2 Refugee and migrant knowledge as historical narratives

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In this chapter, I think about knowledge of and by refugees and migrants[1] in relation to historical problems about how community, identity, belonging, value and responsibility are determined (usually in terms of the stable concept state-nation-community). The triad state-nation-community gives rise to stable concepts, including those of "refugee" and "migrant", that would not exist without the historical concretisation of state-nation-community as the hegemonic form of political community and the ways of seeing and knowing that come from it and help to order our world. The historical contingency of this triadic political community is often difficult to uncover, concealed as it is by political practices and discourses that normalise and ahistoricise it. The consequence is that we often deal with concepts and not with the historical contests that led to their emergence. With the nation-state-community as a foundation, a number of complex historical-social relations are left concealed and not analysed. I will argue in this essay that by looking at issues about knowledge and ways of knowing as they relate to refugees and migrants, we are able to move beyond these stable and ahistorical conceptualisations of human mobility and the hegemonic ideas of political community on which they rely. Knowledge production for and about refugees has the capacity to challenge deeply engrained structures of domination, but I would argue they do so only if they begin from a perspective that sees refugees as contemporary manifestations of historical problems about how to imagine community, belonging, identity, responsibility and value that have been reconciled in the stable concept state-nation-community.

How are these complex historical-social relations concealed? One important way is by devaluing alternative histories and forms of knowledge. In this chapter I will look at the persistence of a type of "coloniality of power"[2] which acts against what may be called "subaltern" narratives. Such narratives are devalued because they are said to not be relevant for the contemporary world or for modernity or some other large hegemonic idea. This leads to the stability of ahistorical concepts, like the triad state-nation-community, and the ways of imagining and governing that stem from them.

In this chapter, I try to recover subaltern narratives. In order to do that, I look at the social and political impacts of two contested practices of knowledge by people identified as migrants. The first example is the politics

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and narratives by migrant workers in a tea-growing district in colonial India in the early 20th century. I read these as attempts to produce new knowledge about colonial-capitalist rule that challenged British narratives of the same. The colonial exploitation of migrant workers depended on a narrative strategy that would depict them as backward and thus justify their exploitation on low wages in a labour regime based on heavy discipline, control and surveillance. As I will argue later, the value of colonised people's labour was not worked out in the labour–capital relationship, but outside it in the racist everyday of the colony. The maintenance of the ruse of "free labour" by colonial administrators made a fetish of the capital–labour relation, it became the focus of administration, and in the postcolonial state it underpinned political claims and the idea of citizenship.[3] The idea of administrable "labour" gave colonised people a place in a regimented and hierarchical polity and was generally the first way of administering the colonised subject. The histories of antagonism and conflict that led to the labour relation forming in a particular way became obscured.

My second example is a discussion of issues faced by displaced people seeking entry into higher education in Europe. The connection between the two cases is the way value is imputed on subaltern others outside of the ostensibly primary value regime (in the first case, the labour–capital regime, in the second the higher education assessment system). The labour market is important to both cases, with the latter story being about people whose claims on knowledge and knowledge production are juxtaposed against European labour markets' need for cheap and disposable labour (see Bergholm and Toivanen in this volume).[4] There remain individuals whose market value is not determined by their bodypower alone but by their evictability. I will argue that migrants and refugees are valued as evictable individuals and groups, but not as producers of knowledge with the consequence that there are few pro-active attempts to enhance university education.

Many, but certainly not all, citizens have the privilege of being assessed as potential students, in a relationship which assesses only the extent to which they fit previously stated entry requirements. This assessment system has class and other bias built in;[5] this points to the fact that the capacity of some citizens to become students is dependent on social relations outside the system. For displaced people in Europe, the social relations outside the system have an overwhelming impact on their chances of being students. This is not to say this experience is worse than that of citizens impacted by implicit or explicit class or other bias in university admissions. The idea of the coloniality of power traces how hegemonic systems, which can appear to be "neutral" or "fair", are based on invisibilising social relations of inequality that impact on access to social goods, in this example the university. A primary way, I argue, that the coloniality of power works, is by a prior derogation of the value of some experiences. The value of subaltern groups is not articulated solely or even primarily within the ostensible value regime applied to. With regards higher education, as Paolo Freire argues,[6] there is a pre-emptive dismissal of the possibility of alternative ways of knowing: these cannot be valued within

the typical higher education system and its admissions policies. The other side of this is that "othered" groups carry this value into a myriad of relations. Thus refugees and displaced people in Europe bring with them the imputation of otherness into different relations, including that of higher education: the border is multiple and invasive.[7]

