

Institution: Goldsmiths, University of London
Unit of Assessment: Sociology
Title of case study: The institutional marginalisation of migrants
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Les Back has produced a body of research that has documented and intervened in the institutional marginalisation of migrants in Europe, the de-humanising impacts of the UK immigration system and the new technologies of border regulation. This work has stimulated and shaped public understanding through journalism and direct engagements with politicians, policy makers, practitioners and third sector organisations. It has contributed to an accumulating public narrative in favour of a humane national and EU migration policy. In particular, his research of conditions at Lunar House, Croydon gathered evidence of the poor quality of facilities and de-humanising practices and led to specific recommendations for improvement. This directly resulted in a large-scale (£800,000) change to facilities for users of the immigration service at Lunar House. Drawing on this underpinning research, Back's later work exposed the damaging consequences of UKBA's use of 'go home' texting. Collectively, his research has impacted and continues to shift the terms of political debate amongst a wide range of audiences including the Houses of Parliament and the European Commission, as well as less specialised audiences such as BBC Radio 1 listeners.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
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Back was appointed to Goldsmiths as a lecturer in 1994; he is now Professor. The key underpinning research for his work on migration is The EUMARGINS Project, funded by the EU 7th Framework Programme.^[1] This research analysed 250 life stories of young adult migrants in seven European countries exploring the experience of social inclusion and exclusion. A collaborative project between ten universities in seven countries, the UK team comprised Back and Goldsmiths researcher Shamser Sinha (a researcher at Goldsmiths from May 2009 to April 2011). Research was co-ordinated by Katrine Fangen at the University of Oslo and Back led the data analysis work package at Goldsmiths. Back and Sinha contributed to two books based on the project's findings. *Inclusion and Exclusion of Young Adult Migrants in Europe* (2010) set out the historical context and the comparative framework for the research and Back and Sinha co-authored a chapter on the UK.^[2] The book, *Young Migrants* (2011), focuses on the project findings; Back and Sinha co-authored a chapter and provided cases from the UK team's research for other chapters.^[3]

Back's co-authored research summary report 'A door to the future?' focuses on the policy recommendations emerging from the EUMARGINS project.^[4] A co-authored article focuses on the EUMARGINS UK case studies, as does the forthcoming book *Migrant City*.^[5] Back has also presented the EUMARGINS research in six invited keynote addresses at international conferences and a further six invited public lectures and seminar presentations at Princeton, Trinity College, Dublin, London School of Economics, Manchester, York and Oxford.^[6]

The underpinning research emerges out of a long civic engagement with organisations concerned with migrant rights. Along with the community organisation South London Citizens (SLC), Back was a co-author of a report investigating the workings of the front line office headquarters of the British Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), at Lunar House in Croydon. Beginning in October 2004, Back and colleagues gathered evidence from about 300 staff and users of Lunar House through surveys, written submissions, and oral testimonies. Further evidence was received from refugee community organisations, universities and other organisations. Back subsequently discussed the findings of this inquiry in his acclaimed book *The Art of Listening* (2007).^[7]

The enquiry into conditions at Lunar House found a poor standard of facilities, a lack of quality and fairness in transactions, failures in IT and record keeping, and poor working conditions of staff. Published in 2005 as a report aimed at politicians, policy makers and the public and made publicly accessible on the SLC website, it highlighted areas of immediate concern and made 28 recommendations.^[8] These included: indoor queuing areas, a ticketing system for queuing (so that people can leave the queue to use the toilet), making complaint forms available, and informing applicants of their rights concerning interpreters.

Drawing on the underpinning research, in October 2013 Back exposed the damaging consequences of UKBA's use of 'Go Home' texts for both young migrants and UK citizens to whom they were wrongly sent. Back and Sinha published an article exposing the negative consequences of this practice and subsequently an article documenting further developments and responses of the government on openDemocracy.net.^[9] Through this platform the article received international

coverage, from China and Chile to all over Europe. In these ways Back's research is ongoing and continues to develop a case against the current system of regulating UK borders, arguing that its stringency criminalises and marginalises many migrants, and that at bottom it is racist and contains the residue of colonial superiority.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Evidence of quality of the research: Refs 2 and 3 below are published in established academic presses (Ashgate and Palgrave Macmillan). Ref 5 is published in an internationally recognised peer reviewed journal. Ref 7 is a widely reviewed book and was entered in RAE2008 – “*The Art of Listening*” is a rare book in its commitment to vitalize an ethical, global sociology for the 21st century. Everyone needs to read this book – especially jaded academics” (*British Journal of Sociology*) and “This is a wise and humane piece of writing, concerned to break out of sociology’s academic straitjacket and speak to a wider audience” (Stuart Sims, *New Humanist*). The EUMARGINS research project was reviewed favourably in the European Commission’s report, “[Social inclusion of youth on the margins of society Policy review of research results.](#)”

