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Sexuality and borders in right wing times: a conversation

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ABSTRACT
We respond to prompts about the relationships between race, migration, and sexuality, as these intersecting differences have been forced into the same frame by the violent practices of right-wing regimes, and brought into relief by Covid19. Even as we have long known that sexual politics are a way to govern bodies, and to distribute uneven states of vulnerability, we are seeing new incarnations of government. What we aim to point out is how people who are seen as "different" are being attacked, maimed, dispossessed and murdered. But perhaps more importantly, we insist on the specific nature of right-wing times because these regimes not only encourage attacks on people, but on the very idea that such people should exist and be recognized and understood; that there are areas of scholarship that centre them, or areas of law that try to address the inequalities that dispossess them.

In their prescient 2019 symposium on sexuality and borders, Billy Holzberg, Anouk Madörin and Michelle Pfeifer identified a deepening relationship between sexuality and mobility; they pointed to the increasingly important role of sexuality in the production and maintenance of border regimes, and how racialized border regimes in turn mediate expressions of sexuality. That is, they acknowledge sexuality as a dominant frame by which mobility is captured and regulated.

The symposium made an important intervention, but then we were hit by the Covid19 pandemic and the effects of the many virulent, anti-immigrant, authoritarian and racialized regimes were made even more manifest. Instead of haunting us, right wing sentiment has materialized into a form of mass death of Black and brown people and migrants – not just through the

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biopolitical logic of "letting die", but by actively exposing and cultivating infection in meat packing plants, prisons, detention centres as well as in front line workers. Holzberg, Madörin and Pfeifer anticipated that this would be furthered by its intersections with sexuality; and in our conversation, we explore how, specifically, with the idea that right-wing times have rendered these intersecting relationships both slightly different, but nevertheless all more urgent to understand.

Those most vulnerable have borne the brunt of inadequate healthcare and housing, combined with newly invigorated forms of police and other forms of violence: perhaps top amongst these are trans people of colour. The massive rally for Black Trans lives in Brooklyn, New York in June 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, acknowledged this vulnerability; with 15,000 people dressed in white, packed into the plaza in front of the Brooklyn Museum and spilling out into the transecting streets, people reacted to the many recent deaths of Black trans women, several of which came in the wake of rollbacks to transgender healthcare protections. Other murders occurred in prison or on the street. As Angela Davis (2020) stated in an interview, if we want to develop an intersectional perspective, the trans community is showing us the way; the trans community has taught us how to challenge our foundational sense of normalcy, and as Davis underscored, if we can challenge the gender binary, then we can resist prisons, and jails, and police. And, we would add, we can challenge the very idea of borders and nation-states.

In what follows, we respond to prompts about the relationships between race, immigration, and sexuality, as these intersecting differences have been forced into the same frame by the violent practices of right-wing regimes, and brought into relief by Covid19. Even as we have long known that sexual politics are a way to govern bodies, and to distribute uneven states of vulnerability (Stoler 2010), we are seeing new incarnations of government. With the concepts of tolerance, multi-culturalism or integration, liberalism works to manage, govern and control difference. That is, it abandons and excludes those who exceed the bounds of acceptable or recognizable difference, but it works by cultivating and creating difference that it can exploit. Illiberalism, on the other hand, works to expunge difference; to repress it, excise it. Current forms of illiberalism protect purity, based on blood-lines and heteronormative families. What we aim to point out is how people who are seen as "different" are being attacked, maimed, dispossessed and murdered. But perhaps more importantly, we insist on the specific nature of right-wing times because these regimes not only encourage attacks on people, but on the very idea that such people should exist and be recognized and understood; that there are areas of scholarship that centre them, or areas of law that try to address the inequalities that dispossess them. We note that these areas of thought and law, too, are under attack.

Finally, the feature that perhaps most drives contemporary right-wing movements is their attachment to the nation, and to nationalisms. Our

conversation centres this attachment in its intersection with sexuality, and together, we work to undo it – to further a form of anti-nationalism. We end by joining with and amplifying the voices of many people who have used this devastating moment to reimagine new and better ways of being together and in the world.

(1) How can we analyze and investigate the relation of racism and migration in research on sexuality and borders? Is there a difference on how we think of the entanglement of racism and migration in the US and in Europe? What are transnational overlaps and context specific peculiarities?

MT: In the US, questions of racism and migration rarely meet, either academically or politically. That is, the debates about racism take African Americans as their primary subject, referencing the history of slavery. The debates on migration stay focused in large part on Latinx communities, and on the border itself. Yet the way racism plays into immigration policy – and has from the start, characterizing immigrants in the language of essential Otherness, and working to exclude them (through the Chinese Exclusion Act, or the Japanese Internment camps) – has been translated into questions of citizenship, deservingness and integration. And the way immigration policy relies on anti-black racism is rarely mentioned; indeed, people do not address the fact that many immigrants are black, and that they are currently deported at 3 times higher rates than other immigrants for having supposedly committed a crime (Paik 2020).

