

# RACISM IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

## **Culture and Politics / Politics and Culture**

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Racism in Metropolitan Areas

Edited by **Rik Pinxten** and **Ellen Preckler**

# RACISM IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

Edited by  
Rik Pinxten and Ellen Preckler



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# INTRODUCTION: RACISM IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

Rik Pinxten and Ellen Preckler



After the terrible annihilation of peoples because of their so-called racial features in the Second World War, the United Nations Organization was founded to work on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The basic creed of this attempt at worldwide negotiation and interaction in a common forum was not so much 'no more war', but rather 'human rights and human dignity for all'. One could indeed say that the UN's purpose is to prevent and eventually to remedy violations of basic rights of anyone by combating structural humiliation, exclusion and enslavement. The establishment of such an organisation and the implementation of the Declaration of Human Rights in actual policies throughout the world have never been attempted on such a large scale in the history of humankind. Over the past five decades, we have witnessed an increase not only in knowledge, but also in behavioural patterns accordant with Human Rights: an unprecedented historical milestone. But not all is well. A political discourse that incites exclusion and hatred for those who are seen as different is unfortunately gaining in appeal, most notably in affluent and developed countries, where certain groups are excluded from the benefits and privileges of mainstream society because of their ethnic, racial or religious identity. Two decades ago it would have been utterly impossible to publicly defend the atrocities of the Holocaust or any other racist policies. Today, however, certain political parties actively support such opinions by drawing upon racist discourses (often disguised as cultural fundamentalist proposals) which are finding massive appeal in the older Western democratic societies (see Ford, this volume). Racism is back, and antiracism is no longer accepted as an argument that suffices in itself.

Our first international conference held on these issues highlighted the topic of new manifestations of racism in Europe (Evens, 2002). The second international conference, held at Ghent University focused on the worldwide

context of large cities and racism. One obvious reason for this is that nowadays about half of the entire human population resides in cities and urban areas, thus accelerating the growth of the metropolis. This reality led us to investigate whether this form of settlement would show universal features of (new) exclusion of groups that differ from the nationalistic or territorial ethnic basis for racism of the past. In what sense does the larger city induce forms of collaboration or of structural exclusion that would be typical in some sense for the anonymous, necessarily multicultural and intrinsically dynamic context of the large city? This was the focus of the second conference from which the present volume emanates.

The format of the conference differed from what is commonly followed in academia. As racism is a social, cultural and political problem, and not a merely scientific topic, we have attempted to involve a series of relevant agents in dialogue with each other. Scientists, politicians, cultural brokers, captains of industry and media people were engaged in a constant forum of discussion during the conference.

The book expresses a similar mix of voices and competencies. Unfortunately, not all of the speakers were able to submit a written contribution. Racism is on the agenda of all these agents in contemporary society and our aim was to present an ongoing dialogue in this book. Moreover, we remain mindful that a printed dialogue is not really comparable with the dynamism of the real event.

Taking into consideration the focus of this publication, we begin the book with a short contribution by the chairman of a social democratic party with government responsibility in Belgium (Janssens, this volume). We end this part with the perspective on policies against racism at the European level by a member of the European Parliament who has a distinguished reputation on these issues (Ford, this volume).

The present introduction and the synthetic conclusions and propositions by Laura Nader in the final chapter thus encapsulate a set of contributions that is deliberately varied as a result of the particular professional interests of the authors. We would like to express our gratitude to the participating scholars, but even more so to the people 'from the field' for their willingness to participate in this endeavour.

The general structure of the book divides the contributions into two categories: those that discuss ways of empowerment and those that detail processes of disempowerment. Duster gives a detailed analysis of how employment policies in larger American cities can offer opportunities or keep racially identified youth away from the job market. Seward examines recent attempts to deal with surging racism in British cities. His involvement in this field is insightful in delineating a series of potentially effective measures. Hervik on the other hand, stems from a double background: that of academia and of policy-making institutes. He focuses on the situation in Denmark and proposes to negotiate with the people about limits of tolerance. Three authors then offer different perspectives on the questions of racism in India's caste society.



