



Introduction

In this age of globalization, immigration has become a controversial topic, often dominating political and media discourse, and consequently, public attention. In recent years the European Union's 'managed migration'¹ approach, has generated much discussion on the role and purpose of migrants in receiving societies. Nevertheless, representations of migrants, including their activities and predicaments, continue to remain in the hands of others who do not share their situation, but hold the authority and ability to engage in the discourse (Rojo & Van Dijk 1997). Whether it is a Guardian article on the exploitation of migrant workers by gang masters, or a political speech vilifying 'bogus' asylum seekers, the portrayal of migrants is usually related by one who has their own agenda and objectives, be it positive or negative in mind.

While mainstream political and media discourses are mainly concerned with presenting migrants as villains, victims or economic imports, there are less readily available voices which lay claim to their own image of migration. In contrast to more mainstream discourses, the radical left portrays migration in an optimistic light. The literature produced takes a celebratory stance- 'the migrant's' existence and his or her 'struggles' around work and mobility are viewed with hope and interest. To the radical left, migrants are heroes or heroines, who undermine authority and

Theorizing the Dangers of Representation

The anthropological critique of Edward Said (1987) draws our attention to the dangers of representing others. In 'Orientalism' Said argues that the colonialist powers of Europe invented a discourse of otherness thus rewriting the history of the colonialist cultures in order to justify their actions. Established hierarchies remain in place because of the way that the 'oriental' is spoken for and represented by the European. In other words, a discourse of otherness allows the one who has control over the represented to retain his or her power and authority (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 6).

Foucault's (1984) understanding of modern power reminds us that power is changeable, relational and connected to control over discourses and knowledge. Language is not a neutral force; it has the ability to change peoples' perceptions of events and 'others' and thus to shape reality (Van Dijk 1993, 1996, 1997). For Said and others, 'the other' has been manufactured, in the form of a series of discourses, through which a dominant group or individual can define or legitimise themselves through dismissing the represented. As the representation affords the dominant group an 'expert' status it also simultaneously silences 'the other' (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 9). Politicians are one such example of a dominant group which has been known to use discourse in order to represent 'others' in a such a way that legitimises their authority and absolves them of any wrong doing (Rojo & Van Dijk 1997).

This misuse of authority and power does not have to be deliberate. Misrepresentations can occur even when a dominant group without an obvious agenda, intends to present an accurate and fair portrayal of another. In recent years anthropologists and sociologists have begun to critically examine the risks of representation in their own work. Attention has been drawn to the inevitable authority of the researcher (Groves & Chang 1999; Mullings 1999; Gabriel 2000) and the ways in which this can impact on the relationship between the researched and the researcher, as well as research findings. The research relationship has been acknowledged as a 'power relationship' (Groves & Chang 1999: 238) Whilst reflecting on the 'powers and privileges of whiteness', Gabriel (2000: 168) points out that in interviews, words are 'framed, prompted and interpreted' by the researcher. He stresses that researchers can unintentionally misrepresent, silence or 'pathologize some ethnicities whilst normalizing others'.

Although it has been argued that the author's dominance cannot be displaced and therefore all representations of others should be avoided (hooks 1990: 151-152), scholars have developed an approach to research that attempts to deconstruct the power differences discussed above. Attitudes of self-reflection have sought to explore how knowledge is perceived, interpreted and finally represented. It has been argued that the researcher's perspective can never be impartial as it has been shaped by such underlying factors as gender, class, race, nationality, sexuality amongst others (Hathaway 1991). In recognition of this, the role of reflexivity in ethnographic research is to deconstruct the power and reduce the interpretative authority of the researcher, thus producing a more authentic account of the field (Davies 1998).