While in Europe, colonialism is what brings – or at least threatens to bring – the languages of immigration and racism together, in the US, one rarely hears about colonialism in relation to immigration, despite the long history of imperial relations with Latin America. And certainly the ways in which settler colonialism, and the decimation of indigenous communities, prefigures the treatment of both African Americans and immigrants is rarely even considered.

But, these struggles are increasingly visibly intersecting, for better and for worse. In both cases, sexuality is foregrounded as the connecting force. On the negative side, they are meeting in and through the deeply racist desire to control sexuality and reproductive capacity; in particular, through the practice of forced sterilization. The recent revelation about the sterilizations of immigrant women in ICE detention has opened up the intertwined histories of African American, indigenous and immigrant communities and the underlying eugenics policies that have shaped US state engagement with all of them.

In September 2020, nurse practitioner Dawn Wooten served as whistleblower for the sterilizations being performed at Irwin County Detention

Center (ICDC) in Georgia. In addition to witnessing the lack of testing and medical care for those who had been exposed to Covid19, and the general unsanitary and neglectful living conditions, Wooten said that nearly all the detained women who went to see the assigned gynecologist returned without ovaries and/or uteruses. These operations were performed without proper consent, in a coercive manner – often the women did not even know they had had hysterectomies.

This echoes the long history of Black Americans being forcibly sterilized, named already in the 1974 case Relf v. Reinberger when two Black sisters, aged 12 and 14 were forcibly sterilized because their mother, who was illiterate, was made to sign a form she did not understand. In the south, poor Black women were regularly forced to agree to sterilization when doctors threatened to withhold care or welfare benefits, including during childbirth. This eugenics policy was federally funded and mandated, resulting in approximately 150,000 Black women involuntarily sterilized. It was not accidental that the whistleblower was African American in the case of the Irwin County Detention Center; Wooten was aware of the abuses of sexual and reproductive rights in Black communities, and able to recognize these as violent practices.

As activists and scholars have documented, women carry condoms as they cross the US-Mexico border, knowing that US Customs and Border Control officials regularly rape immigrants with impunity (Falcon 2006). Yet this latest set of acts has made clear that such forms of sexual violence are actually also – and perhaps primarily – a part of genocidal violence.

If these struggles are being forced into the same frame by violent practices – if indeed as Nadine Naber states, "oppressive powers make the connections for us" (2017) – it also points to new possibilities for solidarity. For instance, when we acknowledge how Black men and other men of colour are all grouped under the same category of "sexual predators", creating a racialized, rapacious masculinity, this opens the way to collective organizing, against a shared form of racism. While negative stereotypes of Black men's sexuality have long circulated – with lynchings as the ultimate punishment for this so-called sexualized violence against white women – similar strategies of demonization are clear in Trump's labelling of Mexicans immigrants as "rapists". Of course, Arab men have borne the brunt of this formulation since September 2011, as "monster-terrorist-fags" (Puar and Rai 2002).

But if we follow this same logic, we have to acknowledge that this is not about Black folks, nor about Latinos or Arabs – indeed, this is not a singularly American logic; it is a form of transnational sexualized racism, in which transnational and globalized racialized regimes are consistently used to stigmatize and dehumanize people by way of sexual panics. One of the more recent, infamous cases is that of Cologne on New Year's Eve in 2015, when Muslim men – initially labelled "refugees" – were accused of being sex offenders,

attacking white German women. I wrote about a similar case in Paris that took place in 1999, when young French men of Arab origin were being accused of being gang rapists (Ticktin 2008). But there are countless such cases, going back to colonial times. Overall, we see that these forms of violence are transnational, even as right-wing politics continue to use the nation as the container of hatred.

AT: I have long grappled with the question how to conceptualize the race/migration nexus (Erel, Murji, Nahaboo 2016) for a European context without giving up a postcolonial understanding of racism and racialization. I am not alone in this pursuit. It has been a constant issue in critical scholarship (e.g. Mayblin and Turner 2020) and heated controversies over the role of whiteness for analyses of the relationship of migration and racism have emerged. A few years ago, a colleague "cited" me in a German newspaper article (Terkessidis 2017).[1] He implies that I don't recognize the murder of Theodoros Boulgarides, committed in 2005 by a (state supported) Neo-Nazi terror cell in Germany, as racist. The Neo-Nazis targeted migrants, and the victims mostly had a migration history from Turkey – Boulgarides was the only victim with a migration history from Greece. In the newspaper article, my colleague accuses me of adding to the pain of the bereaved family by seeing the victim as "white". The problem is, however, that I had never talked about the case, I literally have never said the words that were put into my mouth.