What may be called state or state-centric knowledge about refugees in Europe is bulwarked by data and research that naturalises the state and its political arrangements. Framed differently for different audiences, the European Commission centres its narrative and knowledge about refugees through the prism of smuggling and security risks (see Bergholm and Toivanen in this volume).[8] These are modes of representing human mobilities, with an overarching master frame which is the centrality of a settled notion of state-community-nation. Pro-migrant media representations have been recently critiqued as being eurocentric because they do not connect "migration crisis" to continuing coloniality.[9] Critical readings of migration that call to mind new agglomerations of solidarity and responsibility do not always root themselves in the historical work necessary to say what experiences these terms ("state", "nation", "community") conceal.[10]

The primary focus of this essay is then on two cases intended to demonstrate (1) the way the coloniality of power works, and (2) what may happen when we take seriously alternative narratives of migrants – as subaltern others: might we be able to move beyond the organising concepts of our contemporary world, and indeed the exclusions and violence that it causes? Before turning to the two cases, the essay starts with a brief engagement with the thought of Michel Foucault[11] and Raymond Williams.[12] Foucault's account of the contests between subjugated and dominant knowledge seems to me to connect to Williams' conjunctural histories which focuses on the multiple entanglements that have been invisibilised under concepts like state-nation-community and the political practices that they justify. Such conjunctural histories also point to alternative futures, different ways of organising political community and responsibility that are actively derogated by hegemonic systems. Migrant and refugee knowledge is one such alternative.

Multiple histories

The state-centric policy regimes that refugees typically have to negotiate reflects complex historical experiences that are concealed. In Europe, terms like state, nation, community reflect (but also conceal through ideological work) a complex cultural and political historical experience tying in colonialism and capitalism. So do the value systems that operate within the state-nation-community and which generally go by labels like "economy" and "culture" and the "political system". Knowledge production by subaltern groups may denaturalise the state-nation-community triad and the ways of seeing and thinking they encourage.

Dissident ways of thinking and seeing human mobility can run the risk of being isolated and fragmented against this solid architecture. In Europe, a populist rhetoric to connect "state", "nation" and "community" has been

used.[13] An important consequence of this is a culturalisation of the public sphere with the European Union and individual member states pronouncing threats to European ways of life posed by migrants: people on the move become security threats.

Alternative ways of seeing and understanding refugees and migrants might seem to resonate with Michel Foucault's description of "local critique".[14] "Local critique" is the action of subjugated knowledge. Foucault describes local critique as a response to the universalising and generalising tendencies of "established regime[s] of thought". Foucault therefore gives "subjugated knowledge" the role of demonstrating the limits of the theoretical unity of dominant knowledge by pointing to the fragments and remnants that have not been successfully or finally encompassed. The value of Foucault's typology is that the emphasis is placed on the relations between subjugated and dominant knowledge, allowing a focus on how hegemonies require the policing of alternative ways of knowing. The limitation of Foucault's approach is that the historicity of the relations between dominant and subjugated knowledge is not explicitly connected in the way, for example, Raymond Williams attempts in his account of dominant, residual and emergent cultural forms.[15]

To focus on local critique in its relation with dominant knowledge is to focus on the historical experiences behind stable terms (state-nation-community) rather than naturalise, take for granted, or leave unchallenged the politics and ways of thinking enabled by these terms. This applies to dominant knowledge about refugees. Raymond Williams argues that if we move beyond the names and concepts, we see a series of historical problems, in this case problems about how we live together and how we are to be governed.[16] If, Williams continues, we see concepts as actually being historical problems that are as yet unresolved, then there is little sense in "listening to their sonorous summons or their resounding clashes".[17] What, Williams asks, might it look like to move beyond concepts and to recover the historical experience from which these concepts were cast? To my mind, this means questioning the assumptions of state-community-nation thinking about refugees. It is about focusing on the historical antagonisms that have been reconciled under ostensibly stable concepts.

