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Nowak, Katharina

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HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

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Katharina Nowak

Disentangling Participation in 'Local Organic' Food Activism in London

On the Intersecting Dynamics of Whiteness, Coloniality and Methodologies that Constitute Ecological Identities

Abstract: The way *we* grow and consume food has become a key arena where concepts of nature, sustainability and identity are being negotiated. But who is the "we" in this discourse? The London-based local organic food network Organiclea that seeks to facilitate a reconnection with nature through food growing provides the empirical platform for exploring this question and its related territories of participation in such food spaces and understandings of race, nature and culture. Building on the work of US food justice theorists who have introduced framings of whiteness and coloniality in relation to the exclusiveness of local organic food practice, this paper asks what it means to engage in such food activism in light of intersectionality that informs any identity and therefore stance towards food and nature. By reviewing and embedding these conceptualisations within a UK context with the help of inductive interviews and intersectionality as an empirical paradigm, a deeper understanding of racialised (ecological) identity formation behind ecological identities and the role of scientific methodologies in upholding subordinated diaspora subjectivities can be brought forth. This study therefore provides important subtle layers to gender studies' signature framework of intersectionality and the disproportionate participation on the part of diaspora subjects in the design and operation of local organic food practice.

Keywords: local organic food networks; food justice; intersectionality; whiteness; coloniality.

Alle sind willkommen aber wer MACHT am Ende mit?
Über intersektionale Dynamiken von Weißsein, Kolonialität und Forschungsmethoden hinter ökologischen Identitäten in einem Londoner sozial-urbanen Landwirtschaftsprojekt

Zusammenfassung: Wie *wir* unsere Lebensmittel anbauen und konsumieren ist zu einer wichtigen Arena geworden, in der Naturverständnisse sowie Nachhaltigkeits- und Identitätskonzepte ausgehandelt werden. Doch wer ist dieses diskursive ‚*Wir*'? Das Londoner sozial-urbane Landwirtschaftsprojekt Organiclea, das sich durch den lokalen Anbau von Lebensmitteln für eine Aufhebung der Entfremdung von der Natur einsetzt, dient dabei als empirische Plattform, um dieser Frage samt ihrer thematischen Schnittstellen wie Teilnahme, Rassialisierungsprozessen sowie Natur- und Kulurverständnissen nachzugehen. Die theoretische Anlehnnung und Weiterführung orientiert sich an dem US-fundierten Wissenskanon zu *Food Justice*, der damit begonnen hat, erste Rahmungen zu Weißsein und Kolonialität in Bezug auf diese Art der Verbreitung von Bio-Gemüse anzubieten. Dieser Artikel überarbeitet jene Konzeptualisierungen und beginnt, sie innerhalb des britischen sozial-urbanen Landwirtschaftsdiskurses mit Hilfe von induktivem Befragungsmaterial und Intersektionalität als empirisches Paradigma einzubetten. Dadurch kann ein tieferes Verständnis von rassialisierter (ökologischer) Identitätsbildung und der Rolle von Forschungsmethoden in der Aufrechterhaltung von untergeordneten diasporischen Subjektivitäten hervorgebracht werden, um Lücken in Bezug auf die Exklusivität und unverhältnismäßige Teilnahme seitens diasporischer Subjekte in der Gestaltung solcher Initiativen zu füllen.

Schlagwörter: sozial-urbane Landwirtschaft; Intersektionalität; Weißsein; rassialisierte Identitätsbildung; Kolonialität.

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> I think it is beautiful for bringing people together that wouldn't normally come together because there is quite a big mix at Hawkwood of ages and backgrounds, not as full as it could be. It doesn't represent the whole community in this area, but I think it is a good sign. I think they are very open in that way. (V5)