I assume this misquotation demonstrates a desire for categories and certainties that is projected onto my knowledge production. And I understand this desire which comes with critical questions on the possibilities of finding accurate words for naming structural violence. Indeed, how can we find formulations that are strong enough to make clear that people are being killed because of being ascribed as migrants?

Central strands of European migration studies scholarship have had the tendency to ignore post/colonial racism and racialization and instead are caught in an understanding of migration that is disconnected from postcolonial analysis. To mitigate this, I suggest differentiating between racism and what I call *migratism* to analyse the complex connection of racialization and migration in postcolonial Europe. *Migratism* makes it possible to think of migration as an analytical rather than descriptive category and resists equating the ascription of race with the ascription of migration (Tudor 2014, 2018a). Most importantly, the conceptualization of migratism is epistemological – it is not about boxes, but rather about critically examining certain pregiven categories. It is about offering a perspective that allows us to think and do things we were not able to think and do without it. Migratization – the ascription of migration – intersects in complex ways with racialization but is not the same. A failure to differentiate between racialization and

migratization renders Europeans of colour abject in discourses on migration, nation and – paradoxically – racism.

While "the migrant" in the US often is excluded in critical race theory, as you point out, Miriam, and of course the term "immigrant" also has a history of being used as euphemism for white European settlers in the contexts of the Americas (Dunbar-Ortiz 2021), in continental Europe, "race" has often been displaced as something not relevant, as if "migration" was happening here and "race" was happening elsewhere. This type of race-ignorant scholarship has been prevalent in continental Europe and comes with a mixture of conscious denial and unconscious disavowal of European colonial history and its multiple sites of occupation, dispossession and genocide (El-Tayeb 2011).

However, it is also present in the UK, both in earlier scholarship and in more recent academic takes on Brexit. What makes me really uneasy about this is the incapacity to theorize transnational forms of racism and white supremacist nationalisms in Europe in these approaches. As our examples in this conversation show, the interplay of race, migration and belonging to the nation state works differently in continental Europe, the UK and the US. But there are also similarities that can be traced back to the functioning of race in European settler colonialism and slavery (Hall 1991). I think what we both try to do in our work – going beyond the nation state in order to investigate the entanglement of race and migration – helps to address these tensions.

If one of the supra-national similarities of hegemonic conceptualizations of race and migration is the replication and assertion of white supremacy, another in connection to the nation state is the idea that sexual violence is brought in from "elsewhere", from the "outside", what you so aptly call "sexual violence as the language of border control", Miriam (Ticktin 2008). However, of course, in our current situation, approaches that are really interested in tackling gender and sexual violence need to centrally take into account how border regimes make women, lesbians, trans, queer and non-binary people, sex workers or not, vulnerable to violence. It is not migration that is the problem, but nationalism, white supremacy and the highly policed borders that require dangerous border crossings. This insight turns investigating, criticizing and opposing border regimes into a key topic for gender and sexuality studies, especially for strands that are concerned about gender and sexual violence. It is crucial to analyse the border industrial complex as relying on and stabilizing violent gender and sexual regimes *and* at the same time using gender and sexuality as arguments for its necessity. As Schmidt-Camacho (2005, 281) makes clear, to understand "gender violence as a central feature of both nation-formation and capitalist development rather than seeing it as an expression of their failure", means that any approach to gender and sexual violence needs to address the violence of the

nation state and its regulatory regimes, like borders, migration laws, deportations, detention centres etc.

(2) How might the vocabulary of borders and sexuality help us to make sense of the current pandemic?

MT: What you make so beautifully clear, Alyosxa, is that this is not simply a question of sexualized and racialized violence, but that such violence cannot be thought of outside of border regimes; that we need to recognize the inherent violence of borders and nation-states themselves. Borders require forms of dehumanization to allow capital to flow, keeping certain people in place and others out of place. In this sense, we need to look directly at the form of the nation-state to address all these forms of violence.

Turning to nation-states, then, I think we can learn a lot about Covid19 by thinking about how national borders and pathologies are co-constitutive, and how these tend to rely on a language of sexualized invasion or contagion.

From the beginning, COVID-19 was framed as a narrative of war: political leaders regularly made triumphant pronouncements about defeating this enemy, winning this war. As part of this story, there is the necessary Invasive Other – the evil foe who infiltrates or penetrates and must be exterminated so "we" can "win". This language has been used to conflate invasive pathogens and people and to close national borders, mixing up medical and political quarantine.