Celebrating or Romanticizing the Other

As 'others', by definition, are repressed and silenced by dominant discourses, attempts in alternative discourses have been made to readdress injustices through a series of representational tactics. These 'corrective' procedures have a tendency of celebrating and describing aspects of 'the other's life and culture that has previously been portrayed as inferior by the dominant culture (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 13). In particular, the survival strategies of the 'oppressed', as well as any strategies of resistance in response to the oppressor are emphasized. Although seemingly positive, these representations can hold significant complications. Attempts to portray the represented in a positive way can be damaging due to presenting the latter in a 'heroic' and 'exotic' light (Olson & Shopes 1991: 198). By 'romanticizing Others' (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 13) the author is reclaiming and misrepresenting their lives for the sake of personal or political ideology. Moreover, it can lead to an over exaggeration of the survival or resistance strategies used by the oppressed. Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996: 14) relate such instances where feminists interpret and represent the stories of 'others' in a way that directly reflects their own (the writer's) agenda. It could be argued that although well meaning in their attempts to empower the oppressed, these representations achieve the opposite of the intended affect. The voice and agenda of the represented is overpowered and silenced by that of the (re)presenter.

Abu-Lughod (1990: 41) reflects on this tendency to 'romanticize resistance' by criticizing a recent scholarly fixation with a specific type of

resistance. She points out that the recent rise in social movements has fueled an academic interest in human agency and in the ways in which individuals carry out everyday forms of resistance. As a result, scholars have become so focused on finding and describing resisters that other aspects of investigating resistance such as power analysis have remained neglected. According to Abu-Lughod (1990: 41-42) they 'read all forms of resistance as signs of ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated', therefore failing to explore the complex power structures in which 'acts of resistance are embedded' As well as failing to adequately recognize the inseparable relationship between power and resistance, this lack of analysis ultimately fails to give a valid portrayal of the individual or group concerned.

The above reflections are of particular relevance as they point to the possible misrepresentations that can occur when a researcher or writer is focused on one intended portrayal in his or her work. Moreover, they serve as an example of the influence that one's ideologies, background and agenda can have on one's perspective. It could be argued that in such cases the (re)presenter has failed to adequately reflect or deconstruct his or her agenda during their work. However, it could also be argued that, to a certain extent, the (re)presenter's agenda is given a preference over accurate portrayals of other peoples' lives. Regardless of whether it is conscious or not, in the above examples the (re)presenter is projecting his or her own agenda onto the represented. It could be argued that these misrepresentations carry similar dangers to the 'orientalist' reflections of Edward Said. By promoting his or her agenda through the representation of others, the writer is reinforcing the dominant order that he or she is attempting to critique.

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data in the form of published scholarly work was also used in order to compliment the findings of my fieldwork.

Ethical Issues

Confidentiality was promised to all interviewees and their personal details, such as their names and personal details were disguised. Informed consent was gained after the reasons behind the interview were briefly explained. Perhaps more significantly there was consideration given to the possibility that information given by interviewees would fall into the wrong hands, in this case that would be the immigration authorities. For

organize autonomously from, and against the control of money, the state or different types of bosses. A world with space

In Hardt and Negri's (2004) sequel to 'Empire' (Hardt & Negri 2000), migrants are seen to be part of the 'Multitude'. This is an all-encompassing concept that includes the industrial working class as well as agricultural workers, the

freer, or indeed less controllable, than non-migrants:

'Migrants understand and illuminate...the situations of more or less free forms of life. They roll up hills as much as possible, seeking wealth and freedom, power and joy. Migrations recognize the geographical hierarchies of the system and yet treat the globe as one common space....'

(Hardt and Negri 2004: 134)

Hardt and Negri's (2004: 134) reflections on migration also suggest that mobility is believed to dispute the authority of the nation state. This is illustrated by the line, 'Migrants demonstrate the general commonality of the multitude by crossing and thus *partially undermining every geographical boundary*', [emphasis my own].

The Crossing of Borders without Papers

'... the alleged number of at least half a million illegal border crossings into the EU each year proves the autonomy of a migration movement which is overcoming fences and barbed-wire, ignoring infrared cameras, defying plastic handcuffs, and dragnet controls. It spans oceans, continents and skies'.

(Schneider 2004).

