(DIS)PLACING RACE: SOCIOCULTURAL CARTOGRAPHIES AND THE ONGOING CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN SPACE

ABSTRACT:

Migration is a racialized encounter fundamental to the creation of European spaces. Spatiality refers to the way imaginaries and sociocultural relations infuse places and locations with meaning at the macro and micro level. We distinguish spaces, as lived social constructions, from sites which are more inert and lack meaning. In this sense, Europe is a macro-space constructed through historical relations that also encompasses small spaces and relationships. From this framework this panel aims to understand how various European spaces are constructed and understood in a relational sense through an analysis of three meso-level spaces: Circuits, Confinement, and Care. These three categories are labeled as such for analytical convenience, as well as a way of acknowledging the similarities between seemingly disparate forms. A single site can be spatialized and understood differently. Circuits are related to trajectories and vehicles, from trade routes to international aid and development. Hospitals may represent a very specific site of care, but care is also present at the home or hospitality organization. Confinement is connected to prisons and refugee camps, but also evident in borders and (b)ordering. By viewing these spaces through a lens of racial (dis)placement we demonstrate how relations of im/mobility past and present contribute to the formation of a broader European space. In this take on the shared theoretical theme, I explicate three examples that connect my research work with the Oromo diaspora and my personal standpoint as a member of the Black diaspora. The spaces that have been made in this transhistorical process demonstrate the racial nature of EUrope.

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INTRODUCTION

While maps and standardized cartographies inform a certain way of knowing Europe (or more specifically the sociopolitical formation of the European Union's version of Europe, labelled here as EUrope), these knowledges and narratives tell an incomplete story. The map and its delineation clarify what is meant, ordered, and bordered as EUropean land, but a gap remains in trying to comprehend the formation of space. Space, rather than topography and physical infrastructure, refers to the way the world is lived, felt, and interacted with. To demand the role of experientiality in conceptions of geography is to refuse the seduction of geography described by Katherine McKittrick in her writing on Black women's geography:

> Geography's discursive attachment to stasis and physicality, the idea that space "just is,"
> and that space and place are merely containers for human complexities and social relations,
> is terribly seductive: that which "just is" not only anchors our selfhood and feet to the
> ground, it seemingly calibrates and normalizes where, and therefore who, we are. (2006:xi).

Rather than accepting this calibration without question, a critical spatial analysis, as attempted here, delves into the way "where" we are differences in relation to our selfhoods.

This paper uses an analytical model centered around three notions to unpack the formation of EUropean space as a racialized process. In addition to the three notions that undergird the theoretical model (Circuits, Containment, and Care), there are other terms that should be defined in order to contextualize the larger argument. The concepts of race, race-making, and racialization can be seen as

connected to a thread of knowledge that resonates with what has been called the "afterlives of slavery" (Hartman 2007). Race in a post-slave world still reverberates with the logic that a single space on earth can be thought of as the production of the human-as-object, or nonhuman commodity: the slave. "Black, Blackness, and even the thing called Africa, cannot be dis-imbricated" from the "global consensus that Africa is the location of sentient beings who are outside of global community" Wilderson 2015:20). Further, Africa was imagined as the "the singular place on the planet where you go to turn human beings into objects" (Saucier and Woods 2014:61). Race, as such, is by necessity linked to ideologies of white supremacy or white being (Garba and Sorentino 2020; Rodriguez 2020) as much as it is by antiblackness (Anderson 2021; Burden-Stelly 2017). The deviations and contradictions in the way whiteness and race have shifted over time retain at one end an extreme Black other. In between these ends are people who are racialized and blackened into further positions of Othering and marginality.

I will begin by glossing through each of the key terms[1] that make up the analytical model and way of engaging with the topic. Within this analysis, the core thesis remains that migration and movement are racialized, and these racial trajectories come to define what is known and experienced of EUrope. By drawing on examples from different spatiotemporalities of EUrope, I attempt to theorize the construction of European space and space-making, with three levels of configuration are involved: macro, meso, and micro.