When we use the language of invasion, we make containment and elimination the goal; but more importantly, the term enables the extension and displacement of the initial enemy, in this case, the virus, onto entire classes of people. This was illustrated by Trump's use of "Chinese virus" or "Wuhan virus", which conflated the idea of invasive pathogens with invasive people, opening the way to violent attacks against people of Asian origin. Indeed, it follows a long pattern of turning people of colour (from Arabs, Muslims, Sikhs to Black folks) into sexualized and racialized terrorists, trying to penetrate the homeland (Puar 2007).

More specifically, we use the idea of "invasive" to describe many things today: from people to pathogens, from plants to ideas (Ticktin 2017a).[2] But once something is described as invasive – even if it is of a very different kind or order – it is often patrolled and controlled through similar technologies, practices and policies, and these overlaps can have deadly consequences. Indeed, once different types of "invasive others" are conflated – through conceptual, moral or aesthetic likeness – practices used against one type of invasive may be used against another. Trump has said of immigrants, "these aren't people, they are animals, and we are taking them out of the country at a level and a rate that has never happened before" (Hirschfeld Davis 2018).

Metaphors not only render certain likenesses thinkable, but also shape and authorize certain kinds of action. Refugees are currently being forcibly detained in the dangerous zones they are fleeing, and immigrants – from children to adults – are being kept in cages.

The language of invasion has a sordid history. In World War II, for example, new technologies of quarantine and delousing for the purposes of hygiene were eventually used to exterminate Jews, who were described as lice, and a threat to the hygiene of the nation (Raffles 2007, 2017). In fact, it does not seem accidental that the chemical ultimately used in the gas chambers – Zkylon B – had previously been used for delousing Mexican immigrants in the US in the 1930s (Anderson 2017).

The point is that when people are likened to parasitic and other forms of threatening life, capable of infection and contamination – there are mandated responses, first and foremost of which is cleansing or elimination.

HIV/AIDS is a case in point. Rather than actually treating the viral infection, people have sought to control HIV/AIDS by regulating the movement of people who are HIV positive into and out of nation-states; in other words, by trying to contain and exclude them. In the US, from 1988 until 2010, there was a restriction on immigration and travel to the United States for non-U.S. citizens living with HIV/AIDS. This conflated certain racialized, sexualized populations with disease; HIV/AIDS became a disease of errant populations, and the nation-state was configured as a victim, trying to fight off unwanted penetration.

Framing the problem as the need to shut the borders of nation-states against invasive others is not only wrong, but deadly.[3] "National quarantines" make no sense, as nation-states are clearly not "safe spaces"; those caged in prisons and detention centres have revealed this far too clearly, as have the videos of the police in the US, lynching black men and women such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and most recently in France, Michel Zecler, instead of protecting them. Using the pandemic to remove the right to asylum – and, under Trump, closing the door to all immigration in the United States – only serves a white-supremacist neoliberal agenda that is deepening inequality and literally killing people, not saving them.

Understanding this virus requires that we rethink taken-for-granted political categories. While we may still need forms of medical isolation or quarantine, these cannot map onto existing political borders. Most importantly, viruses do not invade. They are not living entities; they are just bits of information that our cells bring to life (Napier 2020). And viruses are already an integral part of our body-worlds. Indeed, they have been a driving force in the evolution of the species: a non-negligible percentage of human DNA comes from viral infections (Brives 2020). Neoliberal regimes that defund health care, practices of deforestation, and the domination of agribusiness are key practices that make us differently and unequally susceptible to

already circulating virus variants; but these are part of racial capitalism, which go well beyond nation-states (Adams 2020; Napier 2020; Wallace 2016).

Queer and feminist theory have led the way to understandings of the body as embedded in and part of larger ecologies, as inseparable from them. These theories challenge the idea of independent liberal selves. As Julie Livingston (2020) writes, "The body is an act of exchange and a site of vulnerability in a complex and more-than-human world". It is, as she so aptly notes, a tentacular relationship, where the air we breathe and exhale eventually gets inhaled by someone else, somewhere else; where the water that goes through our bodies to keep us alive may next nourish a farmer's field. Or, as Mel Chen notes (2020), where the smoky air, from the climate-change-enhanced wildfires of California, gets inhaled by an unmasked, infected pedestrian, creating a doubly potent inhalant for the next passerby. We are interconnected, co-constituted.

Recognizing that we live in a connected world is the only way to survive today: we are in a life and death embrace with each other that no one can wriggle out of. This is a not a dystopic statement; if we do recognize this, we might not only survive, but eventually might flourish in much more substantive ways than what our extractive and exploitative racial capitalist system currently allows. Indeed, we must take advantage of the fact that through COVID-19 our connections have been rendered visible in a way that is impossible to ignore. This goes back to your call for an anti-nationalist epistemology, Alyosxa.

