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# Old racisms, New masks: On the Continuing Discontinuities of Racism and the Erasure of Race in European Contexts<sup>1</sup>

By: Sara Salem and Vanessa Thompson

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<sup>1</sup> This article is born out of our transnational, though situated, reflections and lived experiences, which were mostly exchanged in our conversations while residing in the US as visiting scholars at UC Berkeley. As two women of color, scholar activists, transnational, and decolonial feminists, one residing in the Netherlands and Egypt and one residing in Germany, we aim to contribute to a transnational understanding of the workings of racism and entangled structures of oppression that de-centers the discourse on racism from a decolonial perspective. As articles like this one are born from interactional processes, critical engagement and support, we would like to express our deep appreciation to Rekia Jibrin, Nika Zablotzky, Lidia Solomon, Egbert Alejandro Martinez, Karim Malak, Miheret Ayele, Nancy Salem and Marlie Gommans who have helped us to flourish our ideas around the arguments expressed in this article. We would also like to thank the editors of NSN for their helpful comments.

## Abstract

Discourses on racism in Europe have largely been dominated by a US-centric lens that serves to universalize the North American experience of racism. This decenters the different historical and geographical experiences European contexts have had with continuing racist legacies as well as the multiple ways in which anti-racism can challenge such legacies. It also allows European societies to continue to construct a self-image that displaces racism onto other geographical contexts or isolates it as a purely historical phenomenon. In order to reveal and counter the mechanisms of this displacement and isolation, we want to argue that three specific socio-historical developments have produced distinctive articulations of racism that differ significantly from North American understandings of both race and anti-racism. Whereas in the US context, where the post-race discourse is constituted by a speaking through race, dominant European socialities either detach from race as a social category of domination and/or interpret it as a historical phenomenon.

By unpacking the construction of a national imaginary that erases racism, interrogating the assumed turn from biological to what is sometimes referred to as cultural racism, and examining the (bio)politics of the welfare state, we aim to elucidate modern forms of European racism that call into question the view of Europe as not a racist space. Drawing specifically on the contexts of France, the Netherlands and Germany, we demonstrate the importance of conceptualizing racism as an intersectional, dynamic phenomenon bound to spatial and temporal meanings and signifiers. In the process, we reveal the ways race and racism formulate themselves differently within European spaces over and against the United States in order to challenge the silence about race in Europe and transnationalize our understandings of the various articulations of racism in different socio-historical contexts.

## Introduction

US-centric understandings of racism decenter differing historical and geographical experiences other locations have had with racist legacies. They further neglect the multiple ways in which anti-racism--also dependent on location and time--can challenge these enduring legacies. Centralizing the US-American construction of racism has an impact on how Europeans understand racism within European societies but also serves to limit the ways European anti-racist movements can challenge localized forms of racism that continue to parameter European societies. The aim of this paper is to establish the importance of history and context in understanding both European and US-American racisms and anti-racist movements. We will also debunk the false claim made by many European actors, notably scholars, politicians and policy makers, that racism is something that happens “over there”—in the United States or in other non-European contexts. Melissa Weiner, a scholar who has written extensively on racial formations in Europe, has pointed out the tendency in Europe to speak of “ethnicity” in discussions that are essentially about race. In the case of the Netherlands, for example, she writes:

Policymakers and scholars alike prefer the term “ethnicity,” which evokes notions of culture but fails to account for hierarchical power and value implications central to racial identities and racialization processes embedded in Dutch society. This preference for “ethnicity” over “race” obscures the reality of daily and institutional racism of those experiencing these phenomena (Weiner 731).

For example, scholar Rutger Bregman has stated that “only American neurotics think we’re racist,” and argued that racism is an “American thing,” (qtd in Martina, “This is Not America: Dutch Rhetoric and its Denial of Racism”). Another example is Dutch historian Han van der Horst, who has argued that white dominance and white privilege are terms coined in America and their translations do not hold in the Netherlands<sup>2</sup> (Ibid).

Because racism is so often identified as US-centered, European forms of racism remain uncovered and unchecked, allowing European states and actors to unknowingly deflect attention from local racist practices. As Egbert Alejandro Martina notes, “modern technology has made it easy for images of US anti-Black racism as a framework for understanding anti-Black violence to travel. These images of US anti-Black violence that circulate across the world shape how anti-Black violence is read and perceived in specific geographical and cultural contexts” (“This is Not America: Dutch Rhetoric and its Denial of Racism”). Technology is certainly an important aspect of this phenomenon, as is the hegemony of US culture worldwide,<sup>3</sup> not to mention the absence of a European discourse that clearly articulates racism as a social phenomenon embedded in the relational matrix of domination comprised of intersetting structures such as capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, etc. Martina goes on to point out that by using US racism as an index, some European societies are perceived as non-racist or not-as-racist.<sup>4</sup> In her article “Europe and the Silence about Race,” Alana Lentin furthermore demonstrates that the silence about

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<sup>2</sup> Van der Horst is not making this argument in order to demonstrate the complex problems with translating racial language, but rather to demonstrate that racism is something that happens “over there” and that concepts such as white privilege simply do not apply in the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> This hegemony is constituted by hegemonic forces within the US, and operates in discursively and materially harmful ways against marginalized groups within the US.

<sup>4</sup> It is useful to note that within Europe there are hierarchies as well, whereby some countries (primarily Southern and Eastern Europe) are seen as less tolerant and open than others (Western Europe).

race in a European context allows European states to construct themselves as non-racist and further perpetuates notions of European superiority.

Europe, under this vision, is proposed to be unique. That it is unique also implies that it is superior to other regions of the world. Today that superiority is seen as definitive of a uniquely European political culture that expresses itself in Europe's tradition of democracy (489).

It is important, however, to recognize the deflection as a mechanism. We argue that it is likely that many Europeans simply do not identify as being racist because of the domination of a US-centered definition. This paper shifts toward unpacking various discursive and material conceptualizations of race and racism in specific European contexts. In so doing, we demonstrate that race and racism in certain European contexts—namely Germany, France, and the Netherlands—are produced and reproduced by historical and contextual nuances. We thereby contend that racism and anti-racism movements must take context into account rather than simply transporting a US-centric definition of race and racism onto their agendas.