This account describes how one participant perceives Hawkwood, the food growing site of the local organic food network Organiclea in Northeast London that can be seen as part of a wider food movement that challenges the doings of the corporate agri-food system by cultivating more food locally in line with permaculture principles and skillshare activities. Even though it is not considered to be representative of the demographics of the local area Waltham Forest in London, this food growing space is seen as being inviting and offering a place where a diverse group of people can meet and learn in a non-preachy way about alternative ways of doing food. This extract is indicative of the key themes of exclusiveness and white elephants in the room[1] that will be explored in this paper through empirical intersectionality, whose overall aim is to provide some patterns of explanation as to why some people participate in doing local organic food more than others. The research objective is not about discovering whether Organiclea and its related local food outlets are fully representative of their local demographics, which partially adds to the problem in that it reifies essentialist notions of 'race' that are based on dichotomous categories and reinforces the allure that racialisation is undone merely by focusing on proportional participation (Moore et al. 2003; Reardon 2005). Rather it is about the subtle workings of whiteness that intersects with the social process of doing research behind how such a local organic food space is being perceived on the part of both white and diaspora participants, as well as myself the white academic. Drawing on the UK racial discourse, *white* as a political category that refers to a culturally signified construct and representation of identity and the self-appointed term *diaspora* are chosen deliberately in this study to make the negotiation of agency and subjectivity visible. In particular, diaspora implies an anti-dichotomous political expression that challenges the binary logic of many methodologies that run the risk of essentialising the equally self-appointed terms Black and People of Colour as well as the latter's problematic connotation of 'colour' in relation to 'race' or ethnicity that is – in many British framings – considered an outdated and offensive remainder of the 1960s (McCall 2005; Gillborn 2008). Out of the realisation that the divide between essentialist and non-essentialist notions of such political identities had become obstructive, the idea of diaspora as a mode of representation and analytical framework was proposed by key Black British scholars such as Paul Gilroy to emphasise the pluralistic and diverse character of the non-white British population that share histories and continuities of oppression and a common diaspora space in Britain (Gilroy 2000; Malik 2001). It is within this context that I have decided to employ the terms white and diaspora in this study to juggle the area of conflict around these social positions. The perpetual trade-off between reinforcing dualistic subject dichotomies of diaspora

and white *and* needing such binary categories to highlight the continuous damage brought about by the social reality of racialised difference (Alexander/James 2011) is something that I have been struggling with during every stage of this research process.

Overall, making this damage more visible is a key motivation of this study. US food justice theorists and activists have begun to explore that damage in the whitened coding and discourses of both the US mainstream and alternative food movement that clearly mark and encode its related spaces and arenas as white. My argument will extend their work by embedding such food justice framings within a UK context and opening up these themes of damage to broader mechanisms of intersecting social relations around whiteness and research processes. It will build on my initial empirical study with ten subjects involved with Organiclea that I conducted in 2012, which looked at how they talk about or imagine inclusionary and exclusionary practices as well as the very practice of doing local organic food itself. I started asking for interviews through convenience sampling with an eye for a fairly balanced composition of diaspora and white research subjects (see appendix for an overview). To avoid reifications of categories of difference, the interviewees were not presented with any categories, which means that the research objective was examined from a sideways direction to reduce the interview bias.

After applying feminist intersectional reflexivity to some of their accounts and my very own role in conducting this study, this paper now attempts to carve out how whiteness, coloniality and scientific methodologies intersect to bring about one-dimensional spaces and subjectivities. I would like to stress that I have no intention of generating shame at Organiclea or in the wider local organic food movement for I am aware we are all socialised into a colonial/modern world system that permeates our epistemologies with boundaries and dichotomies. Rather, I seek to lay bare my own learning process of the workings of whiteness and coloniality given my own white academic identity and how this relates to the absence or presence of voices and epistemologies in this study, as well as the difficulty of negotiating that fine line between 'speaking about' the diaspora and 'speaking nearby' them (Chen/Minh-ha 1992). Even though such feminist intrapersonal reflexivity (Hill-Collins 2000) cannot magically do away with dichotomies, it works as a useful tool to depict and analyse mechanisms of assigning agency within the very research process itself and the role of expert knowledge in creating the diaspora/white dichotomy in the first place.