CIRCUITS

Circuits are the macro and broadest level of looking at space-making, the means of institutionalizing the forces of displacement and exile. Circuits create race by working in tandem to normalize and justify divisions and hierarchy. As described by Alexander Weheliye, racialization is understood as a "conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" while "blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot" (2014:3). This notion of the conglomerate of forces, ranging from the fluidity of culture into the firm structuring of sociopolitics is what makes a Circuit distinct. Circuits are carved out (and do their own carving and delineation) at the scale of international laws, transnational ideologies, and entities like borders and the juridical meaning-making that surrounds their construction. Circuits interweave ideology and practical force demonstrating a "fatal coupling of power and difference," as described by Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2002). The subliminal aspect of the juridical are the racial ideologies that inflect white supremacy at the expense of Black livingness.

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[1] *The construction of the analytical model used for this paper was developed in collaboration with MOVES researchers Zoheb NAME and Peter Teunissen, presented DATE. In this paper I keep the nomenclature and examples presented during the conference but add further detail and more topical citations.*

Circuits at times result as the aftermath or side effects of other conglomerate relations. The "protection" and enforcement of the European Union's borders is unevenly done across land and sea, and migrant smugglers and refuge-seekers both come to reveal these circuital routes. The Horn of Africa's borders are an indication of such circuital links, in this case between the would-be colonizers like the Portuguese, British, French, and Italian, the local empires like the Abyssinians, and even with attention to radical resistance fighters from Kenya's Mau-Mau to the more recent work of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. These forces established and legitimized certain borders and challenged others. While not quite an imperial or radical anti-fascist force, the Eritrean resistance is one particular example of the way imperial incursions of the past and juridic legal structuring of states dictates paths of mobility.

Example Circuit: (B)ordering of the Horn of Africa

The establishment of the borders between Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia are an example of the reification of a whitened superior other, and the blackening of already Black people. The key circuital forces at play were ideologies of race and racialization, with Indigeneity and religion as the intertwined counterparts. The colonial history of the Horn of Africa diverges from much of Africa because of the role African colonial forces, namely the Abyssinian Empire, played in settlement and conquest. Long idealized as an "island of Christianity in the sea of Islam" the Abyssinians and the corresponding empires like the Shoan were complicit with European colonization of the Horn (Holcomb and Ibssa 1990). Alongside the resources provided by Europeans, used to subjugate the Indigenous peoples across the Horn, Abyssinia was permitted to maintain its colonial form even in a post "Berlin Conference" world. Abyssinia's special power was part of its larger project, which has been called Ethiopianism:

> Ethiopianism shifts back and forth between claims of a "Semitic" identity when appealing to the White, Christian, ethnocentric, occidental hegemonic power center and claims of an African identity when cultivating the support of sub-Saharan Africans and the African diaspora (Jalata 2009:189)

The blackest Other among a region of Black people was the indigenous non-Christian, Oromos, Somalis and all others. Ethiopia's whitening through Christianity and the aftermath of British colonialism in Kenya and Somalia legitimized their supremacy, and in doing so legitimized the Circuital power. The legacies of the Circuit linger on, delineating in/formality and il/legality for economic and social activities (Little, Tiki, Debsu 2015:406). The resulting conditions of the borders work to confuse resistances and paths towards liberation. Each of the resulting nation-state formations, the preferred spatial and juridical configuration of both the regional and international powers, reveal the impact of these preferences. These are not the only paths to divide and subjugate the many peoples and nations of the Horn, but their economic, political, and cultural Circuiting held and continues to uphold certain hierarchies. These convergences are summed up well by Crummey:

To one degree or another, Ethiopia is implicated in all these ambivalences, its own historiography being ambivalent about how distinct languages and customs may be reconciled with an Ethiopian national identity, or about the strength of continuing resentment of the late-nineteenth-century process of incorporation into the state (2003:122).

Looking at the border-making of the Horn of Africa reveals the way racializing seeps into political forms, generating nations and borders that uphold oppression. A more complex analysis of the Horn of Africa and the way borders and lands have served to generate ways of living that move transnationally, Nadiya Nurhussein's book on imperial Ethiopianism is a useful resource (2019).