In contexts such as the Netherlands, France, and Germany, racism is always something that happens over there, or that happened back then.<sup>5</sup> By relegating colonial domination and slavery to the past, there is no discussion of how these events have constituted the modern European self (Martina “The Delicious Pleasures of Racism”). Conceptualizing racism as something that occurred in the European past is not unique. It is further accompanied by a marked lack of opposition. As Weiner notes, there has been no large scale civil rights or ethnic minority movement to counter this phenomena (738).

Three socio-historical developments can shed light on modern forms of European racism: the construction of an imagined national community, the shift from framing racism as biological to framing it as cultural, and the (bio)politics of the welfare state beginning in the mid-1800s and spanning the contemporary period. The first section of our paper outlines how national imaginaries have come to erase racism and construct Germany, France and the Netherlands as progressive and equal. The second traces how racism shifted from being framed as purely biological to cultural. In the second section we also enumerate the effects this transition had on the discursive formations of racism and on articulating questions of race in European contexts. In the third section we will trace the genealogy of the welfare state in the Netherlands, France and Germany in order to demonstrate how its biopolitical nature has silenced questions of racism even as race and racism are integral to the welfare state itself. We conclude by sharing our thoughts on what these shifting articulations of racism mean in a transnational landscape of anti-racism struggles.

### Constructions of the Imagined National Community and the Erasure of Race

What is notable in numerous European contexts is the tendency to frame and represent the nation as a space in which racism does not exist. As Benedict Anderson has argued in *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, the construction of the nation is based on discursive and social imaginations of an organic community in which its members perceive themselves as part of that group. Stuart Hall has also demonstrated how this process of national collective self-formation is bound to a binary structure of representation and practices of exclusion of a constructed other, which places

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<sup>5</sup> See Martina “The Delicious Pleasures of Racism.”

certain people outside of the imagined community.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the national collective self is built upon the construction and representation of an other that is placed outside of this imagined corporeal nation.

The German socio-political and cultural context is heavily marked by the hegemonic avoidance of recognizing racism and coloniality as a social phenomenon that still haunts present day realities of people of color in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Against the background of a colonial cultural archive that manifested after the first world war in a concept of “colonialism without colonies” and the long re-activated principle of *ius sanguinis*, i.e. a principle of law that determines citizenship not on the ground of place of birth but by having one or both parents who are citizens of the state, the German context reproduces a “purity of blood” discourse that influences the debate on racism and coloniality.<sup>8</sup> Even though Germany was not an overt colonizing force after the first world war, the colonial continuities are scripted into the dominant discourse as colonial relicts (like street names), practices (exhibitions of people in color in zoos, Blackfacing, the genocidal immigration regime, racist police brutality and so on), as the lack of recognition of the German colonial genocide against the Herero in Namibia demonstrate.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore the re-activation of *ius sanguinis* has produced a discourse where bodies of color are constantly, discursively placed outside of the German nation state, which then has effects on practices. People of color are thus perceived as foreigners (*Ausländer\_in*) or strangers (*Fremde*), as bodies that are never legitimate. This demonstrates that *ius sanguinis* is a construction strongly bound to imaginative formations of race<sup>10</sup> and constructs nationality and citizenship as white.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the background of national-socialism and the Holocaust have produced a political climate in Germany that enhances the silencing of racism through interpreting racism as a particularity bound to the Nazi-regime (Lentin 489). This can be said of European countries in general. And, as a “consequence, the roots of racism have always been located somewhere else. They are conceived of as alien to the humanism that post-war Europe has rewritten its history around” (Ibid.). Racism is thus only located in the realm of a right-wing extremist rhetoric and practice but never framed as a societal institutional and structural phenomenon.<sup>12</sup> Various scholars, like Wollrad, Dietrich and Gutiérrez Rodríguez have pointed out that the word racism was a taboo in the German political and academic landscape until the 1990s, and was at most reserved for individual acts of physical violence, but never as a structuring determinant of German society.<sup>13</sup> Following the Holocaust, the term was substituted by terms such as “hostility” against foreigners (*Ausländerfeindlichkeit*) or against strangers (*Fremdenfeindlichkeit*). This also must be framed against the background of the fact that Germany did not recognize itself as being a destination country for migrants until 1993, although the working recruitment contracts with Italy were signed in 1955 and Turkey in 1961. These circumstances demonstrate that racism as well as coloniality are hidden in the

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<sup>6</sup> Hall "Questions of cultural identity."

<sup>7</sup> See the following works on the conditions of people of color and articulations of racism in the German context: Ha et. al. "Re/Visionen: postkoloniale Perspektiven von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland"; Eggers et. al. "Mythen, Masken, Subjekte. Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland".

<sup>8</sup> See the work of Kien Nghi Ha on colonialism without colonies in the German context (Ha 110).

<sup>9</sup> Kirsten "Keinerlei Entschädigung. In Pressedokumentation iz3w Deutscher Kolonialismus Geschichte und Erinnerung."

<sup>10</sup> Gilroy, "The end of anti-racism"

<sup>11</sup> Kilomba Plantation memories: episodes of everyday racism.

<sup>12</sup> Although this is also the case in mainstream US discourse, we will demonstrate that the logics of silencing racism in these contexts are distinct. Whereas in the US racism is silenced on the basis of a historical speaking through race, various European contexts have detached altogether from race since the post-war period.

<sup>13</sup> This can be generalized to many European societies, where the word racism is seen as taboo within public debates and, when present, is individualized rather than seen as part of the structure of society.

manufacturing and workings of social inequalities in Germany. Although discourse on race is silenced in Germany, evident in the ways Germany has avoided conducting statistics that reveal socio-economic stratification and discrimination along racial lines and has only introduced the “migration background” category into micro-census statistics in 2005 (again, racism is covered), various NGOs and Scientific Research projects have revealed that institutional racism is constitutive of German society and structures the realities for Black people and people of color.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of France, the dominant national, cultural and political self-image is an egalitarian Republic that is intrinsically “category-blind” and thus detached from race as a social category. Grounded in the Republican principles of “liberty, equality, fraternity” of the Jacobin ideology, the French Republic performs a dominant form of universalism that conceals its discriminatory practices as well as disqualifies demands of marginalized groups.<sup>15</sup> Presented as the core of the French Nation and French nationality, these Republican ideals, that can be traced back to the French Revolution in 1789 and the Enlightenment, are grounded in the idea of humanist universalism. What is distinct from other European countries in terms of national understanding and constitution of the French Republic is that the idea of the French Republic stems from the universalizing notion of a unified national citizenship which assimilates (constructed) differences into the national body. These Republican ideals impacted the constitution of the French nation-state, which aimed at state-centered society building; France’s conception of national identity presents itself as egalitarian through a “diversity-neutral” lens.<sup>16</sup>