Situating Local Organic Food Practice within the Arena of Whiteness

The Organiclea project started in 2001 with the aim of cultivating more food locally in line with permaculture principles and skillshare activities in the London borough of Waltham Forest, featuring three project outlets: the food growing site Hawkwood, the Hornbeam café as the project's community space with a weekly market stall as well as the initiative Common Sense Growers that represents its outreach arm through which they provide direct training to

organisations seeking to establish their own food growing projects. In addition to paid project workers and apprentices, Organiclea relies on a large number of volunteers for its growing, processing and selling activities who either find out about the project themselves or get referred in by social service agencies. The initiative can be seen as part of a wider food movement that has built strong and sound opposition to the corporate monoculture behind our food and taste. Given the multivocality of such alternative food initiatives in the wider literature and discourse, I decided to employ the term *local organic food network* in this study as it best captures the type of activism championed by the concurrent UK food narrative. Framed by Seyfang (2006), it symbolises the recommendations for action prescribed by contemporary sustainability discourses that consider buying local and organic as the signature public arena for change towards less damaging socio-ecological food production and consumption patterns. Whilst providing the normative and positivist foundations for this proliferation of organic foodways in the first place, the Northern academy has also begun to critique their rise. By applying a cultural politics lens to the common rhetoric around what is referred to as alternative food activism in the US literature, Slocum (2006) and Guthman (2011) have argued that most of the discourses associated with alternative food signal to a *white* subject and thus code the operations and spaces of alternative food as essentially *white*. In particular, the romanticised portrayal of agricultural work employed in that discourse blanks out the explicit racialisation of the United States' land and agricultural labour relationships. 'Putting your hands in the soil' is thus almost predestined to conjure up mental pictures of slave labour for People of Colour as opposed to the rosy nostalgia of 'working the lands' (Guthman 2011).

Such colonial framings tend to be largely unacknowledged by the *white middle class* demographic that dominates these alternative food initiatives in the US and tie into the inherent discrimination of non-white actors in that they determine the rhetoric, spaces and broader activism of agri-food transformation, thereby crushing other narratives (Slocum 2006; Guthman 2011; Alkon/Agyeman 2011; Harper forthcoming 2017). Such concerns and conversations are, however, strikingly noteworthy for their absence in the literature and organic food practice in the UK and wider European context despite considerable materialised and discursive similarities in how such alternative foodways have come about and operate. This paper seeks to start filling that gap by exploring how we can interpret some of the enmeshed processes that tend to marginalise specific social groups in the design and operation of local organic food networks. While the historiographies of land and agricultural relationships in the UK differ significantly from the US context, whiteness as a global power structures imposes its weight and burden as much when rendered visible through activism, lived experience and scholarship. Most critical to this research aim is the prevailing notion of ecological sustainability in the majority of expressions of the local organic food narrative in the UK and its failure to understand food as more than merely a nutritional and ecological commodity, but instead as an array of social relations. By taking part in culturally defined patterns of consuming

food, individuals act out their own identities and memberships in specific circles (Delind 2006; Douglas 1996). Food therefore holds a unique position within the environmental discourse, as it shapes personal identities, including racialised identities, in a manner that other socio-ecological issues such as waste, energy and water simply do not. While the way food practices act as a marker of one's diaspora positionality and hybrid identity has been explored in the European academy in fields such as food or diaspora and cultural studies, whiteness as a marker of food practice has been largely void and/or un-named in these research arenas despite its global sway as a power structure. The food justice realm helps to shed light on such discursively unmarked food realms. A better understanding of these processes is urgently needed since bringing about change in the way we produce and consume food will require strong coalitions among *all* social groups in society. At the same time, food justice research may also contribute to a deeper and theoretically more diverse understanding of racialised identity formation given the intimate role of food in the making and performing of personal and collective identities (Alkon/Agyeman 2011). This is particularly important due to the marginalisation of the workings of white agency within the European academy. In exploring and naming whiteness as a marker of food practice, I am hoping to add important new dimensions to the discourse on food in the UK and Europe that revolves almost exclusively around eco-sustainability and/or how racialised diaspora identities are negotiated and ascribed around food.