AT: I think we can draw connections here to the situation in Europe and the question who has, who loses and who never had proper citizenship rights and with it, sexual and gendered rights – be that in a nation state or in "Europe". In spring 2020, when the first COVID wave hit Western Europe, charter flights from Romania brought thousands of workers (Erizanu 2020), both white Romanians and Romanian Roma, to the UK and Germany as seasonal workers.[4] Images of big crowds of people waiting at the airports show the absolute lack of protection. These people are seasonal, cheap workers, staying in mass accommodation, and in the British case after Brexit, are not even allowed to settle in the UK – the post-Brexit point system for preventing immigration of so called "low skilled" workers already has a built-in potential for short-term, exploitative work conditions (Walsh 2020). It is a disposable migrant workforce with people coming from already vulnerable and precarious situations.[5]

It is not surprising that in Germany in April 2020 in a meat plant more than 400 Romanian workers tested positive for Covid-19 (SWR aktuell 2020). These workers are not even employed by the factory; they work for subcontractors, earn only a few Euros per hour, work 260 hours a month, mostly in night shifts, share mass accommodation, will be transported back to Romania

after a few months and pay thousands of their hard-earned income to the agencies that act as brokers. The ones who tested positive were quarantined. Many Germans who commented on social media sites regard the migrants as being the ones who bring contagion to the region, who don't "understand" social distancing and "misbehave" in public. They were constructed as the "perverts", compared to the normative Germans sheltering in their households with their families.

As I want to stress, this example sheds light on both the normativity and privilege of the "household" and on uncomplicated belonging to the nation (Grewal et al. 2020): there is a mismatch between the confinement in mass accommodation – that cannot be described in terms other than "labour camps" – vs. the expectation that the Romanians practice social distancing (among each other) in public. Gender and sexuality come in through the interconnection of the family and the nation state. Both depend highly on normative gender and sexuality (Manalansan 2006; Luibheid 2008). And as you also point out, Miriam, historically in the US, this becomes very clear in kinship under slavery and settler colonialism: the family that remains together as a household is a privilege of white settlers/slaveholders (Spillers 1987; Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 2013). Children being separated from their parents at borders in the US under Trump underlines the continuation of these practices (Batra Kashyap 2019).

As we can see in the example of the migrant workers, mass accommodation and the lack of privacy are markers of already existing precariousness. Both shelter in place – having a private place – and being confined with chosen loved ones is a privilege. Migrants worldwide are being exposed to danger and death[6], during the crisis but not only then. This is why no-border movements are so important. Moreover, even if borders can be crossed legally for work migration, the normalization of the idea that a migrant (worker) has fewer rights than a citizen and can be "sent back" any time as they "don't belong" needs constant political and epistemological pushback. It is the precarious crossings, precarious movements, precarious exclusions from uncomplicated belonging that put people in danger. Interestingly, similar to anti-trafficking arguments, many voices that criticized the unbearable and exploitative situation of these seasonal workers that became evident during the first COVID wave, aim to restrict migration and they often come from a place that opposes migration and calls for well-paid jobs for the local population "instead", but mask this with opposition to the exploitative conditions (Mai 2018).[7] Critical scholarship therefore cannot only call for closing these facilities down – as they are often the only chance for many people to work abroad and earn the money they need to sustain themselves and their loved ones – but needs a broader analysis of risk, exploitation, nationalism, border regimes and consumerist privilege and expectations.

Our examples underline what intersectionality as an epistemology teaches us: That racialization and migratization multiply the danger that comes with sexism, misogyny and queer- and transphobia – they not only add but make it into a specific vulnerability. In the household, women, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming people are subjected to domestic violence. In the labour camp, detention centre, refugee camp or other precarious migration situations, there are also women, queer, trans and gender-nonconforming people who are subject to the violence of their employers, superiors, co-workers, of guards, border controls, police and the hostile dominant society.

