

# MIGRATION

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*The future of Germany and Europe must be secured in the long term. We want to leave a country for our descendants that can still be recognised as our Germany [...]. Immigration movements from Africa to Europe [...] can destabilise our continent within a few years. (AfD Germany)<sup>1</sup>*

*[T]ens of thousands of people are living illegally within the country's borders and Sweden has become internationally known for unrest, rape and citizens active in terror networks. [...] Sweden needs to build a migration policy from the ground up, with firm regulations and respect for the country's borders, its citizens, and the law. (Sweden Democrats)<sup>2</sup>*

*Extra-European immigration is a controversial issue that the big parties cowardly shy away from and yet it is among the most serious ones facing the continent today. [...] In the VOX party, [...] we are going to name it clearly and we are going to call a fight to the invasion but also to the attacks on our sovereignty because we are very aware that our freedom and future as a people are at stake. (Vox Spain)<sup>3</sup>*

*The open-door immigration system of the European Union means anyone from the European union can come and work here while skilled workers from other countries are blocked. [...] Once we vote to leave, the British parliament will regain control over immigration and other matters. [...] [W]e need a carefully controlled policy, not the open doors policy forced on us by the European Union. (Vote Leave leaflet, U.K.)<sup>4</sup>*

*The United States must adopt an immigration system that serves the national interest. To restore the rule of law and secure our border, President Trump is committed to constructing a border wall and ensuring the swift removal of unlawful entrants. (US government)<sup>5</sup>*

**“MIGRATION” IS A** key topic for queer studies not only because of migratised queers being both producers of queer knowledge and the objects of queer migration research (Manalansan 2006; Luibheid 2008), but also because of migration’s prominent position in right-wing, fascist and populist discourse (which also is concerned with stabilising a “proper” sex/gender alignment and regulating sexuality). The quotes in the chilling opening of my contribution are far-right statements from several Western countries. What is important to point out is that in the current moment of the rise of the global right, this anti-immigration rhetoric is rapidly gaining mainstream acceptance; in case of the USA, the statement is from the government’s official webpage.

“Migration” is not a descriptive, objective category, but an analytical tool to name positions of power. Some people who move from one place to the other, who cross borders, are named “migrants,” some are not. The ascription of migration (“migratisation” in the term that I have coined), making people into migrants, ascribing to them a notion of being from somewhere “else” or not at home in the Western nation state – is one of the strategies that essentialises the borders of nation states, national cultures and belonging (Tudor 2018a). The epistemological project of making sense of the connection of racism/racialisation and migration has been discussed widely (e.g., Brah 1996; Tudor 2014, 2017a, 2018a; Erel et al. 2016) and has resulted in heated controversies over the role of whiteness for analyses of the relationship of migration and racism (Tudor 2018b). I argue that migratisation is entangled in complex ways with racialisation but that the two are not the same. Therefore, it is important to analyse migratisation as a strategy of racism and at the same time pay attention to the ways racialisation is more than only the ascription of migration. As Umut Erel and colleagues (2018) make clear, “[c]alls for restricting immigration [are] underpinned by the racially charged motif of ‘taking back control.’”

Not all migrations are the same. It matters how one got to become a migrant. Importantly, it is not migration-as-any-border-crossing that is targeted in anti-immigration discourse, but in the nationalisms showcased in the quotes above, racialisation of migrants and refugees

and the demonisation of the Global South as origin of migration play a specific role. The German quote constructs loss of national/European/racial identity through immigration (as does the Spanish one), and explicitly names “Africa” as the undesired place of origin. This ideology racialises Western nation states and Europe as white and Christian – as if there ever were a moment of racial or religious purity in the past. All the examples use the language of laws, control, and security and rely on fearmongering: borders are needed to “protect” the nation state from an imagined (sexual) violence from the “outside.” Both the Spanish and the British quote are explicitly concerned with “sovereignty” that they see in danger. The Brexit discourse builds on nostalgia for empire (El-Enany 2016), and while the leaflet cited above implicitly targets Eastern European migrants and seems to be inviting “skilled” migrants from Britain’s ex-colonies, it only proves the British desire to re-establish their imperial sovereignty built on a colonial racial hierarchy (Bhambra 2017).

The prevalent anti-immigration discourse externalises sexism and homophobia as taking place somewhere else, outside the West, or committed by migrants, and/or Black and Brown persons and/or Muslims – all of whom are constructed as the eternal migrants who can never belong in the Western nation state (e.g., El-Tayeb 2012; Haritaworn 2012; Tudor 2018a). Therefore, queer theory that is not complicit in homo- and transnationalist attempts to inscribe certain queer and trans people into the nation through adopting racist, migratist and nationalist rhetoric (Puar 2007; Tudor 2017b), centrally focuses on both anti-racism and open border politics. Nation states are based on capitalist border industries in which the people trying to precariously cross these borders are seen as being made for suffering and being killed (Schmidt Camacho 2005; Tinsley 2008, Shakhshari 2014). Critical perspectives do not see migration as the problem, but both the normative understanding of the relationship of racialisation, nation, and belonging and the highly policed national borders that require risky crossings. Scholars like Alicia Schmidt Camacho (2005), Eithne Luibheid (2006), and Stella Nyanzi (2013), point out that it is crucial to analyse the

border industrial complex as relying on, and stabilising, violent gender and sexual regimes *and* using gender and sexuality as arguments for its necessity. Leticia Sabsay (2012) urges us to pay attention to the ways in which the language of human rights creates exclusionary Euro-American ideas of sexual citizenship. Nicola Mai (2018) warns against “sexual humanitarianism,” that is, fixed ideas about sexuality-based vulnerabilities that in the end are used to legitimate migration control. Opposing what S Lambie (2013) calls a “queer investments in punishment,” queer abolition approaches bring together the abolition of both detention camps and punitive prisons and fight for the de-criminalisation of border crossings.

B Camminga (2019) points out in their theorisation of “transgender refugees” in South Africa that both terms conceptualised together change what it means to think about “gender” and the normativity of the nation state. “Migration” as a central category of queer theorising changes what “queer theory” can be. It becomes clear that it is not only the fight against anti-immigration politics that makes “migration” into a queer issue. If we follow Avtar Brah (1996) in thinking Europe as a “diasporic space” that is defined through the presence of multiple layers of migrations, diasporas, and movements, “migration” becomes an affirmative category that names a non-normative relationship to the nation state. In all these respects, “migration” is a queer concept for the 2020s as it can be seen as bearing the promise of queering as anti-nationalist epistemology.

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## NOTES

1. <https://www.afd.de/zuwanderung-asyl/> (accessed October 20, 2019).
2. <https://sd.se/vad-vi-vill/migrationspolitik/> (accessed October 20, 2019).
3. <https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/soberania-e-inmigracion-20180730> (accessed October 20, 2019).
4. <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:bun833zaj> (accessed October 20, 2019).
5. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/immigration/> (accessed October 20, 2019).