Becoming Aware of my Role as the Researcher through Re-calibrating Intersectionality

While it can be argued that intersectionality merely reframed an old problem of how numerous types of oppression shape the experiences of women of colour and other marginalised subjects, it did pioneer a unique approach and has been described as the most profound contribution of gender studies to society (McCall 2005). This is because it connected the dots between critical feminist theory on the ramifications of the multiple oppressions and postmodern feminist thought with its methodologies that deconstruct categories and lay bare the pitfalls of the dualistic logic in creating and remedying social disparities (Brah/Phoenix 2004; Choo/Ferree 2010; Hancock 2013). I therefore position intersectionality as an empirical paradigm (Hancock 2013) and it is this epistemological dimension of intersectionality that I want to highlight and develop further in this paper as opposed to merely drawing on single aspects of the triumvirate of race, class and gender seperately in explaining processes of marginalisation. Re-calibrating intersectionality in this way is built on an understanding of how Eurocentric science emerged in opposition to epistemes that were invalidated and/or erased (Santos 2010), and groups of people that were racialised, gendered and/or othered with the aim of producing a rational and empiricist understanding of perceivable phenomena with an immanent binary counterpart (Hill-Collins 2000; Davis 2008). The latter part also applies to most critical academic disciplines including gender studies. When transferring this epistemological insight behind

intersectionality to my empirical data, a deeply diverse realm such as a local organic food network is reconstructed through polarised categories, for example, white vs. diaspora subjects, the academic's expert knowledge vs. the research participant's lay knowledge. Intersectionality's commitment to the 'situatedness of all knowledge' (Haraway 1988) seeks to reverse that process of binary abstraction so fundamental to Eurocentric science by exploring the relations among what are normally considered separate dimensions (Hill-Collins 2000). This can be attempted by extending intersectional analyses by the pivilege-related categories of *whiteness and coloniality* to generate complex patterns from the onset as opposed to inferring from the often dominating triumvirate race-class-gender with its focus on what puts others at a disadvantage (Hill-Collins 2000; Staunæs 2003; Mehrotra 2010;). In this way, whiteness and coloniality stand for relational patterns of power that seek to describe the cultural, economic and epistemic subordination of racialised/ethnic groups by dominant racialised/ethnic groups that continues to play out in contemporary social realities *with or without* the presence of colonial administration (Grosfoguel 2007). Such a reading of whiteness and coloniality does not consider them independent from class, but rather as fabricating and being fabricated by economic inequalities, emphasising the entangled substantiation racialised positionalities can take on. All three therefore can work together to materialise an intersectional process that fulfills the material and aesthetic needs of white-identified subjects (Harper forthcoming 2017).

Adding to the empirical intersectionality with its strong epistemological component that I draw on in this paper is the *academic's* reflexivity by making them embrace their own intersectional position of power in the very conceptualisation and conduction of their research projects (Hill-Collins 2000; Lykke 2005), which has become a key motivation for my scholarship. In developing an overview of my interviews and observations for this study, I looked for emergent multi-level patterns and structured my results accordingly, making sure that the literature, the research subjects' understandings of Organiclea and their as well as my own white positionality inform my data analysis. This process combines both deductive and inductive methodological elements as a result of different levels of causality during the entire research process. The very idea for this study with its analytical focus on whiteness and intersectionality in local organic food networks evolved deductively from studying the literature and my own experience. Yet the extent to which participants are affected by intersecting social relations around whiteness and research processes needed to be explored through inductive interviews and phases of analyses to do justice to the complexity within, between and beyond categories.

Speaking Whiteness to the Righteousness behind Local Organic Food

The 'post-racial'[2] theoretical strand that emerged in Britain in the 1980s gave rise to a new focus on the previously undertheorised fact that we all inhabit a racialised space, which rendered whiteness a racialised and cultural identity of its own (Dyer 1997; Byrne 2006). While there has been a surge in whiteness studies in the US since the early 1990s, this realm continues to hold a rather isolated position in the UK and the wider European cultural and racial discourses despite the Eurocentric roots of white supremacy in bringing about enslavement, colonisation and cultural prototypes. This paper seeks to bring whiteness back into the wider European discussion given its continued destructiveness, which can be observed in current debates about refugees and migrants in both the German and wider European discourse. Whiteness can be defined as an ideology, a marker of privilege that upholds the power or the use of power of white people without necessarily being the effect of their conscious endeavours (Leonardo 2007). It follows from this account that drawing on whiteness as a concept is not to find out who is 'racist' or not, but rather to create an understanding as to the effect of white agency on others (McKinney 2005; Frankenberg 1993), which effectively means that "a white voice stands in relationship of power to a [diaspora] voice" (Byrne 2006: 5-6). This is in line with food justice's wider aim to create a deeper understanding of racialised identity formation, for which I employ the local organic food network Organiclea as a window.

