Call for papers

“Redressing the harms and violence of ‘othering’ – towards the abolition of structures, discourses and practices of ‘othering’ “

A conference of the British/Irish section of the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control

Venue: Albert Hall, Nottingham
Date: 17.4.-18.4.2020

The year 2020 marks one hundred years since the beginning of the 1920’s, a period characterised by economic and political unrest in the aftermath of World War I and the crash of the stock market. Importantly, the 1920’s also saw the rise of fascism. One significant event in this destructive process was Hitler’s 'Twenty-Five Theses' speech at the Munich Hofbräuhaus in which he presented a twenty-five point programme of ideas which became the basis of the National
Socialist German Workers Party. At the core of the speech lay the construction of ‘enemies’ by means of Othering (Merskin 2004) whereby this ‘othering’ served as an expression of visions of a purified social body.

While there are of course differences between this historical period and contemporary times, many parallels can be drawn, one of the most obvious is the populist rhetoric and ideology, that, based on a dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them’, served as a means of framing the political arena and ultimately let to fascism in many countries. Thriving on fragmentation and polarisation, populist ideologies that rely on the construction of ‘others’ can be observed in many contemporary countries (e.g. xenophobic political discourses and forms of hate speech in public spaces) with destructive consequences.

“...freedom is not a gift received from a state or a leader but a possession to be won every day by the effort of each and the union of all.”(Camus 1953ori./2018: 54)

Thus ends Albert Camus’ speech ‘Bread and Freedom’. His words acquired an even more pressing urgency in contemporary Britain as the ‘othered’ poor and their plight in the ‘civilised’ space of the world’s fifth largest economy, was highlighted by the UN rapporteur on extreme poverty Philip Alston in the summer of this year. He demonstrated the impact of austerity in the UK and accused ministers of being in a state of denial about the impact of their policies since 2010 and of the “systematic immiseration of a significant part of the British population”(Alston 2019) and further stated: “It might seem to some observers that the department of work and pensions has been tasked with designing a digital and sanitised version of the 19th-century workhouse, made infamous by Charles Dickens.”

The UK government, unwilling to debate the impact of its austerity policies which were “in clear violation of the country’s human rights obligations”, condemns one fifth of its population (14 million people) to live in poverty whereby four million of those are more than 50 per cent below the poverty line. There are millions of people who are in work but are nevertheless dependent upon various forms of charity in
order to cope, increasing uses of food-banks, increasing amounts of
people who find themselves without home and shelter and increasing
amounts of people who die on the streets. In many instances,
povertyism has become seemingly institutionalised if unacknowledged
within organisations as well as internalised by individuals.

The dehumanisation of people relies on processes of Othering
whereby the processes and structures of ‘othering’ are interdependent
with the existence of institutions that reify a specific ‘Order of things’.
Western identity and culture itself can be understood as fundamentally
interrelated with and constructed by an othering logic (Said 1985).
Groups that historically were and are marginalised and ‘othered’ are
also at disproportionate risk of experiencing poverty as well as precarity
such as ‘females’, ‘gender’ and ‘sexually’ diverse communities, ethnic
minorities, people categorized as ‘disabled’, children, single parents,
carers, older people, institutionalised people etc. Forms of ‘othering’
like for example the application of essentialist assumptions and the
selective distribution and application of ideologically driven categories
like ‘deviance’ and ‘crime’ have a long tradition in mainstream social
sciences and let to the proliferation of techniques of producing ‘others’
thereby solidifying the existing unequal status quo and imposing its
destructive power on ‘lived realities’.

This conference seeks to challenge the destructive operations of
‘othering’ in different contexts, aims for the abolition of its facilitating
structures and ideologies and to explore ways of engaging in critical and
creative praxis in the struggle to overcome these.

In order to achieve these aims contributions to the following themes
are invited:

◊ Bio-politics of ‘Other’

◊ processes of ‘othering’ and the continued ‘lived realities’ of slavery

◊ ‘othering’ of non-human animals, our planet and the Anthropocene
◊ generating ‘new’ Others (e.g. via early intervention schemes, Brexit-discourses, etc.)
◊ ‘othering’ and the ‘floating signifiers’ of ‘race’ and ‘gender’
◊ ‘sexuality’/’gender’ and the generation of ‘other’
◊ ‘othering’ and geological, cultural and existential ‘sacrifice zones’
◊ ‘othering’ and genocide
◊ transhumanism and ‘othering’
◊ ‘others’ and visions of a purified social body
◊ ‘othering’ Roma, Sinti and other Travelling peoples, ‘legislative cleansing’ and the legacy of the Porajmos
◊ challenging the Othering and dehumanisation of people; conceptions of shared ‘fraility’ (Turner) and Butler’s concept of ‘precariousness’ as a collectively shared conditions of life (2004, 2009)
◊ queering the normative, re-gaining control of representations, fighting the oppression of ‘othering’ and dehumanization – art i(a)s resistance

The venue for this conference is Nottingham’s Albert Hall, originally established as a Temperance Hall in 1873, it became later a Methodist mission and was for a long time Nottingham’s largest concert hall and a venue for political rallies (e.g. Oswald Mosley held a speech to the British Union of Fascists in this building).

Please send abstracts and other critical and/or creative suggestions for contribution by the 20.1.2020 to abeckmann94@outlook.com