

Blackboard as Separation Wall: classrooms, race and the contemporary crisis in Germany

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ABSTRACT: This article suggests that racism, construed as a reified and artificial dichotomization of social bodies into acutely hypostatized and opposed identities, can best be understood by placing it within a larger global context of exploitative hierarchies which racism retrospectively legitimizes. The loss of the global perspective and the obscured knowledge of global networks of toxic causalities allow the broader context of racism to remain invisible, thus condemning local anti-racist activism to mitigated success. The article suggests that the classroom as a vital site of education of citizens tends to be isolated from the world; racism can be combatted in the classroom by opening its walls up to the larger global context in which education is a significant factor. A contextually de-segregated classroom can become the site of contextualizing knowledge. A pedagogical practice of interrogative critical assemblages may facilitate the reconstruction of invisible global networks, which in turn may enable us to better understand the workings of micro-racisms within a larger context of global macro-racism.

KEYWORDS: racism, education, classroom, assemblages, segregation

Like theatres, classrooms have a fourth wall. Where the classical proscenium stage has a transparent boundary between the audience and the actors, which allows spectatorship but imposes a reality/fiction demarcation vital to the theatrical illusion, the classroom has a blackboard (or perhaps more frequently today, a whiteboard, or a smartboard). That surface of pedagogical inscription is where much teaching actually happens, rendering tangible the classroom's functioning as a space of modelling: in the classroom, learners practice at a safe distance from the real world skills that they will need later in real professional scenarios; the classroom, like the theatre, is a protected space of 'modelling' play (that is, its activities have the structure of real-world activities, say, maths or writing, but can be practiced without real-world consequences; Bateson 1974: 177-93). Curiously enough, however, the blackboard that enables pedagogical 'modelling' or educational 'play' by separating the classroom from the

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world may also hinder that pedagogical practice. The blackboard can have a ‘segregative’ effect, rendering the very real connections between pedagogy and the world so opaque as to reduce that teaching to a reified inculcation of mere ‘skills’. This paradoxical mixture of connection and separation, I would suggest, is analogical to, as a bad black/white pun might intimate, and perhaps structurally related to that of racism.

Racism can be defined as an artificially imposed differentiation, based upon arbitrary but easily identifiable (or imaginable) markers of difference, which occludes deeper socio-political connections. Racism is a rhetoric of difference that separates out populations that share the same spaces—populations that are all too often closely linked to each other by manifold connections: history, intermarriage, migration, competition for scarce resources. Discrimination seeks to occlude these connections, thereby aiding and at the same time obfuscating the complex functioning of contemporary global capitalism (Mbembe 2017).

In this article, I wish to explore the ways in which, by reconnecting the often lost links between the classroom and the world, we may be able to contribute, at least indirectly, to laying bare the deeper global connections that are obfuscated by the speciously differentiating structures of racism. My thesis is that a direct opposition to or contradiction of racism, while remaining a moral imperative and civil duty, will probably not do much to change the underlying structures of racism. What is needed instead, I suggest, not in lieu of but alongside an oppositional condemnation, is a practice of connections—in the first place cognitive, then existential, and finally, what I will be calling ‘affective’. In addition to a sturdy condemnation of racism in all its forms, a positive strategy, one that resists racism’s own separative impulses by operating a dynamic reconnection of causes and effects, of identities and practices, may be the apposite epistemological or educational response to the current multi-crisis the racist backlash that goes hand in hand with it. The increasingly acute nature of what is becoming evident as a contemporary global multi-crisis makes it imperative to pose such questions.

Like most of us writing in this issue, and probably many of you who are reading it, I am a teacher (in the university sector), and more specifically, a teacher who trains teachers. For that reason, I will be considering ways this tactic of diagnostic reconnection may be carried out in the most immediate context I am familiar with, that of the university classroom where future high school teachers of English are trained. I suggest that the classroom should become a forum in which ‘racism’ as a local phenomenon (manifest in the current German system by an increasing level of racist-motivated violence and arson) should be put in a larger network of global crises. To that extent, it would become a performative act of self-inclusion that would equip students for locating themselves and their own practices within those

networked practices. The purpose of such a diagnostic pedagogy would not be to dictate the stance(s) that students should take, but to lay bare the simultaneously destructive dynamic of racism and the increasingly dichotomized economic structures that make up racism on a global scale. Once students have located themselves in the broader context, it may become possible for them to decide how their own activist or future professional practices within clearly circumscribed but networked contexts might constitute a reaction and a riposte to racism. The very fact of making connections is not merely a cognitive exercise, but one that establishes lines of ‘affective’ connection—that is, not merely an emotional ‘tie’, but also a linkage that empowers engagement (Massumi 2015).