Drawing on the empirical body of work, most interviewees expressed an understanding of the white middle class bias of Organiclea by implicitly or explicitly referring to a dominance of white subjects at Organiclea's outlets. One white volunteer notes that "there is definitely a white middle class core hold" (V7) while another diaspora volunteer adds: "They seem to be varied, but then maybe a lot of them are local, kinda middle class white people/ not all of them. [...] If I was to say if it represents this area of Walthamstow, then no." (V5) In addition, a diaspora subject states:

> People find it strange that I volunteer there [at the Hornbeam café]. But then when I say I'm not the only Black person/ [and] there is that Somalian boy who is there every now and then this person and that person. And then when I say also, there is even this person and that/(...) Yeah/ (...) there is lots of people there who are just completely different from one another. (V9)

While this narrative illustrates how he has to justify to his friends why he volunteers at a café that is coded as white, it also reconfirms that the Hornbeam café is a predominantly white place. This also shows in this diaspora subject's account: "So that Pakistani teenager is a totally different/ (laughs) youth on the stall." (V5)

When trying to explain the white bias, one white volunteer referred to the class markers of education and income:

> The whole white middle class thing I think partly is that it extends from the idea about organic and organic gives you health and it costs more so these people are getting educated to know that organic is better for your health and secondly can afford to pay for that extra couple of quid. (V7)

This overlaps with the standard line of argumentation in organic food scholarship in Britain (Seyfang 2006; Padel et al. 2005) and is also employed by the white demographic involved in US-based alternative food institutions (Guthman 2011; Alkon/Agyeman 2011). Others concluded that it must be down to everyone's personal interest. "It is not your choice personally, it is kind of an interest." (A1) "I definitely think that you need to be leaning towards that type of interest already." (V5). Later on in our conversation the diaspora volunteer embeds the disinterest in 'digging' within the broader context at the meta level:

> I know a lot of kids, for example, who might say 'oh I'm not going to dig in a field'. [...] They are happy with buying food from the supermarket. So it is not just saying this is a good way to live. It is not the way that a lot of people want to live. So I suppose it is negotiating all of that and bringing the ideals to the reality. Because for me, I love it and it is great, but not everyone is going to love that. (laughs) I suppose a lot just stopped farming because it was hard and they wanted to have an easier life. (V5)

Here, she critically reflects on why it may not be appealing to some people by hinting at the local organic food movement's romanticising of horticulture and gardening work, which translates into a rhetoric that disregards the reality of tough livelihoods and exploitation for the vast majority of people involved with agricultural work. While critical theory and political economy theorists would ascribe such accounts to class privilege with its related exclusions, I would like to apply the food justice lense to highlight another layer of privileged access to local organic food growing: whiteness. The wider aim of Organiclea as expressed by a white participant, which is "to facilitate a reconnection with nature and train people up in a relationship with nature" (V8) is conceived from a white ecological identity that blanks out processes of racialisation. This universalist outlook is shaped by invisible whiteness and collective white notions of nature as freeing, easily approachable and emotionally reassuring (Vanderbeck 2008). This stands in stark contrast with the cultural memories of intersectionally subordinated diaspora groups who were and continue to be exposed to genocide, slavery, rape and exploitation for white individuals to have access to 'nature' as a cradle of economic resources as well as recreational and conservation purposes (Deming 2002; Solnit 2007). Drawing on Harper (2009), the white participant's statement above therefore masks the invisible whiteness behind ecological identities that inform one's involvement in local organic food initiatives. Knowles (2008) offers a post-imperial whiteness framing that ascribes rural practices and life in Britain with imperial connotations and associations of oppression and supremacy. Being outdoors and "being involved directly in working the land" (PW8) – as one white participant put it – on the edge of Epping Forest in North London very much

resembles rural life and is thus likely not to have a relaxing therapeutic effect for everybody. Yet the wish to be involved with food growing is universalised by a white participant who reduces it to a matter of simple tasks that resonate with every *body*: "[...] Everyone can connect to food, right. Everyone eats. Uhm. And everyone can do gardening." (A4) Who is meant by 'everyone' and how is 'everyone' reflected at Organiclea's three outlets? How is 'everyone's' food represented at Organiclea's Hornbeam café and the market stall? The following account by a diaspora subject paints a slightly different picture:

