

<http://somatosphere.net/?p=8160>

Technologies of Belonging -- A Special Issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values

2014-05-23 02:53:06

By Aaron Seaman



The current issue of [Science, Technology, & Human Values](#) is a special issue examining the politics of race in Europe, entitled "[Technologies of Belonging](#)." The issue, coming out of a 2011 conference, *Technologies of Belonging: Biology, Race and Ethnicity in Europe*, contains several articles and commentaries, the abstracts of which are listed below.

Introduction

[Technologies of Belonging: The Absent Presence of Race in Europe](#)

Amade M'charek, Katharina Schramm, and David Skinner

In many European countries, the explicit discussion of race as a biological phenomenon has long been avoided. This has not meant that race has become obsolete or irrelevant all together. Rather, it is a slippery object that keeps shifting and changing. To understand its slippery nature, we suggest that race in Europe is best viewed as an absent presence, something that oscillates between reality and nonreality, which appears on the surface and then hides underground. In this special issue, we explore how race has been configured in different practices and how race-based identities and technologies are entwined in various European settings.

Articles[Topologies of Race: Doing territory, population and identity in Europe](#)*Amade M'charek, Katharina Schramm, and David Skinner*

Territorial borders just like other boundaries are involved in a politics of belonging, a politics of “us” and “them”. Border management regimes are thus part of processes of othering. In this article, we use the management of borders and populations in Europe as an empirical example to make a theoretical claim about race. We introduce the notion of the phenotypic other to argue that race is a topological object, an object that is spatially and temporally folded in distributed technologies of governance. To elaborate on these notions, we first examine a number of border management technologies through which both race and Europe are brought into being. More specifically we focus on how various such technologies aimed at monitoring the movement of individuals together with the management of populations have come to play crucial roles in Europe. Different border management regimes, we argue, do not only enact different versions of Europe but also different phenotypic others. We then shift the focus from border regimes to internal practices of governance, examining forensic DNA databanks to unravel articulations of race in the traffic between databases and societies.

[Biological Citizenship Reconsidered: The Use of DNA Analysis by Immigration Authorities in Germany](#)*Torsten Heinemann and Thomas Lemke*

In recent years, there has been an intense debate about the concept of “biological” or “genetic citizenship.” The growing literature on this topic mostly refers to the importance of patients’ associations, disease advocacy organizations, and self-help groups that are giving rise to new forms of subjectivation and collective action. The focus is on the extension of rights, the emergence of new possibilities of participation, and the choice-enhancing options of the new genetics. However, this perspective tends to neglect the potential for exclusion and restriction of citizenship rights based on biological traits. We aim to broaden and complement the existing theoretical discussion on biological citizenship, which so far has concentrated on the medical sphere, by investigating a new empirical field. The article analyzes the use of DNA analysis for family reunification and shows that biological criteria still play an important role in decision

making on citizenship rights in nation-states. Presenting Germany as an exemplary case, we argue that the use of parental testing endorses a biological concept of the family that is mobilized to diminish citizenship rights. The argument is based on documentary analysis and on interviews with representatives of nongovernmental organizations and immigration authorities, lawyers, geneticists, and applicants for family reunification.'

[Virtual Geographies of Belonging: The Case of Soviet and Post-Soviet Human Genetic Diversity Research](#)

Susanne Bauer

This article explores human genetic diversity research east of what was the iron curtain. It follows the technique of "genogeographic mapping" back to its early Soviet origins and up to the post-Soviet era. Bringing together the history of genogeographic mapping and genealogies of "nationality" and "race" in the USSR, I discuss how populations and belonging were enacted in late Soviet biological anthropology and human genetics. While genogeography had originally been developed within the early Soviet livestock economy, anthropologists, public health scientists, and medical geneticists reanimated the technique in the late 1960s after the end of the Lysenko era and its ban on classical genetics. In the 1970s, population geneticists pursued a project to compile all genetic data on the USSR population, resulting in a "genogeographic atlas," consisting of series of tables as well as maps projecting genetic markers onto geographic grids. Following the post-Soviet trajectories of these maps, I examine the ways in which human genetic diversity studies realign with renegotiations of difference in today's Russian Federation. The exploration of the Soviet case of human genetic diversity research contributes to our understanding of the varied ways in which racializing discourses were entangled in the project of modernization.

[The Imbalanced Sex Ratio and the High Bride Price: Watermarks of Race in Demography, Census, and the Colonial Regulation of Reproduction](#)

Alexandra Widmer

This article examines changes and continuities in the epistemic and methodological presence of "race" in British imperial demography from 1920 to 1960. It does so in relation to population-level interventions aimed at improving reproduction in the New Hebrides. Through an examination of the sex ratio in relation to debates about demographic decline, the article

describes aspects of how sexual selection was connected to race thinking. Taking a balanced sex ratio as a marker of well-adapted, healthy populations—biologically and culturally—the British authorities in the New Hebrides attempted to regulate the bride price in an attempt to level the imbalanced sex ratio. They believed that this intervention would reduce the marriage age of men while also appeasing missionary agendas of changing marriage and kinship practices. I use the metaphor of a “watermark” to think through the conceptual and methodological absent/presence of race in colonial demography and colonial administrators’ attitudes toward and interventions in local reproductive practices.