In the Global North, the social crisis provoked by the pandemic is based on narrow understandings of the household, the family and good citizenship, and this feeds into a context where not only sexual and gendered rights are being undermined (Breslow 2020) but also critical knowledge production is being attacked. In the US, the government under Trump attempted to erase at a moment of a pandemic that specifically kills people affected by anti-Black racism (Pilkington 2020) vital transgender civil rights protections in health care (Sanger-Katz and Weiland 2020). This was not only an attack on trans people in general but trans people in the Black community in particular as you also point out, Miriam. In the UK, after years of transphobic media debates during the process of a public consultation on the changes to the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) (Mermaids 2020), the government in June 2020 announced to ignore the results of the consultation that are overwhelmingly pro-trans and cited "protecting women" as the reason (Milton 2020; Tudor 2020b).[8] Moreover, during this exceptional situation of a global pandemic that hit both the US and the UK in particularly devastating ways, making them into two of the countries with the highest casualties compared to their population numbers – a fact that is certainly connected to the countries' right-wing governments – critical race studies were attacked in both contexts. In the US, the government published in September 2020 under the misleading title "Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping"[9] an order to prevent critical teaching about white and male privilege and institutional racism and sexism. In the UK in October 2020, the Tory Minister for Equalities Kemi Badenoch denounced "critical race theory" (naming the term for the first time in the House of Commons chamber) and argued in a debate on Black History Month that schools teaching on "white privilege as an uncontested fact" were breaking the law (Murray 2020).

I think of anti-nationalist epistemology as one of the key concerns of studying sexuality and borders – the possibility and necessity to think beyond the paradigm of the nation state. Fields of knowledge production like gender studies, critical race theory and attempts to decolonize the curriculum, indeed are by definition not projects of nationalist respectability (Tudor 2021). And this refusal of nationalist respectability is where the risk

lies. We have seen in times of right-wing imposed austerity and crisis that specifically the social sciences and humanities are under threat, in the UK for example the proposed government rescue packages for struggling universities came with conditions: 1. "[S]uch rescue packages would see the government exerting more control over what was taught and how money was spent"; 2. "Universities would be expected to end courses seen as being of 'low value', with an emphasis on either high-quality research or courses with good job prospects"; 3. "[A]ny funding for student unions should be for the 'wider student population rather than subsidising niche activism'" (Coughlan 2020).

What is happening is that in a moment of crisis governments in the UK, the US, Hungary and Romania for example attempt to severely diminish academic freedom and also queer and trans rights. What this means in the UK is first, that Tory governments over decades have created a situation in which universities struggle financially and now they offer a buyout that gives the government control over what would be taught. Second, it is a threat and opens the possibility to cut back the arts and humanities and unwanted research and teaching fields like gender studies under the made up argumentation that they are "low value" or not "high-quality research". And third, the term "niche activism" in this context is a direct threat towards student unions and societies representing gendered, sexual and racialized minorities. In short, when looking at this "offer" the UK government made in a moment of crisis, we are looking in the face of one of the many endings of democracy.

(3) How might we use this extreme moment of right-wing politics and violence to both critique and imagine otherwise?

MT. If, as you so compellingly write, Alyosxa, the squashing of all forms of knowledge that challenge nationalist ideologies points to an ending of democracy, I want to suggest that it also presents an opening – or a series of openings – onto new political formations.

For instance, in this time of Covid19, to stay healthy, people are forging new egalitarian forms of connection well beyond the nation-state. But these end-times are opening the way to new forms of "home" and solidarity as well. I want to first talk about Covid19, and then turn to the idea of abolitionist sanctuary, which can also be thought of as a new set of queer-inspired egalitarian spaces.

I have argued elsewhere that COVID-19 has enhanced experiments in what I will call a burgeoning *feminist commons* (Ticktin 2020).[10] Such formations not only foreground new, horizontal forms of sociality but insist that these are the only way to survive. That is, they acknowledge our porousness,

accepting that we must fight for the well-being of everyone, if we are to be healthy ourselves.

I will briefly mention one example of that here: the intimate formations that some have called "pods", others "bubbles". People are forging intimate connections with others who are not part of their immediate or nuclear families and yet with whom they may not have any previous or deep emotional ties. That is, these are neither the heteronormative households, nor the form of mass accommodation that you mentioned earlier, Alyosxa. They break this binary, and create something else in between. But in quarantine times, these can function as life-or-death commitments. Not dissimilar to the history of the "families we choose" (Weston 1997), and the ways queer folks have created forms of kinship based on affinity or need, not on blood or biology, COVID has generated the need for new relationships with friends, comrades, neighbors, coparents, lovers and ex-lovers – relationships that require deeper trust and sharing in new, respectful ways that limit exposure to risk, while still enabling sociality (Chang 2020; Kohn 2020).

To be sure, pods are not inherently progressive formations; they respond to the retreat of the state – and to the loss of the publics that feed institutions such as public schools – and sometimes, they respond by further privatizing resources, rather than rendering them part of a commons. The "parents pods" forming among the wealthy to school their kids are a case in point (Moyer 2020). Similarly, enforced forms of togetherness during COVID-19 have resulted in increased rates of domestic violence (Taub 2020). These are the counterpart to the commons-pods. But here, I focus on the potential of pods to undermine – rather than further deepen – inequality.

