

# Exclusion: Editorial Introduction

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*PARSE Journal's* "Exclusion" issue coincides with the announcement of *PARSE's* new digital publication platform. The "Exclusion" issue is the first to be published within the new website designed by Benjamin Fallon.

*PARSE* has not only been redesigned but reimagined. In place of the themed print issues we have previously put out three times a year, *PARSE* will host parallel, 12-18 month-long research themes resulting in publication 'arcs' that are conceived and carried out together with guest editors. Experimental publishing is at the heart of the new organisation of *PARSE*; with a flexibility of approach that includes online, events, print and print-on-demand, the new format is intended to facilitate the editorial team to experiment with combinations of written and audiovisual content, as well as various publication processes.

The first iterations of our publication arcs in 2018-2019—"Art and Migration", "Art and Work", and "Intersectional Engagements in Politics and Art"—offer open-ended, interdisciplinary investigations, presented in multiple formats across a time span that standard academic print publishing normally cannot accommodate. *PARSE* no longer views the release of an issue as its moment of completion, but rather as the initiation of a rolling publication schedule that will continue to add contributions over a period of months.

The current issue reflects a thematic focus on exclusion that was explored through a series of events in 2017: *PARSE* dialogues, highlighting various aspects of exclusion in education and the arts; a symposium on "Exclusive Access" at the Research Pavilion during the Venice Biennale in June; and, the second *PARSE* biennial research conference on "Exclusion" in November. The conference was divided into six overlapping strands: "Educational Exclusion", "Participation as Exclusion", "Colonisation and Decolonisation", "Indigeneity", "Geographies of Exclusion" (co-organised with the Centre on Global Migration), and "Vocabularies of Exclusion" (co-organised with UC Berkeley Arts Research Center). We are happy to be able to publish a broad selection of contributions from the six strands as well as from the dialogues and symposium leading up to the conference, in addition to the conference's main talks by Craig Wilkins, Dylan A.T. Miner, Hagar Kotef, Shannon Jackson, Nicholas de Genova, and Marina Gržinić.

The co-conveners of the theme, and editors of this issue—Dave Beech, Erling Björgvinsson, Kristina Hagström-Ståhl and, until November 2017, Andrea Phillips—chose exclusion rather than the more optimistic theme of inclusion, partly because the former is so often concealed in the latter. Not only are notions of inclusion often little more than the managerial spin on processes of recuperation and incorporation—in which resistance is neutralised by subordinate forms of participation—but formal inclusion has become the perfect mechanism for preserving concrete exclusions. Inclusion masks normative assumptions about a universal subject—whose prerogative would be to determine and inscribe the terms of inclusion—as well as the violence of its seemingly benevolent operations. In response we can see how struggles for minority rights since the 1950s have transposed

into a matrix of pragmatic, intersectional and micropolitical campaigns against the persistence of social asymmetries.

Exclusion continues to blight a global world system ostensibly liberated from twentieth-century restrictions on liberty, movement, trade, knowledge, opportunity and communication. There is no doubt a greater volume of financial and informational exchange today than at any time in history; simultaneously, however, our epoch is defined by the mushrooming of crippling individualised debt as well as the monetisation and weaponisation of data by an elite. Rising levels of migration across continents has been met with escalating deportation regimes, and the formal equalities won by the civil rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century have come up against stubborn resistance within institutions that have not been desegregated, as well as the rise of the alt-right.

Gothenburg, the second city of a social democracy traditionally considered a model of equality and welfarist opportunity, combines a history of global trade with the unfortunate status of the most segregated city in Western Europe, and is one archetypal location of simultaneous liberty and exclusion. Sweden has, for instance, the honour of accepting more Syrian refugees than any other European nation (in proportion to the existing population), but Syrians in Sweden, and in Gothenburg in particular, have been largely isolated from the Swedish population and excluded from opportunities to work, study and contribute to civic life. Tellingly, the PARSE biennial research conference coincided with an EU summit, hosted in Gothenburg by the Swedish government, entitled “Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth”. As a result, massive security measures clogged Gothenburg traffic for two days. At the same time, Afghan refugees and their supporters in Gothenburg carried out a two-day-long sit-in protest against impending deportations. As a result, unrestricted flow coincided with the restriction of flow; meanwhile, security measures effecting local, national, and international exclusion and inclusion were actively and palpably produced at the same time that conference participants addressed the issue.