My argument runs as follows: (1) I begin by suggesting that racism is symptom of larger structures of disconnectivity: it separate causes and effects, thereby making it easy to blame outsiders rather than identify systemic factors; (2) a solution to this obfuscation of connections is to reintroduce the making of connections at systemic level; this is all the more important in an environment where racism on the rise because the scope of global multi-crises are increasing and scapegoats must be found; (3) connectivity thus restores connection between opaque global complexes, between students and the world, and between the educational process and the world; exercises in connection, alongside frontal confrontation with racism, may enable students to gain a sense of connectivity and agency that presents possibilities of engagement that also allow one to ‘tinker’, at a micro-level, with single aspects of those relationships; (4) one site where this important work can be done is the classroom (whether high-school- of university-)—usually, in the German context, a highly reified location that can, however, be opened up to the outside world via processes of interrogative critical assemblage and cognitive mapping.

1. Racism as a global phenomenon

This article posits that, suggest that racism depends upon a polarization and a freezing of essentially fluid identities, provoked or legitimized by excessively mercurial and unpredictable political and economic events. Racism itself is not only a corrosive power to reduce identities to a differentiated essence, a divisive view that needs to be replaced by a sense of all that connects people; it also needs to be reconnected, as a phenomenon, to a multitude of other phenomena that do not excuse it, nor explain it away, but rather, explicate it and render explicit the causal networks within with it functions.

In the closing pages of *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault (2003: 257-9) suggests that the origin of racism lies in colonial genocide. Racism, he posited, was not the driving

force of genocide, but its retrospective legitimization, the fabricated rationale that justified and legalized a biopolitical regime of lawlessness that could unleash itself far from the juridical limitations imposed by the European nation-state (2004: 375); it was from the genocide in the colonies that the racist war on European territory would subsequently develop.¹ Recent German commentators have suggested, very much in parallel to Foucault, that colonialism and the slave trade were the global projects of primitive accumulation and predatory labour/resource extraction that needed retrospective legitimization via racism (Arndt 2017). This means, then, that racism is not a phenomenon which should be examined and confronted only in its own right, but rather an reflexive epiphenomenon that refracts a large number of other broader phenomena that could be gathered up under a meta-category biopolitics and its close connection to war (Mbembe 2016), which produces, when fully fledged, what Mbembe (2003) terms ‘necropolitics’. Within this larger framework of exploitative bio/necropolitics, Mbembe (2017) identifies the phenomenon ‘becoming black’ as a global process of *longue durée* racist dehumanization. But as Mbembe’s notion of a creeping, ever-more-encompassing global category of racist ‘thingification’ suggests, such reification is part of a long-term global politics of planetary destruction whose effects are slowly catching up on us (Mbembe 2012).

In other words, when we speak about racism, we should place it within a global network of other political issues that may have to do with employment (and/or) labour exploitation, slavery (ancient and modern), immigration, landgrabbing, access to water, food and mineral resources, social unrest, violence, terrorism and the war on terrorism, and so on. This is no easy task, but I posit that it is a vital undertaking for the contemporary humanities, and a central plank in a new university- and school-based pedagogy of planetary awareness and citizenship education that, at least within the German context in which I work, is currently largely absent.

