in exceptional moments. This does not deny that moments of violence also exist in the zone of being, but they are the exception, rather than the rule.

In contrast, as de Sousa Santos (2007, 2010) affirms, in the zone of non-being – below the abyssal line – where people are dehumanised in the sense of being considered below the line of the human as non-humans/subhumans, the methods used by the imperial/capitalist/masculine/heterosexual 'I' and its institutional system of managing and administering conflicts are through violence and overt appropriation/dispossession. In general, conflicts in the zone of non-being are managed through perpetual violence and only in exceptional moments are methods of emancipation and regulation used. This is the inversion of the way conflicts are managed in the zone of being.

Since the humanity of those classified in the zone of non-being is not recognised, and given that they are treated as non-human or subhuman, namely without norms of rights or civility, acts of violence, rape and appropriation are permitted that would otherwise be unacceptable in the zone of being. For de Sousa Santos, both zones are mutually constitutive and form part of the colonial modernity project. On the other hand, for Fanon, the dialectic of mutual recognition of the 'I' and the 'Other' that exists in the zone of being collapses in the zone of non-being where there is no recognition of the humanity of the other. The latter has important implications such as those described by de Sousa Santos.

To summarise, conflicts in the zone of being are administered through perpetual peace with exceptional moments of war, while in the zone of non-being we have perpetual war with exceptional moments of peace.

Intersectionality and stratification in the zones marked by the abyssal line

Class, gender and sexual oppressions lived within the zone of being and within the zone of non-being are not the same. Since conflicts with the dominant elites and ruling classes within the zone of being are non-racial, within the conflicts of class, gender and sexuality the 'Other Being' shares in the privileges of imperial codes of law and rights, the emancipation discourses of the enlightenment and their peaceful processes of negotiation and resolution of conflicts. In contrast,

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since in the zone of non-being conflicts of class, gender and sexuality are articulated simultaneously with racial oppression, conflicts are managed and administered through violent methods and constant appropriation/dispossession. Class, gender and sexual oppression as lived by the 'Non-Being Other' are aggravated due to the joint articulation of such oppressions with racial oppression. The same principles apply to gender and sexual oppression. Western women and gays/lesbians disproportionately enjoy greater access to resources, wealth, rights and power than do oppressed non-Westernised women or gays/lesbians in the zone of non-being. In fact, despite gender oppression in the zone of being, and as a demographic minority in the world, Western women have more power, resources and wealth than the majority of non-Western men of the world that live in the zone of non-being in the present system. Yet, this contrast is not merely a North/South divide, it is also a division that exists inside metropolitan centres between Western populations and non-Western immigrants/minorities.

In the Western-centric imperial order of things, being an 'Other human' in the zone of being is not the same thing as being a 'non-human Other' in the zone of non-being. For Fanon and de Sousa Santos, the zone of being is the imperial world that includes populations oppressed by the imperial elites, while the zone of non-being is the colonial world with its non-Western oppressed subjects. The latter could be manifested in North/South conflicts as well as inside the metropolitan centres of the Global North with racialised populations classified in the zone of non-being (immigrants from the Global South, racial minorities, etc.). The question here goes beyond the issue of having or not having legal citizenship. People inside the zone of non-being are racially inferiorised populations with or without citizenship and resident permits.

Similarly, for both Fanon and de Sousa Santos, the zone of non-being is heterogeneous and stratified. What this means is that in the zone of non-being, in addition to the oppression colonial/racial subjects experience on the part of Western subjects in the zone of being, there are also oppressions exercised within the zone of non-being between colonial/racial subjects who are also stratified. A non-Western heterosexual man in the zone of non-being exercises some privileges oppressing non-Western heterosexual women and/or non-Western gays/lesbians within the zone of non-being. Despite the fact that non-Western heterosexual men in the zone of non-being are oppressed by the institutions of the zone of being, the social situation for non-Western women or gays/lesbians in the zone of non-being is still worse. The problem is that non-Western women and non-Western gays/lesbians in the zone of non-being are oppressed not only by the Western or Westernised peoples inhabiting the zone of being, but also by other subjects that belong to the zone of non-being. This implies a double, triple or quadruple oppression for oppressed non-Western subjects within the zone of non-being that has no comparison with access to human/civil/labour rights, or norms of civility and emancipation discourses recognised for and lived by Western subjects oppressed within the zone of being. This discussion has important implications for migration theory.