CONFINEMENT

Confinement is a meso-level enaction of space-making in EUrope. Confinement is connected to carcerality, imprisonment, enclosures like camps, refugee holding spaces, and Indigenous land reservations. Confinement, used interchangeably here with containment, is a way of capturing through movement people who are meant to be considered societal Others. While circuits, returning to the example of borders, reveal broader connections, confinements are the results of these phenomenon; the way Indigenous land has been transformed into ethnic territory within a settler colonial state. While the bordering, for example, of any region, is the result of a convergence of Circuits, spaces of confinement and containment happen in the wake of and in relation to these establishments. While a state has been made, the state's "capacity to wield despotic power over certain segments of society" occurs once that society has already been segmented (Gilmore 2002:21).

The work of Ruha Benjamin and the concept of carceral imaginaries helps to delineate the spatialities associated with such forms of confinement. Writing on the subject of technoscientific development, Benjamin uses "carceral" to describe "forms of containment that make innovation possible in the contexts of health and medicine, education and employment, border policies and virtual realities" (2017:145). Further, carceral imaginaries ask us to reconsider the way people are "fixed in place—classified, corralled, and/or coerced—to enable technoscientific development" (ibid.). Understanding that while paths of movement are defined on a higher scale the way these spaces contain people further reveals the way race is made.

Case Study of Confinement: Bureaucratic Borders

To assess EUropean race-making at the meso level, I want to look at Oromo diasporas who are confined by EUropean state bureaucracy. Confinement in this sense is a rhetorical device that both impacts policy formation and reifies existing policy through its legitimacy. As the racial knowledge and reckoning of EUrope prioritizes the nation-state form as the white ideal body, refugees who are permitted access and processed must do so in the political language of the nation-state they have fled.

In order to explicate the experience that meso levels dictate about epistemologies of Oromo diaspora experiences and journeys, I will quote at length an anecdote from my forthcoming dissertation:

In summer 2021 the peoples of Ethiopia were faced with famine, locust plagues, rogue militias, and innumerable other tragedies, triggering mass flight and displacement at alarming rates. The federal government was engaged in an increasingly violent civil conflict with the Tigray Defense Forces, the armed wing of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, representing the Tigrayan ethnic group from the North of the country. The Tigrayans were making demands about their sovereign ability to rule, and the conflict has taken center stage amongst the Horn's other atrocities.

During this same period, I was working as an intern for an NGO located just outside of the capital city of a Western European country. The organization primarily works to facilitate the processing and integration of refugees into the national host society. In one of the first days there I was asked to complete a fairly banal task: take a list of contact information and place a reminder call to all of the individuals listed, confirming their participation in a focus group to be operated by a large governing refugee body. During the call I was asked to write the names of each individual who would attend, their preferred language (between the national language, Arabic, and English as a neutral third choice), and their country of origin. While not actively conducting research during this task, Ethiopia remained ever on my mind, and I smiled when I came to the names attached to this nation-state. I was surprised at first even to see Ethiopia included on the list, as the vast majority of other participants and individuals receiving support from the organization were from further North, fleeing from the violence that rippled across places like Syria and Iraq. Buried in this bureaucratic list, I was further surprised to see that although the nation-state of Ethiopia provided the only geographic indication, the names made space for an alternative mapping.

As I looked down the sheet in front of me, the names linked to the Ethiopian state contained an undeniable Oromo presence, evidence of a generational Oromumma that was not restricted to these state borders. There were religious names, primarily Muslim, where it was only the third name of the grandfather that shared its Oromo-ness. Several names reflected the social conditions in which the individuals were born, names like Strength and Patience corresponding with a childhood in the Dergue era.

[...]

Oromo sovereignty is suppressed by the nation-states of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa more broadly through the activation and implementation of borders, divisions which arbitrarily divide the Oromo nation into parcels and pockets, which have turned the mobile grazing lands of Oromo and Somali pastoralists in the South into sites of conflict. Oromos bear their nation-states on their backs in their engagement with bureaucracy, but they do not let this label of Oromo forsake them. With obsaa and abdii (patience and hope or dreams, two common Oromo boys' names), Oromo people refuse to subsume themselves. Names are selected with care, connecting to the generations before, and they tell

a story that sounds like sovereignty.