In the second part we present a set of authors highlighting cases of empowerment. Again we drew specialists from academia (e.g., Marx, Gingrich) and from the field. In the latter group journalists (Peirs) as well policy makers (Leman) offer their expertise.

Finally, we want to thank sponsors who enabled the symposium or the preparation of the book: the Evens Foundation, the Triodos Bank and the Foundation for Scientific Research of Flanders.

## Reference

Evens Foundation. 2002. *Europe's New Racism?* Oxford: Berghahn Books.



# PART ONE

## DISEMPOWERING THROUGH RACISM

# HOW A DREAM WAS SHATTERED

Patrick Janssens



At a symposium on racism in metropolitan areas at one of our distinguished universities, a group of eminent international speakers were giving lectures. I wanted to address them as common inhabitants of the city. Politicologists, anthropologists and sociologists have undoubtedly offered important contributions to the analysis of a phenomenon that is spreading like a cancer throughout our cities. Strangely enough, their analyses often do not coincide with the daily practice of the urban citizens who experience racism, or – and this is probably more important – who generate racism. I've always stated that it is easy to be an antiracist in the green suburbs. The highly literate children of the baby-boom generation – the progressive legacy of the 1960s – have settled there. From their suburban dwellings, they write with indignation about the growing intolerance in the city. It is from there – behind their desks with a view of the green lawn outside their doors – that they brood on terms such as 'inequality', 'bad neighbourhoods' or 'multicultural life' and wag their fingers at the 'scared white man'.

I wanted to do something slightly different. I declined the role of the sociologist addressing his fellow sociologists. The introduction I wanted to give would deal with the daily experience of people in the city. It was the experience, moreover, of my parents. They were two hard-working citizens, who at the end of the 1950s had had a dream. They wanted to open a butcher's shop; much like my father's father had done before him: in a nice neighbourhood, a popular area, where people loved to eat a good piece of meat. My parents opened their butcher shop in 1958 in *het Zuidkwartier*, the South Quarter of Antwerp. This area is part of the nineteenth-century extension of what is now the region of Belgium with the most important economic expansion rates. Antwerp is one of the most successful European harbours, situated on the shores of the river Schelde. Being once one of the largest towns in Europe, it is now a mere modest city of approximately half a million people. The South Quarter, where my parents ran their shop, is situated near the outskirts of the town. At that time,

it had an outdoor swimming pool that drew massive crowds from the city. On one of the inbounds to the city there was a decent shopping street, right around the corner from my parents' business. The future looked bright. It would be hard work, but this was a neighbourhood with potential. The shop was a success. My parents knew that a good butcher's shop would prosper and bring home a good bit of money. They were confident that they, in time, would sell their shop at a profit. That money would be a nice supplement to their pension. The shop was in that regard their personal savings for retirement. People would always eat meat, so all's well that ends well. They lived through the 'golden sixties' and its optimism. The belief in progress was never as high as then, the economy was booming. In fact, there was so much work available that people were invited to Belgium to fill all the vacant jobs. First came the Italians and Spaniards, they worked in the coalmines in the province of Limburg. Then Turkish and Moroccan people came over. There was plenty of work on the docks of the Antwerp harbour, and the large infrastructural works, like the subway in Antwerp, needed unskilled labourers. These people had to set up residency somewhere. The South Quarter was an appropriate area for them. Old bourgeois houses from the 1900s went out of fashion in the 1960s – they were too big for the smaller average families of that time, and the houses were too costly to heat after the oil crises of the 1970s. Local people, who could afford to, left the neighbourhood. Only the smaller 'blue-collar worker' houses in the quarter were still inhabited by locals. The outdoor swimming pool degenerated and was replaced by high-rise apartment buildings, looking out on the network of highways at the border of the city. The buzz of bizz (business) in the shopping street around the corner vanished or was replaced by shops with foreign signatures.