In its French version, communitarianism, which pays attention to the experiences of religious, racialized, gendered, cultural, sexualized social groups instead of simply absorbing them into an assimilationist “national project”, is therefore constructed as a discourse that “threatens” the unity and equality of the French Republic. As Montague has demonstrated in her examination of the discourse of anti-communitarianism within the French Republic, communitarianism is widely understood as an “imported” Anglo-US-American discourse that develops as well as fosters the formation of communities/particular groups (ethnic, religious, racial, cultural, social), and thus is placed in diametrical opposition to French Republican ideals.<sup>17</sup> She explains that ignoring the social claims of marginalized groups in France, because they would fracture the social and political integrity of the French national body, “is grounded in the notion that France lacks any institutional bias towards visible minorities” (Montague 220). France is presented as fundamentally distinct from other Western societies—especially the United Kingdom and the United States—which are seen as self-declared multicultural societies and thus communitarian.<sup>18</sup> However, various critical

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<sup>14</sup> See for example the 2012/2013 Shadow Report of the European Network against Racism as well as the 2012 publication on institutional racism of the Migrationsrat Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.

<sup>15</sup> Cervantes-Rodriguez et. al Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United States: Essays on Incorporation, Identity, and Citizenship; Keaton "Racial profiling and the 'French exception'"; Montague "Communitarianism, discourse and political opportunity in Republican France."

<sup>16</sup> (Laborde Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy). This tradition of state-centered society-building as an assimilationist discourse has a long history in France. Rousseau’s social contract and his conception of the general will (*volonté générale*) prove as examples. In trying to solve the problems that emerge out of the genesis of civil societies within modernity (i.e., the loss of the state of nature, which Rousseau describes in his *Discourse on Inequality*), Rousseau offers the possibility of “civil freedom” by proposing the transformation of social and political institutions as well as modes of individual education through an “egalitarian difference-blind liberalism” (Laborde 315) that integrates “differences” into the unified (national) general will.

<sup>17</sup> "Communitarianism, discourse and political opportunity in Republican France."

<sup>18</sup> What is important to note here is that the UK in many aspects relies on similar notions of multiculturalism as the US. Still the UK is not roped with the US in terms of racial discourse. As we will discuss below, scholars like Stuart Hall have demonstrated that race is very much articulated through discourses of culture in the UK.

scholars<sup>19</sup> have emphasized that France was never “category-blind” in practice; they have revealed quite the contrary, and have pointed out that what is often seen as a failure or anomaly within the French Republican tradition is “in fact constitutive of that tradition” (Raissigieur 436). Indeed, the construction and racialization of non-European bodies was intrinsic to the understanding and legal constitution of the French Republic, as was the concept of universalism as an authoritarian abstract universal that tended to override the socio-historic experiences of the subjectivities placed in the underside of the modern and French colonial projects.<sup>20</sup>

This programmatic is still at work in its postcolonial version. The French maneuvering through histories of enslavement and colonialism oscillates between liberal grammars of recognition, mostly articulated through memorial politics, and an active dismembering of France’s colonial history. This is demonstrated through the 2001 passing of the Taubira Law, the world’s first laws recognizing enslavement as a crime against humanity, as well as the 2005 act, passed by the National Assembly, that mandates the “positive values” of colonialism be taught in national curricula and research endeavours. Although the law on colonialism was partially repealed, the debate about the “positive role” of French colonialism mirrors how the hegemonic cultural archive operates through a discursive re-production of the mission civilisatrice (civilisatory mission). As Françoise Vergès describes, this logic reveals France’s “inability to integrate its colonial past [including slavery] into its national past.”<sup>21</sup>

Despite the supposedly universal ideals of equality that resist the concept of race as a basis of categorizing humans, to the extent that statistics on race or ethnicity are prohibited, the counter-hegemonic discourses of color of the last few decades have strongly revealed that race does work as a category of subordination in France. A clear example are the 2005 revolts in the northern outskirts of Paris, some of the nation’s most impoverished and racialized suburbs. These revolts followed the deaths of Zyed Benna, 17 years old, and Bouna Traoré, 15 years old, who were tragically electrocuted while trying to escape from a police chase, a consequence of racial profiling.<sup>22</sup> The events not only demonstrated that the ideal of French Republicanism is racially coded and contracted,<sup>23</sup> but also showed how racism articulates itself in France, namely by an interlocking arrangement of culturalist formations that are strongly naturalized and reveal the race-blind principle to be untrue. In the dominant media coverage but also political discourse linked to these incidents, urban youth of color were portrayed as inherently violent, pathological and undereducated. In a similar vein these racist stereotypes were linked to a culturalist discourse on chronic polygamy and poverty.<sup>24</sup>

Shifting to the Netherlands, the final context to be analyzed in this piece, there is a similarly constructed national self-image free of racism. When racism is mentioned, it is located in individuals that are exceptional, rather than the norm, as Weiner points out: “Ask a White Dutch person about racism in their society and most will quickly respond that, except for maybe a few right-wing politicians and individual racist incidents each year, racism does

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<sup>19</sup> Ndiaye "La condition noire." Essai sur une minorité française ; Constant "Talking race in color-blind France: equality denied, Blackness 'reclaimed'"; Keaton "The politics of race-blindness"). Scholars like Catherine Raissigieur ("Gender, Race and Exclusion: A New Look at the French Republican Tradition") and Dubois ("Republican Antiracism and Racism.")

<sup>20</sup> (cf. Césaire Discourse on Colonialism; Fanon "Toward the African Revolution"; Bernasconi and Lott The idea of race)

<sup>21</sup> Vergès (Abolir l'esclavage: Une Utopie coloniale: Les Ambiguïtés d'une politique humanitaire and Miller The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade).