[…]

If we read this list of names as a "transparent" space-making (after McKittrick 2006) of refugees in this European country, our fixation on the Ethiopian state has certain uses. It points out the harm generated from the nation-state and the expulsion and flight that this has caused. However, the conflation of dozens of ethnic groups into a single state problem ignores the different rates of harm enacted. Certain communities face extraordinary levels of violence, and these attacks target people for their ethnicity as well as their geospatial locations. Reading the list with waloo in the forefront reveals how Ethiopia's violence has unfolded in particular places, and the reverberating impacts of this in the formation of Oromo diasporas. The names and their Oromumma provide a guide for reading against the necropowerful state sovereignty and into the ways the Oromo soul has enacted its own sovereign resistance. (Bass forthcoming)

Through this example, the European Union's way of dictating, defining, and in doing so rhetorically confining the Oromo people to a subordinate position within a genocidal nation-state is elucidated. Ethiopia is legitimated and maintained for its (b)ordering capabilities even by those peoples who have demonstrated their resistance with the most physical means possible: their bodies brought across the borders. What the meso-level also reveals is the shared legibility of only certain institutions. The Oromo are a nation of more than 30 million domestically, with a large diaspora. Neither this numerical strength nor their documented history is worth recognizing by the EU. As soon as they are given bureaucratic legibility, processed as refugees, they are subsumed by the nation-state form.

CARE

The final level of the analytical frame is the microlevel, labelled here as Care. Care is the individual and personal way that concepts, legal policies, and epistemologies are put into action. A law may set certain expectations, but it is up to people, from lawyers and judges to police officers, to enforce and bring that law to life. At the level of Care, a police officer may choose to exercise humanity and compassion, identify a broken law as an accident worthy of a warning, or live up to their position as a tool of violent imperialism and use a misstep to justify a bullet at the offender's body. This (un)caring sets a space between who is safe in certain spaces, for example. A racial other is delineated by the very body who can move directly across certain spaces. To conclude the discussion of race-making in EUropean space, I move to data that combines the Oromo diasporic experience with mine, describing an incident of anti-Black racism which I experienced while doing fieldwork at the Irreecha event in Frankfurt, Germany.

In a space with the expectation of care, there was still opportunities to withhold and ignore, to decide who should be fed, who should have access to nourishment. The confines of the state set

certain standards here, as Germany has its own established anti-discrimination laws which protect German wealth and prosperity by deciding who can access it. The meso level is established as an idea of something liberal or welcoming, but at this micro scale the fissures emerge. The rejection of my humanity in the example that comes could not be mitigated by the meso level structures that meant, in their state capture, to also contain or define forms of illegal exclusions, due to the way that antiblackness has seeped itself into the ways we relate. Although it is intimately connected with my theorizing and analytical approaches, this example is not reflexive of the topic I set out to study. At this smallest scale, in a collection of fleeting moments, the volumes and histories of the Circuits and Confinements that shadowed my path are made evident. To understand how the giving and withholding of care dictated a EUropean space that my passport could not facilitate access to, I will retell an anecdote from my fieldnotes.

The incident described took place in Frankfurt, Germany at a mid-level hotel located just beside the Frankfurt Central Train station. Frankfurt has relatively high numbers of international communities and peoples from the global south. They pride themselves on this quality, advertise and celebrate it. This context is essential. I was in Frankfurt, at this hotel, to attend an Irreecha celebration organized by the Hawaasa Oromoo Jarmani (Oromo Community of Germany). Irreecha, the Oromo Thanksgiving, is a time of song, chanting, shared food, and gathering. Most participants dress up in clothes that represent their region of Oromo, bright whites and greens of one area in harmony alongside the multi-colored stripes of another. It is an event of great joy, an event which I had indeed enjoyed, which fulfilled my heart and showed the beauty and livingness of a people who was fighting a transnational fight for liberation. This context too is essential. In the morning after the event, I went, alongside my friend and mentor, to eat the breakfast that we paid for when we reserved our rooms. She is Oromo, in her 70s, living in Berlin, Germany since before the Wall fell, I am Black (American + Austrian), living in Germany since 2019. We arrived downstairs to eat our breakfast, a service which we had booked separately to our room stay.