Choosing quarantine pod-mates can be determined by proximity and location, shared need or circumstance (i.e. kids playing together, shared outdoor space, shared rent), or political or other forms of queer or extended kinship. Pods enable and require different affective structures. Whether or not pod-mates love or even like each other, they must agree to live by consensus: is a certain action okay with everyone in the pod? All of this must be constantly discussed, debated, revealed, agreed upon – conflict is always on the horizon. Such practices of intimate sociality based on shared risk require different ways of inhabiting and sharing space and resources.

Living in communal arrangements is in itself not new: there are communes, ecovillages and cohousing arrangements. But quarantine pods may not actually live together; they are formed to share a different type of vulnerability, namely, exposure to one another in times of sickness. They are grounded on a different sense of risk and trust: if one is not open, honest and respectful, one could be putting one's pod at risk of sickness, long-term disability, or death. Sharing and living with the risk of contagious illness is also not new – queer communities pioneered various models during the first outbreaks of HIV/AIDS in the 1970s and 80s. To be sure,

there are differences: while HIV is less contagious, it is lethal when untreated; COVID-19 is more contagious, but much less lethal. This broadens the circle of concern enormously, even as it dampens the stakes, making pods a commoning practice that has the potential to become very widespread.

Turning to my second example of experiments in re-imagining these endtimes, I want to return to an important point you made earlier, Alyosxa, which is that gender and sexuality multiply the danger of migration and/or racialization; as you said, they not only add but make it into a specific vulnerability. What if we took your insight and suggested that this specific vulnerability offers a location from which to create a new set of political possibilities?

For instance, feminist, queer and trans POC have been at the forefront of a new movement that brings immigrant and black lives together in the struggle for what is being called "abolitionist sanctuary" (Paik 2020), or "expanded sanctuary". That is, they are bringing together the movements for migrant justice and racial justice, which, as we already discussed, rarely explicitly join together, finding ways to combine their different goals and temporalities, and ultimately imagining a queer space of home that challenges the nation. Indeed, we could say this is a scaled up version of the pods.

If abolitionism - the driving philosophy of #BLM – is about a long-term politics of care that changes subjectivities, communities, and infrastructures, sanctuary is often seen as a mechanism of immediate protection; of shelter from the law and from deportation. But sanctuary is also a politico-legal technology and a form of architecture that challenges nation-state borders by creating spaces inside the nation-state not subject to its laws.

In the US, the campaign for *expanded sanctuary* (or abolitionist sanctuary) challenges the ways that sanctuary supports immigrants at the expense of others.[11] It asks how spaces of solidarity with undocumented people can also address the broader challenges of inequality in American cities, which include poverty, police violence and mass incarceration, and the targeted murders of queer and trans people.

This movement suggests that we need sanctuary until there is no separation between being inside a space of sanctuary, and outside of it (Ticktin 2017b); indeed, until we have replaced our current violent reality with the abolitionist vision of an egalitarian, respectful spatial and political order that is based on equal access and sharing of the commons for everyone. This challenges the "household" as the basis of any liberatory political formation.

Once again, it is not accidental that Black, Latinx, queer and trans communities have been at the forefront of these movements, bringing together racial and immigrant justice with justice for LGBT folks, and for all those who are discriminated against. Those who are subject to the various, intersecting oppressions – those situated at this specific point of vulnerabilitycan see where such points of oppression meet and strike hardest. Together,

they are helping to create new queer, anti-national spaces of care and flourishing.

AT. Community care as a response to heightened exposure is also what Stella Nyanzi (2013) compellingly analyzes. Thinking together colonialism, Ugandan postcolonial nationalism and queer- and transphobia, in her article on HIV/AIDS prevention in post-conflict Uganda, Nyanzi (2013) shows how sexual and gendered minorities and refugees are often excluded from official prevention programmes. Especially those in displacement are hit by the overlapping regimes of sexual morality, state violence and the heightened exposure to gender and sexual violence, illness and death. Nyanzi (2013, 450) remarks that the refugee-run self-organized support group *Les Saints* that aims to fill the gap the official sexual health providers leave, uses *wacheche* as a common denominator, which is according to her "a colloquial label for sex workers and same-sex-loving or gender non-conforming people in Uganda". Even if the term is colloquially not necessarily used as critical of the state and its borders, Nyanzi certainly introduces it in that way in her knowledge production.