To establish an initial framework for starting this process of contextualizing diagnosis, I suggest that the North-South divide is the meta-racism within which all other localized racisms of today (from those afflicting the reviled asylum seekers of Europe, or the Muslim targets of European Islamophobia [Fassin 2016], to the threatened ‘black lives’ of the contemporary US crisis [Denby 2016], or the ‘intra-African’ racism that bedevils the post-apartheid democracy of South Africa) have their over-determined, often indirect, but ultimate causality; recent research on the history of international relations (Vitalis 2015) suggests that in the first half of the twentieth-century this notion was widely recognized by conservative political theorists. The question of racism is a global one, and connectivity is central to

understanding and combating it. In general, resource extraction under inhuman conditions, or commodity production without social protection occurs in the Global South, because those populations are seen as not needing or deserving dignity or protection. Racism as we usually consider it in the European context, that is, as a domestic phenomenon, is the Northern tip of the iceberg. That is not to say that it is not worthy of attention, nor that it needs to be combatted less, but simply that it can only be genuinely understood when it is placed within a global perspective. This is not to say that local interventions against racism, especially in an educational context, have lost their relevance. There are many excellent approaches to anti-racism and anti-discrimination training in schools (e.g. for the German context, Liebscher and Fritzsche 2010; for the UK context, Epstein 1992). This article does not suggest that this sort of pedagogical work is irrelevant, overhauled or out of date; on the contrary, such work would appear even more acutely necessary than ever before. Rather, however, the article suggests that alongside such direct pedagogical practices, a structural approach to racism and its broader systemic logic is necessary to complement—and finally link up with and reinforce—punctual and local interventions.

Patently, racism itself reposes upon a chimera, the notion of a substantial difference between social groups—usually reposing upon easily visible, or easily imagined, but generally superficial differences. It is absolutely necessary, but also absolutely inadequate to deconstruct this chimera, as the critical social sciences have been doing for a good half-century (see Paulson 2001; Latour 2004). The reason for this is that, quite apart from the self-confirming nature of racist stereotypes (Taguieff 1987), and the deep embedding of racism in habitus and affective structures, the driving rationale of racism in fact lies in a multiplicity of other factors. What must be reconstructed, then, are the networks within which racism is one highly visible, even spectacular phenomenon, that plays various ideological roles within wider and more complex networks of causalities.

But how are we to seize this moment of reconnection and transform it into an opportunity to combat racism, that is, to reconnect, on an equal basis, hierarchically differentiated groups within society where the principle of discrimination (in the sense of both differentiation and exclusion) is delineated according to some form of racism? I would suggest that the moment is apposite for developing a stronger sense of the multiple causal entanglements of ‘a world that is as interconnected as it is divided’ (García Canclini 2014: xii). The current multi-crises besetting the planetary community make it imperative to address these issues; but they also make it easier to do so, because the issues at hand are becoming more and more flagrantly salient.

2. Systemic connections

A solution to this obfuscation of connections is to reintroduce the making of connections at systemic level. In mid-2016, the German left-liberal *Die Zeit*, registered a sense of an ‘epochal shift’ in world politics in the ‘week of madness’ in which the Brexit referendum, reciprocal black-white violence in the US, and several IS-sponsored attacks in Nice and Würzburg, took place (Ulrich 2016). Doubtless such rhetoric was overblown. And of course it was parochial: what registers as crisis for populations in the Global North may be crisis-as-norm for peoples elsewhere, as Benjamin (1999: 248-9) knew: ‘[t]he tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “state of emergency” in which we live is not the exception but the rule.’ We here in Europe have been largely protected from the sustained havoc wreaked, for instance, by the 1970s debt crisis and 1980-90s structural adjustment programmes upon many countries in the Global South. As Stephen Morton (2013: 14) notes, ‘from the standpoint of the oppressed, the state of emergency is a permanent historical condition, rather than an aberration in a liberal narrative of historical progress’. Nonetheless, there are many symptoms of an increasingly strong sense of what can be identified as a complex of interrelated and increasingly acute multi-crises that currently beset the global population. It may be objected that the notion of a multi-crisis is too imprecise and too broad to serve a rigorously analytical purpose. That, however, is precisely my point: we are confronted by a bewildering concatenation of looming catastrophes of global proportions whose dimensions make them what Timothy Morton (2013) calls ‘hyper-objects’ that defy comprehension, let alone the formulation of solutions. Listing them is a first step, however, towards beginning to tease out connections, and with that, our own precise location and opportunities for agential intervention.