In other words, it means uncovering the historical experiences underpinning what we commonly understand as refugee experience or, sometimes, "refugeeness". This is more incisive than juxtaposing alternative knowledge about refugees against dominant ones. Such juxtapositions do not necessarily connect refugees with broader historical experiences that the concept state-nation-community conceals.

People called refugees are the subject of an ideological interpellation that separates them from the state-nation-community. This separation is validated to the extent that state-nation-community are taken as stable concepts that can direct how people live together. The onus then is to recover the substance, the historical relations and experiences, from which these stable concepts were cast. Alternative knowledge about or by people called refugees is at its most striking when read as markers of these complex historical relations. This means reading knowledge about or by people called refugees not as

"refugee knowledge", but as expressions of a condition of marginalisation or subjugation that has historically been important in stabilising the concepts we use to arrange how we live together and are governed (state-community-nation). I will argue that it is the continued expression of the coloniality of power, better read as a historical process of cultural, political and economic expansion built on subjugation and value-derogation that manifests in occupation of territory. This coloniality of power continues to be important in understanding contemporary processes of exclusion and subjugation on which the state-nation-community triad and dominant narratives about refugeeness rest.

Moving away from epochal thinking, with its emphasis on understanding a system that has dominant features,[18] colonialism is better understood as the historical expression of a project of expansion that involves cultural, political and economic appropriations. The result is that difficult questions of living together and being governed become stabilised into concepts that conceal the historical problems from which they were cast. By associating refugee knowledge with indigenous narratives against "colonialism", I point to the coloniality of refugee and migrant governance in Europe.

Exile, labour and knowledge: tea plantation workers in colonial India

British colonial expansion in India involved reorganising ways of living. An important aspect of this was the use of disciplinary and legal measures to transform people into labourers and ensure their reproduction. It is crucial that the price of labour was not determined according to traditional market forces. Value was attributed outside the employer–labour relation. Colonised people had their bodypower "cheapened" based on the attribution of cultural inferiority. "Labour" was, and is, a cultural system: it is a way of organising bodypower so that it is productive. To be productive, in the colony, was to work according to what were taken to be European norms, and colonised subjects were always presumed to fall short of such cultural norms, being too traditional or too bound by custom or simply too lazy to approximate to the standards of "labour".[19] This justified the cheapening of the bodypower of colonised subjects. The value of labour was determined outside of the actual contractual relationship between capital and labour; this suggests that capitalist production was nested in wider racist social and cultural relations.

These wider relations point to the antagonistic historical experiences that are resolved and forgotten under ostensibly stable arrangements like the market and "free labour". The validation of colonial power rested on a prerogative to narrate historical experience in any given space, and to block other narratives from emerging.[20] The prerogative to narrate rested on the capacity to construct a homogenous norm out of a complex culture ("European" or "English") and the prerogative to control other narratives lay in the elevation of that "culture" to civilisation itself, and the consequent tethering of "native" to "European" where the latter represented order and civilisation and the former its dark mirror always playing catch up but doomed to never quite get there.[21]

The fairly simple point that value was attributed outside of the capital–labour relation allows us to shed light on the historical relations and experiences from which stable concepts were cast.[22] The capacity to control the narration of these experiences takes the form of Orientalist rewriting of native experience and the incorporation of these into a colonial hegemony. While Foucault focuses on local critique, Williams' conjunctural critique points to the histories of accumulation and dispossession on which hegemony lies. Hegemonies appropriate alternative narratives of human experience and use them to justify and validate a specific way of thinking – a culture – and, therefore, economic, political and social organisation. One result then is that the value of the bodypower of native labourers is determined in relation to a narrative that casts them as inferior.