The sub-themes and strands of the conference, as well as the topics of our dialogues and symposium, overlap and confirm affinities between questions of migration, colonisation and decolonisation, privilege and discrimination, in their connection to education and the arts. For the arts are by no means exempt from practices of exclusion. The very terms of artistic production are governed by exclusionary processes, conditioned by language as well as embodied and discursive practices. The undertaking of artistic and political work in cross-disciplinary contexts necessitates the interrogation of languages of inclusion, separation, and participation, as they are produced and enacted in the field of cultural production and in the socio-economic and political arena.

Since the 1990s doubts have been raised about the opposition of the arts and capitalism. It has been claimed, for instance, that the arts operate in the spirit of the networked and projective economy, as described by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, which values qualities such as “autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphic capacity, multitasking (in contrast to the narrow specialization of the old division of labour), conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity to differences, listening to lived experience and receptiveness to a whole range of experiences, being attracted to informality and the search for interpersonal contacts...”<sup>1</sup> These qualities have been embraced by neo-management in the wake of the May 1968 movement, and therefore appear to have lost their capacity as a radical critique of post-Fordist capitalism, when bosses have turned into “team leaders” and work discipline has been replaced with creative forms of virtuoso cognitive work.

The attachment of histories of western art and design to the modernisation myth, which goes hand in hand with the belief in technological advancement, has had adverse consequences for the ways in which knowledge, creative production, consumption, subjectification processes, desires, and social relations have been and continue to be forged. Aside from devastating ecological effects, this investment has also led to the conquering of land and environments, which has displaced and dispossessed large populations of the world together with their ways of living and knowing.

Our focus on geographies of exclusion and indigeneity highlight the importance of land, and thus the role of material conditions and practices in the production of exclusion. Social, cultural, political and economic barriers produce and sustain public spaces, public spheres, public memory, borders and migrants, as well as their experiences of movement through the logic of circulation, all of which is managed, controlled, and regulated by state authorities, public institutions, NGOs and private firms. However, these dominating modes of production can be transgressed through civil counter-actions and independent self-organised practices. In recent years, the practice of (re)claiming land has come to be seen as an increasingly important way of resisting colonialism; however, such resistance is also met with colonial violence in the present.

Addressing colonial paradigms in the arts entails taking on institutional, communal and collective perspectives, as well as seeking strategies for an arts and humanities sphere that embraces epistemic and disciplinary disobedience, in addition to non-capitalist and pluri-national institutions and modes of aesthetic production, to paraphrase Walter D. Mignolo.<sup>2</sup>

Forms of vagrancy have been celebrated in European art since the Renaissance; this ideal, however, demands a distinction between bodies deserving and undeserving of mobility. Similarly, questions of being settled and/or unsettled have been a central concern to the arts. Western art in colonial modernity has associated a transgressive art that unsettles our senses and ways of being with political emancipation in a universal register, and has therefore failed to acknowledge how this experience is restricted to privileged bodies and subjects. Certain groups can claim the privilege of being settled while having unrestricted flow of movement, maintaining their knowledge and forms of expressions and values. Meanwhile other groups, together with their knowledge, expressions, and values, are forced into situations of becoming unsettled through displacement and dispossession. Paradoxically, the mobility of these same groups is increasingly controlled and restricted through privatised securitisation, as nation-states compete in providing their citizens with the “best” forms of security, and at the lowest risk of becoming unsettled.