<sup>22</sup> Keaton "Racial profiling and the 'French exception'"; Fassin La force de l'ordre: une anthropologie de la police des quartiers

<sup>23</sup> Mills The racial contract

<sup>24</sup> see for example Keaton "Racial profiling and the 'French exception'"



not exist. Indeed, it cannot. Because, according to many, ‘race’ does not exist in The Netherlands” (Weiner 731). In the Netherlands, two terms have come to dominate debates on integration, ethnicity and race: *autochtoon* and *allochtoon*. *Autochtonen* are people whose parents were both born in the Netherlands and *allochtonen* are people who were either born outside of the Netherlands or who were born inside but have one parent (or both) born outside of the Netherlands. Interestingly, the dominant conception of who is an *allochtoon* has shifted to primarily designate one who is Moroccan and Muslim, as opposed to previous decades, in which the term commonly referred to Surinamese and Antilleans. “The binary opposition between *autochtoon* (= white Dutch) versus *allochtoon* (= Muslim = Moroccan) has become so pervasive in Dutch society that persons and groups who do not fit the categories (white) Dutch, Muslim and Moroccan have become all but invisible in media and public debate” (Cornips and de Rooij 130). Moreover, by centering public debates on the “guest workers” that arrived in the 1960s, the fact that Surinamese and Antilleans have been in the Netherlands much longer is ignored. Therefore Surinamese and Antilleans are constructed as a foreign threat: they are foreign despite the long colonial history and the presence of the Dutch nationality; because of this foreignness, they are a threat. As Martina notes: “Even though Black people have been part of the Netherlands for a long time, we are often figured in media representations as an external threat that has managed by our Dutch nationality to slip through the cracks.”<sup>25</sup> Despite these clear historical legacies, the Netherlands considers itself to be a space in which racism only occurs within fringe elements.

In his article “The non-usage of ‘race’ in the Netherlands,” Han Etzinger argues that race (and by extension racism) is not the reason behind the “failed integration” of “guest workers” from North Africa and Southern Europe. He points out that the “smooth” integration of 250,000 Eurasians from Indonesia that took place in the 1950s—despite their “Asian outlook”—demonstrates that race does not constitute a barrier to integration. This approach, however, fails to contextualize the different histories of various groups that have migrated to the Netherlands. What was the relationship between Indonesian migrants and the Indonesian state? What were the different processes and formations of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, and what effects did these have on Indonesian socio-economic status, displacement patterns, education and kinship ties, and other social, economic and political markers? It is useful to remember that many of the Indonesians that migrated to the Netherlands were confined to camps for years before being allowed into society, thus raising questions about a “smooth” integration.<sup>26</sup>

What is quite notable in modern Dutch history is the tendency to shift certain stereotypes and discourses from one group to another, depending on a complex array of political and economic factors. When migrants began to arrive from North Africa and Southern Europe, much of the discourse surrounding the white working class was extended to these new migrant groups, specifically the notion that they needed to be civilized into Dutch culture. Another example is the way in which Surinamese men were discursively portrayed as violent and aggressive in the 1980s. Yet in the 1990s this portrayal extended to and became focused on Moroccan men.<sup>27</sup> One should note, however, that such shifts are never complete. In the Netherlands today it is clear that negative assumptions about the white working class prevail, and that Surinamese men are still often portrayed as violent and aggressive. This highlights the enduring nature of these discursive formations. They are resilient precisely because they are linked to class formation and nation building through bourgeois notions of

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<sup>25</sup> Martina, “The Delicious Pleasures of Racism”

<sup>26</sup> For more see: Bosma (Post-colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands) Jones (“Tussen onderdanen, rijksgegoten en Nederlanders”).

<sup>27</sup> This pattern of traveling significations can be found in multiple locations outside of Europe, including the United States.

“civilized”. In other words, the identity of the rational, white bourgeois Dutchman is constituted in a dialectical relationship with numerous “Others”—thus making the discursive formation necessary to Dutch identity. This draws our attention to the continuing need in Dutch society to create “Others” in order to both construct the identity of the civilized Dutchman, but also, by extension, legitimize certain social political and economic policies. These policies range from increasingly tough stances on immigration to the increased policing of post-migrant populations and populations of color.

At the center of this process of othering is the construction of the Dutch self-image as tolerant and thus of Dutch society as excluding racism, homophobia, sexism, and so on. Dutch society is constructed as tolerant and open, and indeed this has become a universal image of the Netherlands. However, as Martina argues, there is more than enough evidence to disprove this claim:

The outward appearance of benevolence, tolerance and innocence has been central to the Dutch national self-image and to the political manufacture of the White autochtoon Dutch identity. Even in the face of resounding evidence against it, the myth of the Netherlands as a generous, welcoming and tolerant country has proven unshakable (Martina, “The Language of Racial Innocence”).

Moreover, (post-)migrants are seen as constituting a threat to this tolerance. A notable example is the fear on the part of many Dutch people that Muslim people will spread homophobia in the Netherlands, a country that is constructed in the national imaginary as free of homophobia. This also applies to gender norms, whereby people of color are seen as a threat to the gender equality that is imagined to exist in the Netherlands. The fear of such cultural contamination of the tolerant nature of Dutch society justifies many of the calls for assimilation--to adopt Dutch cultural values and norms. In the present discourse this is heavily articulated through a culturalized register of racism which reveals that racism very much relies on its shift and mixture of meanings in a given temporality.

Relevant is the fact that the Dutch do not perceive their colonial history in a negative sense or as something worthy of shame. What Weiner refers to as social forgetting captures this process whereby the practice of forgetting is institutionalized, especially with regards to slavery: “This represents a ‘willful act of forgetting’ and has a direct impact on contemporary Dutch conceptions of race and racism within their society” (Weiner 737). This Dutch colonial history is not something to be navigated or worked through, and indeed can be presented positively or, at least, as a relic of a time that was not necessarily “wrong.” The denial surrounding both its status as a colonial empire (as well as the fact that the Netherlands controlled territories until 2010) and its neutral moral position on colonialism allows the Netherlands to construct a national imaginary based on tolerance.

### Shifting Meanings of Race and Racism. Old racisms, New masks: Framing Race as Cultural

As a form of questioning and thus denying the humanity of people of color, the concept of racism has manufactured the structuring of economic, epistemic, social, cultural, linguistic, spiritual as well as gendered power relations. It works through institutional, discursive as well as interpersonal realms. Racism thus has an impact on all aspects of social existence. Theories of racism have often defined it as an ideological structure of exclusion

and exploitation bound to a process of racialization,<sup>28</sup> that occurs through the construction, marking as well as confining of bodies in a discursive regime of hegemonic thought and social practices.<sup>29</sup> Racism has to be understood as an overall structure of domination that contains humans within representational regimes making use of constructed racialized signifiers and working in concert with practices of exclusion and exploitation.