Immigrants moved into the neighbourhood. The large bourgeois houses were appropriate for the larger immigrant families. Moreover, they were very cheap, and, with minor costs for renovation, they were habitable. A satellite dish connected these nineteenth-century houses with the country of origin of the new occupants. My parents began to worry. All these new inhabitants turned to the Turkish or Moroccan butcher's to buy their meat. They occasionally came into my parents' shop, but only to buy a small jar of mayonnaise. The neighbourhood started to lose its appeal. Some houses were left empty. Others became ruins. My parents' dream was shattered, loudly and abruptly. Their retirement trust was jeopardised. When they finally sold their shop in 1998, they were pleased to have been able to sell the house at all. The profit they had hoped for was out of the question.

My parents' story is the story of those who 'stayed behind'. It is one that has seldom been told – unfortunately, because it is precisely this group of people that was prone to the first signs of racist urges. This group is susceptible to the extreme right discourse. Radical right groups who seized their chance to construct an image as 'protectors of common people' fuelled their fears and frustrations. Meanwhile, the leftist intellectuals in green suburbia pushed those 'who remained behind' deeper into their misery by portraying them as intolerant scum.

A similar dynamic can be found in the high-rise, blue-collar worker apartment buildings in Kiel, another nineteenth-century neighbourhood on the outskirts of Antwerp. The situation there was even worse. Kiel was more distinctively a 'blue collar' neighbourhood than the South Quarter. The city council invested large sums in housing projects here during the 1950s. In keeping with the times, the majority of housing problems in Kiel were solved vertically, the housing towers followed the recipe of modernist architects. Antwerp actually did a brilliant job. Le Corbusier had created a master plan for the neighbourhood on the left bank of the river. A pupil of his, Renaat Braem, did the same for the settlements of Kiel.

Braem was a visionary architect, who wanted to achieve social equality and social justice with bricks and concrete. A socialist by conviction, he was determined to make the blue-collar workers happy by means of a new vision of urban development. Without a doubt, the towers he constructed in Kiel were an example of modernist high-rise buildings. The families who settled in were more than satisfied. They had modern and comfortable flats, with a magnificent view of the town. The apartments were well situated and had easy access to public transport. For most of the inhabitants, these flats in Kiel were appreciated as a token of upward social mobility. They experienced progress.

Almost half a century later, however, things have changed for the worse. The buildings are ageing, and with them the once young occupants grow old. Children have left home, and because the residents have less family to take care of, their rent has increased; but not the quality of the building. At the same time new residents have moved in – immigrants. And the policy of the city council has changed; no more political favouritism determining who gets what type of flat. Those who acquired a flat through this practice were asked to move out, in favour of the immigrants. And so the locals said: 'We have to go, and they ...' Since then the us–them contrast is undermining social relationships in the high-rise buildings, just as time has started to gnaw away at the concrete. What was then a token of upward social mobility, is now turning into social degradation for those who remain behind.

As for me, this context is determinant for the problem of racism. A danger is that the care and attention for the locals who stay behind could be interpreted as a rejection of the problem of foreign newcomers. Concern for the local people can also – with or without bad intentions – be confused with the monocultural view of the extreme right. I refuse to become entangled in these sorts of arguments. As a politician, and as a socialist, it is my wish to defend a society of equal opportunities for everyone, newcomers as well as locals who stayed behind. Our story must be grounded in reality, not simply in a theoretical framework, and in a willingness to listen to all those concerned, while respecting their particular problems. Only then shall we be able to work towards the recognition of the European metropolitan area as a radically new environment, with new challenges and in need of yet unseen solutions. It is in this 'new city' that I wish to live.