Mobility, in the specific form of irregular border crossings is celebrated and admired in the literature of the radical left. This 'clandestine' activity is seen as a deliberate act of defiance, which, not only empowers the migrant but also undermines the authority of the nation state and the rules of the global market; thereby constituting, in the words of one writer, 'a refusal of capital's enclosures and domination' (Whyte 2002). According to some writers, the 'free' movement of irregular migrants is raising questions about the ability of the nation state to control its borders and those within them (Barchiesi 2004). Such movement is therefore a direct challenge not only to the authority, but also potentially to the foundation and existence of the nation state. The perceived challenges posed by migrant mobility can be observed in the following passage, which is taken from a newspaper produced by the Frassanito network.

"Migrants are not just the collateral damage of global capitalism: they are the active agents of free movement who represent a subverting power in respect to the sovereignty of the

nation-state as well as the new regimes of hyper-exploitation on a global level",

(Arozena et al 2004:1).

This view is echoed and expanded upon by another 'noborder' activist who states:

'As globalization from below, migration movements constitute a global resistance against old and new economies and their modes of exclusion, repression, division, separation, detention and selection',

(noborder network 2004b).

The fact that irregular border crossings are seen to pose a challenge to institutionalized dominant orders is significant. As illustrated in the passage above, 'old economies' or the nation state and 'new economies' or Neoliberalism, is seen to embody exploitative and oppressive structures. This holds particularly relevancy for those in the radical left with anarchist principles who hold the view that any form of institutionalized authority is coercive and thus should be abolished. It appears therefore that the way in which the radical left perceive irregular border crossings is directly related to their own aspirations and ideologies. This will be further expanded on below.

Migration as a Social Movement

It is stressed that irregular border crossings are not carried out by individuals but by a 'movement', which is actively organizing itself in an autonomous fashion. Before embarking on further discussion on the ways in which migration

'globally interconnected social movement' (Notes from Nowhere 2003) made up of different grass roots movements and united by its opposition to global capitalism. It has been referred to by some, as 'globalization from below' (Mertes & Walden Bello 2004), and by others as the 'globalization of resistance' (Notes from Nowhere 2003).

The justifications given for the unusual application of this term to migration have partly been relayed in the above section on 'the crossing of borders without papers'. These deserve further explanation and will be expanded on below. This 'powerful social movement' is portrayed as such, due to its challenge on a daily basis to 'border regimes' (Tavolo dei migranti 2004) Irregular migrants are perceived as being engaged in an organized 'struggle for freedom of movement'. The strength of this social movement is attributed to the belief that individual nation states and the European Union have been unable to control and restrict the movement and survival of irregular migrants. 'Freedom of movement' therefore has already been 'claimed' or reclaimed by irregular migrants from the authorities:

'...a social movement which cannot be controlled by various states policies of the sealing off of borders and which cannot be reduced to economical cost-benefit-calculation.'

(Arozena et al 2004: 1)

It is believed that the organized border crossings of irregular migrants have impacted on the European Union to such an extent that a change in immigration policy has been required. The 'zero tolerance'⁷ attitude of the past decades has been replaced by that of 'managed' migration (Barchiesi 2004). This is seen to be an admission of the European Union's failure to control its own borders.

Migration is also seen as a social movement due to its perceived impact on the nature of citizenship in Europe. Some writers claim that the act of crossing a border 'illegally' creates a contradiction within the citizenship policies of the European Union, thus challenging the existing concept of citizenship and demanding a new

practice of social rights (Barchiesi 2004; Arozena et al 2004: 5).

'By transcending national borders migration challenges conventional notions of citizenship as well as legal frameworks and opens up a new space for the practice of rights which reach far beyond the historically known constitutional settings.'

(Arozena et al 2004: 5).

This 'challenge' is deemed important as it redresses the existing social inequalities between European Union citizens and non European Union citizens. As full social rights are granted with citizenship, it is suggested that irregular migrants are drawing attention to the general lack of basic rights, in terms of 'housing, education, health services' (Arozena et al 2004: 5) suffered by migrants, irregular as well as regular. Germany is given as an example of a country where migrants can lose their unrestricted residence permits if they need to claim welfare from the state.