First and foremost is of course the increasingly evident global climate crisis, whose results are overdetermined, thus driving an accelerating upwards spiral of interlocking causes and effects (for instance, global warming cause the ice-caps to melt, which reduces the area of heat-reflecting ice and increases the area of dark, heat-absorbing water, which propels global warming, which causes the ice-caps to melt even faster...) (Friedrich et.al. 2016; Scheffers et.al. 2016). The effects of global warming include rising water levels (Goodell 2017) and concomitant land-scarcity; desertification, drought, food scarcity, with famine also being used as a weapon of war (de Waal 2017), resource conflicts (‘Herders against Farmers’ 2017), forced migration (Missirian and Schlenker 2017; UNCHR 2016); increased fire danger (Davis 2017); and increased seismic activity (Jones 2017), with the risk of tsunamis, resulting in

catastrophes such as Fukushima (Crist 2018: 12). Other global crises include the widening gap between rich and poor driven by the neoliberal economy (Milanovic 2016; Sassen 2014; Streeck 2017), with evidence of poverty in many bastions of social-democratic Euro-America (for the UK see Armstrong 2017; for Germany see Paritätischer Gesamtverband 2017); the prevalence of widespread forms of modern slavery (Kara 2017); looming food scarcity (Ambler-Edwards et al. 2009), and the rise of landgrabbing as a predatory response (Allan et al. eds 2013; Engelert and Gärber, eds 2014); the imposition of Structural Adjustment Policies and regimes of austerity even within Europe, in the wake of the Greek debt crisis (Flassbeck and Lapavistas 2015; Varoufakis 2017); the looming threat of further global financial crises (Richards 2017); a rise of populism, with a concomitant victimization of immigrants and asylum seekers; the retreat of democracy evinced everywhere, even in Euro-American heartlands of parliamentary democracy, especially in the UK and the US (Crouch 2004; Kurlantzick 2013; Streeck 2013), and the disturbing rise of autocracy in Hungary, Poland and Turkey; the rise of conflicts, with long-running wars in Ukraine, Syria, etc (Münkler 2004), with the real danger of nuclear conflicts in Asia, and concomitant catastrophic results for world food supplies (Toon, Robock and Turco 2008); and so on.

Some German commentators suggest that the currently acute sense of crisis is endemic to modernity: a basic characteristic of modernity is the formation of autonomous social systems, each of which has its own logic and language and way of looking at the world; each system (the economy, academia, the law) offers a perspective which is consistent and coherent from its own point of view, but incompatible with that of the others (Luhmann 1984). The absence of any form of synthesis, and thus of a narrative which would give subjects the sense of mastery of an ungovernable world, is the cause of a sense of ‘crisis’ which, according to this systems theory account, besets modernity from the outset (Nassehi 2012). This sociological account is neat and doubtless not without an element of diagnostic accuracy, but harbours a number of problems when it comes therapy.

The first is its tendency simply to reinscribe in the analysis precisely the problem we are trying to address here. Systems theory accepts the reciprocal opacity of societal systems to one another, thus replicating the essentially monadic, isolating processes of modernity identified for instance by Adorno (1971: 88-104) or Rosa (2016: 36-48) at the level of sociological theory, without being able to offer any riposte to it. Despite the ‘system of systems’ that systems theory aims to offer (Luhmann 1997), there are no resources within systems theory for escaping a fundamental systemic solipsism and for making larger connections between systems.

Thus, and this is the second problem, this sort of diagnosis ignores several other central factors. On the one hand, by suggesting that crisis is endemic to modernity, this theory works in a deflationary direction. Certainly in some cases this may be salutary, especially where ‘end times’ or ‘catastrophe’ rhetoric serves obviously manipulative political purposes (e.g. Titlestad 2013). The current global circumstances are however a different case. The current over-determined multi-crises are becoming genuinely more acute, measured, for instance by the increasingly evident effects of global warming, which is impacting climate unpredictability (e.g. more severe storms, fires, seismic activity etc), food scarcity, land loss, resource-based conflicts, and increasing flows of forced migration in empirically measurable ways. Relegating the ambient sense of crisis to an epistemological effect of reciprocal sub-systemic opacity merely reveals the poverty in the fact of genuinely accelerating and escalating chains of economic, climate-driven and geopolitical causes/effects.