# EXPLAINING INCREASED RACIAL CONFLICT IN POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES: THE CREATION OF SYSTEMIC 'COMPETITIVE' YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Troy Duster



When in a Eurobarometer survey of attitudes in 1988, respondents were asked, 'When you think about people of another race, whom do you think of?', respondents in all the fifteen except France and Britain cited black people in first place, indicating a perception of the greatest difference. The French cited 'Arabs' first and the British 'Indians'. When asked a similar question about people of another nationality, the French indicated a preoccupation with North Africans, the Germans with the Turks, and the British with Asians. A survey nine years later (Eurobarometer 1997) noted a lack of embarrassment on the part of 33 percent of respondents who said they were 'very racist' or 'quite racist'. It concluded that self-reported racism was growing in direct proportion to dissatisfaction with life circumstances, fear of unemployment, etc.

Of fifteen countries, the eight with the highest percentages of respondents classifying themselves as *very racist* or *quite racist* were: Belgium, 55 percent; France (48); Denmark (43); Austria (42); Germany (34); U.K. (32); Netherlands (31); and Italy (30) (Banton 1999: 6).

Rob Witte (1995) tried to explain it this way:

What seems to be true for all groups victimized by racist violence is that in furious and highly publicized debates on asylum and migration policies, they are or were portrayed as the main representatives of people under discussion. Such public and political debates occurred, for instance, in Britain during the late 1960s and the 1970s, in France during the early 1970s, the early 1980s and in the early 1990s, in the Netherlands during the early 1980s and especially in the early 1990s, and in Germany during the early 1990s. (Witte 1995: 8)



Three massive social-economic developments have converged over the last three decades to provide the context for the emergence of increased racial and ethnic tensions and conflict that are now being experienced in postindustrial societies, most especially in Western Europe. It is the convergence and integration of these forces that are the necessary backdrop to understanding before we can move to a meaningful discussion of the sources of inter-group conflict. In order, these three forces are: (1) deindustrialisation, the movement of capital investment across national boundaries to newly industrialising sites, and the concomitant shift to tertiary economies; (2) the movement of labour across national boundaries from less-developed nations to postindustrial societies, and the concomitant 'hour-glassing' of the social stratification system of tertiary economies; and finally (3) the creation of an endemic and systemic pool of high youth unemployment.

As national borders are made porous by the movement of cheap labour, we are witnessing a shifting tension between the local resident workforces in postindustrial societies, and the migrants and sojourners who come to take the lower-paying jobs. Many of these migrants and sojourners are from nations in which there are not only linguistic, cultural and religious differences (from the host country), but also phenotypically marked racial and ethnic differences. The combination of ethnic and racial differentiation, of the new workers, alongside high rates of unemployment and a sense of 'displacement' by local resident workers, produces a volatile situation.

While the United States has witnessed this problem for a full century, with rural to urban and Southern to Northern migration (of poorer blacks and Latinos), and the consequent racial and ethnic tensions and violence, this has been a relatively recent phenomenon in Western Europe. When it happens, it often catches the locals by surprise. For example, in several towns in the southeastern area of Spain in early 2000, there were three days of rioting in areas overwhelmed by mobs of residents chasing Moroccan and other African immigrants through the streets, shouting racist slogans, and vandalising the shops and cars of foreign labourers. In response, the Foreign Minister, Abel Matutes, said on state radio: 'We must think about how we need to change in a pluralist society, where every day we will need more immigrants to take our country forward.' Spain is hardly a pluralist society by most measures. Instead, the country has mainly exported its people for centuries, first to the new American colonies, and later to Northern Europe. But this trend was reversed during the last two decades, when Spain joined the European Union and the economy began to prosper. The flatlands around Almeria, just east of Malaga, have grown rich from intensive and successful agriculture, now able to supply Europe with fruits and vegetables during the winter. Even today, only 2 percent of Spain's population is foreign-born. However, a floating population estimated as high as 100,000 migrant labourers, mostly Moroccan, harvest olives and oranges around Andalusia, or pick strawberries and tomatoes. They cross the Mediterranean in shabby boats to earn the equivalent of \$25 per day. And while this is low for Europe, it is more than four times what farm labourers earn in Morocco. In the villages of Almeria, where the core of the racist violence was

focused, 25 percent of the people living there are poor foreign migrant workers. This is the highest concentration of such workers anywhere in Spain, and the majority live in hovels without light or running water.