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Migration and the coloniality of power

One of the central Eurocentric myths of the contemporary post-war period is that following the demise of colonial administrations in the periphery of the capitalist world-economy, we are now living in a 'post-colonial', 'post-imperial' world (Grosfoguel 2003). The fallacy of decolonisation is a pernicious presumption in not only migration theory but social theory in general. The question is not whether colonialism, understood as the presence of colonial administrations, has ended. The answer to this question is obvious and from that point of view we would be living in a so-called post-colonial world. The question is whether colonial relations of exploitation and domination between the West (European/Euro-Americans/Westernised elites) and the rest (non-European and non-Western people) ended with the end of colonial administrations. The answer to this other question is more complex. The global hierarchies of power put in place during the 450 years (1492–1945) of Western colonial administrations on a world-scale that articulated the relationship between European/Euro-American metropoles and non-European peripheries did not disappear with the end of colonial administration.

Today, it is obvious that, despite some anomalous cases, most of the non-European periphery is organised in formally 'independent' states. However, the global hierarchies created during the 450 years of European colonial expansion such as the international division of labour (core-periphery), the racial/ethnic hierarchy (West and non-West), the Christian-centric patriarchal hierarchy of gender/sexuality and the interstate system (military and political power) are here with us in our contemporary world even though colonial administrations are over. This is what Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000) terms the 'coloniality of power'. Power structures at global and national level are still informed by racist/sexist colonial ideologies/discourses and power structures that go back several centuries. In Quijano's coloniality of power perspective, racism is an organising principle of the international division of labour and all power hierarchies. The racism that emerged from the history of colonialism did not disappear with the end of colonialism. Colonial racism continues to produce zones of being and non-being on a world scale. Indeed, the question is rather the relevance of 'coloniality' for the understanding of migration experience in the metropoles.

In order to understand the transnational processes of migrant incorporation into metropolitan societies, it is important to make conceptual distinctions among diverse migration experiences. Applying the 'coloniality of power' perspective to migration studies would allow us to produce a different conceptualisation from the rest of literature. Migrants do not arrive in an empty or neutral space, but in metropolitan spaces that are already 'polluted' by racial power relations with a long colonial history, colonial imaginary, colonial knowledge and racial/ethnic hierarchies linking to a history of empire; in other words, migrants arrive in a space of power relations that is already informed and constituted by coloniality.

Zones of being and non-being are already in place when migrants arrive in metropolitan centres. There is no neutral space of migrant incorporation. If we were to apply the coloniality perspective, we would need to distinguish between three types of transnational migrants: 'colonial/racial subjects of empire', 'colonial immigrants' and 'immigrants' (Grosfoguel 2003).

'Colonial/racial subjects of empire' are those that are inside the empire as part of a long colonial history. The importance of these populations is that metropolitan colonial imaginary, racial/ethnic hierarchies and racist discourses are frequently constructed in relation to these subjects. These are the domestic minorities that were directly colonised and that live now inside the Empires. There is a long history of racialisation and inferiorisation towards 'colonial/racial subjects of the empire' that informs/constitutes/determines their location in the present hegemonic entanglements and constellation of power relations. The 'coloniality of power' of the metropolitan country is organised around and against these colonial subjects with a long history inside the empire. They are frequently in the 'zone of non-being' at the bottom of the urban racial/ethnic hierarchies even if in many cases they are formal citizens of the metropolitan country where they live (African-Americans, native Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, Indo-Caribbeans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Asians, North Africans, Turks, etc., in Western Europe and the USA).