This increasing acuteness of global multi-crisis culminates in an imperative to map the current complex and over-determined situation. Though the systems theory approach suggests that the respective languages of the subsystems are mutually incompatible but resist any construction of a master narrative capable of synthesizing them, I would object that this, though appealing in intellectual terms, is empirically unfounded. It is true that the number of systemic crises to be understood is daunting, and that the connections between them are extremely complex. However, though these systems manifestly function according to distinct logics, it is entirely possible, by dint of hard work, to gradually establish the connections between the different phenomena. This practice of ‘diagnostic’ mapping (Nealon 2016: 121) would create chains of connections that I can only present here in a very schematic linear fashion: Climate change→desertification across the Sahel band (Weizman and Sheikh 2015) →food scarcity, resource-based conflicts (e.g. herders, Fulani conflicts) →rising levels of forced migration on the South-South axis, and on the South-North axis (McAdam 2014, McLeman 2013, Wennersten and Robbins 2017,) →part of the growing pressure on the Mediterranean migrant route→increasing closure of borders in Europe, etc→moral obligation upon Germany to keep its borders open in 2015 order to compensate for its bad press over the imposition of SAPs on Greece (Varoufakis) →global dynamic of capital transfer towards a small elite and away from the larger population of any given state (Piketty 2014; Milanovic 2016) → in Germany, a drop in employees’ real wages since the 1990s, a rise in precarious employment and arise in poverty (Bosch and Kalina 2016; Hagelücken 2017; Böckler-Impulse 2017), which fuel the increasing influence of populist discourses of ‘homeland’ (Heimat) (Schüle 2017) at one end of the spectrum, via a retreat from politics (Streeck 2013)

or the rise of populist parties such as the AfD and an alarming rise in anti-immigrant violence (Amnesty 2016), through to the mobilization of *ressentiment* that result, in extreme forms, in terrorist activities (Mishra 2017), etc... These are rudimentary chains of connection (not always of direct causality), but they can be extended *ad infinitum*, because the globe is a single interconnected whole, and its crises are interconnected. Such framings of interconnected can be staged, with a bit of work. One exemplary gesture of such connective contextualization might be Naomi Klein's (2016) avowedly polemical article where she connects carbon fuels, global warming, American wars in the Middle East, the emergence of 'Orientalist' stereotypes and their morphing into contemporary Islamophobic racism, and Europe's willingness to condone the tens of thousands of ongoing refugee deaths in the Mediterranean.

3. Connections: Performatives, Affect and Agency

With my trainee-teacher students, I have tried to construct visual concept maps of such networks of causality so as to militate against the 'segregation' of the classroom. This is a tried-and-tested method of visualization of complex contents, often used under the rubric of 'mind mapping' as a brainstorming technique, or as a means of organizing material (Novak 2012; Wittkower 2011). My implementation of such techniques aims less to organize student-produced material as to reconstruct in schematic form multiple and overlapping connections between global issues. The exact content or nature of those connections (e.g. what is the relationship between desertification and forced migration) is itself complex and defies squeezing into such schematic network-like diagrams: at this point, the classroom activity needs to transit to discussion, and must refer to scholarly sources. The benefit of the visual networking technique is quite simply to create a framework where connections become evident, even if their precise nature needs to be elaborated separately. Given the multiply over-determined natures of these global causalities, the pedagogical results of such conceptual maps are predictably messy and of course open-ended and contingent.

The connective, networking pedagogy I am proposing here means that knowledge must be constructed precisely by making connections, across disciplines, across 'subjects', and above all across the restrictive frontiers of the classroom, and indeed of the nation and of 'Fortress Europe'. Paul Rabinow (2007: 5) suggests that the contemporary moment itself may appear to us as a mode of 'assemblage', constructed in ways that are not definitive or closed off. It is perceived as a collage of events and sites that do not immediately form a whole, but rather, reach us as a fluid, shifting configuration that includes our own place of participatory

observation (see Barad 2007). A networking mode of learning would accept the disparate and fragmented nature of the contemporary world as it presents itself to us, and would set about trying to put together the pieces of the puzzle. It would be a constructivist work of assembly. Unsurprisingly, a provisional ‘bricolage’-mode of learning, or what the Canadian performance artist and theoretician Kapwani Kiwanga (2016: 93) calls a practice of ‘critical assemblage’—connecting things with one another—may then be the most apposite way of structuring the business of making sense of the contemporary in the classroom.

