

New Sociology: Journal of Critical Praxis

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This issue of *New Sociology* examines life in states of liminality and uncertainty, seeking to understand what it means to live in flux across experiences of transnationality, gender, queerness and disability (to name a few). How does it feel, we wonder, to be in a constant transitional state, always traveling but never arriving? What kind of possibilities emerge from this ebb and flow of social and political betweenness? And how do those living in such continuous flux come to define and mobilize resistance?

In Flux: Experiences of Social and Political Betweenness explores how systems of oppression subjugate people to states of unbeing and unbecoming, allowing the specter of dismissal and erasure to loom large. At any given moment, these lives are at risk of political scrutiny, targeted violence or exclusion. The unrelenting angst about how broader social and political churnings will impact their everyday lived reality can be overbearing, if not debilitating. We believe that it is important to share these stories, to amplify those marginalized voices who are “talking back” to the unjust displacement and abjection that constitutes their lives. We desire to go beyond what we are supposed to know (and *how* we are supposed to know it) by embracing the messiness of humanity.

The theme of this issue was inspired by the instability and anxiety of the present political moment(s). Diplomatic decisions, and social and political developments constantly call the rights, wellbeing, and autonomy of non-white, queer, trans, sex worker, poor, and disabled communities into question. At the time this issue is being edited, genocidal, settler colonial violence runs rampant in Gaza, depriving Palestinian people of crucial resources, subjecting those who have been detained to horrific abuse, and taking countless

lives. Additionally, for members of the Palestinian diaspora and allies who choose to fight the institutional forces that allow this violence to continue, the surveillance, violence and punishments that accompany this kind of activism pose a constant threat. At the same time, there are many silenced genocides across Africa. In Sudan, Congo, and Tigray, millions of people have been murdered by state sanctioned violence, some over decades, with almost no recognition from either mainstream or social media. There are more genocides taking place, of displaced people all around the world, but it seems that mass death has become so commonplace, that in this introduction, we can only name a few.

We also see efforts to erase and disappear queer and trans people in numerous countries, including our own. As right-wing groups and mobilizations grow, social justice milestones that were hard won through decades of LGBTQ+ activism hang in the balance, and hateful, exclusionary projects are carried out in the name of “protecting the children.” Amid efforts to restrict their access to healthcare and support, young queer and trans peoples’ voices become obscured as their lives and identities become political battlegrounds.

Finally, the uneven and unjust distribution of citizenship rights creates precarity in the lives of many. Around the world, non-white people, people with precarious migration ‘status’, the unhoused, and people with disabilities face a constant threat of violence and imprisonment, as carceral systems expand, drain public resources, and overstep basic rights and freedoms. In short, the social and political struggles of the moment have compelled us to use this issue to find wonder and meaning in all the uncertainty.

This volume is divided into three themes, each containing four pieces, followed by a book review. The themes are: *Between*, *Beyond*, and *Against*. These spatio-temporal terms are used to describe

the pieces' relationship to flux. The first theme, *Between* is intended to capture the process of realizing or reflecting upon one's experience of flux and of subsequently navigating continuums of fixity and stability. The section opens with Eric Goodchild's "Indomitable Colour Schemes," the volume's featured piece. In this visual poetic essay, the author evokes the feeling of instability by taking the reader through the challenges and traumas that have shaped their work and life. Colour, negative space, and discordance are all used to represent the fluidity of survival and to create art from a social position conditioned by volatility and vulnerability.

The next piece is entitled "Leaving, *Again*," a reflective piece that recounts the author Areej Alshammiry's emotional journey of leaving Kuwait, her native land. It captures the bittersweet reality of living between two worlds, mapping some of the struggles she felt as a result of leaving loved ones behind in Kuwait in order to build another life in so-called Canada. Following this we have "A Love Letter to the US," by Mari Sobrewal, who uses the popular concept of the American dream to problematize ideas about citizenship and belonging. A reflection of Sobrewal's personal experience, this essay highlights the importance of understanding the roles national histories play in perpetuating colonial narratives. To conclude the section, we have "A Sudden Epiphany," by Joddi Alden. This photo poem offers a contemplative reflection on a nighttime walk through the famed city of Vienna, capturing the capital's many cultural achievements alongside its dark colonial roots and genocidal afflictions. Balancing the beauty of the present and the horrors of the past, Alden depicts a harrowing moment of realization as felt in a world of harrowing instability.