In the conceptualisation used here, 'immigrants' are those migrants who are racialised as 'white' in the metropolitan 'zones of being' and who experience upward social mobility in the first or second generation (other European migrants or migrants coming from other regions of the world but of European origin such as Euro-Australians, Euro-Latinos, Euro-Africans, Eastern Europeans, etc.). These are migrants who, having adopted the metropolitan language, accent, demeanours and manners, are assimilated into dominant White metropolitan populations in the public domain of the 'zone of being'. They pass as 'white' or are designated as 'honorary whites' due to skin colour or for geopolitical reasons. This group is composed of the following: European migrants who after one or two generations become incorporated into the mainstream as 'white'; Japanese executives invited into the country as 'honorary whites' or the 1960s cohort of Cuban anti-communist refugees who, through a combination of US foreign policy and federal government policies, were transformed into a Cold War showcase and incorporated as 'honorary whites' (Grosfoguel 2003).

'Colonial immigrants' are those migrants coming from peripheral locations who, although never directly colonised by the metropolitan country they migrate to, at the time of arrival are 'racialised' in similar ways to the 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' who were already there. Due to this process of racial inferiorisation, they end up sharing zones of non-being along with 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' inside the urban areas of metropolitan centres. We refer here to the 'Puertoricanisation' of Dominicans in New York City, the 'Chicanonisation' of Salvadoreans in Los Angeles, the 'African-Americanisation' of Haitians and Afro-Cuban marielitos in Miami, the

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'Algerianisation' of Turks in Paris, the 'Antillanisation' of Dominicans in Amsterdam, the 'Afro-Caribbeanisation' of Africans in London and so on. When racist discourses constructed towards the 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' are extrapolated to newly arrived migrants from the periphery of the world-economy, the production of the 'colonial immigrants' experience occurs. Thus, many migrants from formally 'independent' peripheral countries become 'colonial immigrants', even though they are not directly colonised by the metropole to which they migrate and they may have higher class backgrounds than the 'minorities' or 'migrants' that are among the 'colonial/racial subjects of empire'.

'Racial/colonial subjects of empire' and 'colonial immigrants' are the two groups that experience statelessness and pariah status in the zone of non-being of metropolitan centres today. There are many racial/colonial subjects of empire and even some 'colonial immigrants' who are formal citizens. However, they are still, in the zone of non-being, policed in their communities, incarcerated in large numbers, discriminated against in housing and labour markets, etc. This is not due to a problem of 'terrorism' or 'illegality' as immigrants, but rather of racial discrimination.

However, the situation becomes even more complicated with the presence of Eastern European migrants in metropolitan centres such as Paris, London, Berlin, New York and other global cities. To understand their situation we need to discuss the particularities of each metropolitan country. In our classification, Polish and Russian migrants in New York City become 'immigrants' because they are perceived and incorporated as 'whites' in the zones of being of the US racial/ethnic hierarchy. Yet, the situation is quite different in Western Europe. Polish and Romanian migrants are racialised as inferior subjects relative to metropolitan Whites even though many are of 'white' skin colour. This makes the old divisions and racial/ethnic hierarchies of European versus non-European more complex.[1] Polish historical neocolonial relations with Germany and Polish representation in the German imaginary as inferior to Germans complicate the old European/non-European divide. Polish women domestic workers in Berlin suffer racial discrimination despite being from Europe and of 'white skin colour'. This cannot be grasped without an understanding of Germany's old imperial colonial and neocolonial relations with Eastern Europe and Poland in particular. Similarly, the 'Polish plumber' became the object of discrimination in French political debates and electoral campaigns. Romanian migrants in Western Europe are also racialised in the zones of non-being despite having the status of 'European Community'/European Union citizens. Some of them from Roma origin were even expelled from France or placed in 'illegal immigrant camps' in Italy despite being part of the European Community. We will classify the experience of these migrants as 'colonial immigrants' because they experience discrimination similar to the 'colonial/subjects of empire', despite the fact that they do not have a direct history of colonisation by the host society.