The pedagogical gain of such ‘acts of cognition, not transferrals of information’ (Friere 1972: 53) is clear. Students acquire a sense of the bewildering complexity of global interconnections that is perhaps initially discouraging; at the same time, however, they glimpse the possibility of ascertaining that there *are* connections; this is a distinct cognitive/affective/agential advance on the visceral sense of excessive complexity and resultant opacity and the concomitant loss of agency that is experienced. The usage of conceptual maps offers the potential to locate oneself on the map. This provides a sense of locatedness within a world that is otherwise opaque and resists any sense of synthesis or overview: here I am, in a classroom that is part of a network of complex webs of causality. Such a recognition of connectedness finally offers a fabric for agency, however limited or local that may be (there is no scale of effectiveness or of responsibility or of relevance for political action: this is something that must be decided by the individual; of more importance is to recognize oneself as a political agent within a network of interconnections).

The history of scientific progress over the last century of so has been that of the successive rediscovery of the unsuspected connectedness and entanglement of things that the Enlightenment assumed were unconnected with each other: time and space, gravity and light (relativity), body and mind (psychosomatic medicine), and the entirety of planetary processes (radioactivity, pollution, global warming). The global system is an interconnected whole (Capra and Luisi 2014). Affect theory (Clough and Halley, eds 2007; Massumi 2002; Gregg and Seigworth eds 2010) explores the multiple connections that enable entities to exert agency and to take effect upon one another, to make something happen. Affect theory is far more than a theory of the ‘emotions’, although the ways in which subjects are connected to each other by non-cognitive processes (whence the double meaning of ‘feeling’) (Damasio [1994] 2000; 2003) is one part of that theory. The connections identified by affect theory extend well beyond humans and their cognates (e.g. domestic animals), enveloping all beings, thus producing a theory of interlinked agency in which non-human and non-sentient entities feel, think, speak and act in social networks (Cruikshank 2005; Latour 1986; 2005; Ingold

2011). Affect theory restores connections between entities and acknowledges that these connections are vital to distributed agency (Hodder 2012). What I am suggesting here is that the classroom is also a place of such connectedness and agency. The classroom is connected to the outside world, not separated from it. Learning takes place in ways that are driven by affect (e.g. ‘classroom atmosphere or climate’), but in a much broader sense than is currently acknowledged (e.g. Arnold 1999). Recently, Hartmut Rosa and Wolfgang Endres (Rosa 2017; Rosa and Endres 2016) have used the device of ‘resonance’ to describe an enhanced sense of connectedness within the classroom. What I am proposing here would integrate such ‘pedagogy of resonance’, but would extend it to go beyond the classroom walls into the world of the natural environment and the world of politics and crisis. Rosa’s (2017) sociology of ‘Weltbeziehungen’ (‘relations to the world’) tends to privatize such resonances, rather than politicizing and globalizing them.

Making connections in a pedagogical context is a speech act: it doesn’t merely describe those connections (as a locutionary speech act); it situates the self (via an illocutive speech act) within those connections, and by making them, it makes something else happen (thus making it a perlocutionary speech act) (Austin 1962). The making of pedagogical connections is not merely cognitive, but has real effects, partly at the emotional level, but more significantly to the extent that a connection recognized is a connection endowed with an enhanced form of multi-directional and multi-actantial agency (Hickey-Moody and Page 2016; Sedgwick 2003). Michel Serres (2008: 124) claims: ‘To perceive beings fills them with being. Simply by their perceptions, human beings—living things—in this case, women, fabricate negentropy, produce information, and thereby oppose the irreversible degradation of things.’ Perception is an active process that is always already intentional, interventionist, and interactive (Bohm and Peat 2011: 53-96).