1. *EUMARGINS: On the margins of the European Community – Young adult immigrants in seven European countries* (1/10/2008 – 30/9/2011). European Commission Framework Programme 7: Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities, Activity 3, "Major trends in society and their implications", Research area 3.2 "Societal trends and lifestyles". Collaborative Small or Medium Scale Focused Research Project Grant 217524 (€1,953,587).
2. Back L, Sinha S (2010) “The UK: Imperial Spectres, New Migrations and the State of ‘Permanent Emergency’” in K. Fangen, K. Fossan and F. Andreas (eds.) *Inclusion and Exclusion of Young Adult Migrants in Europe*, Farnham: Ashgate. ISBN 1409492451
3. Back L, Sinha S (2011) ‘Migration and the Terms of Inclusion’ in K. Fangen, T. Johansson and N. Hammarén (eds.) *Young Migrants: Exclusion and Belonging in Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9780230298873
4. Sinha S, Back L (2011) ‘[A door to the future?](#) The consequences for young migrants of immigration and welfare policy: A Summary Report’.
5. Back L, Sinha S (2012) ‘The New Hierarchies of Belonging,’ *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15(2): 139-155. (REF output). The book, *Migrant City*, will be published by Routledge in 2015.
6. Keynote addresses presented by Back based on the EUMARGINS research include:
 - ‘Social Cohesion and Diversity in a Hyper-connected world: methodological and political reflections’, Center for Studier af Lighed og Multikulturalisme, Institut for Medier, Erkendelse og Formidling, Københavns Universitet, Copenhagen University, Denmark, 28/02/13.
 - “[Live Sociology: Social Research and its Futures](#)”, Trinity College Dublin (TCD), in collaboration with University College Dublin (UCD) Public Lectures, Series, 13 Feb 2013.
 - “Moving Sounds, Controlled Borders: Asylum and the Cultural Politics of Music”, New Post-Migrant Socialities: Rethinking Urban leisure Publics in the Context of Diversity and Dominance, Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany, 24 January 2013.
 - 'New Hierarchies of Belonging: Young People in Divided but hyper connected worlds' at The Youth in Transition Culture and Marginalization - Between the Local and the Global Conference held at University of Gothenburg, Sweden arranged by the Nordic Network, Youth and Social Marginalization, 5 December 2012.
 - “New Hierarchies of Belonging: Young Lives in a Divided but Hyperconnected World”, To Be Young: Youth and the Future, Turku, Finland, 6th-8th June, 2012.
 - “Young Lives on the Move: Borders, Scale and New Hierarchies of Belonging”, Open Lecture Series, Dept. of Sociology, Princeton, New Jersey, USA, 8 November, 2010.
 - “Young Lives and the New Hierarchies of Belonging,” *Youth 2010 – Transitions, Identities, Cultures*, University of Surrey, 9 July 2010.
 - “Understanding the Paradoxes of a Multicultural City”, *Public Lecture Diversity and Learning DPU*, Aarhus University, Copenhagen, Annual Public Lecture, 10 March 2010.
7. Back, L (2007) *The Art of Listening*. Berg. ISBN 978-1845201203

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8. Back L, Farrell B, Vandermaas E (2005) 'A Humane service for global citizens: Report on the South London Citizens enquiry into service provision by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate.' South London Citizens.
9. Back L, Sinha S (2013) '[You've Got a Text from UKBA](#): Technologies of Control and Connection', *Discover Society*, 2, October 13. Back L and Sinha S (2013) '["Go Home" texts expose anti-migrant British policy to the world](#)', *Our Kingdom* (British arm of openDemocracy.net), 26 October.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Back's research for the EUMARGINS project has been presented on a number of occasions to high-level policy-making audiences. He presented his research in a policy report to 70 politicians, advisors and policy makers in Westminster. This was at a ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) Briefing session he co-organised at the Houses of Parliament.^[10]

To launch their policy report 'A Door to the Future', Back and Sinha held a policy workshop in September 2011, attended by 50 policy-makers, stake holders and activists at Europe House.^[11] These activities and the reactions of policy-makers are documented in Simon Rowe's (2013) film *Institutional Marginalisation: Young Migrants in Europe*.^[12] It covers the key findings of the research and is freely available on the COMPAS website. Sinha wrote a play derived in part from the EUMARGINS project. *Khadija is 18* ran from October-November 2012 at the Finborough Theatre receiving wide critical acclaim in *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* newspapers.

Back and others from EUMARGINS also presented the project's research findings to the European Commission at an evidence-based policy conference 'Youth and Social Inclusion' held in November 2011. Over eighty EU government officials, and representatives from over seventy-five major think tanks, centres for policy, NGOs and consultancies across Europe attended.^[13] Further presentations of the EUMARGINS research findings have been made across Europe by the project's other national teams, including a workshop held by the Spanish team for senior policy makers, and a presentation by the Norwegian team of research at the Norwegian Institute for Social Research.^[14] The EUMARGINS project was featured in the February 2012 edition of the Socio-economic and Humanities Research for Policy (SCOOP) news alert service which went out to 9500 recipients in international organizations such as NGOs and trade unions (37%), EU institutions (34%), national government departments (26%) and the media (3%).^[15]