This new understanding of rights not only draws attention to and challenges this 'contradiction between inclusion and exclusion' (Castles 2000: 124), but according to Barchiesi in particular they are directly associated to a whole transformation of society in which people can start reclaiming their lives back from commodification⁸.

'Migration is a social movement that demands a new understanding of social rights that is clearly linked to de-commodification, the claim for new commons through which societies in receiving countries themselves can start to seize back, within struggles that transcend the narrow boundaries of nation-state institutionality, what had been taken away from them in the decades of neoliberal restructuring... In the expansion of a sphere of rights that is no longer dependent on the labour market and on the commodity form embodied in the contract of employment, the specific struggles of the migrants carry the embryo of a new universality that challenges the increasingly discredited universalism of a

⁷ 'Zero tolerance' refers to the European migration policy of the last thirty years. Emphasis was on controlling migration as opposed to 'managing' migration in order to maximize economic and other benefits.

⁸ Commodification is a term deriving from the work of Marx; the transformation of social relationships into commercial relationships of buying and selling. The social relations between peoples assume the alienated form of relation between material products. (McLean & McMillan 2003: 95).

liberal discourse on rights whose translation into practice is synonymous with new exclusions and selectivity'.

(Barchiesi 2004)

Barchiesi's comments may stem from a common perception held by the radical left and others. Borders are seen to act as a 'filter' for the labour market, a process referred to as 'selective inclusion' (Frassanito network 2005b). The European Union is seen to regard and treat migrants as purely economic necessities whose flexibility can be manipulated in accordance to the labour market's competitive needs. In the above passage Barchiesi seems to be suggesting that by undermining these border regimes irregular migrants are reclaiming the control that the labour market and the institutionalised authorities have over working people's lives.

The Merging of 'Movements'?

Migration as 'a social movement' is an attractive prospect to the radical left for obvious reasons. The perceived existence of a movement suggests a purpose and strength, as well as an actual threat to the current political and economic structures that are deplored by the radical left. Moreover, if the impact of this 'movement' is intended, it points to a marked resemblance with the agenda of the radical left.

By merely referring to migration as a social movement the radical left is leaning towards an identification of sorts. This 'identification' is further exemplified by the specific injustices that this 'social movement' is described as challenging. As already mentioned 'migration as a social movement' is portrayed as attacking the exact same structures that the radical left wishes to challenge. It is not surprising therefore, to find places in the discourse where the radical left appears to relate their struggle to the 'struggles' of irregular migrants. It is significant that the Frassanito network is not purely choosing to present migration as an autonomous social movement in its own right. They are linking 'migration as a social movement' to global 'movements' of resistance against Neoliberalism and thus also linking it to themselves.

'We consider migration as a social movement and see the role of migrants' struggles as crucial for the further development of the entire global movement'

(The Frassanito network 2004b)

'Migration as a social movement' is believed to be organized in an 'autonomous' fashion with underlying features of 'co-operation' and 'self-organization' (Greenpepper 2002). This portrayal is a factor suggesting that the radical left are indeed identifying with 'migration as a social movement'. The above characteristics reflect the principles admired and sought after by groups in the radical left which are heavily critical of the impact that Capitalism has had on social relations. They are significant as they are believed to contrast with the oppressive way society is believed to have been organized. The passage below illustrates that irregular border crossings are seen to constitute a positive alternative to institutionalized power:

"When migrants force and conquer European borders through their everyday struggles they also exercise an alternative constituent power which contrasts to the material constitution of Europe built upon the hierarchization of social and political spaces. Autonomy of migration is a subversive movement,"

(Frassanito network 2004b).

The following passage is from a 'noborder' seminar at the E.S.F which is aptly entitled a 'Meeting of Movements'. Its title and contents appear to suggest that the radical left are inviting irregular migrants to join them or work with them on some level.