Understanding racism as contextual, flexible, spatial and historic as well as dynamic, enriches our understanding of racism and its distinct historical-conjunctions. This re-configured understanding also enables us to construct a more useful transnational anti-racism movement based on the diversity of experiences of racism. This is especially important to contexts in which race is violently written out of the dominant discourse and paradigms and/or replaced and substituted by culturalist accounts. In the following section, we will sketch out some of the theoretical backgrounds necessary for framing racism as a flexible, spatial and contextual phenomenon that has to be understood alongside its continuous discontinuities and shifts. We do this to challenge the silence about race in many European contexts, in which racism is obscured through the emphasis on naturalized cultural differences.

Sociologist Robert Miles has written extensively on the role of the construction of race as an ideological process that deterministically ascribes negative attributes to a social group of people.<sup>30</sup> His focus on the process of making, or better, doing race proves important for an analysis of the representational implications of racism as a social process of domination. Miles shows how certain categories are constructed and become meaningful through the development of racialization. In shifting the focus to a process of racialization, Miles calls for an analytical framework and language that allows the deconstruction of the ideological idea of race rather than reifying it, thereby emphasizing the social process in which race is constructed and re-produced as a social fiction with material effects.<sup>31</sup> Departing from Miles, Michael Omi and Howard Winant have articulated the concept of racial formation in which race is defined as an effect of social structures and cultural representations.<sup>32</sup> Stuart Hall also develops racism as a social process and highlights the interconnectedness between racialized signifiers and material effects, articulated in exploitative practices which work in concert with these signifiers. Their relationship can be characterized as an entangled one. For Hall, racism cannot be reduced to ideological dimensions that distinguish between false and true consciousness or draw a strict line between forms of knowing and practices. Following Foucault, he blurs the line between practice and ideology and states that "all practices are determined by ideas and all ideas are written into practice" (Hall 8). He further argues that the ideological discourse of racism changes in relation to the historical and social relations of power and thus does not entail a linear historio-static content. He adds, we must pluralize racism as its signifiers tend to change in historic-socio-political formations bound to spatial and temporal contexts. This means that racism as an exclusionary practice that contains social groups in violent representations of the other--the non-or subhuman, the underdeveloped, uncivilized, irrational and corporeal other of the rational self--can unfold its meaning onto various re-covered,

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<sup>28</sup> Miles "Racialization."

<sup>29</sup> Grosfoguel "The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century"; Hall "Rassismus als ideologischer Diskurs".

<sup>30</sup> (Racism after 'race relations')

<sup>31</sup> Miles Racism after 'race relations'; Guillaumin Racism, Sexism, Ideology, and Power.

<sup>32</sup> Omi and Winant Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s.

modified, changing markers that will become racialized signifiers in the workings of economic, political and symbolic exclusion and exploitation.<sup>33</sup>

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discourse on race in many European contexts has shifted from a focus on biology to culture (Lentin 489). Elaborating on this shift proves to be important for our argument as it demonstrates that racism re-articulates itself through the usage of culture and that this shift is simultaneously no historical novelty as we will argue below. Balibar has drawn attention to this shift: “It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions” (Balibar 21). Grosfoguel explains that within this discourse of racism the word race is not even used, still cultural racism is always bound to biological racism in terms of naturalization and ontologization.<sup>34</sup>

In analyzing the distinctive features of this shift, Balibar mentions three important aspects: it is located in the period of historical decolonization; it is related to migrations from the old colonies to the former “metropolises;”<sup>35</sup> and that the articulation of this new racism is centered within the nation state, rather than outside of the borders of the nation state. Moreover, the ideological discourse on racism has changed its articulations within the realms of the post-national-socialist period.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the discourse of the Holocaust and the strong biological racism associated with it rendered discussions of racism based on biological race a taboo and instead racial discourse had to be expressed as culturally based rather than biologically constructed.

In his analysis of the discursive formations of the renewed question of national identity in Thatcherist Britain, Hall points out how the new form of racism expresses itself through culturalist arguments that discursively produce Englishness in opposition to non-Englishness within Britain (12-13). This shift towards “cultural” forms of racism can be linked to the specific legacies of European colonialism. Frantz Fanon wrote extensively on the question of what is sometimes called cultural racism and the European empire and argued that the culturalist articulation of racism has to be considered when he explained that “the unilaterally decreed normative value of certain cultures deserves our careful attention.” He shows that there is a cultural hierarchy, one that appears to be quite distinctly racialized in the specific cases of European colonies as well as Europe during and after colonialism when the “object of racism is no longer the individual man but a certain form of existing” (Fanon 31-2). During European colonialism, culture became central as it needed to be destroyed in order for the natives to be dominated completely. Ways of speaking, dressing, being were attacked; values were destroyed; ways of being disrupted. A new cultural system was imposed, one that took hold in a fractured manner, whereby the result was a complex mixture of pre-colonial culture, colonial imposition, and forms of resistance that emerged during the colonial period.

Although the debate on cultural racism or new racism mirrors the temporality and contextuality of racist discourses and traces a shift from biological to cultural markers of

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<sup>33</sup> The anatomic structure of racism as a binary system of exploitative classification as laid out here of course does not exclude the inherent ambivalence of exactly that binary. For example, the construction of difference through racist discourses (Hall 14) constructs the body of the self that is weaved into a dialectical arrangement of self and other (Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*; Hall “Rassismus als ideologischer Diskurs”; Eggers “Rassifizierte Machtdifferenz als Deutungsperspektive in der kritischen Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland”; Kilomba *Plantation memories: episodes of everyday racism*).

<sup>34</sup> Grosfoguel ““Cultural Racism” and Colonial Caribbean Migrants in Core Zones of the Capitalist World-Economy”.

<sup>35</sup> see also Hall (12).