The next theme, *Beyond*, explores the generative possibilities of flux. The pieces in this section engage with flux as transition, change, and becoming. In this sense, they invite us to think about how betweenness offers opportunities to create and nurture something new. In "Purple Basil Lemonade," Calvin Prowse offers a collection of stories and personal reflections that speak to the community, loss, memory and dreams felt among Mad and disabled people, developed through the process of making and sharing purple basil

lemonade. In "The Limbo Party," Giuliana Racco captures a collaborative video project created with Tivoli Föreningen, a self-organized group of refugees from different countries. The piece considers how spatio-temporal concepts such as limbo and twilight can be metaphorically connected to the state(s) of waiting for asylum.

In "The Sex Worker Historian," Evania Pietrangelo-Porco similarly captures her multimedia collaborative effort of the same name, using her skills and experiences as a trained historian to draw attention to the oppression of sex workers. Pietrangelo-Porco showcases how the project uses various social media platforms to fight against the erasure of sex workers and their histories. Lastly, in "Dawn," Erik Brownrigg uses poetry to engage the experience of time and transition in the search for utopia, using the transformative beauty of a sunrise to symbolize the fluid nature of time and to present a transformative outlook on life through the shift between night and day.

Against is the final theme, and it is used to describe a process of becoming defiant through a position of flux. The pieces in this section show how flux can be a site of resistance. The first piece, "I am myself," is a personal narrative in which author Sasha Askarian reflects on a childhood experience of being physically restrained, representing the broader themes of bodily autonomy and the struggle of self-expression. Showcasing the unique experiences of being an immigrant youth, Askarian's words astutely capture the necessity of recognizing and asserting one's right over one's body. The next piece is "Becoming Unapologetically Metis," where author Jolene Heida poetically reflects on the novel *In Search of April Raintree*. Heida recounts experiences of the complex and violent processes associated with Indigenous identity formation in a settler colonial state and engages with her memories as a means of resistance.

The third piece of the theme is "Nihilist Potato," which features a collection of original Instagram memes created and curated by Yaqing Helen Han. The memes use humour and Dadaism to delve into the author's personal troubles and aspirations, and to resist oppressive structures through satire and joy. To conclude the section, we have a poem entitled "African Mother Scholar," by

Runeni R. Mangwiza Zvemhara, which challenges colonial narrative structures and epistemologies. By decolonizing her relationship to knowledge, both of the world and of herself, Mangwiza Zvemhara embraces an identity that is resistant to the Eurocentric, patriarchal structures that seek to define her pursuits.

Finally, the volume concludes with a book review of Jennifer L. Morgan's *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, by Kamilah Clayton. In this review, Clayton explores how Morgan's work examines the complex and sometimes contradicting narratives surrounding Black women's bodies, which were developed through the violence of racial capitalism and the plantation system and persist today.

Combined, the brilliant and vibrant pieces of this issue capture the contradictions and upheavals in everyday lives, as they shift between states of being and unbeing, becoming and unbecoming, stability and instability, here and not; they tell stories of hope and resilience, resistance and belonging. As such, they speak to the different ways in which lives in flux can help us better understand broader social and political forces. The

reflections, stories, poetry, art, and collaborations found in this issue provide opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be in flux, and how oscillating between worlds should not render us disposable, as it does now, but act as a harbinger of hope and futurity, enabling us to see *Between, Beyond, and Against*.

We would like to thank the authors, creatives, and dreamers who contributed to our fifth issue, *In Flux: Experiences of Social and Political Betweenness*. A special thank you also goes to Eric Goodchild for creating the cover photo for the issue and to Namitha Rathinappillai for their extensive copy edits. Most of all, we want to thank the readers of *New Sociology* for making issues like this possible. Five years ago, *New Sociology* was a dream, and today, it's a dream with more than a hundred publications. Thank you.

Naiomi Perera, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, Muskaan Khurana, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, and Shreyashi Ganguly, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, with Jade Da Costa, NS Founder and Editor-In-Chief.

ⁱ See bell hooks' "Talking Back" (1986) in *Discourse* Vol. 8, pp. 123–128, where she develops the idea of "talking back" as a means of resistance. As she argues, "moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized,

the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible" (p. 128).