Back's work has contributed to a growing public pressure for reform in how border regulation is conducted most notably contributing to a change in UK government policy. The enquiry into the provision for migrants at what was the IND Croydon, led directly to a large-scale (£800,000) improvement of facilities at Lunar House. The research was presented to Lin Homer (Director General of IND) and Tony Smith, UK Border Agency Regional Director and was considered at Ministerial level. On 21 December 2009 a plaque was unveiled to Mary Apragas at the opening of the new 'Welcome Centre.' It was her story that sparked the enquiry and she sadly died in 2004. Welcome Centre now provides heating, seating, a reception, clear signage, and shelter where once users had to queue outdoors in all weather conditions.^[16]

As a result of the enquiry, a special commission formed by the SLC in 2006 produced over 180 recommendations to safeguard asylum seekers. In order to campaign for these recommendations, a group was formed, Citizens for Sanctuary. So far the campaign has had a number success stories, including persuading the government to end Child Detention for immigration purposes.^[17]

The Lunar House enquiry opened up space for discussion among users of the service and immigration officers who testify to feeling trapped and distressed by what they have to do. At one meeting held by Back and SLC, an immigration officer stood up in the crowded room and apologized to the users present for the misery caused to them at Lunar House. More generally, Back has helped shape a public narrative in favour of migration and diversity in Europe, through widely read publications, mainstream radio, and public events. He has, for example, written an article questioning the social costs of European border controls for *Eurozine*, a netmagazine which has an international readership of around 200,000.^[18] Two of his articles were published by *The Guardian*, a national newspaper with an international reach.^[19]

Back was a guest on BBC Radio 1's 'Sunday Surgery debate on Nationality' phone-in show on 30 November 2008. In 2009, he participated in one of Tate Britain's themed public symposia, giving a talk on how cities benefit from cultural diversity.^[20] In 2010, at a public symposium on the subject of 'Living in Diversity' held by Barcelona's Centre de Cultura Contemporània, Back's talk was

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attended by 125 people.^[21] He was also asked to join nine others to form the Concerned Citizens of Europe and to co-author a manifesto published in Eurozine, and a version in *The Guardian*.^[22]

Back's most recent writings on the 'Go Home' texts were covered in *The Guardian* and *Independent* newspapers precipitating a wide public debate including BBC Radio 4's Today Programme. The media and public response culminated in a statement from Prime Minister David Cameron and a call for an investigation by the Labour Party.^[23]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

10. [COMPAS Breakfast Briefing event](#), 6 October 2011.
11. [Conference: A door to the future?](#) The consequences for young migrants of immigration and welfare policy. Europe House, Goldsmiths College, 7 September 2011.
12. Simon Rowe's (2013) film [Institutional Marginalisation: Young Migrants in Europe](#) available online.
13. Evidence-Based Policy Conference: '[Social inclusion of youth on the margins of society: more opportunities, better access, and higher solidarity](#)', 17-18 November 2011 in Brussels. Organised by the DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission.
14. Details of numerous presentations across Europe by national teams ([EUMARGINS](#)).
15. Socio-economic and Humanities Research for Policy ([SCOOP](#)) and details of the News Alert Service offered.
16. South London Citizens Newsletter Winter, 2009 ([Academia.edu](#)) and Kerry McQueeney '[Immigration Centre Blasted](#)' This is Local London: Forty Local Newspapers One on-line Voice, Thursday 3rd November 2005.
17. See: [Citizens for Sanctuary](#). Successful past campaigns are recorded on their [blog](#) and their [newsletter](#) outlines how Citizens for Sanctuary brought about the end of Child Detention. Corroboration about Back's involvement in the Lunar House campaign from a representative of London Citizens can be provided on request to Goldsmiths Research Office.
18. Back, L. '[Beaches and graveyards](#): Europe's haunted borders', in *Eurozine*, 30 May 2008 (in German and Catalan).
19. Back, L. 'How EU integration bars the persecuted from finding refuge in Europe', *The Guardian*, 16 August 2010 (<http://bit.ly/a0qXSe>). Back, L. '[Fortress Europe? There is a better way](#)' *The Guardian*, 27 April 2011 (attracted 164 comments online)
20. Tate Britain Symposium: '[Urban Encounters: Rethinking Landscape](#)', 23 May 2009.
21. Centre de Cultura Contemporània in Barcelona, [Living with Diversity: For a Politics of Hope in Europe](#), Symposium, 4-5 March 2010.
22. The Concerned Citizens of Europe Manifesto. '[Living with diversity: For a politics of hope without fear](#): An open letter to Europe.' Eurozine, 5 May 2010. Version published in *The Guardian* as: '[A Manifesto for a New Europe](#)', 14/07/10.
23. Hugh Muir, in [The Guardian Diary section](#), covered the research over three days, directly mentioning Back on 15 October. The research was discussed in *The Independent*, [BBC News](#), and BBC Radio 4's Today programme precipitating a response from David Cameron. These reports and responses were also documented in Back and Sinha's article on openDemocracy.net – see note [9]. Corroboration about the impact of Back's writings in relation to the 'Go Home' text campaign from a representative of openDemocracy can be provided on request to Goldsmiths Research Office.