

SOCIOSCAPES

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CALL FOR PAPERS

RACISM, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Environmental racism and health inequalities

Guest Editors

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STRUCTURAL GROWTH OF INEQUALITIES

In the context of the structural growth of inequalities that has taken place in the last decades everywhere in the world, health inequalities (global and domestic) and environmental inequalities have sharply worsened despite the advancement of scientific knowledge in life sciences and despite the spread of the so-called green paradigm. Neo-liberal globalization has transformed social inequalities and the system of inequalities, modifying the old ones, generating new ones, intertwining the old and the new; social, health, environmental inequalities have been modified and exacerbated, also because of the considerable ongoing environmental crisis and the very deep ecological rift – which, in combination with the very acute economic crisis and the Sars-Cov-2 health crisis, have unified into a colossal triple crisis of the capitalist society.

RACISM AND THE UNSTOPPABLE RISE OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

This growth in inequality occurred at the same time as the unstoppable rise in many parts of the world of racism, which has maintained a key role in the process of production, reproduction, accumulation and legitimation of inequalities, including health and environmental inequalities. Racism – an integral and constitutive element of capitalism – refers to a material relationship of exploitation between races, classes, genders, to a social relationship of domination that includes an ideological dimension that naturalizes, justifies and legitimizes exploitation and domination. In addition to being structural, racism is structured and structuring; it is an organized system of thought, policies, practices, and discourses, marked by a top-down movement in society in which doctrinal racism and institutional racism are the primary sources of popular racism. But while popular racism is socially learned and therefore reversible, institutional racism is the ultimate core of racism and therefore systemic.

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES

Despite the many declarations of equality that have followed one another in the past decades and that we hear every day, racism, in its various forms, still retains a great deal of weight in the process of producing and preserving inequalities, including: environmental inequalities, health inequalities, environmental health inequalities, excess disease and mortality among specific social groups, harmful and unhealthy environments “reserved” for specific classes and segments of the population. Among the various forms of racism, environmental racism – that is, environmental inequalities linked to the racial factor and characterized by a racial dimension – plays a prominent role, which it carries out through multiple modalities and mechanisms: social exclusion, occupational segregation, concentration of certain groups of workers in unhealthy workplaces and in harmful tasks;

stigmatization of racialized populations and groups (minorities, immigrants, native populations, proletariat and under-proletariat, vulnerable groups, disadvantaged groups); spatial isolation, urban segregation, housing concentration in areas that are unhealthy, unsanitary, with few services, difficult to reach due to natural or artificial barriers; the location of harmful, toxic or polluting production and sites in neighbourhoods or areas inhabited mainly by racialised populations and groups; their settlement in harmful, toxic or polluting production or sites; discrimination in environmental policies and administrative practices concerning the environment, urban planning and the territory; exclusion from the processes and places where urban planning policies and environmental projects are defined. If environmental racism fosters exposure, susceptibility and vulnerability of racialized populations and groups to (physical and mental) diseases and social pathologies, if the concentration in unhealthy environments worsens their health condition, in turn, the loss of health assets caused by environmental racism constitutes a factor of exclusion from the labour market, (economic, educational, etc.) impoverishment, stigmatization. And all this reinforces racism, which declares and certifies as natural the social inferiority of racialized populations and groups. This is visible with the pandemic, which has highlighted and exacerbated health inequalities – with racialized populations and minorities everywhere suffering the worst consequences in terms of morbidity and mortality.

STRUGGLES AND RESISTANCE

This set of processes is not one-sided, all-powerful, monolithic. The world is teeming with struggles against environmental racism, against environmental and health inequalities, with mobilisations for health and the environment, to break the vicious circle described above. From local mobilizations focused on specific situations to transnational movements, the convergence of struggles and social movements for environmental and climate justice has mobilized (even virtually and beyond individual local contexts) a growing number of people against the legacies of capitalism and racist public policies in the environmental sphere. So that the struggles on racism, environment and health have become a testing ground for all social struggles and an important observatory on social conflict. The resurgence of institutional racism – brought to public attention by movements such as Black Lives Matter, Common Ground Collective after Hurricane Katrina, Standing Rock Coalition, by the struggles of indigenous communities in the global South and North against extractivist economies and forced relocations caused by large-scale construction, climate change, environmental degradation – is also (and even more so) manifesting itself in the pandemic. In this health crisis, the struggles for public health and workers' health, for equality in health (access to health services, treatment, vaccines, basic sanitary items), for alternative realities, experiences and practices, are paramount. In the struggles for health and the environment, the role of women has been vitally important, igniting and organizing environmental conflict, raising the issue of environmental justice in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. In these struggles, the specificity of the ecofeminist perspective emerged, as much in the gender difference in addressing environmental issues as in the deep critique of the patriarchal capitalist system that discriminates against women and the “more-than-human” world.

PURPOSE OF THE ISSUE

This issue of *Journal Socioscapes* aims to critically analyse the relationship between racism, health and the environment, in particular the relationship between environmental racism and health inequalities, the intertwining of environmental ills with the social ills of racism and capitalism, through the collection of theoretical or empirical studies.

According to a multidisciplinary perspective, this issue of the *Journal* welcomes contributions from different fields of study, including (but not limited to) sociology, political science, anthropology, political economy, geography, epidemiology, public health, urban and rural studies, environmental studies, environmental justice studies, critical race theory, critical race feminism, political ecology, eco-feminism.

Below we offer some ideas for contributions, which are in no way binding:

- studies on the particular exposure of racialised populations, groups and workers (minorities, immigrants, native peoples, proletariat and under-proletariat, vulnerable groups, disadvantaged groups) to environmental hazards and accidents, occupational diseases;
- racism, Covid-19 and health inequalities; racial inequalities in health for Covid-19; Covid-19 related ethnic disparities in morbidity and mortality; racist discourses and pandemic.
- mechanisms that generate and reinforce environmental health inequalities, which affect vulnerable groups (environmental policies, economic policies, urban planning policies);
- struggles, mobilizations, social movements, artistic and cultural expressions, addressing the racism-environment-health relationship, fighting environmental racism and environmental health inequalities; women and environmental conflicts, women's role in the emergence and development of struggles for the environment, against environmental racism, health inequalities and environmental health inequalities.
- theoretical reflections on conceptual tools concerning the racism-environment-health relationship, environmental racism; counter-hegemonic theoretical elaborations to protect public health (e.g. decolonial thinking in favour of indigenous rights for alternative forms of development respecting public health).

Publication procedure and timetable

The Journal Socioscapes welcomes proposals of articles by sending an abstract to the Guest Editors. Proposals should include author information (name, institutional affiliation, email address), the title of the contribution, a 500-word abstract (maximum), some keywords (up to 5).

Proposals shall be sent to Fabio Perocco fabio.perocco@unive.it and Francesca Rosignoli Francesca.Rosignoli@eurac.edu

Accepted articles should be up to 8000 words in length (including notes and bibliography).

Languages: proposals and articles can be written in English, French, Italian, Spanish.

Timeline: proposals and articles should be submitted according to the timelines below.

April 15, 2021 - Submission of proposals to Guest Editors.

April 30, 2021 - Notification of acceptance/non-acceptance of the proposal.

September 15, 2021 - Submission of articles.

October 30, 2021 - Peer review.

December 15, 2021 - Revising of the articles.

2022 – Publishing.

Website of Socioscapes: <http://www.socioscapes.org/index.php/sc>