'We are here as we were in Genoa, in July 2001, where for the first time the global movement met migrants' struggles, during that beautiful demonstration on the evening of the 19th.... We are here as we were in Bari Palese, in Southern Italy, where in the summer of 2003 a direct action against a detention center created the conditions for the escape of dozens of migrants. We are here bringing with us the experiences of the struggles of migration all over the world, from the mobilization of the sans papiers in Europe to the Freedom Ride of Migrant Workers in the US last year, from the "Justice for Janitors" campaign to the upsurge of Woomera, in Australia. In the last years, these struggles have forged new political languages and practices',

(Arozena et al 2004: 1).

The words of the Frassanito network, as well as those of Barchiesi and others (Greenpepper 2002) are highly suggestive. It appears that these writers and activists are not merely admiring the 'struggles' of irregular migrants but identifying

with them and possibly, inviting them to join them in the 'global movement' against Neoliberalism. It should be pointed out here that although the literature on migration as 'a social movement' does draw similarities between these two 'movements', it does not directly describe irregular migrants as consciously attempting to organize and impact on the authorities in the ways described above. It could be assumed that the perceived impact of irregular border crossings is seen as unintended consequence of actions that hold an altogether different motive. However, the references to migration as a social movement, as well as the suggestions that this 'social movement' and the radical left have similar characteristics does seem to imply that at least some of the writers believe that there is some level of intent and awareness in migrants' actions. This is further emphasized by the stress on migrant resistance in the general literature.

To summarize, migration is represented by the radical left in the following ways. There is a conscious attempt to contradict the presentation of migrants as victims of Neoliberalism by portraying them in a different light; from the perspective of the radical left, migrants are capable and autonomous protagonists. The work and living conditions of migrants are of interest due to a growing interest in 'precarity'. The social and financial insecurity experienced by some economic migrants is used as a way of drawing attention the increasingly flexible work conditions

Despite presenting migrants in a powerful light-according to Hardt and Negri (2004:133-134), they are 'free forms of life', who endow 'the entire society with their subversive desires'- there is no attempt to supply any detail or expand on these descriptions. Apart from a brief description of the conditions that migrants might be escaping from and currently enduring, and a definition of migrants as a 'special category of the poor' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 133), there is no attempt to describe specific possible reasons for resistance, such as, for example, exploitative work conditions⁹. Moreover, there is no distinction made between documented or undocumented migration, which can have a significant impact on migrants' living and working conditions. By not attempting to validate or justify their representations, Hardt and Negri succeed in creating an ambiguous and abstract notion of migration. This is exemplified by the romantic language used to describe migrants.

Although the 'precarity' discourse does point to conditions that may cause resistance or unrest, they are not adequately described. Although it is insinuated that the migrants referred to are working in low skilled sectors, the discourse neglects to describe specific work conditions or to distinguish between different types of work. This serves to insinuate that all migrant workers are suffering from the same insecure job conditions; a vast generalization which is exemplified by the use of the term 'the migrant worker' (Frassanito network 2004a). It could be argued that the use of the phrase 'the migrant' serves to objectify the latter, thereby achieving the opposite of the radical left's aim to empower their 'subjects'.

Hardt and Negri (2004: 133) can also be held accountable for reducing migrants to a general state of being, through the use of the phrase 'condition of mobility and cultural mix common to the migrant'. The inclusion of the word 'condition' in this phrase implies that migrants are in a situation so similar that it has induced a common state of being. The fact that this phrase is followed by declarations that migrants are influencing receiving societies to resist is significant as it suggests that this 'condition' or state of being automatically reduces migrants to resisters.

It could be argued that the other texts reviewed also romanticize migration and reduce their subjects to resisters. However, in some of the

other texts the portrayal of migration is far more tangible. When defining 'migration as a social movement' (Arozena et al 2004; Barchiesi 2004; Frassanito network 2004b), the writers are precise on how and why

⁹ It is however assumed that as part of 'the multitude' they are exploited by global capitalism.

understanding of what role migrants wish to play in society. Moreover, they allow us to see if migrants perceive themselves in the same light as the radical left. It should be stressed that as the primary and secondary data presented in this

'very frightened rarely go out' were rarely brought up.