<sup>36</sup> Grosfoguel forthcoming

meaning, it is important to note that the transition is not a historic novelty within discursive formations of racism. As Hall<sup>37</sup> and Balibar<sup>38</sup> show, the contemporary discussion about cultural racism has to be framed in a wider time-space context to explore the manufacturing and working of racism in more general terms. As Balibar states, the “idea of a ‘racism without race’ is not as revolutionary as one might imagine” (Balibar 24). In fact, culturalist accounts have not only sidelined the hegemonic discourse of biological racism but have engaged in a hybrid interplay with biological counterparts. As Fanon has argued in his speech “Racism and Culture” in 1956, and in direct relation to French colonialism, biological racism worked hand in hand with culturalized codes and systems of meaning. Gilroy argues in a similar vein, stating that the supposedly major shift from nature to culture is actually not an absolute shift as there has been no clear cut in their relationship since modern/colonial thought (Gilroy 33).

Adopting a decolonial approach and tracing historical accounts, it becomes clear that the workings of racism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are bound to the early years of the final colonial conquest of the Iberian Peninsula Al-Andalus (today part of Spain and Portugal) and settler colonialism in the Americas, where populations were divided and hierarchized along conceptions of the human.<sup>39</sup> The long-durée of the phenomenon of racism makes clear that religious theological racism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century developed into scientific racism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the foundation of racism is not located in the old discourse of “race war” inside Europe, as Foucault argues, but in the old religious racism against Muslims and Jews coupled with the denial of humanity of the people in the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup>

In their genealogy of racism, Grosfoguel as well as Maldonado-Torres<sup>41</sup> demonstrate that the expulsion of and physical and epistemic genocide against Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula was underlined by a discourse of “purity of blood” that was institutionalized as biopolitical racism (Grosfoguel 85). By forcing those Muslims and Jews who decided to stay in the conquered territory to convert to Christianity, the Christian monarchy attempted to assimilate people with the “wrong God” or “wrong religion” into the hegemonic structure of Christianity. One method through which such population regulation took place was the conducting of “ancestry information” (Grosfoguel 78). It is important to note that this process of religious discrimination, exercised along the line of “blood” references, proved to be not only a proto-racist configuration but also a hallmark of contemporary forms of culturalist racism(s). The social groups it targeted were perceived as (sub-)subjects with the “wrong religion,” which can shift into subjects with the “wrong practices” or subjects “without civilization” and so on. Religious-racist discourse, however, was not yet fully racist as the possibility of conversion was still open and the humanity of the social subjects was not yet in question (Grosfoguel 79).

Whereas the proto-racialized subjectivities of Al-Andalus were constructed as “people with the wrong religion,” the people in the Americas were constructed as people “without religion/without soul.” In the context of the Christian imaginary of the time, being “without a soul” was equivalent to not being human.<sup>42</sup> As Maldonado-Torres suggests, “With a single stroke, Columbus took the discourse on religion from the theological realm into a modern

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<sup>37</sup> “Rassismus als ideologischer Diskurs”

<sup>38</sup> “Is there a ‘Neo-Racism?’”

<sup>39</sup> Goldberg The racial state; Grosfoguel "Human Rights and Anti-Semitism after GAZA"; Quijano "Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America"; Wynter "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Desêtre: Black Studies Toward the Human Project."

<sup>40</sup> Grosfoguel "The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century."

<sup>41</sup> "Religion, conquête et race dans la fondation du monde moderne/colonial"

<sup>42</sup> Maldonado-Torres Ibid., Grosfoguel Ibid.

philosophical anthropology that distinguishes among different degrees of humanity through identities fixed into what would later be called races” (217). It is important to note that this shift in turn impacted the forms of domestic discrimination in Al-Andalus in 16th century Spain. Grosfoguel explains that the debate which turned “people without religion” into “people without soul” (exemplified in the well-known discussion of Sepúlveda and Bartolomé De Las Casas in the mid of the 16th century Spain) produced a boomerang effect which changed the discourse of “purity of blood” that dominated in the 15th century conquest of Al-Andalus. Thus, the debate in Spain over the humanity of the indigenous people in the Americas transformed the European medieval religious discriminatory rationales as they rapidly turned into modern racist discrimination. The subsequent secularization of this process during the 19<sup>th</sup> century into a scientific discourse therefore had its roots in both the conquest of Al-Andalus and the colonization of the Americas. In exploring the linkages between the discourses of having or not having a soul and the biologicistic articulations of (scientific) racism of the 19th century, Grosfoguel states that

though the word “race” was not used at the time, the debate about having a soul or not was already a racist debate in the sense used by scientific racism in the 19th century. The theological debate of the 16th century about having a soul or not had the same connotation of the 19th century scientific debates about having the human biological constitution or not. Both were debates about the humanity or animality of the others articulated by the institutional racist discourse of states such as the Castilian Christian monarchy in the 16th century or Western European imperial nation-states in the 19th century. These institutional racist logics of “not having a soul” in the 16th century or “not having the human biology” in the 19th century became the organizing principle[s] of the international division of labor and capitalist accumulation at a world-scale (Grosfoguel 82-83).

It is important to note that biopolitical racism did not emerge as a novel phenomenon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but had its roots in previous historical formations. This also demonstrates that color racism was not the first marker through which racism was expressed: religious and cultural expressions of racism have a much longer history and are not purely postmodern phenomena.<sup>43</sup> For example, cultural theorist Ann Stoler points out that for Dutch and French reformers during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, arguments of cultural “suitability” were used rather than arguments based on race in order to exclude certain subjects from colonial education systems. However, it became clear that this was still a racialized argument. Stoler explains that the “designations of those Europeans who were ‘full-blooded’ were repeatedly invoked to identify how the lines between the deserving and underserving were to be drawn” (Stoler 34).

The turn to framing racism as cultural difference in European contexts serves to both construct cultural racism as separate from racism based on race, and to justify discriminatory practices based on “alien cultures”—all the while making a claim to multiculturalism. In this section we want to draw attention to the fact that cultural discrimination is not separate from discrimination based on race. The positing of one culture as superior remains a racialized maneuver in European contexts. White cultures are still posited as superior to other cultures and are thus normalized whereas non-white cultures are doomed deviant and inferior. By constantly shifting the debate to culture, the discourse in many European countries has

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<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that racism does not simply intersect with other structures of domination such as gender, class, disability and so on, but is itself intersectional in its arrangements of signifiers and markers.

managed to obliterate the biologicistic notion of race from the public sphere making it increasingly difficult to bring discussions on racism into public debates, and challenge white supremacy or coloniality. Although this seems similar to the ways Eurocentrism serves as hegemonic culture in the US, it is important to note that the ways in which the dominant discourse articulates itself in the US differs significantly from various contexts from Europe.<sup>44</sup> Whereas in the US race is spoken in a “post-race” manner against the background of a historical speaking through race, i.e. acknowledging race as a social category in every day sociality,<sup>45</sup> various European countries rely on a “post-race” discourse that is historically embedded in the detachment from and abolishment of race since the post-war period. In other words, race has been acknowledged as a continuous historical reality in the US (thus leading to the US being framed as “post-race”), as opposed to numerous European contexts where race as an every day phenomenon is not even present historically.