> When I tell my friends that I volunteer there, they say 'oh you volunteer with the hippie people'. [...] I'm fine with it. I just say yes I am. I don't see a problem. But I do understand how other people might be like/ they may not want to volunteer there or go there because it is seen as that [...] big purple building on the corner [...] where you can hear strange international music and where all the hippies and all the like sort of strange people go to eat. [...] So it is sort of weird. [...] You just know it is like an environmental place. (V9)

His phenomenology of environmentalism equates Organiclea's community centre with hippies, strange people and being weird, making it not seen as being inviting or interesting. He then continues:

> All of them seem to be vegans as well. There is not a lot of normal everyday/ I wouldn't say like... ok if you are vegan you are not normal but...[...] There is not a lot of variety. Yes, it is a vegan restaurant, but it doesn't cater for everyone else. (V9)

These two accounts indicate how he is wary of denouncing the design, aesthetic and cuisine of the Hornbeam café altogether while at the same time expressing the exclusionary effects that come along with it. This resonates well with Sherriff's (2009) findings that link the green coding of a Manchester local organic food initiative through emotive photographs of world agriculture and permaculture posters to the dominant participation of the "usual environmental clique" (p.81) that he describes as white middle class. Equally, food justice activist Keval has observed how most food initiatives fail to create the spaces for the lived experiences, the recipes and the histories of their highly diverse communities (Keval 2015). After all, as one diaspora participants puts it:

> There is probably potentially a lot more interest than we think. [...] And potentially, many people that live here have a background in food growing and farming where they came from or in their family history. So it is probably something that you could tap into. It is just a case of how you frame it. (V5)

Yet whitened codings and framings as driving forces behind the perceived exclusiveness and feeling uninvited cannot take all the credit in explaining the entanglements behind being engaged and/or disinterested in Organiclea. Another layer for that became visible by applying intersectionality as an overall

research paradigm is an unwillingness on my part to accept a diaspora subject's post-racial epistemology, which turned out to be another key insight into the workings of white agency. In response to the question whether Organiclea was open to a wide range of people, one diaspora apprentice replied: "I think that is what they want. [...] I feel that they want to cater to everyone." (A6) As this merely reiterates Organiclea's mission statement, I then directed the next question to the actual situation on the ground, to which he reacted:

> The thing is we are all human, aren't we. We all breathe air. We have all got hands and feet. It is just the conscience that is different. [...] Do you know what I mean?" [...] And if you haven't got that mentality it is not going to work. It is one part/ (...) one/ it is for everyone. (...) I mean I believe that is Hawkwood's (...) mission statement or/ (...) [...] they got equal opportunities, haven't they? [...] You have to think of everyone as a whole now/ as one. (...) There is no separation. [...] And I (...) can't get into the political part of it though. (A6)

By applying a one-dimensional whiteness lens to this account, I first identified it as strong post-racial rhetoric on the part of a diaspora observer that tries to de-racialise his racialised experience (Valentine/Sporton 2009). Later into the research process I realised that this interpretation could also, however, be the result of what Smith (1990: 48) has termed conceptual imperialism in that I read "the actualities of people's activities as expressions of the already given", namely the academic literature on whiteness theories. This is "to generate ideology, not knowledge" and the result of 'speaking about' as opposed to 'speaking nearby' research subjects (Chen/Minh-ha 1992). Therefore I was at first not able to recognise his 'non-scientific' epistemology as a critique of science through which he was pointing at the fallacy of labelling difference with dichotomous categories. He just used a 'non-scholarly' jargon for emphasising the co-optation of (feminist) science in the production of dichotomous power relations that re-enact and thus uphold the very racialisation they are trying to overcome (Hill-Collins 2000). This became clear to me as I re-read my notes and internalised empirical intersectionality, which calls for questioning the researcher's 'own' science as a technique that re-produces oppression by rejecting non-academic epistemic theorising as 'non-scholarly', biased and over-simplistic. De-centering academic epistemologies could be a good vantage point to lower the barriers around local organic food spaces in order for other voices to co-create and -shape such spaces and initiatives (Guthman 2011). This interview conversation substantiates this call, where I sensed an immense intrusiveness in exploring the whiteness assumptions of food justice scholarship on my part, which led to the interviewee feeling awkward and intimidated and perpetuated the hierarchical power relations between the white researcher and the diaspora research subject. By upholding and projecting the dichotomous category of diaspora onto this participant, I am effectively denying this individual the right to act out on their agency, which they expressed through their discomfort, critique and hesitation. This is a good example of how subjects and identities are formed as an effect of my positioning as a white researcher and 'cultural insider' (Alkon 2011) that is