Williams' focus on how hegemonic cultures are formed is intended to move beyond epochal historical analysis – it is not colonialism that is the subject, and it is not the point that colonialism (or any other cultural form) may have had determining dominant features. The focus is rather on the historical experiences and processes rather than the concepts that derive from them. It is important, according to Williams, to focus on the complex interrelations between historical movements and tendencies.[23]

Williams emphasises that hegemonies are in relations of struggle with residual cultural forms that it cannot quite do away with, and with emergent cultural forms that arise and sometimes deviate from the hegemonic. To recover these relations of struggle that are invisibilised by stable concepts, we may point to contradictions in the ostensibly stable systems, for example in the colonial market economy where labour is valued not in terms of the capital–labour relationship. Such contradictions point to how apparently stable concepts bleed out to connect with complex historical experiences and the struggle to control narratives about these experiences.

Narratives of migrant workers in colonial India

In what follows I tell a story about narratives by indigenous labourers in a tea plantation in colonial India and the attempts by British authorities to reframe their articulations and opposition to a system of colonial-capitalist exploitation.

Jalpaiguri in northeast India was one of the centres of tea production in colonial India. Labourers included indigenous Oraon "tribals" recruited from Chota Nagpore (Chotanagpur in the current spelling) some 500 km to the south-west. In 1916, when our story began, there were in the region of 90,000 migrant tea workers from Chota Nagpore in and around Jalpaiguri.

The law – the Inland Emigration Bill – called them free workers, and colonial ethnographers called them tribals. Oraons had moved to work in tea estates in north-east India since the 1870s, with numbers escalating in the late 19th and early 20th century because of famine or food shortage, land enclosures and high taxation. The Inland Emigration Bill fostered their mobility, but the fundamental cause of this was the encroaching of capitalist modes of production that meant participating in a capitalist labour market – i.e. learning to perceive and mobilise one's "labour power" with regards to the new economic structures

– was the only option for survival and reproduction. Unlike labourers in nearby Assam who were primarily indentured, Oraon labourers were largely contracted and because of this a rhetoric that they were "free labour" prevailed. It is important to note though that like the indentured system, the contracting of Oraon "tribals" was designed not so much as to provide economic choices for the labourer, but to secure for planters a labour force whose wages "were determined completely outside the labour market".[24]

Behal and Mohapatra's argument is focused on indentured labourers in Assam and against liberal revisionist historians who emphasise freedom of contract and mobility for indentured labour. Indenture meant that individuals were not free to collectively organise nor to withdraw from the labour contract. The same outcomes were caused among "free labourers" in Jalpaiguri not tied to an indenture contract. Wages paid to tea plantation workers were half that paid to agricultural workers in the district, Oraons were migrant workers recruited to provide cheaper and more disposable labour than the market conditions of the district allowed. The reproduction of this labour force was enabled by close connections with recruiters and middle men and the availability of a surplus labouring population who had not yet migrated. Their interaction with the higher-paid agricultural workers was strictly limited by a hierarchical and highly disciplinary plantation management.[25] Their lack of connections to the wider society emphasised their evictability, limited their opportunities for social reproduction and enabled the maintenance of artificially low wages. The reproduction of the labour force was managed by the planters through importing more migrant workers, rather than through traditional social reproduction. The consequence was a downward pressure on wages and the ability to control any attempts at unionising or organising.

The situation of Oraons as migrant workers in the Duars has strong similiarites to that of refugees and migrants today who work as disposable and evictable labour in market conditions and for wages that are significantly lower than much of wider society. The same goes for low wages paid to citizens on zero-hour contracts, market innovations that enable a separate sub-market for the bodypower of individuals who cannot valourise their labour under normal market conditions.[26] These are not new "neoliberal" innovations, but a natural consequence of the availability of a marginalised population.