[Biology as a Technology of Social Justice in Interwar Britain: Arguments from Evolutionary History, Heredity, and Human Diversity](#)

Marianne Sommer

In this article, I am concerned with the public engagements of Julian Huxley, Lancelot Hogben, and J. B. S. Haldane. I analyze how they used the new insights into the genetics of heredity to argue against any biological foundations for antidemocratic ideologies, be it Nazism, Stalinism, or the British laissez-faire and class system. The most striking fact—considering the abuse of biological knowledge they contested—is that these biologists presented genetics itself as inherently democratic. Arguing from genetics, they developed an understanding of diversity that cuts across divisions of race, class, or gender. Human diversity rightly understood was advantageous for societal progress. Huxley, Hogben, and Haldane did not hold identical political ideals, but they all argued for democratic reforms and increased planning geared toward greater social equality, and they did so under the label of scientific humanism. Huxley took issue with the notion that evolutionary history does not carry any moral lessons for human societies. Rather than being its antithesis, evolution was the basis of human sociality. In fact, the entire future progress of individuals and communities toward a democratic world order needed to be founded on the cosmic principles of evolution—a process that had to be guided by the biological expert with a strong sense of social responsibility.

Commentaries

[Race, Ethnicity, and Technologies of Belonging](#)

Peter Wade

This essay explores how academics know when they are looking at something called “race.” Given that the term has an uneven history, there is some disagreement about when the concept fully emerged, and social scientists often now argue that race is implicitly at issue in public discourses, even if it does not appear overtly. I argue that there are significant continuities that allow us to recognize when race is at work; these are linked to “nature” and to colonial histories and categories. This is not a static definition, because nature and colonially derived categories themselves change over time and take on new forms.

[Race and History: Comments from an Epistemological Point of View](#)

Staffan Müller-Wille

The historiography of race is usually framed by two discontinuities: the invention of race by European naturalists and anthropologists, marked by Carl Linnaeus’s (1735) *Systema naturae* and the demise of racial typologies after World War II (WWII) in favor of population-based studies of human diversity. This framing serves a similar function as the quotation marks that almost invariably surround the term. “Race” is placed outside of rational discourse as a residue of outdated essentialist and hierarchical thinking. I will throw doubt on this underlying assumption, not in order to re-legitimate race but in order to understand better why race has been, and continues to be, such a politically powerful and explosive concept.

[Race and the Mobility of Humans as Things](#)

Ricardo Roque

This article reflects on a significant dimension of the modern history of race in Europe and the world: the processes of mobility of humans as things that accompanied the scientific pursuit of the immutable racial condition of humans. It asks what it might mean to approach racial conceptions as historically embedded in, and shaped by, racial regimes of mobility, that is, the regimes encompassing the practices and apparatuses for the displacement of human bodies (or parts of bodies) as “scientific things” of racial significance for museum and laboratory networks. The article articulates race in Europe as entailed in a history of national, colonial, and postcolonial regimes of mobility. First, it is suggested that the history of race in science can be understood as the history of regimes of mobility of humans as things. It is then discussed how this history of mobility regimes connects with the making of

collectives within and beyond Europe—national, imperial, indigenous, and postcolonial. Finally, the article investigates the contemporary expressions of racial regimes of mobility.

[Personal Names: Embodiment, Differentiation, Exclusion, and Belonging](#)

Gisli Palsson

Because they are right under our nose, taken-for-granted, and essential to every person everywhere, personal names have often eluded the theoretical and analytical scrutiny they deserve. To what extent do naming practices exemplify or parallel the biopolitics of bodily inscriptions and markings such as tattoos, birthmarks, and presumed racial signatures? To what extent do names represent “technologies of the self” (Foucault 1988) in the broadest sense, as both means of domination and empowerment, facilitating collective surveillance and subjugation, and the individual fashioning of identity and subjectivity? Partly drawing upon indigenous contexts in the North American Arctic (Inuit and Yup’ik), this commentary discusses personal names and genealogies in relation to other technologies of belonging. Practices of naming, it is argued, are not only key elements of identification and personhood, embodied in the biosocial habitus much like other biomarkers, also they situate people in genealogies, social networks, and states. Clashes, I suggest, between different traditions and practices of naming, especially in the context of slavery and empires, illuminate with striking clarity the relevance of names as technologies of exclusion, subjugation, and belonging.

AMA citation

Seaman A. Technologies of Belonging -- A Special Issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values. *Somatosphere*. 2014. Available at: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=8160>. Accessed May 23, 2014.

APA citation

Seaman, Aaron. (2014). *Technologies of Belonging -- A Special Issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values*. Retrieved May 23, 2014, from Somatosphere Web site: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=8160>

Chicago citation

Seaman, Aaron. 2014. Technologies of Belonging -- A Special Issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values. Somatosphere. <http://somatosphere.net/?p=8160> (accessed May 23, 2014).

Harvard citation

Seaman, A 2014, *Technologies of Belonging -- A Special Issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values*, Somatosphere. Retrieved May 23, 2014, from <<http://somatosphere.net/?p=8160>>

MLA citation

Seaman, Aaron. "Technologies of Belonging -- A Special Issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values." 23 May. 2014. Somatosphere. Accessed 23 May. 2014.<<http://somatosphere.net/?p=8160>>