If we bring gender, class and sexuality to the aforementioned categories of migrants, the situation becomes even more complex. The situation of women

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migrants classified as colonial immigrants is worse than that of their male counterparts. Gender aggravates established racial divides in which immigrants are classified the moment they arrive in a Western metropolis. Intersectionality is analytically important in accounting for the diverse racial, class and gendered experiences in international migration.

Migration theory and the 'Immigrant Analogy'

The conceptualisation provided here is a critical response to the 'immigrant analogy' that informs many migration studies. The 'immigrant analogy' takes as a point of reference the successful European migration experience to the USA in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and extrapolates this experience to the remaining migrant groups. If a migrant group is not as successful as European migrants, this is accounted for by reference to a 'cultural' problem inside the migrant community (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). By homogenising the diverse incorporation experiences of migrant groups, the 'immigrant analogy' of many migration studies contributes to legitimising the practices of hegemonic populations in the racial/ethnic hierarchies and avoids confronting the racist discrimination and colonial legacies perpetuated within the 'zones of being'.

Something similar could happen with recent migration theories that are more critical than 'assimilationist' (Gordon 1964) or 'cultural pluralist' theories (Glazer and Moynihan 1963) such as the transnationalist approach (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995). Although in the transnationalist literature[2] the 'immigrant analogy' based on early European migration to the USA is avoided, instead offering a more complex understanding of the dynamics of race, class and gender, it still falls into a kind of 'immigrant analogy from the South'. In this case, the 'immigrant analogy' is with a Third World migrant who circulates between two nation-states and whose political, cultural and identity allegiances are divided between two nations. Our point is not to reject the transnationalist approach but to call for a more nuanced understanding of the transnationalist migratory experience in relation to colonial legacies. Transnationalist literature has challenged the more static models of migration that continued to think in terms of a unidirectional mobility from sending to host societies. In this literature, there is recognition of immigrants' more complex and multidirectional interactions between countries of origin and arrival. Migrants not only circulate themselves but also circulate money, commodities and resources across borders. This has important implications in terms of the migrants' identification processes, political strategies and economic survival. The current compression of time and space has made old thinking on migration obsolete. However, despite its major insights, the lack of a notion of 'coloniality' and the multiple distinctions among migrants that this implies could lead transnationalist literature to a kind of 'immigrant analogy' from below, namely, an analogy with the Third World migration experience. It is not an accident that many transnationalist studies of international migration are based on the Caribbean migration experience. Haitian, Grenadian and St. Vincent

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migration experiences to the USA were the first case studies used to sustain the new transnationalist paradigm. By not differentiating between different types of transmigrants in relation to the coloniality of power of the metropolitan centre, this literature is in danger of reproducing an 'immigrant analogy from the South' as opposed to the 'immigrant analogy from the North' of old migration literature; it also risks homogenising diverse experiences and being unable to account for the different processes of migrants' success and failure if it fails to incorporate the 'coloniality of power' perspective into its approach.

Recognition of the diverse distinctions among experiences of migrant incorporation provided by the 'coloniality' perspective is crucial to avoid culturalist explanations about the failure or success of migrant groups. These culturalist explanations today constitute a transnational hegemonic ideology, highly popular in the new forms of 'anti-racist racisms' in the core of the capitalist world-economy. This is linked to what has been called 'new racism' or 'cultural racism'.

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From biological racism to cultural racism

A key Eurocentric myth in today's world is the argument that colonial structures and racist ideologies are a 'problem' of peripheral regions, not of core metropoles. However, what we see today is the reproduction of the old colonial/racial hierarchies of the West (Europeans) versus the rest (non-Europeans) and the hegemony of colonial racist ideologies inside each metropolitan centre. In order to understand this process, we need to link the present racial/ethnic hierarchy to the colonial history of each empire. Otherwise, it makes no sense to question why non-Western/non-European people are still classified in the zone of non-being at the bottom of the social structures and are the targets of metropolitan racism. It is not an accident that in London, Amsterdam, Paris or New York, colonial domestic minorities share the bottom of the city's racial/ethnic hierarchy together with other colonial/racial subjects of these empires and/or other 'colonial immigrants'. Nevertheless, for metropolitan populations, racism is invisible. The denial of racism is a common feature of metropolitan discussions about minorities. The prevalent ideology is that racism and the colonial relations it produces are a thing of the past. This invisibility and denial of the experience in the zone of non-being are linked to the transformations of racist discourses from biological racist discourses to cultural racist discourses (Balibar 1991; Modood 1992; Gilroy 1993; Essed 1996; Grosfoguel 1999).