One important way in which colonial capitalism controlled labour and artificially low wages were through narratives that constructed a stable and exploitable labour force out of indigenous labour. The experiences of encroachment, enclosure and dispossession were invisibilised by a colonial economy that deployed a cultural sensibility of bringing modernity to backward groups. The low wages determined outside of market conditions were also enabled and maintained by a culturalist discourse, one that deployed an Orientalist view, backed up by ethnographers. This took many forms for different groups, Oraon for their part were characterised as "jungli" from "jungle", valued for hardy bodies but tagged to primitivity.[27]

The cultural narrative would have it that Oraons were controllable, simple coolies, and some historical texts also miss contrary evidence. Despite

attempts to ensure separation between Oraon tea plantation workers and other agricultural workers, a 1910 report was full of accounts of labourers "running away", often with wage advances to set up more independent lives in the surrounding agricultural communities.[28] The typical way of understanding this by progressive scholars is to point to a struggle against deproletarianisation.[29] However, the other point is that planters with the assistance of the colonial government sought actively to control the narratives of Oraon about their own historical experiences. Their narratives and ways of knowing and understanding their contemporary situation caught up by colonial-capitalist rule were actively denigrated and dismissed.

An excellent example of this was the response by the British authorities and planters to incidents in 1916 when Oraon labourers rioted. Police reported masses of Oraon men gathering to sing songs at night and refusing to work. These songs and verses called on Kaiser Wilhelm to come and save the Oraons from the injustices of colonial and zamindari rule, to kill the British and establish an Oraon Raj. Things kicked off and the local government became involved when a "tea garden" worker named Charua Oraon cut his wife's throat and then his own after being made to chant "the name of the Germans" by some of his fellow labourers. Before he died, he told the investigating policeman that some of his fellow tea workers were trying to make him recite something, saying that a devil named Logo would come and kill him and his wife if he refused. Soon after their deaths, tea estate managers reported a series of stop work protests and groups gathering at night to sing songs and chant verses.[30]

To take up some space to record this song is important, these are the subjugated narratives of people trying to articulate the historical experience of dispossession that is colonialism and resisting the large concepts centring around British order and civilisation. The song was sung by one Soma Oraon, before the magistrate and translated by a member of the investigating tribunal:

> German Baba is coming
> Is slowly slowly coming
> Drive away the devils Manaldanal;
> Cast them adrift in the sea,
> Suruj Baba (the Sun) is coming;
> The devils of the Oven will be driven away
> And cast adrift in the sea.
> Tarijan Baba (the stars) is coming,
> Is slowly slowly coming,
> Is coming to our very courtyard,
> The chigri devils will be driven away
> And cast adrift in the sea.[31]

It was the middle of World War One and the Tribunal was tasked to determine the cause of this "seditious" activity and to find out if German Lutheran missionaries were behind the songs extolling the Kaiser – "the German Baba".

Towards the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th, Oraons in Chota Nagpore were rent by a series of pseudo-millenarian movements. One stuck – the Thana Bhagat movement which, according to colonial administrators and ethnographers, combined personal and moral teachings with political and economic claims. Members of the Thana Bhagat movement ("Thanas") were called on to stop eating meat and drinking alcohol and Christian or Muslim Oraons were excluded from membership. Members were enjoined not to till fields and to spare the suffering oxen. Protests and demonstrations against high taxation and the excesses of the zamindari[32] system grew. In the early 20th century, the British called in their Gurkhas and a brief skirmish occurred. The movement stalled at that point. I have not been able to find any record of the skirmish with the Gurkhas, authorities mention it in passing but no record of what happened seems to exist, and no history of the Thana Bhagat movement mentions this. In 1915, in the tea gardens in Bengal and Assam where Oraon workers had migrated, the movement appeared to suddenly come to life in bursts.