Building on Nyanzi's approach, I suggest extracting a political and epistemological claim for decolonized and transnational trans/gender studies and for countering anti-immigration, anti-sex-work and transphobic argumentations. Let's imagine the term "wacheche" would come to have an international career like political and identity-based concepts like "lesbian" and "trans", or epistemological and political traditions of thought like "queer" with origins in the US. What would *wacheche theory* help us to understand about the entanglement of non-normative genders and sexualities and their connection to racialization and migrant status, about the violence of colonialism *and* (decolonial or Western) nationalism alike? Of course, I am not making the point on wacheche studies in order to argue we should replace "queer", "lesbian" or "trans" with "wacheche", but in order to remind us of the traveling or non-traveling of these terms and the variability of the dominant meaning that is attached to them, as also Zethu Matebeni and Thabo Msibi (2015) underline.

In Spring 2020, we could see the drama of national time unfold: every nation state started counting from their own first COVID cases and ignored the radical interconnection of what was evolving. I am struck by the fact of how the national has become, often even in critical analysis, the unquestioned paradigm. What happens in other countries does not seem real to most people. It was mostly migrant and diasporic subjects who have been operating in *non*-national time, seeing this coming from following transnational analysis. Especially in the US, it is my impression, "the transnational" only becomes visible to scholars and activists when it enters the national.

It becomes evident that racism – and what I theorize elsewhere as "migratism" (Tudor 2018a) – both create populations that are not under the

protection of the nation state in the crisis. And have not been all along, as shown in the exposure of migrant workers, and also in the fact that in the UK for example, it is mostly Black and ethnic minorities who die of COVID, both in the regular population and among health care staff, as Yasmin Gunaratnam (2020) points out. We must take this seriously in our responses not only to COVID, but to the current situation in general. But of course, people who have been excluded from the nation state in so many ways are not sitting around and waiting for it to protect them. This is why turning this around, turning oppression into resistance through community care, as you say, Miriam, creating "new queer, anti-national spaces of care", is so important.

Notes

1. The following two paragraphs were first published as blog post for *Feminist Review* (Tudor 2018b). In the version here they are extended and updated in order to make a broader point on the state of European migration research.
2. The ideas about "invasive others" in this paragraph and the next were initially published in my special issue, *Invasive Others*, and reworked in the Op-Ed with Suzette Brooks Masters, "Coronavirus Cannot become an Excuse to label Groups of People Invasive" (2020), https://immigrationimpact.com/2020/03/20/coronavirus-racism/#.YC4S4mgzaUk. The ideas are updated and revised here.
3. I first discussed borders in relation to Covid19, in "No Borders in the Time of Covid-19" in *American Anthropologist*, Public Anthropologies Series on Covid-19, July 2, 2020. http://www.americananthropologist.org/2020/07/02/no-borders-in-the-time-of-covid-19/. The paragraph and the next take up these ideas in reworked forms.
4. An earlier version of these thoughts (Tudor 2020a) was published in the blog series *Confronting the Household* (Grewal et al 2020) for the *Feminist Review Blog* and at the panel series *Under the Blacklight: The Intersectional Vulnerabilities that COVID Lays Bare* hosted by Kim Crenshaw: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoFGUrkGbmo&t=606s&fbclid=IwAR0qm4AEkoXUBMjsHQxlC2MHp29zFy1g-cWgs3KjgfsC_JnF_FlCHcwTIPs0 [December 12, 2020].
5. As Roma have been subject to discrimination and violence for centuries and therefore mostly live under the most precarious conditions in Romania (Oprea 2012; Tudor 2017; Parvulescu and Boatcă 2020), it is very likely that a high proportion of Romanian migrant workers are Roma, and are also marginalized within the group of Romanian labour migrants (Yıldız and De Genova 2018).
6. See for example reports of migrant workers in India trapped in lockdown (Pandey 2020).
7. See for example the Facebook discussion on the site of a local newspaper that reported on the COVID cases among the seasonal workers in the meat plant: https://www.facebook.com/badischeneuestenachrichten/posts/1421476554727451 [December 1, 2020].
8. Some of the thoughts in the next paragraphs were first conceptualized in my discussion of transphobia in the UK during the BLM protests (Tudor 2020b).

9. https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-combating-race-sex-stereotyping/ [December 12, 2020].
10. In the next 3 paragraphs, I take up one part of the argument from my short piece, updated for the purpose of the conversation. "Building a Feminist Commons in the Time of Covid19" *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* symposium, "Feminists Theorize Covid-19" October 2020. http://signsjournal.org/covid/ticktin/.
11. What I write is informed by a workshop I co-organized in 2018 on "Expanded Sanctuary" with academics, community partners, and #BLM, queer and immigrant activists, at the New School. Organizations leading the way for expanded sanctuary include Mijente, the Black Youth Project or BYP100, and Baji (Black Alliance for Just Immigration).

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