A desire to be a 'normal' part of society is significant and can be observed in all five interviews undertaken by myself. This desire is partly expressed through the wish to acquire a European Union or British citizenship. In response to the question do you want a passport from one of the countries in the European Union, all interviewees answered yes. Not surprisingly freedom of movement and status were strongly associated with holding a passport of this specific region. Beshir and Erik wanted European passports so they could acquire freedom of movement. They wanted to be able to go on holiday and to be able to leave and return to Britain without any problems. This would be, in the words of Beshir 'like a normal person'. They both gave a distinct impression that they would be empowered and treated better in general if they a passport from one of the countries of the European Union. Referring to this, Erik stated:

'When you've got the passport that gives you power. When you have no passport you are nothing.'

A wish to be 'normal' was expressed by three participants through the specific use of the word. This desire was not only associated with having documents and ultimately citizenship, but also through securing a 'normal' future by working and saving money. The two quotes below from Siamak and Beshir, illustrate that being 'normal' or 'like everyone else' is also equated with owning one's own business and property.

'....England is very good for money, that's why everyone comes here. My boss he has a lot of money, and he has four houses and all the time he think about money. Some people change when they make money, and they want more and more, people are different, I'm not like my boss, I like to live normal like many people. I am happy with just one house, and maybe one shop.'(Siamak).

'To be honest I am really happy with my life, I
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gangs or organized networks are becoming increasingly common. As approximately 500,000 people (King et al 2003: 15) are trafficked or smuggled into Western Europe every year, Agim's experience at the hands of gangs could be a typical one. The overriding picture is not of an environment that is organized by the characteristics described by the radical left. The

Conclusion

Through comparing two perspectives, this paper has offered an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which one's ideological position and agenda can affect one's perception and representation of another. Moreover, it has, I hope, demonstrated the complications that can arise when a dominant group attempts to represent a less privileged one in a seemingly positive way. The conflicting perspectives that have transpired only serve to highlight the possible dangers of this form of representation.

This radical left has indeed emerged as a dominant group that is 'guilty' of misrepresenting its 'subjects'. Although attempting to empower migrants by portraying them as out-witting and challenging their oppressors, the radical left has possibly achieved the opposite. By misrepresenting them, it could be argued that the radical left is silencing their 'subjects' and thus disempowering them. These misrepresentations are damaging in a practical as well as a theoretical sense; they are produced and read by 'noborder' activists working with irregular and regular migrants in probable positions of vulnerability. If the radical left is indeed inflicting its own ideology and agenda onto migrants then it could be argued that it is using migrants' standing in the global system to reinforce its own political position. This in itself would point to an abuse of power. It is alarming that the radical left does not view itself as an exploiter; from its perspective it is fighting with, and on behalf, of the oppressed in their struggles against the oppressors.

The stark difference between the two perspectives explored in this paper draws our attention to the complex inequalities that exist between these two groups. These are fundamental social and legal differences which govern the way each is treated on European Union ground and undoubtedly influences the way each perceive their life situation and that of others. Whilst the radical left holds the privileges of European Union citizenship, migrants, in particular migrants without papers lack the 'rights' afforded by the latter. Therefore it could be argued that the radical left's commitment to participating in, and writing about activities of resistance is a reflection of the relative social security that a European Union passport, and other privileges such as class and skin colour offers them. Likewise, the aspirations and opinions of the migrants interviewed could reflect their current position of relative social insecurity (when compared to the radical left) as well as the

influence of past experiences of irregularity. This paper has argued that living in a situation where one is socially and financially insecure possibly leads one to search for security through an inclusion into the very system that has contributed to this situation in the first place. It suggests that the radical left can afford to be engaged in direct action precisely because of the particular position that they hold in society.

It is a cause for concern that the radical left do not view migrants in a similar way to that which they (the migrants) view themselves. This is particularly so, as some of the radical left are engaged in practical work with migrants. If the radical left can project their political perspectives onto migrants' needs on paper, they can do it in

McLean, I. & McMillan, A. (2003): *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*. Oxford University Press.

Mertes, T. & Walden Bello, F. (2004): *A*