The Tribunal's conclusions were centred on grasping the narrative away from the Oraons. Despite evidence that the invocation of Kaiser Wilhelm to save Oraon from the British and to kill the colonialists had clear connections to the previous Thana Bhagat movement (leaders of this uprising in 1916 were involved in that movement), the Tribunal would conclude that, despite having no evidence at all, that German missionaries were behind the uprising. The Tribunal concluded: "The Commission who tried the case held that no German missionary could have been concerned, since Christian Oraons were excluded from the meetings. But some German agent, or some agitator or impostor must have been at the bottom of it… There is no anticipation of further trouble."[33]

The British ethnographic narrative about Oraon insisted that they "are mere coolies, and of a race prone to superstition and the wildest stories" and could not have come up with an account of British oppression without German intervention. This is against the evidence of the Thana Bhagat and millenarian movements that had disturbed the colonial social order in Chota Nagpore and now imported into Jalpaiguri and the Duars. The culturalist rendition of the Oraon as mere coolies, incapable of articulating political agency without external (German, European) intervention, was necessary as a means of controlling narratives about historical experiences. Following Raymond Williams, the ability to make invisible alternative historical experience enables the articulation of stable concepts and to assert the hegemony of particular ways of knowing.

I have tried in this section to recover residual histories, attempts to give a different narrative about the colonial-capitalist experience. These narratives point to the antagonistic historical experiences that are prevented from emerging by a culturalist narrative. This culturalist narrative forecloses the possibility of these alternative experiences emerging by naming their proponents as backward or primitive and incorporating them into a cultural system in the colony that tethered native knowledge to European modernity as their dark mirrors.

Knowledge production and contemporary migrants

In this section I focus on access to higher education for people called refugees in Europe, this is a story about contests over knowledge and knowledge production and about the value of disposable labour to capitalist systems.

Following the arrival of over a million new refugees and migrants in Europe in 2015, the European Union and individual member states attempted to increase opportunities for migrants and refugees to access higher education, often as part of a broader suite of European and national policies designed to either foster integration or assuage the threat of radicalisation.[34] Several strategies formed part of this overall policy. The EU promoted mechanisms to assess and recognise migrants' and refugees' qualifications; states and individual universities set up scholarship programmes and language courses. While these measures aimed to address some of the difficulties that refugees faced in accessing higher education, they typically do not deal with the underlying political and social issues influencing how refugees are perceived and governed in Europe. That is to say, these new – and often innovative – measures stem from and reiterate the European integration infrastructure that sees refugees as cultural others.

This problematisation manages potentially disruptive social forces. Governmental framing facilitates viewing refugees, like other subjects of the state, in terms of the problems that they pose to government; governmentalised subjects are reduced to how the state or other authority perceives them. Foucault notes that this means that the historical depth and character of people and groups become reduced to questions of systemic organisation and rule. In Raymond Williams' terms, it could be said that in order to preserve the state-nation-community concept, people called refugees are interpreted as specific sets of problems for government, and their entrance or otherwise into higher education is determined by this interpretation.

Against this framing of refugees as a particular type of problem, I argue that refugees may be understood as a group whose social and economic marginalisation shares similar features to the marginalisation of other communities in Europe. This is sometimes along the lines of class, and other times along the lines of religion or ethnicity.[35] Focusing on the common marginalisations of refugees and others offers an opportunity to rethink how higher education access for refugees may be framed. Rather than a governmental means to ensure that refugees "fit", the issue may be re-situated to something like this: how would the entry into university of marginalised groups (including people problematised as "refugees" requiring integration) aware of the historical conditionality of their marginalisation help us rethink the relationship of universities to education and the role of the university in the public sphere? University admissions, as noted earlier, reflect broader social relations, and this acts as a way of filtering out dissident ways of thinking. The value of certain groups, refugees among term, is formed in the broader social relations which are carried with them across different social relations and value regimes, the university admissions system being one.

Henry Giroux has argued that the "fundamentally political nature" of university teaching has been downplayed in western states over time.[36] The university, he argues, can become at times an adjunct to the market, providing education that is in service to existing employment opportunities, thus reproducing inequalities. The reproduction of social and economic inequalities serves the interests of an elite and enables their control over state infrastructure while also then continuing the relative marginalisation and inequality of different groups defined in racial/ethnic, gender or class terms. Giroux argues that it is important to consider the role that pedagogy and curricula have in furthering or impeding social change. Thinking about refugees as a marginalised group, and not an externalised appellant to the state as the governmental narrative would have it, might allow us to think the fuller import of critical pedagogic and inclusive practices at universities and how these may foster broader social inclusion.