Germany has had a much longer history of migrant labour, or guest workers. When Turkish workers began arriving in Germany in the 1960s, it was widely believed that they would be sojourners. Scores of thousands remained as 'guest workers' and a second generation has now settled into several major metropolitan areas. However, a combination of factors, including the uniting of East and West Germany, the movement of labour into Germany from many other parts of Europe, and the unprecedented construction boom in Berlin during the last decade has fuelled a new level of interethnic and interracial tensions.

In Germany, since September, 1991, in Hoyersweda (ex-East Germany) there has been a sharp increase in attacks against immigrants from Central Europe, as well as against Turkish and Moroccan immigrant workers: according to *Verfassungsschutz* (State security police) there were 270 racist actions in 1990 and 1483 racist actions in 1991. That number sharply increased to 2286 in 1992, and of this total 696 were acts of violent destruction of property, 598 attacks on people, 701 criminal fires and bomb attacks, and 17 murders. (Wieviorka, 1996: 340)

## A Larger Context for Youth Unemployment

In both academic and policy circles, there is a notable, even remarkable consensus about the nature of the great economic and social transformation of Western industrialised societies over the last quarter century. In particular, there is general agreement that the important and decisive shift from predominantly industrial to mainly service economies has been accompanied by select and patterned 'dislocations' that are true for all nations which have a declining manufacturing sector. Perhaps most significantly, without regard to ethnic or cultural variation, what is common to declining secondary-sector economies is the attendant sharp increase in youth unemployment.<sup>1</sup>

In Australia, for example, while there has been a growth in employment overall and for adults in the last few decades, for youth (aged 19–24) there has actually been a substantial loss of jobs. Indeed, over one-third of the jobs available to teenagers in the 1960s in Australia disappeared by the middle of the 1980s (Polk and Tait 1990).

Economists, sociologists, public policy analysts and social demographers are in general agreement on these basic facts, but there are fierce disagreements about the implications of these developments for policy and the lessons that rising youth unemployment provide about the changes in national economies. All postindustrialising societies share this relatively new development but, as Tolstoy told us, 'each family [substitute 'nation'] is unhappy in its own way'. Local outbreaks of racial and ethnic violence represent decidedly particularistic narratives of what is an increasingly common phenomenon.

Those analysts who are inclined to see cycles express a strong faith that 'the crisis' of youth unemployment will work itself out. They advise that economies

should continue along the same general path as had been their course in the heyday of industrial-sector domination. Others see more structural change, and thus advise strong readjustments in state policy to limit the haemorrhaging of capital and/or the underwriting of new methods to generate employment. Still others have suggested explicit planning to better articulate schooling with work. In any event, comparative studies across nations and regions hold out the promise of increasing our insights about the larger picture that youth face in the new service economies. There are two quite distinct approaches to this matter of comparative youth unemployment. First, there is the strategy of comparing whole societies – for example, France with Germany, the U.S.A. with Japan, or Australia with England – regarding the fate of youth. These comparisons are made with regard to rates of youth unemployment, or with regard to public policy on employment and employment training. As Osterman (1995) points out, this allows us to see how youth in general are doing in different settings, and how large societal issues and policies (or a lack thereof) relate to the transition from school to work. The other strategy involves comparing the fate of particular segments of the youth population within the same society, e.g., youth from the dominant society with youth from immigrant groups, from ethnic, or racial and cultural minorities.