Stoler argues that the Civil Rights movements in the US prompted intellectuals and activists to “resituate racism as inherent to the inclusionary myths and exclusionary practices of democracy and freedom” (24). This was different from the path taken by European countries, in which racism became part of certain stories at certain times, most notably as part of the Nazi reign in Germany and the Holocaust. By locating racism only within specific temporalities and occurring during specific events, many European discourses have managed to relegate racism to the past or to specific groups and individuals who do not represent the “mainstream,” while at the same time relying on a discourse that unspeaks race. While mainstream US discourse also locates racism in the past, race questions are still articulated through a racial metric; the discourse claims to have overcome race by speaking through race. These two post-racial discourses thus differ in the ways race is articulated or manifests in the discourse. Whereas the “post-race” discourse of the US suggests that race is overcome but acknowledges the long history of race as a category of exclusion and oppression, the “post-race” discourse in countries like Germany, France and the Netherlands becomes a sort of “pre-race” discourse in which race is perceived as an isolated incident and not as a continuous factor in the workings of society. Both discourses detach from the present workings of racism, but in very different ways. While there is no doubt that recent debates in the European public sphere have brought discussions of race and racism to the forefront of the European imaginary, mainly as a result of social struggles against racism, the debates have been framed almost exclusively in terms of culture. While the discourse in the US largely continues to revolve around race, the discourses in many European contexts have become about culture. It is not about racial but rather cultural contamination. It is not about racial, but cultural purity. But how different are the two?

The welfare state, (bio)politics and race

“What we see here is a ‘gardening state.’ All the weeds had to be eliminated from the national garden in order to ensure the creation of an exclusive national identity” (Lucassen 281).

One of the major historical and contemporary differences between numerous European and North American contexts is the existence and implementation of a specific economic and political system, namely the welfare state. While there is little doubt that various European countries are currently in the process of dismantling or at least limiting

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<sup>44</sup> For the different genealogies of racism and their shift to cultural racism in European contexts in comparison to the US see Lockman (Contending visions of the Middle East: the History and Politics of Orientalism).

<sup>45</sup> This of course does not imply that racism is tackled in the hegemonic discourses but rather points at the ways the workings of racism are articulated and exercised even if race is acknowledged as a social category.

their welfare states, the fact remains that the European societies in question in this study have been structurally defined by both the discursive and material realities of the welfare state.<sup>46</sup> In this section, we explore the ways in which the construction of the European welfare state has impacted views on citizenship and race. Specifically, we want to argue that the welfare state acted as a means of neutralizing opposition to the state and capitalist accumulation by exercising control over citizenship, which manifested through granted rights and economic privileges. In other words, the welfare state can be viewed as a form of biopolitics, following Foucault, whereby the state controls the life and death of citizens within the boundaries of the nation state in ways that are intricately linked to daily survival. This is done through the provision of welfare and social benefits, whereby education, healthcare and other key sectors are largely subsidized by the state, therefore providing the state with vast control over these sectors,<sup>47</sup> and by extension, vast control over its subjects: “By means of social policy the state manages the politics of life to shape the social to accord with the tasks and exigencies faced by the state. It is Foucault’s contention that the body, individual and collective, becomes the raw material for this undertaking” (Hewitt). It is pertinent to emphasize that biopolitics is exclusionary in and of itself.

The core underlying assumption to the welfare state has been that welfare is only accessible to a certain type of citizen. In other words, not everyone within the nation state deserves the services provided by the welfare state. The notion that a section of the population needed to be altered to be more deserving of welfare became dominant.<sup>48</sup> What differed across contexts was the way in which this was to be done: primarily through sterilization or socialization. The move to exclude certain types of bodies from the welfare state was expressed in an extreme form in Nazi Germany (although the welfare state dates back earlier in Germany, with the original template emerging in 1870 under Bismarck). All bodies deemed inferior or of no use to society were exterminated. And while countries such as the Netherlands, Britain, France and Belgium, favored socialization exclusion was framed as beneficial to the entire society, highlighting its biopolitical nature (Lucassen 282).

Since its inception in the mid-1800s, the welfare state has exercised strong disciplinary power in the cases of Germany, the Netherlands and France. As scholars have noted, the Dutch welfare state, for example, was created in order to socialize working class families.<sup>49</sup> The aim of the welfare state was never to transform the economy or relations of production, nor to redistribute wealth, but rather to absorb and discipline the working class. Working class people were referred to as “antisocials” and were to be taught how to live:

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<sup>46</sup> In this paper, we define ‘welfare state’ in accordance with the institutionalized social welfarist policies that began to take place in Germany, France and the Netherlands in the late 1800s. This refers broadly to a system whereby the government takes care of citizens – especially those in need. The government is responsible for protecting the welfare of citizens and for ensuring as equitable a distribution of resources as possible.

<sup>47</sup> This is different to other contexts such as the US, and this difference can be explained by understanding the different historical developments. In Europe, the Renaissance, Hobbesian social contract, and Kantian notion of the ruler providing for the ruled created a discursive understanding that would transform into a welfare state system. This is very different from the US, where freedom and liberty were of paramount importance and defined through individualism rather than through an understanding of the social contract as in Europe. Beyond these crucial ideological and historical underpinnings, there are clear differences in the scale and organization of welfare policies in Europe versus the US.

<sup>48</sup> In Germany the welfare state can be traced back to 1870; in the Netherlands to 1874 and in France to the 1850s.

<sup>49</sup> Indeed many European states seem to have focused their disciplinary techniques onto the working class. In Switzerland, for example, most of the people that were sterilized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were working class women (Lucassen 279). Perhaps the most extensive work on this topic has come from Michel Foucault: Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Random House LLC, 1977; Foucault, Michel, and François Ewald. "Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976. Vol. 1. Macmillan, 2003.