Shahram Khosravi[37] argues that an impediment to refugees entry into higher education in Sweden is the imperative that they valourise their bodypower in the labour market. Migrants and refugees are important as people whose labour value can be calculated outside of market conditions. Like Oraon migrant workers, refugees and migrants sell their disposability and evictability. Cast as external others, refugees and migrants are regularly consigned to making fragile claims to belong and left with little but their bodypower to valourise, which means valourising their insecurity and reproducing conditions of evictability and disposability.[38]

The equality presumed in the state-nation-community is seen in the figure of the citizen. The fact that there are unequal struggles to enact citizenship rights amongst citizens is something that is downplayed by the deployment of the state-nation-community concept and its rhetoric of equality for all (citizens). The particular problem posed to the state-nation-community concept by the entrance of refugees and migrants, and their struggles to valourise their bodypower, is that it is a reminder of historical problems of incorporation and valuation of different subjects in an unequal social, economic and political structure. The state-nation-community concept plays down this material inequality.

Access to higher education for refugees is an issue that both the European Commission and grassroots organisations have focused on. But this has focused on a transformation of refugees into another governmental category: students with the requisite qualifications to enter into higher education. Qualifications may be seen as markers and reassurances that the student and their learning can be incorporated into the education goals of contemporary universities in Europe. The focus on assessing qualifications, rather than learning or actual levels of knowledge, can prevent displaced students from accessing higher education. In my own work at Central European University's Open Learning Initiative (OLIve), we encounter students who have either been told by national education authorities to return to lower grades of high school, despite having a high school qualification, or have had their qualifications under-recognised, so that a Bachelor's degree is not recognised as being

adequate for graduate study. Initiatives to address these, like the Council of Europe's European Qualifications Passport, focus on making clear the qualifications that refugee students hold, they do not seek to overcome a focus on qualifications that are inevitably assessed as lower in value than that of European qualifications. This may be seen as an active form of de-skilling, where skills and learning gained in a different context and geography are devalued by bureaucratic processes of recognition.

This focus on qualifications and the under-valuing of non-European qualifications is a form of stabilisation and control of education, restricting the development of learning by groups that Paolo Freire (1970) calls the oppressed. As noted earlier, this restriction is enabled by the way in which such groups are valued in relation to cultural and social relations outside of the ostensible value regime. If we understand refugees and migrants not as governmentalised categories but as manifestations of historical problems about inclusion and valuation that have not been completely resolved, then we may argue that they represent remnants of the coloniality of power. In order to shed light on this coloniality of power, a principal focus would be perhaps in Freire's terms a form of pedagogy that focuses on problem-centred learning, moving away from names and concepts (here Freire and Williams are remarkably similar) towards an understanding of the historical conditions of oppression and exploitation that have led to certain forms of knowledge, and certain ways of knowing, and the interests they serve becoming dominant.

If refugees and migrants, and attempts to articulate dissident accounts of their experience, are taken as attempts to articulate historical problems that have been contained by the state-nation-community triad (like the Oraon migrant worker songs had to be contained by a colonial system), and if refugees are seen as manifestations of historical problems purportedly resolved, then the articulation of refugee knowledge should bring to light the limits and assumptions of the entire contemporary political and social edifice, the state-nation-community triad, and its value regimes.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have tried to insist that knowledge by and about refugees should be located in relation to a historical account of concepts that organise our political, economic and social life – state-nation-community. Following Raymond Williams, I have insisted also that we need to focus on the historical experiences and problems that have been invisibilised by these stable concepts. I have suggested that thinking about the contradictions of migrant and refugee experience can highlight the cracks in these concepts, focusing on the emergent and residual forms that hegemonies have not quite done away with.

Oraon migrant workers of the early 20th century tried to narrate their own experience of colonial capitalism. In doing so, the conditions for the perpetuation of the colonial-capitalist system – the availability of labour whose price was not determined according to market conditions – would be threatened.