The difficulty in the struggle against the new racist discourses is their denial of their own racism. By avoiding the word 'race', cultural racism claims to be non-racist. Therefore, if colonial/racial subjects in the zones of non-being experience higher unemployment rates, higher poverty rates, higher dropout rates, lower quality of education in public schools, lower salaries for the same jobs as White workers or are placed in the 'dirty' jobs of the labour market, it is because they are 'lazy', 'unassimilated', 'uneducated', have 'bad habits', 'bad

attitudes' or an 'unadapted/inadequate culture'. By internalising the 'causes' inside the discriminated communities and explaining their social situation in terms of their own cultural features, cultural racist discourses conceal the reproduction of racism and the old colonial/racial hierarchies inside the metropoles. 'Meritocratic' discourses in public spaces and 'culture of poverty' or 'culturalist social capital' approaches in academia contribute to the invisibility and perpetuation of the problem. Metropolitan centres do not have a 'minority problem' as defined in The Netherlands and Great Britain or an 'immigration problem' as defined in France and the United States, but rather a 'racist problem' that needs to be addressed to make real the claim of equal opportunities for all and transform them into more egalitarian societies.

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Migration studies and the geopolitics of knowledge

What is the relevance of this discussion about coloniality and the 'zone of being'/'zone of non-being' for the epistemic decolonisation of migration theory? Epistemic decolonisation implies, as Quijano (1991) notes, delinking from Eurocentrism. Epistemic racism refers to a hierarchy of colonial domination whereby the knowledge produced by Western subjects (imperial and oppressed Westernised subjects) within the zone of being are considered *a priori* to be superior to the knowledge produced by non-Western colonial subjects in the zone of non-being. The pretension is that the knowledge produced by subjects belonging to the zone of being – whether from the right-wing point of view of the imperial 'I' or from the left-wing point of view of the western oppressed 'Other' within the zone of being – is automatically considered as universally valid for all contexts and situations in the world. This leads to an imperial/colonial epistemology as much from the left as from the right within the zone of being.

How does this discussion relate to migration theory? Migration studies tend to reproduce a northern-centric social science view of the world that comes from the experience of others in the zone of being. For many decades, migration theory was based on European immigrant experience. One of the most pervasive myths reproduced by Eurocentric social sciences is the myth of a neutral, universalist, objective point of view. However, there is no neutrality in knowledge production. We consistently speak from a location in the gender, racial, class and sexual hierarchies of the world-system. In the case of international migration, due to its relationship to colonial legacies and the reproduction in the presence of colonial relations between migrant and host populations, we speak from a location in the 'colonial hierarchies' produced by the coloniality of power. 'Colonial epistemic racism', as a further elaboration of Anibal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of power, refers to the coloniality of power at the epistemic level that divides knowledge production in the 'modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal Christian-centric/Western-centric world-system' (Grosfoguel 2003) between colonising and colonised epistemic views. Knowledge is not detached from 'racial/colonial domination'.

Migration studies speak from a non-neutral particular location in the colonial divide, reproducing the point of view of the coloniser or the colonised. In the case of migration studies that reproduce the coloniser's point of view, it frequently justifies the domination, marginalisation or poverty of the migrant population in terms of a claim to a neutral, universalistic and objective culturalist or economic reductionist argument. According to this literature, migrants have 'difficulties' due to 'objective' criteria such as culture (attitudes, behaviour, mentality, values, etc.) or the economy (class origin, economic crisis, market factors, etc.). Issues such as discrimination, xenophobia and racism are often invisible in migration studies.[3]