located in a relationship of authority to their positioning as a diaspora research subject. Here the power structures of whiteness and science intersect to produce a subordinated subject position that can be made visible by employing intersectionality as an empirical paradigm. This finding raises multiple questions for all the academic realms that are being brought together in this study. Does the agency need another term for subjects that are beyond race as a marker? And what does that mean for the cornerstone of critical race studies that informs food justice research and activism, i.e. the dichotomy of white/diaspora?

Addressing the White Elephants in the Room of Local Organic Food

This attempt to frame food justice from a UK angle has not only invited us to add more dimensions to looking at local organic food initiatives, but also to help white people *in general* realise and own their racialised space of whiteness, which all too often remains invisible. One of the key white elephants in the room that leads to the disproportionate participation on the part of the diaspora at Organiclea is thus the *unawareness* of how white ecological identities have been formed through historical processes of racialisation and contemporary power patterns of whiteness and coloniality, informing people's involvement in local organic food initiatives accordingly. Contextualising the disproportionate diaspora participation in this way highlights how the white bias of Organiclea might not be so much a result of a lack of interest on the part of the diaspora, but rather a lack of awareness on the part of white participants of what it entails to be racialised as white and having a white ecological identity. Cultivating such an awareness would be a vital starting point for a more multi-dimensional framing of local organic food practice at Organiclea that includes more histories of its diverse community. This finding is not only an important contribution to the UK agri-food discourse, but also to the wider racial and cultural discourses in Europe where the ramifications of whiteness continue to be largely undertheorised despite the Eurocentric roots of white supremacy. This study has shown that white-identified subjects are so entrenched in whiteness that even an intersectional feminist methodology seeking to critique it re-enacts its workings. Ascribing and analysing diaspora identities from a 'speaking about' perspective thus reifies subordinated subject positions of diaspora participants by potentially dismissing their post-racial claims. If the objective of such methodologies is mainly geared towards determining the extent to which the diaspora subject is racialised, it may crush any attempts on their part to break free from their subordinated position. Beginning to have conversations about what we do and do not achieve through such dichotomous methodologies that are commonly applied in the realm of intersectionality may therefore be a good starting point to ensure that this research contributes to: (1) Opening up the local organic food landscape to more multi-dimensional subjectivities (2) preventing a whole new monoculture of its own from taking root.

Correspondence Address

Katharina Nowak
Institut für Europäische Ethnologie
Humboldt-Universität
Möhrenstraße 41
10117 Berlin
katharina.nowak@posteo.de

Appendix

Table 1. Categorisation of Research participants

Type of involvement	Racialised research status	Anonymous code	Number of subjects
Volunteers (V)	diaspora	V2, V5, V9, V10,	4
	white	V7	1
Apprentices (A)	diaspora	A1, A6	2
	white	A4	1
Project workers (PW)	white	PW3, PW8	2

Remarks

1 'Elephant in the room' is an English idiom referring to a large issue that is obvious, but not addressed or discussed.

2 This discourse argues for a complete rejection of 'race' as a category for it is both analytically flawed and politically vacant (Miles 1989; Gilroy 2000), yet should not be mistaken with neo-conservative framings of 'race-neutral' policies that tend to be called 'post-racial' within the US discourse.

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