Lower than market wages for Oraon migrant workers could only be paid if the colonial authorities could continue to justify the Oraon's backwardness. Thus, in the case I looked at, the colonial authorities had to dismiss the possibility of Oraon political agency; they had to remain "mere coolies" of a "superstitious race". The colonial tribunal insisted that political riots and protests by Oraon had to have been the result of mischief caused by German missionaries despite having no evidence for this. The sense of Oraon, and other people who could be exploited for their bodypower, as backward "mere coolies" was central to the racialised cultures of the colonial period. Without this, the figure of the native as the counterpart of the orderly and civilised European, to be simultaneously exploited for economic gain and civilised, would be called into question and the whole colonial edifice potentially under threat, with the violence and brutality underpinning colonial government becoming resonant.

The role of the university in furthering the state-centric account of "refugees" as a problem of governance was also investigated. Thinking about people called refugees not as external others would, however, mean that they may be understood as remnants of historical experiences of antagonism and conflict from which stable concepts that generate specific ways of living and value regimes (like state-nation-community) are cast. Like Oraon migrant workers, refugees present a historical problem that can show up the contradictions of how we live together, and the inequalities this validates. If understood as members of a commonly marginalised group that includes those both "inside" and "outside" the state-nation-community, then their externalisation as a problem of state is not valid.

The question of knowledge production for and by refugees and migrants is important. If we investigate it in relation to historical problems about how we live and with whom – rather than thinking it in terms of large concepts like state-nation-community – then a key focus must be how narratives and knowledge of these problems remain or may emerge. Hegemonies are maintained by the control of knowledge, that is, by the deployment of stable concepts – state, nation, community – rather than investigating problems. Knowledge production by and for refugees that is done in relation to these historical problems can demonstrate how hegemonies are not self-evidently dominant, they rely on struggles with residual and emergent ways of knowing that can, if given enough attention, be the basis of new forms of political action.

Notes

1 In this essay I use the terms "refugees", "migrants" and "displaced" interchangeably. "Refugee" is a legal category that does not cover the entirety of the experiences of forced displacement that people encoutner. Dichotomies between "refugee" and "migrant" are often false, while they may be subject to different legal regimes, their conditions and positions in relation to economic, political and cultural sytems are often similar. The best word might be "displaced", but it is unwieldy to use.
2 Quijano, 2000.
3 Rajaram, 2014.
4 Khosravi, 2019.

5 Cantat, Cook, and Rajaram, Forthcoming.
6 Freire, 1970.
7 Khosravi, 2010.
8 Rajaram, forthcoming.
9 Avraamidou, 2020.
10 There are notable exceptions, see Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Cantat, 2016; Marfleet, 2006; Novak, 2017.
11 Foucault, 2003.
12 Williams, 1977.
13 Yılmaz, 2012; Rajaram, forthcoming.
14 Foucault, 2003, 6.
15 Williams, 1977, 121.
16 Williams, 1977, 12.
17 Williams, 1977, 12.
18 Williams, 1977, 121.
19 Alatas, 1977.
20 Said, 1993, xiii.
21 Fanon, 1967.
22 Rajaram, 2018.
23 Williams, 1977, 121.
24 Behal and Mohapatra, 1992, 143.
25 Bose, 1993, 96.
26 Rajaram, 2018.
27 Chatterjee, 2001.
28 Duars Committee, 1910.
29 Brass and Bernstein, 1992.
30 India Office Records, IOR/L/PJ/6/1448.
31 India Office Records, IOR/L/PJ/6/1448.
32 The land tenure system transformed by capitalism which allowed traditional owners of the land – zamindars – to exercise more proprietary rights to its produce than historically permitted, and to reduce those who worked the land to sharecroppers.
33 India Office Records, IOR/L/PJ/6/1448.
34 Rajaram, forthcoming.
35 Yıldız and De Genova, 2018.
36 Giroux, 2003, 6.
37 Khosravi, 2019.
38 Rajaram, 2018.

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