The making of cognitive connections thus has two interrelated effects: it opens up connections in places where separation was previously assumed to be the governing factor; and it introduces new co-actors where agency was presumed to be absent; in this way, it extends the scope and form of political agency (Massumi 2015). It thus inherently militates against the underlying structures of racism, both in re-establishing connectivity where racism imposes putatively essentialist divisions, and in acknowledging personhood of all beings (Viveiros 2014; 2016) where racism reduces the other to the status of non-person, in the most extreme version to the status of animal (Mbembe 2001) or to that of thing (Mbembe 2017).

4. The Classroom in the World

Having sketched the way a connective practice might work, and what effects it might have, I now return to the classrooms where I currently work. I am a trainer of future teachers within a German university English department: my students qualify as high school teachers who will mainly work in the upper secondary division, where they will be teaching adolescents with a reasonably-well developed palette of academic literacies and a fair grasp of contemporary socio-political (perhaps less economic) issues. Paradoxically, however, there is little sense, within German schools seen as institutions (individual teachers are always a different case) that a number of basic givens upon which educational philosophies and practices are built have fundamentally shifted. The world outside has changed, but the institution is so disconnected from it that these changes have not registered within educational policy and institutional practice. Several interconnected examples will suffice.

For instance, the seismic effects of transformations of the nature of work as a result of computerization (Frey and Osborne 2013; Job-Futuromat 2016), and the massive effects of global warming on human population displacement (Nealon 2016: 121), are still off the horizon for the German ‘Gymnasium’ system (i.e. the sector of a streamed, stratified education system that qualified students for university entrance), whose frames of reference, it would seem, are those of the 1970s and 1980s, with close to full employment in classical middle-class professions in a sector of an employment market closed to immigrants. With regard to migration, the German school system across the board remains predominantly monolingual in approach (Gogolin 1994), disavowing the multilingual learner in every three pupils in its classrooms (Chlosta 2003; Fürstenau et al 2003; Schroeder 2007), using textbooks that present children with a ‘migrant background’ in discriminatory terms (Niehaus et.al. 2015), and streaming pupils with such a ‘migration background’ away from university entrance towards manual professions (e.g. Agarwala, Schenk and Spiewak 2016: 61; Freidooni 2016; OECD/EU 2015). Despite long-standing calls for a ‘pedagogy of diversity’ (‘Pädagogik der Vielfalt’; Prengel 1993) the German school system remains persistently inured to its own social complexity. In this way, the German school system stubbornly ignores the realities of world outside its walls—and de facto inside: in many cases, refugee children now sit alongside permanent residents and citizens in German primary or secondary schools, if they are not kept at arm’s length in in specially segregated classes (‘Mehr als...’ 2016), not to mention children with a first- or second-generation ‘migration background’ (now roughly a third of the school population and rising; Statistisches Bundesamt 2016: 37). The systemic ‘racism’ that is endemic all across the German school system and enforced by its stratified structures is thus closely linked to the educational system’s hermetic isolation

from broader social realities—even when those realities have long since invaded the school at the level of the ‘real existing’ classroom. The school system itself, an integral part of German bourgeois society, is thus structurally moulded by what Adorno (1971: 100-2), once called ‘bourgeois indifference’ (‘bürgerliche Kälte’). Such ‘coldness’ is evinced, for instance, in a lack of empathetic imagination on the part of youth workers that prevents them from appreciating the effects of trauma and the long-term psychic stress imposed by the constantly looming threat of deportation on their young refugee and asylum-seeker clients (Terkessidis 2017: 62). The school system is fundamentally disconnective, and negatively reproductive—of reified knowledge and of exclusionary white middle-class social structures.