Critical decolonial thinking is the epistemology that emerges in colonial situations where the hegemonic perspective is subverted by the cosmologies, languages and epistemologies of the subaltern. It is a new form of epistemology that emerges in the 'in-betweenness' of two languages, two cosmologies, two epistemologies and in which the subversion of hegemonic knowledge is produced from the subaltern's geopolitics of knowledge. There are minority intellectuals/activists who are 'colonial racial/subjects of empire' and migrant intellectuals who are 'colonial immigrants' and who are implicated in the production of critical decolonial thinking inside metropolitan centres. Examples of this are Philomena Essed, an Afro-Surinamese scholar/activist in The Netherlands/USA, Salman Sayyid, a Muslim South Asian British scholar/activist in the UK, Houria Bouteldja, an Algerian Muslim writer/activist who lives in Paris and Angela Davis, an African-American scholar/writer/activist. These are all critical decolonial thinkers who articulate critiques of hegemonic thinking from their locations as colonial subjects inside Western empires. There are also migrants who are not part of the intelligentsia and are less known critical decolonial thinkers. However, not all migrants produce critical decolonial thinking. 'Immigrants' who are incorporated as 'white' as well as many colonial migrants who do not think critically and have been ideologically co-opted by dominant ideologies/epistemologies tend to reproduce hegemonic knowledge. Thus, this is not a call for a naive, populist celebration of whatever is said from below by oppressed groups, but for incorporating critical thinking and knowledge produced from below, from the zones of non-being. Scholars in migration studies should take seriously and incorporate migrants' critical decolonial epistemologies into their knowledge production. To be anti-colonial does not necessarily imply being decolonial. Decoloniality implies an epistemic critique that is not included in many anti-colonial Eurocentric projects. Those who pursue this decolonial methodology are able to produce critical thinking about the power structures linked to the oppression of migrants in colonised locations at the centres of empire. The task in Europe and North America today is to decolonise power structures by developing a political struggle from the critical anti-Eurocentric epistemological standpoint of colonial migrants and subjects.

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Interrogating intersectionalities, gendering mobilities and racialising trans/nationalisms

Our inspiration for this special issue draws from the issues discussed in the previous section and aims to stimulate further dialogue among scholars who are working on transnational phenomena from a gender, class, sexuality and/or 'race' perspective. In our contribution and the articles that follow, we explore intersectionality from the angles of these forms of oppression and how they shape transnational migration through interdisciplinary, ethnographic/anthropological, sociological, literary and post-colonial approaches.

The introductory text of this special issue (Grosfoguel, Oso and Christou) highlights the need for migration theory to take into consideration race and racism processes of migration incorporation, analysing transnational migratory experiences in relation to colonial legacies and shedding light on the various distinctions between experiences of migrant incorporation provided by the perspective of coloniality. This has provided us with a starting point from which to reflect in greater depth on the intersectionality of race, class, sexuality and gender power relations.

The work of Kàtia Lurbe falls within the framework of the debate proposed in this introduction regarding the construction of 'cultural racism' in Europe. Furthermore, it stems from a definition of this term that includes, within the hierarchy of human superiority/inferiority, various racial markers (colour, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion). Lurbe brings to light the way in which the 'Roma' category has been built up in France, combining foreign roots and social conditions, highlighting a racialisation of poverty and social exclusion. Based on an socio-anthropological study from a local group-specific social integration project (Sénart 2000–2007), the author analyses how 'in targeting a selected grouping of individuals drawn from a minority, the prevailing Republican governance model underlying the project perpetuated its colour-blind redistribution policy, reflecting the problem of recognition that was inextricably intertwined with the racialised inequalities they faced' (Lurbe, this issue).