There is a major methodological problem in studying youth unemployment by cross-national comparisons of the status of racial and ethnic populations. The Nuremburg injunctions against identifying citizens by race mean that many nations just do not keep statistics by race and ethnicity, or they have rejected a basis for collecting such data. Several researchers have come up against this barrier when trying to do comparative work in Europe. Gordon (1992) notes how Italy has very poor record keeping by race and ethnicity, Witte (1995) notes the same problem in France; and it is certainly true in several other European nations. Moreover, there is no agreed-upon poverty line in most countries; and even where there is, the differences between rural and urban poverty are considerable. It is difficult, in short, to address the issue of the comparative centrality of race or ethnicity in different countries without some minimal agreement on a baseline and an empirical database for making measurable comparisons. We can nevertheless salvage some important insights from specific kinds of comparative data. For example, most of the immigrant labourers have ‘fallen’ into secondary labour market employment in the last decade. There is a general tendency for the largest migrant groups in each country to experience the highest rates of unemployment. However, it is equally important to assess the ways in which the native population characterises and perceives the sense of ‘their own displacement’. The massive economic and structural changes that occurred with German unification have been well chronicled. One of the ‘local stories’ was the sharp increase in ethnic and racial tensions and violence noted above, at the beginning of the 1990s.

On the surface, immigrant minorities and indigenous minorities would seem to experience much the same fate, i.e., the greatest vulnerability to high rates of youth unemployment. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to lump together immigrant

youth with indigenous minorities in cross-national comparisons. In the United States, it is the indigenous minorities that have the highest rates of unemployment; immigrant Asian minorities on the two coasts, and immigrant Cubans in Florida fare much better (Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Portes and Zhou 1992).

By staying within a single country, we can compare youth unemployment between immigrant minorities recently arrived, and long-term indigenous minorities (where such records are kept). The U.S.A. has a history of recordkeeping regarding this difference, and mainly in the 1980s, there was important empirical and theoretical work in this arena. Ogbu (1978, 1983, 1990), Portes and Rumbaut (1990), Light and Bonacich (1988), Bourgois (1995), Bailey and Waldinger (1991), Waldinger (1986) and Wilson and Martin (1982) each made a contribution to our increased understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and economic destiny in postindustrial nations. Portes shows how immigrant solidarity in ethnic enclaves can be a buttress, even sometimes an economic advantage (trust, working with kin, extended and fictive, etc.). But this must be contrasted with Ogbu's work on indigenous cultural minorities where enclaves do not serve this advantage.

Because of the putative link between socialisation, credentialing and the workplace, comparative research on educational achievement of cultural minorities has been especially instructive. Gordon shows that West Indians fare relatively poorly in the United Kingdom's school system, John Ogbu (1990) points out that West Indians, however, do relatively well in the educational system of the United States. Since American-born blacks do relatively poorly in the U.S.A., Ogbu has theorised that the often dramatically different educational achievement successes of immigrant minorities versus indigenous minorities can be explained by the 'active resistance' of the latter, and is in sharp contrast to the 'active assimilation' strategy of the former. Today's immigrants soon become tomorrow's second and third generation, who either assimilate into occupational structures or act (and/or are treated) increasingly like indigenous minorities, who are visibly isolated to low-wage marginalised employment. Theoretically, comparison strategies (cross-national global comparisons versus internal differentiation, then comparative) can be related. As a matter of either practical empirical investigation or of social theorising, analysts tend to make a choice and favour one over the other. With respect to national policy planning related to the transition from school to job, at one end of the continuum is the German model. Germany integrates schooling with apprenticeships and, among nations, has the best articulation with industry and other sectors of the economy with actual post-training placement into first adult jobs.

At the other end of the continuum, the United States has one of the looser connections between schooling and employment, with a period of flux, adjustment and uncertainty. Current critiques at the most general level argue that U.S. education does not articulate well with either the changing white-collar technical segment or with the changing vocational economic organisation of the service sector. In the United States, about one-third of those