How would such a practice of (re)connective pedagogy look concretely? Let me imagine, in what follows, how such a cognitive-mapping or -networking in the classroom might be inaugurated. Once again, my proposals repose upon experimental discussions with my own teacher-trainee students. Rather than taking on the raft of global issues that were addressed in section 2 above, it might be worth beginning with a more local problematic, namely, the reification of the classroom itself. The construction of the absent networks could be launched by asking a number of questions about the connections customarily elided by discourses subtending classroom practices. Let me re-imagine my opening blackboard/fourth-wall as a site upon which incessant question-marks are inscribed, each one demanding that the learner-questioner traverse the blackboard-barrier to see what lies on the other side. In the English-teacher-trainee (or German-teacher-trainee) classroom, these questions might include the following: What language is studied in this classroom, and what language is the medium of study? Is that language a medium of exclusion or inclusion? What languages are spoken by the learners in the classroom, in particular when they are outside the classroom? Do those languages have *droit de cité* in the classroom? How do those language-zones (those of the classroom, those of the street or the home, those of the languages themselves) interact? What histories of migration or interculturality are indexed by those languages? What sort of material (epoch, topic, genre, complexity) is studied in the classroom, in which language and what sort of language? What context does it emerge from? What does it presuppose about us as the learners themselves? Why is it being taught? Is it felt to be relevant to the learners’ life-worlds? Which contemporary issues does it address, however tangentially, or not address? Is this question asked, explicitly, in the classroom? If not, why? How is the material relevant to the learners’ possible professional fields? What might those fields be? Do those possible fields assume about the (class, gender, ethnic, religious) identity? What can we say about the broader economic conditions they index (security, precarity, mobility, etc.)? What do they

assume about the identity of the audiences that will be the recipients of those professional practices? Do they exclude some audiences? What mechanisms of exclusion may be at work beyond the classroom that are already implicit in the material and how it is learnt? Who selects or assigns the material, who has the right to change it? Who has the power to make decisions at the other interfaces discussed, and why? And so on...

It will be clear that this set of questions works by successive apposition, starting from any one of many possible points, and following routes of possible inquiry, 'making connections, drawing lines, mapping articulations, between different domains, discourses and practices' to quote Grossberg (1994: 18) again. Such questions follow the rhizomatic pattern of networked cognitive diagnosis. There is no ultimate point of arrival or arrest, for each connection provokes further questions. Indeed, in such an exercise, the question *is* the mode of connection. The question questions the specious segregation of the classroom. Such networks of question constitute 'critical assemblage' (Kiwanga 2016) because they link diverse domains by asking not about the 'core' or 'essence' of the domain (i.e. confirming and reinforcing its operative assumptions) but by asking about its 'outside', the surfaces where it meets other domains. These questions do not merely interrogate, they provoke answer/questions by which the learners 'assemble' knowledge, creating mosaics of interrelated understandings of interrelationships. Asking about the 'outside' of a practice—its underlying but unsaid exclusive mechanisms, and the effects that flow productively from those unsaids—constitutes a critical 'edge'. 'Edge' is meant literally as a frontier that apposes two zones to one another. The 'black-' or 'whiteboard' I spoke of above becomes just such an edge: a border that is visible as such precisely because it adjoins a world beyond. This is a 'border pedagogy' (Giroux 1991). This form of 'critical' thinking is not merely negative: conceptually at least, it brings populations back together by making explicit the lines of demarcation that in fact join them. Thus, for instance, the border 'native speaker of German'/'non-native speaker of German', may be presupposed and enacted by the material taught in the classroom, the teacher's ethnic identity, the teacher training inscribed in her/his person, the systems of prohibition that bear upon languages other than German in the classroom and in society, the role of German as a gatekeeper in grading, in access to higher education, in access to jobs, in future professional trajectories, in citizenships rights and acquisition procedures ... and so on. Such a discussion is not merely conceptual, but has material effects, transforming the dynamics of a class group, and its own multiple relationships to its respective life-worlds.

Thus the nexus of the topography of the classroom and that of the world may present a way of entering into an engagement, both critical and constructive, with the immensely complex and over-determined terrain of the contemporary crisis. Race is a domain of specious segregation that provides a site for a humanities that is both critical, analytical, but also conducive to considerations of the nexus of identity and agency: this is so because race gathers together issues of nationalism, identity, employment, exploitation, immigration, economics, futurities, violence, and terror. To that extent, race may allow the ‘blackboard’ to become a desegregated ‘contact zone’ (Pratt 1992: 6-7), thereby facilitating the incremental, never-final, never-assured, never-teleologically-preordained transformation of the fabric of their immediate, always politicized, environments: what García Canclini (2014) names a process of ‘imminence’ which makes itself ‘immanent’ in the classroom. If not there, where? And if not now, when?

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