Angeles Ramírez provides a deeper insight into the debate on racism hierarchies and the rationalisation through the marking of bodies (some bodies are racialised as superior, others as inferior), mentioned in the introductory text. In this sense, the author reveals how the legal regulations that require women to wear the so-called Muslim clothing and those that restrict share the same objective, namely the control of women's bodies as a form of political control, as the regularisation of the body of the other reveals the relationship of domination. She also focuses on the fact that

> the paradigm of intersectionality is also valuable when considering the domination – using the legal regulation of clothing – of Muslim women, replacing race with Muslimness. The subordination of Muslim women can only be understood within a framework that considers the interrelationships between sexism (both inside Muslim communities and with respect to non-Muslim) and anti-Muslim racism or

> islamophobia. In both cases, identity politics are based on the bodies of Muslim women through hyper-regulation. As a result, Muslim women experience racism in different terms than Muslim men, just as they experience sexism differently than non-Muslim women. (Ramírez, this issue)

It can therefore be seen, as posited in the introduction of this special issue, that racism constitutes the traversal dividing line that cuts across multiple power relations such as class, sexual and gender relations on a global scale. In their analysis of this relationship, Jorge Malheiros and Beatriz Padilla claim that the legacy of the Portuguese colonial imaginary (including prejudices and stigma regarding the sensuality of Creole women) influences the everyday experiences of Brazilian immigrant women in Portugal. However, they also reveal how these women mobilise and modify this 'perceived negative image, transforming it into an added value associated with an aesthetic Brazilian body culture', converting it into a business resource. As a result, 'the sense of opportunity to twist negative images into a positive resource speaks of the "agency" of these entrepreneurs, illustrating a further application of the intersectionality theory, by innovatively assessing layers of oppression and privilege simultaneously' (Malheiros and Padilla, this issue).

It is therefore clear that power structures on a global and national level are still informed by racist/sexist colonial ideologies/discourses and power structures that go back several centuries, as indicated throughout the introduction. This question is also addressed by Dussart, who analyses how discourses of race, gender and class were intersected to shape the relational construction of the identities and roles of servants and master/mistress in British colonial households in India in the nineteenth century. She shows that 'the relationship between domestic servants and their employers was crucial to the structuring of social identities and relations in the colony' (Dussart, this issue). In this sense, 'the historial master/servant relationship is a lens through which we may clarify the power relations and identities that underpinned imperial systems of rule, and that continue to characterize patterns of domestic servitude today' (Dussart, this issue).

Women's identity and sense of belonging in the context of larger structures of sexism, racism and the legacies of colonialism are also analysed by Sharon Krummel. The author explores how 'migrant women may encounter place and landscape, incorporating embodied, emotional relationships with places into their multi-faceted intersectional identities' (Krummel, this issue). She examines some literary portrayals, shedding light on 'how migrant women's relationship with specific places of origin and settlement, both steeped in structural relationships of unequal power and experienced on an immediate, psychological and bodily plane, are fundamental to migrant women's changing sense of belonging and identity' (Krummel, this issue).

Finally, Rosa Parisi underscores the role the intimate sphere plays as a dimension of citizenship. The mixed family appears as 'a boundary in which social hierarchies, based on class, gender and nationality, are rooted and in which

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citizens are produced through acts of citizenry fulfilment or failure. The family also becomes a place where freedom restrictions are contested and new citizenship rights are requested' (Parisi, this issue). Such intersectionalities highlight how entanglements of intimacy in the private sphere shape and mediate social relations in the public sphere.

This collection of papers breaks new ground in several ways. Firstly, it provides a transnational approach to migration studies from an international perspective. Secondly, the papers are centred mainly on the way in which power geometries articulated through sexisms and racisms are experienced in relation to a migration and/or minority context. Similarly, the papers also challenge in various ways the somewhat fixed notions of what constitutes an intersectional approach to the study of oppressions in social interactions.

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Notes

1. Yet this does not negate Polish agency as revealed in Christou's research with Polish migrants in Greece: see Christou (2008).
2. Vast literature has been produced in the last two decades on transnational communities, transnational spaces and in general the phenomenon of transnationalism from above and below. For an extensive review and re-theorisation refer to King and Christou (2010) and King and Christou (2011).
3. We naturally acknowledge that there are a few exceptions to this, yet as a core theoretical tradition migration studies are not pre-occupied with a critical race theory framework unless the specific author has an anti-racist/activist/critical agenda.

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