As we sat, talking quietly back and forth in between bites, the room began to fill up. It became clear quickly that we occupied a categorical Other space, at least visually, from the rest of the diners and the wait staff. They were all white, or white-passing, dressed inconsistently in a range from loungewear to more formal, business attire. The only other consistency we pick out among them, or separating a Them from an Us, is the clear definitive Othering that emerged via the level and access to service. These guests are accommodated, offered, greeted, welcomed. Our morning "Hallo" had been replaced with a short, curt interrogation of our room number. This gruffness preceded and characterized our entire experienced. We waited and watched as this stream of unrelated strangers were shown easy smiles, friendly nods, a bare minimum of human experience.

There is of course an argument to be made into expectations of hospitality; what do we as guests ask, demand, expect, or know we may receive from service staff at a place of hospice, rest, visitation, and sleep? The nuances are innumerable. The question, then, is consistency. If you are cold,

if your idea of care is colored by such coldness, then what triggers a shift to a warmth and welcome. Contravening this, if you are warm and kind, looking into eyes and returning this shared sight with a smile, what may demand your own shift to a harsh and unyielding other? Outside this somehow vague impression, the concrete case of a social and spatial delineation that separated us from the rest began to grow. We were at each turn refused access to service, or upon a firm request, given a substandard offering. Even water or a simple piece of bread remained out of reach.

When the issue was addressed, eventually, after our shared reflection back in the room, with the front desk manager, the initial discomfort turned to a stiffer bureaucratic boundary. While the withholding of care, access, services, and a restricted humanity was the initial concern, couched as it was in the specific incident, it was when we sought some explanation that the larger Circuits and Confinements came into play. The manager was cold first, lying second, shifting stories between English and German as if to take advantage of a linguistic ability he (incorrectly) assumed we did not have. When we asked for another route to process this complaint, he refused to provide contact information for anyone beside himself, insisting on writing down a "Front Desk" email that he had provided directly to us at check-in the day prior. In his bureaucratic terror, he attempted to wear down and deny even the faintest of justice, a report of what had taken place. Undernourished as we were by the Care of the hotel, we were bolstered and fed by the community spirit of the night before. We would not so easily be appeased. Eventually, the name of the complaint bureau was acquired, reports written and sent from the most official of University emails, CC'd to the Frankfurt Tourism Bureau and other bodies. The hotel would not admit to a mistake but offered a hollow apology and a free night's stay, as if that should appease us. This apology, of course, came after the initial response from the City of Frankfurt, as they were shamed by the confines of the business establishment and its procedures.

Amidst this issue and its irritation, the stress that stole my focus from my dissertation research, that pulled me away from the communities I wanted to uplift, it was, in part, my Circuital privileges that sustained me. I arrived in Frankfurt a respected Early-Stage Researcher, member of the Freie Universität Berlin, representing Marie Curie and Horizon 2020 as well. I am fluent in English, competent in German, and I hold access to a shiny red passport that declares my status as Austrian, a member of the European Union. With all of these points of power, dictated as superior over generations and centuries of imperial violence, I am well-equipped to fight such bureaucratic battles. Many arriving to Frankfurt, in the infamous images of Germany's brief foray into refugee welcome, are not. Across nationality and ethnic background, regardless of the routes that take one to the center of Frankfurt, deep in Germany, there are many who would rather accept this dehumanization for its normativity and refuse to fight. I have, at other times, taken this route. On this day, fulfilled and strengthened I was by the previous day's community, I would not accept this absention of Care. Returning to the analytics of space-making and EUrope that came up in this microscale, I use this

example to demonstrate the way that broader histories seep in the most insidious ways to maintain a separation between a homogeneous We and a disparaged Other.

CONCLUSION

Moving spatiotemporalities from the borders of the Horn of Africa, modern-day EUrope, and the migration trajectories that link these places reveals the way space is made and racialized in complex and multilayered ways. The same analytical model could, speculatively, apply to a single spacetime, moving deeper and closer to one moment. The interaction and example with which I closed the analysis was not in isolation. As my passport privilege would not allow access to Care, at the meso-level more and more members of the African diaspora are denied even this legal protection. Couching this ongoing trouble is the memory of slavery and colonialism that destabilized Africa in the originary moment, rendering it as a singularity. Instead of lingering too long in the singularity of each moment, returning to the scales and networks of incidents refuses an easy dismissal. Considering EUropean space as ongoing, in progress, being built and constructed with both physical infrastructures and social imaginaries of race-making helps us to better critique what we think of EUrope and how we may better Care for each other.

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