Paul Gilroy has rightly argued that “the reflexive cultures and consciousness of the European settlers and those of the Africans they enslaved, the ‘Indians’ they slaughtered, and the Asians they indentured were not, even in situations of the most extreme brutality, sealed off hermetically from each other.”<sup>3</sup> Also, Partha Mitter has demonstrated how the opposition of centre and periphery was translated directly into evaluations of works of art in which artists from the centre are credited with a kind of originality for their integration of “primitive” influences, whereas “the impact of European naturalism on Indian artists, for instance, is viewed simply as a superior culture dominating an inferior, passive one.”<sup>4</sup>

If the “birth of art” is charted as a European trajectory, the solution is not to assert that this abstraction is secretly a cover for Eurocentric hegemony, since the problem is to narrate the colonial history of modernity as an exclusively European history. Because modern Europe cannot be understood fully within exclusively Western terms, as their economies, policies, military campaigns and culture unfold as a result of colonial enterprises, competition over colonial territories and the accumulation of wealth from the slave trade, profits from colonial

goods, it is essential that art in general—that is, art as an abstraction—must be reinserted into the ensemble of colonial relations.

Just as Stuart Hall called for a “re-narrativisation” of the established literature on the unfolding of modernity in Western Europe, and just as post-colonial theory “displaces the ‘story’ of capitalist modernity from its European centering to its dispersed ‘peripheries’”,<sup>5</sup> the history of the emergence of art as an abstract category cannot be told only “from the point of view of Europe as the protagonist”, to use Doreen Massey’s phrase.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, the perception persists that Western artistic ideals, its philosophy and scientific discourse, as Denise Ferreira da Silva argues,<sup>7</sup> assume a white, Western subject who is believed to be transparent—a (presumably male) subject in control of his interiority and temporality, a subject determined by it-/himself and not by exteriority, who makes history and decides where to live and what places to conquer. This pervasive view, as Ferreira da Silva writes, depends on modern representations of race. Central to the project of modernity was the inclusion and use of racial distinction as a productive category, enabling white people to place people of colour outside of history and civilisation, out of time and out of place. If Western institutions of higher learning in the arts are to take questions of colonisation and decolonisation seriously, they need to grapple, on a fundamental level, with their own past and present epistemic and ontological violence.

Western systems of arts education still largely fail to address their colonial past and are blind to their neocolonial present. The Nordic countries, including Sweden, maintain a rhetoric of Nordic/Swedish exceptionalism, which prevents the issue from being addressed. As such, the fundamental logic of colonisation is still actively alive in Western ways of perceiving the world and in Western curriculums. It is time for Western institutions, in the arts and in education, to address white privilege, blindness and normative ignorance. It is also time to see the devastating consequences of their continued perpetuation and export across the globe.

The “Exclusion” issue features contributions by Nicholas De Genova, Craig Wilkins, Dylan A.T. Miner, Marina Gržinić, Decolonizing Design group members Ahmed Ansari, Matthew Kiem, Pedro Oliveira and Luiza Prado, Ellie Ga, Patricia Lorenzoni, the members of MDGH, Maryam Fanni, Elof Hellström, Åsa Johansson, Sarah Kim, and Paula Urbino, Heather Warren-Crow, Arkadi Zaides, Andrea Phillips, Mick Wilson and others.

Notes:

1. Boltanski, Luc and Chiapello, Ève. *The Spirit of New Capitalism*. London: Verso. 2007. p. 97.
2. Mignolo, Walter. “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom”. *Theory, Culture & Society* (Singapore). Vol. 26, Nod. 7–8. pp. 1–23.”
3. Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Routledge. 1993. p. 2.
4. Mitter, Partha. *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850–1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1994. p. 6
5. Hall, Stuart. “When was the Post-Colonial?” *Thinking at the Limit*. In *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. Iain Chamber and Lidia Curti (eds.) London: Routledge. 1996. p. 250.
6. Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage. 2005. p. 63.

7. Da Silva, Denise Ferreira. *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2007.