“During the interwar period, they laid the groundwork for the so-called woonscholen (literally, housing schools), small isolated complexes on the peripheries of cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and The Hague), where slum dwellers were accommodated and taught by social workers how to lead a ‘decent’ life,” (Lucassen 292). The entire aim of such programs was to make citizens as productive as possible.

It is important to note the capitalist logic at play. The bourgeoisie wanted to maintain the class structure as it was and create a modern civilized nation. What emerged from this process was also the creation of the nation as constituted through the distinction between a civilized “Self” and an uncivilized “Other.” At this point, the internal “Other” often consisted of the white working classes (Rath 3).

The civilizing tendency can be traced back to colonial expansion. “The colonial project claimed one of its objectives was the civilization of ‘backward races,’” (Ibid). Thus two civilizing projects were occurring simultaneously: one on the inside—against the white working class—and one on the outside against the “backwards” races of the colonies. It is notable that both of these processes include relational constructions of the bourgeois and the national Self as opposed to an Other onto which the Self was projecting all of its negative qualities. For example, the process of civilizing “antisocials” in the Netherlands was linked to the way the bourgeois saw themselves: “The anti-social behavior of the lowest fractions of the working class brings painful memories of their own origins to the higher fractions” (de Regt 199-203). This relational dynamic is thus a means of displacement of the negative attributes of the civilized European self onto the designated Other.

It is crucial to note that the underlying argument in the cases of both internal and external “Others” was a racial one. The white working class was often portrayed as being genetically different from the rest of society (Ibid). While it is true that in the Netherlands there was a strong discourse that blamed class differences on context rather than genetics, it remains the case that the working class was often seen as inherently inferior. The same logic was used when it came to the external Othered, who were seen as genetically inferior because of both racial and cultural attributes. As we will see, when Southern European and North African immigrants arrived in the Netherlands in the 1960s, their constructed racial Otherness was understood through cultural differences. Culture became the vessel through which racial difference was understood and class the vessel for understanding the racial difference of the Dutch working classes leading up to the 1960s. In both instances, racial constructions were hidden under the label of either class or cultural difference.

Starting in the 1960s, the institutions that had been set up to civilize “antisocials” were dismantled and the Dutch state instead began to focus on “arranging conditions in which everyone could deploy their own capabilities” (Rath 6). This shift marks the beginning of the neoliberal era, in which the individual would become responsible for his/her own socialization.<sup>50</sup> Neoliberal ideas were combined with social welfare ideas, and discursively the responsibility of the individual would become central to public debates. However the transition toward individualism did not apply broadly to those under state rule. The Indonesian Dutch and immigrants from Southern Europe and North Africa were to be regulated-using the same “antisocials” model. It is likely that racial differences played a role in exempting these groups from the approach taken toward the white Dutch working class. This was especially the case for (post-)migrants from Southern Europe and North Africa.

Integration into Dutch society was framed as something that could only be achieved through programs led by experts. It was assumed that Dutch society was faced with people with specific problems, and that the only way to integrate them was to approach them as a

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<sup>50</sup> Neoliberalism is here defined as the phase of capitalism that structures society based on liberal economic ideas solidified by the Washington Consensus.

group in need of expert attention. This would prevent cultural problems that may lead to those needing integration to reject society (Rath 7). This appears to be a clear case of race as interpreted through the lens of culture. In this instance, cultural differences were constructed as potentially disruptive and dangerous, and that integration was in order for (post-)migrants not to experience conflicts, disorientation and rejection. Thus the group in question—in this case, the (post-)migrants—needed social policies that would integrate them culturally so that they could be part of Dutch society.

Returning to the concept of the welfare state, it is particularly important to note its function in absorbing groups seen as threatening to the state and relations of production. White working class families were seen as a threat to the Dutch nation precisely because of their class attributes: they were seen as less civilized than the bourgeoisie. The solution, however, was not to exclude but rather socialize them. We argue this is a form of co-optation of their political will. Socialization in this sense referred to an entire range of behaviours and ways of living that mirrored those of the bourgeois even while these families remained working class. As Michel Foucault's work on the mental hospital has demonstrated, institutions play a big role in such forms of socialization. The threat of the white working class was minimized by ensuring that as a group, they were incorporated into the national imaginary, which was disciplined by the state. Via inclusion and socialization, the white working class no longer posed a threat to the state.

The emergence of the Dutch welfare state represents an attempt to make the white working class “fit for (bourgeois) society” which was seen as preferable to improving conditions of the working class by raising the standard of living (Martina 2013d). This shift occurred through imagining the welfare state as a disciplinary force that would deflect attention away from structural inequalities (in this case economic inequality between classes) and instead shift the focus onto disciplining the working class and making it socially acceptable. Thus the welfare state acted as a disciplinary force that, through biopolitical means, absorbed and neutralized any “threat” coming from the white working class. This later transformed as a means of disciplining bodies seen as racially and/or culturally different. Attention was deflected from structural inequalities, this time regarding institutionalized racism, and instead focused on framing such bodies as in need of socialization through intervention.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated three socio-historical developments that are central to understanding European articulations of racism: the construction of a national self-image that erases race and racism from the national imagination, the shift from framing racism as biological to cultural and the (bio)politics of the welfare state. Using the German, French and Dutch contexts we have shown that various national self-formations are bound to a symbolic, discursive, and material process of racist othering that constructs bodies as out of place, or the national imaginary. Furthermore, we explored how the welfare state serves to socialize elements seen outside of the nation--in these cases, racialized bodies that are seen as not European--in an effort to preserve cultural hegemony. These two forms of national regulation intersect with an arrangement in which racism is framed as “cultural difference”. By studying the shifting meanings and discursive formations of racism since the first modernity/coloniality<sup>51</sup> and the internal and external conquest at the beginning of the long-durée of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we have shown racism is contextual and contingent; that it can

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<sup>51</sup> Quijano, Maldonado-Torres.

change its markers and signifiers. This does not mean racism is a discontinuous phenomenon. Rather, we call for reading the discontinuities as vital to its continuity. Racism needs to be contextualized in its specific temporal and spatial dimensions.

Reading racism in its various contexts engenders transnational anti-racist solidarity across difference. It further avoids the re-production of centre-periphery binaries common to the geographies of and struggles against racism. A transnational perspective that takes specific historical contexts into account can trace how racism is invisibilized and re-produced. More importantly, it can help frame anti-racist struggles that take these contextual components into account, making anti-racist movements far more effective.

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